

MARGERY MORRIS



VIOLET GORDON GRAY

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“AN OLD FAMILY RETAINER”

MARGERY MORRIS

By

VIOLET GORDON GRAY

Illustrated by

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Margery Morris

To
BETSEY-JANE-O

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Introduction

MARGERY MORRIS is the story of the experiences of a young girl in a quaint old Quaker town in New Jersey. It tells of the friends she makes, of the fun and mishaps she has, and of the great surprise she receives at the end.

Much against her will she visits her grandfather, whom she has not seen since she was a child, and her visit does not begin happily. But the kindly welcome of the old housekeeper, the jolly comradeship of two boy cousins, and the friendship of a girl of her own age, Polly Jameson, help to remedy her discontent. The boys and girls have much wholesome fun, and Margery blunders into not a few scrapes. Events occur which cause her distress and finally a strange discovery. Through her own trouble she learns the truth of a verse the old doctor teaches her :

“Two things stand like stone,
Kindness in your neighbor's trouble,
Courage in your own.”

The following book will tell of the winter Margery spends with her grandfather, her devotion to him, and the jolly times she and Polly Jameson have with the other girls and boys.

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Margery Morris

Margery Morris

CHAPTER I

ANOTHER RELATIVE

“HELLO, DICK! I just tried to get you on the 'phone, but they said you were out. I want you to come for supper to-night. Uncle Jack's coming down on this train,—and, I say, Dick, you ought to hear him talk! He's just been made a scout-master, you know.”

The boy addressed dug the point of his shoe into a crack between the boards of the station platform. “Can't,” he said, disconsolately. “Sorry, Sam. I've got to meet this train, and take the cousin that's coming on it out to the farm. And then hang around and do the polite, I suppose,—worse luck!”

Sam whistled. “Another 'dear cousin,' eh?” he asked with a grin. The never-ending stream of relatives who came to visit at

the Morris farm was a constant source of amusement to the people of Renwyck's Town. "I thought your grandfather was still away."

"He is." Dick whirled on his heel, and tried putting the point of his other shoe into the crack in the platform. "But this dear relative seems to be coming, whether or no. I think it's a girl, too,—worse luck."

"Anyhow, that's better than five old ladies," consoled Sam, and both boys laughed. The five old ladies who had arrived in a body at the Morris farm, several months before, were still fresh in their minds. "But who is this one? You're a clam, Dick! You didn't say a word about her yesterday."

"Didn't know she was coming! I suppose Grandfather knows,—I've forwarded a lot of letters to him up there in Canada,—but I haven't heard a word from him for two weeks. I guess he is pretty well snowed up."

"How do you know that she is coming now?" queried Sam, who had a masterly mind for details. Besides, the Morris farm—when its owner was away—was a paradise for the boys of Renwyck's Town, and Sam felt that he had a right to know something

about the feminine serpent who was to invade his Eden.

“Oh, she sent a telegram from the city. They 'phoned it out from the telegraph office, and old Thomas answered the 'phone, so all that we know is: 'dat Miss Margaret Morris done arrived at Philadelphia, and will be down on the five-fohty-foh.' The only Margaret Morris that I can think of is Uncle Harry's daughter. They always call her 'Bunnie,' but her real name is Margaret, I think. They were living in Texas last winter, and she was coming on for a visit then; but something happened; she had measles, or something, and she didn't come. However, I'll know all about her soon enough,” and Dick looked as bored at the prospect as he felt.

“I hope Deborah doesn't get mad about it, and leave,” he added pessimistically. “She's the only housekeeper we've had that's any good since old Matilda died. It's hard on her, our having so much company.”

Sam grinned. “What makes you have such a lot?” he asked, although he knew perfectly well that Dick's grandfather found

more congenial society in the score of semi-dependent relatives living at a distance and bound to him by the ties of kinship and gratitude, and the debt due to ungrudging hospitality, than he did in his neighbors at Renwyck's Town, who were not inclined to overlook his crotchets and peculiarities.

Dick flushed, and dug his toe deeper into the crack. "Well, it's right to be hospitable," he declared, loyal as always to the grandfather who was often needlessly severe with him. "Grandfather believes in 'holding by the family,' he says. As long as anybody has a drop of Morris blood in his veins, he says he is welcome to come as often, and stay as long as he likes,—he's kind of crazy over the name, I guess. Besides, he says he hates this modern stingy way of just asking people to a meal in a restaurant. To tell the truth," Dick admitted, "if there weren't so many cousins I'd take more interest in them. Thank fortune, we are only distantly related to most of the Morrises living in Renwyck's Town now. I don't take any stock in Uncle Harry, though," he finished, going back to the subject of the coming visitor, "or in any

that belong to him. He was so mean to Mother before she died."

Sam was silent; he and Dick had discussed before the relations between Mrs. Ball and her brother. "When I 'phoned to you," he remarked after an interval in which both boys idly watched a small dog that, having lost its master, was making a great to-do over the fact, "Thomas wouldn't tell me where you were. He just kept saying that it was his 'scantification' that you were out."

"They had a new preacher at the African Methodist Tabernacle last Sunday,—he must have used the word 'scantification,' for ever since then Thomas has been saying it all the time. Don't you remember how he used to say that everything was his 'jurisdiction'? It was his 'jurisdiction' that it was a cold day, and his 'jurisdiction' that breakfast was ready. Hey, George," hailing a passing baggageman, "isn't that train late?"

The baggageman pulled out his watch. "Yep,—about five minutes. Guess a mosquito's on the track." He paused for the laugh which, for the past fifteen years, his pet joke had seldom failed to earn. "Ha!

Ha! Yes, I guess a mosquito's on the track. Waiting for some relations, Dick?" he asked, with the familiarity of the small town.

"Yes," Dick answered shortly; he was growing rather sensitive about relatives.

"There's Dr. Huston over there," went on the baggageman, not a bit abashed; "he's waiting for a doctor from the city, come down to consult with him over old Mr. Henry Morris, over on the Pike,—he's pretty sick, they say. Heart, you know. Comes from livin' so many years in foreign countries, I guess. Sakes! Think of the queer things people eat in those outlandish places,—no wonder they get sick when they grow older. And I don't want no city doctors, either! Old Dr. Huston is good enough for me, I tell you what! Why, the way he brought my wife through that spell of lumbago,—yes; by jingo, Miss Harkinson! I did forget to check that trunk! S'long, boys."

Meanwhile, on the train that shuffled and shook nearer and nearer to Renwyck's Town, Margery Morris was sitting huddled into a corner of the faded, plush-covered car-seat, a thoroughly tired, cross, and resentful girl.

What a tiresome, pokey train it was! And what common, stupid-looking passengers—how could any sane person wear a hat as hideous as that perched on the scant, sandy locks of the woman in front of her? She supposed that woman was a fair sample of the entire population of Renwyck's Town.

The brakeman went through the car lighting the oil lamps suspended from the ceiling. "Renwyck's Town's next,—I guess you'll be glad," he remarked as he passed by.

Margery nodded coldly and pressed her face closer to the window, staring out with unseeing eyes at the melancholy brown fields.

"Well, anyway," she sulked, "I can dance with the mosquitoes, and hobnob with the whippoorwills. Oh, dear, *why* couldn't Mamma and Papa have allowed me to spend the winter with Marie Smythe? It was such a perfect invitation! And we would have had so much fun! I don't see why, just because Papa and Mamma had to go to Japan on business, I have to be shipped on here like—like a barrel of oranges!"

The pretty, high-bred little face that would have been so charming but for the haughty

droop to the mouth grew more sullen and resentful still.

"It mightn't have been so bad," she went on scolding to herself, "if I had waited until after Christmas to come East, as we had planned." A long, gusty sigh stirred the sandy locks of the woman in front of her.

Margery considered that it would have been bad enough to have to go to Renwyck's Town at all, without having to leave home at a moment's notice three months ahead of time, merely because her father had decided that he wanted to sail for Japan immediately. Business could wait! And the traveling companions she had been given! Her eyes filled with tears as she thought of her tribulations in traveling with a dull, middle-aged couple, who, instead of escorting her all the way to her grandfather's at Renwyck's Town, as had been planned, must needs consign her to the care of the train conductor, and rush off for the Washington limited; panic-stricken over the news of their granddaughter's sudden illness at her boarding-school.

"Renwyck's Town! Renwyck's Town!" bawled the brakeman.

Her grumbling interrupted for the time being, Margery gathered together her magazines, bag and the big box of candy that poor anxious Mr. Van Pelt had thrust into her hand as he put her on the train.

The arrival of the afternoon train at Renwyck's Town was a social event, and a jolly crowd waited on the platform to welcome friends and relatives. Rather dazed by the hubbub, Margery stood stock-still, very much in the way, to the annoyance of a dressy young woman who was eagerly hailing some one as "stranger." Margery gazed at her scornfully, a gaze that was suddenly obliterated when a fat woman bumped into her and knocked her hat down over her eyes, while at the same time a rosy-faced boy walked over her feet in his enthusiasm at meeting some one he called "Uncle Jack." Straightening her hat as well as she could for hands occupied with umbrella, magazines, candy and valise, she limped to one side of the platform and looked about her for her grandfather.

But where was he? With a worried frown, her eyes eagerly searched the little crowd. A tall, white-haired old man with a kind, sad

face hurried forward. This was he? No, he greeted a pompous, well-dressed man who carried a surgeon's bag, and who hailed him as "Dr. Huston," and they went away together.

Margery drew back and looked about her almost with despair,—oh, why didn't he come? The platform was practically empty now,—where could he be? She wished that tall boy with the funny cap on the back of his head would stop staring at her so; why didn't her grandfather come?

"Well," she thought wearily, "I shall have to go to the station-master and see if he can get me a carriage to take me to Grandpapa's house." Picking up her bag, she started toward the ticket office.

"Pardon me, but aren't you Miss Morris?" Dick stepped forward and lifting his cap, clutched it as though it were a life preserver.

"Yes," said Margery.

"Thought you were," and Dick took her bag, and attempted to take the box of chocolates, which he promptly dropped.

"Yes, I am Margaret Morris—I'm looking for my grandfather, Mr. Morris," explained Margery, in her distress more affable than

she would ordinarily have deigned to be. "I wonder if you happen to know him and to have seen him about the station. I thought surely that he would come to meet me."

Dick finished scrambling for the candy and stood up, looking rather red and embarrassed. Just like a girl to have things that would spill all over creation!

"Yes," he said briefly; "he's away."

"Away?" Margery's knees wobbled and she felt queer and breathless. "Away?" she repeated.

"We got your telegram all right, though, and I've come to meet you."

"But what shall I do?"

"Oh, that's all right. He'll be back soon—and there's Deborah, the housekeeper, you know, to make you comfortable. Have you got your trunk checks? Thanks. Here, George—send these out to the farm, won't you? The carriage is waiting out in front of the station," he finished in a businesslike manner, turning to Margery. "Come on."

CHAPTER II

DICK EXPLAINS

TIRED and dazed, Margery stumbled along the platform after Dick to the front of the station.

"There's Benjamin," and Dick nodded toward a runabout in which sat a handsome little boy about seven years old. "Climb in while I unhitch,—the horse doesn't stand very well."

As he caught sight of them, the little lad stood up and grabbed his cap from his curly head. "I'm awful glad you've come," he cried gleefully, holding out his hand, "just *awful* glad! An' please 'scuse my hand being dirty," he added with equal cheerfulness, "'cause I forgot to wash it."

It was quite evident that he had forgotten to wash it, and disregarding the proffered hand, Margery climbed into the runabout. Dick unhitched the horse and jumped in

beside her, while Benjamin settled down at their feet.

A rapid drive through a wide, pleasant street bordered with quaint red-brick houses, a sedate amble across an old covered bridge, where a sign urged them to "keep to the right, as the law directs," and they were out in the country, a gentle country of broad meadows and white roads lined with willows, silvery now in the twilight.

Its soft melancholy beauty was lost on Margery, who sat staring straight ahead at the horse's ears, absorbed in disappointment at her grandfather's absence. She felt indignant, too. She was used to being treated as a person of importance; and now to be received in this haphazard fashion. Grandpapa had no right to be away!

"Rather unexpected, your coming, wasn't it?" Dick's voice broke in upon her revery.

"Rather."

Who were these boys who had come to meet her? Margery turned to Dick. "You're the stable-boy, I suppose?" she remarked tentatively.

"Stable-boy nothing! I'm Dick."

"*Dick?*"

"Yes, your Cousin Dick."

"*Cousin?*"

"Yes, I'm Richard Ball."

"But I never heard of you! How can you be my cousin?"

"But you've heard of me?" Benjamin was evidently quite certain that nobody could possibly have lived to be Margery's age without having heard of so important a person as Benjamin. "My name is Benjamin Carson Ball."

"No. I never heard of either of you."

"I am not surprised," put in Dick, quietly. "Mother and your father weren't on very good terms before she died—seven years ago." The little note of sadness that always came at the mention of his mother crept into Dick's voice.

Her cousins! "Mother and your father weren't on very good terms." What did it all mean? Margery put out her hand and clutched at the reins as though to seize upon reason itself.

"Hello! What did you do that for?" asked Dick, astonished. "First thing you

know, we'll have a runaway," he added as politely, but firmly, he loosened her hand.

Margery gazed at him uncomprehendingly, her mind engulfed by this bewildering new thought: her cousins? Dick Ball? Benjamin Ball? Had she ever heard of them? Surely not! She racked her brain; frowning at the unoffending dash-board, she admitted to herself that she had paid wonderfully little attention to what her father had to say of friends and relatives in the East. But surely she would have remembered something about her cousins. Oh, yes, she remembered now. Aunt Margaret had died when Margery was very young, and Mamma had worn black for a while, and little Margery had cried for her to take it off; Aunt Margaret must have been the boys' mother. Had she ever heard of Aunt Margaret's boys,—she could not remember.

"Do you live in Renwyck's Town?" she asked.

"Yes,—with Grandfather."

"You do?"

"Yes, ever since Father died."

"But Grandpapa never talks about you in his letters!"

Dick tightened the reins. "Your father doesn't seem to approve of our being here," he said in a low voice. "At least he doesn't approve of *my* being here. I suppose he thinks that I ought to go to work. I am going to work," he added proudly, "just as soon as I'm through school."

"Our fathers didn't like each other a bit," piped up Benjamin from his place at her feet. "But I don't think that we ought to 'scuss the matter."

"I'm sure that Papa was right, anyway," was Margery's ungracious response to the friendly little fellow's speech. She had really no conviction that her father was right; in fact, after the ruthless way in which he had torn her from the arms of her beloved Marie Smythe, she was prepared to think him wrong in everything. The spirit of perverseness had entered into her soul, and she told herself that she was not going to give in to anybody; least of all, to this queer, big country-boy.

There was much that was winning about Dick's clear, steady blue eyes, and the clean cut of his resolute chin; in a less querulous

mood, Margery might have admitted that he was a handsome, manly cousin to be proud of; but as it was, stealing a look at him from the corner of her eye, she merely noted that his sweater was a particularly ugly affair. "Common-looking, like a butcher boy's," she told herself, shudderingly. The broad shoulders which Dick's mates—and Dick himself, if the truth must be told—found so admirable, she despised as taking up more than their share of room in the narrow runabout.

"Rather unexpected, your coming, wasn't it?" asked Dick, harking back to the beginning of their conversation.

"Yes," answered Margery, more communicative this time. "I didn't expect to come until January. Papa and Mamma have gone to Japan on business, you know. They wouldn't take me, because they didn't want me to miss so much school. I had to drop out of school most of last winter,—I outgrew my strength, the doctor said. I mightn't have minded it so much if I could have waited until after Christmas,—but Papa found that he had to go earlier,—they sailed yesterday. I came East with Mr. and Mrs. Van Pelt,—unfortunately

they happened to be coming, so there was no escape for poor Margery."

Dick switched off the top of a roadside weed with his whip. "Hmmm," he said thoughtfully, "did you write to Grandfather?"

"Papa did."

"Well, I guess it's all right. I forwarded a lot of mail to Grandfather yesterday,—I was in too much of a hurry to notice particularly where the letters were from."

"Of course, it's all right." Margery's tone was rather sharp. "But it's awful having Grandpapa away. Where is he?"

"Canada,—Northwestern Territory. He's looking after some farms he has bought up there for an investment. He thinks that there is a mighty big future in Canada, and that eventually . . ."

"It was bad enough, anyway," interrupted Margery, not at all interested in the future of Canada, and very much interested in the present—and Margery, "to have to come here, without having Grandpapa away. I don't think that he ought to have gone,—though I suppose that he didn't know I was coming so soon," she added justly.

Benjamin twisted around, planting his knee firmly on Margery's instep. "Why, Cousin Margaret, you sound as though you didn't want to come,—didn't you?" he asked, astonished. "Why, Renwyck's Town is just a perfectly lovely place!"

"Ouch! You're on my foot. No, I didn't want to come, one little bit. I had a simply perfect invitation to spend the whole winter with my best friend, Marie Smythe. Her mother asked me to stay with them while Papa and Mamma are away. Marie and I would have gone to school, and dancing-class, and our riding-lessons, and everything, together. Marie has two older sisters; one of them was a *débutante* last year, and the other is coming out this year. They have awfully gay times, and it would have been such fun to see it all. Marie gets up and sneaks downstairs to watch what's going on whenever they have people there,—often she doesn't get to bed before twelve and half-past. Mamma always makes me go to bed at half-past eight,—think of it, half-past eight! And Marie entertains just lots herself,—but Papa wouldn't let me accept the invitation, and insisted that

I spend the winter with Grandpapa,—so here I am !”

“Perhaps you can persuade your father to let you go back there yet,” suggested Dick, with a sudden spasm of animation.

Margery was not too self-absorbed to miss the strong note of hope in Dick’s voice ; and she resented it. But he had suggested a delightful idea ; perhaps she could persuade her father to let her spend the winter with Marie, after all ! Meanwhile, she wished that the horrid little boy wouldn’t sit on her feet ; she wished that the big boy wasn’t so “queer,” and that he didn’t take up so much room. Anybody ought to be able to drive a quiet old horse like that without ramming his elbow into people’s ribs ! She wished that the road didn’t lead through such a dark and dreary stretch of pine woods. She leaned back, and composed herself for a thorough fit of ill-humor.

Margery was rather proud of her ability in that respect. Marie Smythe often declared that such extreme sensitiveness to the bumps of life denoted unusual refinement and temperament. Margery’s father, with parental

frankness, had a way, however, of referring to this sensibility as "grouchiness"; Margery, although she admitted that her father had many good qualities, and of late an astonishing capacity for making money, felt that at times he verged on vulgarity.

Dick and Benjamin were silent; as the carriage jogged along, Margery's tired eyes closed, and her tired head under the smart hat nodded wearily.

"There's the house!" cried Benjamin, suddenly, and very wide awake at once, Margery straightened up and looked about her.

CHAPTER III

AT THE FARM

THEY turned in between two whitewashed gate-posts; through the dusk Margery could discern a fine old brick mansion with a high white portico, standing at the end of a driveway lined with pine trees. Lamplight gleamed through the lower windows and the wide front door, left hospitably open, out across a strip of lawn and big beds of scarlet sage, still untouched by frost. It was plainly the setting for easy, comfortable, old-fashioned living, far removed from the rush and turmoil of modern life.

As Margery stepped from the carriage, a little woman with a sweet, patient old face came hurrying out of the house.

"So this is Miss Margaret Morris," she remarked in a quaint, prim little manner, her head tipped to one side like a bird's.

"Yes," Margery returned limply.

"Mr. Morris is away on business, but the

boys and I are glad to make you welcome. I am Deborah Davis, the housekeeper, you know. I'll take you to your room right off; then supper will be ready in a few minutes. I guess you're real hungry."

Margery vouchsafed no answer, and the housekeeper, after a quick, somewhat surprised glance at her, silently led the way up the steep, old-fashioned flight of stairs, across a wide hall, and along a narrow, dark passageway to a door at the end, which she swung open. Margery was pleasantly conscious of a clean, fresh smell as of linen and blankets that had been folded away in lavender, but beyond a huge, white-canopied bed, her eyes could make out but little in the dim room.

"Wait," said the housekeeper, "until I light the lamp. I didn't light it before, for fear it might go up and smoke the walls."

The lighted lamp disclosed to view a handsome, stiff room filled with the heavy mahogany furniture of the late forties. The bed belonged to an earlier period, and reared its tall, carved posts and white dimity canopy toward the ceiling with an air of conscious elegance. Margery looked at it with critical

but approving eyes; she knew the value of such antique furniture.

She pitched her hat onto the bed and began to take off her jacket, then paused uncertainly. "The heat must be turned off," she shivered, "it's very chilly in here. Will you turn it on, please, Deborah—you said your name was Deborah, didn't you?"

Deborah lowered a window shade until it was on the exact level of its fellow. "Yes, Deborah Davis," she said cheerfully. "I'm afraid it is chilly here—you see, the furnace doesn't heat this part of the house. I'll try to have the stove put up some time next week. If we had only known that you were coming we should have had things ready for you. But we will make you as comfortable as we can. I'll have to go down now. There's fresh water in the pitcher on the wash-stand, and clean towels. Supper will be ready in a minute, so perhaps you had better get ready."

Left alone, Margery plumped down tragically on the side of the bed, ruthlessly rumpling the heavy Marseilles counterpane. No heat! Why, she would die! Of course she would! Surely her grandfather wouldn't

have allowed her to be put in a barn or a room like this if he had been home. Well, if she took pneumonia and died, Papa and Mamma would be sorry then! They would wish, after she was dead, that they had been a little more anxious to please her. And what would Marie Smythe say if she could see her now, and see those dreadful new cousins of hers? At the thought of Marie's critical brown eyes surveying Dick's sweater Margery almost groaned.

"Supper, Cousin Margaret," called a voice, which Margery recognized as Benjamin's.

Hastily slapping at her curls with a hair-brush and polishing off the middle of her face with the wet end of a towel, Margery hurried down-stairs, finding her way with difficulty. At the back of the wide lower hall two steps led down to the dining-room where Deborah and the boys were waiting for her.

The country supper, with its platters of fried chicken and sweet potatoes, its tall pitchers of fresh milk, and the molds of delicate pink crab-apple jelly, was really wonderfully good. But Margery, while she ate hungrily of it, could not help feeling how

shocked Marie Smythe would be at the informal, not to say haphazard, way in which everything was served.

The boys, too, Margery felt, would have earned Marie's disgust. Benjamin apparently considered, when he had apologized at the station for his dirty hands, that he had done everything for them that was needful, and they still were of a griminess wonderful to see. Dick had had a violent, although friendly, tussle with another boy earlier in the day, and his collar bore evidence to the fact. He ate a good deal, very rapidly, and said little, plainly rather bored at the advent of another visitor, and one who added insult to injury by being a girl, and a rather ungracious girl, at that. Deborah made an effort to talk, and asked Margery a few questions about her journey, but Margery, feeling that the elegant Marie would consider it the acme of bad taste to dine with "a servant," answered her with a distance designed not only to "put her in her place," but to keep her there permanently.

The door opened, and a white-haired old negro came in with a fresh platter of chicken.

“Des try a little moh of dis yere yard-bihd,” he urged, standing beside Margery’s chair. “Ah is Thomas,—ah rar’ly waits on de table, but de young lady strangahs widin de gates gits mah best scanctification.”

“That will do, Thomas,” said the housekeeper, hastily.

Margery’s spirits revived a little at Thomas’s entrance. After all, it was like the books to have “an old family retainer”; life at her grandfather’s might prove to be rather romantic, even if it was pokey and uncomfortable, infested by boy-cousins, and talkative housekeepers. She would write to Marie about Thomas.

Benjamin, who had been staring at Margery as though she were an ichthyosaurus, or some other prehistoric animal newly returned to earth, suddenly broke the silence with :

“There must be lots of Indians, and bears, and wolves around your ranch.”

“Oh, mercy no. California is perfectly civilized,—as much so as it is here. Besides, we don’t go out to the ranch very often.”

“California?” queried Dick. “I thought that you lived in Texas.”

"No, indeed. California."

"Isn't that funny,—I was sure it was Texas. Always get them mixed, anyway," and Dick thoughtfully rolled the remains of his bread into neat little pills. "Whom do you look like?" he exploded suddenly.

"My hair is like Mamma's, but my eyes and features are like Papa's."

"Do they still call you Bunnie?"

"They never called me Bunnie. They call me Margery. When I was little I used to insist that my name was 'Dear,' and I wouldn't answer to anything else. Perhaps you were thinking of that."

"Humph," said Dick, as he filliped one of the bread pills at Benjamin, in spite of Deborah's warning head-shake.

After supper Benjamin challenged Margery to a game of checkers, and Dick got out a bottle of ink to begin a letter. If one could judge from the contortions with which, in the agony of composition, he wrapped his long legs around the rungs of his chair, letter writing was not a favorite art with Dick.

"Whom are you writing to, Dick?" Ben-

jamin asked as he captured two of Margery's "men."

"Grandfather."

"Give him my love," put in Margery, with a brave attempt at airiness. She was feeling anything but debonair; the tears had come very near the surface, and her efforts at checker-playing grew more and more careless and erratic.

Her kindly little opponent, seeing her distress, forbore to capture her unguarded "king," and leaning across the table, said softly, "I think I'm going to love you awful much, Cousin Margaret,—you're so pretty. I never had anybody so pretty to love before. Deborah's awful nice, but she's old, and not nearly so pretty."

Benjamin's tact almost unnerved Margery, and the stately young lady suddenly became a tired, homesick little girl. With trembling lips she announced that she would like to go to bed.

"Wait a minute,—I'll call Deborah," Dick said kindly, and took down a small lamp from the high mantel-shelf.

"Your room is rather apart from the others,"

the housekeeper observed, as lamp in hand she led the way up the stairs and down the narrow eerie passageway, "but you're perfectly safe here, and I'm within call if you want anything." She set the little lamp down on the bureau from which it timidly lighted up a small corner of the big, dark room. "You're not nervous, are you?"

"N-no," shivered Margery, "but I'm cold."

"It is chilly here—you'd better hurry and undress as fast as you can. You'll be warm as soon as you are in bed. I put the winter blankets on, and that down quilt is fine and warm." Deborah did not add that she had taken it off her own bed, in order that the little stranger's comfort might be ensured.

Margery sat down in a big rush-bottomed rocker, and kicked off her tan oxfords. Deborah stood waiting uncertainly, but as Margery said nothing and was evidently anxious to be alone, she quietly turned down the bedclothes, and spread the quilt over the foot of the bed.

"Now! If there isn't anything more I can do for you, I think that I'll go down-stairs.

Be sure to raise the south window—the other one opens onto the porch roof. I'll call you in the morning. Good-night."

She went out, closing the door after her, and with a sob that began at her toes and went all the way up to her throat, where it clutched her tight, Margery began hurriedly to undress. She undid her clothes, pulling off a vital button or two in her haste, and walked out of them, leaving them in a little heap in the middle of the floor. As she tied the pink ribbon on her nightgown, the farewell promise that she had made to her mother to be "very, very neat" occurred to her. A promise was a promise to Margery, a thing to be kept sacredly, however great the inconvenience or cost. With all her absurdities and faults Margery had that rigid sense of honor, which, alas, we associate more with boys than with girls. Shivering, and sobbing bitterly, she pulled her frock from the heap of huddled garments, and stumbled toward the cupboard to hang it up.

The closet door stuck, and she had to brace her knee against the door-jamb before she could wrench it open. As with a final tug

the heavy door swung open on its protesting hinges, there was a rustle in the depths of the great closet and something moved.

With a scream, Margery slammed the door to, and sank back. Crouching against the bed, her eyes wide with horror, she stared motionless at the door. Who was in that cupboard? What could she do? If she shrieked for help the others down-stairs could not hear her. And soon the door would open slowly, slowly, and the something that was back of it would get her by the throat and . . . She shuddered and hid her face in her shaking hands.

But Margery was not a coward; after the first recoil of horror, she pulled herself together and bravely considered the situation.

Well, she decided, she would not submit to being coldly murdered, no matter how much it might please them! If there was a murderer in the room she would fight him while there was a last gasp of breath left in her body. Stealthily, she rose to her feet. A glance toward the hall door; it was bolted with a heavy, old-fashioned bolt that had creaked and groaned when she had fastened

it after Deborah—still she might be able to . . . The lamp!—she would fling it at the murderer if he tried to grab her as she unbolted the door, and then, shrieking, she would dash along the passage to the stairs. She stole across the room to the little lamp, her bare feet making no sound.

Something stirred again within the closet, and she paused, the lamp held high. Then from within the cupboard's depths came a faint, but unmistakable :

“Me-o-uw.”

Putting down the lamp, she sprang across the room and opened the closet door again. “Scat!” she cried, and a whirlwind of yellow fur streaked under the bed.

Half-laughing, half-sobbing, she opened the hall door, and with the aid of her umbrella, persuaded the big old tortoise-shell cat skulking under the bed to depart.

“Oh, dear,” she sighed, “I’d think it was funny if I were home. I wonder how long that poor cat’s been shut up there. Oh, dear, it *is* funny!”

With a feeble giggle she blew out the light and bounded into the middle of the great cav-

ernous bed, pulling the bedclothes up over her head. But her fright had made her nervous, and she could not get to sleep; nor could she indulge in the glorious fit of crying which she had been promising to herself all the evening. Wide-eyed and wide-awake, she thought of all the dreadful stories that she had ever heard of people being walled up alive in dungeons; of the Man With the Iron Mask, of Marie Antoinette, whose hair turned white in a single night. If she lived until morning she knew that her hair would be snow white.

She stuck her nose out from under the bedclothes for air, and rolled over on her side, impatiently reviewing a conversation that she had overheard a few nights before she left home. Her father and mother had been talking in the room next to hers; Margery, too sleepy and too indifferent to remind them of her presence, had perforce heard something of their colloquy.

“You may give a child everything,” Margery had heard her mother declare. “Money, and position, and education, all the material things—but you don’t seem to be able to give

it the things of the soul—however hard you try. That's the heartrending part."

"Oh, come, my dear, cheer up. Margery isn't so bad." Margery had grown rather more awake at this. "Papa," she had called. "I'm awake in here;" but her father had gone on talking.

"It's partly our own fault. We've sent her to a regular sausage machine of a school: put in a live child at one end; bring out a dead snob at the other. And then we have allowed her to select as her chosen friend that ridiculous Marie Smythe. Marie Smythe, *what* a name! I can see, though, why she has a fascination for Margery—she's so much more worldly wise, so old for her years. I can remember my own admiration for the bad little boy who taught me to smoke corn-silk cigarettes! Margery has a fine nature underneath her nonsense; she was a dear, lovable little thing—and she is honorable and truthful to a degree now, and she's not a coward. You've planted the seeds of character well, and the flowers are there, just the same, though now they are growing under the snow. But some day the snow will melt. Remember the old lines: .

“ ‘ You can glad your child, or grieve it,
You can trust it or deceive it,
When all's done,
Beneath God's sun,
You can only love and leave it. ’ ”

“ Yes, ” Mrs. Morris had said wistfully, “ perhaps, as you say, some turn of fate, some piece of hardness endured, will give her the thing I desire for her more than any riches, any talent : a happy, brave and valiant heart. This separation this winter almost breaks my heart—I—I feel that I couldn't endure it if it were not for the hope that perhaps the simpler life, the being away from us, may help her. Yes, Margery dear, what is it? You want the door closed? You're trying to get to sleep? Very well, dear.”

“ Well, ” thought Margery, as she finished reviewing the conversation, “ I'm sure if they could see me now they ought to be satisfied ! I'm sure I'm enduring hardness enough ; getting all scared up with cats—and having no fire in my room—and having a horrid little boy sit on my feet—and—and—being neglected by—my grandfather, and . . . ”

And Margery dropped off to sleep at last, her heart by no means happy, valiant, or kindly.

CHAPTER IV

DEBORAH

“GOOD-MORNING; how did you sleep?” asked Deborah as Margery came down-stairs to breakfast at half-past eleven the next morning. “We have breakfast at seven, usually—but I didn’t call you, for I knew that you must be tired after your long journey—and it’s always hard to get to sleep and a good night’s rest in a strange bed.”

Margery groaned inwardly at the thought of a whole winter of early breakfasts stretching endlessly before her, but she accepted a bowl of bread and milk without comment and curled up in a big rocking-chair to take it slowly. The little housekeeper went on busily with her darning; now and then she glanced up as though she would like to talk, but Margery resolved not to encourage her, and ate away at her bread and milk in an impressive and dignified silence. Alas for Margery’s dignity,—with the final spoonful she curled

her feet up under her and settled back in the roomy old chair; too far back, for the chair tipped suddenly on its old-fashioned short rockers; Margery's feet flew out in a frantic effort to reach the floor, as with a startled squawk she grasped at the air.

Deborah reached out her hand, and placed it steadyingly on the arm of the chair. "You won't go over," she laughed. "That chair's terrible tricky, but it never goes all the way over. It's the short rockers; all the old rocking-chairs were made that way. They all have such short rockers that they don't balance properly. I've had a good many laughs out of that chair. When I first came here, the Baptist minister's wife came to call. She's one of these formal women who would put on a bonnet and gloves to go out and call home the cows. It was a real chilly day when she came here; one of those spring days that go right through you. As I had a fire in the grate here, we sat in this room, though I could see she didn't approve of sitting in the dining-room for a first call. To make matters worse, she sat in that chair. The first

thing I knew, she was shrieking, her feet were sticking straight out, her arms were waving round, and she was thinking that she was going over, sure! She was so annoyed and disgusted at me and the chair that I had an awful time to make peace; it took a lot of rubbing camphor on her forehead, and fanning, and fruit cake, to bring her round."

Margery laughed in spite of herself as she climbed out of the treacherous chair, and put down the empty bowl on the table.

"If you are through now," said Deborah, "you can go up-stairs and make your bed—you needn't turn the feather-bed to-day."

With an air that would have done credit to the most chastened and resigned of early Christian martyrs, Margery left the room. Seven o'clock breakfasts and making beds!—she supposed that she would have to milk the cows next.

As she went along the hall, she passed the library door; on an impulse she opened it and peeped in. The cheerful disorder of the evening before had been cleared away, and in the cold morning light streaming in

through the long front windows, the room looked very prim and substantial, and to Margery dreary. She closed the library door and opened the one directly across the hall. This room, a little less substantial and rather more elegant, was evidently the parlor, sacredly best. A row of really fine old mahogany chairs was ranged solemnly and stiffly along the walls, a mahogany table stood squarely in the center of the room; but the thing that caught and held Margery's eyes was the pictorial wall-paper, portraying the evidently unhappy love affairs of some medieval lady, which had been imported from France about the time that Europe was commencing to enjoy a well-earned repose after the activities of the great Napoleon. Depressed by the stiff grandeur and cold closeness of this state apartment, Margery closed the door and started up-stairs.

"Grandpapa's house is exactly what I expected it to be," she thought drearily. "Stiff and country and gloomy, and I suppose life here will be just to match. I wonder why," she added fretfully, "anybody who has traveled so much should have so few things that

are travelly and interesting about—except for those snow-shoes and bows and arrows there on the wall, Grandpapa might never have been out of Renwyck's Town."

She gave a little laugh of exasperation as she thought of her mother's efforts to cast a glamour over the winter she was to spend in Renwyck's Town. How sure she had been that everything would be gay and bright and her grandfather the most delightful of comrades, worth a dozen Marie Smythes. What surprises she had suggested might be hidden away for her there in Renwyck's Town, waiting her coming. "Oh," said Margery, as she reached the top step, "of course, I had forgotten about the surprises—they must be Dick and Benjamin! Of course!—wasn't I dumb not to think of that! 'Dear little comrades' for me to play with!"

Poor Mamma! How hard she did work to find the silver lining to every dark cloud. What enthusiastic praise she had wasted over the charms of taking milk and eggs, and cod-liver oil, and going to bed early, and studying algebra, and all the other things in life that Margery found distasteful. If she were

here, what pleasures she would try to discover, for Margery, in seven o'clock breakfasts on dark, icy mornings.

“ Well,” concluded Margery, “ I might just as well make that old bed—a little bit more horridness won't make much difference.” Stripping the covers off the bed, she began listlessly to remake it. Occasionally, when she was rather younger, and very much less dignified, she had helped the chambermaid at home to thump the pillows or spread the sheets on her own narrow white bed, but this colossal old ark was a very different affair. Toss and tug the bedclothes as best she could, they still persisted in trailing forlornly on one side or the other; strange lumps rose up unexpectedly, and as fast as she smoothed out one wrinkle, another appeared. In spite of herself she became interested in those lumps and wrinkles; there was fascination in their very ability to tantalize. It was a triumph when she could force them to subside and could make the bed all smooth and even on the top; fun to plump up the big fat pillows in their absurdly braided old pillow-cases, and to roll up the puffy down quilt in its funny

patchwork cover, and put it neatly at the foot of the bed ; best of all to have the happy sense of achievement.

“ It really looks very nice,” she gasped, as, Marie Smythe and her various grievances quite forgotten, she stood off with critical head tilted to one side to admire her handiwork, “ it really does.” And indeed, it did, although—as she found out that night when she went to bed—the blankets were neatly sandwiched between the sheets.

Just as she gave her handiwork a last pat, her trunks arrived and Deborah came upstairs to help her to unpack them. “ My, that bed looks nice,—it’s a hard one to make, too,” she admired, and Margery smiled quite pleasantly as she got out her keys and unlocked the trunks.

With careless hands she was tossing out her clothes onto bed and chairs, when a soft gasp made her turn. There stood Deborah gently stroking a little shell pink muslin she had spread out on the bed. “ Isn’t it lovely,” she murmured, “ isn’t it just like a flower,—a sweet pea, or maybe a rosebud. And soft as a baby’s cheek, too. I do love pink,” she ex-

plained, blushing faintly. "When I was a girl I longed for a dainty pink cobweb like this one. But I never got it."

Margery sat back on her heels, and contemplated Deborah; anybody who had never had a pink dress was rather interesting. "But why didn't you?" she queried.

"Both my older sisters had red hair."

"But what had their red hair to do with it?"

Deborah laughed. "I guess you don't know much about big families. We only got a new dress about once in so often, and then my sisters had the first choice—which was only right, you see, as they were older. Having red hair they naturally took blue. I never was very partial to blue, and unless it's a good dark blue, it does get kind of streaky and faded by the time it gets down to a third sister."

Margery undid a patent leather pump from its tissue-paper wrappings, and put it down on the floor beside her. "And didn't you even once have a pink dress?" she asked. That any one should have to do without such a trifling thing as a pink dress seemed almost unbelievable to her.

“No.” Deborah slipped the frock on a hanger and hung it in the cupboard. “There, I hung it well back where the light won’t get at it and fade it. No, I never once got a pink dress—I did save up the money for it several times. Once when I was about your age I picked berries all one July for old Farmer Weygandt; he was powerfully cross and stingy, too. And a couple of other times I made some money for it doing one thing or the other. But every time just as I got the money saved up, something or other happened—Mother had rheumatism, or the kitchen stove needed repairing, or the cow died—and the money was needed. Now, of course, I’m making a nice lot of money, for me, and there’s nobody really dependent on me—but an old lady like me would look fine prancing around in a pink dress, wouldn’t she? I guess a pink dress would have made me too vain, so I wasn’t meant to have it,” and Deborah laughed softly as she picked up a white blouse, and tenderly stroked a tiny lace-edged ruffle with her work-worn old hands.

Margery thoughtfully unwrapped the other

pump. "Didn't you feel bad when you couldn't have the dress?"

"Mercy, yes. Isn't that hat lovely, now? It just looks like a young girl—those roses, I do believe, are prettier than real ones. Yes, I did feel bad about the pink dress sometimes—but it was always a comfort to feel that I could have had the dress, if only I had had the money for it. Now my cousin, Eliza Moore, who was a Quakeress, or Friend, as they say, had lots of money, but her family were such plain Friends that she couldn't even wear the plain little gold brooch her lover gave her, on the day that they were married—and as for her having such a thing as a pink dress, well, that just couldn't be thought of! But though Mother was born a Quaker, she married a Baptist, so they put her out of the Society of Friends, the way they used to do for 'out-going in marriage.' So Mother, though she liked things plain and dainty, didn't have to hold with Quaker ideas of dress. Oh, there are lots of comforting things in life—if you only hunt for them long enough."

"Pretty long hunt sometimes," Margery murmured resentfully, gazing with unseeing

eyes at a pair of overshoes. She had suddenly remembered Marie Smythe.

"Here," and Deborah interrupted her reverery, "I'll do that unpacking for you. There's no need for you to strain your young back over those trunks. I'll do it for you, if"—she hesitated a little—"if you'll put on that pink dress and that hat with the roses on it. I'd just like to look at you."

With a somewhat superior smile, but inwardly rather flattered, Margery slipped out of her sailor suit and into the pink muslin, and put on the big black hat with the pink velvet roses at the most becoming angle.

"Well now, if you aren't a picture! Those roses just match the roses in your cheeks, and that black hat makes your hair all the goldener. It's a treat just to look at you. Sit down there, and don't do a thing but look pretty—I'll be through this in a jiffy."

Margery sat back in a low chair, feeling that Deborah was really very nice, after all,—although of course she would have to be kept in her place, and watched the little woman putting away frills and furbelows into cupboard and bureau. Deborah, meanwhile, ut-

tering soft little clucks of pleasure over each particular piece of daintiness that she laid away in its new home; and despairing cries when Margery, changing to another chair, inadvertently sat on her second best hat.

“Well,” said Deborah, as she finished arranging Margery’s silver brush and comb and mirror on the old mahogany bureau, and spread out her silk kimono over the foot of the bed, “I’ve almost had my fill for once of handling pretty things. You certainly never know what nice thing is in store for you, do you? I groaned when I knew you were coming. We’ve had so much company this past summer, and I get so worn out trying to keep things going and looking nice, and doing my best to make everybody happy. But here you turn up as sweet and pretty as a picture,” and Deborah’s beauty loving eyes rested admiringly on Margery, “and with all these lovely things to take care of. Now, I must skip down-stairs—I think I’d better be seeing about dinner.”

Left alone, Margery laughed a little uncomfortably as she took off the big hat and hung away the pink muslin. She wished that

Deborah wouldn't be so silly—but she was rather a nice little thing, after all.

After the noonday dinner which she had alone with Deborah, as the boys had stayed in the town for a football game, Margery settled down to write to Marie Smythe. But there seemed to be very little to say,—that Marie would understand, at any rate. She described Thomas, whom she catalogued as “our old family butler,” and mentioned the fact that her grandfather's house had great white pillars in front. After that she paused to refresh herself by eating a piece of nougat; took up her pen; put it down again; then decided that she would investigate the smell of chocolate stealing appetizingly up the stairs.

In the kitchen she found Deborah spreading the icing on a three-layer chocolate cake. In spite of her grown-up airs, Margery was still enough of a child to be interested in chocolate cake, and she at once decided that being in the kitchen was less dreary than sitting alone up-stairs.

In truth, the kitchen was a cheery place, with the scarlet geraniums with which Deborah had indulged her love of beauty bloom-

ing in the sunny windows, its yellow painted walls and woodwork, and its spotless floor covered with a bright rag carpet. The gigantic old fireplace had been bricked up, and a modern range stood in front of it; but on the mantelpiece an old mahogany clock ticked away, and the brass candlesticks stood sentinel as they had done in the long ago days when the United States was a lusty infant barely out of swaddling-clothes.

With an elaborately detached air, Margery leaned against the window frame and played with a geranium leaf. Deborah looked up at her and smiled as she put the cake to one side and got out a clean old table-cloth which she carefully folded and placed on the table.

“I like the smell of geranium leaves, don’t you?” Deborah remarked. “Mrs. Smally, the wife of the druggist in town, was telling me that the French women use geranium as a perfume—well, I’m sure I don’t wonder, it’s such a fresh, clean smell. My, but you do remind me of my little sister, standing there with the sun on your curls. She had hair like yours, as golden as gold. When she was little I used to tell her to keep out of the

fields where the cows were, for fear they would eat her for a buttercup. She was as sweet and pretty as a pink, too,—but she died when she was just nineteen—of a broken heart,” and Deborah took off her spectacles and polished them carefully on a corner of her apron.

Margery was fast approaching the romantic age when a broken heart appears to be the only appropriate organ to lay claim to. “Oh, tell me,” she asked, her face lighting up with genuine interest, “really a broken heart?”

Deborah settled her glasses carefully back on her nose before she answered. “Yes, really a broken heart. You see, it was this way: first there was Mary, she was the oldest of the family. She had red hair, and red hair wasn’t fashionable in those days. And then there was Sally, and she was red-headed, too; and then I came, and I wasn’t anything particular as to looks, and then came the two boys, and then Lizzie. And so, you see, when she was seventeen the rest of us were pretty well along. And as it happened none of us were married—which didn’t suit Father one bit—Father had real decided notions about the way things ought to be. Well, when Lizzie was seventeen

she got engaged to David Fortescue—they had been sweethearts ever since their mud-pie days. But when David spoke to Father, Father said, ‘no,’—very firm. He said that he wasn’t going to have any picking and choosing in *his* family; the Lord had sent his children in order, and they would have to go in order. As Lizzie had three older sisters, she’d have to wait until they were married. You see, Father had the old-fashioned notion that it was a disgrace to have the older sisters single when the younger ones were married. And he kept Lizzie as strict as could be, and wouldn’t let her see David. We girls all just worshipped the ground that Lizzie walked on, and so we did our level best for her. Mary said she had made up her mind to take the widower with seven children, who had been after her for ten years, and whom she couldn’t abide, and Sally even made up her mind to Cranky Bennie Black.”

“Cranky Bennie?”

“Yes, people called him that because he was so disagreeable. The two boys we didn’t bother about for we knew that as soon as we had married off down to them they could

take care of themselves. There never was a man yet too old, or ugly, or disagreeable, not to be able to get some woman to have him. But all of our planning wasn't any use. Just as Mary got resigned to the idea of the widower, he went and married another woman, a widow with four children and some money. That knocked things right in the head at the start, for of course if Father insisted on our going in order, it wasn't any use then for the rest of us to try anything, if the eldest one was put out of the race, first whack.

"And then Lizzie began to get thinner and thinner, and she felt so blue and discouraged that she didn't take care of her health, and got a bad cold on her lungs."

"Why didn't she elope?" interrupted Margery. "Marie Smythe's cousin did."

Deborah looked at her over the tops of her glasses. "Such a thing as that was never done in our family," she said firmly. "Anyway, by that time she was really too sick to elope. But if she had only kept well it would have come out all right. Things mostly do if you just give them time enough. For just about that time, Father was cleaning out the

well, when he slipped and fell in head foremost. He caught himself by the bucket chain, and so he wasn't in any danger of drowning, but he was in an uncomfortable position. Sally heard him call for help, and she went out to him. And then, she said afterward, it just came to her what she ought to do. You usually could make Father listen to reason if you could only get him so that he couldn't jump up and go out of the room, or begin to wind the clock, or something like that.

"So Sally sat down at the top of the well and she talked to him, and pointed out to him how his falling into the well was a judgment on him for making Lizzie and all of us so unhappy. And Father finally admitted that he was in the wrong, so Sally called the hired man, and together they pulled Father up. Father sent for David and told him that he and Lizzie could be married any time that they wanted to, and that he would give Lizzie his blessing. But it was too late then," and Deborah took off her glasses and frankly wiped her eyes. "Lizzie had gone—too far into a decline—and that

spring—she died—just when the fields were yellow with buttercups.”

Margery stood thoughtfully twisting the shreds of the geranium leaf. The homely little tale had touched the more human side of her nature, the tenderer side that her father felt to be blooming like flowers under the snow. “It’s a sad world, isn’t it?” she said at last.

“That it is, dear,—but,” the housekeeper’s sweet old voice took on a cheerful tone, “I don’t believe the dear Lord meant it to be. If we just have patience and faith in Him, things almost always work out right. If my darling just could have kept the faith in her dear heart, and had had the patience and courage to wait, and had taken care of her health, and had not gone around in wet shoes, everything would have worked out all right. But, you see, she was young,—and youth is always impatient. I think that life is just like this bread,” and Deborah paused while she opened the oven door, and taking out a large bread-pan, carefully emptied out the golden-brown loaves of bread onto the folded table-cloth.

“ This is fine bread now,” and she touched it with the pride of the artist, “ because it was not only stirred right, but baked right. But suppose that half an hour ago I had said, ‘ I’m tired of waiting; Mrs. Jones’ bread is done, and Mrs. Smith’s bread is done, and it is getting late, and I am too tired to wait any longer.’ And suppose that I had insisted on taking it out of the oven, and slamming it on the table, and trying to cut it. A nice, doughy mess it would have been! And the worst of bread—when it is life—is that you can’t escape from eating it just because you’ve pulled it too soon from the oven, and you can’t throw it away and say that you will make some more. No, you’ve got to eat it, and what’s harder yet, those who are nearest and dearest to you have to eat it, too; for there is no such thing as living singly in this world.

“ Or suppose,” she went on, as she put the bread-pan in the sink, “ that I had gotten discouraged, and said, ‘ That bread is never going to bake! I’ll just go into the pantry and eat jam to keep my mind from it,’ and had gone away in my discouragement and left the bread to burn up. Well, I should probably have

had to eat the burnt crumbs,—and been good and sick from the jam, too! Just as in real life people who do wicked and silly things to forget their wearinesses get sick souls. And now, dear, I'll have to go down cellar after some canned fruit. There are some interesting books in the library—and you'd better take some of these sweet red apples to eat. Dick will have to see that you meet some of the nice young girls in Renwyck's Town—there are quite a number of them—and then you won't have to have another dull day with a chattery old body like me."

"I suppose," thought Margery as she selected "Tom Sawyer," and curled up in a big chair in the library with her feet under her in a comfortable, if inelegant, position, "that Deborah has the cheerful heart that Mamma is always talking about."

CHAPTER V

TEMPE WICK

“TOM SAWYER” proved to be so unexpectedly interesting,—although Margery had a guilty feeling that Marie Smythe would have thoroughly disapproved of such a vulgar little boy,—that she started quite violently when Benjamin suddenly put his grubby little hand under her chin, and tilted back her head.

“Why, aren’t you glad to see me?” asked the child doubtfully as she impatiently shook her head free. “I thought you would be.”

Margery was not overwhelmed with delight, and did not exert herself to conceal the fact as she turned back to the boy in the book.

The real boy before her backed off to the door, a hurt look in his round blue eyes. “Perhaps, Margery,” he said bravely, although his voice quivered a little, “you’d like to come out to the stable. Dick told me to ask you. He’s going to take Tempe Wick out to

exercise her—and he thought perhaps you'd like to see the stable and the big barn. It's an awful nice barn, Margery,—the nicest in the county."

Margery sighed impatiently. She had caught the quiver in the childish voice, and felt reproached, and therefore annoyed by it. But glancing up, her heart softened at the sight of the wistful little figure standing so manfully by the door.

"Oh, what a nuisance little boys are!" she cried, nevertheless tossing her book onto the table. "Come on."

Although he winced at the term "little boy," Benjamin was all smiles and delight, and as they went toward the stable, gamboled around her as gayly as an excited puppy.

"Can you ride, Margery? I can, and so can Dick. Dick ought to exercise Tempe Wick every day, but he doesn't do it. She's Grandfather's saddle horse, and Dick's supposed to keep her in good condition while he's away. I can ride an awful big horse, Margery,—an *awful* big one," he boasted, child-fashion.

"Yes, you're a wonder," laughed Dick,

pulling his small brother's ear. "Can you ride, Margery?"

"Yes, indeed,—of course I can ride," answered Margery, her tone only a trifle less boastful than that of Benjamin's.

Dick critically examined the bit of the tall horse that he had just led out of the stable. "All Western girls ride," he remarked judicially. Having met three Western girls in the whole of his vast experience, he was well qualified to speak.

"Then why can't Margery ride Tempe, and show me the way the Indians ride? Please, Dick, please let her," begged Benjamin.

"No, kid. Tempe is a pretty ugly customer, you know, when she happens to feel like it."

Margery looked at the mare, a powerful, raw-boned animal, who was standing now with drooping head; and knowing but little of horse-flesh, decided that she was not nearly so dangerous as the arch-necked, high-stepping creatures that she had ridden in the riding ring. "Nonsense, Dick," she said loftily, "I can ride her, and I shall."

"We don't own a side-saddle. Besides, Tempe isn't a ladies' horse—Grandfather has

her because she can carry weight—he's gotten pretty heavy lately."

"I always ride astride; I have a regular costume for it." And indeed, Margery owned a particularly fetching riding-rig of breeches and long coat. "Besides, Professor Riggs taught me, and he's the very best riding-master. Who gave you lessons?"

Dick laughed; he had ridden almost ever since he was old enough to sit up alone. "Never had a lesson in my life. You don't need lessons."

"Oh, yes, Dick, there are lots of little things that you can't possibly know without lessons—Professor Riggs said so."

"Did he? Well, I guess I can stick on as well as anybody."

"Oh, yes, anybody can stick on. But that isn't knowing the little things—and it's the little things that count; Professor Riggs said so."

"Yes? Did he?" answered Dick absently, searching through his pockets for something. "Pshaw! I've gone and left those arrow-heads in the house."

"What are you going to do with them,

Dick?" questioned Benjamin rather anxiously. "Half of them are mine, you know, Dick."

"Yep. I'm just going to show them to old Mr. Morris, if he is well enough to see anybody. I'm going to ride over and inquire how he is, anyway. Besides, I want to see him about something."

"What?" asked Benjamin, still rather suspicious on the score of his arrow-heads.

"Oh, nothing much. He knows a lot about old things, and it's just a good ride over there and back," and tying Tempe Wick to a hook by the stable door, Dick hurried toward the house. "Don't fool with Tempe, either of you two," he called back warningly.

Margery looked after him with reproachful dignity. She was not going to be told what she could ride, and what she could not, by a boy who had never had a riding lesson in his life, and who could go out looking like that, and she flashed a disdainful glance at Dick's legs as they disappeared through the kitchen doorway; Dick having merely buckled on a discarded pair of his grandfather's leggings as a preliminary to his ride.

" Benjamin," she announced, untying Tempe Wick, who laid back her ears ominously, " I'm going to ride around the house and show Dick."

" Oh, goody," exulted Benjamin, climbing to a precarious perch on the top of the stable pump. " I can see you finely from up here."

With the bridle in her hand, Margery stood thinking. She wished that she had time to slip into the house and put on her riding costume; it would be so much more impressive. But before she could do it, Dick would be out of the house, mounted, and away. No, she would have to ride as she was. Her short pleated skirt, and the bloomers she wore under it instead of cumbersome petticoats, would do, of course, as an impromptu riding costume, but it really wasn't much more stylish than were Dick's leggings. Dick's clear whistle came from the house, and dreading lest he should appear too soon on the scene, she hastily led Tempe to the horse-block, from which she proceeded to scramble into the saddle. Tempe had no idea of standing patiently like the horses in the riding-school, and Margery managed the climb with

so little skill and dignity that she admitted to herself that she was glad Dick was not on hand at that particular moment. The horse started forward, as Margery swung her foot over the saddle and reached for the stirrups which, being arranged for Dick's long legs, she could scarcely touch with the tips of her toes. But she sat up very straight and held her elbows at exactly the angle Professor Riggs had taught her.

By the second time that she had cantered along the driveway that encircled the house, her confidence came back, and she began to hope that Dick was seeing her and feeling properly impressed. He really needed "taking down, that boy."

Far from playing the rôle of awestruck spectator assigned to him, "that boy" was placidly strolling from the back door to the stable, absorbed in something that he was wrapping in a strip of white tissue paper.

"Look at Margery," shouted Benjamin.

Dick looked up and waved to her good-naturedly. "Better get down, Margery," he called. "She's a crotchety beast."

For answer Margery struck her mount a

stinging blow with her little palm, hardened by gymnasium work.

The nervous, high-strung animal sprang forward with a suddenness that nearly catapulted Margery out of the saddle. Her right foot slipped out of the stirrup, and she felt herself falling. With a shriek she dropped the reins, and clutched at Tempe's mane, a proceeding which Tempe resented even more than the slap. With her ears laid back viciously, and her wicked eyes showing the white all round, she bounded violently forward again. Margery, her whole being suddenly merged into an agonized endeavor to stick on, forgot Professor Riggs and the importance of the "little things," and sprawled along the side of the mare, one foot waving defiance in the air. Around the house, and round again flew the incensed Tempe, and nearer and nearer toward the ground slipped Margery, and straighter toward the sky pointed her right foot. Her arms grew weak, her breath grew short, she gathered together the remnants of her strength for a despairing plunge to earth, hoping vaguely to miss the cruelly flying hoofs.

Suddenly some one whistled, a loud clear whistle that Tempe seemed to recognize. She slackened her pace, and the ears laid back so wickedly were raised. The lessened pace enabled Margery to perform one more acrobatic feat, and with a last, supreme effort she hauled herself back into the saddle.

Again the whistle sounded, and Margery, limply clinging to the bridle, was carried toward the stable porch, where Dick stood with his cap full of oats. With a futile, but instinctive, effort to recover her lost dignity, Margery brushed back the flying witch-locks from her crimson face, rearranged the folds of her skirt, and sat up very straight, trying to look as though riding with one foot pointing toward the sky was quite à la mode.

Dick quietly hitched Tempe to a post. "Shall I help you down now, Margery?" he asked gravely, although his eyes twinkled, and he swallowed hard as a burst of laughter almost overtook him.

Benjamin was candidly delighted. "You were just like the man at the circus, Margery," he whooped, clinging to the top of the

pump like a particularly lively little monkey on a stick. "Oh, but you were funny!"

Dick gave him a warning glance as he swung Margery down from the saddle, and she stumbled to a stool providentially near. "Would you like to see my Indian arrowheads, Margery?" he asked as though nothing had happened.

Margery nodded; she couldn't speak just then.

"Here they are," and Dick drew a little package from his pocket and unwrapped a handful of some reddish, pointed stones. "I'm going to take these over to Mr. Morris—he knows a lot about old things. They were made by the Indians that were here long before the first settlers came,—nobody knows just how old they may be. See, you can tell how each one has been chiseled to a point by some sharp instrument, probably another piece of stone. Every once and a while somebody finds some; Denis O'Flanigan, that's the farmer, found these in the south meadow the other day."

"Yes, they are very interesting," murmured Margery, her face still red.

“Well, I must go, or it will be too late,” and Dick jumped onto Tempe’s back, and in spite of his lack of knowledge of the “little things” taught only by Professor Riggs, rode off with considerably more style than Margery had been able to achieve.

Benjamin scampered off to play with the dilapidated puppy which was the pride of his heart, and Margery went back to her book feeling decidedly out of tune with life—and with Dick in particular.

“That horrid boy!” she fumed. “He might have laughed.” Illogically overlooking the fact that she would have been deeply offended if Dick had laughed.

She read on for a page or two, her mind more on that humiliating episode of the wildly waving foot than on the whitewashing of Tom Sawyer’s fence. “Well, anyway,” she comforted herself as she put down her book and went in search of Deborah’s more soothing society, “Dick doesn’t count at all—Papa’s always so stuck on anybody that’s related to us that I’m sure if Grandpapa had thought much of Dick Papa would have talked reams about him. Of course, Mamma,

makes the best of it, and pretended that they would be a pleasant surprise; but I'm sure that the boys' father was an awful black sheep, and broke Aunt Margaret's heart. And I'm sure that they are really afraid that the boys are going to be like him. Benjamin mayn't—he's so young perhaps he can be taught something yet—but I'm sure Dick is going to be a black sheep." And having settled Dick's future 'to her satisfaction, she pushed open the door of the dining-room, where Deborah was arranging a vase of bright autumn leaves on the table.

At the supper table Benjamin was full of Margery's exploit. In vain Dick reached out a long leg and kicked him under the table. "You just ought to have seen her, Deborah," he persisted. "She was awfully funny!"

Her face scarlet, Margery hurried to change the subject. "Why is that horse called Temevic?" she asked.

"It isn't Temevic—it's Tempe Wick," explained Deborah, Dick and Benjamin in chorus.

"Short for Temperance Wick," Deborah explained as Margery looked bewildered.

“You see, Margie, she’s named after ——” began Benjamin.

“Better let me tell the story, kid,” interrupted Dick.

“Tell your old story, then!” cried Benjamin.

“Boys, boys,” cautioned Deborah, “don’t forget yourselves. If it gives you much pleasure, Dick, I guess that you had better tell the story.”

“Well, Margery,” Dick began, looking rather shamefaced, “Grandfather named her after a girl that lived up in Jersey, during the Revolution. Her name was Tempe Wick, short for Temperance Wick. Anyway, she had a horse named General that she was daffy over. One day when she was out riding, didn’t a whole crowd of soldiers jump out on the road from behind some bushes and demand that she give them General at once, as they were badly in need of horses.”

“British soldiers, of course,” put in Margery.

“No-o, they were American,” Dick admitted, regretfully. “You wouldn’t think that Americans would do a mean thing like that,

would you? Anyway," he went on, "Tempe was bound that they shouldn't get General, so she gave him a crack with her whip—and off he bounded! The men chased them, but old General flew like a cracker-jack until they reached home. Then Tempe was in a fix, for she knew that the soldiers would follow, and take General away from the stable. So what do you suppose she did?"

"What?" asked Margery with flattering interest; anything was better than having the conversation dwell on her riding.

"Well, the back kitchen door was open, so she just rode straight on in and through the house to the guest room which was on the ground floor. When she got old General in there, she hitched him to a bed post, drew the shutters to and bolted them, and went out the door, locking it after her. Then she sauntered out into the yard, as cool as you please. Just as she got there, up came the soldiers looking for General. They looked for him high and low; in the barn, in all the sheds, through the woods,—but of course it never occurred to them to look in the house. The next day,—back they came! But Tempe had

the sense to keep General still hidden in the room. And she kept him there until the soldiers had left that part of the country,—and never once did old General give himself away by stamping or neighing.”

As Dick finished his story, Deborah set down a plate of doughnuts on the table.

“Can you cook?” she asked of Margery.

“No, indeed.”

Dick looked surprised. “Can’t you? Why, that’s funny! I remember perfectly, and it’s the chief thing I do remember about Uncle’s letters, that your father said you were a wonderful cook for a young girl.”

“Can’t you really cook?” Benjamin added reproachfully.

Deborah laughed. “You may be sure,” she said, turning to Margery, “that these perpetually hungry boys will try to wish you into a first-class cook. I wish that I could discover something that they would get enough of for once. No, Benjie, dear, no more doughnuts to-night—bad dreams, you know. Wake up, Dick; what are you mooning about?”

Dick looked up from the little pile of bread pills that he had manufactured; a habit of

which Deborah had vainly tried to break him.

“Did I understand you to say that you were to stay all winter, Margery?”

Margery sighed. “Yes, the whole long winter.”

“Had your father said anything about school?”

“Yes, he wrote to Grandpapa about it,—I’m to go to the Quaker school, or some such funny sort of place. The boys and girls go to school there together—I just despise the idea of going to school with boys. At home I went to Miss Spencer’s; that’s the very best school in the whole state of California. Where do you go?” she finished. It had not occurred to her before to wonder where the boys got their schooling.

“We go to the Quaker school—Friends’ school, they call it here. ‘Society of Friends,’ you know. Grandfather was a Friend when he was a young man, and he still likes their ways. Besides, it’s the only good school in town.”

“It sounds awful,” commented Margery, as they got up from the table. “I know I’ll

loathe it. But I think that I'd better go on Monday. It's awfully dull out here,—besides, I don't want to lose any more time than I have to. I don't want to drop back a class when I go home,—I suppose that I'll be way behind anyway, studying at such a little country school," and Margery looked very much martyred and despairing.

Dick and Benjamin went out to look after Benjamin's puppy, which had cut its foot, and Margery slipped into the darkened library, where she curled up on one of the wide window seats. The stillness of the country night, broken only by the melancholy hooting of an owl, seemed almost terrifying to her, and she wondered uneasily if her father and mother, far out on the ocean by this time, were safe. The owl's hooting seemed to waken all sorts of mental spectres. She had left her parents in the fierce heat of resentment, but now, accustomed, if not reconciled, to her new home, the resentment died down, and she longed to tell her mother about Deborah and to be praised and petted for having made a bed so beautifully, and to ask her father all about the boys and her Aunt Margaret and the boys'

father, and to have him pull her curls and call her "mischief." She was sorry, she thought, that she had been so horrid when she left,—she would write to-morrow the loveliest letter imaginable.

Lost in her thoughts she almost screamed with fright when some one close by stumbled over a chair in the dark.

"Are you there, Margery?" came Dick's voice.

"Gracious, yes,—is that you?" Severely, "You gave me an awful fright."

Dick struck a match and lighted the lamp. "What are you doing here in the dark? Ouch! That did burn my fingers! The puppy scratched me up pretty well, too," and Dick ruefully examined his injuries. "Well, that doesn't matter. I say, Margery," he blurted out, seizing the back of a chair, and settling himself astride of its seat, "I want to ask you some questions."

"All right. Go on."

"When did you decide to come here?"

Margery sighed; the elaborately patient sigh of the impatient. "I explained all that to you yesterday; shall I do it again in words

of one syllable? I came because Papa and Mamma are going to Japan. Papa had business there,—something to do with banking. They found that they would have to go earlier; so I got shipped off. I wanted to stay with Marie Smythe, as her mother asked me to do. But Papa wouldn't let me. If my presence worries you so much, I'll write to Grandpapa and have him give me a certificate."

The shy boy flushed crimson under his tan, clear up to the roots of his light hair, almost the color of Margery's own, but he stood his ground manfully. "And you really come from California, not Texas?"

"Yes."

"Where did you address your letters when you wrote to Grandfather?"

Margery hesitated. She rather disliked having to admit how seldom she had written to her grandfather of late, and how much prodding it had taken from her mother to make her write the few letters she did achieve. "Oh, I don't remember," she stammered, "b-box 68, or 86, or some such number, Renwyck's Town. But I usually just put my letters in with Mamma's."

“ Oh, I say, Margery, wouldn't it be a joke if you didn't belong here at all,—if you belonged to some of the other Morrises.”

Margery gasped with indignation. “ You don't want me here, Dick Ball, I could see that plainly enough yesterday. But even if you don't want me, I think that you might be gentleman enough to behave as one, and not to act as though you thought I was an impostor come to steal the family spoons ! ”

“ Very well,” was Dick's quiet answer. “ I shall never ask you anything more—I'll leave everything to Grandfather.” The two glared at each other like a pair of angry kittens.

Dick recovered himself first. “ I beg your pardon, Margery,” and he held out his hand. “ I didn't mean to hurt your feelings.”

“ I'll forgive you, but I do get so tired of answering questions ! ”

Dick carefully turned down the lamp, which was beginning to smoke. “ All right. Another thing,—you were great the way you stuck to Tempe this afternoon, a real sport. If you want to ride I can borrow a saddle for William Rufus, that's the sorrel that brought you from the station yesterday, and we can go out

riding together. Another thing,—we all try to help Deborah, sometimes. You see, she's old, and she has a lot to do,—and we have had such a heap of company ever since she's been here. The farmer's wife and daughter are supposed to come in and help her every day,—but they aren't much good and we have to help out. We often help Thomas about the yard, too,—he's so tottery. Everything here but Grandfather is old. He's really the oldest, but he is spry. Come along, let's crack some nuts for Deborah now,—she wants them for a cake, or something."

As they cracked away at the nuts, Margery decided that Dick had rather a nice side to him, after all. They grew confidential, and discovered that they liked and disliked the same characters in history and fiction. When Margery gravely asserted that, "Richard the Third, aside from his murders, was a very nice man," Dick laughed so uproariously that Thomas stuck his head in at the pantry door.

"Laugh and grow fat," he beamed. "Dat's my best scanctification."

CHAPTER VI

AT OLD ST. PETER'S

“ ‘Here lies the body of Margaret Morris,
She was lovely and pleasant in this life,
And in death she was mourned,’ ”

Margery read aloud as she leaned over an old table-tombstone in the churchyard the next morning. With the boys she had arrived too early for church, and now they were filling in the time wandering in the quaint old graveyard that stretched out behind the little old church of St. Peter. It was very peaceful and quiet in that final resting-place, with only the soft rustle of the falling leaves and the distant pealing of a church bell to break the Sabbath stillness, and Margery felt sad, with that pleasant sadness that comes when one is young and has nothing to be unhappy about.

“It makes you feel queer to see your name on a gravestone,” she remarked pensively. “I wonder if anybody would ever put ‘she

was lovely and pleasant in this life' on my tombstone?"

Dick looked dubious, but Benjamin threw his arms around Margery's waist. "I will, Margie," he declared, "I will, and—and—I'll make them put a lady with a trombone, like this one, on it," and he pointed to a dropsical angel blowing the final trump, carved on an old tombstone beside him.

Dick and Margery glanced at each other, and laughed. "You'll see your name on plenty of stones here," Dick remarked, idly scraping with his knife the moss from the table-stone on which he was sitting. "The whole place is full of Morrises. Grandfather belonged to the Quaker branch of the family, but they are all descended from the same old Henry Morris—he was one of the first governors of the state, and he had a very pretty daughter named Margaret ——"

"Oh, yes," interrupted Margery, "I remember—her husband was killed fighting a duel, and she died of a broken heart—lots of people seem to have died of a broken heart," she finished, thinking of Deborah's sister.

"Lots," agreed Dick cheerfully. "Crazy

thing to do. Look here, Margery,—the old chaps that are buried here are Morrises, too. Just wait until I finish digging the moss out of these letters—there !”

“Oh,” cried Margery, leaning over his shoulder, “oh !”

“What’s the matter ?”

“Nothing.”

In queer straggling old letters the tombstone announced that under its flat surface lay sleeping all that was mortal of Henry and Elizabeth Morris. Her parents’ names. It had been mildly interesting to see her own name carved in stone, but it came as a shock to see those of her parents. Suppose, she thought with a little catch in her breath, those names really did mean her father and mother instead of some long ago ancestors. How could she stand it then? For the first time in her life, it occurred to her that her parents must needs be mortal, and that some time they might be taken away from her. She had always thought of them as of necessity existing for her comfort and pleasure, a duty which they often performed with indifferent success.

"There's the last bell," said Dick. "Stop staring so soberly at that stone, Margery, and come on."

The day was warm, and through open door and window the autumnal sunshine streamed into the dark church. Through the open window across the aisle Margery could see the leaves dropping softly down from a scarlet and gold maple tree, and a Virginia creeper glowing against the dull old brick of the quaint churchyard wall. "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done," she prayed mechanically with the congregation, her eyes on those softly falling leaves. She wished that she had not left undone so many things; if only she had helped her mother with the packing; if only—she had done so many things. If only she had not been so hateful about staying with Marie Smythe,—of course they were all wrong about that; but still she might have been nicer about it. . . .

"Get up, Margery, get up!" whispered Benjamin, anxiously. "Everybody's been standing up ever so long."



IF ONLY SHE HAD NOT BEEN SO HATEFUL

As Margery scrambled to her feet, and joined hastily in the anthem, she caught the eye of a tall girl across the aisle, who smiled at her in such a friendly fashion that involuntarily she nodded back. Did that girl go to the Friends' school, Margery wondered as she fluttered the leaves of her prayer-book; she hoped that she did.

The congregation settled itself at last for its sermon-time nap, and Margery looked about her with interest. She wondered if the people there knew who she was, and if they would come up and speak to her after church. She had a vague feeling that they ought to feel impressed that she was among them. She glanced at Dick, sitting bolt upright on the bench on the opposite side of the old square pew, his arms folded, and a preternaturally solemn expression on his frank face. His clear profile was outlined against the dark wainscoting of the wall beyond, and Margery noted with surprise how handsome he looked. She wished suddenly that Marie Smythe could see him now that he was dressed up and didn't have on that dreadful gray sweater; after all, he might be a cousin of whom she could be proud.

With a long, windy sigh; Benjamin put his head down on her knee and dropped off to sleep. With a new tenderness she shaded his eyes with her prayer-book, and smiled to herself as she noticed the very clean little paw tucked under his cheek. Deborah had confided to her that morning with some amusement the arguments he had used against the scrubbing on which she had insisted: first, he couldn't wash his hands, they were sore; second, it was walnut stain, and wouldn't come off; third, it was the natural color of his skin; fourth, his hands weren't dirty at all, it was just a shadow on them.

After church there were many friendly nods for Dick, and still more smiles for Benjamin, for the handsome, affectionate little boy was a general favorite, but nobody seemed to pay much attention to Margery, to her surprise.

"Who's your pretty girl, Dick?" asked a fat man on the church porch.

"Cousin," returned Dick with his usual laconicism.

"Another visitor, eh?" continued the man, with what Margery mentally catalogued as a "grinny smile."

"Yes."

"I hope those Baptists are through," remarked Dick as they got into the carriage. "We have to wait an age for Deborah sometimes."

The Baptists were "through," and the housekeeper was waiting on the curbstone for them as they drove up. "Now then," she said gayly as she settled herself beside Margery with Benjamin sitting bodkin-fashion between them, "I want my special Sunday treat. Drive home the long way, Thomas. It's the loveliest ride," she explained, turning to Margery. "We go through part of the Sheep Town woods—they are much prettier than the woods near us. Last spring when I first came to Renwyck's Town—I come from up the state, where the woods aren't so fine, you know,—I thought they were the loveliest things I had ever seen. Such masses of pink and white bloom as you would admire to see,—laurel, you know. And then a little later the air was that sweet with swamp magnolias and wild honeysuckles. Oh, it was lovely," and she leaned back with a smile of reminiscent pleasure.

They jogged along in a comfortable midday Sunday silence, broken only by Dick's pointing out to Margery the objects of natural interest along the road. "That," he would say, pointing to some old hen that, contentedly scratching on one side of the road, must needs, at the approach of the carriage, hurl herself with a great squawking and flapping of wings across the road under the horse's hoofs, "is an ostrich. They are quite common about here." Or, "That, Margery," waving toward a little chipmunk that chattered impudently at them from the corner of a fence, "is a camel. See that?" a pig roaming at will in an orchard, "well, that's an elephant,—we must teach our visitor some natural history, Benjamin."

"And that," said Margery at last, indicating a particularly tall and raw-boned horse that hung its long head over the fence, "is a Jersey mosquito, I suppose."

Dick collapsed, and said no more.

The road turned into the woods, winding between dark pine trees, and here and there a flame colored hickory, or scarlet sweet gum. "Winter is coming sure," commented

Dick as they crossed a little stream of clear, dark brown cedar-water. "Hear those birds—they are flying south, now. Winter will be here before we know it,—hope we have some decent skating this year."

"I wish winter wouldn't come," lamented Benjamin, "'cause Grandfather always makes me wear heavy woolen things, and they prickle so. And I can't go swimming, or eat watermelons. I wish it was spring coming, don't you, Deborah?"

"Yes indeed, but never mind, dear. Think of Thanksgiving and Christmas, and the mince pies I'm going to make you. And remember, dear, spring has already started. All nature is getting ready for it now."

Benjamin peered out of the carriage as though he expected to see spring, in rosy kirtle and flower-garlands, dancing through the woodland glade. "Oh, Deborah," he scoffed, "you're funny."

"No, I am not,—the buds have started on the trees already. Just look at a lilac bush carefully, and you'll see. Pull up a hepatica, that's the deadest thing in the fall that I know, and yet, away down by the roots, tucked

away, you will find the buds all formed for spring. Sometimes, when I feel blue and downhearted, and there doesn't seem to be anything bright whichever way I look," Deborah went on, talking more to herself than to the others, "it is a great comfort to think of the hepaticas. It makes you realize, even when life does seem dead and hopeless, that tucked away in the future God has something bright and happy waiting, though you can't see it at the time."

"Like having you come and take care of us," suggested Benjamin, thoughtfully.

"Yes, you nuisance, like you," and Deborah gave the child a hug which he endured with a fair show of composure, and not too much wiggling, as Dick fortunately had his back turned and couldn't see the indignity.

They came out of the woods into the open sunlit country, and Dick announced grandiloquently, "Behold, Margaret! Behold the domicile which Deborah has claimed as hers."

On a knoll overlooking the creek stood a large rambling white house, surrounded by a group of elms and chestnut trees. A beau-

tiful lawn, divided by a driveway bordered by elms, "the last elms left in the county," Dick explained, rolled up to the house. On the south, protected from the north winds by the house, was a large box-bordered garden, with here and there a late rose nodding above the high hedges. On the other side stretched innumerable stables, carriage-houses and offices.

"I call it my house," laughed Deborah, "because I like it so much; it does me good just to look at it. I don't see why we feel that we have to own things before we can enjoy them. I can get lots of pleasure out of other people's pretty curls, and their hats, and fine houses."

"I rode over here yesterday," Dick remarked, "to see Mr. Morris, but he's too ill to see anybody. It's pretty serious, I guess."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Dick. I have a great admiration for Mr. Morris; he's one of the few people who know how to be a beautiful Christian character without overdoing it. They say that for all his wealth there isn't a kinder, more unassuming man on the face of the earth, and as full of fun as he can

be. He came over to see your grandfather one day this summer, and he was just as common as you or me," and Deborah sighed sympathetically, as she voiced that bit of praise supreme to country minds.

Margery took a final look through the tiny square window in the back of the carriage at the home of the gentleman who knew how to be a beautiful Christian character "without overdoing it," and said in her most superior manner:

"Now, *that's* the sort of place Mamma made believe that Grandpapa's would be like, but of course I knew better."

"Why, Margery," cried Benjamin, indignant at her tone. "Our house is lots nicer, —it's older, and—and—and"—he cast about for a point of superiority—"and—it's got a lots nicer chicken yard. It has, too," he maintained stoutly, as the rest laughed. "Mr. Morris said so hisself."

CHAPTER VII

BENJIE

AFTER dinner Deborah slipped off to enjoy her Sunday afternoon nap, and Margery and the boys drifted out to the front portico. The October sun shone warm, and they lingered there on the steps, idly watching a squirrel in the oak tree across the driveway.

"I bet you don't often see bluer skies than this in California, Margery," remarked Dick with a sigh of contentment, as he settled himself with his back against one of the pillars.

"Not often," Margery admitted. "Oh, just look,—that squirrel is coming down the tree! Isn't it cunning?"

Benjamin extracted from his pocket the battered remains of the crackers with which he had fortified himself against any possible pangs of hunger during church-time, and stealing softly toward the tree, crouched on one knee, with the cracker-crumbs held tempt-

ingly in his outstretched hand. The squirrel stood still, its tail neatly folded against its back, and its tiny nose quivering with excitement. At last, apparently satisfied that Benjamin was quite harmless, it dropped down on all four little paws, and crept nearer to the alluring crumbs. Suddenly it paused, turned, and with a startled whisk of its tail, darted up the tree.

"Oh, I'm sorry I startled the little chap," came a voice from behind the shrubbery bed on the right, and Sam Bennet appeared. "I didn't see what you were doing until I got up close, or I should have waited."

"Sam, this is my very own cousin Margery, and she's going to live with us all winter," announced Benjamin, assuming the duties of master of ceremonies. "Margie, this is Sam Bennet, Dick's per-per-per-tikler friend."

Sam laughed and held out his hand. Margery recognized him as the boy who had walked over her feet at the station on the day of her arrival, and her greeting was correspondingly reproving, but Sam's smile was so friendly and unconscious, and his bow and

hand-shake so polite, that she relented and made room for him beside her on the step.

Sam, who knew but little of the meaning of the word "shyness," sat down beside her, and at once began a rattling account of the trip he had made the day before to the city with his much idolized young uncle. "It was fine," he laughed, "and I had a peach of a time, until about three o'clock, when Uncle Jack insisted on going to an afternoon concert. He said he had promised to go, so as to hear the fiancée of one of his friends sing. Well, I was big enough goat to go, too. It was awful," and Sam groaned tragically, "one of these highfaluting, tra-la-la affairs. The only part that I enjoyed was when a great big fat woman,—she must have weighed at least two hundred—sang, in a way-high-up soprano, 'I am a butterfly, perched on a rose!'"

Margery, who liked mentally to catalogue and label people, decided that Sam himself, with his rosy cheeks, short neck, and wide shoulders looked like an apple on a mantel-piece, but she liked him and considered him far more mannerly than Dick. Sam had

four sisters, two maiden aunts, and several girl cousins, and had not only achieved but had thrust upon him more polish and urbanity than had the other lads whose sister-less, aunt-less, cousin-less state he envied.

All too soon for Margery the conversation strayed toward football. Feeling rather bored, she slipped away to the library to write the Sunday afternoon letter, which she had promised, rather indifferently, to send to her father and mother every week. There was much to tell them: the trip across the continent, which Margery had found wearisome; the illness of Mr. Van Pelt's granddaughter; and her own arrival at Renwyck's Town; her grandfather's absence, and Deborah and the boys. She sat down intending to make her letter reproachfully dignified, to make quite clear, without saying so in so many words, the unhappy situation into which they had forced her, and to paint the contrasting picture of how happy and well-cared for she would have been if she had been allowed to remain in the company of Marie Smythe, in the most glowing colors. But as she spread out her paper, and dipped her pen in the

queer old inkstand made from half a cannon-ball, she felt again as she had felt that morning in the quiet old church.

She regretted those hours of parting, when coldly and reproachfully she had said farewell, and regarded so condescendingly the tears that would roll down her mother's cheeks.

She dipped her pen again in the ink and began :

“Dear Papa and Mamma. I am sorry I was horrid when I came away. I don't like it a bit here. Aunt Margaret's boys are here, too, and Dick is not especially agreeable, and he is very stuck-up about his riding, but I try to make the best of things. Grandpapa is away, somewhere up in Canada, and the housekeeper runs things in a way that isn't especially good form, but I think that you would like her because she has such a cheerful heart. But I wouldn't mind things if only you were here. I want to see you so much,—oh, Mamma dear, I miss you so, and I'd just give anything to hear Papa laugh ——”

Her pen slipped and made a blot, and a big tear rolled down beside her nose and fell on

the blot as if to wash it out. With something very like a moan, she put her head down on her stiff little epistle and began to cry. Benjamin, who had followed her in from the portico and who had been busily engaged in catching flies on the window-pane, slipped out of the room to the boys.

"Margery's crying," he announced in an awed whisper. "My, but she looks funny."

Dick quietly entered the library, and putting his hand on Margery's heaving shoulder, said, "Come on, Marge, leave the letter until evening and we will take a walk. Perhaps the frost the other night was enough to ripen the persimmons."

"W-what a-a-are persim-mons?" gulped Margery, in a desperate effort to appear at ease, and to act as though wildly sobbing with one's head in the ink-well were a usual Sunday afternoon relaxation.

"Great Scott,—don't you know? Come on then. Here, take my cricket blazer,—it's getting cooler. We'll go over the back meadow and you won't see a soul, so never mind prinking."

Without a word, Margery obediently donned

the red and orange striped blazer, and choked back her tears as best she could. She wasn't going to have "that boy" see her cry!

As they walked across the meadow in silence, Dick absorbed in stripping a willow-wand of its bark, and Margery lost in her thoughts, a loud whistle made them turn. Sam and Benjamin were hurrying toward them, waving to them to wait.

"Well," grumbled Sam, as he caught up, "of all the cool things! To go off calmly and eat up all the persimmons without saying a word to anybody. But you didn't fool us,—we knew what you were up to when we saw you heading in this direction! If Miss Morris will allow it," and Sam courteously looked at the sky, and the trees, and a distant cow, anywheres but at Miss Morris's tear-stained cheeks and red-rimmed eyes, "this humble personage would fain accompany her to gather the aforesaid delicious fruit."

Dick laughed. "All right, we'll give him the first green one we find, won't we, Margery?"

Unfortunately, Margery, to whom persimmons were a novelty, picked the first green one.

"Ha! Ha!" shouted Benjamin. "She looks as though she had a drawing-string tied round her mouth! Have another one, Margie, do!"

But Margery, declaring that it would take the rest of the day to get her mouth unpuckered, declined to take any further interest in persimmons, and wandered on toward the creek. Here the boys pointed out the swimming-hole, and showed her the diving-board they had made. Benjamin ran to the end of it, inviting her to "come and see how nice it is."

Not to be outdone in grace and agility, Margery ran out to the end of the narrow, slippery board, and together she and Benjamin bounced it up and down.

"Hasn't it a dandy spring?" Benjamin exulted. "Just look at me, Margery!"

But alas, he gave a too vigorous jump, and after balancing a moment with outstretched arms, he made a desperate clutch at Margery and they struck the water with a splash.

Margery had been carefully taught to swim in a swimming-pool, and as she rose to the surface she struck out for the shore. But she found the cold creek a different matter from

the marble tank, her wet skirts were heavy and in the way, and there was no swimming-master to count encouragingly, "One, two, thr-r-ree, *one*, two, thr-r-ree."

Despairingly, she reached out, her hands encountered Benjamin's curls, and grabbing them wildly, she pulled him under with her.

After what seemed an eternity a distant voice somewhere beyond the rush of waters seemed to say, "You're all right. I've got you, and Sam's got the kid."

A moment later she and Dick were standing, wet and shivering, on the bank, where Sam and Benjamin were already shaking themselves like a pair of huge Newfoundland dogs.

"Well," laughed Sam, "what were you two kids trying to do? Show off? Come on now, you'll have to leg it, or you'll get a cold. Scoot!"

He grasped one of Margery's hands, Dick took the other, and they started off on a run for the house, Benjamin bringing up the rear.

Regardless of Deborah's clean kitchen and immaculate hall, through the house they ran, dripping water as they went.

"Gracious," cried Deborah, appearing at the head of the stairs, one shoe on, and agitatedly trying to smooth her disheveled hair with the other. "Is anybody hurt? What has happened? You've just fallen in the creek? Thank goodness, if that's all! Oh, Margery, are you injured?"

Startled, they all turned and gazed at Margery. Margery herself gave a scream as she discovered streaks of red running down over her white serge frock. Dick shouted with laughter. "Cheer up, Marge," he cried, "it isn't gore, it's only the red from my blazer!"

"Oh," and Deborah laughed with relief, "if that's all we can make the best of it. Now go change your clothes at once. You'll have to lend some to Sam, Dick. Better let him have that gray suit. Don't stand there shivering, Margery, and come, Benjamin,—I hope you don't get your death of croup."

Margery felt a little chilly from her impromptu dip, even after she had changed her clothes, and her wet hair had been well dried before the kitchen fire, so after supper

Dick built a fire of pine-knots in the library fireplace, and the young people settled themselves with their books to enjoy its glow. Benjamin stretched himself out on the hearth-rug with a battered volume before him, from which he read to himself, half aloud, with the absurd mouthings of the beginner at reading. With a sudden little nervous pang, Margery looked down at him, lying there so rosy in the firelight. Suppose she had pulled him down when she clutched his curls so wildly in that cold creek; suppose that now he were lying all white and still; suppose,—it made her feel very uncomfortable, and Margery hated to be made to feel uncomfortable. With a shudder she leaned over him.

“‘Aha, my men,’” he was reading in a whisper, “‘Aha, my ——’ (Dick, what does h-e-a-r-t-i-e-s spell? Oh!) ‘Aha-my-hearties-are-you ——’ (Margery, what does c-o-w-a-r-d-s spell? Oh!) ‘Are-you-cowards-I-will-do-the-brave-deed ——’”

“What are you reading, Benjamin? Let me see it.”

Benjamin rolled over on his back like a lazy kitten, and obediently handed the grimy

volume to Margery. As she took it, Margery shuddered even more than she had done at the thought of Benjamin's possible watery grave, and carefully held it by the extreme tips of her fingers. It was a book far too old for him, which he had borrowed from another boy at the price of three nearly new wire-nails, and a spent tennis-ball; one of those remarkable publications on which so many youthful minds are fed, in which incredibly brave and wise boys of fifteen or sixteen perform deeds on land and sea, in the air, and the waters under the sea, such as mortal never essayed before. And not only do they accomplish these marvels, but as a side issue they foil an unbelievably wicked villain; win the gratitude of a middle-aged admiral or general for teaching him his business; rescue a startlingly beautiful maiden, and restore her lost millions to her; all with an airy nonchalance overwhelming to contemplate.

"I think," said Margery, as with fastidiously upturned nose she gingerly turned the torn leaves, "that I have a nicer book upstairs. It's cleaner, at any rate. Wait a minute, I'll go up and get it. And," she hesitated,

then went bravely on, "I'll read to you,—for a little while."

Benjamin scrambled up, all eagerness. "Will you, Margie? Goody, it's *awful* hard work—I have to spell out so many words."

The Jungle Book appealed to Margery as the most suitable among the books her mother had insisted on packing, and when she and Benjamin were cozily settled on the old hair-cloth sofa before the fire, she began the story of Rikki-tikki-tavi.

As the reading commenced, Benjamin sat bolt upright, with his brow knitted in a very grown-up manner copied from Dick, but little by little he crept closer and closer to Margery, and at last snuggled his head down on her shoulder like the little boy he really was. In her heart, Margery was tired and homesick, and his nearness was comforting; she slipped her arm around him and leaned her face down on his curly pate with a half-formed wish that she, too, had a little brother. Tick, tock, tick, tock, droned the tall old clock in the corner, and with each swing of the pendulum a little more sweetness, a little more womanliness crept into Margery's nature, although she read

on all unknowing, unconscious as people are in those quiet big moments of their lives. The backlog fell with a shower of sparks, and Margery, finishing one of the few unselfish deeds of her life, closed the book with a bang.

“That’s the very end of the story, honey. And it’s lucky that it is, for my voice is used up.”

“Bed, Benjie,” announced Deborah, appearing at the door at that moment.

Benjamin yawned, and slid down from the sofa. “Oh, Deborah, I’m not a bit sleepy, and I don’t have to go to bed yet, I ——” The rest of the words were lost in another yawn.

“Come along, young man.”

Recognizing the inevitable, Benjamin met it manfully. “All right then, I’ll go up,— and you needn’t come, Deborah, until I call you to put out the lamp.” He stopped before Margery on his way to the door, and throwing his arms around her neck, planted a kiss squarely between her nose and her left ear. “Well, I don’t care,” he said defiantly to Sam and Dick, over his shoulder, “I’m glad Margery has come, for I love her *awful* much!”

CHAPTER VIII

SCHOOL

It was cold and rainy the next morning when Margery woke to find Deborah standing by her bedside.

"Come, dear," said the housekeeper, opening the shutters, "it is half-past six. You had better get up, if you feel that you want to go to school to-day."

With a final word as to the advisability of a warm frock, Deborah left the room, and Margery, drawing the bedclothes closer under her chin, cuddled down deeper in the snug hollow under the covers. She did not feel at all like getting up; her back ached, her neck was stiff, and she had a bad cold in her head.

"I can't get up," she whimpered softly. "I'm tired and I've got a cold. Mamma would never let me go out on a day like this."

Her aching eyelids closed, and she drowsed off again.

A tremendous bang at the door awoke her with a start.

"I say, Margery," Dick's voice came through the panels, "aren't you ready yet? We've eaten most of the hot cakes."

With a bound Margery landed on the floor.

"Yes, Dick—I'm almost dressed."

Her truth-loving nature aghast at the fib she had just involuntarily uttered, she scurried around to make it a fact. Dashing frantically into her clothes, she smoothed back her curls with a few vigorous strokes of the brush, stuck her face into a basin of cold water, and ran down the stairs, tying the silk scarf of her blue serge sailor suit as she went.

The scramble set her blood going, and the glow lasted until breakfast was over and she was well down the road with the boys on the way to school. It had stopped raining, but the sun had not succeeded in pushing its way through the clouds, and where their path led through the woods the air seemed icy cold, and every breath of wind sent a spatter of raindrops down from the dripping trees. The

sandy road was wet and heavy, and the children trudged along in silence. Dick was trying to study his history lesson, and walked along with his eyes on his open book. Benjamin lagged behind looking for chincapins and gathering pine-cones to throw at the chipmunks that scampered along the tops of the worm fences. Margery felt chilly and miserable, and wished that she had not stood out so obstinately against Dick's suggestions at the breakfast table that she postpone her school career until his grandfather came home. Several times she was on the verge of announcing that she would give up the idea of school for the present, and of turning back to the house, where at least she could be warm, and possibly amused; but the dread thought that the following winter when she returned to Miss Spencer's she might have to drop back into a class below Marie Smythe and her circle gave her courage. Besides, Margery was not a shirker, and once having set out to accomplish a thing it was seldom that she turned back before the end was gained.

"Well, it's no use," Dick declared after he had zigzagged off the path into a burr-patch,

"I'll just have to bluff history to-day," and he closed his history book with a bang. "Are you sure," stooping to pull off some dried burrs sticking to his ankle, "that you really want to begin school to-day—sure you hadn't better wait?"

Her secret falterings sharpened the edge to her voice as she replied, "Of course I want to begin school now."

"All right, then,—I suppose I had better take you to the principal, and you can make your little speech to him."

They had reached the town by this time, and a few minutes' walk brought them to the school. Renwyck's Town was one of the last strongholds of the old American life, changing now so rapidly under the influx of new people and new ideals. Settled before the coming of Penn to Pennsylvania by a little band of English Quakers who sought in the New World the life of their Vision, added to a few years later by another group, Church of England people, who, being made welcome, gave their share to its well-being, the little town still retained in the twentieth century some of the dignity and simplicity of that earlier life. In

the Friends' School, the only private school in the town, the old ideas and ideals of those first Quaker settlers still found expression.

The school building itself, like most of Renwyck's Town, was old; a square, red, box-like affair. A high whitewashed fence enclosed the school and protected it from the profane gaze of the rare passer-by. The young people from the Morris farm turned in between the gate-posts, and Dick led the way up a short flight of stone steps, worn into hollows by the restless feet of five generations of school children, and knocked at a door marked "Office."

The rather stern old Quaker principal was busily slipping into his overcoat and gathering up various papers preparatory to hurrying off to the city where he was to address an educational meeting, as Dick and Margery entered. With an absent-minded air he listened to their explanations, but he smiled kindly as he said, "Thy grandfather's granddaughter is welcome here. Just hand me that portfolio, will thee please, Dick? Thee says thee's fifteen, Margaret? Oh, just fourteen. Well, Dick, I think that thee had better take

her to Teacher Rachel," and putting on his broad-brimmed Quaker hat, he hurried off.

"Come on," said Dick, and Margery, her spirits having revived in the warm school-house, skipped nonchalantly up the stairs back of him, all unconscious that she was entering upon the most galling and unhappy days of her short life. There was nothing about the big many-windowed room to suggest that it was a Valley of Humiliation; yet for poor Margery, from the moment that she crossed its threshold and dipped a graceful curtsy to Teacher Rachel, and a faint but unmistakable snicker had rippled over the class of boys and girls, life there became something to be lived through with clenched teeth and tightened lips, and if the truth were told, often with tear-brimmed eyes.

In her own school she had held a conspicuous place, her grace and beauty had been made much of, and she had moved in a happy vacuum whence all but the homage given to her father's wealth and her mother's social gifts had been withdrawn. Here and there, some daring and anarchistic spirit had dubbed her "stuck-up," but to the rest of Miss

Spencer's pupils she was "exclusive," and her smiles and favors eagerly sought, and her intimates envied. It was not pure good-nature, as Mr. Morris perfectly well recognized, which led the ambitious mother of Marie Smythe to urge that Margery spend the winter under her care, but other considerations which made her long to wear this choice rose in her button-hole, as it were.

But Margery Morris at Miss Spencer's and Margery Morris arriving a stranger, "unhoned and unsung," at the Friends' School, Renwyck's Town, seemed to be two different people. In vain she let the glories of her life at home be known to her schoolmates. Was she, indeed, the daughter of a successful and prominent man in the West? She was also the granddaughter of old Mr. Morris in the East, with whom their grandmothers and grandfathers had gone to school, and known all their lives, and who they themselves knew to be a worthy man, but a most eccentric one, much given to disputes with neighbors over boundary fences.

Not that her schoolmates disliked Margery, harder to bear by far, they merely considered

her a joke. To them, as to the rustic or youthful mind so often, what was unusual appeared to be comic; Margery's style and manner was different from anything that they had ever known before, therefore, it was ludicrous. Her graceful curtseys were thought to be a highly entertaining piece of affectation, and her "English accent," carefully drilled into her by a teacher from Chicago, was regarded as the acme of the ridiculous. What damsel so dull that she could not pass for witty by saying languidly, "Ahmaandah, please pahss me the rubbah"; or what boy so lumpish and uninteresting that he could not shine in the girls' eyes by a cautiously executed curtsey behind Teacher Rachel's back? Not that they were really spiteful, or meant to be unkind; but they were young and thoughtless, with that peculiar light-hearted cruelty of youth, and they were carried away by their own wit. Indeed, most of them could have said with Lady Teazle, "When I say an ill-natured thing, it is from pure good nature."

Margery held her head higher and looked haughtier than ever, and told herself that she

did not care what a "parcel of country bumpkins" said, or did. And the "country bumpkins," meeting her cold glances and ungracious manner, in turn revenged themselves by wilfully neglecting her, and so the gap between them grew wider and wider. However superior one may feel, it is not pleasant at fourteen to sit by a window feigning a deep interest in the boys' football practice in the school-yard below, while across the room a group of happy girls spend their recess perched on their desks, chattering like the happiest of birds, and sharing those delightfully sticky cinnamon buns dear to schoolgirl hearts. The more she told herself that she did not care, the more she did care; she had to admit to herself that they were a likable lot of young people, and that she should be glad to be on good terms with them.

It was mortifying, too, to have Dick see her humiliation, and to suspect that the suddenly improved behavior of several young gentlemen had been effected by Dick and Sam, and the school pump.

Only in Deborah, who suspected so much of how things were going at school, and

wisely said so little, did she find comfort ; and in Benjamin, who lavished his affection upon her and paid her tribute with the dearest of his treasures : a dried hoptoad, a ball of putty, a carved peach stone, a lame chicken, several arrow-heads, and an electric torch that had neither bulb nor batteries.

“ Why don't you try to make friends with Polly Jameson, Margery ? ” suggested Dick as they walked to school together on Friday morning ; “ she's got more sense than all the rest of the girls put together. She's the most popular girl in the school, too ; all the girls think she's ' simply perfect ' ” — Dick minced affectedly in what he took to be a girl's voice — “ and all the boys like her, too, ” he finished more naturally. “ She looked at you last Sunday as though she would like to know you. Funny, everybody likes Polly. ”

Margery hung her head and did not answer. She knew in her heart of hearts that she might have had Polly Jameson as her friend and champion if she had not snubbed her so unmercifully that first morning at school, when Polly, all smiles and blushes, had come forward to meet her and to make

her welcome. Margery had liked her appearance when she had first seen her in church, and had thought that if Polly went to the Friends' School she might be a pleasant acquaintance; but accustomed as she was to being courted, Margery had felt that she was the one to make the advances. Accordingly, she had found Polly's eager friendliness premature, and had treated her with a politeness so freezing that the other girl, who was proud and sensitive, made no further attempts at cordiality.

"Why don't you try making friends with Polly?" prodded Dick as Margery did not answer.

"I'll—I'll try," mumbled Margery, meekly. "Why, there she is now."

Tall, and as she herself expressed it, "skinny as an umbrella rib," Polly carried herself with a certain air of energy and independence that was decidedly attractive. She had a good square chin and a rather long nose, just now very much sunburnt at the tip. Her chief claim to beauty lay in her sparkling brown eyes, which she herself scorned. (All her favorite heroines boasted

large, languid, forget-me-not blue orbs.) Her thick black hair alone pleased her, and of that she was rather vain. She usually wore it braided into a long pigtail, which to emphasize its length was ornamented at the extreme tip by a flaunting scarlet bow.

When Margery entered the cloak room, Polly was standing before the mirror, trying with much twisting to see the back of her waist. "You poor fish," she was muttering wrathfully to herself, "you are a sight, with all those safety pins showing in your belt and nary a belt ribbon to cover them,—you can't go up-stairs looking like *that*."

Margery hesitated a moment; should she attempt to make friends with Polly now? Something told her to try, and she stepped forward with a new timidity. "You've lost your belt ribbon, haven't you?" she began.

"Oh," shrieked Polly, wheeling around wild-eyed. "Mercy," she laughed, as she saw Margery, "you did startle me,—do forgive me for yelling at you like that! I didn't hear you come in. I've a crazy habit of talking to myself,—just like our old colored cook. Yes, I've forgotten to put on my belt ribbon,

and I won't have time to go home for one."

"I can help you, I think," said Margery eagerly. "I can perfectly well get along without my hair ribbon, and it will do for a makeshift belt,—fortunately, it's black, so that it won't show so much."

Polly looked at Margery's flushed, eager face, evidently puzzled. What had suddenly come over this cold, distant stranger with the somewhat affected manner and haughty airs? Suddenly Polly smiled, a friendly, understanding smile. "You're a jewel," she said heartily. "If you're sure that you can spare the ribbon, I should appreciate it ever so much."

Together they untied Margery's hair ribbon and wrapped it around Polly's waist, where it made an inoffensive, if not particularly artistic, belt. Just as they had finished pinning it the bell rang.

"Gracious, Margery," Polly exclaimed, "there's doom! Come on." As they ran up the stairs, Polly slipped her arm through Margery's. "Sit with me at recess to-day," she whispered. "I have some extra-sticky buns."

CHAPTER IX

ESTHER

“THEE may go to the board,” said Teacher Rachel to Polly Jameson, who sat beside her half-hidden by the table, “and write out the declension of domus.”

Polly sat still.

“Yes, Teacher Rachel,” she answered sweetly at last.

Teacher Rachel waited. “I don’t believe that thee understood. I want the declension of domus written on the board.”

A sound of thumping came suddenly from under the table.

“Yes, Teacher Rachel,” murmured Polly with unaccustomed meekness, but still not getting up.

“Hurry, child; thee is very slow to-day.”

There was more thumping, and Polly turned scarlet and squirmed uneasily, but still failed to rise.

“Hurry, Polly!”

"Yes, Teacher Rachel."

"Polly!"

"Yes, Teacher Rachel."

"Polly, go to the board at once."

"Yes, Teacher Rachel."

"Polly, I do not understand thee to-day,— thee is usually so obedient. Now I want thee to stop saying, 'Yes, Teacher Rachel,' and do what I say at once."

"Yes, Teacher Rachel," and Polly ducked under the long table-cover.

"Mary Jameson!"

The bumping and thumping became violent and prolonged.

"Mary," cried the now thoroughly exasperated teacher, "come out from under that table."

The table heaved convulsively, then settled down again.

A suppressed, half-scared titter rippled over the class. Teacher Rachel rapped with her ruler for order, and settled back in her chair with a sigh.

"We are waiting, Mary," she announced as the table heaved again.

A final thump, and, giggling and confused,

Polly reappeared from under the table, and with a do-or-die expression on her crimson face hopped to the blackboard, both feet firmly wedged in Teacher Rachel's neat, lady-like little scrap-basket.

Poor Teacher Rachel, whose sense of humor had been sadly shrunk in the bitter waters of two decades of teaching, frowned at the hilarious class and rose with dignity.

"Will thee explain this astonishing performance?" she requested of the now purple Polly.

"It—it was this w-way," stammered the performer, screwing round scrap-basket and all, "I—I—well, I never did care very much for Latin, and—and—well," with a sheepish grin, "I—just thought that it would be fun to put my feet in the scrap-basket. I'm sure I don't know why I happened to think of it, except that the basket was there. But really, Teacher Rachel, I never dreamed I'd get stuck, really I didn't."

"Remove thy feet."

Polly hesitated, glanced at Dick, who winked at her, giggled hysterically, and snickered out:

"I—I can't! They're stuck—it's so narrow at the bottom."

"Sit down."

There was a world of warning in that tone, and looking rather scared, Polly hopped to the nearest chair and plumped down, and her disgusted teacher yanked off the offending footgear.

"Now, Mary, leave the room. The class will please come to order."

Polly sidled out of the door with ostentatious meekness, and the class subsided; although every now and then some one would give vent to something that began suspiciously like a chuckle, but which always ended discreetly in a cough.

Polly disappeared directly school was over, and Margery, who took her luncheon at school, started on the walk home without seeing her.

It was a glorious day; old Dame Nature seemed bent on giving a farewell gala performance before she should retire under soft white blankets for the winter. The sky was brilliantly blue; here and there roly-poly little white clouds chased each other across it like frolicsome kittens. As she skipped

and slid along the woodland path, slippery with pine-needles, Margery suddenly realized that she was happy; happy as the little gray squirrels that chattered in the tree tops and leaped from branch to branch as if they could not contain themselves for joy. A little brown rabbit scampered across the path, and she stopped to watch it.

"Dick," she said softly, "doesn't that bunny remind you of Deborah? There's something awfully nice about her, isn't there?" and she smiled to herself as she thought how pleased Deborah would be to hear of her encounter with Polly that morning, and of the latter's friendliness.

"You bet,—Deborah's a peach," Dick agreed, stopping to shy a pine-cone at a squirrel, which whisked out of sight with a contemptuous flirt of its tail.

"And isn't Polly fun?" Margery went on. "She was ever so nice to-day,—more like the girls at home. We are going to have our desks together, if Teacher Rachel will let us. Where do you suppose she disappeared to after school?"

As if in answer came a distant cry of

"Polly, put the scrap-basket on!" They turned; gleaming between the dark tree trunks they could catch a glimpse of scarlet wheels.

"It's Polly!" whooped Dick. "Just wait until you see the horse she's driving, Marge. His real name is Spy,—but the fellows call him Spry,—he's so slow! Sit down and take it easy,—they'll get here in half an hour,—maybe."

With an exaggerated expression of patience, Dick seated himself on a fallen tree trunk.

"Hello! I thought maybe I'd overtake you. Won't you get in, Margery?" invited Polly, as she drew up in a showy red-wheeled cart pulled by a sleek, fat horse. "I am going over to see Esther Crowell,—and I thought you might like to meet her. She has the place next to yours, and she is awfully nice. You may come, too, if you want to, Dick," she added with a laugh.

"Thanks,—I'm a brave man, but I'm afraid that Spry might run away with me," declined Dick. "But Margery may go. Hop up, Marge. Don't let Spry gallop *too* hard," he warned as Polly shook the reins and

clucked like an anxious hen, and the vivacious Spy moved slowly off.

“By the way, Cinderella-Polly,” Dick called after them, “your new slipper seemed quite stuck on you.”

“Wasn’t it awful, Margery?” Polly moaned. “The most unromantic things are always happening to me!”

She sighed and flapped the reins up and down on Spy’s back. “I’ve just been back apologizing to Teacher Rachel,—she was perfectly sweet about it, too. I was awfully ashamed of myself, really, for I know that she suffers from neuritis terribly lately, and it’s mean to make her any more trouble than we can help. But Agag just got hold of me and put my feet in that scrap-basket! Sometimes I get so tired fighting Agag that I almost give up!”

“Agag?”

Polly laughed. “Don’t think that I am crazy; it’s something Mother told me about one day when I had done something or other particularly awful, even for me. Agag’s your worser self, you know, and you have to keep fighting him all the time. It’s from some-

thing General Gordon said,—he called it Agag, and told some one that he had had an awful time that morning ‘hewing Agag before the Lord.’ I don’t seem to be able to ‘hew’ very well, or rather, Agag jumps up and catches *me*, before I have time even to think of hewing *him*! Wasn’t it unromantic, though!” she went on, flying back to the subject of the scrap-basket. “Those people who get into a scrape only once in a while can afford to think that it’s funny, but I’m in a scrape almost all the time,—and really, Margery, it does get awfully mortifying sometimes.”

Margery smiled absently, but made no answer; she was thinking.

“Promise that you won’t tell a soul,” Polly demanded after they had jogged along quite sixty seconds in silence. “Cross-your-heart hope-to-die? Well,” as Margery made the required sign, “I’m writing a story about a beautiful Russian countess named Olga,—I’ve simply got to have some romance in life!”

“Yes?” said Margery vaguely; she was puzzling over Polly. What a queer girl Polly was to think of such things as Agag; yet she

wasn't the least bit goody-good! She wondered if she herself had not a "worser self," as Polly called it, to fight. The idea of hewing Agag appealed to Margery's rather militant spirit.

"Here's where Esther lives," Polly interrupted her musing. "She doesn't go to school,—her mother needs her at home. I thought it would be nice for you to know her—she's a whole lot pleasanter than some of those fishes at school."

Margery's dormant sense of humor stirred a little, as though some day it might awake. "Anyway," she smiled, "she won't be able to make curtsies at me behind Teacher Rachel's back,—because Teacher Rachel won't be there," she added in case Polly might miss the point of her small joke.

Polly laughed delightedly. "Why, you've some fun in you after all," she said admiringly, if somewhat outspokenly. "It isn't every girl who can see a joke on herself!"

They turned into a private lane, and drove up to the front of a rambling frame house, surrounded by tall cedar trees which had been trimmed bare of branches except a cluster



“WHY, YOU’VE SOME FUN IN YOU, AFTER ALL”

at the very top, so as to let more sunshine get through to the house, and which resembled nothing so much as the shaved tails of French poodle dogs. Margery had a confused feeling that a whole family of gigantic canines must have been buried alive and their tails left sticking straight out.

“Polly,” she said, and pointed to the trees.

Polly giggled as she jumped out of the cart, and hitched her horse to a ring in one of the trees. “Yes, aren’t they killing! Come on,” she added mysteriously, her finger on her lips.

As they tiptoed in at the open front door, a sweet-faced woman met them; she smiled meaningly and pointed to the stairway; Polly smiled and nodded back, and seizing Margery’s hand began to run swiftly up the stairs, cautioning her in a whisper not to make any noise. At the top of two flights of steep, old-fashioned stairs, they found a ladder leading to a trap-door. Up the ladder Polly scrambled, pushed aside the door, and disappeared with a wild flourish of heels. In a second her flushed face appeared again, and she explained to Margery that by resting her stomach on the edge of the door-casing, balancing her feet out,

and squirming round a bit, she could get up quite easily. It did not sound easy to Margery; but she kicked valiantly, rocked precariously on her fifth rib, clutched Polly desperately, and in a moment found herself kneeling on the floor of a large, old-fashioned garret.

As she panted for breath, she looked around her with eyes wide open with astonishment. She had never dreamed of such a place as that garret. Indeed, it was a wonderful place; one that would have driven a collector wild with joy. Furniture ran in the Crowell family as pug-noses or irritable dispositions run in others. At the time of their marriage Mr. and Mrs. Crowell had set up housekeeping with a house full of fine old heirlooms; so full that when Mr. Crowell's widowed cousin, and later his spinster great-aunt had died and the contents of their large, well-stocked houses had been left to him, there was nothing to do but to pile the extra furniture into the garret. To sell it would have seemed to the Crowells an insult to the memories of its former owners; although Mrs. Crowell, pressed by bills and the needs of a large family of young chil-

dren, thought wistfully, at times, of the sums that old mahogany might have brought.

In the center of the garret a fine old carved bed post leaned against an ancient high-boy of quaint and rare design, and by a candle stand sprawled a great wool spinning-wheel, while behind them were piled a medley of old windsor chairs, high chests of drawers, and tables of every degree of substantialness or frivolity. From the rafters old hoop-skirts dangled cheek by jowl with great bunches of wild bergamot and rosemary hung there to dry by the careful housewife. At one side of the attic a pile of old-fashioned trunks, covered with calfskins with the hair left on, rose to the low dormer roof.

"Hello,—Polly?" called a voice from behind the structure.

"Yes, my lady,—'tis Polly. Oh, ouch, ouch!" In closing the heavy trap-door Polly had pinched her finger. Sucking the injured digit, she was rocking backward and forward with the pain, when her eyes fell on Margery. "Oh, Esther, come out quick," she begged. "I've got Margery Morris here,—I wish you could see her face! Oh, dear," she gasped

rolling over, "it's too funny! I forgot to explain about the garret, and now she looks so bewildered. It's no wonder."

"No, indeed, it isn't," laughed a roly-poly black-eyed girl, with a jolly, easy manner, who came out from behind the pile of trunks. "Neither of us is crazy," she explained, holding out her hand rather formally to Margery as Polly introduced them. "It is just that I have so many little brothers and sisters,—they won't give me a minute's peace,—so when I want to be quiet, I just hide up here. There's a big door and a regular stairway that leads down from here into the guest-room, but Polly likes to come up by the ladder."

"It's shorter," declared Polly, wrapping her finger in her handkerchief. "Besides, it's more exciting,—I'm always scared to death that some of the kids will catch me on the way up."

"'Kids,'" teased Esther. "Now, Polly, what does Teacher Rachel say to thee about the 'inelegancies' of thy language? Isn't 'kids' somewhat inelegant?"

"That depends on the kids," grinned Polly. "Come on now, Esther, do show Margery your den."

CHAPTER X

THE L. A. L.

MARGERY was surprised to find that the pile of trunks partitioned off a little room from the rest of the garret. Here Esther and her mother had arranged a retreat where the studious girl might read or study, safe from interruption from the brood of little brothers and sisters who loved her so dearly and who imposed so upon her.

Only very keen eyes could have discovered from the other side that there was anything back of the pile of trunks but the home of Mrs. Spider and Miss Mouse. But once inside the den it was a cozy place. A rug was spread on the floor and a gay Paisley shawl covered a comfortable old-fashioned lounge. A big mahogany desk was fitted up with a clean blotter and writing materials, and gay pictures were pinned to the quilts hung to hide the trunks. Through a low dormer window,

Margery could see a wide vista of scarlet and gold woods and lush meadows and far off the blue creek winding its way to the river.

"Isn't this fun, Margery?" Polly demanded. "Don't you just adore garrets? It must have been awfully dull in the stone-age."

The other girls laughed. "Now, Polly," Esther asked, "what have garrets got to do with the stone-age?"

"Why, don't you see, they didn't have garrets in the stone-age, therefore it must have been very dull then. Half the fun of life, when you are growing up, is to have a garret to browse around in, and to dream in, and to plan all the things you are going to be,—and never are,—wait a minute before we begin to talk,—I stopped at Jimmie's on the way out."

"Then we certainly won't be able to talk. Old Jimmie is a Renwyck's Town institution," Esther explained to Margery. "He keeps the funniest little store, has a little bit of everything in it, and makes the most luscious home-made caramels that you ever had. Do sit on this end of the sofa. The springs are

rather broken at that end,—and you can get a better view from the window here.”

Well supplied with caramels, Margery curled up in the corner of the old sofa, from which she could watch a hawk wheeling through the air, while Polly rehearsed for Esther's benefit the tragedy of the scrap-basket.

“Agag got the upper hand to-day, didn't he, Polly?” teased Esther. “Pretty Polly,—have a scrap-basket?”

“Oh, my dear, the struggles I have with that Agag! Oh, good lack-a-day! Look what I've done!” Polly, heedlessly jumping up to show Esther exactly how she had had to hop to the board, had dropped the bag of caramels and scattered its contents over the floor. “Most of them are under the sofa, too!” she lamented. “Well, never mind,—I'll do the groveling,” and her head and arms disappeared under the sofa.

“Girls,” came a muffled voice, “I've a perfect plan—wait until I get out from under here, and I'll tell you.”

“All right, we'll wait,” and Esther leaned over slyly to tickle the back of Polly's ankle.

“ Stop that, you villain! There! I think I’ve got the last one,” and Polly’s face, red and somewhat dusty, reappeared. “ It didn’t hurt the caramels a bit,—each one is covered with paper, anyway. Well, as to my plan,—or ‘ to return to our muttons ’ as the poet hath it,—it just struck me, under the sofa,—and I want you to agree to it,” and she threw a meaning look at Esther.

“ All right, I agree,” Esther chimed in. She adored Polly, and usually followed where she led.

“ Don’t you think that it’s fun up here, Margery?” continued Polly.

“ Indeed I do,” Margery agreed sincerely. After her unhappy week at school, the cozy little den and these courteous, amiable girls seemed very pleasant to her.

“ Well,” went on Polly, “ don’t you think that it would be fun if we had a little club, and met here once or twice a week?” and she glanced meaningly at Esther again.

“ Yes, indeed,” Esther acquiesced, as commanded by the look.

“ Yes, indeed,” said Margery, unconscious of Polly’s signals. “ What kind of a club?”

“ We’ll decide that later,—first, I must have a staff of office as promoter. Come help me get one, Esther.” As the two girls disappeared into the outer garret, Polly whispered to Esther, “ The girls at school are hateful to her. We have just got to help her, and see if we can’t make things so that she won’t be quite so lonely. She seems awfully nice, if she is rather airyfied.”

“ Sshh,” cautioned Esther; “ she will hear you. Yes, Sam told me the other day that the girls were inclined to make fun of her. How long is she to stay with the Morrisses ? ”

“ All winter, I think.”

When Polly reappeared she carried a huge old green cotton umbrella, tied around its waist with a piece of string, which she pounded dramatically on the floor as she announced :

“ It having been decided upon that a club shall be formed, the object of the club will now be sat upon. Our distinguished visitor shall have first choice.”

“ I think that a social club would be nice,” Margery suggested, as distinctly as she could for laughing, “ and we could give dances and things.”

Polly groaned. "Niver. The shpectacle of me sproightly silf doin' the 'loight fantastic' would be enough to make the ould cow die of hysterics. No, we'll have to have somethin' proivate and select-loike."

"I think a club for the suppression of Polly's mischief would be a good thing,—only we'd all die of overwork," and Esther dodged the caramel that Polly threw at her.

Polly knocked violently on the floor with the umbrella. "We must be serious,—do let's think,—don't you think that a literary club would be nice? It would help us with our careers, too." Polly's modest ambition was to be the greatest living author, and as a side issue, when resting from turning out the Great American Novel, to be something of an improvement on Reynolds and Gainsborough as a portrait painter.

Margery demurred. "I couldn't write a story if my life depended on it."

"Oh, yes, you could. Polly and I write lots of them;—they are perfectly crazy, of course, but we have lots of fun doing it."

"Oh, yes, Margery," Polly added her voice, "you know you can,—you could give a tone

to our humble efforts,—write us some stories of society-loife.”

Margery laughed, and gave in.

“The motion is put that this be a literary club,—will somebody please second the motion?” Polly had once read a book on parliamentary rules of order.

“I’ll second it,” Esther dutifully complied.

“I third it,” Margery contributed, and was promptly ruled out of order by Polly.

Polly banged the umbrella against the floor. “Now, for the name.”

“I think that we ought to have something in it about a tower-room,” suggested Margery, who had been much impressed by the romance of the little hidden room.

“To be, or not tower be.” This dreadful pun from Esther aroused Polly’s ire, and she waved the umbrella menacingly, as she implored them, “*Please* be serious!”

“All right. What would you suggest, Pollykins?”

“Don’t know,—haven’t an idea,—never have when I want one.”

“Oughtn’t we to name it after somebody?” Margery asked. “Shakespeare, or somebody

like that—or—or”—certain Lenten readings of her mother's coming to her mind—“Maeter—Maeter—Maeterlinck, or some of those funny people.”

Esther agreed. “Yes, I think that a literary club ought to be named after a writer.”

But “after what writer?” was the problem, and suggestions ranged all the way from Mother Goose to Homer and Mark Twain.

“I have it,” Polly cried at last. “She had a tower-room, too, so that brings in Margery's tower.”

“Who did?”

“Lady Anne Lindsay, of *course*.”

Esther and Margery looked blank.

“Please enlighten us, Polly,” Esther requested. “Was Lady Anne Lindsay—a writer, an historical character, or a race-horse? You never can tell with Polly,” she explained to Margery; “for days she raved about a lovely Lady Jane,—finally, it came out that the mysterious Lady Jane was a dachshund that she had seen at the dog-show.”

Polly was dignified. “Lady Anne Lindsay was the author of ‘Auld Robin Gray’—I'm

surprised at your ignorance. Ever since yesterday I've known that she wrote it."

"Oh, you mean the song," and Margery sang, "I wish I were dead, but I'm no like to dee," words that chimed in well with her sentiments during much of her stay, so far, in Renwyck's Town.

Polly beamed approval. "That's it. I wish that I could sing the way you do! I can't even carry a tune. Well, Lady Anne Lindsay really did have an interesting life—especially when she was a girl. Cousin Elizabeth is visiting us, and she read about her to Mother and me last night. Perhaps you have heard of Cousin Elizabeth, Margery? She's Elizabeth Hoover, the writer, you know."

Margery had heard of Miss Hoover, who happened to be the novelist and playwright of the moment, and who had even been so fortunate as to win the high approval of Marie Smythe, who had voted one of her lighter dramas "perfectly sweet." Margery looked at Polly with new respect.

"Tell us about this Lady Mary Lindley, Polly," Esther requested.

“Lady *Anne Lindsay!* Treat the lady with respect,—remember that you are to be named after her. Well,” Polly took a deep breath and began, “she lived a couple of hundred years ago in a lonely castle away up on the east coast of Scotland. And though they lived in a castle and had titles and all that, they were really awfully poor. And the girls had to have their frocks made out of strips of their mother’s wedding dress, pieced out with some blue gauze that they had—which must have gotten awfully in the way when they rode on the pig’s back. . . .”

“Did they have to ride the pig because they were so poor?” put in Esther, at her favorite game of teasing Polly.

“Of course not, goosie. For fun,—they were up to anything. Their father was terribly old,” Polly continued, “and he was awfully funny. He wore a wig with three pigtails hanging down over his shoulders, but he had beautiful manners, and he was so polite that he wouldn’t hurt a fly. One day he caught an old woman stealing his turnips from one of his fields,—he started to scold her, but he ended by lifting the big bag of stolen

turnips for her, because it would not be polite to let a woman lift anything heavy. But their mother was awfully cross—one day they all ran away.”

“Why?” questioned Margery.

“Well,—they just ran away. They said that their mother made their home ‘horrious.’ They went in a procession, in single file, the biggest one at the head with the baby on his back, and the littlest toddler bringing up the rear. Their old shepherd, Robin Gray, ran to their mother and said, ‘Oh, my lady, all the ledies, an’ all the young gentlemen, an’ all the dogs is run awa’!’ So their mother sent after them, and they were caught and brought home, and then,” Polly finished with a laugh, “their mother gave them an awful dose of medicine all round, to make home seem pleasanter to them.”

“Go on. What happened to Lady Thingamabob when she grew up?” Esther probed. As Sam said, Esther always got “at the root of the matter, if it took the last pig in the pen.”

“Oh, she grew up, and became a great belle in Edinburgh when she went there to visit.

And one day, up in her tower-room, she wrote 'Auld Robin Gray.' There, I'm tired of talking,—for once!"

Margery leaned forward eagerly. "Oh, it was fine, Polly,—do let's call the club the Lady Anne Lindsay Club," and Margery looked at Polly admiringly. Polly had an unusually sweet speaking voice, and a dramatic way of telling the simplest story, as well as an unconsciousness and naturalness that were very winning. Margery was shocked to find himself thinking that Marie Smythe was insipid beside this vivid creature.

"We can call the club the L. A. L. for short. And we won't let the boys know a thing about it. Remember, Margery, don't let it out to Dick. Now, Margery,—it's your turn to give us a story. I'll get some pears as my part of the entertainment,—I'm too dumb for anything more 'high brow,' as Polly says," and Esther brought some of the biggest and juiciest of the pears that had been spread to ripen slowly between old quilts on the floor of the outer garret.

Margery felt embarrassed; she hated to appear as a stupid, uninteresting sort of person

before these clever girls. "I can't think of a thing to tell you," she regretted, as she bit into her pear. "I wish I could."

"Oh, just try," urged Esther.

Polly got up. "I'm sorry, but the shadows are getting pretty long, and if I'm to drive you home, I'm afraid that we had better be going."

Margery got up too, rather reluctantly. She was putting on her jacket, when a thought struck her. "Oh, I do remember something to tell you," she cried, standing with one arm half in her jacket sleeve. "It's some verses a Scotch lady that was visiting us one time taught me. They're written by an old Scotchman. The first poem is very sad. It's called a 'March Day.'" She began solemnly :

" ' First it frizz, and then it thew,
Soon it rained, and then it snow,
And then it blew,—most horrid !' "

"Oh, Margery," Polly cried, delightedly, "that's a gem! You'll have to come and recite it to Cousin Elizabeth,—she's crazy about things like that."

"Did he mean to be funny?" asked Esther.

"No indeed. He thought that he was a

great poet,—as great as Robert Burns. There's another one—'The Hen,' it's called :

“ ‘The hen it is an awful beast,
It plays about our door,
And every day it lays an egg,
Or one, or two, or three, or four,
Or so, or more.’ ”

“ Dear me,” laughed Esther, who got the “egg money” of the household poultry-yard as a perquisite, “I wish that our hens could lay like that.”

“Do you know any more?” demanded Polly, holding Margery's jacket and doubling her arm into the sleeve as though Margery had been a baby.

“Only one.”

“Proceed.”

Margery beamed. “This one was written when the Ayr bridge fell down,” she announced. “Here it is :

“ ‘The brig fell doon, wi' sic a stoon,
The fishes ran frae toon tae toon,
Ah, what a day that nicht!’ ”

“Don't forget the L. A. L.!” reminded Esther as, still laughing, she accompanied her friends down the stairway that led from the

garret into a quaintly furnished guest-room, a somewhat tamer mode of descent than the trap-door. "I'm awfully glad that you have come to Renwyck's Town."

Margery smiled with the winning graciousness she knew so well how to assume, when she happened to feel like it. "Thank you," she returned sweetly. Then raising her eyes to the frank faces of the two girls standing arm in arm on the steps above her, she added sincerely, "I've had an awfully jolly time this afternoon, and do you know,—I really believe that I'm going to like Renwyck's Town, after all."

CHAPTER XI

PUMPKINS

“ WE won't let the boys know a thing about it beforehand ! Be sure you don't let it out to Dick, Margery.”

“ Honestly, Esther, I don't believe that he would hear me if I did. He's too busy fussing because Grandpapa doesn't answer his letters.”

“ Still, you had better not run any risks.”

“ Right you are, Esther,” commented Polly, sliding gracefully backward off the arm of the sofa onto its broad seat. “ If any of the boys even look inquisitive, I shall say, ‘ Avaunt, false knave ! Tremble and cower ! Know ye not that —— ’ ”

“ Now, Polly, ‘ do be serious, ’ ” interrupted Esther, wickedly quoting the expression so often on Polly's lips.

But Polly refused to notice the gibe. “ Look out, Esther,” she warned with mock

solemnity, "some of these days a nice little joke will come up to you, and if you aren't careful, it might,—well, it might bite you."

Esther laughed good-naturedly. "You goose!" she murmured.

"What thinkest thou, fair Margaret?" Polly chanted, waving one foot elegantly as emphasis, "of ye jack-lanterns made out of ye golden pumpkins, which we purpose, on ye hobgoblin occasion which ye vulgar hath termed 'Hallowe'en——'"

"I've a toofache in my tummy!" wailed a small voice. "Sister, I wants you!"

Margery poked her head out of the window of Esther's little den, where the girls were spending the afternoon on the Monday following Polly's escapade with the scrap-basket. "It's a little boy," she reported, "sitting under the apple tree,—the picture of woe."

"It's Jimmie," Esther sighed. "He's the baby of the family, you know. I suppose that he has been eating those apples again. You'd think that he would have learned better by this time."

"Poor kid!" laughed Polly, getting up. "I can sympathize with him. Come on, my

young Christian friends, we had better go down."

On cross-examination, Jimmie admitted that the "toofache" was more a matter of loneliness than of apples. His brothers and sisters had gone off to hunt chestnuts, he sobbed, and left him "ahind," and he was correspondingly low in his mind.

The girls regarded him ruefully. They had intended going to a neighbor's for a load of pumpkins with which on Hallowe'en they were to surprise the boys with a fine array of jack-lanterns.

"Well, I'm afraid that I shan't be able to go," Esther announced as she tenderly wiped away the last tear trickling down Jimmie's fat cheeks. "We can't take him, of course, —so I'll have to stay home and take care of him. Mother has gone to Grandmother's, and I suppose old Sarah is busy. She isn't much use in looking after the youngsters, anyway."

Polly scratched her nose meditatively with a piece of apple twig. "I don't see why we can't take him," she reflected. "He can sit in the bottom of the wagon. Oh, my good-

ness!" she screamed, jumping to her feet. "Esther! There goes Jake with the wagon now! Whoa! Whoa!"

"Whoa! Whoa!" shrieked the others frantically. "Oh, Jake, *stop!*"

But Jake, the Crowells' "hired man," could not, or would not, hear, and the cart rattled out of the front gate, and down the road.

"Well," said Margery, after a final, despairing shriek, "that's always the way when I try to have any fun."

"It's a shame," agreed Esther, forgetting her own disappointment in sympathy for Margery.

Polly leaned her back against the apple tree, and continued thoughtfully to rub her nose with a twig. "I wonder," she pondered aloud, "if people often do get any fun when they just expect it to drop from the skies into their laps. In a sort of a way that's what we are doing now. Really, the fun of having fun is to have fun when there isn't any fun to have. Now, I'm going down to the barn and get a horse and cart,—and we will get the pumpkins yet."

Polly's philosophy found little response in Esther. "I'm afraid, Polly," she demurred, "that there isn't a horse or cart left in the barn."

"There's Spy."

Esther smiled. "Now, Polly, do you really suppose that we could carry any pumpkins in that shaky brake-cart of yours? They'd all roll out!"

"I'll find a way to fix them."

"Bet you can't!"

"Bet I can, too," and with a laugh and a little face at the girls, Polly disappeared toward the barn.

Margery sat down disconsolately on an upturned peach-basket, while Esther knelt before Jimmie, the pride and darling of the Crowell family, trying to put him through the paces of his accomplishments. "Now tell Margery, Jimmie dear, what you saw at the circus."

"Bears an' lelfunts."

"Yes, 'dear, and you saw pretty ladies on white horses,—didn't you, dear?"

Jimmie's description of the pretty ladies who rode the white horses at the circus was

considered the most distinguished of his social graces.

“Bears an’ lelfunts.”

“Yes, but Jimmie dear, weren’t there any pretty ladies?”

“Bears an’ lelfunts.”

“Oh, Jimmie, you rascal! Can’t you tell Margery about the pretty ladies? See, she’s waiting to hear about them.”

Jimmie folded his fat little hands on his fat little stomach, and sat down with a jounce that would have been trying to any one further away from the ground. “No,” he said firmly, “I’s told all my told, an’ I’s got no more told to told.”

“Aha, ladies,” came an exulting shout from the barn. “Who said there wasn’t a cart left? Look at this!”

Dragging the fat and panting Jimmie with them, Margery and Esther raced around the corner of the house to the barn. There stood Spy harnessed to a particularly old and rickety dump-cart, two-wheeled, and painted a languishing pale blue, which, in its younger and palmier days, had been used to haul gravel. On the high front seat Polly sat cracking her

whip over Spy, who turned his head now and then to regard with mild astonishment this strange vehicle which had been fastened upon him.

“Hop up, ladies and gentlemen! Hop up! Here, Marge,—give me your hand. Oh, clumsy!—Put your foot on the wheel. That’s the ticket. Now then; boost Jimmie up—there—now I’ve got him. All right, Esther? Well, then, go on, Spy.”

The road leading to the neighbor who had offered them the pumpkins was a lonely one, and only one person met them on the way to be amused at their quaint vehicle. That was old Dr. Huston who, scorning automobiles as inventions of the evil one, still clung to his ancient steed, an animal only less slow than Spy. He and Polly were great friends, and many a good-natured race did they run.

“Beat you this time, Polly,” he called as he came up beside her.

“’Deed you won’t!” she called in answer, giving a grand flourish to her whip. “Here goes!”

Bumpity, bumpity, bump, rattled the cart,

the three girls clinging to the seat and to Jimmie, laughing and shrieking shrill little shrieks of feminine enjoyment, while Spy humped along, struggling to keep abreast of his ancient rival. But success was with the doctor to-day, and he turned down a cross-road, waving back a derisive hand at them.

"Well, we should have had to stop, anyway," said Polly, always quite willing to admit her own faults, but sensitive on the subject of those of her pet. "Spy could beat his old horse any day,—but here's the field."

The girls scattered to search out the smaller pumpkins that could easily be carried back to the cart, and Margery, wandering across the wide field, found herself shut off from the rest of the world by long aisles of tall, yellow corn-shocks. A crisp, October breeze, warmed by the sun and coming from the ocean across miles of redolent pine-barrens, rustled the dried stalks, and a southward-bound thrush paused to sing of the joys of the summer that was gone. As Margery lifted her head to let the wind blow through her curls, the spell of the quiet, peaceful old land fell upon her, as it has fallen upon many another, and although

she was too young to analyze, or to understand, she vaguely felt that no matter how far she might wander, her heart would always turn back to its woods and fields, and its kindly, courteous people.

“I wish that I hadn’t been so horrid about coming,” she thought. “I believe that there is something in what Polly says about having to fight Agag,—I suppose that my Agag is wanting to have my own way all the time. I wish that I could do something big and wonderful, something that would make the whole world better and happier, and that would make me famous,” and like many another girl, Margery dreamed of the great things that she might do some day for the world at large, and never once thought of the commonplace, little things that she might have done at the present to make her own small world a happier, smoother place: the courteous answers that she might have given to Dick’s questions; the frocks that she might have picked up, and not left carelessly on bed or chairs for Deborah to hang away; the extra petting that she might have yielded motherless little Benjamin.

“Margery! Marg-ery!” Polly’s voice came faintly on the breeze.

“Yes,—coming!” Hastily gathering up her skirt, which fortunately was of good, stout serge, to form a sort of bag, Margery filled it with the smallest pumpkins that she could find, and ran as speedily as she was able for the heavy load bumping against her knees, through the avenues of corn-shocks back to the road.

“Margery!” called Polly, as she drew near, “what *do* you suppose we’ve done? *We’ve forgotten the tail-board!* Isn’t that a mess! What-*ever* shall we do?”

“Tail-board? What’s that?”

“The board that goes in the back of the cart and holds things in. The pumpkins will roll out without it,—what shall we do?”

“Can’t we find another board?”

“Nary a board to be found,—we’ve looked.”

“Go back after it.”

“Get us home too late.”

“We’re doomed,” lamented Margery, feeling that fate was most cruelly insisting on making a martyr of her.

Esther laughed and pulled one of Margery's curls, temptingly near. "There are more ways of killing a cat than choking it to death. You don't really suppose, do you, Margery, that three such brilliant damsels as we are going to be stumped by a little thing like a tail-board? I'll be tail-board."

"You?"

"Yes, I'll sit across the end and keep the pumpkins in. See?" scrambling up to demonstrate. "I can sit with my back braced against this side, and my feet against that, like this."

"Sure you won't tumble, Esther?" queried Polly.

"Pos-i-tive. Why, just look," and Esther leaned back against one side of the cart, and dug her heels into the other, with an expression of grim determination that was highly impressive.

"All right, friend o' me heart," and Polly picked Jimmie up in her arms. "Climb up, Margery,—you'll have to hold Jimmie, I guess. Esther can't, of course,—and I can't hold him and drive, too. Here, take him."

But Margery shrank back. Jimmie was

fat, and rather dirty, and very restless. She had not enjoyed his proximity on the way to the field, and she did not relish the idea of bumping home again, over the rough roads, in the springless cart, with the heavy child in her lap. Besides, she wanted to continue those beautiful, uplifting thoughts which she had had in the corn-field; and how is one to make noble plans for elevating the world and making one's self famous with a squirmy child in one's arms?

"We-l-l ——" she began lamely, with a critical glance at the front of Jimmie's diminutive blue linen blouse. During the day Jimmie had eaten a piece of bread and butter and molasses; had made some delectable mud-pies; had crawled under the back kitchen after his escaping kitten; had borrowed some coal from the kitchen with which to play coal-man; and had shared its kennel with the watch-dog; to which facts his attire bore circumstantial evidence.

Esther, hardened by custom to Jimmie's decorations, and conscious that twice a day he arose pearly-white from the bath-tub, caught the expression of distaste on Margery's

face, fleeting as it was, and her pride took fire at once. Was the pride and darling of the House of Crowell to be flaunted by a chit of a girl from California? Never. "Give him to me, Polly," she said imperiously. "I will hold him. I wouldn't *think* of allowing anybody else to do it."

Polly looked puzzled. "Why, what's struck you?" she asked. "I don't think that you ought to hold him, Esther. You might drop him. Why don't you let Margery hold him?"

If such a thing had been possible, big-hearted Polly would willingly have dandled the inmates of an entire orphan asylum on her knee, and filled in the chinks between children with half the lame puppies and stray cats in the county.

But Esther was not to be moved. "No, Polly, I'll hold Jimmie," she persisted. "I have my reasons," she whispered, nodding toward Margery.

Margery knew that she had wounded Esther by her evident repugnance to the adored Jimmie, and that she ought to make amends by cordially offering to take charge of him,

but self and self's comfort were dear, so she merely shrugged her shoulders, and sat watching a distant flock of sheep with a remarkably detached expression.

Polly whistled softly. "Oh," she said, with another glance at Margery. "So that's it, is it? But don't be silly, Esther. If Margery doesn't want to hold him, he can sit on the seat beside her, and she can just steady him, so that he won't fall off."

Margery felt herself grow hot with embarrassment; she wished that she had said cordially that she was willing to hold Jimmie; but now perverseness seemed to keep her tongue-tied, and she sat silent, looking more detached than ever.

Polly made a final attempt. "Do be sensible, Esther. Of course Margery wants to hold him; you don't expect her to rave about it, and beg for it, do you? You want to hold Jimmie, don't you, Margery?"

But Margery was silent, and Esther was adamant. "No, I'll hold him," Esther replied with dignity, a hauteur that had its edge blunted by the fact that Jimmie himself burst into roars of grief. "I wants to sit wif Mar-

gie!" he howled. "I wants to sit wif Margie!"

The social atmosphere was somewhat cool as the girls started on the homeward journey. Esther and Polly were thoughtful, and Margery sat quiet, ashamed of the perverse spirit which had betrayed her into the display of selfishness, and seeking to justify herself in her own eyes with the plea that Esther and Polly were entirely unreasonable.

But the afternoon was too beautiful for anybody to harbor hurt feelings, and the little strain wore away as the girls bumped along the road, Esther shrieking like a steam siren every time that a rut sent the pumpkins rolling against her, and Jimmie, in her arms, laughing as though it were the greatest joke that had ever happened. "Sing, Margery," Polly commanded, and Margery started "My Bonnie lies over the ocean." Esther and Polly joined in, and even Jimmie lifted up his shrill little pipe in, "Hey diddle, cat 'n' fiddle," to a tune of his own invention.

"Oh—isn't—this—fun!" chanted Polly. "Is—is—isn't—it—a—lark?" And indeed, as it was of their own volition that they were

rattling over a rough road in a springless cart, they found it a joyous adventure. If any stern teacher or parent had required such a thing from them they would have thought themselves most cruelly used.

"When first I saw sweet Margery," warbled Polly, "'twas on a market day. A low-backed car she rode in — Whoa! Spy! Whoa!"

"Aha! We've caught you, girls!" shouted Dick and Sam, who had jumped from behind the hedge, and were prancing beside the cart like a couple of wild Indians. "We've caught you,—pumpkins for jack-lanterns. Gee whilkens, Esther! Are you hurt?"

Spy had reared suddenly, and Esther, Jimmie, and the pumpkins lay in an ignominious heap on the ground.

Esther sat up and rubbed her elbow. A long smear of crushed pumpkin was on her right cheek, and shreds of yellow decorated her from head to foot. Around her lay the pumpkins, broken and split open by their fall, with their long strings of seeds spilled out in the dusty road. "No, I'm only surprised," she declared; then, shaken and a little hysterical from her tumble, she began to laugh.

Reassured the others joined in. "When first I saw sweet Esther," gasped Dick, "'twas on a market day—a low-backed car—she fell out of—upon—a load of pumpkins!"

"Elizabeth, Eliza, Betsy and Bess," chimed in Sam, "all went out to rob a pumpkin field ——"

But Esther had stopped laughing, and was leaning anxiously over Jimmie. "Jimmie, dear," she implored, giving him a little shake. "Open your eyes and look at Sister, dear."

But the big blue eyes did not open.

Frightened, Esther looked up at the others. "Something is wrong," she said in a low voice.

Polly jumped down from the cart. "Baby dear," she implored, bending over the unconscious little form, "wake up—oh, *do* wake up!"

But Jimmie lay white and still.

Terror-stricken, the children looked at each other.

"Oh, Jimmie, Jimmie," wailed Esther.

"We'll have to get a doctor as soon as we can," said Sam, practically.

As though in answer to his words, Dr. Hus-

ton, returning from his call, turned into the lane from the crossroad ahead of them.

"Oh, there's the doctor now," shouted Dick. "Hey, doctor, wait!"

The doctor drove on.

"Hey! Wait!"

Polly ran to the front of the cart, and scrambled up beside Margery, who had sat still throughout the accident, frozen with horror. "I'll get him," she cried. "He's too deaf to hear us,—but I'll overtake him!"

She whirled her whip around Spy, and Spy humped his back, and rocked a little in imitation of a gallop, then settled down into his every-day, steady jog. The doctor heard the approaching hoof-beats, and looked around.

"Aha! I'll beat you again," he shouted as he recognized Polly, and he whipped up his horse.

"Doctor! Doctor! Wait! Please wait!"

The doctor heard the shouts this time, but he was too deaf to catch the words. "Don't get ahead of the old man this time, you don't!" he yelled back gayly.

"He thinks we are trying to race him," wailed Margery.

Harder came the whip on Spy's back. Spy rocked again, but his rival was gaining.

"Doctor!" shrieked Polly, standing up in her eagerness. "Wait! Wait!"

Her voice could not carry over the widening distance between the vehicles, and leaning out for a mocking wave of his hand back at them, the doctor whirled around a bend in the road. "I beat you again!" he roared, as he disappeared.

Again the whip came lashing down on Spy's back, but to no purpose.

"It's no use," sighed Polly, as she pulled Spy in, and began to back the cart into a clump of elder-bushes, in order to turn in the narrow lane. "We had better go back, and see if there is anything we can do."

"Oh, Polly," Margery wailed, "if only I had held Jimmie all this wouldn't have happened. It's all my fault."

"We mustn't think about that now," Polly answered quietly. "We are all to blame."

"Oh, but I must think—I must do something! Polly! I can see the doctor going along the road now, there where it has turned

so. I can see the wheels through the bushes —if I cut across the fields I may catch him.”

At the risk of breaking her neck, Margery jumped down from the cart, and diving through the elder-bushes, hurled herself over the worm-fence, and started running across a wide corner of the fields toward the road along which the wheels of the doctor's carriage were fast disappearing. The fields had been freshly plowed for wheat, and the soft earth gave with every step. Slipping, stumbling, falling once her full length, she plunged on. Her breath came in gasps, and as with every step forward she seemed to fall back two, she felt as though a knife were sticking into her side. But crueller than the pain was the agonizing thought that through her fault little Jimmie lay dying, dear little Jimmie. . . . She reached the other side of the field and with a last effort she crawled through the fence. As she scrambled to her feet a tall, tattered figure rose from the tree-stump where he had been sitting. With a faint scream Margery stood stock-still; he had already been pointed out to her as “Loony Joe Morris,” the town idiot.

“Oh, Joe,” she panted, recovering her

courage, "catch him!" pointing to the receding carriage. "It's the doctor."

"Loony Joe" looked at her, his head on one side. "Gimme ten pennies?" he asked.

Margery nodded. "Yes, yes,—anything."

"All right,—I catches him!"

With a shout, Joe started down the road. "Whoa, there! Who-aaa! Whoaaa!"

However weak Joe's brain might be, his legs were long and strong and there was a difference between his base bellow and the girls' little soprano shrieks. As he gained on the carriage, he bellowed lustily, and the doctor stopped and looked around.

"Come back," ordered Joe, in a mighty roar. "The gal wants you."

"What girl?"

"The gal back there. She wants you bad," and Joe pointed with his stubby forefinger.

Obligingly, the doctor turned around and hurried back to Margery, Joe gamboling beside the carriage, cheerily shouting about his "ten pennies."

"What's that you say, child? Little Jimmie hurt? Bad business, a bad business!" ejaculated the doctor, as Margery told

her story. "Hop right in, and we will go back to him as quickly as we can. What's the matter with you, Joe? What's that you're making such a noise about? Oh, your 'ten pennies.' Well, here, take them."

While Margery had been pursuing the doctor, Polly had gone back to Jimmie. She found that the boys had carried him to a little grove by the roadside, where a tiny brooklet meandered, and were using such first aids as considerable experience of mishaps on the football field had taught them. By the time that Margery and the doctor reached him, Jimmie was beginning to come to.

The doctor felt him over carefully. "Not a bone broken," he said, reassuringly. "But he's had a bad shaking up, and been stunned. I don't think, though, that there's any injury to the head,—in a day or two he'll probably be as chipper as a bug in a rug."

As the doctor straightened up, Margery slipped around to Esther and put her hand on her arm. "It was all my fault," she said humbly. "I ought to have said that I would hold Jimmie."

Esther's face was white and strained, but

she managed to smile. "Why no, Margery, it was my fault. For really I oughtn't to have been so silly and proud. I ought to have had you hold him whether you wanted to or not. Yes, doctor, I'm coming."

"Here, Esther," commanded the doctor, "I want you to drive to your home with me and Jimmie,—you'll have to hold him. He's going to be all right now, I hope,—but I don't trust you children," with a glance at the crestfallen group, "not to try any more tricks.

"Oh, cheer up, child," as Esther suddenly burst into tears. "You've been as brave as could be,—and now you want to frighten your mother into fits by going home boo-hooing like that. Climb in, child."

Esther gulped her tears down bravely, and clambered into the carriage. Jimmie, still rather white and dazed, was put in her lap, and Dr. Huston tucked the lap robe around them.

As he gathered up the reins, a thought struck him. "Why under the sun," he demanded, "when you children saw me turn into the road ahead of you, didn't you make some effort to stop me?"

CHAPTER XII

THEY VISIT THE CITY

"DEBORAH," began Margery that evening after supper, "did you ever do things that you wished afterward that you hadn't done?"

Deborah looked up from the splinter she was taking out of Benjamin's finger. "Haven't I?" she laughed.

"I mean have you ever kept from doing something—oh, maybe just some little thing—for somebody, just because it was easier not to do it, and then been sorry that you hadn't done the something, and the somebody had gotten hurt, or something?"

Deborah caught the drift, if not the exact meaning of the involved sentence. With her kindly understanding she realized that Margery's spirit, childishly self-centered though it was, was beginning to ask for light.

"Yes," she said gently, "that comes to most of us, I guess. Getting old would be

the loveliest thing I know if it wasn't for that. When you get old you have a chance to see the meanings of all the things in your life that have seemed so hard, and so unnecessary. And you find out that, after all, things have worked out for the best—it's real fascinating—like reading in a November magazine the answers to the puzzles that came out in the May numbers. But just that one thing spoils it; the having to remember all the mean little things, and all the selfish little things you have done! There, Benjie,—that splinter's out now; go and put some witch-hazel on your finger. There's a bottle of it on the little table in my room.

“Yes, being old,” she went on, as Benjamin left the room, “would be the loveliest thing if it wasn't for the memories of the mean things! I wish I could just go up and down the land preaching, like some of those fellows of the olden times, to all the young people, that selfishness doesn't pay one little bit, and that when they get old they will have to find it out.”

Margery made no answer, and rising, Deborah brought a great basket of stockings to be

mended, and settled down again in the glow of the lamp to finish her weekly darning.

“Dear me, this stocking looks as though Benjamin had been playing with a wildcat. Margery, you are so sleepy that you can scarcely hold your eyes open. Are all your lessons done? Well, then, you had better go to bed right off. Be sure to gargle your throat well with the salt and water,—I don’t like the way your cold is hanging on.”

Almost too sleepy to make the effort, Margery dragged herself out of the chair, and lighted her little bedroom lamp, which stood with those of the others on a table in the corner. With a gigantic yawn she opened the door, and turned to remind Deborah that she was to have hot chocolate for breakfast. As she spoke to her, something in the patient weariness of the little housekeeper’s attitude as she sat toiling over the big pile of stockings touched her. Unobservant as Margery habitually was, she had not been able to escape seeing how faithfully Deborah, but ill-assisted by the farmer’s daughter and old Thomas, and burdened by the inconveniences of the big, badly contrived old house, worked, from

early morning until late at night, to make the little family comfortable.

Margery stood stock-still in the doorway, thinking; thanks to her mother's insistence, she knew how to mend very neatly,—should she propose to assist Deborah with the darning on the morrow? She opened her lips to speak; still, the sacrifice seemed unnecessary, and she might want to spend to-morrow afternoon with Polly; besides, she concluded, darning was the work that Deborah was paid to do. She went out, closing the door behind her.

At the foot of the stairs she paused again. "I suppose," she thought with a wry little smile, "that Deborah really does lots of things for us that she isn't paid to do,—things she does just because she is so good-natured. I suppose, too, Polly would call my—my—having other plans than darning a case of Agag on the rampage."

She decided to compromise, as, alas, we so often do. Going back, she opened the library door and stuck her head into the room. "Deborah," she said kindly, "you look very tired—if I were you I'd go to bed early, and get a good night's rest."

There was destined to be but little sleep for Deborah that night. Scarcely, it seemed to her, had her head touched the pillow, before she was awakened by somebody shaking her.

"Oh, no," she muttered, clutching the bedclothes tighter under her chin, "it is *not* morning yet."

"No, no," whimpered a little white figure beside the bed; "wake up! Do please wake up!"

"Gracious! What is the matter? I always knew that Dick, the way he reads in bed, would set something on fire ——" Awake now, Deborah jumped out of bed, and began to fumble for matches.

"No, it's my tooth," sobbed Margery. "It's aching so."

"Dear me, child, why didn't you say so at first? My sakes," she continued, as she lighted the lamp, "what are you doing standing there in your bare feet? Get right back into your bed. I'll get you something that will stop your toothache in a jiffy."

A quaint little figure Deborah looked in an old-fashioned nightgown that made up for what it lacked in length and width by an

extraordinary amount of goffered ruffling about the neck and wrists. But to Margery, although we suppose that angels do not usually have little gray pigtails tied with a shoe-string, she seemed an angel of comfort as she deftly tucked her up in bed and brought what remedies the house afforded.

But the hot iron wrapped in newspaper, and clapped to her feet; the bag of hot salt applied to her cheek; the wedge of cotton soaked in oil of cloves and plugged into the aching tooth; the hot drink to send her into a perspiration; even the final remedy recommended by the almanac, a mustard plaster on her left elbow, all failed.

"There's nothing for it but the dentist," sighed Deborah as at last the dawn, not "rosy-fingered," as the poets have it, but pale green, leered through the windows at Margery's swollen jaw.

Worn out by the pain and lack of sleep, it was a very woebegone little figure that Polly Jameson, as she opened her shutters the next morning, spied sitting on the horse-block in front of the house of her neighbor, the dentist.

“Why, Margery Morris—whatever is the matter?”

“Oh, Polly,” came a muffled wail, “I’m nearly dead. I didn’t sleep a wink last night,—except, of course, sometimes. And now the dentist says that I’ve got to go up to the city and have the old tooth out by gas. My cold has settled in my tooth—it’s been feeling rather hurty—and now there’s an abscess forming at the root of it,” she explained wearily, as she rose and stood waiting for the carriage, which Dick was just driving up to the curbstone.

“Gracious, you poor darling,” Polly sympathetically commented, in her interest leaning out of the window at a perilous angle. “What train do you take?” she added as Margery clambered into the carriage.

“Nine-forty,” called back Dick.

“Is Deborah going, too?”

“No, she’s going to house-clean to-day,—got the women all engaged to come and help. Besides, Deborah isn’t any good about finding her way around the city; she ——” The rest of Dick’s remark was lost as the carriage turned the corner.

Just as the nine-forty pulled out of the station there was a commotion at the back of the car in which Margery and Dick were sitting, and Sam and Polly, breathless and laughing, plumped down into the seat ahead of them.

“Well—we—got—here,” panted Polly, fanning her crimson face with a lace collar. “When—I—got—around—to the—school it was closed to be fumigated—the Perkins kid has diphtheria—and he was in school yesterday. So I just tore home, and begged and begged Mother to let me come—I met Sam on the way home, and he said he’d come, too,—at first she wouldn’t let me—but here I be! Gracious! Look at the lace collar I’ve brought for a handkerchief! Phew!” and with a final gasp Polly adjusted her hat to a less perilous angle and leaned back.

Margery smiled wanly in an attempt to show her appreciation of her friend’s arrival and Polly, reawakening to the tragedy of an aching tooth, insisted on changing places with Dick and tenderly offered her somewhat sharp shoulder for Margery to lean her head upon. Exhausted by her sleepless night, Margery

slept by fits and starts, while Polly heroically sat motionless and silent; neither disturbing the head, which grew to feel so heavy, leaning against her shoulder, nor yielding to the temptation of joining in the conversation of the boys behind her. Not until they had nearly reached the railway terminus did Margery rouse herself, and turning to Polly ask :

“ Were you coming up to the city anyway, Polly,—or just because of me ? ”

“ Just because of you, m’love.”

Margery was thoughtfully silent. She wondered, had the case been reversed, if she would have even thought of going with Polly, much less doing it. “ It is dear of you,” she said at last, with conviction.

“ Why, of course,” Polly answered, as though there could be no two ways about it, “ I oughtn’t to have let you come alone with just Dick,—boys don’t count, anyway. It would have been awfully dreary for you. Besides, you might feel nervous, or ill from taking the gas,—mightn’t she, Sam ? ” she added as they rose to leave the car.

Sam considered the question. “ Yes,” he

said thoughtfully; "plenty of people have died under gas, I guess."

A reflection which Margery found scarcely cheering.

When they reached the dentist's office, Sam and Dick left the girls and went off to telephone to Billy Ball, Dick's cousin on the Ball side, who was at college in the outskirts of the city, and Polly accompanied Margery into the little room where the dentist stood beside his gas machine. Margery had had a tooth out by gas before so, while her knees wobbled somewhat unmanageably under her, she was able to crawl into the dental chair with a passable imitation of courage.

"Now, think of something pleasant," commanded Dr. Marshall, the big, jolly-looking dentist, as he put the cork in her mouth. "And now,—take a deep breath,—slowly, slowly,—so ——"

"Sp—flu—my," spluttered Margery, a minute later. "Why don't you begin?"

"It's out," laughed Dr. Marshall. "But just look at your friend," and he nodded toward Polly, who, with her face as white as her blouse, her hat falling off the back of her

head, her eyes screwed tight shut, and her mouth open with sympathetic horror, sat waiting, hands over her ears, for the ordeal to be over.

"I'll have to get you to take care of me, Miss Jameson," said Dr. Marshall, still laughing, as he let down the big chair and helped Margery out of it, "when I have to have a tooth out. Now, Miss Morris, you had better rest for a while in the other room, there, and when you go out, keep those veils of yours on. There's a raw wind blowing to-day, and you don't want to take cold in your face just now. Good-morning."

At noon the boys came back for the two girls, bringing Billy Ball with them. He was a larger and older edition of Dick, with the same mass of straight light hair, handsome blue eyes, and regular features. He greeted Margery kindly from the superior heights of college sophomoredom, inquiring how she left "the savages out West?"

"Quite as well as she has found them in the East, I imagine," Polly answered for her, and they all laughed.

Not a bit abashed, Billy pretended to be

immensely impressed by Margery's veils, and insisted on addressing her as "Honored Madam," and "Reverend Lady" all the way down the street to the department store, where, after some discussion, they had decided to take luncheon. As they entered the store Billy gravely led the wondering group to the veil counter.

"I wish a veil," he announced pompously to the salesgirl.

"Yes, sir—what kind?"

"Not one for myself,—I seldom wear a veil."

"Beg pardon?"

"I said I do not wish a veil for myself. I want one for my grandmother."

"Mesh or chiffon?"

"Eer—chiffon."

"Black, I suppose? Here is a very good quality."

"Eer—no—not black. One red, and one green. My grandfather—er—grandmother, I mean, usually—er—wears two veils at once."

"Beg pardon?"

"My grandmother usually wears two veils at once," repeated Billy politely. "Grand-

mother," turning to the gasping Margery, "you would prefer red and green, would you not?"

"Grandmother?" exclaimed the salesgirl, with an involuntary glance at Margery's abbreviated skirts.

Billy lowered his voice confidentially, and with a nod toward Margery, tapped his forehead suggestively. "Grandmother,—er—has a little trouble—er—er—she has a little weakness of the intellect. As she insists on wearing short skirts, we—er—let her do it, but we hide her ancient face with veils."

"Ch-ch-sss," snickered Polly, hiding her face on Margery's shoulder.

"My great-aunt," explained Billy, indicating Polly, "is very sensitive on the subject of my grandmother's affliction, and—er—can seldom hear it mentioned without tears. You will excuse my saying anything more, under the circumstances, I am sure," and with a stately bow, Billy led his hysterical flock toward the elevator, while the giggling salesgirl murmured something about "somebody else having a little weakness of the intellect."

After luncheon the problem of what to do

next arose. There was only an hour and a half before train time ; too little time to go to a matinée, and too long to spend waiting in the station. The boys wanted to go to a machinery show in progress in the city, but Polly was firm on that score.

“No, indeed,” she declared, “not much ! I’ve enough wheels in my head now, without going and looking at any more. Let’s go and see the fashion parade on the dressmaking floor. They have a bride and bridesmaids all dressed up, and Sarah Morton says they are perfectly sweet,—she saw them day before yesterday.”

“Save us !” protested Dick and Billy in chorus, while Sam explained that he didn’t have to see any fashion show, as his sisters had already decided that his new gown was to be made of “egg-plant purple bombazine, trimmed with bias peplums and plackets, cut à la leg-o’-mutton.”

“There’s Independence Hall,” put in the waitress, who had been highly entertained at their jokes and nonsense. “If you are strangers in the city, why don’t you go there ? Most folks do.”

"I'm afraid we've all seen it," Dick explained.

"Grandmother hasn't," Sam reminded him.

Margery was tired and growing rather cross. "Grandmother doesn't want to see it," she objected. "It's nothing but an old red-brick building anyway. I've seen lots of pictures of it."

Polly answered her soothingly, as she would a querulous child. "Oh, yes, Margery, you will enjoy it ever so much when you get there. If you don't we'll think you don't deserve to have it to look at, and that you just ought to look at a king,—like a cat."

Sam laughed, and Polly repeated her last sentence with a teasing smile.

Margery stood up and stared at Polly icily. "I think that you are very provincial," she said haughtily.

Far from being crushed, Polly crossed her eyes and wiggled her ears, an unladylike accomplishment of which she was proud.

"Come on, you children," exclaimed Billy, hastily tipping the waitress, and herding his obstreperous charges together for the descent to the street. "Cut it out, girls."

“Yeth, girlth, do,” lisped Sam, hiding his face in affected horror. In the midst of his horror he collided with a fat man, who glared at him with genuine indignation.

“Now then, behave yourselves, everybody,” commanded Billy, as they reached the elevator. “What shall it be, Margery? Machinery, fashion, or history? We bow to your wishes.”

Margery hated being laughed at, and she was thoroughly irritated at Polly’s teasing manner, but pride came to her rescue, and she said sweetly, “Thank you, Billy,—I think I’ll take history.”

Polly slipped her arm through Margery’s. “I was mean to tease you,” she whispered, repentantly. “But really, Margery, you’re such a nice little canary bird when you get mad and ruffle your feathers.”

CHAPTER XIII

THE DEAF-MUTES

IN spite of her weariness, and her anticipated disdain of the "old red-brick building," Margery became enthusiastic over its serene and mellow beauty. After the busy crowded street, with its throng of gay, well-dressed shoppers and hurrying business men, the cries of the flower-venders along the curbs, the noise of automobile-horns and clanging trolley-gongs, entering the quiet, old building, with its air of settled, dignified sadness, seemed to her like stepping back into another and long-ago time. The rear door of the echoing, brick-paved entrance hall was standing open; through it she could see the square with its big old trees, the dried leaves of which were being whirled along the paths and hurried into quiet corners by the autumnal wind.

"Polly," she said softly, looking about her, "it is beautiful, isn't it?"

"Isn't it?" agreed Polly. "I should think that it would seem particularly thrilling to you after you've come all the way across the continent. To see this after you've seen how huge, and—and—well, how wonderful the country is, must seem like seeing the acorn after you have seen the gigantic oak that grew from it."

Arm in arm, they strolled into the signers' room. Before the historic desk there stood a thin, little work-worn woman whose accent announced her to be from some of the southern mountains.

"To think of we-all's seein' it," she was saying in a hushed voice to the daughter on whose arm she leaned. "To think of seein' the table on which it was writ."

The two girls smiled at her sympathetically, and she went on, turning to them. "It does you good, don't it, to see the pictures of all them men up there," waving her hand toward the portraits of the signers. "Makes you feel right down patriotic, an' like you wanted to do something to be worth your salt. I guess it would do a lot of good to plenty of the inhabitants of this here country if they'd come

and gaze at them pictures for a spell. They was men, the livin' models of those pictures was, that wasn't afraid to risk their lives for their country. In these days, I do declare, people are perfectly willin' to risk their country's salvation for their ease an' profit."

"Yes," said Polly; "one of those old signers, I think it was Franklin, said, 'We'll all have to hang together,—or else we'll hang separately.'"

The old woman was delighted. "Well, aren't you bright!" she said admiringly. "To think of your knowing that. How's that it goes, 'We'll all have to hang together'?"

"Come on, you girls," interrupted Dick; "how long are you going to stand mooning here, looking at that old desk? We've been waiting for you out in the hall for an age."

"Come on up-stairs, Margery," said Polly. "I'll show you the portrait there of the most adorable young Frenchman, who came over and helped fight in the Revolution. See if you aren't crazy about him."

They climbed the stairway and entered the room where hung the portrait of Polly's

"adorable" Frenchman. Margery admired him properly, and even Sam and Dick were prevailed upon to say that he was not "so bad for a Frenchie" before they wandered off in search of more congenial diversion than gazing at the portraits of long-dead generals and statesmen.

"Run away, Margie, and amuse yourself," smiled Polly. "I like to stand here and imagine things about my Frenchman,—just think, he so young, and I *know* he was brave. Some day I want to put him in a story; wouldn't that be fun? Billy's in the ball-room, I think," and she turned back to the pictured face whose boyishness and charm had so captured her imagination.

Margery found Billy standing, hands behind his back, and head bent in deep contemplation, at the doorway of the long banquet-hall. "Hello, Margery," he said absently; "where are the others? I was just thinking of all the things this old room has seen. All the belles and beaux that used to dance here in the Colonial days, and the anxious meetings that were held here when the Revolution first began."

“And the wounded that lay here,” put in Margery, who had been reading a sign before one of the fireplaces. “This sign says that the wounded were brought in here after the Battle of Germantown.”

“There wasn’t room for the American wounded anywhere in Germantown,—there were so many Redcoats to be looked after there. But the Continentals had a grewsome kind of consolation for their long, jolting ride. The doctor at work in here was a more skilful one than the old saw-bones operating out in Germantown, and he was able to cut off their legs and arms in half the time that it took the enemy to lose theirs. That meant a lot, I guess, in those old days before anæsthetics were discovered,” and Billy, who had recently made a round of the city hospitals with a medical friend, shuddered at the thought.

In the meantime, while Billy and the girls were dreaming of the past, Dick and Sam, whose bumps of reverence were small, and to whom Independence Hall was an old story, were looking about for some mischief with which to while away the time. The quest was discouraging.

At length a group about the Liberty Bell, where a pompous little man was explaining all about the relic to his open-mouthed family, suggested a means. Worming their way close to the glass case surrounding the bell the boys commenced to gesticulate violently in what they pretended to be the deaf and dumb language. At first no one paid any attention to them and their efforts, and they were about to slink discreetly out of sight, when the daughter of the pompous little man espied them.

"Oh, Ma!" she exclaimed in a shrill whisper. "Just look at them two! They're talking with their fingers."

"Ain't it a pity?" answered Ma. "Two such likely-looking young fellers, too! Your Aunt Mame's first husband's nephew was a deaf-mute,—she was light complected, too."

"Mother!" demanded the self-appointed interpreter of the Liberty Bell, "are you and Edith goin' to listen to what I am tellin' you,—you won't get somebody every day who'll be able to tell you as much as I do,—or are you goin' to spend your time gawkin' at them mutes?"

After that the boys shared honors with the Liberty Bell. A bride and groom stopped thinking about themselves and each other long enough to gaze at them with pitying eyes. "Poor things," sighed the bride, "isn't it too bad? They are so good-looking, too."

Flattered at the comments, and inwardly convulsed, Sam and Dick continued to gesticulate, their faces monuments of solemnity and impassiveness. Billy and the girls, coming down the stairway, were astonished to see them in the hall below, apparently undergoing a species of fit to the evident interest of the group around them.

"What's the matter with them?" asked Polly anxiously.

"Don't know," answered Billy. "Oh, great Scott! I see,—they're pretending to be deaf and dumb. Come on; we won't have time to stop and watch them. We've got to hurry," he added in a louder tone, for the benefit of the boys.

They took the hint, and trailed after Billy and the girls, at a discreet distance, as they left the building.

The trip across the river in the slow-mov-

ing, clumsy ferry-boat was enlivened by more deaf and dumb language. Fearful lest Polly's unrestrained giggles should give them away, the boys sat apart from the rest of the party, reveling in the comments of the sympathetic passengers.

"Quit your fooling, now, you fellows," ordered Billy as he said good-bye at the train steps. "You've worked the joke long enough. Take care of the girls, and don't let our wild Western friend frighten the natives."

But the boys found the joke too good to give up, and after having, with much sign language, deposited the girls in a seat, they retired to the end of the car, where they could sit facing the other passengers.

"I wish they'd stop," sighed Margery. "Their carryings on seemed funny at first,—but I'm tired of it now. A joke that's dead is so *awfully* dead!"

Polly agreed with her, but laughed in spite of herself when a tired-looking woman with a whiney little boy hailed the boys' advent with joy, and urged her small son to "sit up like a little gentleman, now, and watch the dummies."

"Oh, look, Polly," said Margery, who sat

next to the window, "see those pretty girls out there on the platform! Hasn't that taller one got a stunning hat?"

Polly leaned across Margery, and peered out of the window. "My child," she said solemnly, "I shan't die happy until I have a bonnet equally beautiful. Oh, they're coming in here. They had better hurry; the train's beginning to move now."

The two pretty, modishly attired young girls whose appearance they had been admiring entered the car, followed by a tall negro in a chauffeur's livery, who put down their handsome traveling bags in the aisle beside them, and hurriedly left the starting train. However much they might condescend to the girls of their own age, Dick and Sam were beginning to take a great interest in girls a year or two older than themselves, and they were immensely impressed by the evident fashion and wealth of the young ladies. With admiration they gazed at them, and it was not until the prettier of the two girls threw a casual glance in their direction that they remembered their reason for selecting such a conspicuous place in the car. They looked at each other ques-

tioningly; it was one thing to act before the "rubes," as they dubbed the other passengers, quite another to perform before these dainty creatures. But catching Polly's eye, which winked derisively at them, they took up the farce with renewed vigor.

The train rattled along over switches and crossings, and the passengers settled down to their evening newspapers, or idly to watching the uninteresting landscape from the car windows; suddenly a sweet, high voice rang out above the rumbling of the train.

"Oh, my dear," it said; "look at those deaf-mutes. Poor things."

"Yes," answered another voice, sweeter and higher, "poor things."

Sam and Dick perceived that the speakers were the two pretty girls, and gesticulated violently.

"Isn't it dreadful, Helen?—How I do pity them!" went on the first speaker, while the boys fairly outdid themselves. "It's bad enough to be so terribly afflicted,—and then to look so frightful!"

The boys stopped gesticulating in astonishment.

"Isn't it dreadful?" agreed Helen. "I don't think such people ought to be allowed to go around, do you?"

"Mercy no! It gives me the creeps,—why, just look at the nose of the bigger one!"

Dick, who, in spite of his carelessness, was proud of his blond good looks, turned red. Involuntarily, he started to feel of his nose, then remembering that he was supposed to be deaf, and therefore unconscious of the conversation, plunged his hands into his pockets.

"But really, my dear," went on Helen, "ghastly looking as he is, he doesn't seem to me to be quite as bad as the other one,—*he* has such a deceitful face! There is an awfully crafty look about his eyes,—they say those very round blue eyes usually do belong to deceitful, unscrupulous people. You can just imagine that boy deceiving people, and enjoying it! I should be afraid of him,—even worse than of the other. Isn't it dreadful that they should look so, when they are so afflicted already?"

Her clear, carrying voice rang out through the car, and during her speech there had been a general craning of necks to look at the af-

flicted ones. The afflicted ones turned scarlet, and shuffled their feet, and cleared their throats in a desperate attempt to regain their composure. Sam, his cherubic countenance the color of a ripe tomato, glanced furtively at Polly and Margery to see if they had heard. They had. With their arms clasped around each other they were shaking with convulsive joy. That was too much for poor Sam; jumping to his feet he made for the smoking car. Finding himself about to be deserted, Dick looked sheepishly about him, then plunged after his fellow conspirator, the beads fairly standing out on his crimson forehead. But Dick was of the stuff that dies gamely. As he passed his two pretty critics, he held his head high, and with the utmost dignity carried on a finger conversation, quite oblivious to the fact that his fellow mute had his back to him, and could not see it. Polly and Margery he discreetly avoided looking at at all.

As the door banged after the boys, the prettier of the two strangers moved back to the seat in front of Polly and Margery. "You are Margaret Morris, aren't you?" she began. "Dick Ball's cousin, Billy Ball, told me to

speak to you. He said I'd know you by the veils. I do hope that we didn't hurt the feelings of those poor boys. But," she added with a laugh, "Billy put us up to it."

"Oh, goody," giggled Polly, "we might have guessed."

"Yes, my brother, Harry White, is Billy's roommate at college, so of course I know him pretty well, and so does my cousin,—the girl with me. We met Billy outside of the station, and he stopped us—we pretty nearly missed the train, too—to tell us those boys were trying to make fun of the country people in the car,—and he dared us to get back at them. We did, didn't we? But I do hope," she finished, wiping the tears of mirth from her eyes, "that we didn't hurt their feelings. If we didn't have to get off at the next station I'd like to apologize to them."

Margery and Polly assured her as well as they could for the peals of laughter which overcame them that they knew it had been an episode of great and lasting benefit to the boys.

CHAPTER XIV

“I’M SORRY, DICK ”

DEBORAH was immensely entertained at Margery’s account of the day in the city, and of the trip home, especially. “Dear me, who would have thought that a toothache would have brought you so much fun?” she commented. “That’s usually the way with pleasure or happiness, though,—you find them in all sorts of unexpected places. And you don’t find them where you think you’re going to. You make all your plans, and have an appointment to meet happiness at some particular spot, and when you get there,—it isn’t there! The same way with pleasure. And then, some time when you’re all discouraged, and have given up hope of ever seeing happiness again, you go up some dreary little alley to take a bowl of soup to some poor woman, or you just turn a corner in your every-day walk of life, and there is happiness

waiting for you! And it will take you in its arms and give you a regular bear-hug.

"Now, how did you say Dick looked when the girls began to talk about his nose? I guess it didn't hurt him any. Dick's pretty proud of that nose! To tell the truth, he's real proud of his looks altogether,—and he's getting to be awfully dressy at times. Then again, he'll go around with his collar looking like a Civil War relic, or his hair sticking up like a wheat-field in a wind-storm. I don't say anything to him about it, though; Benjamin's hands are about all I'm equal to tackling."

If Margery had shared her enjoyment of the deaf and dumb episode with Deborah and Polly, and let it rest there, everything would have passed off happily; unfortunately, she insisted on pointing out to Dick how excruciatingly funny it had been. A point which Dick preferred to overlook. The more he tried to overlook it, the more dignified he grew. The more dignified he became, the more fun Margery found in teasing him. Besides, Margery had not forgotten the day when she attempted to ride Tempe Wick, and

how absurd her appearance must have been as she clung to the saddle with one foot pointing toward heaven; or how Dick had seen her slighted by the girls at school, and it was sweet to her self-love to have him at an equal disadvantage. Had anybody, however, suggested to her that such was her state of mind, she would have been properly indignant.

In vain Deborah hinted that the masculine animal hates ridicule worse than a cat hates water; in vain Dick gave her a stare of polite inquiry whenever she moved her fingers in ostentatious dumb-show; in vain he requested her, with lofty dignity, to "stop chortling": Margery persisted in rubbing in the joke, until by the afternoon of the next day she and Dick were not "speaking beyond a bow," as the old woman said of her neighbor.

Deborah tried to smooth things over without avail, and there was general relief when Polly arrived to ask Margery to drive with her.

"We'll go to the Crowells'," Polly explained as they turned into the highway, "and ask after little Jimmie, and then Mother wants me to take these two bundles of clothes to

some poor people over on the Pike. We’ll just leave them at the doors, and not go in. And then,—oh, yes, I mustn’t forget that!—we’ll go over to old Mr. Morris’s and leave this bottle of elderberry wine there. Mother always sends some to sick people,—and Mr. Morris has been very ill. He’s the dearest old gentleman, Margery,—I wish that you knew him. Old people are awfully nice,—when they *are* nice, aren’t they?”

“Polly,” was Margery’s abrupt answer, “what’s my grandfather like? Is he nice?”

Polly stammered in astonishment. “Why—w-why—d-don’t you know?”

“No, not really,—you see, I haven’t seen him since I was eight. He was awfully sweet to me then, and he always sends me lovely things for Christmas and birthdays.”

“Don’t you get letters from him?—letters always tell you a lot.”

“Oh, no, I don’t think you learn much from letters. Besides,” she added rather shamefacedly, “I’ve had too many things on hand lately, dancing class, and, oh, ever so many things, to do much letter writing.”

Polly looked thoughtfully at a crimson

sumach bush. "Well," she felt her way cautiously, "I imagine that your grandfather would treat you differently from the way he does the boys. He sends you lovely things, you say, for Christmases and birthdays,—he doesn't put himself out much over Dick's birthdays! He's awfully strict with Dick. Perhaps he'll be different with a girl. But Dick simply doesn't dare to spend a cent, or to do a thing, without asking his grandfather's permission first. Father thinks that Dick has the making of a very fine, manly fellow, and that it's a pity that Mr. Morris doesn't let him have more liberty, and give him more chance to develop."

"A letter came for Dick just before you came to-day," Margery remarked pensively. "It was from Grandpapa, I know. I was dying to know what it was about. Dick has been fussing terribly because he hasn't had any letters from Grandpapa. The first thing that boy did when we got home last night was to ask Deborah if any letters had come for him. She said there hadn't, but that surely one would come to-day, and that probably Grandpapa had been traveling so quickly

from place to place that Dick's letter had been some time in catching up with him. And then I heard her say something about wishing that Dick had told her before about something,—I didn't hear what—but as he had let things go so without saying anything, he'd better keep on waiting to hear from Grandpapa, and then he'd know definitely."

Polly was interested. "That does sound mysterious. But it probably means that Dick wants a new suit of clothes, and doesn't dare to order them until he hears definitely from his grandfather."

"Maybe. Dick and I aren't speaking. Of course, I couldn't ask a rude boy like that questions until he apologizes. Anyway, I wasn't supposed to have heard what they were saying."

"Perhaps you can help Dick with his grandfather," Polly suggested. "Mr. Morris might be influenced by what you say. I feel rather sorry for Dick sometimes."

Margery looked at her new friend with comic despair. "Do you know, Polly, you are always thinking about helping somebody. I believe that you are awfully good,—almost as good as Mamma."

“What a dreadful thing to say about anybody,” laughed Polly. “But really we all have to help a little as we go through life. That sounds preachy, I know,” and Polly blushed uncomfortably, and struck at a way-side weed with her whip, “but it’s true, nevertheless. Once, when I was having an awfully hard time,—I had a boil on the end of my nose, and I looked so funny that nobody sympathized a bit, except Father and Mother, and even they laughed sometimes—but really it hurt a lot, and I had to stay cooped in the house, and missed going to the city with Father to see Peter Pan, Dr. Huston gave me a motto, all framed. It helped me just lots and lots, then, and it has ever since. It was just four lines, written by a man in Australia, named Adam Lindsay Gordon :

“ ‘Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone :
Kindness in your neighbor’s trouble,
Courage in your own.’

Dr. Huston gives lots of copies of those lines to his patients. He’ll probably give one to you, if you can manage to scare up an ache,—or a boil on the end of your nose,” she added

with a laugh. "Oh, there's Jimmie,—so I guess he's all right. Bless his heart! Isn't he a darling? Don't you love children when they get all dirty and rumped?"

Jimmie paused long enough in the congenial task of digging a hole, "stwaight frewter China," to throw them several muddy kisses, and Mrs. Crowell came hurrying out of the house at the sound of the carriage wheels. "I'm so sorry, girls, that Esther is out. She has gone to town," she explained. "Yes, Polly dear, Jimmie is all right again; just as well as he ever was. And this is the girl," and Mrs. Crowell put her hand gently on Margery's, "who was so plucky about getting the doctor for him? I am very grateful to you, my dear, for being so good to my little boy."

Margery blushed, and murmured something inarticulate. She hoped that sweet, gentle Mrs. Crowell did not know how Jimmie happened to be acting as extra tail-board.

"Wasn't it funny," Polly put in, "the way that Dr. Huston thought we were trying to run a race with him? I didn't think that it was a bit funny at the time, but I have

laughed a lot over it since then. No, thank you, Mrs. Crowell, we can't stay. We only stopped in to inquire after Jimmie. We are going over, now, to take some of Mother's famous elderberry wine to old Mr. Morris,—you know he has been very ill."

"Yes, isn't it too bad? I was so sorry to hear it. Tell your mother, by the way, dear, that I tried to make some elderberry wine this summer, and that mine wasn't nearly as good as hers. Mrs. Jameson's elderberry wine is a Renwyck's Town institution," Mrs. Crowell explained to Margery.

"We are going to Gertrude Brown's too,—and to Mrs. Sykes'," Polly added with a laugh.

"I won't detain you then," Mrs. Crowell declared. "If you fall into Mrs. Sykes' clutches she will keep you until dark while she gives you a long account of all the misdoings of her neighbors. If you want to get home by supper time, I advise you to hurry now. Good-bye, dear."

Mrs. Crowell was a true prophet. When they drew up at the little cottage of Mrs. Sykes, that worthy but talkative woman

threw her apron over her head and ran out to the gate to talk to them. She had so much to tell: her gratitude for the clothes that Mrs. Jameson had sent; the scandalous way in which her next door neighbor had borrowed a pound of flour from her and never returned it; what the Ladies’ Aid Society had said to her about her carpet rags, and her own wise and witty reply; the dreadful way in which the children of her opposite neighbor quarreled among themselves.

At last Spy—thanks to surreptitious ticklings with the whip—became so restless that they were forced to move off, Mrs. Sykes’ voice floating after them until they were out of ear-shot:

“Don’t forget, Miss Polly, to tell yer mother how much obliged I am fer these things! And, fer the land’s sake, do you think it’s safe fer a young girl like you ter drive a dangerous animal like that?—I never trust a horse that won’t stand! Give me a quiet horse, I says. And don’t forget, Miss Polly, ter tell yer mother what I said to the Ladies’ Aiders, and ——” The rest was lost in the clatter of Spy’s hoofs.

“Whew!” gasped Polly. “Anything left of you, Margie? Did you ever hear anybody talk so much! I suppose she’s lonely, poor soul—and all that stored-up talk breaks loose when she sees any one. Mother told me this morning that I was as bad,—I talk so much about the football game day after tomorrow! Are’t you excited, Margery? I am thrilled. It must be fine to have your cousin on the team. Dick doesn’t seem a *bit* excited, does he?—he never does.”

“No,—I wish he did, sometimes. It will be fun at the game, won’t it? Renwyck’s Town is a pretty jolly sort of a place, after all.”

“Of course it is, goosie! Here we are at Gertrude Brown’s. She is a poor lame girl that Dr. Huston is trying to help. Hold the reins, while I skip up and knock.”

“Do you think I can hold such a wild beast? ‘I never trust a horse that won’t stand,’” quoted Margery teasingly, as Polly jumped out of the carriage and sped up the pathway to the drab little house standing under two giant maple trees.

“There,” said Polly, “that’s done. Now for Mr. Morris’s.”

“This is a lovely place, isn’t it?” Margery remarked, as they turned in between Mr. Morris’s gate-posts.

“Isn’t it? Wouldn’t it be fun to live here?—think of the house-parties you could give! And the fun you could have! It always seems a shame to me that there isn’t somebody young here to enjoy it.”

“Hasn’t Mr. Morris any family,—and doesn’t he ever give any parties?” Margery asked regretfully. She thought that she would like to attend a party in the stately white house before her.

“He has a son somewhere. He’s married, I think. No, Mr. Morris never entertains,—except, perhaps, somebody to dinner. He sticks pretty much to himself,—although everybody likes him. But he reads a good deal, I imagine,—and then he’s away most of the time, anyway. He goes to New York a lot, and he is always going down to some springs in Virginia for his health. No hope, Margery Daw,—no parties here! Oh, goody, there’s the gardener now. Here, Charles,” she called softly to a man tying up a rose-bush by the front steps, “won’t you come here

and get this? Take it into the house right away, please,—and tell the nurse that Mrs. Jameson sent it to Mr. Morris. How is he today? ‘A little bit better’? I’m so glad. Oh, yes, I suppose that it will take him a while to get well, and that they will have to be very careful with him. Now then, Margery,” she declared as she turned Spy around, “I’ll get you home as soon as I can.”

At the gateway of the farm, Margery offered to get out and walk up to the house that Polly might reach town so much the sooner. “All right, if you don’t mind,” Polly agreed. “Thank you for coming with me. Good-bye.”

Left alone, Margery strolled slowly up the pine-tree bordered avenue. Under the spell of Polly’s congenial society she had largely forgotten Dick and the strained feeling that had arisen; in the twilight, alone, her mind went back to her difficulties.

“After all,” she thought, idly scuffling with her feet the pine-needles that had fallen on the level driveway, “it *was* mean to tease Dick so much. He didn’t tease me when I had such a horrid time at school.” She stopped and picked up a pine-cone. “It was nice of

him. I suppose Deborah was right," she went on thoughtfully turning the pine-cone over in her hand; "boys don't like to be made fun of. Perhaps I have hurt his feelings. Oh, dear,—I suppose that I ought to apologize. Polly would apologize as quick as a wink."

She walked slowly on again. Suddenly at the end of the driveway she threw the pine-cone at the horse-block, and ran lightly up the portico steps. "I will apologize," she said aloud, as she opened the front door.

The hallway was dark. Margery stopped, astonished, for she knew that as night came on Deborah's first care was always to light the lamp in the hall where it gave a welcome to all who might come to the door.

"Hello, somebody!" cried Margery, feeling her way to the library. "Anybody home?"

Dick opened the door. "Oh, hello, Margery," he said quietly. "Come in. Don't make any more noise than you have to—Deborah's gone up-stairs to bed."

"To bed?"

"Yes,—she's feeling pretty seedy. I wanted to send for the doctor,—but she says she just wants to get into bed and be let alone."

"Why, Dick,—what do you think is the matter? Do you think that she is very ill?"

"Oh, no. She says that it is just a little attack of inflammatory rheumatism, and that she has had it before."

"I'll go right up to see her."

"Better not. She says that she wants to get all the sleep that she can. She's tired anyway,—she had those women cleaning here yesterday,—and then she caught a little cold."

"Oh, dear,—I hope it wasn't from fussing over my old toothache."

"Don't you worry," Dick consoled her. "Inflammatory rheumatism comes from something in your system. The cold just started her off. Let's have supper now,—I'm hungry. Deborah put out a cold supper for us,—and Thomas can wash up. Ready, Benjamin?"

As they left the dining-room after supper, Margery drew Dick back. "I'm sorry, Dick," she said softly, "that I teased you so. I didn't mean to be disagreeable."

Dick grinned somewhat shyly. "All right, Marge," giving her hand a vigorous shake. "I was a gump to get so peeved. Want any help with your algebra?"

CHAPTER XV

THE DOCTOR'S MOTTO

A CASUAL observer, wandering down a certain pleasant side street in old Renwyck's Town at about eleven o'clock on any school morning, might have been under the impression that a theatrical company was rehearsing for the mob in Julius Cæsar. Such shoutings, such wild yells, such a general din! But instead of mimic grief and anger, the noise came from real joy. The Friends' school was at recess. A few fussy old ladies might bang down their windows in futile protest, or a near-by mother say despairingly that it was positively no use trying to put Baby to sleep until after recess was over, but as a rule such inhabitants of Renwyck's Town as happened to be passing paused to look over the old wall, thankful that there were so many strong young bodies to run and play, so many happy hearts to be lifted up in shouts of joy.

By an unwritten law the girls and boys, however much they might be together out of school hours, ignored each other during recess. The boys gathered at one side of the big school yard to practice football, or in spring, cricket and baseball, while the girls either stayed indoors, or twined arms and walked, long strings of them, sedately up and down under the old walnut trees, chattering as fast as their agile young tongues could go. Here and there some more exclusive spirit wound her arm around the waist of a chosen intimate, and they sauntered apart from the others in the more secluded section of the yard. Polly usually either perched on a desk indoors, or, if out-of-doors, on the top bar of the side fence, from which high point of vantage she held forth to an interested group of girls on whatever subject happened to be nearest to her heart.

Since the beginning of her friendship with Polly, Margery usually perched beside her, an accepted member of the group. Thanks to the spirited championship of her cause by Polly—who was decidedly the most popular girl in the school—and also to their better

acquaintance with her, Margery had come to be liked by the other girls.

Being at a co-educational school, the girls had absorbed some of the modes of thought of their boy companions; chief among these was their respect for the quality of "squareness"; and Margery was undeniably very "square."

In her turn, Margery had come to like her schoolmates, finding in these cheerful, wholesome young people a society that was really more congenial to her than was that of the girls amongst whom she had been thrown.

The morning after their drive together found Polly and Margery at recess, sitting on the side fence, while Polly, her long legs gracefully hooked through the rails to make her perch the more secure, expounded to a hilarious circle of girls a new labor-saving method of writing themes.

"Of course, I love writing," she declared. "I'd rather write the kind of things I *like* to write than do anything else on earth. But I do hate scribbling away at the old subjects Teacher Rachel and Teacher Abigail give us. 'Nice instructive subjects,' " a world of scorn

in her voice. "‘How iron is mined,’ and ‘wheat elevators,’ and things like that. I could give lots better subjects: ‘How it feels to fall out of a flying machine,’ or ‘What a polar bear thinks of the people that come to the zoo.’ Oh, there’s no use in making life as dull as Teacher Abigail does."

"But how are you going to make writing themes any easier?" asked a fat damsel who had tried to perch on the rail beside Polly and, losing her balance, had hastily decided that she preferred to stand.

"It's this way—you know Kubla Khan was the result of a dream."

"What's Kubla Khan?" asked the fat damsel eagerly.

"It isn't a new kind of sundæ, anyway," answered a sharp-eyed, thin little girl, with a meaning glance at the plump arm beside her.

"It's a poem. By Coleridge," Polly went on hastily, seeing a storm about to brew. "You see, Coleridge went to sleep one day after dinner and dreamed it, and when he woke up all he had to do was to remember it and write it down,—and there was a beautiful poem, all nicely done for him. Now my plan

is: when I have to write some deadly dull thing, on 'carpet-tacks,' say, full of information (I loathe information—I wish there wasn't any such thing in the world), I'll just say 'carpet-tacks, carpet-tacks' over and over to myself when I'm going to sleep, and then I'll dream about carpet-tacks, and in the morning all that I'll have to do will be to write it down."

"The encyclopædia's surer," suggested a sceptic.

Polly was not to be discouraged. "Oh, with practice the other way will do wonderfully. Making your subconscious mind work, they call it," she explained learnedly. "I tried it last night."

"How did it work?"

"Only pretty well," Polly admitted with a grin. "I hadn't any particular subject to work on, so I just took the first word that came into my mind. That was toast. I said 'toast, toast' just as hard as I could before I went to sleep. I did dream a lot about toast,—but when I woke up all that I could remember was that somebody said in my dream, 'The buttered toast had the wings of a cat.' But

of course, it takes practice, like everything else. Oh, Dick is beckoning to you, Margery!"

Margery slipped out of the laughing group, and, breaking all school-yard conventions, hurried over to Dick, who was standing apart from the other boys, violently beckoning to her.

"I didn't want to butt into that group of gigglers," Dick explained. "That's why I beckoned to you. Dr. Huston has just been here to see me. After we left this morning Deborah telephoned for him. He says that she is in for a pretty sharp attack of rheumatism. He was hopping mad, too, about her getting up this morning to see about breakfast; and he says that we shall have to get somebody to help her at once. I have permission to get off just as soon as Latin is over next period, and hunt up Agnes,—that's Thomas's sister. She's usually willing to come if we want her. She can do the cooking, and with Denis O'Flanigan's daughter to help her take care of Deborah, we can get along,—for a while, at any rate. All the nurses in town are busy, and it's a nuisance

and an expense to import one from the city, —unless we positively need one.”

“Oh, Dick,” cried Margery, dismayed, at the end of Dick’s long speech. “Poor Deborah! How shall we get along? Oh, I do wish Grandpapa were home!”

“So do I,” was Dick’s heartfelt answer. “For more reasons than one.”

“It’s awful not having anybody to take charge of things,” Margery went on. “Of course, at home, Papa and Mamma are always there to look after everything. Well, anyway,” she concluded, her mind flying back to Deborah, “I hope poor Deborah won’t be ill long. I ——”

The school bell rang for the end of recess. Margery started pell-mell for the school door, and Dick followed, picking up the side-combs she shed on the way.

“Here,—glue ’em on next time,” he whispered as he handed them to her. “I’ll go to see Agnes ——”. A teacher turned a warning eye upon him, and Dick’s voice trailed away discreetly.

When the children reached home after school they found Thomas’s sister already

installed in the kitchen. Agnes was a tall, thin, middle-aged colored woman with a tongue that wagged almost as constantly as that of the inexhaustible Mrs. Sykes. She took pains to inform Margery at once that, "Ah don't play bridge, an' ah don't go to no saloons, an' ah don't patronize the movin' pictures,—ah takes mah pleasure in talk." By evening, as she heard Agnes's voice incessantly lifted up in chatter to Thomas and the farmer's daughter, or, lacking a more responsive audience, to the cat or the kitchen stove, Margery came to the conclusion that if Agnes's pleasure consisted of "talk," her life must be one round of enjoyment.

Margery was rather startled, when she tip-toed into Deborah's room after luncheon, to find her so pale and tired, and her face so drawn with evident suffering. "Oh, Deborah," she whispered, "I'm so sorry that you're ill. Can't I do anything for you?"

Deborah turned her head on the pillow. She was evidently glad to see Margery. "No, thank you, dear," she said. "Just don't worry,—that's all. Try not to take cold, and wear your rubbers if it rains. I'll be better

to-morrow, surely. Did Agnes get your dinner all right, and make you comfortable? I'm so glad that Dick was able to get her. Now be sure to tell me if she doesn't do things right. It's hard to see the bright side of being tied here by the leg, when there is so much that I ought to be doing for you children. But I suppose that it was sent to keep me from falling down-stairs and breaking my arm,—or having some other such accident. Which would be worse, and would keep me laid up longer. Now, be sure and not worry, dear. And have just as much fun with Polly Jameson and the other girls as though I were around. I think I hear a carriage coming up the driveway. Perhaps you had better go and see who it is."

Margery hurried down-stairs, and found that Polly and Esther had stopped in to bring her "Pride and Prejudice," which Polly had recommended as "simply thrilling," and to spend the afternoon if they were urged.

"I wish," said Margery that evening, as she finished studying her Latin, and closed the book with a bang, "that Deborah were well."

"I wish so too," said Benjamin, disconsolately, leaning his head against Margery's shoulder. "I don't like it without Deborah."

Dick lifted his head from the map he was drawing. "It does seem queer without her," he agreed. "Nothing seems like home, somehow."

"Never mind, Benjie dear," urged Margery, rather aghast at his evidently mournful state of mind, "just as soon as I have read over this page of history once more, I'll"—she hesitated, for she had been looking forward to reading "Pride and Prejudice"—"I'll play checkers with you. Cheer up, Benjamin; Deborah will be better to-morrow; she says so herself."

Alas, Deborah was no better the next day, or the next to that.

"She really isn't so ill," Dr. Huston told Margery on the afternoon of the third day, "but she's mighty uneasy. And she's worried about you children,—afraid that you aren't being made comfortable. That room of hers looks pretty cheerless to me, shades on the skew, and things out of kelter. I don't think much of that Agnes,—in a sick room, at any

rate. She's too slam-bang, and too talkative. As for that farmer's daughter,—she's a stupid lump! See here, you look like a healthy youngster," and the doctor glanced with professional approval at Margery's clear, bright eyes, and smooth, healthy skin. "Can't you take up your end of the burden a little? I think you children have rather neglected Deborah. Go and cheer her up this afternoon; read to her, or talk to her,—she needs that more than she needs medicine. Straighten that room up a little. Dick tries to do what he can,—but he's more at home on the football field. There's a little verse I'd like all you young people to learn by heart:

“‘Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone:
Kindness in your neighbor's trouble,
Courage in your own.’

Now, just be as much of a success at cheering Deborah as you were at catching me the other day, and I'll bring you that verse framed. Good-bye." The old doctor hurried into his overcoat and bustled off, to carry, in his own queer, brusque way, courage and consolation to the next sufferer.

Margery went up the stairs thoughtfully; she had made a delightful engagement with Polly and two of their classmates for the afternoon.

As she opened Deborah's door and glanced about her, Margery decided that the doctor was right. The room *was* cold and dreary. It was quite evident that incapable, indifferent hands had made the untidy bed, and left newspapers and medicine bottles on the table. A tray with Deborah's dinner dishes on it stood on the window sill beneath a curtain pulled carelessly askew. Altogether a very different room from what it was when Deborah was able to give it her usual dainty care.

"Yes, isn't it dreadful?" sighed Deborah as Margery glanced about her critically. "Agnes is a pretty good cook, but she is awfully untidy. I try to make her keep things picked up, but this morning I felt too weak and tired to cope with her. But never mind that now,—come sit beside me, child, and tell me how things are going at school. Is Agnes getting the meals all right? And, Margery, when Benjamin comes in, won't

you see that he changes his feet, if he has been playing down by the creek. He ran in here for a minute after lunch, and he seemed croupy to me."

"All right, Deborah," Margery agreed. "I'll look after the young gentleman. But first I'm going to straighten things up here a little."

"Oh, will you, dear?" sighed Deborah gratefully. "It's very sweet of you."

"Now close your eyes," Margery commanded, "and don't look until I tell you." As quietly as she could, Margery tiptoed about the room, straightening the shades, shaking out the window-curtains with their quaint ball fringe, rearranging Deborah's old-fashioned little belongings on the high mahogany bureau, putting the tray and newspapers outside the door in the hall for Agnes to take down-stairs.

"There," she said, as she smoothed the quilt over Deborah. "You may look now."

Deborah obediently opened her eyes. "You dear child! How different things look!"

"Who did your hair this morning?" demanded Margery.

“Bertha O’Flanigan,—I suppose that it looks like it,” and Deborah made a little grimace of disgust. “My arms are too stiff to raise them to my head.”

“I’m going to do your hair for you.”

Margery’s hands were deft; with a few gentle brushings and pattings Deborah’s hair was arranged more comfortably. “Now then, wait and see what is coming,” and Margery skipped out of the room.

In her own room she found a bottle of toilet water. As she took it from the dressing table a thought struck her; Deborah’s old gray dressing jacket looked dreary; here in the cupboard were two dainty little flannel negligees hanging side by side, one pink and one blue.

Like other generous people Margery found real pleasure in giving. “Oh, what fun!” she thought, as she took down the pink jacket. “Deborah will be crazy about this one.” With the bottle of lilac water in one hand, and the negligee in the other, she ran back to Deborah.

“There,” she laughed, as she slipped the little garment around Deborah’s shoulders,

“you look as sweet as a pink. I’ll put some of this stuff on your forehead before I go down-stairs. Anything more that I can do for you?”

“Nothing, but just take a look at my flowers,—I’m sure that they haven’t been watered since I came up-stairs.”

“All right,—when I come in. I’m going to meet Polly at half-past three, under the big tree by the turnpike. It will take me half an hour to get there, so I’ll have to skip.”

“Where are you going with Polly?” Deborah asked a trifle wistfully.

“Over to see Helen Montgomery,—one of the girls in our class. She lives on the other side of town. She’s the girl I told you about who has such pretty red cheeks. Elizabeth Harper is to be there, too.”

“Oh, yes. Isn’t it nice you’re going to see her? What happy times you young girls do have. Good-bye, dear.”

“Good-bye.”

Putting on her coat as she went, Margery ran out of the house. At the back of her mind she was not feeling comfortable. Although she reassured herself that she had done

all that the doctor expected, Deborah's weary face persisted in rising up before her.

"Bother!" she ejaculated as she reached the gate. "I suppose I ought to go and see about those flowers, and about Benjamin. Perhaps it is mean to leave Deborah alone all afternoon. Oh, pshaw!"

She loitered, irresolute.

"Oh, bother! Bother!" she cried to her inconvenient conscience; and turning on her heel she ran up the avenue. Panting she hurried to the telephone, and between gasps for breath, managed to explain to Polly—who fortunately had not started yet—that she would not be able to meet her that afternoon.

"Why, of course," agreed Polly cordially. "You couldn't leave Deborah! Yes, of course, I understand. I'll explain to Helen."

Margery hung up the receiver, feeling rather better satisfied.

As she went through the front hall again, she wrinkled up her nose critically. "Yes, this is a messy looking place," she thought. "Perhaps I ought to have seen that Agnes cleared things up."

The hall was certainly not in its usual spot-

less order. A gingham apron hung carelessly across the newel-post; the boys' gum boots and tennis rackets lay piled on the old sofa instead of being put away in the cupboard under the stairs as they belonged; the flowers in the vase on the little mahogany table were faded, and everything was dusty.

"If I have to stay in all the afternoon," Margery concluded, picking up the vase, "I may as well clear this mess up. I'll do it."

The faded flowers she disposed of by the simple expedient of pitching them out into the driveway, the gum boots and tennis rackets she hurled into the cupboard under the stairs, and the gingham apron, after she had used it as a dust-rag, followed them. "Whoever owns that apron may hunt for it," she laughed to herself. "There, that looks better."

The hall being finished, Margery started for the library. The flowers there and in the dining-room fulfilled Deborah's gloomiest predictions; they plainly had not been watered, neither had there been any dusting of the heavy, dark mahogany furniture. Marching into the kitchen, Margery demanded a pitcher of water from Agnes.

“Yas’m, ah suttainly was a-goin’ to watah dem flowahs, but too much watah makes ’em brittle-like, dat it does.”

“I suppose too much dusting makes the furniture brittle, too,” Margery replied with a significant gesture toward the dining-room door.

“Har! Har!” laughed Agnes, good-naturedly.

Evidently sarcasm was wasted here. “Get me a duster, please,” Margery commanded.

A tornadic dusting followed, and then, being unused to work, Margery had to sit down to rest. “I declare,” she thought, “somebody certainly is needed here to keep things straight. Benjamin, dear,” she called, as footsteps were heard in the hall, “come in here—in the library.”

“Coming. Look, Margie, I can wiggle my ears. You can’t do that, can you? I can show you how,—look, Margie, you do it like this,” and he leaned across her lap, his muddy little boot rubbing against her skirt.

“Oh, Benjamin,” she cried, remembering, “you must change your shoes and stockings at once!”

"All right, Margery,—but come out on the portico and watch me walk on my hands. I can do it finely on the driveway, and it doesn't hurt if I bump my head there. Come, Margie."

"Very well," Margery agreed, allowing herself to be dragged to the front door. "But you will come right in?"

"Look, Margie! Just watch me!" With true little boy eagerness, Benjamin reversed himself, and feet wildly beating the air, essayed three or four steps on his hands. "There, Margery," he panted, as with crimson face he staggered upright once more. "You couldn't do that, could you?"

"No indeed. Come now."

"Yes, Margery." But the loud "Whoo-ee" from the gateway of Reggie Smedly, his particular friend, was too beguiling, and Benjamin darted off.

Margery started after him. Benjamin, seeing a splendid opportunity for a romp, dived into the shrubbery bed. By the time that Margery had squeezed in after him, he had emerged and was gleefully making for the back of the house.

“You can’t get me, Margery! You can’t get me!” he crowed, dancing up and down.

“Can’t I!” cried Margery, as making a sudden sprint and reaching out a long arm she caught him firmly by the collar. “Now then, young man,—into the house you go!”

Tired and flushed, but laughing in spite of her vexation, Margery marched him into the house and up the stairs, Benjamin protesting every step of the way, but obeying.

“Now then, Benjie, you may go out and play with Reggie,—but don’t dare to go near that creek again! And I’m going to see—every time that you get your feet wet—that you ‘change your feet,’ as Deborah says. So remember!”

“All right, Margie.” Throwing his arms around her neck the affectionate child gave Margery a strangling hug. “You’re awful nice to take care of me! And you’re awful pretty, Margery, too—you’ve got an awful nice, long nose,” he added with sincere admiration.

“Awful-*ly* nice, not awful nice,” Margery corrected mechanically, somewhat dashed by his compliment.

CHAPTER XVI

RESPONSIBILITIES

“You ought to have seen Benjamin,” Margery remarked, sticking her head in at Deborah’s door. “He thought that he could get away from me and not change his shoes,—but I caught him!”

“Why, haven’t you gone yet, child? Don’t you think that you had better go early, and come home early?—unless you stop at the athletic field and wait for Dick to bring you home. I don’t like the idea of you two girls driving alone after dusk.”

“Oh, I’m not going,” Margery returned easily. “I telephoned to Polly,—it might rain, or something. If you wait a few minutes, I’ll bring you another surprise.”

Before Deborah could ask any inconvenient questions about her change of plans, Margery slipped down-stairs again. The library clock, striking four, gave her a suggestion for the

surprise. "Four o'clock tea," she thought. "Of course!" Going into the kitchen, in a not-to-be-disobeyed tone she ordered Agnes to make some tea and toast. Then from the pantry she got out a little tea-tray, and some of the prettiest china from the corner cupboard in the dining-room; it happened to be Mr. Morris's most cherished Wedgwood, but both he and Margery were blissfully unconscious. Deborah was not, and when she saw that precious Wedgwood entering the room on a tray held at a perilous angle, she gasped with horror.

"There, child, you must be tired out,—do sit down," Deborah implored, after Margery had induced old Thomas to make a fire in the fireplace, and the tea-tray had been taken down-stairs again. "Yes, dear, this *is* better,—you've been like a ray of sunshine to-day. I feel like a princess with this pink prettiness to wear—just think, I have something pink at last—and the fire, and the tea, and everything so neat and shipshape. You'll read to me? That will be fine,—if you aren't too tired."

The art of reading aloud seems to be a lost

one, and Margery read no better than the average. In the monotonous voice which she considered suitable to Deborah's choice, the Bible, she droned away until Deborah's weary eyelids closed, and she dropped off for the first sound, drugless sleep she had had in forty-eight hours.

Deborah asleep, Margery curled up luxuriously on the library window sill to read "Pride and Prejudice." Although she did not consider that it came up to Polly's description of it as "simply thrilling," she liked it, and found the characters interesting. By and by, however, her own thoughts grew all absorbing, and the book slipped off her lap to the floor, while she sat with her knees drawn up to her chin, and her hands clasping her ankles, staring out of the window. At five Benjamin came in, and she got up to light the lamp for him.

"Deborah plays checkers with me—sometimes—when I come in from playing outdoors," Benjamin remarked pensively.

"All right, Benjie boy, I can take a hint,—when it's big enough," Margery laughed, as usual finding him amusing. "I'll play with

you until half-past five,—then we'll have to begin to get Deborah's supper tray ready."

As she was putting the finishing touches to the tray, Dick came in.

"Wherefore this thusness?" he inquired.

"I don't like the way Agnes does things," Margery explained. "She is so careless. So I am fixing things myself. Dick," she added briskly, "I'm not going to the game to-morrow."

"Why not?"

"Oh,—because."

"Why,—what's the matter? Had a falling out with Polly and the girls? Well, never mind that; I can arrange for you to go with Sam's sisters. They're old—one of them is nearly twenty-two—but they're nice."

"Of course I haven't had a falling out with Polly!" cried Margery indignantly. "I wouldn't dream of such a thing! Besides, I think Polly would be a hard person to fall out with! It's just this way: Dr. Huston said to-day that Deborah needed cheering up,—and that we had been neglecting her. I hadn't thought of it until he spoke, but I can see that he is right. She did look forlorn and

lonely when I went up to see her this afternoon. If I go to the game to-morrow that will leave her alone all day, with just Bertha and Agnes,—and you know what *they* are!”

“Yes. But I thought that you were crazy to go to the game?”

“I was, but—oh, well!—I’m not going.”

Dick considered the matter in his usual thoughtful fashion. “I see how you feel,” he said at last. “I suppose that we have neglected Deborah. It seems pretty mean, when you think of all the nice little things that she does for us,—lots and lots more than she need to, or than she is paid for. All the same, Miss Margie,” rolling his eyes in comical imitation of Thomas, “it’s my best sanctification dat ye’re a brick.”

Margery felt pleased, and suddenly shy. It was new to her to be praised for unselfishness. To cover her embarrassment she called Dick a “provoking boy,” and in the same breath ordered him to carry the tray up-stairs, and asked him to admire its appearance.

Deborah had tactfully suggested a little earlier in the afternoon that the best Wedgwood had better not be used again, but Mar-

gery had made the tray pretty with the old blue willow-ware in daily use at the farm.

“Now look out, Dick, that you don’t spill that bowl of broth—that’s all the supper poor Deborah gets to-night, and I want it to look dainty. Wait a minute—you’ll be sure to spill something over you—I’ll tie this apron on you.” She unfastened the neat little white apron of Deborah’s that she had borrowed, from around her own waist, and tied it around Dick’s. “There, you make a very pretty French maid. Oh, I wish I had a cap for you. Wait,—I’ll get one!” She ran hastily up to her own room, and by the time that Dick had reached the head of the stairs, she was standing there with a white lace cap in her hands. “Here, put this on! It’s a *bou-doir* cap that Marie Smythe gave to me. There, you look perfectly sweet!”

Dick assumed a most die-away smirk, and hunching up his shoulders in what he fondly imagined to be a ladylike manner, he minced into Deborah’s room, followed by Margery and Benjamin.

“Madame, *vouley de soupey, and de breadey, and de butterey?*” he lisped.

"Well," laughed Deborah, "I don't fancy any 'soupey' very much; but the nonsense of you children is a wonderful sauce."

Giving up the football game seemed easy enough in prospect; but when the end of school came the next day, and Margery had to trudge home by herself to the lonely, quiet old house, it was everything that was hard. Many of the girls and boys had stayed at the school for luncheon, and the very air seemed filled with gayety and color. The girls had worn their brightest sweaters and scarfs, and everybody carried flags, or wore splashing bows of the school colors. And Margery was out of it! Hardest of all, her action in giving up the game was misunderstood and put down to indifference or superiority.

Only Polly seemed to understand; and Dick, of course. As a member of the football team Dick was one of the big men of the day, but he found time to give Margery an encouraging word and a comforting pat on the shoulder as they filed out of the last recitation of the morning.

The encouragement that Dick and Polly

gave her, and the fact that she was never one to give up easily what she had started out to do, was all that kept Margery from turning around, when she was half-way home, and hurrying ignominiously back to the school.

If Deborah suspected that there was something amiss about the game she made no comment, but was so glad to see Margery, and appeared so eager to hear about what everybody was wearing to the game, and saying about it, that by the middle of the afternoon Margery's dissatisfaction had worn off.

"Deborah," said Margery, as the time drew near for the boys to come home, "I want to talk to you about something important. I think that while you're ill I ought to be housekeeper and try to take your place. Agnes is all right, I fancy, if she is bossed a lot,—but things do need a lot of looking after."

Deborah lay still, thinking. It suddenly occurred to her that Margery's staying home from the game might be based on something else than a mere disagreement with Dick or some of the girls. She rather doubted Margery's ability to cope with Agnes, but she de-

cided not to stand in her way if she wished to try it. Deborah's wise old eyes had seen that Margery's strong, rather self-willed nature needed responsibility.

"Very well, dear," she said cordially. "I am sure that you will do it beautifully. It is hard for me to give orders and keep the running of the house in my mind while I am lying here. You can talk over the meals with Agnes, and see that she gives you things that you like. And you might make things look nicer and more homelike for the boys,—I'm sure Agnes doesn't make the table pretty. There's a pile of housekeeping magazines in the library that Mrs. Smedly lent me; suppose you go down and look them over,—perhaps you'll find some suggestions there for pretty table decorations. And while you are doing that, I think that I'll take a little nap."

When Dick and Benjamin came in—wildly elated at the success of the school eleven—they found Margery so deep in reading "hints" on making a family comfortable and happy that she had forgotten that such things as football games existed.

Margery kept bravely to her resolution to

act as deputy housekeeper. Thanks to Deborah's gentle guidance, and to her own native, though untried ability, she managed very well, and the house was certainly a more cheerful and homelike place than when it was left entirely to Agnes.

During the days of her responsibility the pile of housekeeping magazines became familiar to the family at the farm, and Deborah had hard work at times to keep from laughing as she watched Margery searching with comical zeal for suggestions from her oracles. "Let beauty be the key-note of your household," the *Woman's Journal* would urge. "Let nothing be too much trouble to gather beauty," and Margery hurried to decorate the table with an autumnal centerpiece of half a pumpkin, three carrots and a potato, as suggested by that fount of wisdom. "Do not attempt fancy effects in decoration," advised the *Ladies' Intelligencer*, "or have elaborate menus," and Margery at once limited her centerpiece to the chaste simplicity of a spray of ivy in a crystal vase, and ordered nothing but soup for dinner.

Dick and his accomplice in mischief, Sam,

thoroughly enjoyed these efforts, and showed suggestions upon her which they declared they had copied from the housekeeping column in the newspaper. "Never throw away an old sink-drain," was one gem; "it will do as the foundation for a chiffon hat." "Save your old oyster shells," said another; "these, candied, make a delicious dainty to offer at afternoon tea."

The picturesque in cookery appealed to Margery and she urged Agnes to try each new recipe of a florid nature that she discovered.

Agnes rebelled. "Ah don't use no receipts," she declared. "Ah cooks by de grace o' God, ah does."

Finally Agnes, realizing that ornate dishes were Margery's ideal, ordered some vegetable coloring on her own account, and at Sunday dinner served up a wonderful corn-starch pudding shaped like a flag, and colored red, white and blue. Margery decided that she preferred not to eat her patriotism, and Agnes was allowed to go back to the old-fashioned, country dishes at which she was an adept.

From Agnes Margery turned her attention to Dick.

Dick, at fifteen, suffered the usual school-boy spasms of extreme elegance varied by extreme untidiness. His shoes would shine with such brilliance that he had only to look downward to fall, Narcissus-like, in love with his own image, while at the same time his hair showed an unconventionality absolutely untrammelled by combs and brushes. Again, his socks and neckties were of a resplendence equaled only by a poppy-field in its gayest moments; his hair of a flatness and shininess suggesting that each particular hair had been glued into place, and then polished with the best brass polish on the market, a refinement of dandyism marred only by the fact that his collar had plainly seen better days, and many of them. Cuffs he abjured altogether; he was "hardening" his arms, he said, and always wore his shirt sleeves rolled up to his shoulder, however cold the day.

As tactfully as she could Margery dwelt on the charms of clean collars, and Dick invested in a beautiful one of white rubber, warranted never to wear out and never to need laundering; which had the merit of being able to be carried in his pocket and put on, should his

other one not seem equal to the scrutiny of critical eyes, in the back entry, just as the dinner bell rang. She enlarged on cuffs, and Dick continued to wear his shirt sleeves rolled up as usual, but before meals he took the precaution of sticking a pair of cuffs into his coat sleeves. The unattached cuffs usually dived into the soup, or shot into the gravy, at crucial moments.

As a further means of reform, Margery put a toy bank on the table and announced that she was going to fine Dick a penny every time that he rolled his bread into pills, a favorite habit of his which particularly irritated her. Dick grinned. "All right," he said, "if you'll pay up every time that you get a spot on the table-cloth," and he pointed to a cranberry stain with which the young housekeeper had just ornamented the table-cloth.

In the evenings Dick helped her with her lessons and they became good friends, although Margery was so busy, and Dick spent so much time on the athletic field, that they never had time to get much below the surface in each other's lives. Margery was surprised, therefore, when rummaging through a drawer in

one of the bookcases, she discovered a sketch book of drawings of the beautiful old doorways of Renwyck's Town, and learned from Deborah that they had been drawn by Dick. His father, Deborah told her, had been an architect, and Dick longed to be one himself,—a desire which received but scant sympathy from Mr. Morris, who had despised his son-in-law, and grew angry whenever Dick showed any likeness to his father.

But few letters came from Mr. Morris, and in them he did not mention Margery. He seemed to be traveling rapidly from small town to small town, and from ranch to ranch, and he wrote testily that none of his letters, so far, had caught up to him, and that Dick ought to have seen that they had. Just how Dick was to manage it, he did not explain. It was too soon yet for Margery to have any letters from her father and mother, and altogether she had a curiously shut off and detached feeling,—whenever she happened to think about it.

She did not see the doctor again, as he paid his brief visits in the morning while the children were at school, but he sent a message

that she was doing "splendidly," and would "earn that motto soon."

The day after Margery took command at the farm Deborah insisted on being allowed to sit up in the easy chair by the sunny window, well wrapped in two gay old patchwork quilts. "I feel more useful this way,—although I don't have to be useful at all, for Margery takes such wonderful care of everything," she explained to Polly, who had come to spend the afternoon.

Polly looked up from the towel she was cross-stitching for her mother's Christmas present, and regarded Margery with new respect and admiration. "Isn't she fine!" she said cordially.

Margery undertook to read "Pride and Prejudice" aloud to Deborah, and both of them fell in love with sweet, witty Elizabeth Bennet, and laughed until they cried over Mr. Bennet and Mr. Collins. Gentle Deborah greatly admired the haughty Mr. Darcy. "If I had married," she said, "that's the kind of man I'd have liked him to be." But Margery preferred the genial and vivacious Mr. Bingley, and even had a sneaking liking for the villainous, but amiable, Mr. Wickham.

But when Deborah was weary or suffering, "Pride and Prejudice" was put aside, and the little old Bible of Deborah's slipped out from beneath the pillows that propped her up in the big chair. "Just read me some more about David," Deborah would say; "that rests me as nothing else does. I like to think of him away up there by himself in those lonely hills, and I love the description of him, 'ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon.' Strange how he was being fitted for life, wasn't it, in all those lonely years? I suppose that he learned to play on his harp to keep himself from going crazy from loneliness, and he practiced sling shooting to amuse himself, and to keep the wolves away from his flock,—if he hadn't had those years of trial he never could have faced his opportunities. He probably couldn't have played for Saul, and he certainly couldn't have settled Goliath with a sling shot. That's the way with the rest of us, I suppose,—we grumble because we are stuck in some lonely or dreary or dull stretch of life, when really we are being taught something that will be the making of us."

Margery grew to love those quiet hours with Deborah. Often they came late in the afternoon, before the lights were lighted; Dick would occasionally slip in, his manner carefully offhand and casual, but showing in spite of himself that underneath his boyish indifference he, too, appreciated the help and comfort of Deborah's simple philosophy.

But best of all, Margery loved Benjamin's bedtime, when she went up-stairs to cover him up, and to see that the window was properly opened, and to hear his whispered confidences. The affectionate little lad had wormed his way deeply into her heart, and she was quite sure that another such handsome and charming child never lived. On his side, Benjamin thought her all that any fairy princess was ever supposed to be.

"You're awful nice, Margie!" he cried one night. "You're awful nice to come and take care of us all. I'll tell you what I'll do for you, Margie: I'll"—his gratitude sought for expression and finally landed on the supreme sacrifice of all—"I'll marry you when I grow up! Won't that be nice for you, Margie?"

CHAPTER XVII

RICE

As Margery settled deeper into the rather exacting work at school, the first fervor of her attempts at housekeeping wore off. But she continued to show considerable latent ability, and managed her part in the running of the household with, for so young a girl, force and character. Deborah, watching her with kindly, affectionate interest, could see the capable, sensible woman Margery was to be emerging from the spoiled and petulant child. Dick occasionally made wicked allusions in Margery's presence to the nice, kind elephant that tried to take care of the poor, motherless chicks by sitting on them, but Margery was used to Dick's teasing by this time, and paid not the slightest attention to him. From every one else she received an amount of praise that might have been in a fair way to turn her head had not that wholesome fall, which so often follows swiftly and

surely on our pride, saved her from any priggish aftermath of her own perfections.

It began with the fireman's parade in the next town, a festivity of such brilliance that neither Agnes nor the farmer's daughter felt that they could miss it.

"Yas'm," Agnes declared, "ah's just got ter shed my responsibles fer one day an' goter that parade if dis whole farm goes ter rack an' ruin. Yas'm, they's a-goin' ter have thirty colored gemmen dressed up like Uncle Sam, an' a float showin' Marse Christopher Columbus a-makin' de fust American flag, an'—well, ah declare ah just couldn't tell you all der's goin' ter be. Yas'm, ah's just got ter go!"

It was finally settled that the servants at the farm should go to the parade, but that before they went the table should be set, and everything arranged that Margery would have no trouble in taking Agnes' place for one afternoon and evening. Agnes planned out a simple supper, and gave Margery such explicit directions that she felt she could get the meal in her sleep.

The afternoon of the parade, when Margery returned from a short drive with Polly,

she found the house still and practically deserted. Deborah was asleep, and the boys were playing football in the south meadow; so, dumping off her things, Margery settled down for a quiet half hour with "The Old Curiosity Shop." The light grew dim, and Margery hastily lighted the candle in the old brass candlestick on the bureau that she might finish "just one more chapter" before she went down-stairs to the kitchen to get supper. The just one more chapter stretched into two, and three, then four and five; the candle burnt down to a little lump of grease, and Margery's straining eyes could scarcely see the print as she still read on, enchanted.

Suddenly the old clock in the library below began to whirr and wheeze. "One," it hiccupped, "two, three, four, five, six!"

"Margery," called Deborah, "are you getting supper, dear?"

With a startled gasp Margery pitched her book on the bureau, blew out the flickering candle, and dashed down the stairs. The kitchen was dark save for a single ray of light coming from the stove; in her frantic

search for matches she fell over the rocking-chair, knocked against the table and sent something crashing against the range. There was an instant sizzling, as though a liquid had landed on the hot stove, and a disagreeable smell of some sweet substance burning.

At last her groping fingers encountered a box of matches, and lighting the lamp, she saw that she had upset the jar of strawberry jam which Agnes had set out for supper.

“What *shall* I do?” she wailed, as, holding her nose, she wiped up the sticky, scorching mess. “The boys will be in any minute as hungry as bears! Oh, dear,—*why* did I read so late? Bother! Bother! Bother!”

Full of disgust and impatience at herself, she inspected the dainties spread on the table: a loaf of Agnes' best nut-cake, always a special treat at the farm; half a cold tongue; and a bowl of cold, cooked rice, to be made into rice-cakes. Margery was extravagantly fond of nut-cake, so she decided on cutting the loaf at once, and by a generous slice encouraging herself for her further labors. She cut her thumb—of course!—just as Deborah had once prophesied would happen if she did

not learn to hold a knife properly. Margery hated the sight of blood, and that, together with the pain from the cut, made her feel sick and faint. Her knees wobbling uncertainly under her, she staggered out to the back porch, where the crisp, cold air revived her, and she managed to bandage the hacked thumb with her handkerchief.

“Oh, dear,” she sighed, tenderly pulling the bandage tighter around her thumb, “I’m so tired! I’m homesick; I wish that I were back home with Mamma and Papa. If ever I do get home I’ll *never* go away again! Oh, Mamma!—I miss you so! Scat! You rascal!”

This last to old Ebenezer, the barn cat, who came skulking out of the house, carrying something in his mouth. Ebenezer’s visit had been highly profitable to himself,—as was only too evident to Margery when she hurried into the kitchen. The cold tongue was gone!

As she stood staring at the empty platter there was a prodigious stamping of feet and shouting in the back entry, and Dick appeared at the door to announce that he had brought



“WHAT’S THIS IN THE FRYING-PAN?”

Sam Bennett back with him to supper. He received no answer beyond a groan, and after waiting a moment for a more cordial response, he vanished.

With the calm of despair Margery added the eggs to the rice—forgetting the flour and the salt—and slapped a spoonful of the mixture into the frying-pan.

“Isn’t supper ready *yet?*” demanded Dick, coming into the kitchen a few minutes later. “We’re mighty hungry! What’s this in the frying-pan?” he added, wrinkling a critical nose. “Rice-cakes? Looks like fried soup! Great Scott, Marge, a blind duck in a thunder-storm could cook better than you do!”

This fine specimen of masculine tact was too much for the amateur cook. Bursting into tears, she flung the remaining rice batter at Dick’s astonished head, and rushed from the kitchen.

Safe in her own room, she flung herself down on the bed, and burying her head under the folded quilt at its foot, wept tragically. The homesickness which, for the past few days, had been hovering over her like a hawk over a chicken, had swooped down.

But the tears would not last long, and after vainly trying to squeeze out a few extra ones, she stuck her head out from under the quilt, and lay thinking. Was she to be beaten and kept weeping in her room by a cut thumb and fried rice-cakes? No, indeed.

She sat up to consider the matter. With a choking sob she recalled a phrase often on her father's lips, "Be a sport, little girl. Be a sport!" Well, she supposed that she wasn't being much of a sport now; besides, Deborah must be wanting her supper. She would have to brace up and go down-stairs to get her some toast and tea. But oh, dear, how she did dread facing those boys!

As, cherry-nosed and swollen-eyed, Margery marched down the stairs she met Dick, carrying a lighted lamp in one hand, and in the other a plate, whereon lay a dejected and leathery-looking fried egg, and several pieces of bacon.

"Oh, hello, Marge," he beamed. "I was just bringing you up some supper. Hadn't you better come down and help me get Deborah's?—you know how she likes her tray fixed better than I do. She's been call-

ing for you. And see here, kid," he added shyly, "I'm awfully sorry I upset you. You bet I am!"

"Mercy, Dick,—it wasn't your fault! I'm sorry I was such an idiot. But I was so tired, and Ebenezer stole the tongue Agnes had put out for us, and I upset the jam all over the stove, and it scorched horribly, and I cut my thumb,—and then you came in and added the last straw!"

"That's too bad," Dick sympathized. "I'm mighty sorry. Why didn't you tell me, and I could have helped you? I can cook eggs to beat any cook living," and Dick proudly held up the plate with the rapidly chilling fried egg.

"Thank you," said Margery sweetly as she accepted the plate; "that looks—very nice. Oh, Dick!" she cried as Dick shifted the lamp to his other hand, and the light fell on his head, "your hair is all full of rice!"

Dick ran his hand through his hair, and withdrew it well covered with rice batter. "So it is!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "That's what Benjamin and Sam were laughing about,—I wondered what had struck them,

and they wouldn't tell me the joke. Well, that's one on me!"

"It certainly is one on you," giggled Margery.

After a moment's uncertainty Dick joined in her amusement, and they leaned against the banisters in peals of laughter.

"What's the joke?" cried Deborah from above. "And where's my supper?"

"Oh, dear," Margery gasped, as, weak from so much merriment following upon so much grief, she sank on the bottom step. "I beg your pardon for throwing the stuff at you. Oh, dear,—if anybody ever says 'rice' to me, I shall die!"

And indeed, for days after that, neither Dick nor Margery considered anything to be half so witty as the mere mention of the one word—rice.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE L. A. L. MEETS

“HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW was born in Maine. When he grew up he went to Spain.”

With a long yawn Margery put down her pencil, and clasping her hands behind her head, leaned back in her chair. What else could she find to say? The L. A. L. was to have its initial meeting at Polly's house the next afternoon, and each member was to read an original paper. Polly's cousin, Miss Hoover, the novelist, had offered to give a prize of a silver pin for the best effort. And poor Margery, who burned to achieve literary fame, could think of nothing to write about!

“Oh, Margie, Deborah wants you, please,” announced Benjamin, suddenly appearing. “Pshaw!” as he caught sight of the pencil lying on the table. “You've chewed all the paint off the end of my new pencil! It was a ten-center, too!”

“I’m awfully sorry, Benjamin dear,” Margery apologized, genuinely distressed at the havoc she had wrought. “I’ll buy you a new one, really I will,—two new ones. You see,” lowering her voice confidentially, “I’m trying to write a paper for to-morrow. Don’t tell Dick, for we don’t want the boys to know—they’d make fun of us—but Polly and Esther and I are all going to write papers, and then to-morrow we’re going to read them at Polly’s house, and Miss Hoover, Polly’s cousin, will give us a prize for the best one. I’m stuck,—simply can’t think of a thing to write about. Esther ruled travel articles out, because she says she’s never been anywhere, so we have to either write an original story, or a sketch of some writer. It would be easy enough if I could only write about some of the places out home.”

Benjamin continued to ruefully inspect his battered pencil. “Deborah knows lots of stories,” he suggested, “about Indians and bears and things. Will you get me a plaid pencil like Reggie Smedly’s, Margie? And a green one, with a rubber on the end? You can get awful nice pencils at Wilson’s, Margie.”

"Awful-ly nice," corrected Margery, automatically. "Wasn't I stupid not to think of Deborah?"

Deborah proved to be a gold mine of old legends and quaint stories, and it was with high hopes of winning the prize that Margery presented herself at the Jamesons' front door on the following afternoon.

Mr. and Mrs. Jameson were standing in the hall and turned to speak to her as she entered. "So this is the little girl who is taking care of them out at the farm so splendidly?" exclaimed Mr. Jameson; "and now you are going to cover yourself with literary honors? Well, well, what the young people of the present day can't do isn't worth doing. No wonder that you're all thin, like Polly, though."

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Jameson could be accused of being unduly thin; indeed, they made up for Polly's shortcomings in the matter of avoirdupois by both being exceedingly plump, a nice, rosy, cheerful plumpness. They themselves, however, did not admire it, and were 'always intending to undergo some new treatment of exercise or dieting that

they believed would make them over into graceful, willowy beings, and always finding that the weather was too warm, or too cold, to undertake the treatment just then, and so postponing it until the season should be "more settled."

Polly appeared at the head of the stairs. "Come up, Margery," she called. "Esther's here, and we will begin just as soon as Mother and Cousin Elizabeth can be persuaded to join us."

The meeting of the L. A. L. was held in Polly's own room, that remarkable apartment which Mrs. Jameson was rarely able to enter without saying pathetically, "Well, Polly darling, if you and your father think this room is pretty, I suppose it is all right; but to me it looks exactly like a dog's dinner,—all made up of scraps of odds and ends."

Polly, indeed, had indulged her fickle taste to the utmost. On her twelfth birthday her parents had furnished the room as her birthday present in mahogany, heavy, comfortable and handsome, like Mr. and Mrs. Jameson themselves. But it was not at all according to Polly's ideal, and she had seldom gone to

the city with her father without that amiable and doting man being persuaded into buying some new piece of furniture "to liven things up, Father dear." Her tastes never ran in the same lines twice, and on one day Mr. Jameson would be beguiled into buying a Louis Quinze gilt sofa, while on the next he would pay the bill for a massive carved oak chair that looked as though it had come from a doge's palace, but which really had been manufactured by the hundreds in Michigan.

Her taste in pictures was as catholic as her taste in furniture, and cheek by jowl with a beautiful copy of the Madonna of the Coronation were pinned up rows of the pudgy, squidgy infants advertising a popular brand of soup. Over the bookcase hung a quaint old sampler, on which the laborious fingers of a long-ago great-grandmother had cross-stitched with more industry than knowledge of zoölogy :

“ Oh, may Thy powerful word
Inspire a breathing worm
To rush into Thy kingdom, Lord,
To take it as by storm.”

Across the room from this effusion hung a

salmon-cheeked young lady who simpered archly at a young gentleman in scarlet hunting-coat and jockey-cap, who had evidently just presented her with a box of stove-blackening ; a masterpiece which the Jamesons' grocer had bestowed on all his patrons the Christmas when Polly was ten, and which had so charmed her that she had insisted on having it framed.

At fourteen Polly herself had come to laugh at these decorative eccentricities. But they had been dear to her childish heart, and she remained loyal to them, as she did to Rosabelle Marie, the battered old doll whom she had loved, and who now enjoyed a well-earned repose in her chair in a corner of the room.

Under the lovely picture of the stove-blackening lady, Polly had placed a table covered with Mrs. Jameson's best table-cloth. On this she placed four rolls of manuscript with all the pomp and dignity of a colored preacher taking up the collection. With a bow she turned toward the judges, Miss Hoover and Mrs. Jameson, who had seated themselves on a frail gift sofa that threatened to collapse at any moment, and announced :

“Our distinguished visitor, Miss Margaret Morris, will open the meeting by reading her paper. Oh, Margery, won't you? Oh, go on,—don't be shy! Won't you really? Well, Esther then. Oh, Esther, do,—please! Well, then,—since everybody is so bashful and modest all of a sudden, I'll have to break the ice and read my paper first. I ought to be glad—perhaps!—to catch this noble audience's enthusiasm while it is at high tide and hasn't had a chance to cool down, and to nail it down with my own literary flower. How's that for mixed metaphors, Cousin Elizabeth?”

“Well, my literary gem is in the style of the novel Lizzie, that's Cousin Amy's pretty little waitress, lent me one time when I was visiting Cousin Amy, and was—don't mention that I mentioned it—nearly dying of dullness. I'm sure everybody here will appreciate its high-brow tone.”

“Suppose you begin to read, dear,—you can do your talking afterward,” suggested Mrs. Jameson, mildly.

“Anon! Anon! I'll begin as soon as I've made my bow.” Polly bowed and commenced:

“With a cold sneer Sir Algernon De Willoughby De Montague gazed down at the lovely Lady Geraldine. ‘To-morrow,’ he muttered, ‘to-mor-r-row you shall be my bride.’ Lady Geraldine’s damask cheek turned snowy white, and her great, beautiful dark eyes drooped. ‘My father has not given his consent,’ she said, her silvery voice as soft as a zephyr murmuring through the forest at even. ‘Even so,’ returned the other, a note of triumph in his cruel, rich voice. ‘Alas!’ sighed the unhappy bride-elect. ‘Water! I swoon!’ As Sir Algernon stepped to the bell to summon a footman, a tall, handsome man, in the uniform of a hussar, handsome as a Greek god, dashed toward the beautiful, swooning girl, and lifting her fragile form in his arms, hurried from the room.”

Polly paused and took a long breath. “That’s all of that part,” she announced. “My paper is in two sections. Just as I had finished writing the part that I’ve just read, Mother made me stop and take my shoes to the shoemaker and see if he couldn’t do something to take the squeak out of them. When I was trotting home again from the shoemak-

er's, Sam Bennett came up back of me on his bicycle—he has no business riding on the sidewalks—and rang his bell suddenly in my ear. I squawked, and hopped frantically off the curbstone, with the result that I caught my tongue between my teeth, and gave it an awful bite. Then I scolded Sam for having startled me so,—and altogether, by the time I got home, I couldn't remember how I had meant to finish my story. But I couldn't help remembering my poor tongue, so I wrote a sad, sad poem about it. At the close of the reading of the poem the audience will please rise and join in weeping. Here goes :

“ Then did Hiawatha stepping,
Stepping off the curbstone, quickly,
Curbstone, dark, and hard, and stony,
Curbstone, wide, and brown, and muddy,
Curbstone leading to the gutter,
With his tongue between his teeth,
With his red tongue 'twixt his teeth,
Bite his tongue betwixt his strong teeth,
As he stepped from off the curbstone.
Bite so hard it brought the tears his eyes to,
So hard it made him mutter words unwise, too,
Made him scowl, and dance, and splutter.
Thus did Hiawatha, stepping from the curb-
stone, bite his tongue through.

"There!" exploded Polly with relief, plumping down on her mother's lap, a proceeding which, considering the heavy burden it already bore, threatened to finish the life of the little sofa altogether. "Now then, Margery will have to read hers."

Margery got up rather slowly, and unrolled her manuscript. While Polly had been reading, Margery had been regarding Miss Hoover with a whole-hearted absorption so eager and unconscious that Miss Hoover had smiled to herself as she pretended not to notice it. At first Margery had been disappointed; this quiet, middle-aged woman, with the sweet, sensible face, was far from her ideal of what a successful novelist ought to look like. But she forgot her disappointment when Miss Hoover laughed at Polly's nonsense, a musical, merry laugh that seemed to reveal a sympathetic, genuine personality. Margery at once began to yield her that devotion a young girl so often has for an older woman, and palpitated with dread lest Miss Hoover should not approve of her or her attempt at story telling.

"I'm afraid my story isn't bright and funny

like Polly's," she said. "I haven't any Sir Willoughby about mine. Mine is just a story of the old Colonial days that Deborah told me.

"In the early days of this country's history," she began, reading carefully and distinctly, "when the settlers often lived in lonely clearings in the woods, there dwelt somewhere in the forests of old West Jersey a Quaker couple named Heuling and their two children, a boy and a girl. In those times, when there was accident or illness, neighbors had to act for each other as doctors and nurses. One afternoon as the Heulings were just finishing making the family soap, boiling it up in a big cauldron, hung gypsy fashion over a fire in the clearing by the front door, their nearest neighbor, who lived five miles away, came riding up. 'Friend Reuben Heuling,' he called, as soon as he was within speaking distance, 'will thee and thy wife come to my help? My good wife Mary is very ill.' As soon as was possible Reuben Heuling saddled his horse and, taking his wife up behind him, hurried with the neighbor to the aid of the sick woman. Martha Heuling felt rather timid about leaving her little boy and girl

alone in the cabin, for night was falling, and they were only six and seven respectively. But it could not be helped, so she bade them stick close to the cabin, and to run indoors and bar the door should any noise startle them.

“After their parents had ridden away, Clement and Agnes Heuling played about the big soap cauldron, watching the dying embers of the fire, and finally throwing water on it to quench them entirely. Suddenly a crashing through the woods and a growl sent them trembling into the house. Hastily barring the door, they peeped through the opening which served for a window. There, sniffing at the cauldron of hot soap, was a huge, clumsy bear. The hot cauldron burnt his nose, and with a growl he dropped back and struck at it with his paw. That shook the cauldron, and some of the hot soap spilled over on his paw. With another growl, again he struck at the cauldron, and again the hot soap spilled over him. Then the frightened children saw him stand up on his hind legs, and with a long, angry growl commence to hug the cauldron as though it were human

and he wanted to hug it to death. It burnt him terribly, of course, for it had been heated so thoroughly over the fire that it held its heat for a long time. The more it burnt him, the tighter he hugged and the louder he growled, and the tighter he hugged the worse it burned. 'Clement,' whispered Agnes, 'father's gun!' Then Clement, little boy of six as he was, climbed up, and took his father's gun down from above the fireplace where it hung. Pioneer children, they knew how to load it, and then together they carried it to the window. Carefully they aimed, and then together they fired. The recoil sent them flying; when they picked themselves up, there was the bear lying dead. They were too frightened, however, to risk leaving the cabin, and waited patiently until the moon rose high above the trees, and their father and mother returned. But it was many a long day before they forgot that bear."

"That was fine," cried Miss Hoover. "And so clearly read. I enjoyed that ever so much, my dear."

Margery blushed with pleasure. "It was all Deborah, really," she said frankly. "She

told me the story and helped me to write it. I'd have made a fizzle of it without her."

"Now then, Esther," Polly commanded, "you read yours."

"You read it," she whispered, shoving her neatly written paper at Polly.

Polly laughed. "All right, but I don't read nearly as well as you do. Well, since you won't ——

" 'About two hundred years ago, one chilly afternoon in autumn, a fair young girl sat alone in a tower room of a lonely Scotch castle. Her lovely blond head reclined on her small, white hand, and her sweet, thoughtful eyes fell on the floor.'"

"Hope she picked them up," threw in Polly.

" 'Now and then she sighed (Usually spelled s-i-g-h-e-d, Esther, not s-i-e-d) for —— ' "

"Polly," interrupted Mrs. Jameson, "come out in the hall with me."

They disappeared for a few minutes, and when they came back Polly was visibly chastened. "Now, having had my lecture for being rude, I'll go on," she said meekly. "Really, Esther dear," slipping her arm

around Esther's neck, "I didn't mean to do anything to hurt your feelings."

Esther laughed. "Oh, I don't mind you, Polly,—I suppose Agag happened to be on the job again," she added, teasingly.

Mrs. Jameson laughed, too, and shook her head ruefully. "When Polly was little," she said, "she used to get what she called 'kinkajew.' In other words, so happy and excited that she simply didn't know what she was doing. If this amount of literature excites her so, and makes her so 'kinkajew,' I dread to think what will happen if she ever realizes her ambition and becomes a writer and lecturer."

"She will probably stop in the middle of a lecture she is giving," teased Miss Hoover, "and begin to career madly round and round the platform. When her startled manager comes hurriedly forward to find out if she has been taken ill, Polly will sweetly explain that he really mustn't mind, as she is merely feeling 'kinkajew,' because she is enjoying lecturing so much to such a nice, appreciative audience."

Esther and Margery laughed, but Polly

maintained a severe solemnity, although her eyes twinkled. "If you ladies are ready," she remarked, "I will go on with this highly instructive and profitable tale :

" ' Now and then she sighed, for she was almost the last of her brothers and sisters to be left in the old nest, "whence all but she had fled," and she was lonely. Idly she drew a sheet of paper toward her and began to muse on the verses she had been writing the day before. The door opened, and her little sister Elizabeth came into the room. "I have been writing a ballad, my dear," said Lady Anne. "I am oppressing my heroine with misfortune; I have sent her lover to sea, broken her father's arm, made her father fall sick, and given her old Robin for a lover, but I wish to load her with a fifth sorrow, poor thing! Help me, I pray!" "Steal the cow, Sister Anne," suggested little Elizabeth. So Lady Anne stole the cow, and the ballad was finished, which made Lady Anne famous, after which our club is named.' " Polly sat down and fanned her flushed face.

"Fine," declared Miss Hoover. "That was very interesting, Esther, and must have cost

you some hours at the library. Let me see—Auld Robin was the shepherd who told on Lady Anne and the rest of the children when they tried to run away, wasn't he? He certainly had his name made famous as punishment, didn't he? I was reading to Polly and her mother one evening here that when Lady Anne sang the ballad to an old gentleman, a neighbor, he grew very angry and cried, 'Ah, the auld rascal! I ken wha stealt the puir lassie's coo,—it was auld Robin himsel'!' But now for the pin, I suppose."

"How are you going to decide, Cousin Elizabeth, which of three such geniuses deserves the pin?" asked Polly. "You will have to chop it up in three pieces."

Miss Hoover opened the little silk work-bag she carried on her arm. "I thought of that, Polly," she smiled, holding out three little white boxes. "I really couldn't decide among three such interesting and different papers,—but I should like to have the proud distinction of giving their membership badges to the to-be-famous members of the L. A. L."

The pins were quaint little enameled daisies. "Skiudily scrumptious!" Polly declared, as

she fastened her pin on the left side of her blouse like a policeman's badge. "We can't keep these pins secret,—we'll just have to show them, and tell about the L. A. L."

"I'll give a pin to the girl who, at the end of a month, can carry on a conversation with the fewest 'awfullys,' and 'crazys' and 'simply wild about its,'" Mrs. Jameson remarked. "I'm afraid that Polly won't win that prize!"

"I'm perfectly crazy about your offer, Mother dear," said Polly saucily. "And I'm *awfully* certain that I'll win the pin. I'll be *terribly* disappointed if I don't, for I'm *simply wild about* the idea. All right, Mother, I really will try to speak proper, dignified English, but it's awfully hard,—oh, dear, I mean it's hard. Why so silent, Margery Daw?"

Margery finished fastening her pin into the orange tie she was wearing. "I was thinking," she said slowly. "Yes, thinking," she went on, paying no attention to Polly's dramatic gesture of surprise, "what fun writing these silly stories and reading them has been."

Polly crossed her eyes in token of her gratitude. "Thank you, sweet one, for your honest opinion of my literary efforts!"

Margery laughed and slipped her arm through Polly's. "Oh, you know what I mean,—I mean I was thinking that I never should have imagined that there could be so much fun in such a simple little pleasure."

"I know how you feel," said Polly, with that ready sympathy which was one of her charms. "Sometimes it seems as though having everything you wanted was the only thing that could make you happy, and then suddenly you find that that hasn't anything to do with it. Let's form a society for the promotion of simple pleasures for simple minds," she added, for she never could be serious for long. "And now for the hot chocolate,—*with* big fat marshmallows to put in it."

CHAPTER XIX

“THAT BABY IS *ME!*”

“I’M sorry, Polly, but I’ll have to skip now,” said Esther as the girls finished their hot chocolate. “I promised Mother that I’d go around to Grandmother’s while I’m here in town. Good-bye, Margery. Good-bye, Polly; I’ve had a perfect time.”

“Oh, Polly!” exclaimed Mrs. Jameson, coming to the dining-room door as Esther left. “What do you suppose! I promised Aunt Helen—don’t you remember?—to take her some partridge berries for her ‘shut-ins’ when I go up to the city to-morrow,—and I forgot all about it until just this minute!”

“Can’t you send William out to the woods for some?”

“William is driving the car for your father this afternoon. Do you think anybody in town here would have any to sell?”

“I’m sure nobody has. But Margery and I can go and pick you some.”

"Oh, do you think you can, Polly dear? And what about Margery—does she have to go right back to the farm?"

"I can go with Polly, Mrs. Jameson," Margery said. "I don't have to go right home, for Deborah is practically well now,—she's up and around the house, at any rate. She had a pretty sharp attack of rheumatism, but it didn't last long, fortunately."

"Oh, that's fine, dear. Well, suppose you girls go right off then. Aunt Helen is quite old now, and I do hate to disappoint her in anything."

As the girls were climbing into the brake-cart, Mrs. Jameson came flying out of the house.

"Where are you going for the berries, Polly?"

"To that little strip of woods over on the pike,—that's where the best berries grow."

"I thought that you would go there. Won't you, while you're so near to Mr. Morris's, just pop over and leave this little bottle of elderberry wine? The other bottle I sent was such a tiny one,—and the nurse

seemed so pleased with it, when she telephoned to thank me, that I thought I would send some more. And while you are there, Polly, I wish you would just ask to see the nurse,—and find out from her how Mr. Morris is doing now. It doesn't seem kind not to inquire,—and yet I hate to telephone too often. The ringing of a telephone bell is so annoying when one is ill! Don't stay late,—remember, dear!"

Polly gathered up the reins and Spy moved off. Laughing and chattering, the two girls drove through the quiet old streets, already grown so familiar to Margery, to the broad white turnpike, and out to the little strip of pine and oak trees where grew, in Polly's estimation, the most brilliant and waxy-leaved partridge berries.

The woods proved to be a treasure house; not only did they find the partridge berries, but here and there some especially brilliant spray of gorgeous oak leaves that must be gathered and piled into the carriage to be taken home. So long, in spite of Mrs. Jameson's warning, did they linger that it was far into the afternoon before they reached the

wide steps that led up to Mr. Morris's front door.

"We will just ask to see the nurse for a minute," Polly explained in a low voice, as she lifted the heavy brass knocker and let it fall.

There was silence. "Perhaps you had better knock again,—you did it so very gently," Margery was suggesting, when the door was partly opened by a rosy-cheeked, red-haired Irish lass who stood barring the way.

"Good-afternoon,—may I see the nurse, please?"

"Sure. Yes'm, I mean."

"Well, will you tell her that Miss Jameson would like to speak to her. I'll only keep her a few minutes."

"Sure. Yes'm, I mean. Come in. Oh, begorry! I forgot!" The maid dived into the shadowy depths of the hall, to return with a silver plate, which she thrust under Polly's nose. "Put yer tacket there," she commanded.

"Tacket?" Polly was puzzled.

"Yes, yer tacket."

“What do you mean by my tacket? I don’t understand.”

“A tacket? Why, they takes them up on the railway cars.”

“Oh! A *ticket!* Why, I haven’t any ticket.”

“Well, thin,—yez can’t come in.”

The girls stared at her in bewilderment. They had had but little experience in calling at houses where there was illness, and wondered if it was customary to admit only those who had tickets.

“Well —— ” began Polly, doubtfully.

“What do the ladies wish?” asked a voice within the hall, and another maid in neat cap and apron appeared at the door.

Polly explained, and the maid reproved the first with a sharp dig of her elbow. “Let the young ladies in,” she whispered, “ye dumb thing, yez. If yez ladies will step in,” she added to Polly and Margery, “very soft-like, I’ll git the nurse for yez. That girl’s so new and green, and so dumb,” she explained as she ushered the visitors across a wide, stately hall, “that ye nivir know what she’ll do next. I’ve been trying to teach her about taking

folks' cards on a tray when they come to call, —but she is so green she keeps callin' the cards 'tackets,' and I doubt if she ivir learns."

Hysterical with giggles, which the solemn atmosphere of the place rather augmented than subdued, Polly and Margery tiptoed across the slippery floor, and were shown into the library which occupied the whole ground floor of the left wing of the house.

"If yez young ladies will just wait here, I'll send Miss Tucker, that's the day nurse, to yez as soon as I can. The doctor is here now, and yez may have a bit of a wait," and switching on the lights, the maid went out and closed the door after her.

Polly flung herself on a divan, and buried her head in a sofa pillow. "Oh, my dear," she laughed, "I shall never forget your face as long as I live. 'Put yer tacket there.' Oh, Margery, we must stop snickering,—it would be awful if the nurse came in and found us carrying on like this! I'm going to give you a package of 'tackets' for a Christmas present. Margery, you *must* stop laughing," and Polly sat up very straight and tried to look grim.

But Margery, doubled up in a big chair that

threatened to engulf her, could not subdue the giggles with which she was afflicted. "I can't—stop," she gasped. "It wouldn't be so funny—if everything wasn't so still and solemn! Oh, do go away,—and don't—talk to me—or I shall die!"

"All right; but you must behave," Polly scolded, then giggled weakly, herself. "I'll look around the room. It's beautiful, isn't it?"

It was a beautiful room, one that showed it belonged to a man of taste, as well as a scholar and a traveler. Low bookcases of some rich dark wood, filled with well-used books, were built in everywhere one could possibly be fitted, and on their tops stood rare pottery and brasses brought from all over the world. At each end of the long room were great fireplaces, and before them, drawn up cozily, were divans and easy chairs that invited one to stay forever. Long windows on three sides of the room opened out on a brick terrace, and gave vistas of the old-fashioned, box-bordered garden, and beyond the garden, the woods and meadows, and the winding creek.

The books drew Polly like a bee to clover.

“Look, Margery,” she demanded in a shrill whisper, “look at this lovely set of Dickens, —and look, here are all of Stevenson’s. In a perfectly scrumptious edition, too. Don’t you adore Stevenson? Which one of his characters is your favorite?” Polly didn’t wait for an answer, which was just as well, as Margery would have been unable to give one. “Mine’s Alan Breck. I’m crazy about the way he says ‘I’m no so verra bonnie, but I’m leal to them I lo’e.’ I wanted to take that for my motto, and have it stamped under my monogram on my correspondence paper, but Mother said ‘Nay.’ That’s the way she always does put a quietus on all my brilliant schemes. Tragic, isn’t it? Oh, look at this wonderful carved frame! Father says Mr. Morris is a great something or other, —oh, yes, a great connoisseur.”

Margery looked about her with satisfaction. She liked the rich, soft rugs and the great, easy chairs; the pots of gay chrysanthemums brightening the dark corners. Her luxury-loving soul felt more at home here than at the farm, with its old-fashioned, almost austere simplicity.

“Margery,” Polly called softly, “do come here.”

Rising, Margery tiptoed to the other end of the room, where Polly stood beside a small table.

“Just look at these photographs,” Polly commanded. “Isn’t that woman the prettiest thing?” pointing to a small framed photograph standing on the table. “That’s exactly the way you will look when you grow up. That is, if you’re a good little girl, and always eat up all the crusts of your bread, and fold your clothes up neatly every night, and don’t ‘sass’ your dear friend Polly, and so forth, and so forth. This must be Mr. Morris’s son; it looks so much like him. And did you ever see such a funny fat baby? Why,—what’s the matter?”

Wide-eyed, Margery was staring at the photographs. “Polly,” she gasped, “that’s Papa and Mamma,—and that baby is *me!*”

“Good lackaday!” cried Polly, and collapsed into the nearest chair.

CHAPTER XX

“WHOO? WHOO?”

“HUSH, there’s somebody!” There were footsteps and the sound of voices in the hall outside, and Margery listened anxiously. She did not feel like seeing anybody just then. The footsteps stopped outside the library door, and a low, murmured conversation followed. The voices died away, and Margery turned back to the photographs.

“Polly, there’s something queer,” she quavered.

“But are you *sure* they are photographs of your father and mother?”

“Of course I know they are Papa and Mamma. Besides,—oh, Polly, just look at this!” and Margery thrust a small kodak picture she had taken from the mantelpiece into Polly’s hand. It was a snap shot of a young girl, her face so deeply shaded by a wide hat that the features were a blur.

"That's me!" she exclaimed more vehemently than grammatically.

Polly looked rather dubious, and Margery impatiently turned the picture over. On the back was written in Margery's thick and schoolgirlish hand:

"Dear Grandpapa:—I am sending this instead of a letter,—will write when I can find time. I am having a perfect time. Love, Margery."

"Oh," said Polly blankly.

"That explains everything."

"Everything?"

"Dick. And not knowing about him. And everything being different from what I expected. Oh, everything that puzzled me."

Practical, quick-minded Polly considered the question. "Do you mean, Margery, that you think your grandfather isn't your grandfather, and that Mr. Morris is?"

"Yes,—I don't belong at the farm at all."

"But, Margery, I should have thought that you would have had sense enough to know when you first got to the farm that you didn't belong there! It seems awfully queer!"

Margery hung her head and twisted her

ring nervously around her finger. “Well, you see, Polly,” she explained, “I suppose the real reason why I was so awfully stupid was that for years and years Papa and Mamma have talked and talked about Grandpapa and Renwyck’s Town, and made plans and made plans to come on (and then something happening, like business or Papa’s having appendicitis, to prevent it)—so that I just got dead tired and sick of the very sound of Renwyck’s Town. And I never listened to anything they said about Grandpapa’s place if I could help it, so that really *I* didn’t know what kind of a place to expect. It seemed all right on the surface,—both places are in Renwyck’s Town, and belong to Mr. Henry Morrises. I bet you’d have done the same thing.”

Polly ignored the last part of Margery’s speech, merely remarking sympathetically, “I know how you felt about Renwyck’s Town. Katie Van Loon’s father comes from Holland, and Katie says she is so tired of hearing about what a wonderful place Holland is, and what models the girls there are, that she wishes all the dykes would burst

and the whole of Holland would disappear under the sea, and that nobody would ever have to hear of it again."

"And then Mamma was so awfully optimistic about how I was going to love it at Renwyck's Town,—when I knew that I shouldn't,—that it was rather satisfactory to have everything at the farm plain, and lonely, and Grandpapa away. Mamma's so awfully cheerful that it makes you go the other way sometimes."

Polly dug down among her fund of literary references. "Yes," she said, sagely, "somebody said that a 'pessimist is a person who lives with an optimist.'"

Both girls giggled.

"You mustn't think, Polly, that Mamma isn't nice. She's lovely. Lots prettier than this picture, and awfully young-looking and girlish. I guess I'm just an old grouch," and Margery regarded the photograph of her irrepressibly enthusiastic parent with tear-dimmed eyes. "And I suppose, too, that part of the trouble was," and Margery held up her head and faced the truth bravely, "that I was so blue and cross over not being allowed to stay

with Marie Smythe that I was just anxious to have everything horrid,—so—well, so that I could say ‘I told you so.’”

Polly grinned. “It is nice to be a martyr sometimes, isn’t it? Just the way Missouri, that’s our old colored cook, is so tickled if she can only get a ‘misery’ in her ‘haid’ after we’ve had extra company.”

“What puzzles me,” remarked Margery, paying no attention to this flattering resemblance, “is how they got my telegram to Grandpapa out at the farm.”

“That doesn’t mean anything one way or the other. Both your grandfathers,—oh, dear, this is the most mixed-up thing,—both Mr. Morrises, I should say, are named Henry. And it’s no new thing in Renwyck’s Town for the Morrises to get their mail and packages mixed up. That’s the worst of most of the population of a town having the same name. Jim Bancroft sent Sally Morris the silliest love-letter, and old Miss Sarah Morris got it. Miss Sarah thought Jim was making fun of her, and there was an awful to-do over it. It was awfully mortifying for Jim and Sally. Then that girl at the telegraph office

is going to be married next month, and she is so taken up with the monograms she is embroidering on her table-cloths that she doesn't know whether she is going or coming. The telegram doesn't mean anything, but what *does* puzzle me is: if you were due here why haven't they been out searching the country for you? What was it you said about coming earlier than you expected?"

As briefly as she could Margery rehearsed the story of her unexpectedly early trip to Renwyck's Town and the reasons for it. "Oh," Polly nodded. "Yes, I think I see. Won't they be thrilled here when you tell them! I know I'll—— Here comes somebody,—I think it's the nurse."

The door opened, and a young woman in a stiffly starched nurse's uniform rustled in.

"You wished to see me?" she inquired in a manner as stiffly starched as her apron. "I am sorry to have kept you waiting, but just as the doctor came down-stairs and was leaving he remembered something that he wanted to tell me. What is it I can do for you?"

With proper humbleness, Polly produced the elderberry wine and stated her errand.

“Oh, thank you,—you can tell your mother that Mr. Morris is better. All that he needs now is absolute quiet and careful nursing.”

Polly looked at Margery, gave an embarrassed little laugh, then plunged in. “Does his family know of his illness?”

“No. We sent for his son the week before last, but they telegraphed back from his office that young Mr. Morris had left for Japan a few days before. Mr. Morris was out of danger, anyway, before his son could have reached here.”

Margery and Polly exchanged another glance. Polly took a long breath, and announced, “This is Miss Margaret Morris,—Mr. Morris’s granddaughter.”

The nurse looked puzzled. “Oh, I hadn’t known that any of his family were here,” she said, but her profession had given her too many glimpses of family unhappinesses to allow her to make any further comment.

“Margery was to have stayed here, but through some mistake she got into the wrong house—er—that is—well, anyway,” Polly stumbled on, “we think she did.”

The nurse raised her pretty eyebrows toward

the border of her stiff white cap. "I'm afraid I don't quite understand."

Margery joined in the conversation for the first time. "There is really nothing to understand," she said authoritatively. "I came to Renwyck's Town unexpectedly. They met me from another Mr. Henry Morris's and I thought that I belonged there until I came here to-day, and I saw these pictures,—these are my father and mother,—and these two are me."

The nurse took the photographs, and looked from the fat baby to Margery, then back again to the pictured young lady with the big hat and the blurred face. "They don't look much like you," she remarked with a faint smile.

Again Polly and Margery exchanged glances; things did not seem to be going very well. "Wasn't Miss Morris expected here?" asked Polly, surprised.

"Of course I was, Polly," Margery put in. "Papa wrote that I was coming and they are expecting me."

The nurse glanced from Polly's puzzled face to Margery's evidently annoyed one, and her manner grew less detached. "I think if you

will repeat what you have just told me that I may be able to understand better,—you see, nobody has mentioned your coming to me.”

“Tell her all about the way you happened to come on early,” suggested Polly.

Again Margery rehearsed the story of her trip, bravely including Marie Smythe, and her own sulkiness and glory in martyrdom. As she finished the nurse stood up. “If you will excuse me, I’ll take a look at my patient. And then I’ll speak to Kiley, the cook,—she seems to know all the household affairs. Nothing has been said to me since I’ve been here about Mr. Morris’s expecting a granddaughter to visit him,—but I’ve been on the case only a week. Miss Betz, who is the night nurse now, had the case altogether at first. She is taking her rest now, and I can’t disturb her to ask her questions, but I’ll speak to old Kiley.”

Left alone, the girls again found relief to their emotions in a fit of the giggles. “Cheer up,” comforted Polly with a snicker; “the worst is yet to come.”

“Of course Kiley will know that I’m expected here,” answered Margery confidently.

"But I've such a funny Alice-in-Wonderland sort of feeling!"

" ' He sent them word I had not gone
We know it to be true :
If she should push the matter on,
What would become of you ? ' "

quoted Polly from her favorite "Alice."
"Are you sure that Kiley will know you're expected?"

"Certainly."

A voice grew near the library door, a loud Irish voice that was being vainly urged to "Ssh! Ssh!" by the nurse. "Don't ye be afther believin' a wordd of it, Miss Tucker, darlint. It's some mischief of that Polly Jameson's,—a greater rascal than her nivir walked. Don't ye be lettin' her make a fool of ye now!"

"Ssh, ssh. Here, girls,—this is Kiley. She will be able to tell you something about Mr. Morris's granddaughter."

A little, bent old Irish woman with snapping black eyes stood in the doorway, sniffing contemptuously. "Is it yez that would be passin' yersilf off as Mr. Morris's granddaughter?" she demanded of Polly.

“No, *I* am Mr. Morris’s granddaughter,” answered Margery.

The old woman turned on her. “Sure, an’ Mr. Morris’s granddaughter isn’t expected until January! An’ it’s not this way she’ll be comin’—in the back-door like,—but with her maid, an’ at the proper time, like an iligint young lady should. An’ it’s not like yez she’ll be lookin’,” with a scornful glance at Margery’s tweed sports coat, dusty and well covered with burrs and bits of dried leaves from the woods, and at the simple cloth tam-o’-shanter pulled down over her disheveled hair. “Miss Morris is a pretty young lady,—there’s a picture of her in Mr. Morris’s bedroom, taken in an iligint white dress, that thick with lace! Think shame of yersilf fer wantin’ to deceive a poor, sick gentleman, and passin’ yersilf off as his granddaughter. Oh, I tell ye, Miss Tucker,” turning to the nurse with flashing eyes, “the rich has their troubles the same as the poor. The way people try to take advantage of Mr. Morris because he is rich,—an’ a kinder man nivir walked,—is enough to make ye sick!”

Margery sat stunned by this tirade. “You

impertinent old woman," she cried at last, "how dare you speak to me like this?"

"How 'dare' I, ye sez? How 'dare' I? Sure, if Mr. Morris was well *ye* wouldn't be 'darin'' ter talk ter me like that! 'Impertinent old woman!' Indade! I bid yez good-afternoon, young ladies! Young *ladies*? An' you, Miss Polly Jameson, think shame on yersilf fer the socity yer in."

The indignant old woman flounced out of the room, and Polly and Miss Tucker began to laugh.

Margery burst into tears. "I think you're c-cruel to laugh. You wouldn't laugh,—if your father and mother w-were on the way to Japan,—and your grandfathers were away or sick,—you didn't know which,—and you didn't know where you be-be-be-longed!" Her voice breaking into a mournful howl, she threw herself back in her chair and buried her face in her hands.

"Oh, Margery, I'm sorry,—I'm awfully sorry! But cheer up! It will be all right—indeed it will—perhaps you belong at the farm, after all. Perhaps Mr. Morris just happened to have your pictures. Perhaps your

grandfather just happened to bring the pictures over here. ‘See what a fine family I have,’ he would say, ‘and that blessed little girl is coming to visit me this winter.’ And then he’d get so interested talking horses with Mr. Morris that he’d go off and forget the pictures. That’s the sort of thing Father is always doing.”

“I don’t care where I belong,—I wish I were dead! I knew something like this would happen if I had to come to old Renwyck’s Town!”

The nurse’s sympathy took a practical form. She hurried out of the room to procure a bottle of aromatic spirits of ammonia, and a small glass of ice-water. “Here, child, don’t go on like that,” she commanded, as she poured some of the ammonia into the water. “Sit up, now, and drink this. This will make you feel better. That’s right,” as Margery choked down the soapy mixture; “drink it all,—never mind if you don’t like the taste. Now, I’m going to wash off the tear-stains with this,” and she saturated a handkerchief with lavender water. “There, doesn’t that feel cooling? Now, I’m going to send you off,—

I can't have all this excitement in the house. My patient may feel it in some way or other,—it's wonderful how sick people seem to sense anything that's out of the way. But I think that you had better go right to Dr. Huston with the matter. If there has been any mistake he will be able to unravel the trouble. I cannot take any responsibility, of course. And Mr. Morris is too weak to be asked any questions as yet. But there is a pile of letters on the table in his dressing-room which haven't been opened,—I believe they came just about the time he was taken ill. They may have some bearing on the matter,—at any rate, I think the doctor will know what to do. Now, please go out quietly."

"Gracious, isn't it dark?" Polly cried, as she unhitched Spy and climbed into the cart after Margery. "We will have to hurry back as fast as we can,—Mother worries so about me when I am out after dark; especially if she knows I have gone out into the country. I'll go to the doctor's with you though,—but we will have to stop at home for a minute while I explain. It's too bad the doctor left there before we saw Miss Tucker, wasn't it?"

I didn't see his carriage, did you? He must have gone in by the side drive, and hitched his horse by the side-door. I guess that it was his voice we heard.”

“Yes, I suppose so,” said Margery listlessly, choking back a sob. “I'm afraid that Deborah will be worried, Polly. May I telephone her from your house?” she asked, with a new thoughtfulness.

“Yes, I'll 'phone her that you will be a little late. Hurry, Spy! There's a bag of oats, and a warm stable waiting for you.”

It was getting toward six o'clock, and the cloudy autumnal evening was dark and chilly. Shivering with cold and nervousness, Margery turned up her coat collar, and plunged her hands deep into her pockets. The tall bushes along the roadside, ghostly in the twilight, seemed to point mocking fingers at her, as if to say, “Who are you? And where do you belong? Nobody wants you!”

Her head ached from crying; she was tired and hungry; above all, she felt miserably alone and forsaken. Suppose that they should decide at the farm that she did not belong there,—she remembered, now, how bewildered

Dick had been over her arrival. And suppose, on the other hand, that they would not acknowledge her at the house she had just left,—what should she do? She seemed to be in some ghastly nightmare, wherein she wandered from door to door, vainly asking, “Who am I? Who am I?”

As though in answer to her thoughts an owl, hidden in the strip of woodland they were passing, dark and gloomy now in the dusk, hooted, “Who? Who?”

Margery clutched Polly in terror.

Polly laughed. “Cheer up, Margie,—it’s only an owl. We’ll be out of these old woods in a minute,—there! See the lights in the clock-tower in the town hall. I’ve been thinking, Margery,—that’s the reason I was so miraculously silent. It’s going to be all right about you,—either you belong at the farm, or you don’t, and it’s going to be all right either way. What that nurse and old Kiley said doesn’t count. They don’t know anything about it, anyway. But a mystery is a bother, so we’ll stop at the doctor’s and see if he knows anything. I hope he’s back by this time. It certainly is funny that you

didn't see any of your photographs at the farm, and they seemed so vague about you. You dear little goose, not to smell a mouse long before this. But buck up! Be a man. It will come out all right, anyway. And," Polly hesitated; she had all the horror which healthy-minded young people feel at appearing to preach, "and," she went on, rather haltingly, "remember:

“Two things stand like stone:
Kindness in your neighbor's trouble,
And *courage in your own.*”

Margery was thoughtfully silent. "I suppose," she said at last, "that it would be easier if I had had some little troubles to practice on. I wish I had been braver about the Marie Smythe one."

"If you hadn't wilted so over the little one," Polly remarked sagely, "you probably would never have had this big trouble, for you would have been keener, and kept your wits about you, and so you would have known right away whether or not you had landed in the right spot. So take this trouble like a good sport, so that you won't get into any worse one. Here we are at the house,—just

hold the reins while I run in and tell Mother that I'm going to the doctor's."

The Jamesons lived in an old-fashioned house that appeared to be rather below than above the level of the pavement. Seen from the street it looked small and cramped, but once inside its narrow front door, the visitor was amazed at the size and number of the rooms that seemed to stretch endlessly back to the large box-bordered garden in the rear. This evening the shades had been left up, and from the carriage Margery could see into the charming living-room, homelike with books and flowers and open fire. She could see Polly rush into the arms of plump, motherly Mrs. Jameson.

Sitting there outside, cold, and tired, and homesick, Margery realized, as she had never done before in all her pampered, shielded little life, what home, and father and mother love, are; how tenderly they love and comfort, how unselfishly they protect.

A great tear rolled down beside her nose; a blessed tear, that washed away much ingratitude and selfishness.

The Jamesons' front door closed with a

bang that must have rocked the very roof, and Polly came flying across the pavement. “Hurrah,” she cried, as Margery handed her the reins; “now for the doctor’s. I didn’t have time to explain, and poor Mother thinks I have surely gone crazy this time,—she’s always expecting it to come some day. I ’phoned to Deborah that you would be a little late, but that we would see that you got home all right,—William can take you out in the car. Oh, Margie, this reminds me of your old Scotchman, ‘Ah, what a day this night!’ Here’s the doctor’s house. Now, be a good little girl, and say the pretty verse kind Polly taught you. Come on. Pipe up.”

“Two things stand like stone :
Kindness in your neighbor’s trouble,
Courage in your own, ’”

they chanted in chorus, and then because they were young and healthy, and life so far had dealt gently with them, they rang the doctor’s front door-bell, as hilarious a pair as though there were no such things as perplexities or grandfathers.

CHAPTER XXI

MARGERY AND POLLY DINE WITH THE DOCTOR

“WELL, Polly, what is it now? Another boil on your nose, or has that tongue of yours gotten you into a scrape at school, and you want me to cut off a piece of it? Nothing wrong at the farm, is there, Margery? No? That’s good! I’m glad to see Miss Deborah so much better. Sit down, girls, and tell the old doctor about it.”

The doctor took off his spectacles, and beamed at the girls as cordially as though they were not interrupting his precious hour before dinner, the one time of the day he could claim for himself, and the thought of which had been his solace through a long and particularly busy day.

Polly and Margery sat down, and glanced about the shabby, cozy back office as though they were seeking inspiration in the framed

diploma from a medical school hanging over the doctor's desk, or in the china vase in the shape of a grinning skull, the gift of some grateful patient, which stood on the mantel-piece. The doctor watched them with amusement.

"Well, Polly," he prompted at length, "what's the matter,—is it too dreadful to tell?"

"Doctor," Polly fired off like a firecracker, "is Mr. Morris at the White House farm expecting a granddaughter to visit him?"

"No."

"Oh!" exclaimed Polly.

"Oh," wailed Margery.

"Wait a minute,—let me think. Why, yes, it does seem to me that he said something to me about his son's daughter coming on some time during the winter. Yes, now that I come to think of it, I do remember; he was expecting the girl in January. I'd forgotten about that. When I telegraphed for Henry week before last, they sent back word from his office that he and his wife had just left for Japan. However, they may not have taken the girl with them."

“Was Mr. Henry Morris, out Williamsburg way, expecting a granddaughter to visit him?”

“Why, I suppose so,—seeing that Margery is here. Deborah Davis gave me to understand that she is Henry Morris’s granddaughter. To tell the truth,” he added rather stiffly, “I have not seen much of Henry lately. We—er—we disagreed on the question on the boundary fence of my sister Martha’s field. That grandson of his is a fine fellow. I hope that Henry doesn’t spoil him by pulling the reins too tight. But why do you ask these questions, Miss Sherlock Holmes? Looking for lost jewels?”

“I’m afraid that I’m the lost jewel,” put in Margery.

“Eh?”

“It’s this way, doctor,” began Polly. She paused and raised her eyebrows at Margery, who nodded back. Permission gained, Polly plunged headlong into the tale of Margery’s adventures. First, she began at the end, and told the story of old Kiley and her suspicions; then she skipped to the beginning, and recounted Margery’s arrival at Renwyck’s Town, and Dick’s meeting her; after that

she made a few side excursions up the by-paths of Margery's surprise at finding Dick and Benjamin at the farm, and of her parents' hasty departure to Japan; and through it all she dwelt on Margery's yearning to spend the winter with Marie Smythe. Far more, indeed, than Margery considered needful.

As Polly finished her breathless recitation, Dr. Huston closed the book in which he had been hopefully keeping his finger to mark the place, and threw it on the table. "Hhmmm," he mused aloud, "I believe that perhaps I'd understand better if the other little lady were to tell the story. I don't imagine I got that part straight about old Kiley,—as far as I could understand from Polly's story, Kiley said that she was Dick's grandfather's grandfather!"

Margery laughed at the doctor's little joke, and feeling less nervous, told her part of the story simply and quietly. The doctor listened intently, evidently much interested, although he made no comments, and asked no questions.

"First of all," he remarked, as she finished,

“I think that I had better keep you girls to dinner with me,—if you think that you can stand an old bachelor’s housekeeping. It will take my poor old brains some time to get this Mary Smith business, that Polly talks about, and all the rest of it, straightened out. I’ll ’phone to your mother, Polly.” He pulled the desk ’phone toward him. “And I had better ’phone out to your house, Margery. We mustn’t let Miss Deborah be worried, you know! Hello, central,—36 W. Hello, Mary Jameson? This is Dr. Huston speaking. . . . Well, Mary, I’m going to keep your girl for dinner. . . . What’s that? Speak a little louder, please. Remember I don’t hear as well as I used to. . . . Oh, I didn’t mean to make you have to shout. Oh, no,—there’s nothing wrong. Merely something I want Polly to do for me. Better send William after her horse. I’ll get her home myself by bedtime. . . . Hasn’t done her lessons yet? The rascal! Well, good-bye.”

The doctor hung up the receiver, and turned to Polly with a chuckle. “I was so strict with your mother when she was ten

years old, and I brought her through the measles, that she is afraid of me yet. Suppose that you do your 'phoning, Margery, while I see that Lydia counts your noses in when she boils the potatoes," and the doctor hurried off to attend to his housekeeping.

"What do you think he thinks?" Margery asked in a shrill whisper.

Polly shook her head. "Can't tell."

Whatever the doctor thought he did not divulge it while they were at the table, but kept up a constant run of jokes with Polly. He was full, too, of questions about Margery's life at home, in which he appeared to be much interested. Margery's thoughts had been so limited to herself, and the doings and sayings of her own particular little circle,—and of late to Marie Smythe—that she was not usually an interesting, much less brilliant conversationalist; but to-night, under the doctor's skilful prompting, she managed to shine.

"That's awfully interesting! I wish that I could talk like that," cried generous Polly, as Margery finished a description of the old Spanish mission at Santa Barbara, and its

walled garden, forever closed to the foot of woman.

"Oh, it's a wonderful land, California," sighed the doctor. "It's been thirty years since I visited there. I'd give the rest of my hair,—don't you laugh, Polly; there are balder men than I am,—though not many, I admit,—if I could go back there.

"Well, well! Now I'll have to leave you girls to finish your pie while I go and take a look at the patients that are waiting in the office. As soon as they go, we will drive out to the White House farm and take a look at those letters. I think that under the circumstances that is what Mr. Morris would wish me to do. I can explain to him that there are some important matters in his correspondence that I had better look into, and ask for his permission to open the letters, without having to go into particulars and exciting him. We have to be very careful not to excite him. But I think that I can manage tactfully; and that would straighten matters out once for all."

The door closed after the doctor.

"Oh, Polly, isn't it awful?" sighed Mar-

gery, as she finished her piece of pumpkin pie. "I feel the most awful cloud hanging over me."

Polly thoughtfully made an end to the last crumb of her second piece of pie. "Yes, of course you do, you poor dear," she said sympathetically. "I don't feel, myself, like eating, even, or doing anything but thinking about your adventures. It really is terribly romantic, though, Margie,—if you just stop to think about it."

Margery mournfully regarded the little bunch of red and yellow button-chrysanthemums in the center of the table. "I suppose it is," she sighed.

"Are you ready, girls?" The doctor stuck his head in at the dining-room door. "There weren't many patients, fortunately, to-night. I'll have to stop, though, at Gertrude Brown's before I go out to Mr. Morris's. There's a case, if you two girls want to do a little good in the world, where you could help. I got her some work to do,—she selects mottoes for calendars. They send her big stacks of books from the library, and she goes over them; whenever she finds a beautiful or helpful

thought, she writes it down, with the author's name, and then I send them to a society of charitable ladies, who send them to the publishers. Speaking of mottoes, Margery, there's a little verse that you ought to learn, 'Life is mostly ——'

Polly nudged Margery, and in spite of herself Margery laughed.

"What's the matter?" demanded the doctor.

Polly was all penitence. "Please excuse me, doctor dear,—I just poked Margery because I've been teaching it to her all the afternoon, and by this time she could probably stand on her head and say it backward."

"She couldn't do better," declared the doctor. "It's a fine philosophy,—not very deep, perhaps, but a good one to come and go on. 'Two things stand like stone,' " he quoted softly. "'Kindness in our neighbor's trouble,—courage in our own.' Trouble is," he finished with a chuckle, "most of us get it twisted, and have the courage in our neighbor's trouble, and the kindness in our own. Here's poor Gertrude's little home now. Hold the reins, Polly,—I won't be long."

True to his word, the doctor did not keep



A HAND WAS SLIPPED INTO HERS

them waiting long, which was a relief to Margery, who felt that she could not endure any more suspense. What fate was waiting for her in that stately white house, which, through the bare branches of the trees, she could see standing high on its knoll, with the moon, struggling through the sweeping clouds, shining upon it?

For the second time that day Margery arrived at Mr. Morris's classic front door. This time they were not requested to produce their "tackets," but were ushered in, and told to make themselves as comfortable as they could while the doctor went up-stairs. To Margery's disappointment they were not put into the library, but into a small, formal reception-room on the other side of the hall, where there were no photographs of loved ones to give her courage and help. Nervously twisting her handkerchief between her hands, she sat on the edge of the small empire sofa, feeling as though she could scream. Why didn't the doctor hurry? What was he waiting for? He could have read a thousand letters in this time.

A hand was slipped into hers, a warm

friendly hand, and a soft cheek was pressed against her cold one, as Polly whispered, "Cheer up, old girl, cheer up. It isn't a matter of life and death. There comes the doctor now."

The doctor and Miss Tucker came down the stairs together, evidently discussing something with amusement.

"Well, my dears," announced the doctor cheerfully, as he reached the doorway, "from all the evidence I can find, and I have gone over the letters very carefully, it appears that Henry Morris had written to his father all about his change of plans and his decision to send his daughter East with friends,—letters which reached here after his father's sudden illness. And it seems that Margery is that daughter. Besides, I gleaned a good deal from Margery's conversation at the table to-night, so that my mind was made up before I came. Then, too," he stopped to laugh, "in spite of old Kiley's opinion, Margery does resemble the picture hanging in Mr. Morris's bedroom. That is, as much as any flesh and blood girl can look like one of these modern 'artistic' dark brown, all-in-

shadow things,—give me a good old-fashioned tintype for a likeness. Come, girls, we must go. They will send the automobile for you to-morrow morning, Margery. Come, hurry, girls. It's getting late, and the old doctor is tired, if you aren't."

Polly threw her arms around Margery's neck. "Oh, goody, Marge! I'm so glad you know 'where you're at,' as Missouri says. Isn't it perfect, doctor?"

"Perfect," agreed the doctor, absently, intent on hustling them off.

The nurse followed them to the door, remarking politely to Margery that she was glad that everything had "turned out so well."

Margery was too tired and dazed to quite know whether she was glad or not at the strange turn events had taken. But weary as she was she was conscious of a lack of enthusiasm in the manners of her elders. She detected that they felt at best an amused exasperation that anybody could be so stupid and blundering, so casual as she had been.

As though in answer to her thoughts, the doctor remarked half to himself, "Funny

now, Dick must have had his suspicions about you,—he's usually pretty bright. I suppose that he was waiting for instructions how to proceed from that grandfather of his. I wonder why he didn't say anything. Or Deborah, either. I think I'll take you home first, Margery, and then, Polly, I'll go home with you and have a little chat with your father,—I'll wager he doesn't like the way the senate's acting a bit better than I do."

"If only I hadn't been so stupid," moaned Margery to herself, as she huddled back in a corner of the carriage. "What will Mamma say when I tell her? And how shall I ever tell them at the farm? Oh, dear, I wonder what the girls at school will say. And Benjamin isn't my cousin after all!" The tears welled up at that. "Oh, dear, think of having to tell Dick that I'm—I'm—an impostor!"

Telling Dick, however, had to be postponed, for it was after nine when she reached home, and Dick, still in training for football, had already gone to his room.

Deborah was the only one of the household up, and she seemed to be far more concerned

by the fact that Margery looked very tired and pale than by her extraordinary news.

“Yes, dear, you can tell me all about it to-morrow. You look tired out, child! Yes, dear, I suspected that something was queer,—that is, lately I have; and Dick has all along, I think. But Dick’s not being able to get into touch with his grandfather upset things. But you must go to bed at once, child. Are you sure that coat is warm enough for this weather? Dear me, how I shall miss you! I dread telling the news to Benjamin,—the little chap has been so proud of his pretty cousin. Yes, dear,—it was rather too bad that you weren’t rather more communicative when you first came; it would have saved some trouble,—but you mustn’t talk any more about it to-night! Go right up to bed, and I’ll bring you up some hot cocoa. Poor little Benjamin!—he’ll be so disappointed.”

Deborah bustled off, and Margery dragged herself up to bed.

“Now drink this,” said Deborah, coming in with a cup of cocoa in her hand. “Time enough in the morning to talk! I’ve filled the hot-water bag, for I’m afraid that you

have taken cold driving in that thin coat this damp evening. Good-night."

She spread the quilt over Margery, and opening the window, and blowing out the lamp, she slipped out of the room.

Left alone, Margery buried her head in the pillow, and burst into tears. "Oh, dear," she gasped between sobs, "I wonder if I shall ever be able to face anybody in Renwyck's Town again!"

She was too tired to cry long, however. Soon she was asleep, and dreaming that a fierce-eyed, angry Mr. Morris pointed an accusing finger at her, and thundered:

"She is an *impostor*!"

CHAPTER XXII

AT LAST

MARGERY woke the next morning with the sense that something had happened, but she could not think what it was. Half awake she lay dreamily watching the window curtain flapping in the breeze. "Oh," she ejaculated suddenly, "of course!"

With a groan she dragged herself out from under the warm bedclothes, and banged down the window. A glance at her watch told her that it was almost breakfast time; she must dress as quickly as she could and hurry downstairs to tell the strange news to Dick.

"Well, anyway," she sighed as she laced her shoes, "I'll have it over soon."

She found Dick in the dining-room, down on hands and knees before the fireplace, blowing at a rather dismal fire to make it burn brighter.

"Dick!" she cried, "I have the most dreadful news to tell you!"

Dick turned around, his cheeks still puffed out. Margery giggled hysterically at his absurd appearance.

"Er—I——" said Dick, as soon as he could speak.

"I'm not your cousin after all. I don't even belong here! I—I—just came here—and—and—settled down as though I owned things! I'm the other Mr. Morris's granddaughter!"

"Yes, I know you are."

"Oh, Dick,—how did you know?"

"Deborah told me, for one thing."

"Isn't it the most mortifying thing! To think that *I* should be an impostor!"

"Don't be a goose, Margery! You didn't do it to deceive anybody. It was all my fault, anyway."

"How?"

"I haven't known what to do about it," Dick went on, sitting back on his heels. "I felt sure, right from the very first, that you didn't belong here; but Grandfather is so peculiar that it would be like him to have a

girl coming here and never say a word about it to us,—not that he isn't a fine old boy," he threw in loyally.

"Of course, the natural thing to do was to pump you,—but Great Scott, every time that I tried to ask you a question you were so savage I gave it up! Besides, I knew if your coming here was all right, and I worried you, I'd catch it from Grandfather when he came home. And then," Dick poked the fire rather shamefacedly, "I didn't like to do anything to hurt a girl's feelings. But wasn't it funny the way you happened to wander in to Mr. Morris's and stumble on those pictures? Hadn't you ever suspected before that you might fit in there?"

Margery paid no attention to his questions. "But Dick,—you guessed right away that I didn't belong here?"

"Sure,—you didn't fit into being my esteemed uncle's daughter somehow. Though Uncle Harry has moved from state to state such a lot, and been on the edge of making a fortune so often, that I didn't know but what he had gone to California and put it over at last. Not that I care what he does," and the

note of bitterness crept into Dick's voice; "he was too mean to Mother for me to take any stock in him."

"But Dick,—why did you just let me stay here? Why didn't you try to do something about me?"

Dick stood up and brushed the dust off his knees. "I did," he said simply. "I wrote to Grandfather the first night you came to ask him if everything was all right. He was going so from one little town to the other, and from ranch to ranch, that the letters didn't catch up to him,—but you know all about the time we have had over letters. They finally did catch up to him, and I had a letter from Grandfather yesterday after you had gone in to Polly's,—you didn't know that, I suppose. Grandfather said that he was quite sure that there must be a mistake somewhere. He had had no word from Uncle Harry about any of the family coming on,—and he said, too, that my dear uncle's daughter's name is Elizabeth, not Margaret—they always call her Princess or Bunnie or some such trash, or they used to, anyway,—so I was pretty shaky on her name. Grandfather jumped at once

to the idea that you must belong to the other Henry Morris, and said that he remembered Mr. Morris saying something about having a granddaughter named after the original Margaret. The rest of the letter was taken up with telling me that he would be home very shortly, and if nothing else turned up, to make you comfortable until he reached here."

"Then he wasn't angry?"

"No, he didn't seem to be. He took it for granted that you belonged at the other house. Mr. Morris is about the only person hereabouts that he likes very much,—besides, we are cousins, you know. About fifty-sixth ones! Of course, when you first came, I connected you right away with the other Mr. Morris,—I rode over there, too, to see. You remember, I went there the day you rode Tempe Wick. There wasn't anybody to ask about you but the trained nurse, who said that Mr. Morris was too sick to see anybody. That nurse was some dame, I can assure you! I hear that she's the night nurse now, and that they've got a peach for a day nurse. Anyway, the one I saw froze me with an icy

glance, and said positively no granddaughter was being expected, and evidently thought I wanted to flirt with said unexpected granddaughter. And then she turned away as though I had been a worm that she had stepped on, and that she didn't like the looks of, after she had done the stepping, and began to talk to one of the maids. So I beat it. Then I inquired around—cautiously, you bet, for the gossip that goes on in this town is enough to kill a cat—but none of the other Morrises seemed to be missing anybody. So there has been so much clacking over Grandfather's boundary rows, and all the company that we have, that I just decided to wait until I heard from him definitely before I gave the old tabbies anything more to chuckle over."

Margery sat still, thinking. In the first excitement of the great discovery she had forgotten that evening in the library when Dick had suggested tentatively that her arrival at the farm might be a mistake, and she had grown so angry at him that he declared that he would never mention the subject to her again. Now, looking back, it seemed

to her as though it must have been some other girl, instead of herself, who had spoken so.

“Dick,” she began timidly, “did Deborah know?”

Dick looked at her over the top of the paper he had picked up. “Eh? Oh, no. Not at first, at any rate. Poor little Deborah’s had enough worries ever since she’s been here, and I thought my shoulders were broad enough to bear the burden until I knew,” he finished with a manly, resolute expression that contrasted oddly with his boyish face.

“Didn’t you tell her at all?”

“Well,—when I began to get so fidgety about Grandfather’s not answering my letters, she knew something was up, and she pinned me down until I told her. I wish you could have heard her then,” and Dick chuckled. “She gave me a regular tearing out. Told me that anybody with any sense would have told her all about it right away, and then with her woman’s tact she could have gleaned all the facts from you without hurting your feelings, or letting you know

that there was any gleaning going on. Oh, she got quite indignant—wanted to know how she was to be expected to keep the Morris family straight when they didn't seem to have sense enough to know whether they were going or coming. Oh, I had no idea before that Deborah had so much pep to her. Then finally she said that as I had let things slide so without telling her, I had better wait until I heard from Grandfather before I took any steps, and twisted things up any more. Then she was too ill, after that, to worry much about things,—so we just waited."

The door opened and Benjamin bounced in. "Oh, Margie," he cried, "Deborah has told me,—and I'm so sorry you're going away! I'll miss you awful much, Margie!"

He threw his arms around her neck, and with a pang Margery held him close to her.

"Deborah," said Margery miserably, as she packed her bag a little later in the morning, "isn't it dreadful? I—I feel as though I never wanted to look anybody in the face again!"

Deborah looked up from the dressing gown she was folding. "There's no use in tak-

ing it like that, child," she said practically. "You made a mistake, of course,—most of us do, sooner or later. But you also brought a great deal of pleasure to a little child, and you helped to make a sick old woman comfortable. If I were you, dear, I'd think more about that side of it. And I'd think still more about the things you can do to make your grandfather happy. He will probably be a long time getting back his strength, and he will need somebody young and cheerful about the house to encourage him, and to keep him amused. Perhaps," she stopped to laugh, "if you hadn't had me to practice upon you wouldn't have known how to do it. And I do think, dear," she went on seriously, "that you are needed there. Your grandfather has been far more lonely than he realized, I imagine,—or than was good for him. It's not well for anybody to live such a solitary existence, even if he does think that he prefers it. You have your work before you: just to bring sunshine to the old house."

Margery winked away the tears. "I'll try," she said humbly.

At ten the automobile came for her, and carried her away to her new home.

Miss Tucker met her at the door when she arrived at the White House. "I'll take you right up to the room you are to have," she explained. "And then about eleven o'clock you may see your grandfather for a few minutes. Come up as quietly as you can."

Miss Tucker led the way up the wide Colonial stairway that rose from the back of the hall. Margery followed, vainly trying to look about her, and to listen to Miss Tucker at the same time. So this was to be her home for the rest of the winter!

"We have told your grandfather that you have come on unexpectedly early," the nurse continued, crossing the wide upper corridor, "and he wants to see you. Of course, for the present, we have not mentioned that there was any mix-up about your reaching here. It might worry or excite him,—and that would never do!" She stopped with her hand on the knob of a door. "Both Miss Betz and I are strangers here in Renwyck's Town,—we were called here only for this case. So we

don't know many family details,—I'm sorry I wasn't able to be of more help to you yesterday."

She opened the door, and they entered a large, sunny room, luxuriously and comfortably furnished.

"I don't know what room your grandfather will wish you to have, Miss Morris, but this will do for the present, I'm sure. Can I help you to unpack? No? Well, then, I'll leave you for a while."

In a few minutes Miss Tucker was back. "Mr. Morris is awake now," she said, "and wants to see you. Be as bright and cheerful as you can,—and don't talk too long."

They crossed the corridor again to a suite of rooms in the library wing of the house. "Here he is," Miss Tucker whispered, opening a door. "Go in. But don't stay too long, remember."

Margery stood still a moment, shyly looking at her grandfather propped up on the pillows of a great, four-post bed.

He smiled at her and held out his hand. "Well, little girl," he said softly.

Margery forgot her shyness at the sight of the

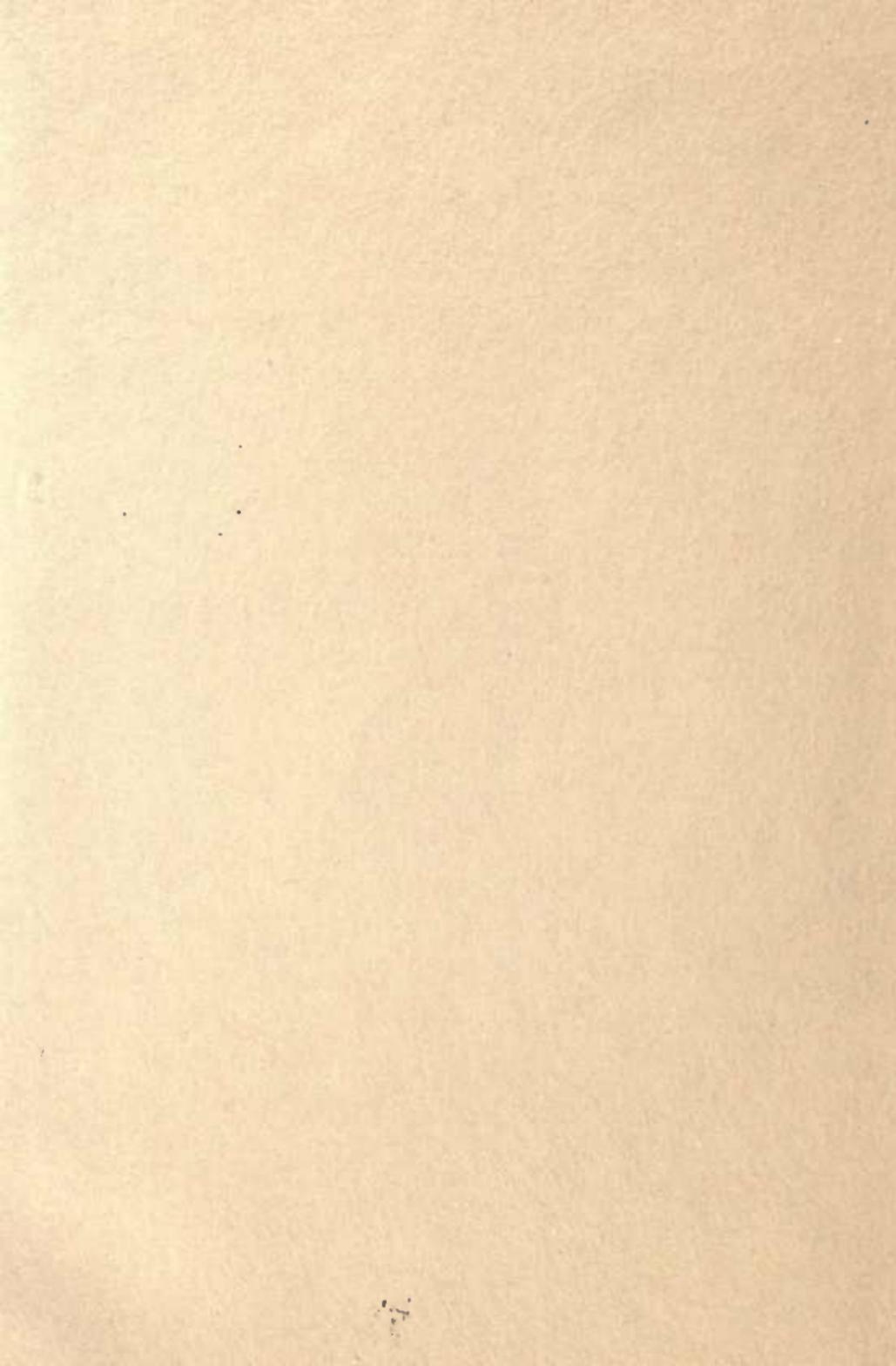
dear, remembered face, now so white against the pillows.

“Oh, Grandpapa,” she cried, hurrying across the room to him, “it’s so perfect to be with you at last.”

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