

FICTION

Carolyn Wells

Pattys Summer Days

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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FICTION



Patty's Summer Days

By CAROLYN WELLS

Author of "Idle Idylls," "Patty in the City," etc.



ILLUSTRATED

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To
ELEANOR SHIPLEYHALSEY

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Patty's Summer Days

CHAPTER I

A GAY HOUSEHOLD

"Isn't Mrs. Phelps too perfectly sweet! That is the loveliest fan I ever laid eyes on, and to think it's mine!"

"And *will* you look at this? A silver coffee-machine! Oh, Nan, mayn't I make it work, sometimes?"

"Indeed you may; and oh, see this! A piece of antique Japanese bronze! Isn't it *great*?"

"I don't like it as well as the sparkling, shiny things. This silver tray beats it all hollow. Did you ever see such a brightness in your life?"

"Patty, you're hopelessly Philistine! But that tray is lovely, and of an exquisite design."

Patty and Nan were unpacking wedding presents, and the room was strewn with boxes, tissue paper, cotton wool, and shredded-paper packing.

Only three days more, and then Nan Allen was to marry Mr. Fairfield, Patty's father.

Patty was spending the whole week at the Allen home in Philadelphia, and was almost as much interested in the wedding preparations as Nan herself.

"I don't think there's anything so much fun as a house with a wedding fuss in it," said Patty to Mrs. Allen, as Nan's mother came into the room where the girls were.

"Just wait till you come to your own wedding fuss, and then see if you think it's so much fun," said Nan, who was rapidly scribbling names of friends to whom she must write notes of acknowledgment for their gifts.

"That's too far in the future even to think of," said Patty, "and besides, I must get my father married and settled, before I can think of myself."

She wagged her head at Nan with a comical look, and they all laughed.

It was a great joke that Patty's father should be about to marry her dear girl friend. But Patty was mightily pleased at the prospect, and looked forward with happiness to the enlarged home circle.

"The trouble is," said Patty, "I don't know what to call this august personage who insists on becoming my father's wife."

"I shall rule you with a rod of iron," said Nan, "and you'll stand so in awe of me, that you won't dare to call me anything."

"You think so, do you?" said Patty saucily. "Well, just let me inform you, Mrs. Fairfield, that is to be, that I intend to lead you a dance! You'll be responsible for my manners and behaviour, and I wish you joy of your undertaking. I think I shall call you *Stepmamma*."

"Do," said Nan placidly, "and I'll call you Stepdaughter Patricia."

"Joking aside," said Patty, "honestly, Nan, I am perfectly delighted that the time is coming so soon to have you with us. Ever since last fall I have waited patiently, and it seemed as if Easter would never come. Won't we have good times though after you get back from your trip and we get settled in that lovely house in New York! If only I didn't have to go to school, and study like fury out of school, too, we could have heaps of fun."

"I'm afraid you're studying too hard, Patty," said Mrs. Allen, looking at her young guest.

"She is, Mother," said Nan, "and I wish she wouldn't. Why do you do it, Patty?"

"Well, you see, it's this way. I found out the first of the year that I was ahead of my class in some studies, and that if I worked extra hard I could get ahead on the other studies, and,--well, I can't exactly explain it, but it's like putting two years' work into one; and then I could graduate from the Oliphant school this June, instead of going there another year, as I had expected. Then, if I do that, Papa says I may stay home next year, and just have masters in music and French, and whatever branches I want to keep up. So I'm trying, but I hardly think I can pass the examinations after all."

"Well, you're not going to study while you're here," said Mrs. Allen, "and after we get Nan packed off on Thursday, you and I are going to have lovely times. You must stay with me as long as you can, for I shall be dreadfully lonesome without my own girl."

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Allen, I am very happy here, and I love to stay with you; but of course I can stay only as long as our Easter vacation lasts. I must go back to New York the early part of next week."

"Well, we'll cram all the fun possible into the few days you are here then," and Patty's gay little hostess bustled away to look after her household appointments.

Mrs. Allen was of a social, pleasure-loving nature. Indeed, it was often said that she cared more for parties and festive gatherings than did her daughter Nan.

Nobody was surprised to learn that Nan Allen was to marry a man many years older than herself. The surprise came when they met Mr. Fairfield and discovered that that gentleman appeared to be much younger than he undoubtedly was.

For Patty's father, though nearly forty years old, had a frank, ingenuous manner, and a smile that was almost boyish in its gaiety.

Mrs. Allen was in her element superintending her daughter's wedding, and the whole affair was to be on a most elaborate scale. Far more so than Nan herself wished, for her tastes were simple, and she would have preferred a quieter celebration of the occasion.

But as Mrs. Allen said, it was her last opportunity to provide an entertainment for her daughter, and she would not allow her plans to be thwarted.

So preparations for the great event went busily on. Carpenters came and enclosed the wide verandas, and decorators came and hung the newly made walls with white cheese cloth, and trimmed them with garlands of green. The house was invaded with decorators, caterers, and helpers of all sorts, while neighbours and friends of Mrs. Allen and of Nan flew in and out at all hours.

The present-room was continually thronged by admiring friends who never tired of looking at the beautiful gifts already upon the tables, or watching the opening of new ones.

"There's the thirteenth cut-glass ice-tub," said Nan, as she tore the tissue paper wrapping from an exquisite piece of sparkling glass. "I should think it an unlucky number if I didn't feel sure that one or two more would come yet."

"What are you going to do with them all, Nan?" asked one of her girl friends; "shall you exchange any of your duplicate gifts?"

"No indeed," said Nan, "I'm too conservative and old-fashioned to exchange my wedding gifts. I shall keep the whole thirteen, and then when one gets broken, I can replace it with another. Accidents will happen, you know."

"But not thirteen times, and all ice-tubs!" said Patty, laughing. "You'll have to use them as individuals, Nan. When you give a dinner party of twelve, each guest can have a separate ice-tub, which will be very convenient."

"I don't care," said Nan, taking the jest good-humouredly, "I shall keep them all, no matter how many I get. And I always did like ice-tubs, anyway."

Another great excitement was when Nan's gowns were sent home from the dressmaker's. Patty was frankly fond of pretty clothes, and she fairly revelled in Nan's beautiful *trousseau*. To please Patty, the bride-elect tried them all on, one after another, and each seemed more beautiful than the one before. When at last Nan stood arrayed in her bridal gown, with veil and orange blossoms complete, Patty's ecstasy knew no bounds.

"You are a picture, Nan!" she cried. "A perfect dream! I never saw such a beautiful bride. Oh, I am so glad you're coming to live with us, and then I can try on that white satin confection and prance around in it myself."

They all laughed at this, and Nan exclaimed, in mock reproach:

"I'd like to see you do it, Miss! Prance around in my wedding gown, indeed! Have you no more respect for your elderly and antiquated Stepmamma than that?"

Patty giggled at Nan's pretended severity, and danced round her, patting a fold here, and picking out a bow there, and having a good time generally.

The next day there was a luncheon, to which Mrs. Allen had invited a number of Nan's dearest girl friends.

Patty enjoyed this especially, for not only did she dearly love a pretty affair of this sort, but Mrs. Allen had let her help with the preparations, and Patty had even suggested some original ideas which found favour in Mrs. Allen's eyes.

Over the table was suspended a floral wedding bell, which was supplied with not only one clapper, but a dozen. These clappers were ingenious little contrivances, and from each hung a long and narrow white ribbon. After the luncheon, each ribbon was apportioned to a guest, and at a given signal the ribbons were pulled, whereupon each clapper sprang open, and a tiny white paper fluttered down to the table.



"Patty fairly reveled in Nan's beautiful trousseau"

These papers each bore the name of one of the guests, and when opened were found to contain a rhymed jingle foretelling in a humorous way the fate of each girl. Patty had written the merry little verses, and they were read aloud amid much laughter and fun.

As Patty did not know these Philadelphia girls very well, many of her verses which foretold their fates were necessarily merely graceful little jingles, without any attempt at special appropriateness.

One which fell to the lot of a dainty little golden-haired girl ran thus:

Your cheeks are red, your eyes are blue;
Your hair is gold, your heart is too.

Another which was applied to a specially good-humoured maiden read thus:

The longer you live the sweeter you'll grow;
Your fair cup of joy shall have no trace of woe.

But some of the girls had special hopes or interests, and these Patty touched upon. An aspiring music lover was thus warned:

If you would really learn to play,
Pray practice seven hours a day,
And then perhaps at last you may.

And an earnest art student received this somewhat doubtful encouragement:

You'll try to paint in oil,
And your persistent toil,
Will many a canvas spoil.

Patty's own verse was a little hit at her dislike for study, and her taste in another direction:

Little you care to read a book,
But, goodness me, how you can cook!

Nan's came last of all, and she read it aloud amid the gay laughter of the girls:

Ere many days shall pass o'er your fair head,
Your fate is, pretty lady, to be wed;
Yet scarcely can you be a happy wife,
For Patty F. will lead you such a life!

The girls thought these merry little jingles great fun, and each carefully preserved her "fortune" to take home as a souvenir of the occasion.

Bumble Barlow was at this luncheon, for the Barlows were friends and near neighbours of the Allens.

Readers who knew Patty in her earlier years, will remember Bumble as the cousin who lived at the "Hurly-Burly" down on Long Island.

Although Bumble was a little older, and insisted on being called by her real name of Helen, she was the same old mischievous fly-away as ever. She was delighted to see Patty again, and coaxed her to come and stay with them, instead of with the Allens. But Mrs. Allen would not hear of such an arrangement, and could only be induced to give her consent that Patty should spend one day with the Barlows during her visit in Philadelphia.

The short time that was left before the wedding day flew by as if on wings. So much was going on both in the line of gaiety and entertainment, and also by way of preparation for the great event, that Patty began to wonder whether social life was not, after all, as wearing as the more prosaic school work.

But Mrs. Allen said, when this question was referred to her, "Not a bit of it! All this gaiety does you good, Patty. You need recreation from that everlasting grind of school work, and you'll go back to it next week refreshed, and ready to do better work than ever."

"I'm sure of it," said Patty, "and I shall never forget the fun we're having this week. It's just like a bit of Fairyland. I've never had such an experience before."

Patty's life had been one of simple pleasures and duties. She had a great capacity for enjoyment, but heretofore had only known fun and frolic of a more childish nature. This glimpse into what seemed to be really truly grown-up society was bewildering and very enjoyable, and Patty found it quite easy to adapt herself to its requirements.

CHAPTER II

WEDDING BELLS

At last the wedding day arrived, and a brighter or more sunshiny day could not have been asked for by the most exacting of brides.

It was to be an evening wedding, but from early in the morning there was a constant succession of exciting events. The last touches were being put to the decorations, belated presents were coming in, house guests were arriving, messengers coming and going, and through it all Mrs. Allen bustled about, supremely happy in watching the culminating success of her elaborate plans. Patty looked at her with a wondering admiration, for she always admired capability, and Mrs. Allen was exhibiting what might almost be called generalship in her house that day.

Of course, Patty had no care or responsibility, and nothing to do but enjoy herself, so she did this thoroughly.

In the morning Marian and Frank Elliott came. They were staying at the Barlows', and Mr. Fairfield was staying there too.

It sometimes seemed to Patty that her father ought to have played a more prominent part in all the preliminary festivities, but Mrs. Allen calmly told her, in Mr. Fairfield's presence, that a bridegroom had no part in wedding affairs until the time of the ceremony itself.

Mr. Fairfield laughed good-humouredly, and replied that he was quite satisfied to be left out of the mad rush, until the real occasion came.

Like Nan, Mr. Fairfield would have preferred a quiet wedding, but Mrs. Allen utterly refused to hear of such a thing. Nan was her only daughter, and this her only chance to arrange an entertainment such as her soul delighted in. Mr. Allen was willing to indulge his wife in her wishes, and was exceedingly hospitable by nature. Moreover, he took great pride in his charming daughter, and wanted everything done that could in any way contribute to the success or add to the beauty of her wedding celebration.

Patty fluttered around the house in a sort of inconsequent delight. Now in the present-room, looking over the beautiful collection, now chatting with her cousins, or other friends, now strolling through the great parlours with their wonderful decorations of banked roses and garland-draped ceilings.

Dinner was early that night, as the ceremony was to be performed at eight o'clock, and after dinner Patty flew to her room to don her own beautiful new gown.

This dress delighted Patty's beauty-loving heart. It was a white tulle sprinkled with silver, and its soft, dainty glitter seemed to Patty like moonlight on the snow. Her hair was done low on her neck, in a most becoming fashion, and her only ornament was a necklace of pearls which had belonged to her mother, and which her father had given her that very day. The first Mrs. Fairfield had died when Patty was a mere baby, so of course she had no recollection of her, but she had always idealised the personality of her mother, and she took the beautiful pearls from her father with almost a feeling of reverence as she touched them.

"I'm so glad it's Nan you're going to marry, Papa," she said. "I wouldn't like it as well if it were somebody who would really try to be a stepmother to me, but dear old Nan is more like a sister, and I'm so glad she's ours."

"I'm glad you're pleased, Patty, dear, and I only hope Nan will never regret marrying a man so much older than herself."

"You're not old, Papa Fairfield," cried Patty indignantly; "I won't have you say such a thing! Why, you're not forty yet, and Nan is twenty-four. Why, that's hardly any difference at all."

"So Nan says," said Mr. Fairfield, smiling, "so I dare say my arithmetic's at fault."

"Of course it is," said Patty, "and you don't look a bit old either. Why, you look as young as Mr. Hepworth, and he looks nearly as young as Kenneth, and Kenneth's only two years older than I am."

"That sounds a little complicated, Patty, but I'm sure you mean it as a compliment, so I'll take it as such."

A little before eight o'clock, Patty, in her shimmering gown, went dancing downstairs.

The rooms were already crowded with guests, and the first familiar face Patty saw was that of Mr. Hepworth, who came toward her with a glad smile of greeting.

"How grown-up we are looking to-night," he said. "I shall have to paint your portrait all over again, and you must wear that gown, and we will call it, 'A Moonlight Sonata,' and send it to the exhibition."

"That will be lovely!" exclaimed Patty; "but can you paint silver?"

"Well, I could try to get a silvery effect, at least."

"That wouldn't do; it must be the real thing. I think you could only get it right by using aluminum paint like they paint the letter-boxes with."

"Yes," said Mr. Hepworth, "that would be realistic, at least, but I see a crowd of your young friends coming this way, and I feel quite sure they mean to carry you off. So won't you promise me a dance or two, when the time comes for that part of the programme?"

"Yes, indeed," said Patty, "and there is going to be dancing after the supper."

Mr. Hepworth looked after Patty, as, all unconscious of his gaze, she went on through the rooms with the young friends who had claimed her.

Gilbert Hepworth had long realised his growing interest in Patty, and acknowledged to himself that he loved the girl devotedly. But he had never by word or look intimated this, and had no intention of doing so until she should be some years older. He, himself, was thirty-four, and he knew that must seem old indeed to a girl of seventeen. So he really had little hope that he ever could win her for his own, but he allowed himself the pleasure of her society whenever opportunity offered, and it pleased him to do for her such acts of courtesy and kindness as could not be construed into special attentions, or indication of an unwelcome devotion.

Among the group that surrounded Patty was Kenneth Harper, a college boy who was a good chum of Patty's and a favourite with Mr. Fairfield. Marian and Frank were with them, also Bob and Bumble, the Barlow Twins, and a number of the Philadelphia young people.

This group laughed and chatted merrily until the orchestra struck up the wedding march, and an expectant hush fell upon the assembly.

At Nan's special request, there were no bridesmaids, and when the bride entered with her father, she was, as Patty had prophesied, a perfect picture in her beautiful wedding gown.

Mr. Fairfield seemed to think so too, and his happy smile as he came to meet her, gave Patty a thrill of gladness to think that this happiness had come to her father. His life had been lonely, and she was glad that it was to be shared by such a truly sweet and lovely woman as Nan.

Patty was the first to congratulate the wedded pair, and Mr. Hepworth, who was an usher, escorted her up to them that she might do so. Patty kissed both the bride and the bridegroom with whole-hearted affection, and after a few merry words turned away to give place to others.

"Come on, Patty," said Kenneth, "a whole crowd of us are going to camp out in one of those jolly cozy corners on the verandah, and have our supper there."

So Patty went with the merry crowd, and found that Kenneth had selected a conveniently located spot near one of the dining-room windows.

"I'm so glad it's supper time," she said, as they settled themselves comfortably in their chosen retreat. "I've been so busy and excited to-day that I've hardly eaten a thing, and I'm starving with hunger. And now that I've got my father safely married, and off my hands, I feel relieved of a great responsibility, and can eat my supper with a mind at rest."

"When I'm married," said Helen Barlow, "I mean to have a wedding exactly like this one. I think it's the loveliest one I ever saw."

"You won't, though, Bumble," said Patty, laughing. "In the first place, you'll forget to order your wedding gown until a day or two before the occasion, and of course it won't be done. And then you'll forget to send out the invitations, so of course you'll have no guests. And I'm sure you'll forget to invite the minister, so there'll be no ceremony, anyway."

Bumble laughed good-naturedly at this, for the helter-skelter ways of the Barlow family were well known to everybody.

"It would be that way," she said, "if I looked after things myself, but I shall expect you, Patty, to take entire charge of the occasion, and then everything will go along like clockwork."

"Are you staying long in Philadelphia, Miss Fairfield?" asked Ethel Banks, a Philadelphia girl, who lived not far from the Allens.

"A few days longer," said Patty. "I have to go back to New York next Tuesday, and then no more gaiety for me. I don't know how I shall survive such a sudden change, but after this mad whirl of parties and things, I have to come down to plain everyday studying of lessons,—but we won't talk about that now; it's a painful subject to me at any time, but especially when I'm at a party."

"Me, too," said Kenneth. "If ever I get through college, I don't think I'll want to see a book for the next twenty years."

"I didn't know you hated your lessons so, Kenneth," said Marian. "I thought Patty was the only one of my friends who was willing to avow that she was like that 'Poor little Paul, who didn't like study at all.'"

"Yes, I'm a Paul too," said Kenneth, "and I may as well own up to it."

"But you don't let it interfere with your work," said Patty; "you dig just as hard as if you really enjoyed it."

"So do you," said Kenneth, "but some day after we have both been graduated, I suppose we'll be glad that we did our digging after all."

A little later, Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield went away, amid showers of *confetti*, and after that there was an hour of informal dancing.

Patty was besieged with partners asking for a dance, and as there was no programme, she would make no promises, but accepted whoever might ask her first at the beginning of each dance. She liked to dance with Kenneth, for his step suited hers perfectly, and her cousin Bob was also an exceptionally good dancer.

But Patty showed no partiality, and enjoyed all the dances with her usual enthusiasm.

Suddenly she remembered that she had promised Mr. Hepworth a dance, but he had not come to claim it. Wondering, she looked around to see where he might be, and discovered him watching her from across the room.

There was an amused smile on his face, and Patty went to him, and asked him in her direct way, why he didn't claim his dance.

"You are so surrounded," he said, "by other and more attractive partners, that I hated to disturb you."

"Nonsense," said Patty, without a trace of self-consciousness or embarrassment. "I like you better than lots of these Philadelphia boys. Come on."

"Thank you for the compliment," said Mr. Hepworth, as they began to dance, "but you seemed to be finding these Philadelphia boys very agreeable."

"They're nice enough," said Patty, carelessly, "and some of them are good dancers, but not as good as you are, Mr. Hepworth. Do you know you dance like a--like a--will-o'-the-wisp."

"I never met a will-o'-the-wisp, but I'm sure they must be delightful people, to judge from the enthusiastic tone in which you mention them. Do you never get tired of parties and dancing, Patty?"

"Oh, no, indeed. I love it all. But you see I haven't had very much. I've never been to but two or three real dancing-parties in my life. Why, I've only just outgrown children's parties. I may get tired of it all, after two or three seasons, but as yet it's such a novelty to me that I enjoy every speck of it."

Mr. Hepworth suddenly realised how many social seasons he had been through, and how far removed he was from this young debutante in his views on such matters. He assured himself that he need never hope she would take any special interest in him, and he vowed she should never know of his feelings toward her. So he adapted his mood to hers, and chatted gaily of the events of the evening. Patty told him of the many pleasures that had been planned for her, during the rest of her visit at Mrs. Allen's, and he was truly glad that the girl was to have a taste of the social gaiety that so strongly appealed to her.

"Miss Fairfield," said Ethel Banks, coming up to Patty, as the music stopped, "I've been talking with my father, and he says if you and Mr. and Mrs. Allen will go, he'll take us all in the automobile down to Atlantic City for the week-end."

"How perfectly gorgeous!" cried Patty, her eyes dancing with delight. "I'd love to go. I've never been in an automobile but a few times in my life, and never for such a long trip as that. Let's go and ask Mrs. Allen at once."

Without further thought of Mr. Hepworth, save to give him a smiling nod as she turned away, Patty went with Ethel to ask Mrs. Allen about the projected trip.

Mrs. Allen was delighted to go, and said she would also answer for her husband. So it was arranged, and the girls went dancing back to Mr. Banks to tell him so. Ethel's father was a kind-hearted, hospitable man, whose principal thought was to give pleasure to his only child. Ethel had no mother, and Mrs. Allen had often before chaperoned the girl on similar excursions to the one now in prospect.

As Mr. Banks was an enthusiastic motorist, and drove his own car, there was ample room for Mr. and Mrs. Allen and Patty.

Soon the wedding guests departed, and Patty was glad to take off her pretty gown and tumble into bed.

She slept late the next morning, and awoke to find Mrs. Allen sitting on the bed beside her, caressing her curly hair.

"I hate to waken you," said that lady, "but it's after ten o'clock, and you know you are to go to your Cousin Helen's to spend the day. I want you to come home early this evening, as I have a little party planned for you, and so it's only right that you should start as soon as possible this morning. Here is a nice cup of cocoa and a bit of toast. Let me slip a kimono around you, while you breakfast."

In her usual busy way, Mrs. Allen fluttered about, while she talked, and after putting a kimono round her visitor, she drew up beside her a small table, containing a dainty breakfast tray.

"It's just as well you're going away to-day," Mrs. Allen chattered on, "because the house is a perfect sight. Not one thing is in its place, and about a dozen men have already arrived to try to straighten out the chaos. So, as you may judge, my dear, since I have to superintend all these things, I'll really get along better without you. Now, you get dressed, and run right along to the Barlows'. James will take you over in the pony cart, and he'll come for you again at eight o'clock this evening. Mind, now, you're not to stay a minute after eight o'clock, for I have invited some young people here to see you. I'll send the carriage to-night, and then you can bring your Barlow cousins back with you."

As Mrs. Allen rattled on, she had been fussing around the room getting out Patty's clothes to wear that day, and acting in such a generally motherly manner that Patty felt sure she must be missing Nan, and she couldn't help feeling very sorry for her, and told her so.

"Yes," said Mrs. Allen, "it's awful. I've only just begun to realise that I've lost my girl; still it had to come, I suppose, sooner or later, and I wouldn't put a straw in the way of Nan's happiness. Well, I shall get used to it in time, I suppose, and then sometimes I shall expect Nan to come and visit me."

CHAPTER III

ATLANTIC CITY

Patty's day at the Barlows' was a decided contrast to her visit at Mrs. Allen's.

In the Allen home every detail of housekeeping was complete and very carefully looked after, while at the Barlows' everything went along in a slipshod, hit-or-miss fashion.

Patty well remembered her visit at their summer home which they called the Hurly-Burly, and she could not see that their city residence was any less deserving of the name. Her Aunt Grace and Uncle Ted were jolly, good-natured people, who cared little about system or method in their home. The result was that things often went wrong, but nobody cared especially if they did.

"I meant to have a nicer luncheon for you, Patty," said her aunt, as they sat down at the table, "but the cook forgot to order lobsters, and when I telephoned for fresh peas the grocer said I was too late, for they were all sold. I'm so sorry, for I do love hothouse peas, don't you?"

"I don't care what I have to eat, Aunt Grace. I just came to visit you people, you know, and the luncheon doesn't matter a bit."

"That's nice of you to say so, child. I remember what an adaptable little thing you were when you were with us down in the country, and really, you did us quite a lot of good that summer. You taught Bumble how to keep her bureau drawers in order. She's forgotten it now, but it was nice while it lasted."

"*Helen*, Mother, I do wish you would call me Helen. Bumble is such a silly name."

"I know it, my dear," said Mrs. Barlow, placidly, "and I do mean to, but you see I forget."

"I forget it, too," said Patty. "But I'll try to call you Helen if you want me to. What time does Uncle Ted come home, Aunt Grace?"

"Oh, about five o'clock, or perhaps six; and sometimes he gets here at four. I never know what time he's coming home."

"It isn't only that," said Bob; "in fact, father usually comes home about the same time. But our clocks are all so different that it depends on which room mother is in, as to what time she thinks it is."

"That's so," said Helen. "We have eleven clocks in this house, Patty, and every one of them is always wrong. Still, it's convenient in a way; if you want to go anywhere at a certain time, no matter what time you start, you can always find at least one clock that's about where you want it to be."

"I'm sure I don't see why the clocks don't keep the right time," said Mrs. Barlow. "A man comes every Saturday on purpose to wind and set them all."

"We fool with them," confessed Bob. "You see, Patty, we all like to get up late, and we set our clocks back every night, so that we can do it with a good grace."

"Yes," said Helen, "and then if we want each other to go anywhere through the day,--on time, you know,--we go around the house, and set all the clocks forward. That's the only possible way to make anybody hurry up."

Patty laughed. The whole conversation was so characteristic of the Barlows as she remembered them, and she wondered how they could enjoy living in such a careless way.

But they were an especially happy family, and most hospitable and entertaining. Patty thoroughly enjoyed her afternoon, although they did nothing in particular for her entertainment. But Aunt Grace was very fond of her motherless niece, and the twins just adored Patty.

At five o'clock tea was served, and though the appointments were not at all like Mrs. Allen's carefully equipped service, yet it was an hour of comfortable enjoyment. Uncle Ted came home, and he was so merry and full of jokes, that he made them all laugh. Two or three casual callers dropped in, and Patty thought again, as she sometimes did, that perhaps she liked her Barlow cousins best of all.

Dinner, not entirely to Patty's surprise, showed some of the same characteristics as luncheon had done. The salad course was lacking, because the mayonnaise dressing had been upset in the refrigerator; the ice cream was spoiled, because by mistake the freezer had been set in the sun until the ice melted, and the pretty pink pyramid was in a state of soft collapse.

But, as Aunt Grace cheerfully remarked, if it hadn't been that, it would have been something else, and it didn't matter much, anyway.

It was this happy philosophy of the Barlow family that charmed Patty so, and it left no room for embarrassment at these minor accidents, either on the part of the family or their guest.

"Now," said Patty, after dinner, "if necessary, I'm going to set all the clocks forward, for, Helen, I do want you to be ready when Mrs. Allen sends for us. She doesn't like to be kept waiting, one bit."

"Never mind the clocks, Patty," said Helen good-naturedly. "I'll be ready." She scampered off to dress, and sure enough was entirely ready before the carriage came.

"You see, Patty," she said, "we *can* do things on time, only we've fallen into the habit of not doing so, unless there's somebody like you here to spur us up."

Patty admitted this, but told Bumble that she was sorry her influence was not more lasting.

On Saturday they started with the Banks's on the automobile trip. Mrs. Allen provided Patty with a long coat for the journey, and a veil to tie over her hat. Not being accustomed to motoring, Patty did not have appropriate garments, and Mrs. Allen took delight in fitting her out with some of Nan's.

Mr. Banks's motor-car was of the largest and finest type. It was what is called a palace touring car, and represented the highest degree of comfort and luxury.

Patty had never been in such a beautiful machine, and when she was snugly tucked in the tonneau between Mrs. Allen and Ethel, Mr. Banks and Mr. Allen climbed into the front seat, and they started off.

The ride to Atlantic City was most exhilarating, and Patty enjoyed every minute of it. There was a top to the machine, for which reason the force of the wind was not so uncomfortable, and the tourists were able to converse with each other.

"I thought," said Patty, "that when people went in these big cars, at this fearful rate of speed, you could hardly hear yourself think, much less talk to each other. What's the name of your car, Mr. Banks?"

"The Flying Dutchman," was the reply.

"It's a flyer, all right," said Patty, "but I don't see anything Dutch about it."

"That's in honour of one of my ancestors, who, they tell me, came over from Holland some hundreds of years ago."

"Then it's a most appropriate name," said Patty, "and it's the most beautiful and comfortable car I ever saw."

They went spinning on mile after mile at what Patty thought was terrific speed, but which Mr. Banks seemed to consider merely moderate. After a while, seeing how interested Patty was in the mechanism of the car, Mr. Allen offered to change seats with her, and let her sit with Mr. Banks, while that gentleman explained to her the working of it.

Patty gladly made the change, and eagerly listened while Mr. Banks explained the steering gear, and as much of the motor apparatus as he could make clear to her.

Patty liked Mr. Banks. He was a kind and courteous gentleman, and treated her with a deference that gave Patty a sudden sense of importance. It seemed strange to think that she, little Patty Fairfield, was the honoured guest of the well-known Mr. Banks of Philadelphia. She did her best to be polite and entertaining in return, and the result was very pleasant, and also very instructive in the art of motoring.

They reached Atlantic City late in the afternoon, and went at once to a large hotel, where Mr. Banks had telegraphed ahead for rooms.

Patty and Ethel had adjoining rooms, and the Allens and Mr. Banks had rooms across the hall from them.

Patty had begun to like Ethel before this trip had been planned, and as she knew her better she liked her more. Ethel Banks, though the only daughter of a millionaire, was not in the least proud or ostentatious. She was a sweet, simple-minded girl, with friendly ways, and a good comradeship soon developed between her and Patty.

She was a little older than Patty, and had just come out in society during the past winter.

As Patty was still a schoolgirl, she could not be considered as "out," but of course on occasions like the present, such formalities made little or no difference.

"Now, my dear," said Mr. Banks to Ethel, "if you and Miss Fairfield will hasten your toilettes a little, we will have time for a ride on the board walk before dinner." This pleased the girls, and in a short time they had changed their travelling clothes for pretty light-coloured frocks, and went downstairs to find Mr. Banks waiting for them on the verandah. He explained that the Allens would not go with them on this expedition, so the three started off. As their hotel faced the

ocean, it was just a step to the wide and beautiful board walk that runs for miles along the beach at Atlantic City.

In all her life Patty had never seen such a sight as this before, and the beauty and wonder of it all nearly took her breath away.

The board walk was forty feet wide, and was like a moving picture of gaily-dressed and happy-faced people.

Although early in April, it seemed like summer time, so balmy was the air, so bright the sunshine. Patty gazed with delight at the blue ocean, dotted with whitecaps, and then back to the wonderful panorama of the gay crowd, the music of the bands, and the laughter of the children.

"The best way to get an idea of the extent of this thing," said Mr. Banks, "is to take a ride in the wheeled chairs. You two girls hop into that double one, and I will take this single one, and we'll go along the walk for a mile or so."

The chairs were propelled by strong young coloured men, who were affable and polite, and who explained the sights as they passed them, and pointed out places of interest. Patty said to Ethel that she felt as if she were in a perambulator, except that she wasn't strapped in. But she soon became accustomed to the slow, gentle motion of the chairs, and declared that it was indeed an ideal way to see the beautiful place. On one side was an endless row of small shops or bazaars, where wares of all sorts were offered for sale. At one of these, a booth of oriental trinkets, Mr. Banks stopped and bought each of the girls a necklace of gay-coloured beads. They were not valuable ornaments, but had a quaint, foreign air, and were very pretty in their own way. Patty was greatly pleased, and when they passed another booth which contained exquisite Armenian embroideries, she begged Ethel to accept the little gift from her, and picking out some filmy needle-worked handkerchiefs, she gave them to her friend.

On they went, past the several long piers, until Mr. Banks said it was time to turn around if they would reach the hotel in time for dinner.

So back they went to the hotel, and, after finding the Allens, they all went to the dining-room.

Privately, Patty wondered how these people could spend so much time eating dinner, when they might be out on the beach. At last, to her great satisfaction, dinner was over, and Mr. Allen proposed that they all go out for a short stroll on the board walk.

Although it had been a gay scene in the afternoon, that was as nothing to the evening effect. Thousands,--millions, it seemed to Patty,--of electric lights in various wonderful devices, and in every possible colour, made the place as light as day, and the varied gorgeousness of the whole scene made it seem, as Patty said, like a big kaleidoscope.

They walked gaily along, mingling with the good-natured crowd, noticing various sights or incidents here and there, until they reached the great steel pier, where Mr. Allen invited them to go with him to the concert. So in they went to listen to a band concert. This pleased Patty, for she was especially fond of a brass band, but Mrs. Allen said it was nothing short of pandemonium.

"Your tastes are barbaric, Patty," she said, laughing. "You love light and colour and noise, and I don't believe you could have too much of any of the three."

"I don't believe I could," said Patty, laughing herself, as the music banged and crashed.

"And that gewgaw you've got hanging around your neck," went on Mrs. Allen; "your fancy for that proves you a true barbarian."

"I think it's lovely," said Patty, looking at her gay-coloured beads. "I don't care if I do like crazy things. Ethel likes these beads, too."

"That's all right," said Mrs. Allen. "Of course you like them, chickadees, and they look very pretty with your light frocks. It's no crime, Patty, to be barbaric. It only means you have youth and enthusiasm and a capacity for enjoyment."

"Indeed I have," said Patty. "I'm enjoying all this so much that I feel as if I should just burst, or fly away, or something."

"Don't fly away yet," said Ethel. "We can't spare you. There are lots more things to see."

And so there were. After the concert they walked on, and on, continually seeing new and interesting scenes of one sort or another. Indeed, they walked so far that Mr. Allen said they must take chairs back. So again they got into the rolling chairs, and rolled slowly back to the hotel.

Patty was thoroughly tired out, but very happy, and went to sleep with the music of the dashing surf sounding in her ears.

CHAPTER IV

LESSONS AGAIN

But all this fun and frolic soon came to an end, and Patty returned to New York to take up her studies again.

Grandma Elliott was waiting for her in the pretty apartment home, and welcomed her warmly.

Mrs. Elliott and Patty were to stay at The Wilberforce only about a fortnight longer. Then Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield were to return and take Patty away with them to the new home on Seventy-second Street. Then the apartment in The Wilberforce was to be given up, and Grandma Elliott would return to Vermondale, where her son's family eagerly awaited her.

"I've had a perfectly beautiful time, Grandma," said Patty, as she took off her wraps, "but I haven't time to tell you about it now. Just think, school begins again to-morrow, and I haven't even looked at my lessons. I thought I would study some in Philadelphia, but goodness me, there wasn't a minute's time to do anything but frivol. The wedding was just gorgeous! Nan was a dream, and papa looked like an Adonis. I'll tell you more at dinner time, but now I really must get to work."

It was already late in the afternoon, but Patty brought out her books, and studied away zealously until dinner time. Then making a hasty toilette, she went down to the dining-room with grandma, and during dinner gave the old lady a more detailed account of her visit.

After dinner, Lorraine Hamilton and the Hart girls joined them in the parlour. But after chatting for a few moments with them, Patty declared she must go back to her studies.

"It's awfully hard," she said to Lorraine, as they walked to school next morning, "to settle down to work after having such a gay vacation. I do believe, Lorraine, that I never was intended for a student."

"You're doing too much," said Lorraine. "It's perfectly silly of you, Patty, to try to cram two years' work into one, the way you're doing."

"No, it isn't," said Patty, "because then I won't have to go to school next year, and that will be worth all this hard work now."

"I'm awfully sorry you're going away from The Wilberforce," said Lorraine. "I shall miss you terribly."

"I know it, and I'll miss you, too; but Seventy-second Street isn't very far away, and you must come to see me often."

The schoolgirls all welcomed Patty back, for she was a general favourite, and foremost in all the recreations and pleasures, as well as the classes of the Oliphant school.

"Oh, Patty," cried Elise Farrington, as she met her in the cloakroom, "what do you think? We're going to get up a play for commencement. An original play, and act it ourselves, and we want you to write it, and act in it, and stage-manage it, and all. Will you, Patty?"

"Of course I will," said Patty. "That is, I'll help. I won't write it all alone, nor act it all by myself, either. I don't suppose it's to be a monologue, is it?"

"No," said Elise, laughing. "We're all to be in it, and of course we'll all help write it, but you must be at the head of it, and see that it all goes on properly."

"All right," said Patty, good-naturedly, "I'll do all I can, but you know I'm pretty busy this year, Elise."

"I know it, Patty, and you needn't do much on this thing. Just superintend, and help us out here and there."

Then the girls went into the class room and the day's work began.

Patty had grown very fond of Elise, and though some of the other girls looked upon her as rather haughty, and what they called stuck-up, Patty failed to discern any such traits in her friend; and though Elise was a daughter of a millionaire, and lived a petted and luxurious life, yet, to Patty's way of thinking, she was more sincere and simple in her friendship than many of the other girls.

After school that day Elise begged Patty to go home with her and begin the play.

"Can't do it," said Patty. "I must go home and study."

"Oh, just come for a little while; the other girls are coming, and if you help us get the thing started, we can work at it

ourselves, you know."

"Well, I'll go," said Patty, "but I can only stay a few minutes."

So they all went home with Elise, and settled themselves in her attractive casino to compose their great work.

But as might be expected from a group of chattering schoolgirls, they did not progress very rapidly.

"Tell us all about your fun in Philadelphia, Patty," said Adelaide Hart.

And as Patty enthusiastically recounted the gaieties of her visit, the time slipped away until it was five o'clock, and not a word had been written.

"Girls, I must go," cried Patty, looking at her watch. "I have an awful lot of studying to do, and I really oughtn't to have come here at all."

"Oh, wait a little longer," pleaded Elise. "We must get the outline of this thing."

"No, I can't," said Patty, "I really can't; but I'll come Saturday morning, and will work on it then, if you like."

Patty hurried away, and when she reached home she found Kenneth Harper waiting for her.

"I thought you'd never come," he said, as she arrived. "Your school keeps very late, doesn't it?"

"Oh, I've been visiting since school," said Patty. "I oughtn't to have gone, but I haven't seen the girls for so long, and they had a plan on hand that they wanted to discuss with me."

"I have a plan on hand, too," said Kenneth. "I've been talking it over with Mrs. Elliott, and she has been kind enough to agree to it. A crowd of us are going to the matinee on Saturday, and we want you to go. Mrs. Morse has kindly consented to act as chaperon, and there'll be about twelve in the party. Will you go, Patty?"

"Will I go!" cried Patty. "Indeed I will, Ken. Nothing could keep me at home. Won't it be lots of fun?"

"Yes, it will," said Kenneth, "and I'm so glad you will go. I was afraid you'd say those old lessons of yours were in the way."

Patty's face fell.

"I oughtn't to go," she said, "for I've promised the girls to spend Saturday morning with them, and now this plan of yours means that I shall lose the whole day, and I have so much to do on Saturday; an extra theme to write, and a lot of back work to make up. Oh, Ken, I oughtn't to go."

"Oh, come ahead. You can do those things Saturday evening."

Patty sighed. She knew she wouldn't feel much like work Saturday evening, but she couldn't resist the temptation of the gay party Saturday afternoon. So she agreed to go, and Kenneth went away much pleased.

"What do you think, grandma?" said she. "Do you think I ought to have given up the matinee, and stayed at home to study?"

"No, indeed," said Grandma Elliott, who was an easy-going old lady. "You'll enjoy the afternoon with your young friends, and, as Kenneth says, you can study in the evening."

So when Saturday came Patty spent the morning with Elise. The other girls were there, and they really got to work on their play, and planned the scenes and the characters.

"It will be perfectly lovely!" exclaimed Adelaide Hart. "I'm so glad for our class to do something worth while. It will be a great deal nicer than the tableaux of last year."

"But it will be an awful lot of work," said Hilda Henderson. "All those costumes, though they seem so simple, will be quite troublesome to get up, and the scenery will be no joke."

"Perhaps Mr. Hepworth will help us with the scenery," said Patty. "He did once when we had a kind of a little play in Vermont, where I used to live. He's an artist, you know, and he can sketch in scenes in a minute, and make them look as if they had taken days to do. He's awfully clever at it, and so kind that I think he'll consent to do it."

"That will be regularly splendid!" said Elise, "and you'd better ask him at once, Patty, so as to give him as much time as possible."

"No, I won't ask him quite yet," said Patty, laughing. "I think I'll wait until the play is written, first. I don't believe it's customary to engage a scene painter before a play is scarcely begun."

"Well, then, let's get at it," said Hilda, who was practical.

So to work they went, and really wrote the actual lines of a good part of the first act.

"Now, that's something like," said Patty, as, when the clock struck noon, she looked with satisfaction on a dozen or more pages, neatly written in Hilda's pretty penmanship. "If we keep on like that, we can get this thing done in five or six Saturday mornings, and then I'll ask Mr. Hepworth about the scenery. Then we can begin to rehearse, and we'll just about be ready for commencement day."

While Patty was with the girls, her interest and enthusiasm were so great that the play seemed the only thing to be thought of. But when she reached home and saw the pile of untouched schoolbooks and remembered that she would be away all the afternoon, she felt many misgivings.

However, she had promised to go, so off she went to the matinee, and had a thoroughly pleasant and enjoyable time. Mrs. Morse invited her to go home to dinner with Clementine, saying that she would send her home safely afterward.

Clementine added her plea that this invitation might be accepted, but Patty said no. Although she wanted very much to go with the Morses, yet she knew that duty called her home. So she regretfully declined, giving her reason, and went home, determined to work hard at her themes and her lessons. But after her merry day with her young friends, she was not only tired physically, but found great difficulty in concentrating her thoughts on more prosaic subjects. But Patty had pretty strong will-power, and she forced herself to go at her work in earnest. Grandma Elliott watched her, as she pored over one book after another, or hastily scribbled her themes. A little pucker formed itself between her brows, and a crimson flush appeared on her cheeks.

At ten o'clock Mrs. Elliott asserted her authority.

"Patty," she said, "you must go to bed. You'll make yourself ill if you work so hard."

Patty pushed back her books. "I believe I'll have to, grandma," she said. "My head's all in a whirl, and the letters are dancing jigs before my eyes."

Exhausted, Patty crept into bed, and though she slept late next morning, Grandma Elliott imagined that her face still bore traces of worry and hard work.

"Nonsense, grandma," said Patty, laughing. "I guess my robust constitution can stand a little extra exertion once in a while. I'll try to take it easier this week, and I believe I'll give up my gymnasium work. That will give me more time, and won't interfere with getting my diploma."

But though Patty gained a few extra half hours by omitting the gymnasium class, she missed the daily exercise more than she would admit even to herself.

"You're getting round-shouldered, Patty," said Lorraine, one day; "and I believe it's because you work so hard over those old lessons."

"It isn't the work, Lorraine," said Patty, laughing. "It's the play. I had to rewrite the whole of that garden scene last night, after I finished my lessons."

"Why, what was the matter with it?"

"It was all wrong. We didn't think of it at the time, but in one place Elise has to go off at one side of the stage, and, immediately after, come on at the other side, in different dress. Now, of course, that won't do; it has to be arranged so that she will have time to change her costume. So I had to write in some lines for the others. And there were several little things like that to be looked after, so I had to do over pretty nearly the whole scene."

"It's a shame, Patty! We make you do all the hardest of the work."

"Not a bit of it. I love to do it; and when we all work together and chatter so, of course we don't think it out carefully enough, and so these mistakes creep in. Don't say anything about it, Lorraine. The girls will never notice my little changes and corrections, and I don't want to pose as a poor, pale martyr, growing round-shouldered in her efforts to help her fellow-sisters!"

"You're a brick, Patty, but I will tell them, all the same. If we're all going to write this play together, we're going to do it all, and not have you doing our work for us."

Lorraine's loyalty to Patty was unbounded, and as she had, moreover, a trace of stubbornness in her character, Patty knew that no amount of argument would move her from her determination to straighten matters out. So she gave up the discussion, only saying, "You won't do a bit of good, Lorraine; and anyway, somebody ought to revise the thing, and if I don't do it, who will?"

Patty said this without a trace of egotism, for she and Lorraine both knew that none of the other girls had enough constructive talent or dramatic capability to put the finishing touches on the lines of the play. That was Patty's special forte, just as Clementine Morse was the one best fitted to plan the scenic effects, and Elise Farrington to design the costumes.

"That's so," said Lorraine, with a little sigh, "and I suppose, Patty, you'll just go on in your mad career, and do exactly as you please."

"I suppose I shall," said Patty, laughing at Lorraine's hopeless expression; "but I do want this play to be a success, and I mean to help all I can, in any way I can."

"It's bound to be a success," said Lorraine with enthusiasm, "because the girls are all so interested, and I think we're all working hard in our different ways. Of course I don't have anything to do except to look after the incidental music, but I do hope that will turn out all right."

"Of course it will, Lorraine," said Patty. "Your selections are perfect so far; and you do look after more than that. Those two little songs you wrote are gems, and they fit into the second act just exactly right. I think you're a real poet, Lorraine, and after the play is over I wish you'd get those little songs published. I'm sure they're worth it."

"I wish I could," said Lorraine, "and I do mean to try."

CHAPTER V

A NEW HOME

Great was the rejoicing and celebration when Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield returned from their wedding trip. They came to the apartment to remain there for a few days before moving to the new house.

Patty welcomed Nan with open arms, and it was harder than ever for her to attend to her studies when there was so much going on in the family.

The furnishing of the new house was almost completed, but there remained several finishing touches to be attended to. As Patty's time was so much occupied, she was not allowed to have any hand in this work. Mrs. Allen had come on from Philadelphia to help her daughter, and Grandma Elliott assisted in dismantling the apartment, preparatory to giving it up.

So when Patty started to school one Friday morning, and was told that when the session was over she was to go to her new home to stay, she felt as if she were going to an unexplored country.

It was with joyful anticipations that she put on her hat and coat, after school, and started home.

Her father had given her a latch-key, and as she stepped in at the front door, Nan, in a pretty house dress, stood ready to welcome her.

"My dear child," she said, "welcome home. How do you like the prospect?"

"It's lovely," said Patty, gazing around at as much as she could see of the beautiful house and its well-furnished rooms. "What a lot of new things there are, and I recognise a good many of the old ones, too. Oh, Nan, won't we be happy all here together?"

"Indeed we will," said Nan. "I think it's the loveliest house in the world, and mother and Fred have fixed it up so prettily. Come up and see your room, Patty."

A large, pleasant front room on the third floor had been assigned to Patty's use, and all her own special and favourite belongings had been placed there.

"How dear of you, Nan, to arrange this all for me, and put it all to rights. I really couldn't have taken the time to do it myself, but it's just the way I want it."

"And this," said Nan, opening a door into a small room adjoining, "is your own little study, where you can be quiet and undisturbed, while you're studying those terrific lessons of yours."

Patty gave a little squeal of delight at the dainty library, furnished in green, and with her own desk and bookcases already in place.

"But don't think," Nan went on, "that we shall let you stay here and grub away at those books much of the time. An hour a day is all we intend to allow you to be absent from our family circle while you're in the house."

"An hour a day to study!" exclaimed Patty. "It's more likely that an hour a day is all I can give you of my valuable society."

"We'll see about that," said Nan, wagging her head wisely. "You see I have some authority now, and I intend to exercise it."

"Ha," said Patty, dramatically, "I see it will be war to the knife!"

"To the knife!" declared Nan, as she ran away laughing.

Patty looked about her two lovely rooms with genuine pleasure. She was like a cat in her love of comfortable chairs and luxurious cushions, and she fully appreciated the special and individual care with which Nan and her father had considered her tastes. Had she not been so busy she would have preferred to have a hand in the arranging of her rooms herself, but as it was, she was thankful that someone else had done it for her.

Hastily throwing off her hat and coat, she flung herself into a comfortable easy chair by her library table, and was soon deep in her French lesson.

A couple of hours later Nan came up and found her there.

"Patty Fairfield!" she exclaimed. "You are the worst I ever saw! Get right up and dress for dinner! Your father will be

home in a few minutes, and I want you to help me receive properly the master of the house."

Patty rubbed her eyes and blinked, as Nan pulled the book away from her, and said, "Why, what time is it?"

"Time for you to stop studying, and come out of your shell and mingle with the world. Wake up!" and Nan gave Patty a little shake.

Patty came to herself and jumped up, saying, "Indeed, I'm glad enough to leave my horrid books, and I'm hungry enough to eat any dinner you may set before me. What shall I wear, Nan?"

"Put on that pretty light blue thing of yours, with the lace yoke. This is rather a festival night, and we're going to celebrate the first dinner in our new home."

So Patty brushed her curly hair and tied on a white ribbon bow of such exceeding size and freshness that she looked almost as if wings were sprouting from her shoulders. Then she donned her light blue frock, and went dancing downstairs, to find that her father had already arrived.

"Well, Pattikins," he said, "can you feel at home in this big house, after living so long in our apartment?"

"Yes, indeed," said Patty, "any place is home where you and Nan are."

The dinner passed off gaily enough. Only the three were present, as Nan did not want any guests the first night.

Although the dining-room appointments were those that had furnished the Fairfield's Vermont home, yet they were so augmented by numerous wedding gifts of Nan's that Patty felt as if she were at a dinner party of unusual splendour.

"It's lovely to live in a house with a bride," she said, "because there are such beautiful silver and glass things on the table, and on the sideboard."

"Yes," said Nan, glancing around her with satisfaction. "I intend to use all my things. I think it's perfectly silly to pack them away in a safe, and never have any good of them."

"But suppose burglars break in and steal them," said Patty.

"Well, even so," said Nan, placidly, "they would be gone, but it wouldn't be much different from having them stored away in a safe deposit company."

"Nan's principle is right," said Mr. Fairfield. "Now, here's the way I look at it: what you can't afford to lose, you can't afford to buy. Remember that, Patty, and if ever you are tempted to invest a large sum of money in a diamond or silver or any portable property, look upon that money as gone forever. True, you might realise on your possession in case of need, but more likely you could not, and, too, there is always the chance of losing it by carelessness or theft. So remember that you can't afford to buy what you can't afford to lose."

"That's a new idea to me, papa," said Patty, "but I see what you mean and I know you are right. However, there's little chance of my investing in silver at present, for I can just as well use Nan's."

"Of course you can," said Nan, heartily; "and whenever you want to have company, or a party of any kind, you've only to mention it, and not only my silver, but my servants and my own best efforts are at your disposal."

"That's lovely," said Patty, "and I would love to have parties and invite the schoolgirls and some of the boys, but I can't take the time now. Why, I couldn't spare an evening from my studies to entertain the crowned heads of Europe."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Fairfield, "you mustn't work so hard, Puss; and anyway you'll have to spare this evening, for I asked Hepworth to drop in, and I think two or three others may come, and we'll have a little informal housewarming."

"Yes," said Patty, dubiously, "and Kenneth said he would call this evening, and Elise and Roger may come in. So, as it's Friday evening, I'll see them, of course; but after this I must study every evening except Fridays."

A little later on, when a number of guests had assembled in the Fairfield's drawing-room, Patty looked like anything but a bookworm, or a pale-faced student. Her eyes danced, and the colour glowed in her pretty face, for she was very fond of merry society, and always looked her prettiest when thus animated.

She and Elise entertained the others by quoting some bits from the school play, Nan sang for them, and Kenneth gave some of his clever and funny impersonations.

Mr. Hepworth declared that he had no parlour tricks, but Patty asserted that he had, and she ran laughing from the room, to return with several large sheets of paper and a stick of drawing charcoal. Then she decreed that Mr. Hepworth should draw caricature portraits of all those present. After a little demurring, the artist consented, and shrieks of laughter arose as his clever pencil swiftly sketched a humorous portrait of each one.

"It's right down jolly," said Kenneth to Patty, "your having a big house of your own like this. Mayn't I come often to see you? Mrs. Nan is so kind, she always has a welcome for me."

"You may come and accept her welcome whenever you like," said Patty, "but I can't promise to see you, Ken, except Friday evenings. Honestly, I don't have one minute to myself. You see, we rehearse the play afternoons, and evenings I have to study, and Saturday is crammed jam full."

"But she will see you, Kenneth," said Nan, who had heard these remarks. "We're not going to let her retire from the world in any such fashion as she proposes; so you come to see us whenever you like, and my word for it, Patty will be at home to you."

Nan passed on, laughing, and Patty turned to Kenneth with an appealing glance.

"You know how it is, don't you, Ken? I just have to stick to my work like everything, or I won't pass those fearful examinations, and now that I've made up my mind to try for them, I *do* want to succeed."

"Yes, I know, Patty, and I fully sympathise with your ambitions. Stick to it, and you'll come out all right yet; and if I should call sometimes when you're studying, just say you're too busy to see me, and it will be all right."

"What an old trump you are, Ken. You always seem to understand."

But as the days passed on, Patty found that other people did not understand. Her study hours were continually interrupted. There were occasional callers in the afternoon, and when Nan presented herself at the study door, and begged so prettily that Patty would come down just this once, the girl hadn't the heart to refuse. Then there was often company in the evenings, and again Patty would be forced to break through her rules. Or there were temptations which she really couldn't resist,—such as when her father came home to dinner, bringing tickets for the opera, or for some especially fine play.

Then, Nan had a day each week on which she received her friends, and on these Thursdays Patty was supposed also to act as hostess. Of course this pleasant duty was imperative, and Patty always enjoyed the little receptions, though she felt guilty at losing her Thursday afternoons. Almost invariably, too, some of the guests accepted Nan's invitation to remain to dinner, and that counted out Thursday evening as well.

Altogether, poor Patty was at her wits' end to find any time to herself. She tried rising very early in the morning and studying before breakfast, but she found it difficult to awaken early, and neither Nan nor her father would allow her to be called.

So she was forced to resort to sitting up late, and studying after the rest of the household had retired. As her room was on the third floor, she had no difficulty in pursuing this plan without anyone being aware of it, but burning the midnight oil soon began to tell on her appearance.

One morning at breakfast, her father said, "Patty, child, what is the matter with you? Your eyes look like two holes burnt in a blanket! You weren't up late last night?"

"Not very," said Patty, dropping her eyes before her father's searching gaze.

Nothing more was said on the subject, but though Patty hated to do anything secretly, yet she felt she must continue her night work, as it was really her only chance.

So that night as she sat studying until nearly midnight, her door slowly opened, and Nan peeped in. She wore a kimono, and her hair was in a long braid down her back.

"Patty Fairfield," she said, "go to bed at once! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, to sit up so late when you know your father doesn't want you to."

"Now, look here, Nan," said Patty, talking very seriously, "I *have* to sit up late like this, because I can't get a minute's time through the day. You know how it is. There's always company, or something going on, and I can't wake up early in the morning, and I have to sit up late at night, even if it does make me tired and sleepy and good for nothing the next day. Oh, Nan, instead of hindering and making fun of me, and bothering me all you can, I think you might try to help me!"

Patty threw herself on her knees, and burying her face in Nan's lap, burst into a convulsive flood of tears.

Nan was thoroughly frightened. She had never before seen Patty cry, and this was more than crying. It was almost hysterical.

Then, like a flash, Nan saw it all. Overwork and worry had so wrought on Patty's nerves that the girl was half sick and wholly irresponsible for her actions.

With a ready tact, Nan patted the golden head, and gently soothed the excited child.

"Never mind, Patty, darling," she said, "and try to forgive me, won't you? I fear I have been rather blind to the true state of the case, but I see more plainly now, and I will help you, indeed I will. I will see to it that you shall have your hours

for study just as you want them, and you shall not be interrupted. Dear little girl, you're all tired out, and your nerves are all on edge, and no wonder. Now, hop along to bed, and you'll see that things will go better after this."

As she talked, Nan had gently soothed the excited girl, and in a quiet, matter-of-fact way, she helped her prepare for bed, and finally tucked her up snugly under her down coverlet.

"Good-night, dearie," she said; "go to sleep without a bother on your mind, and remember that after this Nan will see to it that you shall have other times to study than the middle of the night."

"Good-night," said Patty, "and I'm sorry I made such a baby of myself. But truly, Nan, I'm bothered to death with those old lessons and the play and everything."

"That's all right; just go to sleep and dream of Commencement Day, when all the bothers will be over, and you'll get your diploma and your medal, and a few dozen bouquets besides."

And with a final good-night kiss, Nan left the worn-out girl and returned thoughtfully to her own room.

CHAPTER VI

BUSY DAYS

Nan was as good as her word. Instead of trying to persuade Patty not to study so hard, she did all she could to keep the study hours free from interruption.

Many a time when Nan wanted Patty's company or assistance, she refrained from telling her so, and unselfishly left the girl to herself as much as possible.

The result of this was that Patty gave herself up to her books and her school work to such an extent that she allowed herself almost no social recreation, and took little or no exercise beyond her walks to and from school.

This went on for a time, but Patty was, after all, of a sensitive and observing nature, and she soon discovered, by a certain wistful expression on Nan's face, or a tone of regret in her voice, that she was often sacrificing her own convenience to Patty's.

Patty's sense of proportion rebelled at this, and she felt that she must be more obliging to Nan, who was so truly kind to her.

And so she endeavoured to cram more duties into her already full days, and often after a hard day's work in school, when she would have been glad to throw on a comfortable house gown and rest in her own room, she dressed herself prettily and went out calling with her stepmother, or assisted her to receive her own guests.

Gay-hearted Nan was not acutely observant, and it never occurred to her that all this meant any self-sacrifice on Patty's part. She accepted with pleasure each occasion when Patty's plans fell in with her own, and the more this was the case, the more she expected it, so that poor Patty again found herself bewildered by her multitude of conflicting duties.

"I have heard," she thought to herself one day, "that duties never clash, but it seems to me they never do anything else. Now, this afternoon I'm sure it's my duty to write my theme, and yet I promised the girls I'd be at rehearsal, and then, Nan is so anxious for me to go shopping with her, that I honestly don't know which I ought to do; but I believe I'll write my theme, because that does seem the most important."

"Patty," called Nan's voice from the hall, "you'll go with me this afternoon, won't you? I have to decide between those two hats, you know, and truly I can't take the responsibility alone."

"Oh, Nan," said Patty, "it really doesn't matter which hat you get, they're both so lovely. I've seen them, you know, and truly I think one is just as becoming as the other. And honest, I'm fearfully busy to-day."

"Oh, pshaw, Patty. I've let you alone afternoons for almost a week now, or at least for two or three days, anyhow. I think you might go with me to-day."

Good-natured Patty always found it hard to resist coaxing, so with a little sigh she consented, and gave up her whole afternoon to Nan.

That meant sitting up late at night to study, but this was now getting to be the rule with Patty, and not the exception.

So the weeks flew by, and as commencement day drew nearer, Patty worked harder and her nerves grew more strained and tense, until a breakdown of some sort seemed imminent.

Mr. Fairfield at last awoke to the situation, and told Patty that she was growing thin and pale and hollow-eyed.

"Never mind," said Patty, looking at her father with an abstracted air, "I haven't time now, Papa, even to discuss the subject. Commencement day is next week, to-morrow my examinations begin, and I have full charge of the costumes for the play, and they're not nearly ready yet."

"You mustn't work so hard, Patty," said Nan, in her futile way.

"Nan, if you say that to me again, I'll throw something at you! I give you fair warning, people, that I'm so bothered and worried that my nerves are all on edge, and my temper is pretty much the same way. Now, until after commencement I've got to work hard, but if I just live through that, I'll be sweet and amiable again, and will do anything you want me to."

Patty was half laughing, but it was plain to be seen she was very much in earnest.

Commencement was to occur the first week in June, and the examinations, which took place the week before, were like a nightmare to poor Patty.

Had she been free to give her undivided attention, she might have taken them more calmly. But her mind was so full of

the troubles and responsibilities consequent on the play, that it was almost impossible to concentrate her thoughts on the examination work. And yet the examinations were of far more importance than the play, for Patty was most anxious to graduate with honours, and she felt sure that she knew thoroughly the ground she had been over in her studies.

At last examinations were finished, and though not yet informed of her markings, Patty felt that on the whole she had been fairly successful, and Friday night she went home from school with a heart lighter than it had been for many weeks.

"Thank goodness, it's over!" she cried as she entered the house, and clasping Nan around the waist, she waltzed her down the hall in a mad joy of celebration.

"Well, I am glad," said Nan, after she had recovered her breath; "now you can rest and get back your rosy cheeks once more."

"Not yet," said Patty gaily; "there is commencement day and the play yet. They're fun compared to examinations, but still they mean a tremendous lot of work. To-morrow will be my busiest day yet, and I've bought me an alarm clock, because I have to get up at five o'clock in order to get through the day at all."

"What nonsense," said Nan, but Patty only laughed, and scurried away to dress for dinner.

When the new alarm clock went off at five the next morning, Patty awoke with a start, wondering what in the world had happened.

Then, as she slowly came to her senses, she rubbed her sleepy eyes, jumped up quickly, and began to dress.

By breakfast time she had accomplished wonders.

"I've rewritten two songs," she announced at the breakfast table, "and sewed for an hour on Hilda's fairy costume, and cut out a thousand gilt stars for the scenery, and made two hundred paper violets besides!"

"You are a wonder, Patty," said Nan, but Mr. Fairfield looked at his daughter anxiously. Her eyes were shining with excitement, and there was a little red spot on either cheek.

"Be careful, dear," he said. "It would be pretty bad if, after getting through your examinations, you should break down because of this foolish play."

"It isn't a foolish play, Papa," said Patty gaily; "it's most wise and sensible. I ought to know, for I wrote most of it myself, and I've planned all the costumes and helped to make many of them. One or two, though, we have to get from a regular costumer, and I have to go and see about them to-day. Want to go with me, Nan?"

"I'd love to go," said Nan, "but I haven't a minute to spare all day long. I'm going to the photographer's, and then to Mrs. Stuart's luncheon, and after that to a musicale."

"Never mind," said Patty, "it won't be much fun. I just have to pick out the costumes for Joan of Arc and Queen Elizabeth."

"Your play seems to include a variety of characters," said Mr. Fairfield.

"Yes, it does," said Patty, "and most of the dresses we've contrived ourselves; but these two are beyond us, so we're going to hire them. Good-bye, now, people; I must fly over to see Elise before I go down town."

"Who's going with you, Patty, to the costumer's?" asked her father.

"Miss Sinclair, Papa; one of the teachers in our school. I am to meet her at the school at eleven o'clock. We are going to the costume place, and then to the shops to buy a few things for the play. I'll be home to luncheon, Nan, at one o'clock."

Patty flew away on her numerous errands, going first to Elise Farrington's to consult on some important matters. Hilda and Clementine were there, and there was so much to be decided that the time passed by unnoticed, until Patty exclaimed, "Why, girls, it's half-past eleven now, and I was to meet Miss Sinclair at eleven! Oh, I'm so sorry! I make it a point never to keep anybody waiting. I don't know when I ever missed an engagement before. Now, you must finish up about the programmes and things, and I'll scurry right along. She must be there waiting for me."

The school was only two blocks away, and Patty covered the ground as rapidly as possible. But when she reached there Miss Sinclair had gone. Another teacher who was there told Patty that Miss Sinclair had waited until twenty minutes after eleven, and then she had concluded that she must have mistaken the appointment, and that probably Patty had meant she would meet her at the costumer's. So she had gone on, leaving word for Patty to follow her there, if by any chance she should come to the school looking for her.

Patty didn't know what to do. The costumer's shop was a considerable distance away, and Patty was not in the habit of going around the city alone. But this seemed to her a special occasion, and, too, there was no time to hesitate.

She thought of telephoning to Nan, but of course she had already gone out. She couldn't call her father up from down town, and it wouldn't help matters any to ask Elise or any of the other girls to go with her. So, having to make a hasty decision, Patty determined to go alone.

She knew the address, and though she didn't know exactly how to reach it, she felt sure she could learn by a few enquiries. But, after leaving the Broadway car, she discovered that she had to travel quite a distance east, and there was no cross-town line in that locality. Regretting the necessity of keeping Miss Sinclair waiting, Patty hurried on, and after some difficulty reached the place, only to find that the costumer had recently moved, and that his new address was some distance farther up town.

Patty did not at all like the situation. She was unfamiliar with this part of the town, she felt awkward and embarrassed at being there alone, and she was extremely sorry not to have kept her engagement with Miss Sinclair.

All of this, added to the fact that she was nervous and overwrought, as well as physically tired out, rendered her unable to use her really good judgment and common sense.

She stood on a street corner, uncertain what to do next; and her uncertainty was distinctly manifest on her countenance.

The driver of a passing hansom called out, "Cab, Miss?" And this seemed to Patty a providential solution of her difficulty.

Recklessly unheeding the fact that she had never before been in a public cab alone, she jumped in, after giving the costumer's number to the driver. As she rode up town she thought it over, and concluded that, after all, she had acted wisely, and that she could explain to her father how the emergency had really necessitated this unusual proceeding.

It was a long ride, and when Patty jumped out of the cab and asked the driver his price, she was a little surprised at the large sum he mentioned.

However, she thought it was wiser to pay it without protest than to make herself further conspicuous by discussing the matter.

She opened the little wrist-bag which she carried, only to make the startling discovery that her purse was missing.

Even as she realised this, there flashed across her memory the fact that her father had often told her that it was a careless way to carry money, and that she would sooner or later be relieved of her purse by some clever pickpocket.

Patty could not be sure whether this was what had happened in the present instance, or whether she had left her purse at home. As she had carried change for carfare in her coat pocket, she had not expected to need a large sum of money, and her confused brain refused to remember whether she had put her purse in her bag or not.

She found herself staring at the cabman, who was looking distrustfully at her.

"I think I have had my pocket picked," she said slowly, "or else I left my purse at home. I don't know which."

"No, no, Miss, that won't go down," said the cabman, not rudely, but with an uncomfortable effect of being determined to have his fare. "Pay up, now, pay up," he went on, "and you'll save yourself trouble in the end."

"But I can't pay you," said Patty. "I haven't any money."

"Then you didn't ought to ride. It ain't the first time I've knowed a swell young lady to try to beat her way. Come, Miss, if you don't pay me I'll have to drive you to the station house."

"What!" cried Patty, her face turning white with anger and mortification.

"Yes, Miss, that's the way we do. I s'pose you know you've stole a ride."

"Oh, wait a minute," said Patty; "let me think."

"Think away, Miss; perhaps you can remember where you've hid your money."

"But I tell you I haven't any," said Patty, her indignation rising above her fear. "Now, look here, I have a friend right in here at this address; let me speak to her, and she'll come out and pay you."

"No, no, Miss; you can't ketch me that way. I've heard of them friends before. But I'll tell you what," he added, as Patty stood looking at him blankly, "I'll go in there with you, and if so be's your friend's there and pays up the cash, I've nothing more to say."

The hansom-driver climbed down from his seat and went with Patty into the costumer's shop.

A stolid-looking woman of Italian type met them and enquired what was wanted.

"Is Miss Sinclair here?" asked Patty eagerly.

"No, Miss, there's nobody here by way of a customer."

"But hasn't a lady been here in the last hour, to look at costumes for a play?"

"No, Miss, nobody's been here this whole morning."

"You see you can't work that game," said the cabman. "I'm sorry, Miss, but I guess you'll have to come along with me."

CHAPTER VII

A RESCUE

Perhaps it was partly owing to Patty's natural sense of humour, or perhaps her overwrought nerves made her feel a little hysterically inclined, but somehow the situation suddenly struck her as being very funny. To think that she, Patty Fairfield, was about to be arrested because she couldn't pay her cab fare, truly seemed like a joke.

But though it seemed like a joke, it wasn't one. As Patty hesitated, the cabman grew more impatient and less respectful.

Patty's feeling of amusement passed as quickly as it came, and she realised that she must do something at once. Nan was not at home, her father was too far away, and, curiously, the next person she thought of as one who could help her in her trouble was Mr. Hepworth.

This thought seemed like an inspiration. Instantly assuming an air of authority and dignity, she turned to the angry cabman and said, "You will be the one to be arrested unless you behave yourself more properly. Come with me to the nearest public telephone station. I have sufficient money with me to pay for a telephone message, and I will then prove to your satisfaction that your fare will be immediately paid."

Patty afterward wondered how she had the courage to make this speech, but the fear of what might happen had been such a shock to her that it had reacted upon her timidity.

And with good results, for the cabman at once became meek and even cringing.

"There's a telephone across the street, Miss," he said.

"Very well," said Patty; "come with me."

"There's a telephone here, Miss," said the Italian woman, "if you would like to use it."

"That's better yet," said Patty; "where's the book?"

Taking the telephone book, Patty quickly turned the leaves until she found Mr. Hepworth's studio number.

She had an aversion to speaking her own name before her present hearers, so when Mr. Hepworth responded she merely said, "Do you know who I am?"

Of course the others listening could not hear when Mr. Hepworth responded that he did know her voice, and then called her by name.

"Very well," said Patty, still speaking with dignity, "I have had the misfortune to lose my purse, and I am unable to pay my cab fare. Will you be kind enough to answer the cabman over this telephone right now, and inform him that it will be paid if he will drive me to your address, which you will give him?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Hepworth politely, though he was really very much amazed at this message.

Patty turned to the cabman and said, somewhat sternly, "Take this receiver and speak to the gentleman at the other end of the wire."

Sheepishly the man took the receiver and timidly remarked, "Hello."

"What is your number?" asked Mr. Hepworth, and the cabman told him.

"Where are you?" was the next question, and the cabman gave the address of the costumer, which Patty had not remembered to do.

Mr. Hepworth's studio was not very many blocks away, and he gave the cabman his name and address, saying, "Bring the young lady around here at once, as quickly as you can. I will settle with you on your arrival."

Mr. Hepworth hung up his own receiver, much puzzled. His first impulse was to go to the address where Patty was, but as it would take some time for him to get around there by any means, he deemed it better that she should come to him.

As Patty felt safe, now that she was so soon to meet Mr. Hepworth, she gave her remaining change to the Italian woman, who had been kind, though stolidly disinterested, during the whole interview.

The cabman, having given his number to Mr. Hepworth, felt a responsibility for the safety of his passenger, and assisted her into the cab with humble politeness.

A few moments' ride brought them to the large building in which was Mr. Hepworth's studio, and that gentleman himself, hatted and gloved, stood on the curb awaiting them.

"What's it all about?" he asked Patty, making no motion, however, to assist her from the cab.

But the reaction after her fright and embarrassment had made Patty so weak and nervous that she was on the verge of tears.

"I didn't have any money," she said; "I don't know whether I lost it or not, and if you'll please pay him, papa will pay you afterward."

"Of course, child; that's all right," said Mr. Hepworth. "Don't get out," he added, as Patty started to do so. "Stay right where you are, and I'll take you home." He gave Patty's address to the driver, swung himself into the cab beside Patty, and off they started.

"I wasn't frightened," said Patty, though her quivering lip and trembling hands belied her words; "but when he said he'd arrest me, I--I didn't know what to do, and so I telephoned to you."

"Quite right," said Hepworth, in a casual tone, which gave no hint of the joy he felt in being Patty's protector in such an emergency. "But I say, child, you look regularly done up. What have you been doing? Have you had your luncheon?"

"No," said Patty, faintly.

"And it's after two o'clock," said Hepworth, sympathetically. "You poor infant, I'd like to take you somewhere for a bite, but I suppose that wouldn't do. Well, here's the only thing we can do, and it will at least keep you from fainting away."

He signalled the cabman to stop at a drug shop, where there was a large soda fountain. Here he ordered for Patty a cup of hot bouillon. He made her drink it slowly, and was rejoiced to see that it did her good. She felt better at once, and when they returned to the cab she begged Mr. Hepworth to let her go on home alone, and not take any more of his valuable time.

"No, indeed," said that gentleman; "it may not be according to the strictest rules of etiquette for me to be going around with you in a hansom cab, but it's infinitely better than for you to be going around alone. So I'll just take charge of you until I can put you safely inside your father's house."

"And the girls are coming at two o'clock for a rehearsal!" said Patty. "Oh, I shall be late."

"The girls will wait," said Mr. Hepworth, easily, and then during the rest of the ride he entertained Patty with light, merry conversation.

He watched her closely, however, and came to the conclusion that the girl was very nervous, and excitable to a degree that made him fear she was on the verge of a mental illness.

"When is this play of yours to come off?" he enquired.

"Next Thursday night," said Patty, "if we can get ready for it, and we must; but oh, there is so much to do, and now I've wasted this whole morning and haven't accomplished a thing, and I don't know where Miss Sinclair is, and I didn't see about the costumes, after all, and now I'll be late for rehearsal. Oh, what shall I do?"

Mr. Hepworth had sufficient intuition to know that if he sympathised with Patty in her troubles she was ready to break down in a fit of nervous crying.

So he said, as if the matter were of no moment, "Oh, pshaw, those costumes will get themselves attended to some way or another. Why, I'll go down there this afternoon and hunt them up, if you like. Just tell me what ones you want."

This was help, indeed. Patty well knew that Mr. Hepworth's artistic taste could select the costumes even better than her own, and she eagerly told him the necessary details.

Mr. Hepworth also promised to look after some other errands that were troubling Patty's mind, so that when she finally reached home she was calm and self-possessed once more.

Mr. Hepworth quickly settled matters with the cabman, and then escorted Patty up the steps to her own front door, where, with a bow and a few last kindly words, he left her and walked rapidly away.

The girls who had gathered for rehearsal greeted her with a chorus of reproaches for being so late, but when Patty began to tell her exciting experiences, the rehearsal was forgotten in listening to the thrilling tale.

"Come on, now," said Patty, a little later, "we must get to work. Get your places and begin your lines, while I finish these."

Patty had refused to go to luncheon, and the maid had brought a tray into the library for her. So, with a sandwich in one hand and a glass of milk in the other, she directed the rehearsal, taking her own part therein when the time came.

So the days went on, each one becoming more and more busy as the fateful time drew near.

Also Patty became more and more nervous. She had far more to do than any of the other girls, for they depended on her in every emergency, referred every decision to her, and seemed to expect her to do all the hardest of the work.

Moreover, the long strain of overstudy she had been through had left its effects on her system, and Patty, though she would not admit it, and no one else realised it, was in imminent danger of an attack of nervous prostration.

The last few days Nan had begun to suspect this, but as nothing could be done to check Patty's mad career, or even to assist her in the many things she had to do, Nan devoted her efforts to keeping Patty strengthened and stimulated, and was constantly appearing to her with a cup of hot beef tea, or of strong coffee, or a dose of some highly recommended nerve tonic.

Although these produced good temporary effects, the continued use of these remedies really aggravated Patty's condition, and when Thursday came she was almost a wreck, both physically and mentally, and Nan was at her wits' end to know how to get the girl through the day.

At the summons of her alarm clock Patty rose early in the morning, for there was much to do by way of final preparation. Before breakfast she had attended to many left-over odds and ends, and when she appeared at the table she said only an absent-minded "good-morning," and then knit her brows as if in deep and anxious thought.

Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield looked at each other. They knew that to say a word to Patty by way of warning would be likely to precipitate the breakdown that they feared, so they were careful to speak very casually and gently.

"Anything I can do for you to-day, Puss?" said her father, kindly.

"No," said Patty, still frowning; "but I wish the flowers would come. I have to make twenty-four garlands before I go over to the schoolroom, and I must be there by ten o'clock to look after the building of the platform."

"Can't I make the garlands for you?" asked Nan.

"No," said Patty, "they have to be made a special way, and you'd only spoil them."

"But if you showed me," urged Nan, patiently. "If you did two or three, perhaps I could copy them exactly; at any rate, let me try."

"Very well," said Patty, dully, "I wish you could do them, I'm sure."

The flowers were delayed, as is not unusual in such cases, and it was nearly ten when they arrived.

Patty was almost frantic by that time, and Nan, as she afterward told her husband, had to "handle her with gloves on."

But by dint of tact and patience, Nan succeeded in persuading Patty, after making two or three garlands, to leave the rest for her to do. Although they were of complicated design, Nan was clever at such things, and could easily copy Patty's work. And had she been herself, Patty would have known this. But so upset was she that even her common sense seemed warped.

When she reached the schoolroom there were a thousand and one things to see to, and nearly all of them were going wrong.

Patty flew from one thing to another, straightening them out and bringing order from confusion, and though she held herself well in hand, the tension was growing tighter, and there was danger of her losing control of herself at any minute.

Hilda Henderson was the only one who realised this, and, taking Patty aside, she said to her, quietly, "Look here, girl, I'll attend to everything else; there's not much left that needs special attention. And I want you to go right straight home, take a hot bath, and then lie down and rest until time to dress for the afternoon programme. Will you?"

Patty looked at Hilda with a queer, uncomprehending gaze. She seemed scarcely to understand what was being said to her.

"Yes," she said, but as she turned she half stumbled, and would have fallen to the floor if Hilda had not caught her strongly by the arm.

"Brace up," she said, and her voice was stern because she was thoroughly frightened. "Patty Fairfield, don't you dare to collapse now! If you do, I'll--I don't know *what* I'll do to you! Come on, now, I'll go home with you."

Hilda was really afraid to let Patty go alone, so hastily donning her hat and coat she went with her to her very door.

"Take this girl," she said to Nan, "and put her to bed, and don't let her see anybody or say anything until the programme begins this afternoon. I'll look after everything that isn't finished, if you'll just keep her quiet."

Nan was thoroughly alarmed, but she only said, "All right, Hilda, I'll take care of her, and thank you very much for bringing her home."

Patty sank down on a couch in a limp heap, but her eyes were big and bright as she looked at Hilda, saying, "See that the stars are put on the gilt wands, and the green bay leaves on the white ones. Lorraine's spangled skirt is in Miss Oliphant's room, and please be sure,--" Patty didn't finish this sentence, but lay back among the cushions, exhausted.

"Run along, Hilda," said Nan; "do the best you can with the stars and things, and I'll see to it that Patty's all right by afternoon."

CHAPTER VIII

COMMENCEMENT DAY

Nan was a born nurse, and, moreover, she had sufficient common sense and tact to know how to deal with nervous exhaustion. Instead of discussing the situation she said, cheerily, "Now everything will be all right. Hilda will look after the stars and wands, and you can have quite a little time to rest before you go back to the schoolroom. Don't try to go up to your room now, just stay right where you are, and I'll bring you a cup of hot milk, which is just what you need."

Patty nestled among the cushions which Nan patted and tucked around her, and after taking the hot milk felt much better.

"I must get up now, Nan," she pleaded, from the couch where she lay, "I have so many things to attend to."

"Patty," said Nan, looking at her steadily, "do you want to go through with the commencement exercises this afternoon and the play to-night successfully, or do you want to collapse on the stage and faint right before all the audience?"

"I won't do any such foolish thing," said Patty, indignantly.

"You will," said Nan, "unless you obey me implicitly, and do exactly as I tell you."

Nan's manner more than her words compelled Patty's obedience, and with a sigh, the tired girl closed her eyes, saying, "All right, Nan, have your own way, I'll be good."

"That's a good child," said Nan, soothingly, "and now first we'll go right up to your own room."

Then Nan helped Patty into a soft dressing gown, made her lie down upon her bed, and threw a light afghan over her.

Then sitting beside her, Nan talked a little on unimportant matters and then began to sing softly. In less than half an hour Patty was sound asleep, and Nan breathed a sigh of relief at finding her efforts had been successful.

But there was not much time to spare, for the commencement exercises began at three o'clock.

So at two o'clock Patty found herself gently awakened, to see Nan at her bedside, arranging a dainty tray of luncheon which a maid had brought in.

"Here you are, girlie," said the cheery voice, "sit up now, and see what we have for you here."

Patty awoke a little bewildered, but soon gathered her scattered senses, and viewed with pleasure the broiled chicken and crisp salad before her.

Exhaustion had made her hungry, and while she ate, Nan busied herself in getting out the pretty costume that Patty was to wear at commencement.

But the sight of the white organdie frock with its fluffy ruffles and soft laces brought back Patty's apprehensions.

"Oh, Nan," she cried in dismay, "I'm not nearly ready for commencement! I haven't copied my poem yet, and I haven't had a minute to practice reading it for the last two weeks. What shall I do?"

"That's all attended to," said Nan,--"the copying, I mean. You've been so busy doing other people's work, that of course you haven't had time to attend to your own, so I gave your poem to your father, and he had it typewritten for you, and here it is all ready. Now, while you dress, I'll read it to you, and that will bring it back to your memory."

"Nan, you are a dear," cried Patty, jumping up and flying across the room to give her stepmother a hearty caress. "Whatever would I do without you? I'm all right now, and if you'll just elocute that thing, while I array myself in purple and fine linen, I'm sure it will all come back to me."

So Nan read Patty's jolly little class poem line by line, and Patty repeated it after her as she proceeded with her toilette.

She was ready before the appointed time, and the carriage was at the door, but Nan would not let her go.

"No, my lady," she said, "you don't stir out of this house until the very last minute. If you get over there ahead of time, you'll begin to make somebody a new costume, or build a throne for the fairy queen, or some foolish trick like that. Now you sit right straight down in that chair and read your poem over slowly, while I whip into my own clothes, and then we'll go along together. Fred can't come until a little later anyway. Sit still now, and don't wriggle around and spoil that pretty frock."

Patty obeyed like a docile child, and Nan flew away to don her own pretty gown for the occasion.

When she returned in a soft grey crepe de chine, with a big grey hat and feathers, she was such a pretty picture that

Patty involuntarily exclaimed in admiration.

"I'm glad you like it," said Nan, "I want to look my best so as to do you credit, and in return I want you to do your best so as to do me credit."

"I will," said Patty, earnestly, "I truly will. You've been awfully good to me, Nan, and but for you I don't know what I should have done."

Away they went, and when they reached the schoolroom, and Patty went to join her classmates, while Nan took her place in the audience, she said as a parting injunction, "Now mind, Patty, this afternoon you're to attend strictly to your own part in the programme. Don't go around helping other people with their parts, because this isn't the time for that. You'll have all you can do to manage Patty Fairfield."

Patty laughed and promised, and ran away to the schoolroom.

The moment she entered, half a dozen girls ran to her with questions about various details, and Nan's warning was entirely forgotten. Indeed had it not been for Hilda's intervention, Patty would have gone to work at a piece of unfinished scenery.

"Drop that hammer!" cried Hilda, as Patty was about to nail some branches of paper roses on to a wobbly green arbour. "Patty Fairfield, are you crazy? The idea of attempting carpenter work with that delicate frock on! Do for pity's sake keep yourself decent until after you've read your poem at least!"

Patty looked at Hilda with that same peculiar vacantness in her glance which she had shown in the morning, and though Hilda said nothing, she was exceedingly anxious and kept a sharp watch on Patty's movements.

But it was then time for the girls to march onto the platform, and as Patty seemed almost like herself, though unusually quiet, Hilda hoped it was all right.

The exercises were such as are found on most commencement programmes, and included class history, class prophecy, class song and all of the usual contributions to a commencement programme.

Patty's class poem was near the end of the list, and Nan was glad, for she felt it would give the girl more time to regain her poise. Mr. Fairfield had arrived, and both he and Nan waited anxiously for Patty's turn to come.

When it did come, Patty proved herself quite equal to the occasion.

Her poem was merry and clever, and she read it with an entire absence of self-consciousness, and an apparent enjoyment of its fun. She looked very sweet and pretty in her dainty white dress, and she stood so gracefully and seemed so calm and composed, that only those who knew her best noticed the feverish brightness of her eyes and a certain tenseness of the muscles of her hands.

But this was not unobserved by one in the audience. Mr. Hepworth, though seated far back, noted every symptom of Patty's nervousness, however little it might be apparent to others.

Although she went through her ordeal successfully, he knew how much greater would be the excitement and responsibility of the evening's performance and he wished he could help her in some way.

But there seemed to be nothing he could do, and though he had sent her a beautiful basket of roses, it was but one floral gift among so many that he doubted whether Patty even knew that he sent it; and he also doubted if she would have cared especially if she had known it.

Like most of the graduates, Patty received quantities of floral tributes. As the ushers came again and again with clusters or baskets of flowers, the audience heartily applauded, and Patty, though embarrassed a little, preserved a pretty dignity, and showed a happy enjoyment of it all.

As soon as the diplomas were awarded, and Patty had her cherished roll tied with its blue ribbon, Nan told Mr. Fairfield that it was imperative that Patty should be made to go straight home.

"If she stays there," said Nan, "she'll get excited and exhausted, and be good for nothing to-night. I gave her some stimulants this noon, although she didn't know it, but the effects are wearing off and a reaction will soon set in. She must come home with us at once."

"You are right, Mrs. Fairfield," said Mr. Hepworth, who had crossed the room and joined them just in time to hear Nan's last words. "Patty is holding herself together by sheer nervous force, and she needs care if she is to keep up through the evening."

"That is certainly true," said Nan. "Kenneth," she added, turning to young Harper, who stood near by, "you have a good deal of influence with Patty. Go and get her, won't you? Make her come at once."

"All right," said Kenneth, and he was off in a moment, while Mr. Hepworth looked after him, secretly wishing that the

errand might have been entrusted to him.

But Kenneth found his task no easy one. Although Patty willingly consented to his request, and even started toward the dressing-room to get her wraps, she paused so many times to speak to different ones, or her progress was stopped by anxious-looking girls who wanted her help or advice, that Kenneth almost despaired of getting her away.

"Can't you make her come, Hilda?" he said.

"I'll try," said Hilda, but when she tried, Patty only said, "Yes, Hilda, in just a minute. I want to coach Mary a little in her part, and I want to show Hester where to stand in the third act."

"Never mind," said Hilda, impatiently. "Let her stand on the roof, if she wants to, but for goodness' sake go on home. Your people are waiting for you."

Again Patty looked at her with that queer vacant gaze, and then Lorraine Hart stepped forward and took matters in her own hands.

"March!" she said, as she grasped Patty's arm, and steered her toward the dressing-room. "Halt!" she said after they reached it, and then while Patty stood still, seemingly dazed, Lorraine put her cloak about her, threw her scarf over her head, wheeled her about, and marched her back to where Kenneth stood waiting.

"Take her quick," she said. "Take her right to the carriage; don't let her stop to speak to anybody."

So Kenneth grasped Patty's arm firmly and led her through the crowd of girls, out of the door, and down the walk to the carriage. Ordinarily, Patty would have resented this summary treatment, but still in a half-dazed way she meekly went where she was led.

Once in the carriage, Nan sat beside her and Mr. Fairfield opposite, and they started for home. No reference was made to Patty herself, but the others talked lightly and pleasantly of the afternoon performance.

On reaching home, Nan put Patty to bed at once, and telephoned for the Doctor.

But when Dr. Martin came, Nan met him downstairs, and told him all about the case. They then decided that the Doctor should not see Patty, as to realise the fact that she was in need of medical attendance might prove a serious shock.

"And really, Doctor," said Nan, "if the girl shouldn't be allowed at least to try to go through with the play this evening, I wouldn't like to answer for the consequences."

"I understand," said Dr. Martin, "and though I think that with the aid of certain prescriptions I shall give you, she can probably get through the evening, it would be far better if she did not attempt it."

"I know it Doctor," said Nan, "and with some girls it might be possible to persuade them to give it up, but I can't help feeling that if we even advised Patty not to go to-night, she would fly into violent hysterics."

"Very likely," said Dr. Martin, "and I think, Mrs. Fairfield, you are right in your diagnosis. If you will give her these drops exactly as I have directed, I think she will brace up sufficiently to go through her part all right."

Nan thanked the Doctor, and hurried back to Patty's room to look after her charge. She found Patty lying quietly, but in a state of mental excitement. When Nan came in, she began to talk rapidly.

"It's all right, Nan, dear," she said. "I'm not ill a bit. Please let me get up now, and dress so I can go around to the schoolroom a little bit early. There are two or three things I must look after, and then the play will go off all right."

"Very well," said Nan, humouring her, "if you will just take this medicine it will brace you up for the evening, and you can go through with the play as successfully as you did your part this afternoon."

Patty agreed, and took the drops the Doctor had left, without a murmur.

Soon their soothing effect became apparent, and Patty's nervous enthusiasm quieted down to such an extent that she seemed in no haste to go.

She ate her dinner slowly, and dawdled over her dressing, until Nan again became alarmed lest the medicine had been too powerful.

Poor Nan really had a hard time of it. Patty was not a tractable patient, and Nan was frequently at her wits' end to know just how to manage her.

But at last she was ready, and they all started for the school again. Although Patty's own people, and a few of her intimate girl friends knew of her overwrought state, most of the class and even the teachers had no idea how near to a nervous breakdown she was. For her demeanour was much as usual, and though she would have moments of dazed bewilderment, much of the time she was unusually alert and she flew about attending to certain last details in an efficient and clear-headed manner.



CHAPTER IX

THE PLAY

The play went through beautifully. Every girl did her part wonderfully well, but Patty surpassed them all. Buoyed up by excitement, she played her part with a dash and sprightliness that surprised even the girls who had seen her at rehearsal. She was roguish, merry and tragic by turns, and she sang her solos with a dramatic effect that brought down the house. She looked unusually pretty, which was partly the effect of her intense excitement, and though Nan and Mr. Fairfield could not help admiring and applauding with the rest, they were very anxious and really alarmed, lest she might not be able to keep up to these emotional heights until the end of the play.

Without speaking his thoughts to anyone else, Mr. Hepworth, too, was very much concerned for Patty's welfare. He realised the danger she was in, and noted every evidence of her artificial strength and merriment. Seeing Dr. Martin in a seat near the back of the room, he quietly rose and went and sat beside the old gentleman.

"Doctor," he said, "I can't help fearing that a collapse of some sort will follow Miss Fairfield's performance."

"I am sure of it," said the Doctor, looking gravely at Mr. Hepworth.

"Then don't you think perhaps it would be wise for you to go around behind the scenes, presently, and be there in case of emergency."

"I will gladly do so," said Dr. Martin, "if Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield authorise it."

Mr. Hepworth looked at his programme, and then he looked at Patty. He knew the play pretty thoroughly, and he knew that she was making one of the final speeches. He saw too, that she had nearly reached the limit of her endurance, and he said, "Dr. Martin, I wish you would go on my authority. The Fairfields are sitting in the front part of the house, and it would be difficult to speak to them about it without creating a commotion. And besides, I think there is no time to be lost; this is almost the end of the play, and in my judgment, Miss Fairfield is pretty nearly at the end of her self-composure."

Dr. Martin gave the younger man a searching glance, and then said, "You are right, Mr. Hepworth. It may be advisable that I should be there when Miss Fairfield comes off the stage. I will go at once. Will you come with me?"

"Yes," said Mr. Hepworth, and the two men quietly left the room, and hastened around the building to the side entrance.

As Mr. Hepworth had assisted with the scenery for the play, and had been present at one or two rehearsals, he knew his way about, and guided Dr. Martin through the corridors to the room where the girls were gathered, waiting their cue to go on the stage for the final tableau and chorus.

Lorraine and Hilda looked at each other comprehendingly, as the two men appeared, but the other girls wondered at this apparent intrusion.

Then as the time came, they all went on the stage, and Dr. Martin and Mr. Hepworth, watching from the side, saw them form the pretty final tableau.

Patty in a spangled dress and tinsel crown, waving a gilt wand, stood on a high pedestal. Around her, on lower pedestals, and on the floor, were the rest of the fairy maidens in their glittering costumes.

The last notes of the chorus rang out, and amidst a burst of applause the curtain fell. The applause continued so strongly that the curtain was immediately raised again, and the delighted audience viewed once more the pretty scene.

Mr. Hepworth was nearer the stage than Dr. Martin, in fact, in his anxiety, he was almost edging on to it, and while the curtain was up, and the audience was applauding, and the orchestra was playing, and the calcium lights were flashing their vari-coloured rays, his intense watchfulness noticed a slight shudder pass over Patty's form, then she swayed slightly, and her eyes closed.

In a flash Mr. Hepworth had himself rung the bell that meant the drop of the curtain, and as the curtain came down, he sprang forward among the bewildered girls, and reached the tall pedestal just in time to catch Patty as she tottered and fell.

"She has only fainted," he said, as he carried her off the stage, "please don't crowd around, she will be all right in a moment."

He carried her to the dressing-room and gently laid her on a couch. Dr. Martin followed closely, and Mr. Hepworth left

Patty in his charge.

"You, Miss Hamilton, go in there," he said to Lorraine, at the door, "and see if you can help Dr. Martin. I will speak to the Fairfields and see that the carriage is ready. I don't think the audience knows anything about it, and there need be no fuss or commotion."

Quick-witted Hilda grasped the situation, and kept the crowd of anxious girls out of the dressing-room, while Dr. Martin administered restoratives to Patty.

But it was not so easy to overcome the faintness that had seized upon her. When at last she did open her eyes, it was only to close them again in another period of exhaustion.

However, this seemed to encourage Dr. Martin.

"It's better than I feared," he said. "She isn't delirious. There is no threat of brain fever. She will soon revive now, and we can safely take her home."

And so when the Doctor declared that she might now be moved, Mr. Fairfield supported her on one side, and Kenneth on the other as they took her to the carriage.

"Get in, Mrs. Fairfield," said Kenneth, after Patty was safely seated by her father, "and you too, Dr. Martin. I'll jump up on the box with the driver. Perhaps I can help you at the house."

So away they went, without a word or a thought for poor Mr. Hepworth, to whose watchfulness was really due the fact of Dr. Martin's opportune assistance. And too, if Mr. Hepworth had not seen the first signs of Patty's loss of consciousness, her fall from the high pedestal might have proved a serious accident.

Although Dr. Martin told the family afterward of Mr. Hepworth's kind thoughtfulness, it went unnoted at the time. But of this, Mr. Hepworth himself was rather glad than otherwise. His affection for Patty was such that he did not wish the girl to feel that she owed him gratitude, and he preferred to have no claim of the sort upon her.

When the party reached the Fairfield house, Patty had revived enough to talk rationally, but she was very weak, and seemed to have lost all enthusiasm and even interest in the occasion.

"It's all over, isn't it?" she asked of her father in a helpless, pathetic little voice.

"Yes, Puss," said Mr. Fairfield, cheerily, "it's all over, and it was a perfect success. Now don't bother your head about it any more, but just get rested, and get a good sleep, and then we'll talk it over."

Patty was quite willing not to discuss the subject, and with Nan's assistance she was soon in bed and sound asleep.

Dr. Martin stood watching her. "I don't know," he said to Nan, "whether this sleep will last or not. If it does all will be well, but she may wake up soon, and become nervous and hysterical. In that case give her these drops, which will have a speedy effect. I will be around again early to-morrow morning."

But the doctor's fears were not realised. Patty slept deeply all through the night, and had not waked when the doctor came in the morning.

"Don't waken her," he said, as he looked at the sleeping girl. "She's all right. There's no fear of nervous prostration now. The stress is over, and her good constitution and healthy nature are reasserting themselves and will conquer. She isn't of a nervous temperament, and she is simply exhausted from overwork. Don't waken her, let her sleep it out."

And so Patty slept until afternoon, and then awoke, feeling more like her old self than she had for many days.

"Nan," she called, and Nan came flying in from the next room.

"I'm awful hungry," said Patty, "and I am pretty tired, but the play is over, isn't it, Nan? I can't seem to remember about last night."

"Yes, it's over, Patsy, and everything is all right, and you haven't a thing to do but get rested. Will you have your breakfast now, or your luncheon?—because you've really skipped both."

"Then I'll have them both," said Patty with decision. "I'm hungry enough to eat a house."

Later, Patty insisted on dressing and going downstairs for dinner, declaring she felt perfectly well, but the exertion tired her more than she cared to admit, and when Dr. Martin came in the evening, she questioned him directly.

"I'm not really ill, am I, Dr. Martin? I'll be all right in a day or two, won't I? It's so silly to get tired just walking downstairs."

"Don't be alarmed," said the old doctor, "you will be all right in a day or two. By day after to-morrow you can walk downstairs, or run down, if you like, without feeling tired at all."

"Then that's all right," said Patty. "I suppose I did do too much with my school work, and the play, and everything, but

I couldn't seem to help it, and if I get over it in a week I'll be satisfied. In fact, I shan't mind a bit, lounging around and resting for a few days."

"That's just the thing for you to do," agreed Dr. Martin, "and I'll give you another prescription. After a week or two of rest, you need recreation. You must get out of the city, and go somewhere in the country. Not seashore or the mountains just yet, but away into the country, where you'll have plenty of fresh air and nothing to do. You mustn't look at a book of any sort or description for a month or two at least. Will you promise me that?"

"With great pleasure," said Patty, gaily, "I don't think I shall care to see a book all summer long; not a schoolbook anyway. I suppose I may read storybooks."

"Not at present," said the doctor. "Let alone books of all sorts for a couple of months, and after that I'll see about it. What you want is plenty of fresh air and outdoor exercise. Then you'll get back the roses in your cheeks, and add a few pounds of flesh to your attenuated frame."

"Your prescription sounds attractive," said Patty, "but where shall I go?"

"We'll arrange all that," said Mr. Fairfield. "I think myself that all you need is recreation and rest, with a fair proportion of each."

"So do I," said Patty; "I don't want to go to an old farmhouse, where there isn't a thing to do but walk in the orchard; I want to go where I'll have some fun."

"Go ahead," said the doctor, "fun won't hurt you any as long as it's outdoor sports or merry society. But don't get up any plays, or any such foolishness, where fun is only a mistaken name for hard work."

Patty promised this, and Dr. Martin went away without any doubts as to the speedy and entire recovery of his patient.

Mr. Fairfield and Nan quite agreed with the doctor's opinion that Patty ought to go away for a rest and a pleasant vacation. The next thing was to decide where she should go. It was out of the question, of course, to consider any strange place for her to go alone, and as Mr. Fairfield could not begin his vacation until July, and Nan was not willing to leave him, there seemed to be no one to accompany Patty.

The only places, therefore, that Mr. Fairfield could think of, were for her to go to Vermontdale and visit the Elliotts, or down to the Hurly-Burly where the Barlows had already gone for their summer season.

But neither of these plans suited Patty at all, for she said that Vermontdale would be no rest and not much fun. She was fond of her Elliott cousins, but she felt sure that they would treat her as a semi-invalid and coddle her until she went frantic.

The Hurly-Burly, she said, would be just the opposite. They would have no consideration down there for the fact that she wanted a rest, but would make her jog about hither and thither, taking long tramps and going on tiresome picnics whether she wanted to or not.

So neither of these plans seemed just the thing, and Nan's proposal that Patty go to Philadelphia and spend June with Mrs. Allen wasn't quite what Patty wanted. Indeed, Patty did not know herself exactly what she wanted, which was pretty good proof that she was not so far from the borders of Nervous Land as they had believed.

And so when Elise came over one afternoon, and brought with her an invitation for Patty, that young woman showed no hesitation in announcing at once that it was exactly what she wanted. The invitation was nothing more nor less than to go on a long motor-car trip with the Farringtons.

"It will be perfectly splendid," said Elise, "if you'll only go, Patty."

"Go!" said Patty, "I should think I would go! It's perfectly splendid of you to invite me. Who are going?"

"Just father and mother, and Roger and myself," said Elise, "and you will make five. Roger can run the car, or father can, either, for that matter, so we won't take a man, and father has had a new top put on his big touring-car and we can pile any amount of luggage up on it, so you can take all the frocks you want to. We'll stop at places here and there, you know, to visit, and of course, we'll always stop for meals and to stay over night."

"But perhaps they wouldn't want me," said Patty, "where you go to visit."

"Nonsense, of course they will. Why, I wrote to Bertha Warner that I wanted to bring you, and she said she'd love to have you come."

"How could she say so? she doesn't know me."

"Well, I told her all about you, and she's fully prepared to love you as I do. Oh, do you suppose your people will let you go?"

"Of course they will. They'll be perfectly delighted to have me go."

Patty was right. When she told her father and Nan about the delightful invitation, they were almost as pleased as she was herself, and Mr. Fairfield gave ready permission.

The projected trip entirely fulfilled Dr. Martin's requisites of fresh air, out-of-door exercise, and a good time, and when he was told of the plan he also expressed his entire approval.

CHAPTER X

A MOTOR TRIP

Preparations began at once. It was now the first of June and they were to start on the sixth.

There were delightful shopping excursions for the replenishing of Patty's wardrobe, and Nan gladly assisted Patty to get everything in order for her trip.

At last the day of starting came, and a more beautiful day could not be imagined. It was typical June weather, and the sun shone pleasantly, but not too warmly, from a clear blue sky.

Patty's only experience in motoring had been her trip to Atlantic City, but that was only a short ride compared to the contemplated tour of the Farringtons.

Mr. Farrington's huge car seemed to be furnished with everything necessary for a long journey. Although they would usually take their meals at hotels in the towns through which they passed, Mrs. Farrington explained they might occasionally wish to have tea or even luncheon on the road, so the car was provided with both tea-basket and luncheon-kit. The novelty of this paraphernalia was fascinating to Patty, and she peeped into the well-appointed baskets with chuckles of delight at the anticipated pleasure of making use of them.

Patty's trunk was put up on top among the others, her hand-luggage was stowed away in its place, and with affectionate good-byes to Nan and her father, she took her seat in the tonneau between Mrs. Farrington and Elise, and away they started.

Mr. Farrington and Roger, who sat in front, were in the gayest of spirits and everything was promising for a happy journey.

As they threaded their way through the crowded city streets, Patty rejoiced to think that they would soon be out in the open country where they would have wide roads with comparatively few travellers.

"What is the name of your machine, Mr. Farrington?" she asked, as they whizzed along.

"I may as well own up," that gentleman answered, laughing. "I have named it 'The Fact.'"

"'The Fact,'" repeated Patty, "what a funny name. Why do you call it that? You must have some reason."

"I have," said Mr. Farrington, in a tone of mock despair. "I call it The Fact because it is a stubborn thing."

Patty laughed merrily at this. "I'm afraid it's a libel," she said, "I'm sure I don't see anything stubborn about the way it acts. It's going beautifully."

"Yes, it is," said Mr. Farrington, "and I hope it will continue to do so, but I may as well warn you that it has a most reprehensible habit of stopping now and then, and utterly refusing to proceed. And this, without any apparent reason, except sheer stubbornness."

"How do you finally induce it to move?" asked Patty, interested by this trait.

"We don't induce it," said Elise, "we just sit and wait, and when the old thing gets ready to move, it just draws a long breath and humps itself up and down a few times, and turns a couple of somersaults, and moves on."

"What an exciting experience," said Patty. "When do you think it will begin any such performance as that?"

"You can't tell," said Mr. Farrington. "It's as uncertain as the weather."

"More so," said Roger. "The weather sometimes gives you warning of its intentions, but The Fact just selects a moment when you're the farthest possible distance from civilisation or help of any kind, and then it just sits down and refuses to get up."

"Well, we won't cross that bridge until we come to it," said Mr. Farrington. "Sometimes we run a week without any such mishap."

And truly there seemed no danger at present, for the big car drove ahead as smoothly and easily as a railroad train, and Patty lay back in the luxurious tonneau, feeling that at last she could get rested and have a good time both at once.

The wonderful exhilaration of the swift motion through the soft June air, the delightful sensation of the breeze which was caused by the motion of the car, and the ever-changing natural panorama on either side of her, gave Patty the sensation of having suddenly been transported to some other country than that in which she had been living the past

few weeks.

And so pleasantly friendly were her relations with Mrs. Farrington and Elise that it did not seem necessary to make remarks for the sake of keeping up the conversation. There was much pleasant chat and discussion as they passed points of interest or diverting scenes, but then again there were occasional pauses when they all gave themselves up to the enjoyment of the delightful motion of the car.

Patty began to realise what was meant by the phrase, "automobile elation." She seemed to feel an uplifting of her spirit, and a strange thrill of exquisite happiness, while all trace of nervousness or petty worry was brushed away like a cobweb.

Her lungs seemed filled with pure air, and further, she had a whimsical sense that she was breathing the very blue of the sky.

She said this to Mrs. Farrington, and that lady smiled as she answered, "That's right, Patty; if you feel that way, you are a true motorist. Not everyone does. There are some who only look upon a motor-car as a machine to transport them from one place to another, but to me it is the very fairyland of motion."

Patty's eyes shone in sympathy with this idea, but Roger turned around laughingly, and said, "You'd better be careful how you breathe the blue sky, Patty, for there's a little cloud over there that may stick in your throat."

Patty looked at the tiny white cloud, and responded, "If you go much faster, Roger, I'm afraid we'll fly right up there, and run over that poor little cloud."

"Let's do it," said Roger. "There's no fine for running over a cloud, is there, Dad?"

As he spoke, Roger put on a higher speed, and then they flew so fast that Patty began to be almost frightened. But her fear did not last long, for in a moment the great car gave a kind of a groan, and then a snort, and then a wheeze, and stopped; not suddenly, but with a provokingly determined slowness, that seemed to imply no intention of moving on again. After a moment the great wheels ceased to revolve, and the car stood stubbornly still, while Mr. Farrington and Roger looked at each other, with faces of comical dismay.

"We're in for it!" said Mr. Farrington, in a resigned tone.

"Then we must get out for it!" said Roger, as he jumped down from his seat, and opened the tool-chest.

Mrs. Farrington groaned. "Now, you see, Patty," she said, "how the car lives up to its name. I hoped this wouldn't happen so soon."

"What is the matter?" asked Patty. "Why doesn't it go?"

"Patty," said Elise, looking at her solemnly, "I see you have yet to learn the first lesson of automobile etiquette. Never, my child, whatever happens, *never* inquire why a car doesn't go! That is something that nobody ever knows, and they wouldn't tell if they did know, and, besides, if they did know, they'd know wrong."

Mrs. Farrington laughed at Elise's coherent explanation, but she admitted that it was pretty nearly right, after all. Meanwhile, Mr. Farrington and Roger, with various queer-looking tools, were tinkering at the car here and there, and though they did not seem to be doing any good, yet they were evidently not discouraged, for they were whistling gaily, and now and then made jesting remarks about the hopelessness of ever moving on again.

"I think there's water in the tubes," said Roger, "but Dad thinks it's a choked carburetter. So we're going to doctor for both."

"Very well," said Mrs. Farrington, calmly; "as there's no special scenery to look at about here, I think I shall take a little nap. You girls can get out and stroll around, if you like."

Mrs. Farrington settled herself comfortably in her corner, and closed her eyes. Elise and Patty did get out, and walked up and down the road a little, and then sat down on the bank by the roadside to chat. For the twentieth time or more they talked over all the details of commencement day, and congratulated themselves anew on the success of their entertainment.

At last, after they had waited nearly two hours, Roger declared that there was no earthly reason why they shouldn't start if they cared to.

It was part of Roger's fun, always to pretend that he could go on at any moment if he desired to, and when kept waiting by the misconduct of the car, he always made believe that he delayed the trip solely for his own pleasure.

Likewise, if under such trying circumstances as they had just passed through, he heard other automobiles or wagons coming, he would drop his tools, lean idly against the car, with his hands in his pockets, whistling, and apparently waiting there at his own pleasure.

All this amused Patty very much, and she began, as Elise said, to learn the rules of automobile etiquette. It was not difficult with the Farringtons, for they all had a good sense of humour, and were always more inclined to laugh than cry over spilled milk.

When Roger made this announcement, Elise jumped up, and crying, "Come on, Patty," ran back to the car and jumped in, purposely waking her mother as she did so.

Mrs. Farrington placidly took in the situation, and remarked that she was in no hurry, but if they cared to go on she was quite ready.

And so with laughter and gay chatter they started on again, and the car ran as smoothly as it had before the halt.

But it was nearly sundown, and there were many miles yet to travel before they reached the hotel where they had expected to dine and stay over night.

"Shall we go on, Mother?" said Mr. Farrington. "Can you wait until nine o'clock or thereabouts for your dinner? Or shall we stop at some farmhouse, and so keep ourselves from starvation?"

"I would rather go on," said Mrs. Farrington, "if the girls don't mind."

The girls didn't mind, and so they plunged ahead while the sun set and the darkness fell. There was no moon, and a slight cloudiness hid the stars. Roger lighted the lamps, but they cast such weird shadows that they seemed to make the darkness blacker than ever.

Patty was not exactly afraid, but the experience was so new to her that she felt she would be glad when they reached the hotel. Perhaps Mr. Farrington discerned this, for he took especial pains to entertain his young guest, and divert her mind from thoughts of possible danger. So he beguiled the way with jokes and funny stories, until Patty forgot her anxiety, and the first thing she knew they were rolling up the driveway to the hotel.

Floods of light streamed from the windows and the great doors, and strains of music could be heard from within.

"Thank goodness we're here!" said Mrs. Farrington. "Jump out, girlies, and let us seek shelter at once."

Roger remained in the car to take it away to the garage, and Mr. Farrington accompanied the ladies into the hotel.

Much as she had enjoyed the ride, Patty felt glad to get into the warm, lighted house, and very soon the party were shown to their rooms.

Patty and Elise shared a large room whose twin beds were covered with spreads of gaily-flowered chintz. Curtains of the same material hung at the windows, and draped the dressing-table.

"What a pleasant, homelike room," said Patty, as she looked about.

"Yes," said Elise, "this is a nice old country hotel. We've been here before. Hurry, Patty, let's dress for dinner quickly."

But Patty was surveying herself in the long pierglass that hung between two windows.

Nan had selected her motoring outfit, and she had donned it that morning so hastily that she hadn't really had an opportunity to observe herself. But now, as she looked at the rather shapeless figure in the long pongee coat, and the queer shirred hood of the same material, and as she noted the voluminous chiffon veil with its funny little front window of mica, she concluded that she looked more like a goblin in a fairy play than a human being.

"Do stop admiring your new clothes, Patty, and get dressed," said Elise, who was on her knees before an open suitcase, shaking out Patty's skirt and bodice. "Get off those togs, and get ready to put these on. This is a sweet little Dresden silk; I didn't know you had it. Is it new?"

"Yes," said Patty, "Nan bought it for me. She said it wouldn't take much room in the suitcase, and would be useful for a dinner dress."

"It's lovely," said Elise. "Now get into it, and I'll hook you up."

So Patty got out of what she called her goblin clothes, but was still giggling at them as she hung them away in the wardrobe.

Less than half an hour later the two girls, spick and span in their dainty dresses, and with fresh white bows on their hair, went together down the staircase. They found Mr. and Mrs. Farrington awaiting them, and soon Roger appeared, and they went to the dining-room for a late dinner.

Then Patty discovered what automobile hunger was.

"I'm simply ravenous," she declared, "but I didn't know it until this minute."

"That's part of the experience," said Mrs. Farrington, "the appetite caused by motoring is the largest known variety, and that's why I wanted to push on here, where we could get a good dinner, instead of taking our chances at some

farmhouse."

They were the only guests in the dining-room at that late hour, and so they made a merry meal of it, and after dinner went back to the large parlours, to sit for a while listening to the music. But they did not tarry long, for as Patty discovered, another consequence of a motor ride was a strong inclination to go to bed early.

CHAPTER XI

DICK PHELPS

The travellers did not rise early the next morning, and ten o'clock found them still seated at the breakfast table.

"I do hate to hurry," said Mrs. Farrington, comfortably sipping her coffee. "So many people think that an automobile tour means getting up early, and hustling off at daybreak."

"I'm glad those are your sentiments," said Patty, "for I quite agree with you. I've done enough hustling the last month or two, and I'm delighted to take things more slowly for a change."

"I think," said Mr. Farrington, "that as it is such a pleasant day, it would be a good plan to take some luncheon with us and picnic by the roadside. We could then get to the Warners'in time for dinner, though perhaps a little late."

"Lovely!" cried Elise, "I'm perfectly crazy to use that new luncheon-kit. It's great, Patty! It has the cunningest alcohol stove, and every little contraption you could possibly think of."

"I know it," said Patty. "I peeped inside yesterday, and the array of forks and spoons and plates and bottles was perfectly fascinating."

"Very well," said Mrs. Farrington to her husband, "ask them to fill the kit properly, and I think myself we will enjoy a little picnic."

So Mr. Farrington went to see about the provisions, and Roger to get the car ready, while the ladies sauntered about the piazza.

The route of their journey lay along the shore of Long Island Sound, and the hotel where they had stayed over night was not far from New Haven, and quite near the water's edge.

Patty was very fond of the water, and gazed with delight at the sparkling Sound, dotted with white steamers and various sorts of fishing-craft. For her part she would have been glad to stay longer at this hotel, but the Warners, whom they were going to visit, were expecting them to dinner that evening. These people, Patty knew, lived in a beautiful country place called "Pine Branches," which was near Springfield in Massachusetts. Patty did not know the Warners, but Elise had assured her that they were delightful people and were prepared to give her a warm welcome.

When the car came to the door the ladies were all ready to continue the journey. They had again donned their queer-looking motor-clothes, and though Patty was beginning to get used to their appearance, they still seemed to her like a trio of brownies or other queer beings as they took their seats in the car.

Roger climbed to his place, touched a lever by his side, and swung the car down the drive with an air of what seemed to Patty justifiable pride. The freshly cleaned car was so daintily spick and span, the day was so perfect, and the merry-hearted passengers in such a gay and festive mood, that there was indeed reason for a feeling of general satisfaction.

Away they went at a rapid speed, which Patty thought must be beyond the allowed limit, but Roger assured her to the contrary.

For many miles their course lay along a fine road which followed the shore of the Sound. This delighted Patty, as she was still able to gaze out over the blue water, and at the same time enjoy the wonderful motion of the car.

But soon their course changed and they turned inland, on the road to Hartford. Patty was surprised at Roger's knowledge of the way, but the young man was well provided with road maps and guidebooks, of which he had made careful study.

"How beautifully the car goes," said Patty. "It doesn't make the least fuss, even on the upgrades."

"You must learn the vocabulary, Patty," said Roger. "When a machine goes smoothly as The Fact is doing now, the proper expression is that it runs sweetly."

"Sweetly!" exclaimed Patty. "How silly. It sounds like a gushing girl."

"That doesn't matter," said Roger, serenely. "If you go on motor trips, you must learn to talk motor-jargon."

"All right," said Patty, "I'm willing to learn, and I do think the way this car goes it is just too sweet for anything!"

They all laughed at this, but their gaiety was short-lived, for just then there was a peculiar crunching sound that seemed to mean disaster, judging from the expressions of dismay on the faces of the Farrington family.

"What is it?" asked Patty, forgetting that she had been told never to ask questions on such occasions.

"Patty," said Roger, making a comical face at her, "my countenance now presents an expression typical of disgust, irritation, and impatience. I now wave my right hand thus, which is a Delsarte gesture expressing exasperation with a trace of anger. I next give voice to my sentiments, merely to remark in my usual calm and disinterested way, that a belt has broken and the mending thereof will consume a portion of time, the length of which may be estimated only after it has elapsed."

Patty laughed heartily at this harangue, but gathered from Roger's nonsense the interesting fact that an accident had occurred, and that a delay was inevitable. Nobody seemed especially surprised. Indeed, they took it quite as a matter of course, and Mrs. Farrington opened a new magazine which she had brought with her, and calmly settled herself to read.

But Elise said, "Well, I'm already starving with hunger, and I think we may as well open that kit of provisions, and have our picnic right here, while Roger is mending the belt."

"Elise," said her father jestingly, "you sometimes show signs of almost human intelligence! Your plan is a positive inspiration, for I confess that I myself feel the gnawings of hunger. Let us eat the hard-boiled eggs and ham sandwiches that we have with us, and then if we like, we can stop at Hartford this afternoon for a more satisfying lunch, as I begin to think we will not reach Pine Branches until sometime later than their usual dinner hour."

They all agreed to this plan, and Roger, with his peculiar sensitiveness toward being discovered with his car at a disadvantage, said seriously: "I see a racing machine coming, and when it passes us I hope you people will act as if we had stopped here only to lunch, and not because this ridiculous belt chose to break itself just now."

This trait of Roger's amused Patty very much, but she was quite ready to humour her friend, and agreed to do her part.

She looked where Roger had indicated, and though she could see what looked like a black speck on a distant road, she wondered how Roger could know it was a racing machine that was approaching. However, she realised that there were many details of motoring of which she had as yet no idea, and she turned her attention to helping the others spread out the luncheon. The beautifully furnished basket was a delight to Patty. She was amazed to see how cleverly a large amount of paraphernalia could be stowed in a small amount of space. The kit was arranged for six persons, and contained half-dozens of knives, forks, spoons, and even egg-spoons; also plates, cups, napkins, and everything with which to serve a comfortable meal. There were sandwich-boxes, salad-boxes, butter-jars, tea and coffee cans, salt, pepper, and all necessary condiments. Then there was the alcohol stove, with its water-kettle and chafing dish. At the sight of all these things, which seemed to come out of the kit as out of a magician's hat, Patty's eyes danced.

"Let me cook," she begged, and Mrs. Farrington and Elise were only too glad to be relieved of this duty.

There wasn't much cooking to do, as sandwiches, cold meats, salad, and sweets were lavishly provided, but Patty made tea, and then boiled a few eggs just for the fun of doing it.

Preparations for the picnic were scarcely under way when the racing-car that Roger had seen in the distance came near them. There was a whirring sound as it approached, and Patty glanced up from her alcohol stove to see that it was occupied by only one man. He was slowing speed, and evidently intended to stop. Long before he had reached them, Roger had hidden his tools, and though his work on the broken belt was not completed, he busied himself with the luncheon preparations, as if that was his sole thought.

The racing-car stopped and the man who was driving it got out.

At sight of him Patty with difficulty restrained her laughter, for though their own garb was queer, it was rational compared to the appearance of this newcomer.

A racing suit is, with perhaps the exception of a diver's costume, the most absurd-looking dress a man can get into. The stranger's suit was of black rubber, tightly strapped at the wrists and ankles, but it was his head-gear which gave the man his weird and uncanny effect. It was a combination of mask, goggles, hood, earflaps, and neckshield which was so arranged with hinges that the nose-guard and mouthpiece worked independently of each other.

At any rate, it seemed to Patty the funniest show she had ever seen, and she couldn't help laughing. The man didn't seem to mind, however, and after he had bowed silently for a moment or two with great enjoyment of their mystification, he pulled off his astonishing head-gear and disclosed his features.

"Dick Phelps!" exclaimed Mr. Farrington, "why, how are you, old man? I'm right down glad to see you!"

Mr. Phelps was a friend of the Farrington family, and quite naturally they invited him to lunch with them.

"Indeed I will," said the visitor, "for I started at daybreak, and I've had nothing to eat since. I can't tarry long though, as I must make New York City to-night."

Mr. Phelps was a good-looking young man of about thirty years, and so pleased was he with Patty's efforts in the

cooking line, that he ate all the eggs she had boiled, and drank nearly all the tea, besides making serious inroads on the viands they had brought with them.

"It doesn't matter if I do eat up all your food," said the young man, pleasantly, "for you can stop anywhere and get more, but I mustn't stop again until I reach the city, and I probably won't have a chance to eat then, as I must push on to Long Island."

The Farringtons were quite willing to refresh the stranger within their gates, and they all enjoyed the merry little picnic.

"Where are you bound?" asked Mr. Phelps as he prepared to continue his way.

"To Pine Branches first," said Mrs. Farrington, "the country house of a friend. It's near Springfield, and from there we shall make short trips, and later on, continue our way in some other direction,—which way we haven't yet decided."

"Good enough," said Mr. Phelps, "then I'll probably see you again. I am often a guest at Pine Branches myself, and shall hope to run across you."

As every motorist is necessarily interested in his friend's car, Mr. Phelps naturally turned to inspect the Farrington machine before getting into his own.

And so, to Roger's chagrin, he was obliged to admit that he was even then under the necessity of mending a broken belt.

But to Roger's relief, Mr. Phelps took almost no notice of it, merely saying that a detail defect was liable to happen to anybody. He looked over the vital parts of the motor, and complimented Roger on its fine condition. This pleased the boy greatly, and resuming his work after Mr. Phelps' departure, he patched up the belt, while the others repacked the kit, and soon they started off again.

Swiftly and smoothly they ran along over the beautiful roads, occasionally meeting other touring-parties apparently as happy as they were themselves. Sometimes they exchanged merry greetings as they passed, for all motorists belong to one great, though unorganised, fraternity.

"I've already discovered that trifling accidents are a part of the performance, and I've also discovered that they're easily remedied and soon over, and that when they are over they are quickly forgotten and it seems impossible that they should ever occur again."

"You've sized it up pretty fairly, Patty," said Roger, "and though I never before thought it out for myself, I agree with you that that is the true way to look at it."

On they went, leaving the miles behind them, and as Roger was anxious to make up for lost time he went at a slightly higher speed than he would have otherwise done. He slowed down, however, when they passed horses or when they went through towns or villages.

Patty was greatly interested in the many small villages through which they rode, as nearly every one showed quaint or humorous scenes. Dogs would come out and bark at them, children would scream after them, and even the grown-up citizens of the hamlets would stare at them as if they had never seen a motor-car before, though Patty reasoned that surely many of them must have travelled that same road.

"When you meet another village, Roger," she said, "do go through it more slowly, for I like to see the funny people."

"Very well," said Roger, "you may stop and get a drink at the town pump, if you like."

"No, thank you," said Patty, "I don't want to get out, but I would like to stop a minute or two in one of them."

Roger would willingly have granted Patty's wish, but he was deprived of this privilege by the car itself. Just as they neared a small settlement known as Huntley's Corners, another ominous sound from the machine gave warning.

"That belt again!" exclaimed Roger. "Patty, the probabilities are that you'll have all the time you want to study up this village, and even learn the life history of the oldest inhabitant."

"What an annoying belt it is," said Mrs. Farrington in her pleasant way. "Don't you think, Roger dear, that you had better get a new belt and be done with it?"

"That's just what I do think, Mother, but somehow I can't persuade myself that they keep them for sale at this corner grocery."

The car had reached the only store in the settlement, and stopped almost in front of it.

Patty was beginning to learn the different kinds of stops that a motor-car can make, and she felt pretty sure that this was not a momentary pause, but a stop that threatened a considerable delay.

She said as much to Roger, and he replied, "Patty, you're an apt pupil. The Fact has paused here not for a day, but for

all time, unless something pretty marvellous can be done in the way of belt mending!"

Patty began to think that accidents were of somewhat frequent occurrence, but Elise said, cheerfully, "This seems to be an off day. Why, sometimes we run sweetly for a week, without a word from the belt. Don't we, Roger?"

"Yes, indeed," said Roger, "but Patty may as well get used to the seamy side of motoring, and learn to like it."

"I do like it," declared Patty, "and if we are going to take up our abode here for the present, I'm going out to explore the town."

She jumped lightly from the car, and, accompanied by Elise, strolled down the main, and, indeed, the only street of the village.

CHAPTER XII

OLD CHINA

A few doors away from the country store in front of which the automobile stood, the girls saw a quaint old house, with a few toys and candies displayed for sale in a front window.

"Isn't it funny?" said Elise, looking in at the unattractive collection. "See that old-fashioned doll, and just look at that funny jumping-jack!"

"Yes," said Patty, whose quick eye had caught sight of something more interesting, "but just look at that plate of peppermint candies. The plate, I mean. Why, Elise, it's a Millennium plate!"

"What's that?" said Elise, looking blank.

"A Millennium plate? Why, Elise, it's about the most valuable bit of old china there is in this country! Why, Nan would go raving crazy over that. I'd rather take it home to her than any present I could buy in the city shop. Elise, do you suppose whoever keeps this little store would sell that plate?"

"No harm in trying," said Elise, "there's plenty of time, for it will take Roger half an hour to fix that belt. Let's go in and ask her."

"No, no," said Patty, "that isn't the way. Wait a minute. I've been china hunting before, with Nan, and with other people, and you mustn't go about it like that. We must go in as if we were going to buy some of her other goods, and then we'll work around to the plate by degrees. You buy something else, Elise, and leave the plate part to me."

"Very well, I think I'll buy that rag doll, though I'm sure I don't know what I'll ever do with it. No self-respecting child would accept it as a gift."

"Well, buy something," said Patty, as they went in.

The opening of the door caused a big bell to jingle, and this apparently called an old woman in from the back room. She was not very tidy, but she was a good-natured body, and smiled pleasantly at the two girls.

"What is it, young ladies?" she asked, "can I sell you anything to-day?"

"Yes," said Elise, gravely, "I was passing your window, and I noticed a doll there,--that one with the blue gingham dress. How much is it, please?"

"That one," said the old lady, "is fifty cents. Seems sorter high, I know, but that 'ere doll was made by a blind girl, that lives a piece up the road; and though the sewin' ain't very good, it's a nine-days' wonder that she can do it at all. And them dolls is her only support, and land knows she don't sell hardly any!"

"I'll give you a dollar for it," said Elise, impulsively, for her generous heart was touched. "Have you any more of them?"

"No," said the woman, in some amazement. "Malviny, she don't make many, 'cause they don't sell very rapid. But be you goin' her way? She might have one to home, purty nigh finished."

"I don't know," said Elise, "where does she live?"

"Straight along, on the main road. You can't miss it, an old yaller house, with the back burnt off."

It was Patty's turn now, and she said she would buy the peppermint candies that were in the window.

"All of 'em?" asked the storekeeper, in surprise.

"Yes," said Patty, "all of them," and as the old woman lifted the plate in from the window, Patty added, "And if you care to part with it, I'll buy the plate too."

"Land, Miss, that 'ere old plate ain't no good; it's got a crack in it, but if so be's you admire that pattern, I've got another in the keeping-room that's just like it, only 'tain't cracked. 'Tain't even chipped."

"Would you care to part with them both?" asked Patty, remembering that this phrase was the preferred formula of all china hunters.

"Laws, yes, Miss, if you care to pay for 'em. Of course, I can't sell 'em for nothin', for there's sometimes ladies as comes here, as has a fancy to them old things. But these two plates is so humbly, that I didn't have the face to show 'em to anybody as was lookin' for anteeks."

Patty's sense of honesty would not allow her to ignore the old woman's mistake.

"They may seem homely to you," she said, "but I think it only right to tell you that these plates are probably the most valuable of any you have ever owned."

"Well, for the land o' goodness, ef you ain't honest! 'Tain't many as would speak up like that! Jest come in the back room, and look at the other plate."

The girls followed the old woman as she raised a calico curtain of a flowered pattern, and let them through into the "keeping-room."

"There," she said with some pride as she took down a plate from the high mantel. "There, you can see for yourself, there ain't no chip or crack into it."

Sure enough, Patty held in her hand a perfect specimen of the Millennium plate, so highly prized by collectors, and there was also the one she had seen in the window, which though slightly cracked, was still in fair condition.

"How much do you want for them?" asked Patty.

The old woman hesitated. It was not difficult to see that, although she wanted to get as high a price as possible for her plates, yet she did not want to ask so much that Patty would refuse to take them.

"You tell me," she said, insinuatingly, "'bout what you think them plates is worth."

"No," said Patty, firmly, "I never buy things that way. You tell me your price, and then I will buy them or not as I choose."

"Well," said the old woman, slowly, "the last lady that I sold plates to, she give me fifty cents apiece for three of 'em, and though I think they was purtier than these here, yet you tell me these is more vallyble, and so," here the old woman made a great show of firmness, "and so my price for these plates is a dollar apiece."

As soon as she had said it, she looked at Patty in alarm, greatly fearing that she would not pay so much.

But Patty replied, "I will give you five dollars for the two,--because I know that is nearer their value than the price you set."

"Bless your good heart, and your purty face, Miss," said the old woman, as the tears came into her eyes. "I'm that obliged to you! I'll send the money straight to my son John. He's in the hospital, poor chap, and he needs it sore."

Elise had rarely been brought in contact with poverty and want, and her generous heart was touched at once. She emptied her little purse out upon the table, and was rejoiced to discover that it contained something over ten dollars.

"Please accept that," she cried, "to buy things for your son, or for yourself, as you choose."



"There, you can see for yourself, there ain't no chip or crack into it"

The old woman was quite overcome at this kindness, and was endeavouring brokenly to express her thanks, when the bell on the shop door jangled loudly.

Patty being nearest to the calico curtain drew it aside, to find Roger in the little shop, looking very breathless and worried.

"Well, of all things," he exclaimed. "You girls have given us a scare. We've hunted high and low through the whole of this metropolis. And if it hadn't been that a little girl said she saw you come in here, I suppose we'd now be dragging the brook. Come along, quick, we're all ready to start."

"How could you get that belt mended so quickly?" asked Elise.

"Never mind that," said Roger, "just come along."

"Wait a minute," said Patty, hastily gathering up her precious plates, while the old woman provided some newspaper wrapping.

Roger hurried the two girls back to the motor-car, saying as they went, "We're not in any hurry to start, but Mother thinks you're drowned, and I want to prove to her that she is mistaken."

The sight of the car caused Patty to go off into peals of laughter.

In front of the beautiful machine was an old farm wagon, and in front of that were four horses. On the seat of the wagon

sat a nonchalant-looking farmer who seemed to take little interest in the proceedings.

"I wouldn't ask what's the matter for anything," said Patty, looking at Roger, demurely, "but I suppose I am safe in assuming that you have those horses there merely because you think they look well."

"That's it," said Roger. "Nothing adds to the good effect of a motor-car like having a few fine horses attached to it. Jump in, girls."

The girls jumped in, and the caravan started. It was at a decidedly different rate of speed from the way they had travelled before. But Patty soon learned that Roger had found it impossible to fix the belt without going to a repair shop, and there was none nearer than Hartford. With some difficulty, and at considerable expense, he had persuaded the gruff old farmer to tow them over the intervening ten miles.

Patty would have supposed that this would greatly humiliate the proud and sensitive boy, but, to her surprise, Roger treated the affair as a good joke. He leaned back in his seat, apparently pleased with his enforced idleness, and chatted merrily as they slowly crawled along. Occasionally he would plead with the old farmer to urge his horses a trifle faster, and even hint at certain rewards if they should reach Hartford in a given time. But the grumpy old man was proof against coaxing or even bribing, and they jogged along, almost at a snail's pace.

Perceiving that there was no way of improving the situation, Roger gave up trying, and turning partly around in his seat, proceeded to entertain the girls to the best of his ability.

Patty hadn't known before what a jolly, good-natured boy Elise's brother was, and she came to the conclusion that he had a good sense of proportion, to be able to take things so easily, and to keep his temper under such trying circumstances.

Only once did the surly old farmer address himself to his employers. Turning around to face the occupants of the motor-car he bawled out:

"Whar do ye want'er go in Hartford?"

"To the largest repair shop for automobiles," answered Roger.

"Thought ye wanted ter go ter the State Insane Asylum," was the response to this, and a suppressed chuckle could be heard, as the old man again turned his attention to his not over-speedy steeds.

Though not a very subtle jest, this greatly amused the motor party, and soon they entered the outskirts of the beautiful city of Hartford.

Mr. Farrington looked at his watch. "I suppose," he said, "it will take the best part of an hour to have the machine attended to, for there are two or three little matters which I want to have put in order, besides the belt. I will stay and look after it, and the rest of you can take your choice of two proceedings. One is, to go to a hotel, rest and freshen yourselves up a bit, and have some luncheon. The other is, to take a carriage and drive around the city. Hartford is a beautiful place, and if Patty has never seen it, I am sure she will enjoy it."

"It doesn't matter to me," said Mrs. Farrington, "which we do; but I'm quite sure I don't care to eat anything more just at present. We had our picnic not so very long ago, you know."

"I know," said Mr. Farrington, "but consider this. When we start from here with the car in good order, I hope to run straight through to Warner's. But at best we cannot reach there before ten o'clock to-night. So it's really advisable that you should fortify yourselves against the long ride, for I should hate to delay matters further by stopping again for dinner."

"Ten o'clock!" exclaimed Mrs. Farrington, "why, they expect us by seven, at latest. It is too bad to keep them waiting like that. Can't we telephone to them?"

"Yes," said Mr. Farrington, "and I will attend to that while I am waiting for the car to be fixed. Now what would you people rather do?"

Both the girls declared they could not eat another luncheon at present, and they thought it would be delightful to drive around and see the town.

So Mrs. Farrington settled the matter by deciding to take the drive. And then she said, "We can leave the luncheon-kit at some hotel to be filled, then we can pick it up again, and take it along with us, and when we get hungry we can eat a light supper in the car."

"Great head, Mother!" cried Roger, "you are truly a genius!"

An open landau was engaged, and Roger and the three ladies started for the drive. They spent a delightful hour viewing the points of interest in the city, which the obliging driver pointed out to them.

They smiled when they came to the Insane Asylum, and though the grounds looked attractive, they concluded not to go there to stay, even though their old farmer friend had seemed to think it an appropriate place for them.

"It's a strange thing," said Roger, "that people who do not ride in automobiles always think that people who do are crazy. I'm sure I don't know why."

"I wouldn't blame anybody for thinking Mr. Phelps crazy, if they had seen him this morning," said Patty.

"That's only because you're not accustomed to seeing men in racing costume," said Roger. "After you've seen a few more rigs like that, you won't think anything of them."

"That's so," said Patty thoughtfully, "and if I had never before seen a farmer in the queer overalls, and big straw hat, that our old country gentleman wore, I daresay I should have thought his appearance quite as crazy as that of Mr. Phelps."

"You have a logical mind, Patty," said Mrs. Farrington, "and on the whole I think you are right."

CHAPTER XIII

A STORMY RIDE

The time passed quickly and soon the drive was over, and after calling for their well-filled luncheon-basket, the quartet returned to the repair shop to find Mr. Farrington all ready to start.

So into the car they all bundled, and Patty learned that each fresh start during a motor journey revives the same feeling of delight that is felt at the beginning of the trip.

She settled herself in her place with a little sigh of contentment, and remarked that she had already begun to feel at home in The Fact, and she only wished it was early morning, and they were starting for the day, instead of but for a few hours.

"Don't you worry, my lady," said Roger, as he laid his hands lightly on the steering-wheel, "you've a good many solid hours of travel ahead of you right now. It's four o'clock, and if we reach Pine Branches by ten, I will pat this old car fondly on the head, before I put her to bed."

The next few hours were perhaps the pleasantest they had yet spent. In June, from four to seven is a delightful time, and as the roads were perfect, and the car went along without the slightest jar or jolt, and without even a hint of an accident of any sort, there was really not a flaw to mar their pleasure.

As the sun set, and the twilight began to close around them, Patty thought she had never seen anything more beautiful than the landscape spread out before them. A broad white road stretched ahead like a ribbon. On either side were sometimes green fields, darkening in the fading light, and sometimes small groves of trees, which stood black against the sky.

Then the sunset's colours faded, the trees grew blacker and denser, and their shadows ceased to fall across the darkening road.

Roger lighted the lamps, and drew out extra fur robes, for the evening air was growing chill.

"Isn't it wonderful!" said Patty, almost in a whisper. "Motoring by daylight is gay and festive, but now, to glide along so swiftly and silently through the darkness, is so strange that it's almost solemn. As it grows darker and blacker, it seems as if we were gliding away,—away into eternity."

"For gracious' sake, child," said Mrs. Farrington, "don't talk like that! You give me the shivers; say something more lively, quick!"

Patty laughed merrily.

"That was only a passing mood," she said. "Really, I think it's awfully jolly for us to be scooting along like this, with our lamps shining. We're just like a great big fire-fly or a dancing will-o'-the-wisp."

"You have a well-trained imagination, Patty," said Mrs. Farrington, laughing at the girl's quick change from grave to gay. "You can make it obey your will, can't you?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Patty demurely, "what's the use of having an imagination, if you can't make it work for you?"

The car was comfortably lighted inside as well as out, with electric lamps, and the occupants were, as Mr. Farrington said, as cozy and homelike as if they were in a gipsy waggon.

Patty laughed at the comparison and said she thought that very few gipsy waggons had the luxuries and modern appliances of The Fact.

"That may be," said Mr. Farrington, "but you must admit the gipsy waggon is the more picturesque vehicle. The way they shirr that calico arrangement around their back door, has long been my admiration."

"It is beautiful," said Patty, "and the way the stove-pipe comes out of the roof,----"

"And the children's heads out 'most anywhere," added Elise; "yes, it's certainly picturesque."

"Speaking of gipsy waggons makes me hungry," said Mrs. Farrington. "What time is it, and how soon shall we reach the Warners'?"

"It's after eight o'clock, my dear," said her husband, "and I'm sure we can't get there before ten, and then, of course, we won't have dinner at once, so do let us partake of a little light refreshment."

"Seems to me we are always eating," said Patty, "but I'm free to confess that I'm about as hungry as a full grown anaconda."

Without reducing their speed, and they were going fairly fast, the tourists indulged in a picnic luncheon. There was no tea making, but sandwiches and little cakes and glasses of milk were gratefully accepted.

"This is all very well," said Mrs. Farrington, after supper was over, "and I wouldn't for a moment have you think that I'm tired or frightened, or the least mite timid. But if I may have my way, hereafter we'll make no definite promises to be at any particular place at any particular time. I wish when you had telephoned, John, you had told the Warners that we wouldn't arrive until to-morrow. Then we could have stopped somewhere, and spent the night like civilised beings, instead of doing this gipsy act."

"It would have been a good idea," said Mr. Farrington thoughtfully, "but it's a bit too late now, so there's no use worrying about it. But cheer up, my friend, I think we'll arrive shortly."

"I think we won't," said Roger. "I don't want to be discouraging, but we haven't passed the old stone quarry yet, and that's a mighty long way this side of Pine Branches."

"You're sure you know the way, aren't you, Roger?" asked his mother, her tone betraying the first trace of anxiety she had yet shown.

"Oh, yes," said Roger, and Patty wasn't sure whether she imagined it, or whether the boy's answer was not quite as positive as it was meant to sound.

"Well, I'm glad you do," said Mr. Farrington, "for I confess I don't. We're doubtless on the right road, but I haven't as yet seen any familiar landmarks."

"We're on the right road, all right," said Roger. "You know there's a long stretch this side of Pine Branches, without any villages at all."

"I know it," said Mrs. Farrington, "but it is dotted with large country places, and farms. Are you passing those, Roger? I can't seem to see any?"

"I haven't noticed very many, Mother, but I think we haven't come to them yet. Chirk up, it's quite some distance yet, but we'll keep going till we get there."

"Oh," said Mrs. Farrington, "what if the belt should break, or something give way!"

"Don't think of such things, Mother; nothing is going to give way. But if it should, why, we'll just sit here till morning, and then we can see to fix it."

Mrs. Farrington couldn't help laughing at Roger's good nature, but she said, "Of course, I know everything's all right, and truly, I'm not a bit frightened. But somehow, John, I'd feel more comfortable if you'd come back here with me, and let one of the girls sit in front in your place."

"Certainly," said her husband, "hop over here, Elise."

"Let me go," cried Patty, who somehow felt, intuitively, that Elise would prefer to stay behind with her parents. As for Patty herself, she had no fear, and really wanted the exciting experience of sitting up in front during this wild night ride.

Roger stopped the car, and the change was soon effected. As Patty insisted upon it, she was allowed to go instead of Elise, and in a moment they were off again.

"Do you know," said Patty to Roger, after they had started, "when I got out then, I felt two or three drops of rain!"

"I do know it," said Roger, in a low tone, "and I may as well tell you, Patty, that there's going to be a hard storm before long. Certainly before we reach Pine Branches."

"How dreadful," said Patty, who was awed more by the anxious note in Roger's voice, than by the thought of the rain storm. "Don't you think it would be better," she went on, hoping to make a helpful suggestion, "if we should put in to some house until the storm is over? Surely anybody would give us shelter."

"I don't see any houses," said Roger, "and, Patty, I may as well own up, we're off the road somehow. I think I must have taken the wrong turning at that fork a few miles back. And though I'm not quite sure, yet I feel a growing conviction that we're lost."

Although the situation was appalling, for some unexplainable reason Patty couldn't help giggling.

"Lost!" she exclaimed in a tragic whisper, "in the middle of the night! in a desolate country region! and a storm coming on!"

Patty's dramatic summary of the situation made Roger laugh too. And their peals of gaiety reassured the three who sat

behind.

"What are you laughing at?" said Elise; "I wish you'd tell me, for I'm 'most scared to death, and Roger, it's beginning to rain."

"You don't say so!" said Roger, in a tone of polite surprise, "why then we must put on the curtains." He stopped the car, and jumping down from his place, began to arrange the curtains which were always carried in case of rain.

Mr. Farrington helped him, and as he did so, remarked, "Looks like something of a storm, my boy."

"Father," said Roger, in a low voice, "it's going to rain cats and dogs, and there may be a few thunders and lightnings. I hope mother won't have hysterics, and I don't believe she will, if you sit by her and hold her hand. I don't think we'd better stop. I think we'd better drive straight ahead, but, Dad, I believe we're on the wrong road. We're not lost; I know the way all right, but to go around the way we are going, is about forty miles farther than the way I meant to go; and yet I don't dare turn back and try to get on the other road again, for fear I'll really get lost."

"Roger," said Mr. Farrington, "you're a first-class chauffeur, and I'll give you a reference whenever you want one, but I must admit that to-night you have succeeded in getting us into a pretty mess."

Roger was grateful enough for the light way in which his father treated the rather serious situation, but the boy keenly felt his responsibility.

"Good old Dad," he said, "you're a brick! Get in back now, and look after mother and Elise. Don't let them shoot me or anything, when I'm not looking. Patty is a little trump; she is plucky clear through, and I am glad to have her up in front with me. Now I'll do the best I can, and drive straight through the storm. If I see any sort of a place where we can turn in for shelter, I think we'd better do it, don't you?"

"I do, indeed," said his father. "Meantime, my boy, go ahead. I trust the whole matter to you, for you're a more expert driver than I am."

It was already raining fast as the two men again climbed into the car. But the curtains all around kept the travellers dry, and with its cheery lights the interior of the car was cozy and pleasant.

In front was a curtain with a large window of mica which gave ample view of the road ahead.

With his strong and well-arranged lights, Roger had no fear of collision, and as they were well protected from the rain, his chief worry was because they were on the wrong road.

"It's miles and miles longer to go around this way," he confided to Patty. "I don't know what time we'll ever get there."

"Never mind," said Patty, who wanted to cheer him up. "I think this is a great experience. I suppose there's danger, but somehow I can't help enjoying the wild excitement of it."

"I'm glad you like it," said Roger a little grimly. "I'm always pleased to entertain my guests."

The storm was increasing, and now amounted to a gale. The rain dashed against the curtains in great wet sheets, and finally forced its way in at a few of the crevices.

Mrs. Farrington, sitting between her husband and daughter, was thoroughly frightened and extremely uncomfortable, but she pluckily refrained from giving way to her nervousness, and succeeded in behaving herself with real bravery and courage.

Still the tempest grew. So wildly did it dash against the front curtain that Patty and Roger could see scarcely a foot before the machine.

"There's one comfort," said Roger, through his clenched teeth, "we're not in danger of running into anything, for no other fools would be abroad such a night as this. Patty, I'm going to speed her! I'm going to race the storm!"

"Do!" said Patty, who was wrought up to a tense pitch of excitement by the war of the elements without, and the novelty of the situation within.

Roger increased the speed, and they flew through the black night and dashed into the pouring rain, while Patty held her breath, and wondered what would happen next.

On they went and on. Patty's imagination kept pace with her experiences and through her mind flitted visions of Tam O'Shanter's ride, John Gilpin's ride and the ride of Collins Graves. But all of these seemed tame affairs beside their own break-neck speed through the wild night!

"Roger," said his mother, "Roger, won't you please----"

"Ask her not to speak to me just now, Patty, please," said the boy, in such a tense, strained voice that Patty was frightened at last, but she knew that if Roger were frightened, that was a special reason for her own calmness and

bravery. Turning slightly, she said, "Please don't speak to him just now, Mrs. Farrington; he wants to put all his attention on his steering."

"Very well," said Mrs. Farrington, who had not the slightest idea that there was any cause for alarm, aside from the discomfort of the storm. "I only wanted to tell him to watch out for railroad trains."

And then Patty realised that that was just what Roger was looking out for! She could not see ahead into the blinding rain, but she knew they were going down hill. She heard what seemed like the distant whistle of a locomotive, and suddenly realising that Roger could not stop the car and must cross the track before the train came, she thought at the same moment that if Mrs. Farrington should impulsively reach over and grasp the boy's arm, or anything like that, it might mean terrible disaster.

Acting upon a quick impulse to prevent this, she turned round herself, and with a voice whose calmness surprised her, she said, "Please, Mrs. Farrington, could you get me a sandwich out of the basket?"

"Bless you, no, child!" said that lady, her attention instantly diverted by Patty's ruse. "That is, I don't believe I can, but I'll try."

Patty was far from wanting a sandwich, but she felt that she had at least averted the possible danger of Mrs. Farrington's suddenly clutching Roger, and as she turned back to face the front, the great car whizzed across the slippery railroad track, just as Patty saw the headlight of a locomotive not two hundred feet away from them.

"Oh, Roger," she breathed, clasping her hands tightly, lest she herself should touch the boy, and so interfere with his steering.

"It's all right, Patty," said Roger in a breathless voice, and as she looked at his white face, she realised the danger they had so narrowly escaped.

Those in the back seat could not see the train, and the roar of the storm drowned its noise.

"Patty," said Roger, very softly, "you saved us! I understood just what you did. I felt *sure* Mother was going to grab at me, when she heard that whistle. It's a way she has, when she's nervous or frightened, and I can't seem to make her stop it. But you saved the day with your sandwich trick, and if ever we get in out of the rain, I'll tell you what I think of you!"

CHAPTER XIV

PINE BRANCHES

There were still many miles to cover before they reached their destination, but there were no more railroad tracks to cross, and as there was little danger of meeting anyone, Roger let the car fly along at a high rate of speed. The storm continued and though the party endeavoured to keep cheerful, yet the situation was depressing, and each found it difficult not to show it.

Roger, of course, devoted his exclusive attention to driving the car, and Patty scarcely dared to breathe, lest she should disturb him in some way.

The three on the back seat became rather silent also, and at last everybody was rejoiced when Roger said, "Those lights ahead are at the entrance gate of Pine Branches."

Then the whole party waxed cheerful again.

Mr. Farrington looked at his watch. "It's quarter of two," he said, "do you suppose we can get in at this hour?"

"Indeed we will get in," declared Roger, "if I have to drive this car smash through the gates, and *bang* in at the front door!"

The strain was beginning to tell on the boy, who had really had a fearful night of it, and he went dashing up to the large gates with a feeling of great relief that the end of the journey was at hand.

When they reached the entrance, the rain was coming down in torrents. Great lanterns hung either side of the portal, and disclosed the fact that the gates were shut and locked.

Roger had expected this, for he felt sure the Warners had long ago given up all thought of seeing their guests that night.

Repeated soundings of the horn failed to bring any response from the lodge-keeper, and Roger was just about to get out of the car, and ring the bell at the large door, when Patty's quick eye discerned a faint light at one of the windows.

"Sure enough," said Roger, as she called his attention to this, and after a few moments the large door was opened, and the porter gazed out into the storm.

"All right, sir, all right," he called, seeing the car; and donning a great raincoat, he came out to open the gates.

"Well, well, sir," he said, as Mr. Farrington leaned out to speak with him, "this is a night, sure enough! Mr. Warner, sir, he gave up looking for you at midnight."

"I don't wonder," said Mr. Farrington, "and now, my man, can you ring your people up, and is there anybody to take care of the car?"

"Yes, sir, yes, sir," said the porter, "just you drive on up to the house, and I'll go back to the lodge and ring up the chauffeur, and as soon as he can get around he'll take care of your car. I'll ring up the housekeeper too, but she's a slow old body, and you'd best sound your horn all the way up the drive."

Roger acted on this advice and The Fact went tooting up the driveway, and finally came to a standstill at the front entrance of Pine Branches.

They were under a *porte-cochere*, and as soon as they stopped, Elise jumped out, and began a vigorous onslaught on the doorbell. Roger kept the horn sounding, and after a few moments the door was opened by a somewhat sleepy-looking butler. As they entered, Mr. Warner, whose appearance gave evidence of a hasty toilet, came flying down the staircase, three steps at a time.

"Well, well, my friends," he exclaimed, "I'm glad to see you, I am overjoyed to see you! We were expecting you just at this particular minute, and I am so glad that you arrived on time. How do you do, Mrs. Farrington? And Elise, my dear child, how you've grown since I saw you last! This is Patty Fairfield, is it? How do you do, Patty? I am very glad to see you. Roger, my boy, you look exhausted. Has your car been cutting up jinks?"

As Mr. Warner talked, he bustled around shaking hands with his guests, assisting them out of their wraps, and disposing of them in comfortable chairs.

Meantime the rest of the family appeared.

Bertha Warner, a merry-looking girl of about Patty's age, came flying downstairs, pinning her collar as she ran.

"How jolly of you," she cried, "to come in the middle of the night! Such fun! I'm so glad to see you, Elise; and this is Patty Fairfield? Patty, I think you're lovely."

The impulsive Bertha kissed Patty on both cheeks, and then turned to make way for her mother.

Mrs. Warner was as merry and as hearty in her welcome as the others. She acted as if it were an ordinary occurrence to be wakened from sleep at two o'clock in the morning, to greet newly arrived guests, and she greeted Patty quite as warmly as the others.

Suddenly a wild whoop was heard, and Winthrop Warner, the son of the house, came running downstairs.

"Jolly old crowd!" he cried, "you wouldn't let a little thing like a tornado stop your progress, would you? I'm glad you persevered and reached here, even though a trifle late."

Winthrop was a broad-shouldered, athletic young man, of perhaps twenty-four, and though he chaffed Roger merrily, he greeted the ladies with hospitable courtesy, and looked about to see what he could do for their further comfort. They were still in the great square entrance hall, which was one of the most attractive rooms at Pine Branches. A huge corner fireplace showed the charred logs of a fire which had only recently gone out, and Winthrop rapidly twisted up some paper, which he lighted, and procuring a few small sticks, soon had a crackling blaze.

"You must be damp and chilly," he said, "and a little fire will thaw you out. Mother, will you get something ready for a feast?"

"We should have waited dinner," began Mrs. Warner, "and we did wait until after ten, and then we gave you up."

"It's nearer time for breakfast than for dinner," said Elise.

"I don't want breakfast," declared Roger, "I don't like that meal anyway. No shredded whisk brooms for me."

"We'll have a nondescript meal," said Mrs. Warner, gaily, "and each one may call it by whatever name he chooses."

In a short time they were all invited to the dining-room, and found the table filled with a variety of delicious viands.

Such a merry tableful of people as partook of the feast! The Warners seemed to enjoy the fact that their guests arrived at such an unconventional hour, and the Farrington party were so glad to have reached their destination safely that they were in the highest of spirits.

Of course the details of the trip had to be explained, and Roger was unmercifully chaffed by Winthrop and his father for having taken the wrong road. But so good-naturedly did the boy take the teasing, and so successfully did he pretend that he came around that way merely for the purpose of extending a pleasant tour, that he got the best of them after all.

At last Mrs. Warner declared that people who had been through such thrilling experiences must be in immediate need of rest, and she gave orders that they must all start for bed forthwith.

It is needless to say that breakfast was not early next morning. Nor did it consist as Roger had intimated, of "shredded whisk brooms," but was a delightful meal, at which Patty became better acquainted with the Warner family, and confirmed the pleasant impressions she had received the night before.

After breakfast Mrs. Warner announced that everybody was to do exactly as he or she pleased until the luncheon hour, but she had plans herself for their entertainment in the afternoon.

So Winthrop and Roger went off on some affairs of their own, and Bertha devoted herself to the amusement of the two girls.

First, she suggested they should all walk around the place, and this proved a delightful occupation.

Pine Branches was an immense estate, covering hundreds of acres, and there was a brook, a grove, golf grounds, tennis court and everything that could by any possibility add to the interest or pleasure of its occupants.

"But my chief and dearest possession," said Bertha, smiling, "is Abiram."

"A dog?" asked Patty.

"No," said Bertha, "but come, and I will show him to you. He lives down here, in this little house."

The little house was very like a large-sized dog-kennel, but when they reached it, its occupant proved to be a woolly black bear cub.

"He's a perfect dear, Abiram is," said Bertha, as she opened the door, and the fat little bear came waddling out. He was fastened to a long chain, and his antics were funny beyond description.

"He's a real picture-bear," said Bertha; "see, his poses are just like those of the bears in the funny papers."

And so they were. Patty and Elise laughed heartily to see Abiram sit up and cross his paws over his fat little body.

"How old is he?" asked Patty.

"Oh, very young, he's just a cub. And of course, we can't keep him long. Nobody wants a big bear around. At the end of the summer, Papa says, he'll have to be sent to the Zoo. But we have lots of fun looking at him now, and I take pictures of him with my camera. He's a dear old thing." Bertha was sitting down by the bear, playing with him as with a puppy, and indeed the soft little creature showed no trace of wild animal habits, or even of mischievous intent.

"He's just like a big baby," said Patty. "Wouldn't it be fun to dress him up as one?"

"Let's do it," cried Bertha, gleefully. "Come on, girls, let's fly up to the house, and get the things."

Leaving Abiram sitting in the sun, the three girls scampered back to the house. Bertha procured two large white aprons and declared they would make a lovely baby dress.

And so they did. By sewing the sides together nearly to the top, and tying the strings in great bows to answer as shoulder straps, the dress was declared perfect. A dainty sunbonnet, with a wide fluffy ruffle, which was a part of Bertha's own wardrobe, was taken also, and with a string of large blue beads, and an enormous baby's rattle which Bertha unearthed from her treasure-chest, the costume was complete.

Bertha got her camera, and giving Elise a small, light chair to carry, they all ran back to Abiram's kennel.

They found the little bear peacefully sleeping in the sun, and when Bertha shook him awake he showed no resentment, and graciously allowed himself to be put into the clothes they had brought. His forepaws were thrust through the openings left for the purpose, and the stiff white bows sticking up from his black shoulders, made the girls scream with laughter. The ruffled sunbonnet was put on his head, and coquettishly tied on one side, and the string of blue beads was clasped around his fat neck.

Although Abiram seemed willing to submit to the greatness that was being thrust upon him, he experienced some difficulty in sitting up in the chair in the position which Bertha insisted upon.

However, by dint of Patty's holding his head up from behind, she herself being screened from view by a tree trunk, they induced Abiram to hold the rattle long enough for Bertha to get a picture.



"Although a successful snapshot was only achieved after many attempts"

Although a successful snapshot was only achieved after many attempts, yet the girls had great fun, and so silly and ridiculous did the little bear behave that Patty afterward declared she had never laughed so much in all her life.

After luncheon Mrs. Warner took her guests for a drive, declaring that after their automobile tour she felt sure that a carriage drive would be a pleasant change.

After the drive there was afternoon tea in the library, when the men appeared, and everybody chatted gaily over the events of the day.

Then they all dispersed to dress for dinner, and Patty suddenly realised that she was living in a very grown-up atmosphere, greatly in contrast to her schoolgirl life.

Bertha was a year or two older than Patty, and though as merry and full of fun as a child, she seemed to have the ways and effects of a grown-up young lady.

Elise also had lived a life which had accustomed her to formality and ceremony, and though only a year older than Patty in reality, she was far more advanced in worldly wisdom and ceremonious observances.

But Patty was adaptable by nature, and when in Rome she was quite ready to do as the Romans did.

So she put on one of her prettiest frocks for dinner, and allowed Bertha to do her hair in a new way which seemed to add a year or so to her appearance.

There were a few other guests at dinner, and as Patty always enjoyed meeting strangers, she took great interest in all the details of entertainment at Pine Branches.

At the table she found herself seated between Bertha and Winthrop. This pleased her, for she was glad of an opportunity to get better acquainted with the young man, of whom she had seen little during the day.

Although frank and boyish in some ways, Winthrop Warner gave her the impression of being very wise and scholarly.

She said as much to him, whereupon he explained that he was a student, and was making a specialty of certain branches of scientific lore. These included ethnology and anthropology, which names caused Patty to feel a sudden awe of the young man beside her.

But Winthrop only laughed, and said, "Don't let those long words frighten you. I assure you that they stand for most interesting subjects, and some day if you will come to my study, I will promise to prove that to you. Meantime we will ignore my scientific side, and just consider that we are two gay young people enjoying a summer holiday."

The young man's affable manner and kind smile put Patty quite at her ease, and she chatted so merrily that when the dinner hour was over she and Winthrop had become good friends and comrades.

CHAPTER XV

MISS AURORA BENDER

After a visit of a few days, it was decided that Mr. and Mrs. Farrington and Roger should continue the motor-trip on to Boston, and to certain places along the New England coast, while Patty and Elise should stay at Pine Branches for a longer visit.

The girls had expected to continue the trip with the others, but Bertha had coaxed them to stay longer with her, and had held out such attractive inducements that they decided to remain.

Patty, herself, was pleased with the plan, because she still felt the effects of her recent mental strain, and realised that the luxurious ease of Pine Branches would be far more of a rest than the more exciting experiences of a motor trip.

So the girls were installed for a fortnight or more in the beautiful home of the Warners, and with so many means of pleasure at her disposal, Patty looked forward to a delightful period of both rest and recreation.

One morning, Bertha declared her intention of taking the girls to call on Miss Aurora Bender.

"Who is she?" inquired Patty, as the three started off in Bertha's pony-cart.

"She's a character," said Bertha, "but I won't tell you anything about her; you can see her, and judge for yourself."

A drive of several miles brought them to a quaint old-fashioned farmhouse.

The house, which had the appearance of being very old, was built of stone and painted a light yellow, with white trimmings. Everything about the place was in perfect repair and exquisite order, and as they drove in around the gravel circle that surrounded a carefully kept bit of green lawn, Bertha stopped the cart at an old-fashioned carriage-block, and the girls got out. Running up the steps, Bertha clanged the old brass knocker at what seemed to Patty to be the kitchen door. It was opened by a tall, gaunt woman, with sharp features and angular figure.

"Well, I declare to goodness, Bertha Warner, if you aren't here again! Who's that you've got with you this time? City folks, I s'pose. Well come in, all of you, but wipe your feet first. As you've been riding, I s'pose they ain't muddy much, but it's well to be on the safe side. So wipe 'em good and then troop in."

Miss Aurora Bender had pushed her heavy gold-bowed glasses up on the top of her head, and her whole-souled smile of welcome belied the gruffness of her tone, and the seeming inhospitality of her words.

The girls took pains to wipe their dainty boots on the gaily-coloured braided rug which lay just outside the door.

Then they entered a spacious low-ceiled room, which seemed to partake of the qualities of both kitchen and dining-room. At one end was an immense fireplace, with an old-fashioned swinging crane, from which depended many skillets and kettles of highly polished brass or copper.

On either side of the room was a large dresser, with glass doors, through which showed quantities of rare old china that made Patty's eyes shine with delight. A quaint old settle and various old chairs of Windsor pattern stood round the walls. The floor was painted yellow, and here and there were braided mats of various designs.

"Sit down, girls, sit down," said Miss Bender, cordially, "and now Bertha, tell me these young ladies' names,--unless, that is to say, you'd rather sit in the parlour?"

"We would rather sit in the parlour, Miss Bender," said Bertha, quickly, and as if fearing her hostess might not follow up her suggestion, Bertha opened a door leading to the front hall, and started toward the parlour, herself.

"Well," said Miss Bender, with a note of regret in her voice, "I s'pose if you must, you must; though for my part, I'm free to confess that this room's a heap more cozy and livable."

"That may be," said Bertha, who had beckoned to the girls to follow quickly, "but my friends are from the city, as you suspected, and they don't often have a chance in New York to see a parlour like yours, Miss Bender."

As Bertha had intended, this bit of flattery mollified the old lady, and she followed her guests along the dark hall.

"Well, if you're bound to have it so," she said, "do wait a minute, and let me get in there and pull up the blinds. It's darker than Japhet's coat pocket. I haven't had this room opened since Mis' Perkins across the road had her last tea fight. And I only did it then, 'cause I wanted to set some vases of my early primroses in the windows, so's the guests might see 'em as they came by. Seems to me it's a little musty in here, but land! a room will get musty if it's shut up, and what earthly good is a parlour except to keep shut up?"

As Miss Bender talked, she had bustled about, and thrown open the six windows of the large room, into which Bertha had taken the girls.

The sunlight streamed in, and disclosed a scene which seemed to Patty like a wonderful vision of a century ago.

And indeed for more than a hundred years the furniture of the great parlour had stood precisely as they now saw it.

The furniture was entirely of antique mahogany, and included sofas and chairs, various kinds of tables, bookcases, a highboy, a lowboy and other pieces of furniture of which Patty knew neither the name nor the use.

The pictures on the wall, the ornaments, the books and the old-fashioned brass candlesticks were all of the same ancient period, and Patty felt as if she had been transported back into the life of her great-grandmother.

As she had herself a pretty good knowledge of the styles and varieties of antique furniture, she won Miss Bender's heart at once by her appreciation of her Heppelwhite chairs and her Chippendale card-tables.

"You don't say," said Miss Bender, looking at Patty in admiration, "that you really know one style from another! Lots of people pretend they do, but they soon get confused when I try to pin 'em down."

Patty smiled, as she disclaimed any great knowledge of the subject, but she soon found that she knew enough to satisfy her hostess, who, after all, enjoyed describing her treasures even more than listening to their praises.

Miss Aurora Bender was a lady of sudden and rapid physical motion. While the girls were examining the wonderful old relics, she darted from the room, and returned in a moment, carrying two large baskets. They were of the old-fashioned type of closely-woven reed, with a handle over the top, and a cover to lift up on either side.

Miss Bender plumped herself down in the middle of a long sofa, and began rapidly to extract the contents of the baskets, which proved to be numerous fat rolls of gayly-coloured cotton material.

"It's patchwork," she announced, "and I make it my habit to get all the help I can. I'm piecing a quilt, goose-chase pattern, and while I don't know as it's the prettiest there is, yet I don't know as 'tisn't. If you girls expect to sit the morning, and I must say you look like it, you might lend a helping hand. I made the geese smaller'n I otherwise would, 'cause I had so many little pieces left from my rising-sun quilt. Looks just as well, of course, but takes a powerful sight of time to sew. And I must say I'm sorter particular about sewing. However, I don't s'pose you young things of this day and generation know much about sewing, but if you go slow you can't help doing it pretty well."

As she talked, Miss Bender had hastily presented each of the girls with a basted block of patchwork, and had passed around a needle-cushion and a small box containing a number of old-fashioned silver thimbles.

"Lucky I had a big family," she commented, "else I don't know what I'd done for thimbles to go around. I can't abide brass things, that make your finger look like it had been dipped in ink, but thanks to my seven sisters who are all restin' comfortably in their graves, I have enough thimbles to provide quite a parcel of company. Here's your thread. Now sew away while we talk, and we'll have a real nice little bee."

Although not especially fond of sewing, the girls looked upon this episode as a good joke, and fell to work at their bits of cloth.

Elise was a dainty little needlewoman, and overhanded rapidly and neatly; Patty did fairly well, though her stitches were not quite even, but poor Bertha found her work a difficult task. She never did fancywork, and knew nothing of sewing, so her thread knotted and broke, and her patch presented a sorry sight.

"Land o' Goshen!" exclaimed Miss Aurora, "is that the best you can do, Bertha Warner? The town ought to take up a subscription to put you in a sewin' school. Here child, let me show you."

Miss Bender took Bertha's block and tried to straighten it out, while Bertha herself made funny faces at the other girls over Miss Aurora's shoulder.

"I can see you," said that lady calmly, "I guess you forget that big mirror opposite. But them faces you're makin' ain't half so bad as this sewin' of yours."

The girls all laughed outright at Miss Bender's calm acceptance of Bertha's sauciness, and Bertha herself was in nowise embarrassed by the implied rebuke.

"There, child," said Miss Aurora, smoothing out the seams with her thumb nail, "now try again, and see if you can't do it some better."

"Is your quilt nearly done, Miss Bender?" asked Patty.

"Yes, it is. I've got three hundred and eighty-seven geese finished, and four hundred's enough. I work on it myself quite a spell every day, and I think in two or three days I'll have it all pieced."

"Oh, Miss Bender," cried Bertha, "then won't you quilt it? Won't you have a quilting party while my friends are here?"

"Humph," said Miss Aurora, scornfully, "you children can't quilt fit to be seen."

"Elise can," said Bertha, looking at Elise's dainty block, "and Patty can do pretty well, and as I would spoil your quilt if I touched it, Miss Aurora, I'll promise to let it alone; but I can do other things to help you. Oh, do have the party, will you?"

"Why, I don't know but I will. I kinder calculated to have it soon, anyhow, and if so be's you young people would like to come to it, I don't see anything to hinder. S'pose we say a week from to-day?"

The date was decided on, and the girls went home in high glee over the quilting party, for Bertha told them it would be great fun of a sort they had probably never seen before.

The days flew by rapidly at Pine Branches. Patty rapidly recovered her usual perfect health and rosy cheeks. She played golf and tennis, she went for long rides in the Warners' motor-car or carriages, and also on horseback. There were many guests at the house, coming and going, and among these one day came Mr. Phelps, whom they had met on their journey out from New York.

This gentleman proved to be of a merry disposition, and added greatly to the gaiety of the party. While he was there, Roger also came back for a few days, having left Mr. and Mrs. Farrington for a short stay at Nantucket.

One morning, as Patty and Roger stood in the hall, waiting for the other young people to join them, they were startled to hear angry voices in the music-room.

This room was separated from them by the length of the library, and though not quite distinct, the voices were unmistakably those of Bertha and Winthrop.

"You did!" said Winthrop's voice, "don't deny it! You're a horrid hateful old thing!"

"I didn't! any such thing," replied Bertha's voice, which sounded on the verge of tears.

"You did! and if you don't give it back to me, I'll tell mother. Mother said if she caught you at such a thing again, she'd punish you as you deserved, and I'm going to tell her!"

Patty felt most uncomfortable at overhearing this quarrel. She had never before heard a word of disagreement between Bertha and her brother, and she was surprised as well as sorry to hear this exhibition of temper.

Roger looked horrified, and glanced at Patty, not knowing exactly what to do.

The voices waxed more angry, and they heard Bertha declare, "You're a horrid old telltale! Go on and tell, if you want to, and I'll tell what you stole out of father's desk last week!"

"How did you know that?" and Winthrop's voice rang out in rage.

"Oh, I know all about it. You think nobody knows anything but yourself, Smarty-cat! Just wait till I tell father and see what he'll do to you."

"You won't tell him! Promise me you won't, or I'll,--I'll hit you! There, take that!"

"That" seemed to be a resounding blow, and immediately Bertha's cries broke forth in angry profusion.

"Stop crying," yelled her brother, "and stop punching me. Stop it, I say!"

At this point the conversation broke off suddenly, and Patty and Roger stared in stupefied amazement as they saw Bertha and Winthrop walk in smiling, and hand in hand, from exactly the opposite direction from which their quarrelsome voices had sounded.

"What's the matter?" said Bertha. "Why do you look so shocked and scared to death?"

"N-nothing," stammered Patty; while Roger blurted out, "We thought we heard you talking over that way, and then you came in from this way. Who could it have been? The voices were just like yours."

Bertha and Winthrop broke into a merry laugh.

"It's the phonograph," said Bertha. "Winthrop and I fixed up that quarrel record, just for fun; isn't it a good one?"

Roger understood at once, and went off into peals of laughter, but Patty had to have it explained to her.

"You see," said Winthrop, "we have a big phonograph, and we make records for it ourselves. Bertha and I fixed up that one just for fun, and Elise is in there now looking after it. Come on in, and see it."

They all went into the music-room, and Winthrop entertained them by putting in various cylinders, which they had made themselves.

Almost as funny as the quarrel was Bertha's account of the occasion when she fell into the creek, and many funny

recitations by Mr. Warner also made amusing records.

Patty could hardly believe that she had not heard her friends' voices really raised in anger, until Winthrop put the same record in and let her hear it again.

He also promised her that some day she should make a record for herself, and leave it at Pine Branches as a memento of her visit.

CHAPTER XVI

A QUILTING PARTY

Miss Aurora Bender's quilting party was to begin at three o'clock in the afternoon, and the girls started early in order to see all the fun. They were to stay to supper, and the young men were to come over and escort them home in the evening.

When they reached Miss Bender's, they found that many and wonderful preparations had been made.

Miss Aurora had two house servants, Emmeline and Nancy, but on this occasion she had called in two more to help. And indeed there was plenty to be done, for a quilting bee was to Miss Bender's mind a function of great importance.

The last of a large family, Miss Bender was a woman of great wealth but of plain and old-fashioned tastes. Though amply able to gratify any extravagant wish, she preferred to live as her parents had lived before her, and she had in no sense kept pace with the progress of the age.

When the three girls reached the old country house, they were met at the front door by the elderly Nancy. She courtesied with old-time grace, and invited them to step into the bedroom, and lay off their things.

This bedroom, which was on the ground floor, was a large apartment, containing a marvellously carved four-post bedstead, hung with old-fashioned chintz curtains and draperies.

The room also contained two massive bureaus, a dressing-table and various chairs of carved mahogany, and in the open fireplace was an enormous bunch of feathery asparagus, flecked with red berries.

"Oh," cried Patty in delight, "if Nan could see this room she'd go perfectly crazy. Isn't this house great? Why, it's quite as full of beautiful old things as Washington's house at Mt. Vernon."

"I haven't seen that," said Bertha, "but it doesn't seem as if anything could be more complete or perfect in its way than this house is. Come on, girls, are you ready?"

The girls went to the parlour, and there found the quilt all prepared for working on. Patty had never before seen a quilt stretched on a quilting-frame, and was extremely interested.

It was a very large quilt, and its innumerable small triangles, which made up the goose-chase pattern, were found to present a methodical harmony of colouring, which had not been observable before the strips were put together.

The large pieced portion was uppermost, and beneath it was the lining, with layers of cotton in between. Each edge was pinned at intervals to a long strip of material which was wound round and round the frame. The four corners of the frame were held up by being tied to the backs of four chairs, and on each of the four sides of the quilt were three more chairs for the expected guests to occupy.

Almost on the stroke of three the visitors arrived, and though some of them were of a more modern type than Miss Bender, yet three or four were quite as old-fashioned and quaint-mannered as their hostess.

"They are native up here," Bertha explained to Patty. "There are only a few of the old New England settlers left. Most of the population here is composed of city people who have large country places. You won't often get an opportunity to see a gathering like this."

Patty realised the truth of this, and was both surprised and pleased to find that these country ladies showed no trace of embarrassment or self-consciousness before the city girls.

It seemed not to occur to them that there was any difference in their effects, and indeed Patty was greatly amused because one of the old ladies seemed to take it for granted that Patty was a country girl, and brought up according to old-time customs.

This old lady, whose name was Mrs. Quimby, sat next to Patty at the quilt, and after she had peered through her glasses at the somewhat uneven stitches which poor Patty was trying her best to do as well as possible, she remarked:

"You ain't got much knack, have you? You'll have to practise quite a spell longer before you can quilt your own house goods. How old be you?"

"Seventeen," said Patty, feeling that her work did not look very well, considering her age.

"Seventeen!" exclaimed Mrs. Quimby. "Laws' sake, I was married when I was sixteen, and I quilted as good then as I do now. I'm over eighty now, and I'd ruther quilt than do anything, 'most. You don't look to be seventeen."

"And you don't look to be eighty, either," said Patty, smiling, glad to be able to turn the subject by complimenting the old lady.

The quilting lasted all the afternoon. Patty grew very tired of the unaccustomed work, and was glad when Miss Bender noticed it, and told her to run out into the garden with Bertha. Bertha was not allowed to touch the quilt with her incompetent fingers, but Elise sewed away, thoroughly enjoying it all, and with no desire to avail herself of Miss Bender's permission to stop and rest. Patty and Bertha wandered through the old-fashioned garden, in great delight. The paths were bordered with tiny boxhedges, which, though many years old, were kept clean and free from deadwood or blemish of any sort, and were perfectly trimmed in shape.

The garden included quaint old flowers such as marigolds, sweet Williams, bleeding hearts, bachelors' buttons, Jacob's ladder and many others of which Patty did not even know the names. Tall hollyhocks, both single and double, grew against the wall, and a hop vine hung in green profusion.

Every flower bed was of exact shape, and looked as if not a leaf or a stem would dare to grow otherwise than straight and true.

"What a lovely old garden," said Patty, sniffing at a sprig of lemon verbena which she had picked.

"Yes, it's wonderful," said Bertha. "I mean to ask Miss Bender if I mayn't bring my camera over, and get a picture of it, and if they're good, I'll give you one."

"Do," said Patty, "and take some pictures inside the house too. I'd like to show them to Nan."

"Tell me about Nan," said Bertha. "She's your stepmother, isn't she?"

"Yes," said Patty, "but she's only six years older than I am, so that the stepmother part of it seems ridiculous. We're more like sisters, and she's perfectly crazy over old china and old furniture. She'd love Miss Bender's things."

"Perhaps she'll come up while you're here," said Bertha. "I'll ask mother to write for her."

"Thank you," said Patty, "but I'm afraid she won't. My father can't leave for his vacation until July, and then we're all going away together, but I don't know where."

Just then Elise came flying out to them, with the announcement that supper was ready, and they were to come right in, quick.

The table was spread in the large room which Patty had thought was the kitchen.

It probably had been built for that purpose, but other kitchens had been added beyond it, and for the last half century it had been used as a dining-room.

The table was drawn out to its full length, which made it very long indeed, and it was filled with what seemed to Patty viands enough to feed an army. At one end was a young pig roasted whole, with a lemon in his mouth, and a design in cloves stuck into his fat little side. At the other end was a baked ham whose crisp golden-brown crust could only be attained by the old cook who had been in the Bender family for many years.

Up and down the length of the table on either side was a succession of various cold meats, alternating with pickles, jellies and savories of various sorts.

After the guests were seated, Nancy brought in platters of smoking-hot biscuits from the kitchen, and Miss Aurora herself made the tea.

The furnishings of the table were of old blue and white china of great age and priceless value. The old family silver too was a marvel in itself, and the tea service which Miss Bender manipulated with some pride was over a hundred years old.

Patty was greatly impressed at this unusual scene, but when the plates were removed after the first course, and the busy maid-servants prepared to serve the dessert, she was highly entertained.

For the next course, though consisting only of preserves and cake, was served in an unusual manner. The preserves included every variety known to housewives and a few more. In addition to this, Miss Aurora announced in a voice which was calm with repressed satisfaction, that she had fourteen kinds of cake to put at the disposal of her guests. None of these sorts could be mixed with any other sort, and the result was fourteen separate baskets and platters of cake.

The table became crowded before they had all been brought in from the kitchen, and quite as a matter of course, the serving maids placed the later supplies on chairs, which they stood behind the guests, and the ladies amiably turned round in their seats, inspected the cake, partook of it if they desired, and gracefully pushed the chair along to the next neighbour.

This seemed to the city girls a most amusing performance, but Patty immediately adapted herself to what was apparently the custom of the house, and gravely looked at the cake each time, selected such as pleased her fancy and pushed the chair along.

Noticing Patty's gravity as she accomplished this performance, Elise very nearly lost her own, but Patty nudged her under the table, and she managed to behave with propriety.

The conversation at the table was without a trace of hilarity, and included only the most dignified subjects. The ladies ate mincingly, with their little fingers sticking out straight, or curved in what they considered a most elegant fashion.

Miss Aurora was in her element. She was truly proud of her home and its appointments, and she dearly loved to entertain company at tea. To her mind, and indeed to the minds of most of those present, the success of a tea depended entirely upon the number of kinds of cake that were served, and Miss Bender felt that with fourteen she had broken any hitherto known record.

It was an unwritten law that each kind of cake must be really a separate recipe. To take a portion of ordinary cup-cake batter, and stir in some chopped nuts, and another portion and mix in some raisins, by no means met the requirements of the case. This Patty learned from remarks made by the visitors, and also from Miss Aurora's own delicately veiled intimations that each of her fourteen kinds was a totally different and distinct recipe.

Patty couldn't help wondering what would become of all this cake, for after all, the guests could eat but a small portion of it.

And it occurred to her also that the ways of the people in previous generations, as exemplified in Miss Bender's customs, seemed to show quite as great a lack of a sense of proportion as many of our so-called modern absurdities.

After supper the guests immediately departed for their homes. Carriages arrived for the different ones, and they went away, after volubly expressing to their hostess their thanks for her delightful entertainment.

The girls expected Winthrop and Roger to come for them in the motor-car, but they had not told them to come quite so early as now seemed necessary. In some embarrassment, they told Miss Bender that they would have to trespass on her hospitality for perhaps an hour longer.

"My land o' goodness!" she exclaimed, looking at them in dismay, "why I've got to set this house to rights, and I can't wait an hour to begin!"

"Don't mind us, Miss Bender," said Bertha. "Just shut us up in some room by ourselves, and we'll stay there, and not bother you a bit; unless perhaps we can help you?"

"Help me! No, indeed. There can't anybody help me when I'm clearin' up after a quiltin', unless it's somebody that knows my ways. But I'd like to amuse you children, somehow. I'll tell you what, you can go up in the front bedroom, if you like, and there's a chest of old-fashioned clothes there. Can't you play at dressin' up?"

"Yes, indeed," cried Bertha. "Just the thing! Give us some candles."

Provided with two candles apiece, the girls followed Miss Aurora to a large bedroom on the second floor, which also boasted its carved four-poster and chintz draperies.

"There," said Miss Aurora, throwing open a great chest, "you ought to get some fun out of trying on those fol-de-rols, and peacocking around; but don't come downstairs to show off to me, for you'll only bother me out of my wits. I'll let you know when your folks come for you."

Miss Bender trotted away, and the girls, quite ready for a lark, tossed over the quaint old gowns.

Beautiful costumes were there, of the period of about a hundred years ago. Lustrous silks and dainty dimities; embroidered muslins and heavy velvets; Patty had never seen such a sight. After looking them over, the girls picked out the ones they preferred, and taking off their own frocks proceeded to try them on.

Bertha had chosen a blue and white silk of a bayadere stripe, with lace ruffles at the neck and wrists and a skirt of voluminous fulness. Elise wore a white Empire gown that made her look exactly like the Empress Josephine, while Patty arrayed herself in a flowered silk of Dresden effect with a pointed bodice, square neck, and elbow sleeves with lace frills.

In great glee, the girls pranced around, regretting there was no one to whom they might exhibit their masquerade costumes. But Miss Bender had been so positive in her orders that they dared not go downstairs.

Suddenly they heard the toot of an automobile.



"Patty arrayed herself in a flowered silk of Dresden effect"

"That's our car," cried Bertha. "I know the horn. Let's go down just as we are, for the benefit of Winthrop and Roger."

In answer to Miss Bender's call from below, the girls trooped downstairs, and merrily presented themselves for inspection.

Mr. Phelps had come with the others, and if the young men were pleased at the picture the three girls presented, Miss Aurora herself was no less so.

"My," she said, "you do look fine, I declare! Now, I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll make each of you young ladies a present of the gown you have on, if you care to keep it. I'll never miss them, for I have trunks and chests full, besides those you saw, and I'm right down glad to give them to you. You can wear them sometimes at your fancy dress parties."

The girls were overjoyed at Miss Bender's gift, and Bertha declared they would wear them home, and she would send over for their other dresses the next day.

So, donning their wraps, the merry modern maids in their antique garb made their adieu to Miss Aurora, and were soon in the big motor-car speeding for home.

CHAPTER XVII

A SUMMER CHRISTMAS

Although they had intended to stay but a fortnight, Patty and Elise remained with the Warners all through the month of June, and even then Bertha begged them to stay longer.

But the day for their departure was set in the first week of July, and Bertha declared that they must have a big party of some kind as their last entertainment for the girls.

So Mrs. Warner invited a number of young people for a house party during the last few days of Patty's stay.

"I wish," said Bertha, a few days before the Fourth, "that we could have some kind of a party on the Fourth of July that would be different from just an ordinary party."

"Have an automobile party," suggested Roger, who was present.

"I don't mean that kind," said Bertha, "I mean a party in the house, but something that would be fun. There isn't anything to do on Fourth of July except have fireworks, and that isn't much fun."

"I'll tell you what," said Mr. Phelps, who was at Pine Branches on one of his flying visits, "have a Christmas party."

"A Christmas party on Fourth of July!" exclaimed Bertha, "that's just the thing! Mr. Phelps, you're a real genius. That's just what we'll do, and we'll have a Christmas tree, and give each other gifts and everything."

"Great!" said Roger, "and we'll have a Yule log blazing, and we'll all wear our fur coats."

"No, not that," said Bertha, laughing, "we'd melt. But we'll have all the Christmas effects that we can think of, and each one must help."

The crowd of merry young people who were gathered at Pine Branches eagerly fell in with Bertha's plan, and each began to make preparations for the festival.

The girls made gifts which they carefully kept secret from the ones for whom they were intended, and many trips were made to the village for materials.

The boys also had many mysterious errands, and Mr. and Mrs. Warner, who entered heartily into the spirit of the fun, were frequently consulted under strict bonds of confidence.

Fourth of July came and proved to be a warm, though not a sultry summer day.

Invitations had been sent out, and a large party of young people were expected in the evening; and during the day those who were staying at Pine Branches found plenty to do by way of preparation.

A large Christmas tree had been cut down, and was brought into the library. As soon as it was set up, the work of decoration began, and it was hung with strings of popcorn, and tinsel filigree which Mrs. Warner had saved from previous Christmas trees. Dozens of candles too, were put on the branches, to be lighted at night.

The boys brought in great boughs of evergreen, and cut them up, while the girls made ropes and wreaths and stars, with which to adorn the room.

Mr. Phelps had sent to New York for a large boxful of artificial holly, and this added greatly to the Christmas effect.

Patty was in her element helping with these arrangements, for she dearly loved to make believe, and the idea of a Christmas party in midsummer appealed very strongly to her sense of humour.

Her energy and enthusiasm were untiring, and her original ideas called forth the hearty applause of the others. She was consulted about everything, and her decisions were always accepted.

Mr. Phelps too, proved a clever and willing worker. He was an athletic young man, and he seemed to be capable of doing half a dozen different things at once. He cut greens, and hung wreaths, and ran up and down stepladders, and even managed to fasten a large gilt star to the very top branch of the Christmas tree.

After the decorations were all completed, everybody brought their gifts neatly tied up and labelled, and either hung them on the tree or piled them up around the platform on which it stood.

"Well, you children have done wonders," said Mrs. Warner, looking in at the library door. "You have transformed this room until I hardly can recognise it, and it looks for all the world exactly like Christmas. It is hard to believe that it is really Fourth of July."

"It seems too bad not to have any of the Fourth of July spirit mixed in with it," said Winthrop, "but I suppose it would spoil the harmony. But we really ought to use a little gunpowder in honour of the day. Come on, Patty, your work is about finished, let's go out and put off a few firecrackers."

"All right," said Patty, "just wait till I tack up this 'Merry Christmas' motto, and I'll be ready."

"I'll do that," said Roger, "you infants run along and show off your patriotism, and I'll join you in a few minutes."

"You must be tired," said Winthrop to Patty, as they sauntered out on the lawn. "You worked awfully hard with those evergreen things. Let's go out on the lake and take our firecrackers with us; that will rest you, and it will be fun besides."

The lake, so called by courtesy, was really an artificial pond, and though not large, it provided a great deal of amusement.

There were several boats, and selecting a small cedar one, Winthrop assisted Patty in, sprang in himself, and pushed off.

"If it's Christmas, we ought to be going skating on the lake, instead of rowing," said Patty.

"It isn't Christmas now," said Winthrop, "You get your holidays mixed up. We've come out here to celebrate Independence Day. See what I've brought."

From his pockets the young man produced several packs of firecrackers.

"What fun!" cried Patty, "I feel as if I were a child again. Let me set some off. Have you any punk?"

"Yes," said Winthrop, gravely producing some short sticks of punk from another pocket; and lighting one, he gave it to Patty.

"But how can I set them off?" said Patty, "I'm afraid to have them in the boat, and we can't throw them out on the water."

"We'll manage this way," said Winthrop, and drawing one of the oars into the boat, he laid a lighted firecracker on the blade and pushed it out again. The firecracker went off with a bang, and in great glee Patty pulled in the other oar and tried the same plan.

Then they set off a whole pack at once, and as the length of the oar was not quite sufficient for safety Winthrop let it slip from the row-lock and float away on the water. As he had previously tied a string to the handle so that he could pull the oar back at will, this was a great game, and the floating oar with its freight of snapping firecrackers provided much amusement. The noise of the explosions brought the others running to the scene, and three or four more boats were soon out on the lake. Firecrackers went snapping in every direction, and torpedoes were thrown from one boat to another until the ammunition was exhausted.

Then the merry crowd trooped back to the house for luncheon.

"I never had such a lovely Fourth of July," said Patty to her kind hostess. "Everything is different from anything I ever did before. This house is just like Fairyland. You never know what is going to happen next."

After luncheon the party broke up in various small groups. Some of the more energetic ones played golf or tennis, but Patty declared it was too warm for any unnecessary exertion.

"Come for a little walk with me," said Roger, "we'll walk down in the grove; it's cool and shady there, and we can play mumblety-peg if you like."

"I'll go to the grove," said Patty, "but I don't want to play anything. This is a day just to be idle and enjoy living, without doing anything else."

They strolled down toward the grove, and were joined on the way by Bertha and Mr. Phelps, who were just returning from a call on Abiram.

"I think Abiram ought to come to the Christmas party to-night," said Bertha, "I know he'd enjoy seeing the tree lighted up."

"He shall come," said Dick Phelps, "I'll bring him myself."

"Do," said Patty, "and we'll tie a red ribbon round his neck with a sprig of holly, and I'll see to it that there's a present on the tree for him."

The quartet walked on to the grove, and sat down on the ground under the pine trees.

"I feel very patriotic," said Patty, who was decorated with several small flags which she had stuck in her hair, and in her belt, "and I think we ought to sing some national anthems."

So they sang "The Star-Spangled Banner," and other patriotic airs, until they were interrupted by Winthrop and Elise who came toward them singing a Christmas carol.

"I asked you to come here," said Roger aside, to Patty, "because I wanted to see you alone for a minute, and now all these other people have come and spoiled my plan. Come on over to the orchard, will you?"

"Of course I will," said Patty jumping up, "what is the secret you have to tell me? Some plan for to-night?"

"No," said Roger, hesitating a little, "that is, yes,—not exactly."

They had walked away from the others, and Roger took from his pocket a tiny box which he offered to Patty.

"I wanted to give you a little Christmas present," he said, "as a sort of memento of this jolly day; and I thought maybe you'd wear it to-night."

"How lovely!" cried Patty, as she opened the box and saw a little pin shaped like a spray of holly. "It's perfectly sweet. Thank you ever so much, Roger, but why didn't you put it on the tree for me?"

"Oh, they are only having foolish presents on the tree, jokes, you know, and all that."

"Oh, is this a real present then? I don't know as I ought to accept it. I've never had a present from a young man before."

Roger looked a little embarrassed, but Patty's gay delight was entirely free from any trace of self-consciousness.

"Anyway, I am going to keep it," she said, "because it's so pretty, and I like to think that you gave it to me."

Roger looked greatly gratified and seemed to take the matter with more seriousness than Patty did. She pinned the pretty little trinket on her collar and thought no more about it.

Dinner was early that night, for there was much to be done in the way of final preparations before the guests came to the Christmas party.

The Christmas pretence was intended as a surprise to those not staying in the house, and after all had arrived, the doors of the library were thrown open with shouts of "Merry Christmas!"

And indeed it did seem like a sudden transition back into the winter. The Christmas tree with its gay decorations and lighted candles was a beautiful sight, and the green-trimmed room with its spicy odours of spruce and pine intensified the illusion.

Shouts of delight went up on all sides, and falling quickly into the spirit of it all, the guests at once began to pretend it was really Christmas, and greeted each other with appropriate good wishes.

Mischievous Patty had slyly tied a sprig of mistletoe to the chandelier, and Dick Phelps by a clever manoeuvre had succeeded in getting Mrs. Warner to stand under it. The good lady was quite unaware of their plans, and when Mr. Phelps kissed her soundly on her plump cheek she was decidedly surprised.

But the explanation amply justified his audacity, and Mrs. Warner laughingly declared that she would resign her place to some of the younger ladies.

The greatest fun came when Winthrop distributed the presents from the tree. None of them was expensive or valuable, but most of them were clever, merry little jokes which good-naturedly teased the recipients.

True to his word Mr. Phelps brought Abiram in, leading him by his long chain. Patty had tied a red ribbon round his neck with a huge bow, and had further dressed him up in a paper cap which she had taken from a German cracker motto.

Abiram received a stick of candy as his gift, and was as much pleased, apparently, as the rest of the party.

Many of the presents were accompanied by little verses or lines of doggerel, and the reading of these caused much merriment and laughter.

After the presentations, supper was served, and here Mrs. Warner had provided her part of the surprise.

Not even those staying in the house knew of their hostess' plans, and when they all trooped out to the dining-room, a real Christmas feast awaited them.

The long table was decorated with red ribbons and holly, and red candles with red paper shades. Christmas bells hung above the table, and at each plate were appropriate souvenirs. In the centre of the table was a tiny Christmas tree with lighted candles, a miniature copy of the one they had just left.

Even the viands partook of the Christmas character, and from roast turkey to plum pudding no detail was spared to make it a true Christmas feast.

The young people did full justice to Mrs. Warner's hospitality, and warmly appreciated the kind thoughtfulness which had made the supper so attractive in every way.

Then they adjourned to the parlour for informal dancing, and wound up the party with an old-fashioned Virginia reel, which was led by Mr. and Mrs. Warner.

Mr. Warner was a most genial host and his merry quips and repartee kept the young people laughing gaily.

When at last the guests departed, it was with assurances that they had never had such a delightful Christmas party, even in midwinter, and had never had such a delightful Fourth of July party, even in midsummer.

CHAPTER XVIII

AT SANDY COVE

When the day came for Patty and Elise to leave Pine Branches, everyone concerned was truly sorry. Elise had long been a favourite with the Warners, and they had grown to love Patty quite as well.

Roger was still there, and Mr. and Mrs. Farrington came for the young people in their motor-car. They were returning from a most interesting trip, which had extended as far as Portland. After hearing some accounts of it, Patty felt sure that she would have enjoyed it; but then she had also greatly enjoyed her visit at Pine Branches, and she felt sure that it had been better for her physically than the exertion and excitement of the motor-trip.

Besides this, the Farringtons assured her that there would be many other opportunities for her to go touring with them, and they would always be glad to have her.

So one bright morning, soon after the Fourth of July, The Fact started off again with its original party. They made the trip to New York entirely without accident or mishap of any kind, which greatly pleased Roger, as it demonstrated that The Fact was not always a stubborn thing.

Patty was to spend the months of July and August with her father and Nan, who had rented a house on Long Island. The house was near the Barlows' summer home at Sandy Cove, for Nan had thought it would be pleasant to be near her friends, who were also Patty's relatives.

Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield had already gone to Long Island, and the Farringtons were to take Patty over there in the motor-car.

So, after staying a day or two with Elise in New York, Patty again took her place in the car for the journey to her new home. Mr. Farrington and Elise went with her, and after seeing her safely in her father's care, returned to the city that same day.

Patty was glad to see her father and Nan again, and was delighted with the beautiful house which they had taken for the summer.

"How large it is!" she exclaimed, as she looked about her. "We three people will be lost in it!"

"We're going to have a lot of company," said Nan, "I've invited nearly everyone I know, and I shall expect you to help me entertain them."

"Gladly," said Patty; "there are no horrid lessons in the way now, and you may command my full time and attention."

The day after Patty's return to her family, she proposed that they go over to see the Barlows.

"It's an awful hot afternoon," said Nan, "but I suppose we can't be any warmer there than here."

So arraying themselves in fresh, cool white dresses, Nan and Patty started to make their call.

The Barlows' summer place was called the Hurly-Burly, and as Nan and Patty both knew, the name described the house extremely well.

As Bob Barlow sometimes said, the motto of their home seemed to be, "No place for nothin', and nothin' in its place."

But as the family had lived up to this principle for many years, it was not probable things would ever be any different with them, and it did not prevent their being a delightful family, while their vagaries often proved extremely entertaining.

But when Nan and Patty neared the house they saw no sign of anybody about.

The doors and windows were all open and the visitors walked in, looked in the various rooms, and even went upstairs, but found nobody anywhere.

"I'll look in the kitchen," said Patty; "surely old Hopalong, the cook, will be there. They can't all be away, and the house all open like this."

But the kitchen too, was deserted, and Nan said, "Well, let us sit on the front verandah a while; it must be that somebody will come home soon, and anyway I'm too warm and tired to walk right back in the broiling sun."

So they sat on the verandah for half an hour, and then Patty said, "Let's give one more look inside the house, and if we can't find anybody let's go home."

"All right," said Nan, and in they went, through the vacant rooms, and again to the kitchen.

"Why, there's Hopalong," said Patty, as she saw the old coloured woman busy about her work, though indeed Hopalong's slow movements could not be accurately described by the word busy.

"Hello, Hopalong," said Patty, "where are all the people?"

"Bless yo' heart Miss Patty, chile, how yo'done skeered me! And howdy, Miss Nan,--'scuse me, I should say Missus Fairfield. De ladies is at home, and I 'spects dey'll be mighty glad to see you folks."

"Where are they, then?" said Nan, looking puzzled, "we can't find them."

"Well yo' see it's a mighty hot day, and dem Barlows is mighty fond of bein' as comfable as possible. I'm makin' dis yere lemonade for 'em, kase dey likes a coolin' drink. I'll jest squeeze in another lemon or two, and there'll be plenty for you, too."

"But where are they, Hopalong?" asked Patty, "are they outdoors, down by the brook?"

"Laws no, Miss Patty, I done forgot to tell yo' whar dey am, but dey's down in de cellah."

"In the cellar!" said Patty, "what for?"

"So's dey kin be cool, chile. Jes' you trot along down, and see for yourselves."

Hopalong threw open the door that led from the kitchen to the cellar stairs, and holding up their dainty white skirts, Patty and Nan started down the rather dark staircase.

"Look at those white shoes coming downstairs," they heard Bumble's voice cry; "I do believe it's Nan and Patty!"

"It certainly is," said Patty, and as she reached the last step, she looked around in astonishment, and then burst into laughter.

"Well, you do beat all!" she said, "We've been sitting on the front verandah half an hour, wondering where you could be."

"Isn't it nice?" said Mrs. Barlow, after she had greeted her guests.

"It is indeed," said Patty, "it's the greatest scheme I ever heard of."

The cellar, which had been recently white-washed, had been converted into a funny sort of a sitting-room. On the floor was spread a large white floor-cloth, whose original use had been for a dancing crash.

The chairs and sofas were all of wicker, and though in various stages of dilapidation, were cool and comfortable. A table in the center was covered with a white cloth, and the sofa pillows were in white ruffled cases.

Bumble explained that the intent was to have everything white, but they hadn't been able to carry out that idea fully, as they had so few white things.

"The cat is all right," said Patty, looking at a large white cat that lay curled up on a white fur rug.

"Yes, isn't she a beautiful cat? Her name is The Countess, and when she's awake, she's exceedingly aristocratic and dignified looking, but she's almost never awake. Oh, here comes Hopalong, with our lemonade."

The old negro lumbered down the steps, and Bumble took the tray from her, and setting it on the table, served the guests to iced lemonade and tiny thin cakes of Hopalong's concoction.

"Now isn't this nice?" said Mrs. Barlow, as they sat chatting and feasting; "you see how cool and comfortable it is, although it's so warm out of doors. I dare say I shall get rheumatism, as it seems a little damp here, but when I feel it coming on, I'm going to move my chair over onto that fur rug, and then I think there will be no danger."

"It is delightfully cool," said Patty, "and I think it a most ingenious idea. If we had only known sooner that you were here, though, we could have had a much longer visit."

"It's so fortunate," said Bumble, whom Patty couldn't remember to call Helen, "that you chanced to be dressed in white. You fit right in to the colour scheme. Mother and I meant to wear white down here, but all our white frocks have gone to the laundry. But if you'll come over again after a day or two, we'll have this place all fixed up fine. You see we only thought of it this morning. It was so unbearably hot, we really had to do something."

Soon Uncle Ted and Bob came in, and after a while Mr. Fairfield arrived.

The merry party still stayed in the cellar room, and one and all pronounced it a most clever idea for a hot day.

The Barlows were delighted that the Fairfields were to be near them for the summer, and many good times were planned for.

Patty was very fond of her Barlow cousins, but after returning to her own home, which Nan with the special pride of a young housekeeper, kept in the daintiest possible order, Patty declared that she was glad her father had chosen a wife

who had the proper ideas of managing a house.

Nan and Patty were congenial in their tastes and though Patty had had some experience in housekeeping, she was quite willing to accept any innovations that Nan might suggest.

"Indeed," she said, "I am only too glad not to have any of the care and responsibility of keeping house, and I propose to enjoy an idle summer after my hard year in school."

So the days passed rapidly and happily. There were many guests at the house, and as the Fairfields were rather well acquainted with the summer people at Sandy Cove, they received many invitations to entertainments of various kinds.

The Farringtons often came down in their motor-car and made a flying visit, or took the Fairfields for a ride, and Patty hoped that the Warners would visit them before the summer was over.

One day Mr. Phelps appeared unexpectedly, and from nowhere in particular. He came in his big racing-car, and that day Patty chanced to be the only one of the family at home. He invited her to go for a short ride with him, saying they could easily be back by dinner time, when the others were expected home.

Glad of the opportunity, Patty ran for her automobile coat and hood, and soon they were flying along the country roads.

Part of the time they went at a mad rate of speed, and part of the time they went slower, that they might converse more easily.

As they went somewhat slowly past a piece of woods, Patty gave a sudden exclamation, and declared that she saw what looked like a baby or a young child wrapped in a blanket and lying on the ground.

Her face expressed such horror-stricken anxiety, as she thought that possibly the child had been abandoned and left there purposely, that Mr. Phelps consented to go back and investigate the matter, although he really thought she was mistaken in thinking it was a child at all.

He turned his machine, and in a moment they were back at the place.

Mr. Phelps jumped from the car, and ran into the wood where Patty pointed.

Sure enough, under a tree lay a baby, perhaps a year old, fairly well dressed and with a pretty smiling face.

He called to Patty and she joined him where he stood looking at the child.

"Why, bless your heart!" cried Patty, picking the little one up, "what are you doing here all alone?"

The baby cooed and smiled, dimpling its little face and caressing Patty's cheeks with its fat little hands. A heavy blanket had been spread on the ground for the child to lie on, and around its little form was pinned a lighter blanket with the name Rosabel embroidered on one corner.

"So that's your name, is it?" said Patty. "Well, Rosabel, I'd like to know where you belong and what you're doing here. Do you suppose," she said, turning an indignant face to Mr. Phelps, "that anybody deliberately put this child here and deserted it?"

"I'm afraid that's what has happened," said Mr. Phelps, who really couldn't think of any other explanation.

They looked all around, but nobody was in sight to whom the child might possibly belong.

"I can't go away and leave her here," said Patty, "the dear little thing, what shall we do with her?"

"It is a mighty hard case," said Mr. Phelps, who was nonplussed himself. He was a most gentle-hearted man, and could not bear the thought of leaving the child there alone in the woods, and it was already nearing sundown.

"We might take it along with us," he said, "and enquire at the nearest house."

"There's no house in sight," said Patty, looking about. "Well, there are only two things to choose from; to stay here in hope that somebody will come along, who knows something about this baby, or else assume that she really has been deserted and take her home with us, for the night at least. I simply won't go off and leave her here, and if there was anybody here in charge of her they must have shown up by this time."

Mr. Phelps could see no use in waiting there any longer, and though it seemed absurd to carry the child off with them, there really seemed nothing else to do.

So with a last look around, hoping to see somebody, but seeing no one, Patty climbed into the car and sitting in the front seat beside Mr. Phelps, held the baby in her lap.

"She's awfully cunning," she declared, "and such a pretty baby! Whoever abandoned this child ought to be fearfully punished in some way."

"I can't think she was abandoned," said Mr. Phelps, but as he couldn't think of any other reason for the baby being there alone, he was forced to accept the desertion theory.

Having decided to take the baby with them, they sped along home, and drew up in front of the house to find Nan and Mr. Fairfield on the verandah.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Phelps?" cried Nan. "We're very glad to see you. Come in. For gracious goodness' sake, Patty, what have you got there?"

"This is Rosabel," said Patty, gravely, as she held the baby up to view.

CHAPTER XIX

ROSABEL

"Rosabel who?" exclaimed Nan, as Patty came up on the verandah with the baby in her arms.

"I don't know, I'm sure. You may call her Rosabel anything you like. We picked her up by the wayside."

"Yes," said Dick Phelps, who had followed Patty up the steps. "Miss Rosabel seemed lonely without anyone to talk to, so we brought her back here to visit you."

"You must be crazy!" cried Nan, "but what a cunning baby it is! Let me take her."

Nan took the good-natured little midget and sat down in a verandah rocker, with the baby in her arms.

"Tell a straight story, Patty," said her father, "is it one of the neighbour's children, or did you kidnap it?"

"Neither," said Patty, turning to her father; "we found the baby lying right near the edge of a wood, in plain sight from the road. And there was nobody around, and Papa, I just know that the child's wretch of a mother deserted it, and left it there to die!"

"Nonsense," said her father. "Mothers don't leave their little ones around as carelessly as that."

"Well, what else could it be?" said Patty. "There was the baby all alone, smiling and talking to herself, and no one anywhere near, although we waited for some time."

"It does seem strange," said Mr. Fairfield, "perhaps the mother did mean to desert the child, but if so, she was probably peeping from some hiding-place, to make sure that she approved of the people who took it."

"Well," said Mr. Phelps, "she evidently thought we were all right; at any rate she made no objection."

"But isn't it awful," said Nan, "to think of anybody deserting a dear little thing like this. Why, the wild animals might have eaten her up."

"Of course they might," said Mr. Phelps, gravely, "the tigers and wolves that abound on Long Island are of the most ferocious type."

"Well, anyway," said Patty, "something dreadful might have happened to her."

"It may yet," said Mr. Phelps cheerfully, "when we take her back to-morrow and put her in the place we found her. For I don't suppose you intend to keep Miss Rosabel, do you?"

"I don't know," said Patty, "but I know one thing, we certainly won't put her back where we found her. What shall we do with her, Papa?"

"I don't know, my child, she's your find, and I suppose it's a case of 'findings is keepings.'"

"Of course we can't keep her," said Patty, "how ridiculous! We'll have to put her in an orphan asylum or something like that."

"It's a shame," said Nan, "to put this dear little mite in a horrid old asylum. I think I shall adopt her myself."

Little Rosabel had begun to grow restless, and suddenly without a word of warning she began to cry lustily, and not a quiet well-conducted cry either, but with ear-splitting shrieks and yells, indicative of great discomfort of some sort.

"I've changed my mind," said Nan, abruptly. "I don't want to adopt any such noisy young person as that. Here, take her, Patty, she's your property."

Patty took the baby, and carried her into the house, fearing that passers-by would think they must be torturing the child to make her scream like that.

Into the dining-room went Patty, and on to the kitchen, where she announced to the astonished cook that she wanted some milk for the baby and she wanted it quick.

"Is there company for dinner, Miss Patty?" asked the cook, not understanding how a baby could have arrived as an only guest.

"Only this one," said Patty, laughing, "what do you think she ought to eat?"

"Bread and milk," said the cook, looking at the child with a judicial air.

"All right, Kate, fix her some, won't you?"

In a few moments Patty was feeding Rosabel bread and milk, which the child ate eagerly.

Impelled by curiosity, Nan came tip-toeing to the kitchen, followed by the two men.

"I thought she must be asleep," said Nan, "as the concert seems to have stopped."

"Not at all," said Patty, calmly, "she was only hungry, and the fact seemed to occur to her somewhat suddenly."

Little Rosabel, all smiles again, looked up from her supper with such bewitching glances that Nan cried out, "Oh, she is a darling! Let me help you feed her, Patty."

In fact they all succumbed to the charm of their uninvited guest. During dinner Rosabel sat at the table, in a chair filled with pillows, and was made happy by being given many dainty bits of various delicacies, until Nan declared the child would certainly be ill.

"I don't believe she is more than a year old," said Nan, "and she's probably unaccustomed to those rich cakes and bonbons."

"I think she's more than a year," said Patty, sagely, "and anyway, I want her to have a good time for once."

"She seems to be having the time of her life," said Dick Phelps, as he watched the baby, who with a macaroon in one hand, and some candied cherries in the other, was smiling impartially on them all.

"She's not much of a conversationalist," remarked Mr. Fairfield.

"Give her time," said Patty, "she feels a little strange at first."

"Yes," said Mr. Phelps, "I think after two or three years she'll be much more talkative."

"Well, there's one thing certain," said Patty, "she'll have to stay here to-night, whatever we do with her to-morrow."



"In a few minutes Patty was feeding Rosabel bread and milk"

After dinner they took their new toy with them to the parlour, and Miss Rosabel treated them all to a few more winning smiles, and then quietly, but very decidedly fell asleep in Patty's arms.

"I can't help admiring her decision of character," said Patty, as she shook the baby to make her awaken, but without success.

"Don't wake her up," said Nan. "Come, Patty, we'll take her upstairs, and put her to bed somewhere."

This feat being accomplished, Nan and Patty rejoined the men, who sat smoking on the front verandah.

"Now," said Patty, "we really must decide what we're going to do with that infant; for I warn you, Papa Fairfield, that if we keep that dear baby around much longer, I shall become so attached to her that I can't give her up."

"Of course," said Mr. Fairfield, "she must be turned over to the authorities. I'll attend to it the first thing in the morning."

A little later Mr. Fairfield and Nan strolled down the road to make a call on a neighbour, and Patty and Dick Phelps remained at home.

Patty had declared she wouldn't leave the house lest Rosabel should waken and cry out, so promising to make but a short call, Mr. Fairfield and Nan went away.

Soon after they had gone, a strange young man came walking toward the house. He turned in at the gate and

approached the front steps.

"Is this Mr. Richard Phelps?" he asked, addressing himself to Dick.

"It is; what can I do for you?"

"Do you own a large black racing automobile?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Phelps.

"And were you out in it this afternoon," continued the stranger, "driving rapidly between here and North Point?"

"Yes," said Mr. Phelps again, wondering what was the intent of this peculiar interview.

"Then you're the man I'm after," declared the stranger, "and I'm obliged to tell you, sir, that you are under arrest."

"For what offence?" enquired Mr. Phelps, rather amused at what he considered a good joke, and thinking that it must be a case of mistaken identity somehow.

"For kidnapping little Mary Brown," was the astonishing reply.

"Why, we didn't kidnap her at all!" exclaimed Patty, breaking into the conversation. "The idea, to think we would kidnap a baby! and anyway her name isn't Mary, it's Rosabel."

"Then you know where the child is, Miss," said the man, turning to Patty.

"Of course I do," said Patty, "she's upstairs asleep. But it isn't Mary Brown at all. It's Rosabel,--I don't know what her last name is."

Mr. Phelps began to be interested.

"What makes you think we kidnapped a baby, my friend?" he said to their visitor.

The man looked as if he had begun to think there must be a mistake somewhere. "Why, you see, sir," he said, "Mrs. Brown, she's just about crazy. Her little girl, Sarah, went out into the woods this afternoon, and took the baby, Mary, with her. The baby went to sleep, and Sarah left it lying on a blanket under a tree, while she roamed around the wood picking blueberries. Somehow she strayed away farther than she intended and lost her way. When she finally managed to get back to the place where she left the baby, the child was gone, and she says she could see a large automobile going swiftly away, and the lady who sat in the front seat was holding little Mary. Sarah screamed, and called after you, but the car only went on more and more rapidly, and was soon lost to sight. I'm a detective, sir, and I looked carefully at the wheel tracks in the dust, and I asked a few questions here and there, and I hit upon some several clues, and here I am. Now I'd like you to explain, sir, if you didn't kidnap that child, what you do call it?"

"Why, it was a rescue," cried Patty, indignantly, without giving Mr. Phelps time to reply. "The dear little baby was all alone in the wood, and anything might have happened to her. Her mother had no business to let her be taken care of by a sister that couldn't take care of her any better than that! We waited for some time, and nobody appeared, so we picked up the child and brought her home, rather than leave her there alone. But I don't believe it's the child you're after anyway, for the name Rosabel is embroidered on the blanket."

"It is the same child, Miss," said the man, who somehow seemed a little crestfallen because his kidnapping case proved to be only in his own imagination. "Mrs. Brown described to me the clothes the baby wore, and she said that blanket was given to her by a rich lady who had a little girl named Rosabel. The Browns are poor people, ma'am, and the mother is a hard-working woman, and she's nearly crazed with grief about the baby."

"I should think she would be," said Patty, whose quick sympathies had already flown to the sorrowing mother. "She oughtn't to have left an irresponsible child in charge of the little thing. But it's dreadful to think how anxious she must be! Now I'll tell you what we'll do; Mr. Phelps, if you'll get out your car, I'll just bundle that child up and we'll take her right straight back home to her mother. We'll stop at the Ripleys' for Papa and Nan, and we'll all go over together. It's a lovely moonlight night for a drive, anyway, and even if it were pitch dark, or pouring in torrents, I should want to get that baby back to her mother just as quickly as possible. I don't wonder the poor woman is distracted."

"Very well," said Mr. Phelps, who would have driven his car to Kamschatka if Patty had asked him to, "and we'll take this gentleman along with us, to direct us to Mrs. Brown's."

Mr. Phelps went for his car, and Patty flew to bundle up the baby. She did not dress the child, but wrapped her in a warm blanket, and then in a fur-lined cape of her own. Then making a bundle of the baby's clothes, she presented herself at the door, just as Mr. Phelps drove up with his splendid great car shining in the moonlight.

A few moments' pause was sufficient to gather in Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield, and away they all flew through the night, to Mrs. Brown's humble cottage.

They found the poor woman not only grieving about the loss of her child, but angry and revengeful against the lady

and gentleman in the motor-car, who, she thought, had stolen it.

And so when the car stopped in front of her door, she came running out followed by her husband and several children.

Little Sarah recognised the car, which was unusual in size and shape, and cried out, "That's the one, that's the one, mother! and those are the people who stole Mary!"

But the young detective, whose name was Mr. Faulks, sprang out of the car and began to explain matters to the astonished family. Then Patty handed out the baby, and the grief of the Browns was quickly turned to rejoicing, mingled with apologies.

Mr. Fairfield explained further to the somewhat bewildered mother, and leaving with her a substantial present of money as an evidence of good faith in the matter, he returned to his place in the car, and in a moment they were whizzing back toward home.

"I'm glad it all turned out right," said Patty with a sigh, "but I do wish that pretty baby had been named Rosabel instead of Mary. It really would have suited her a great deal better."

CHAPTER XX

THE ROLANDS

"There's a new family in that house across the road," said Mr. Fairfield one evening at dinner.

"The Fenwick house?" asked Nan.

"Yes; a man named Roland has taken it for August. I know a man who knows them, and he says they're charming people. So, if you ladies want to be neighbourly, you might call on them."

Nan and Patty went to call and found the Roland family very pleasant people, indeed. Mrs. Roland seemed to be an easy-going sort of lady who never took any trouble herself, and never expected anyone else to do so.

Miss Roland, Patty decided, was a rather inanimate young person, and showed a lack of energy so at variance with Patty's tastes that she confided to Nan on the way home she certainly did not expect to cultivate any such lackadaisical girl as that.

As for young Mr. Roland, the son of the house, Patty had great ado to keep from laughing outright at him. He was of the foppish sort, and though young and rather callow, he assumed airs of great importance, and addressed Patty with a formal deference, as if she were a young lady in society, instead of a schoolgirl.

Patty was accustomed to frank, pleasant comradeship with the boys of her acquaintance; and the young men, such as Mr. Hepworth and Mr. Phelps, treated Patty as a little girl, and never seemed to imply anything like grown-up attentions.

But young Mr. Roland, with an affected drawl, and what were meant to be killing glances of admiration, so conducted himself that Patty's sense of humour was stirred, and she mischievously led him on for the fun of seeing what he would do next.

The result was that young Mr. Roland was much pleased with pretty Patty, and fully believed that his own charms had made a decided impression on her.

He asked permission to call, whereupon Patty told him that she was only a schoolgirl, and did not receive calls from young men, but referred him to Mrs. Fairfield, and Nan being in an amiable mood, kindly gave him the desired permission.

"Well," said Patty, as they discussed the matter afterward, "if that young puff-ball rolls himself over here, you can have the pleasure of entertaining him. I'm quite ready to admit that another season of his conversation would affect my mind."

"Nonsense," said Nan, carelessly, "you can't expect every young man to be as interesting as Mr. Hepworth, or as companionable as Kenneth Harper."

"I don't," said Patty, "but I don't have to bore myself to death talking to them, if I don't like them."

"No," said Nan, "but you must be polite and amiable to everybody. That's part of the penalty of being an attractive young woman."

"All right," said Patty, "since that's the way you look at it, you surely can't have any objection to receiving Mr. Roland if he calls, for I warn you that I shan't appear."

But it so happened that when a caller came one afternoon, Nan was not at home, and Patty was.

The maid brought the card to Patty, who was reading in her own room, and when she looked at it and saw the name of Mr. Charles Roland upon it, she exclaimed in dismay.

"I don't want to go down," she said, "I wish he hadn't come."

"It's a lady, Miss Patty," said the girl.

"A lady?" said Patty, wonderingly, "why this is a gentleman's card."

"Yes, ma'am, I know it, but it's a lady that called. She's down in the parlour, waiting, and that's the card she gave me. She's a large lady, Miss Patty, with greyish hair, and she seems in a terrible fluster."

"Very mysterious," said Patty, "but I'll go down and see what it's all about."

Patty went down to the parlour, and found Mrs. Roland there. She did indeed look bewildered, and as soon as Patty

entered the room she began to talk volubly.

"Excuse my rushing over like this, my dear," she said, "but I am in such trouble, and I wonder if you won't help me out. We're neighbours, you know, and I'm sure I'd do as much for you. I asked for Mrs. Fairfield, but she isn't at home, so I asked for you."

"But the card you sent up had Mr. Charles Roland's name on it," said Patty, smiling.

"Oh, my dear, is that so? What a mistake to make! You see I carry Charlie's cards around with my own, and I must have sent the wrong one. I'm so nearsighted I can't see anything without my glasses, anyway, and my glasses are always lost."

Patty felt sorry for the old lady, who seemed in such a bewildered state, and she said, "No matter about the card, Mrs. Roland, what can I do for you?"

"Why it's just this," said her visitor. "I want to borrow your house. Just for the night, I'll return it to-morrow in perfect order."

"Borrow this house?" repeated Patty, wondering if her guest were really sane.

"Yes," said Mrs. Roland; "now wait, and I'll tell you all about it. I'm expecting some friends to dinner and to stay over night, and would you believe it, just now of all days in the year, the tank has burst and the water is dripping down all through the house. We can't seem to do anything to stop it. The ceilings had fallen in three rooms when I came away, and I dare say the rest of them are down by this time. And my friends are very particular people, and awfully exclusive. I wouldn't like to take them to the hotel; and I don't think it's a very nice hotel anyway, and so I thought if you'd just lend me this house over night, I could bring my friends right here, and as they leave to-morrow morning, it wouldn't be long, you know. And truly I don't see what else I can do."

"But what would become of our family?" said Patty, who was greatly amused at the unconventional request.

"Why, you could go to our house," said Mrs. Roland dubiously; "that is, if any of the ceilings will stay up over night; or," she added, her face brightening, "couldn't you go to the hotel yourselves? Of course, it isn't a nice place to entertain guests, but it does very well for one's own family. Oh, Miss Fairfield, please help me out! Truly I'd do as much for you if the case were reversed."

Although the request was unusual, Mrs. Roland did not seem to think so, and the poor lady seemed to be in such distress, that Patty's sympathies were aroused, and after all it was a mere neighbourly act of kindness to borrow and lend, even though the article in question was somewhat larger than the lemon or the egg usually borrowed by neighbourly housekeepers.

So Patty said, "What about the servants, Mrs. Roland? Do you want to borrow them too?"

"I don't care," was the reply, "just as it suits you best. You may leave them here; or take them with you, and I'll bring my own. Oh, please, Miss Fairfield, do help me somehow."

Patty thought a minute. It was a responsibility to decide the question herself, but if she waited until Nan or her father came home, it would be too late for Mrs. Roland's purpose.

Then she said, "I'll do it, Mrs. Roland. You shall have the house and servants at your disposal until noon to-morrow. You may bring your own servants also, or not, just as you choose. We won't go to your house, thank you, nor to the hotel. But Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield and myself will go over to my aunt, Mrs. Barlow's, to dine and spend the night. They can put us up, and they won't mind a bit our coming so unexpectedly."

"Oh, my dear, how good you are!" said Mrs. Roland in a burst of gratitude. "I cannot tell you how I appreciate your kindness! Are you sure your parents won't mind?"

"I'm not at all sure of that," said Patty, smiling, "but I don't see as they can help themselves; when they come home, you will probably be in possession, and your guests will be here, so there'll be nothing for my people to do but to fall in with my plans."

"Oh, how good you are," said Mrs. Roland. "I will surely make this up to you in some way, and now, will you just show me about the house a bit, as I've never been here before?"

So Patty piloted Mrs. Roland about the house, showed her the various rooms, and told the servants that they were at Mrs. Roland's orders for that night and the next morning.

After Mrs. Roland had gone back home, made happy by Patty's kindness, Patty began to think that she had done a very extraordinary thing, and wondered what her father and Nan would say.

"But," she thought to herself, "I'm in for it now, and they'll have to abide by my decision, whatever they think. Now I must pack some things for our visit. But first I must telephone to Aunt Grace."

"Hello, Auntie," said Patty, at the telephone, a few moments later. "Papa and Nan and I want to come over to the Hurly-Burly to dinner, and to stay all night. Will you have us?"

"Why, of course, Patty, child, we're glad to have you. Come right along and stay as long as you like. But what's the matter? Has your cook left, or is the house on fire?"

"Neither, Aunt Grace, but I'll explain when I get there. Can you send somebody after me in a carriage? Papa and Nan have gone off in the cart, and I have two suit cases to bring."

"Certainly, Patty, I'll send old Dill after you right away, and I'll make him hurry, too, as you seem to be anxious to start."

"I am," said Patty, laughing. "Good-bye."

Then she gathered together such clothing and belongings as were necessary for their visit, and had two suit cases ready packed when her aunt's carriage came for her.

Patty looked a little dubious as she left the house, but she didn't feel that she could have acted otherwise than as she had done, and, too, since their own trusty servants were to stay there, certainly no harm could come to the place.

So, giggling at the whole performance, Patty jumped into the Barlow carriage and went to the Hurly-Burly.

"Well, of all things!" said her Aunt Grace, after Patty had told her story. "I've had a suspicion, sometimes, that we Barlows were an unconventional crowd, but we never borrowed anybody's house yet! It's ridiculous, Patty, and you ought not to have let that woman have it!"

"I just couldn't help it, Aunt Grace, she was in such a twitter, and threw herself on my mercy in such a way that I felt I had to help her out."

"You're too soft-hearted, Patty; you'd do anything for anybody who asked you."

"You needn't talk, Aunt Grace, you're just the same yourself, and you know that if somebody came along this minute and wanted to borrow your house you'd let her have it if she coaxed hard enough."

"I think very likely," said Aunt Grace, placidly. "Now, how are you going to catch your father and Nan?"

"Why, they'll have to drive past here on their way home," said Patty, "and I mean to stop them and tell them about it. We can put the horse in your barn, I suppose."

"Yes, of course. And now we'll go out on the verandah, and then we can see the Fairfield turn-out when it comes along."

The Fairfields were waylaid and stopped as they drove by the house, which was not astonishing, as Patty and Bumble and Mrs. Barlow watched from the piazza, while Bob was perched on the front gate post, and Uncle Ted was pacing up and down the walk.

"What's the matter?" cried Mr. Fairfield, as he reined up his horse in response to their various salutations.

"The matter is," said Patty, "that we haven't any home of our own to-night, and so we're visiting Aunt Grace."

"Earthquake swallowed our house?" inquired Mr. Fairfield, as he turned to drive in.

"Not quite," said Patty, "but one of the neighbours wanted to borrow it, so I lent it to her."

"That Mrs. Roland, I suppose," said Nan; "she probably mislaid her own house, she's so careless and rattle-pated."

"It was Mrs. Roland," said Patty, laughing, "and she's having a dinner-party, and their tank burst, and most of the ceilings fell, and really, Nan, you know yourself such things do upset a house, if they occur on the day of a dinner-party."

Fuller explanations ensued, and though the Fairfields thought it a crazy piece of business, they agreed with Patty, that it would have been difficult to refuse Mrs. Roland's request.

And it really didn't interfere with the Fairfields' comfort at all, and the Barlows protested that it was a great pleasure to them to entertain their friends so unexpectedly, so, as Mr. Fairfield declared, Mrs. Roland was, after all, a public benefactor.

"You'd better wait," said Nan, "until you see the house to-morrow. I know a little about the Rolands, and I wouldn't be a bit surprised to find things pretty much upside down."

It was nearly noon the next day when Mrs. Roland telephoned to the Hurly-Burly and asked for Mrs. Fairfield.

Nan responded, and was told that the Rolands were now leaving, and that the Fairfields might again come into their home.

Mrs. Roland also expressed voluble thanks for the great service the Fairfields had done her, and said that she would

call the next day to thank them in person.

So the Fairfields went back home, and happily Nan's fears were not realised. Nothing seemed to be spoiled or out of order, and the servants said that Mrs. Roland and her family and friends had been most kind, and had made no trouble at all.

"Now, you see," said Patty, triumphantly, "that it does no harm to do a kind deed to a neighbour once in a while, even though it isn't the particular kind deed that you've done a hundred times before."

"That's true enough, Patty," said her father, "but all the same when you lend our home again, let it be our own house, and furnished with our own things. I don't mind owning up, now that it's all over, that I did feel a certain anxiety arising from the fact that this is a rented house, and almost none of the household appointments are our own."

"Goodness, gracious me!" said Patty. "I never once thought of that! Well, I'm glad they didn't smash all the china and bric-a-brac, for they're mortal homely, and I should certainly begrudge the money it would take to replace them."

CHAPTER XXI

THE CRUSOES

Plans were on foot for a huge fair and bazaar to be held in aid of the Associated Charities. Everybody in and around Sandy Cove was interested, and the fair, which would be held the last week in August, was expected to eclipse all previous efforts of its kind.

All three of the Fairfields were energetically assisting in the work, and each was a member of several important committees.

The Barlows, too, were working hard, and the Rolands thought they were doing so, though somehow they accomplished very little. As the time drew near for the bazaar to open, Patty grew so excited over the work and had such a multitude of responsibilities, that she flew around as madly as when she was preparing for the play at school.

"But I'm perfectly well, now," she said to her father when he remonstrated with her, "and I don't mind how hard I work as long as I haven't lessons to study at the same time."

Aside from assisting with various booths and tables, Patty had charge of a gypsy encampment, which she spared no pains to make as gay and interesting as possible.

The "Romany Rest" she called the little enclosure which was to represent the gypsies' home, and Patty not only superintended the furnishing and arranging of the place, but also directed the details of the costumes which were to be worn by the young people who were to represent gypsies.

The Fairfields' house was filled with guests who had come down for the fair.

Patty had invited Elise and Roger Farrington, and Bertha and Winthrop Warner. Mr. Hepworth and Kenneth Harper were there, too, and the merry crowd of young people worked zealously in their endeavours to assist Patty and Nan.

Mr. Hepworth, of course, was especially helpful in arranging the gypsy encampment, and designing the picturesque costumes for the girls and young men who were to act as gypsies. The white blouses with gay-coloured scarfs and broad sombreros were beautiful to look at, even if, as Patty said, they were more like Spanish fandangoes than like any gypsy garments she had ever seen.

"Don't expose your ignorance, my child," said Mr. Hepworth, smiling at her. "A Romany is not an ordinary gypsy and is always clothed in this particular kind of garb."

"Then that's all that's necessary," said Patty. "I bow to your superior judgment, and I feel sure that all the patrons of the fair will spend most of their time at the 'Romany Rest.'"

The day on which the fair was to open was a busy one, and everybody was up betimes, getting ready for the grand event.

A fancy dress parade was to be one of the features of the first evening, and as a prize was offered for the cleverest costume, all of the contestants were carefully guarding the secret of the characters their costumes would represent. Although Roger had given no hint of what his costume was to be, he calmly announced that he knew it would take the prize. The others laughed, thinking this a jest, and Patty was of a private opinion that probably Mr. Hepworth's costume would be cleverer than Roger's, as the artist had most original and ingenious ideas.

The fair was to open at three in the afternoon, and soon after twelve o'clock Patty rushed into the house looking for somebody to send on an errand. She found no one about but Bertha Warner, who was hastily putting some finishing touches to her own gypsy dress.

"That's almost finished, isn't it, Bertha?" began Patty breathlessly.

"Yes; why? Can I help you in any way?"

"Indeed you can, if you will. I have to go over to Black Island for some goldenrod. It doesn't grow anywhere else as early, at least I can't find any. I've hunted all over for somebody to send, but the boys are all so busy, and so I'm just going myself. I wish you'd come along and help me row. It's ever so much quicker to go across in a boat and get it there, than to drive out into the country for it."

"Of course I will," said Bertha, "but will there be time?"

"Yes, if we scoot right along."

The girls flew down to the dock, jumped into a small rowboat and began to row briskly over to Black Island. It was not very far, and they soon reached it. They scrambled out, pulled the boat well up onto the beach, and went after the flowers.

Sure enough, as Patty had said, there was a luxuriant growth of goldenrod in many parts of the island. Patty had brought a pair of garden shears, and by setting to work vigorously, they soon had as much as they could carry.

"There," said Patty, triumphantly, as she tied up two great sheaves, "I believe we gathered that quicker than if we had brought some boys along to help. Now let's skip for home."

The island was not very large, but in their search for the flowers they had wandered farther than they thought.

"It's nearly one o'clock," said Patty, looking at her watch, and carrying their heavy cargo of golden flowers, they hastened back to where they had left their boat.

But no boat was there.

"Oh, Bertha," cried Patty, "the boat has drifted away!"

"Oh, pshaw," said Bertha, "I don't believe it. We pulled it ever so far up on the sand."

"Well, then, where is it?"

"Why, I believe Winthrop or Kenneth or somebody came over and pulled it away, just to tease us. I believe they're around the corner waiting for us now."

Patty tried to take this view of it, but she felt a strange sinking of her heart, for it wasn't like Kenneth to play a practical joke, and she didn't think Winthrop would, either.

Laying down her bundle of flowers, Bertha ran around the end of the island, fully expecting to see her brother's laughing face.

But there was no one to be seen, and no sign of the boat.

Then Bertha became alarmed, and the two girls looked at each other in dismay.

"Look off there," cried Patty, suddenly, pointing out on the water.

Far away they saw an empty boat dancing along in the sunlight!

Bertha began to cry, and though Patty felt like it, it seemed really too babyish, and she said, "Don't be a goose, Bertha, we're not lost on a desert island, and of course somebody will come after us, anyway."

But Patty was worried more than she would admit. For no one knew where they had gone, and the empty boat was drifting away from Sandy Cove instead of toward it.

At first, the girls were buoyed up by the excitement of the situation, and felt that somebody must find them shortly. But no other boat was in sight, and as Patty said, everybody was getting ready for the fair and no one was likely to go out rowing that day.

One o'clock came, and then half-past one, and though the girls had tried to invent some way out of their difficulty they couldn't think of a thing to do, but sit still and wait. They had tied their handkerchiefs on the highest bushes of the island, there being no trees, but they well knew that these tiny white signals were not likely to attract anybody's attention.

They had shouted until they were hoarse, and they had talked over all the possibilities of the case.

"Of course they have missed us by this time," said Patty, "and of course they are looking for us."

"I don't believe they are," said Bertha disconsolately, "because all the people at the house will think we're down at the fair grounds, and all the people there will think we're up at the house."

"That's so," Patty admitted, for she well knew how everybody was concerned with his or her own work for the fair, and how little thought they would be giving to one another at this particular time.

And yet, though Patty would not mention it, and would scarcely admit the thought to herself, she couldn't help feeling sure that Mr. Hepworth would be wondering where she was.

"The only hope is," she said to Bertha, "if somebody should want to see me especially, about some of the work, and should try to hunt me up."

"Well," said Bertha, "even if they did, it never would occur to them that we are over here."

"No, they'd never think of that; even if they do miss us, and try to hunt for us. They'll only telephone to different houses, or something like that. It will never occur to them that we're over here, and why should it?"

"I'm glad I came with you," said Bertha, affectionately. "I should hate to think of you over here all alone."

"If I were here alone," said Patty, laughing, "you wouldn't be thinking of me as here alone. You'd just be wondering where I was."

"So I would," said Bertha, laughing, too; "but oh, Patty, do let's do *something!* It's fearful to sit here helpless like this."

"I know it," said Patty, "but what can we do? We're just like Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday, except that we haven't any goat."

"No, and we haven't any raft, from which to select that array of useful articles that he had at his disposal. Do you remember the little bag, that always held everything that could possibly be required?"

"Oh, that was in 'Swiss Family Robinson,'" said Patty; "your early education is getting mixed up. I hope being cast on a desert island hasn't affected your brain. I don't want to be over here with a lunatic."

"You will be, if this keeps up much longer," said poor Bertha, who was of an emotional nature, and was bravely trying hard not to cry.

"We might make a fire," said Patty, "if we only had some paper and matches."

"I don't know what good a fire would do. Nobody would think that meant anything especial. I wish we could put up a bigger signal of some sort."

"We haven't any bigger signal, and if we had, we haven't any way of raising it any higher than these silly low bushes. I never saw an island so poorly furnished for the accommodation of two young lady Crusoes."

"I never did, either. I'm going to shout again."

"Do, if it amuses you, but truly they can't hear you. It's too far."

"What do you think will happen, Patty? Do you suppose we'll have to stay here all night?"

"I don't know," said Patty, slowly. "Of course when it's time for the fair to open, and we're not there, they'll miss us; and of course papa will begin a search at once. But the trouble is, Bertha, they'll never think of searching over here. They'll look in every other direction, but they'll never dream that we came out in the boat."

So the girls sat and waited, growing more and more down-hearted, with that peculiar despondency which accompanies enforced idleness in a desperate situation.

"Look!" cried Patty, suddenly, and startled, Bertha looked where Patty pointed.

Yes, surely, a boat had put out from the shore, and was coming toward them. At least it was headed for the island, though not directly toward where they sat.

"They're going to land farther down," cried Patty, excitedly, "come on, Bertha."

The two girls rushed along the narrow rough beach, wildly waving their handkerchiefs at the occupants of the boat.

"It's Mr. Hepworth," cried Patty, though the knowledge seemed to come to her intuitively, even before she recognised the man who held the stroke oar.

"And Winthrop is rowing, too," said Bertha, recognising her brother, "and I think that's Kenneth Harper, steering."

By this time the boat was near enough to prove that these surmises were correct.

Relieved of her anxiety, mischievous Patty, in the reaction of the moment, assumed a saucy and indifferent air, and as the boat crunched its keel along the pebbly beach she called out, gaily, "How do you do, are you coming to call on us? We're camping here for the summer."

"You little rascals!" cried Winthrop Warner. "What do you mean by running away in this fashion, and upsetting the whole bazaar, and driving all your friends crazy with anxiety about you?"

"Our boat drifted away," said Bertha, "and we couldn't catch it, and we thought we'd have to stay here all night."

"I didn't think we would," said Patty. "I felt sure somebody would come after us."

"I don't know why you thought so," said Winthrop, "for nobody knew where you were."

"I know that," said Patty, smiling, "and yet I can't tell you why, but I just felt sure that somebody would come in a boat, and carry us safely home."

"Whom did you expect?" asked Kenneth, "me?"

Patty looked at Kenneth, and then at Mr. Hepworth, and then dropping her eyes demurely, she said:

"I didn't know *who* would come, only I just knew *somebody* would."

"Well, somebody did," said Kenneth, as he stowed the great bunches of goldenrod in the bow of the boat.

"Yes, somebody did," said Patty, softly, flashing a tiny smile at Mr. Hepworth, who said nothing, but he smiled a little, too, as he bent to his oars.

CHAPTER XXII

THE BAZAAR OF ALL NATIONS

"How did you know where we were?" said Bertha to her brother.

"We didn't know," said Winthrop, "but after we had hunted everywhere, and put a squad of policemen on your track, and got out the fire department, and sent for an ambulance, Hepworth, here, did a little detective work on his own account."

"What did you do?" asked Patty.

"Why, nothing much," said Mr. Hepworth, "I just tried to account for the various boats, and when I found one was missing, I thought you must have gone on the water somewhere. And so I got a field glass and looked all around, and though I thought I saw your white flags fluttering. I wasn't sure, but I put over here on the chance."

"Seems to me," said Kenneth, "Hepworth is a good deal like that man in the story. A horse had strayed away and several people had tried to find it, without success. Presently, a stupid old countryman came up leading the horse. When asked how he found it he only drawled out, 'Wal, I jest considered a spell. I thought ef I was a horse whar would I go? And I went there,-and he had!' That's a good deal the way Hepworth did."

They all laughed at Kenneth's funny story, but Patty said, "It was a sort of intuition, but all the same I object to having Mr. Hepworth compared to a stupid old countryman."

"I don't care what I'm compared to," said Mr. Hepworth, gaily, "as long as we've found you two runaways, and if we can get you back in time for the opening of the fair."

The time was very short indeed, and as soon as they landed at the dock, Patty and Bertha started for the house to don their costumes as quickly as possible.

The Fair, or "Bazaar of all Nations," as it was called, was really arranged on an elaborate scale. It was held on the spacious grounds of Mr. Ashton, one of the wealthiest of the summer residents of Sandy Cove.

So many people had interested themselves in the charity, and so much enthusiasm had they put into their work, that when it was time to throw the gates open to the public, it was a festive and gorgeous scene indeed.

The idea of representing various nations had been picturesquely, if not always logically, carried out.

A Japanese tea-booth had been built with some regard to Japanese fashion, but with even more effort at comfort and attractive colour effects. The young ladies who attended it wore most becoming Japanese costumes, and with slanting pencilled eyebrows, and Japanese headdresses, they served tea in Oriental splendour.

In competition with them was an English dairy, where the rosy-cheeked maids in their neat cotton dresses and white aprons dispensed cheese cakes and Devonshire cream to admiring customers.

The representatives of other countries had even more elaborate results to show for their labours.

Italy's booth was a beautiful pergola, which had been built for the occasion, but which Mr. Ashton intended to keep as a permanent decoration. Over the structure were beautiful vines and climbing plants, and inside was a gorgeous collection of blossoms of every sort. Italian girls in rich-coloured costumes and a profuse array of jewelry sold bouquets or growing plants, and were assisted in their enterprise by swarthy young men who wore the dress of Venetian gondoliers, or Italian nobles, with a fine disregard of rank or caste.

Spain boasted a vineyard. Mr. Hepworth had charge of this, and it truly did credit to his artistic ability. Built on the side of a hill, it was a clever imitation of a Spanish vineyard, and large grape vines had been uprooted and transplanted to complete the effect. To be sure, the bunches of grapes were of the hothouse variety, and were tied on the vines, but they sold well, as did also the other luscious fruits that were offered for sale in arbours at either end of the graperly. The young Spaniards of both sexes who attended to the wants of their customers were garbed exactly in accordance with Mr. Hepworth's directions, and he himself had artistically heightened the colouring of their features and complexions.

Germany offered a restaurant where *delicatessen* foods and tempting savories were served by *Frauleins*. Helen Barlow was one of the jolliest of these, and her plump prettiness and long flaxen braids of hair suited well the white kerchief and laced bodice of her adopted country.

The French girls, with true Parisian instinct, had a millinery booth. Here were sold lovely feminine bits of apparel, including collars, belts, laces and handkerchiefs, but principally hats. The hats were truly beautiful creations, and

though made of simple materials, light straw, muslin, and even of paper, they were all dainty confections that any summer girl might be glad to wear. The little French ladies who exhibited these goods were voluble and dramatic, and in true French fashion, and with more or less true French language, they extolled the beauty of their wares.

In a Swiss chalet the peasants sold dolls and toys; in a Cuban construction, of which no one knew the exact title, some fierce-looking native men sold cigars, and in a strange kind of a hut which purported to be an Eskimo dwelling, ice cream could be bought.

The Stars and Stripes waved over a handsome up-to-date soda-water fountain, as the authorities had decided that ice-cream soda was the most typical American refreshment they could offer to their patrons. But an Indian encampment also claimed American protection, and a group of Western cowboys took pride in their ranch, and even more pride in their swaggering costumes.

Altogether the Bazaar was a great show, and as it was to last for three days, nobody expected to exhaust all its entertainments in one visit.

The Romany Rest was one of the prettiest conceits, and though an idealised gypsy encampment, it proved a very popular attraction.

Half a dozen girls and as many young men wore what they fondly hoped looked enough like gypsy costumes to justify the name, but at any rate, they were most becoming and beautiful to look upon.

Patty was the gypsy queen, and looked like that personage as represented in comic opera. Seated on a queerly constructed, and somewhat wobbly throne, she told fortunes to those who desired to know what the future held for them.

Apparently there was great curiosity in this respect, for Patty was kept steadily busy from the time she arrived at her place.

Other gypsies sold gaily coloured beads, amulets and charms, and others stirred a queer-looking brew in a gypsy kettle over a real fire, and sold cupfuls of it to those who wished in this way to tempt fate still further.

It was a perfect day, and the afternoon was progressing most satisfactorily.

Bertha was one of the Swiss peasants, and by dint of much hurrying, she and Patty had been able to get ready in time to join the parade of costumed attendants as they marched to their various stations.

Though had it not been for Mr. Phelps and his swift motor-car, they could scarcely have reached the fair grounds in time.

Elise was one of the Italian flower girls, and Kenneth also wore the garb of Italy.

Mr. Hepworth and Roger Farrington were ferocious-looking Indians, and brandished their tomahawks and tossed their feathered heads in fearsome fashion.

Dick Phelps was a cowboy, and his Herculean frame well suited the picturesque Western dress. And Charlie Roland flattered himself that arrayed as a Chinaman he was too funny for anything.

Although Patty had become better acquainted with young Mr. Roland, she had not learned to like him. His conceited ways and pompous manner seemed to her silly and artificial beside the frank comradeship of her other friends.

He came early to have his fortune told by the gypsy queen, and though, of course, Patty was in no way responsible for the way in which the cards fell, and though she told the fortunes strictly according to the instructions in a printed book, which she had learned by heart, she was not especially sorry when Mr. Roland's fortune proved to be not altogether a desirable one.

But the young man was in nowise disconcerted.

"It doesn't matter," he said, cheerfully, "I've had my fortune told lots of times, and things always happen just contrary to what is predicted. But I say, Miss Romany, can't you leave your post for a few minutes and go with me to the Japanese tea place, for a cup of their refreshing beverage?"

"Thank you ever so much," said Patty, "but I really can't leave here. There's a whole string of people waiting for their fortunes, and I must stand by my post. Perhaps I can go later," she added, for though she did not care for Charlie Roland's attentions, she was too good-natured to wish to hurt his feelings.

"I consider that a promise," said Mr. Roland, as he moved away to make place for the next seeker after knowledge.

Patty turned to her work, and thought no more of Charlie Roland and his undesirable invitation.

Soon Kenneth came to have his fortune told, for it had been arranged that each booth should have plenty of attendants, in order that they might take turns in leaving their posts and promenading about the grounds. This was

supposed to advertise their own particular nation, besides giving all a chance to see the sights.

Kenneth's fortune proved to be a bright and happy one, but he was not unduly elated over it, for his faith in such things was not implicit.

"Thank you," he said gravely, as Patty finished telling of the glories which would attend his future career. "I don't think there's anything omitted from that string of good luck, unless it's being President, and I'm not quite sure I want to be that."

"Yes, you do," said Patty, "every good American ought to want that, if only as a matter of patriotism."

"Well, I'm patriotic enough," said Kenneth, "and I'll want it if you want me to want it. And now, Patty, you've worked here long enough for the present. Let somebody else take your place, and you come with me for a walk about the grounds. I'll take you to the pergola, and we'll buy some flowers from Elise."

"I'd love to go, Ken, but truly I ought to stay here a while longer. Lots of people want their fortune told, and nobody can do it but me, because I learnt all that lingo out of a book. No, I can't go now. Run along,--I'm busy."

Patty spoke more shortly than she meant to, for the very reason that she wanted to go with Kenneth, but she felt it her duty to remain at her post.

Kenneth appreciated the principle of the thing, but he thought that Patty might have been a little kinder about it. His own temper was a little stirred by the incident, and rising quickly, he said, "All right, stay here, then!" And turning on his heel, he sauntered carelessly away.

Patty looked after him, thinking what a handsome boy he was, and how well his Italian suit became him. Kenneth's skin was naturally rather dark, and his black eyes and hair and heavy eyebrows were somewhat of the Italian type. His white linen blouse was slightly turned in at the throat and he wore a crimson silk tie, and sash to match, knotted at one side. A broad-brimmed hat of soft grey felt sat jauntily on his head, and as he swung himself down the path, Patty thought she had never seen him look so well.

Soon after this, Charlie Roland came back again.

"I've brought someone to help you out," he said, as he introduced a young girl who accompanied him. "This is Miss Leslie and she knows fortune telling from the ground up. Give her a red sash, and a bandana handkerchief to tie around her head, and let her take your place, if only for a short time; and you come with me to buy some flowers. Do you know, your costume really calls for some scarlet blossoms in your hair, and over in the pergola they have some red geraniums that are simply great. Come on, let's get some."

Patty did want some red flowers, and had meant to have some, but she dressed in such a hurry that there was no time to find any. Moreover, she had never known Charlie Roland to appear to such good advantage. He seemed to have dropped his pompous manner with his civilised dress, and in his comical Chinaman's costume, he seemed far more attractive than in his own everyday dress. And since he had provided her with a substitute, Patty saw no reason for refusing his invitation.

So together they left the Romany Rest, and walked about the Fair, chatting with people here and there, until they reached the pergola.

Elise was delighted to see them, and while the Italian girls besought Mr. Roland to buy their flowers, the Italian young men clustered around Patty, and with merry laugh and jest, presented her with sundry floral offerings.

There was one exception, however; Kenneth stood aloof. For the first time in his life, he felt that Patty had intentionally slighted him. He had asked her to come to the pergola for flowers, and she had refused. Then a few minutes later she had accepted a similar invitation from that stupid young Roland. Kenneth was obliged to admit to himself that young Roland did not look stupid just at present, for he had some talent as a comedian, and was acting the part of a funny Chinaman with success. But that didn't make any difference to Kenneth, and he looked reproachfully at Patty, as she accepted the flowers and gay compliments from her attendant cavalier.

Patty had intended to explain to Kenneth why it had been possible for her to leave the gypsy camp in charge of another fortune teller, but when she saw the boy's moody expression and sulky attitude her sense of humour was touched, and she giggled to herself at the idea of Kenneth being angry at such a trifle.

She thought it distinctly silly of him, and being in a mischievous mood, she concluded he ought to be punished for such foolishness. So instead of smiling at him, she gave him only a careless glance, and then devoted her attention to the others.

Patty was a general favourite, and her happy, sunny ways made friends for her wherever she went. She was therefore surrounded by a crowd of merry young people, some of whom had just been introduced to her, and others whom she had known longer; and as she laughed and chatted with them, Kenneth began to think that he was acting rather

foolishly, and longed to join the group around the gypsy queen.

But the boy was both sensitive and proud, and he could not quite bring himself to overlook what he considered an intentional unkindness on the part of Patty.

So, wandering away from the pergola, he visited other booths, and chatted with other groups, determined to ignore Patty and her perversities.

Patty, not being an obtuse young person, saw through all this, and chose to be amused by it.

"Dear old Ken," she thought to herself, "what a goose he is! I'll get Nan to ask him to have supper with us all in the English Dairy, and then I expect he'll thaw out that frozen manner of his."

Feeling that she ought to return to her own post, Patty told her Chinaman so, and together they went back to the Romany Rest; but as Patty was about to take her place again at the fortune teller's table, Mr. Phelps came along and desired her to go with him, and have her photograph taken. At first Patty demurred, though she greatly wanted to go, but Miss Leslie said she was not at all tired of fortune telling, and would gladly continue to substitute for Patty a while longer.

"Come on, then," said Dick Phelps, "there's no reason why you shouldn't, since Miss Leslie is kind enough to fill your place."

Patty still hesitated, for she thought that Kenneth would be still more offended if he saw her walking around with Mr. Phelps, after having told him that she could not leave the gypsy camp.

But Dick Phelps was of an imperious nature. He was accustomed to having his own way, and was impatient at Patty's hesitation.

"Come on," he said. "March!" And taking her by the arm, he led her swiftly down the path toward the photograph booth.

As he strode along, cowboy fashion, Patty said, meekly, "Let go of my arm, please, Mr. Phelps. I think you've broken two bones already! And *don't* walk so fast. I'm all out of breath!"

"Forgive me," said Dick Phelps, suddenly checking his speed, and smiling down at the girl beside him, "you see this cowboy rig makes me feel as if I were back on the plains again, and I can't seem to adjust myself to civilised conditions."

Mr. Phelps looked very splendid as a cowboy, and Patty listened with interest, as he told her of an exciting episode which had occurred during his ranch life, in a distant western territory.

So engrossed did they become in this conversation that the photographs were forgotten for the moment, and they strolled along past the various booths, unheeding the numerous invitations to enter.

Of course Kenneth saw them, and from a trifling offence, Patty's conduct seemed to him to have grown into a purposed rudeness.

As they passed him, Patty smiled pleasantly, and paused, saying, "We're all going to have supper in the Dairy, and of course you'll be with us, Ken?"

"Of course I won't!" said Kenneth, and deliberately turning on his heel, he walked the other way.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE END OF THE SUMMER

"Whew!" said Dick Phelps, in his straightforward way, "he's mad at you, isn't he?"

"Yes," said Patty, "and it's so silly! All about nothing at all. I wish you'd take me back to him, Mr. Phelps, and leave us alone, and I think I can straighten matters out in two minutes."

"Indeed, I'll do nothing of the sort," returned Mr. Phelps, in his masterful way; "you promised to go to the photograph place, and that's where we're going. I don't propose to give you up to any young man we chance to meet!"

Patty laughed, and they went on. At the photograph booth they found many of the gaily dressed young people, anxious to have pictures of themselves in their pretty costumes. Patty and Mr. Phelps had to wait their turn, but finally succeeded in getting a number of pictures. Patty had some taken alone, and some in which she was one of a gay group. Some were successful portraits, and others were not, but all were provocative of much laughter and fun. By a rapid process of development, the photographers were enabled to furnish the completed pictures in less than a half hour after the cameras did their work, and as a consequence, this booth was exceedingly popular and promised handsome returns for the benefit of charity.

Mr. Phelps and Patty loitered about, waiting for their pictures, when Patty caught sight of Nan, and running to her she said, "For goodness' sake, Nan, do help me out! Kenneth's as mad as hops, and all about nothing! Now I want you to ask him to come to supper with our crowd, and you must *make* him come!"

"I can't make him come, if he doesn't want to. You've been teasing him, Patty, and you must get out of your own scrapes."

"Ah, Nan, dear," coaxed Patty, "do be good, and truly, if you'll just persuade him to come to supper with us, I'll do the rest."

"I'll try," said Nan as she walked away, "but I won't promise that I'll succeed."

She did succeed, however, and some time later Mr. Fairfield gathered the large party whom he had invited to supper, in the English Dairy.

The supper was to be a fine one, far exceeding the bounds of Dairy fare, and Mr. Fairfield had reserved a long table for his guests.

As they trooped in, laughing and talking, and seated themselves for the feast, Patty was relieved to see that Kenneth was among them, after all.

He took a seat between Elise and Helen Barlow, and knowing Bumble's good nature, Patty went directly to her, and asked her if she wouldn't move, as she wanted to sit there herself.

"Of course I will," said Bumble, and jumping up, she ran around to the other side of the table.

Then Patty deliberately sat down by Kenneth, who couldn't very well get up and walk away, himself, though he looked at her with no expression of welcome in his glance.

Without a word, Patty leaned over and selected from a dish of olives on the table one which had a stem to it.

With a tiny bit of ribbon she tied the olive to a little green branch she had brought in with her, and then demurely held the token toward Kenneth.

For a moment the boy looked rather blank, and then realising that Patty was offering him the olive branch of peace, and that she had gone to some trouble to do this, and that moreover she had done it rather cleverly, the boy's face broke into a smile, and he turned toward Patty.

"Thank you," he said, as he took the little spray, and attached it to the rolling collar of his blouse. "I accept it, with its full meaning."

"You're such a goose, Kenneth!" said Patty, her eyes dancing with laughter. "There was nothing to get huffy about."

"Well," said Kenneth, feeling his grounds for complaint slipping away from him, "you pranced off with that Roland chap, after you had just told me you couldn't leave your gypsy queen business."

"I know it," said Patty, "but Ken, he brought a nice lady to fill my place, and besides, he asked me to go to get red flowers and I really wanted red flowers."

"I asked you to go for flowers too," said Kenneth, not yet entirely mollified.

"Yes," said Patty, "but you didn't say *red* flowers. How did I know but that you'd buy pink or blue ones, and so spoil my whole gypsy costume?"

Kenneth had to laugh in spite of himself, at this bit of audacity. "And then right afterwards you went off again with Dick Phelps," he continued.

"Kenneth," said Patty, looking at him with an expression of mock terror, "I couldn't help myself that time! Honest, I couldn't. Mr. Phelps is a fearful tyrant. He's an ogre, and when he commanded me to go, I just had to go! He's a man that makes you do a thing, whether you want to or not. Why, Kenneth, he just marched me off!"

"All right," said Kenneth, "I'll take a leaf out of his book. After this, when I want you to go anywhere, *I'll* just march you off."

"You can try," said Patty, saucily, "but I'm not sure you can do it. It takes a certain type of man to do that sort of thing successfully, and I don't know anybody but Dick Phelps who's just that kind."

But peace was restored, for Kenneth realised that Patty's explanation was a fair one, and that he had been foolishly quick to take offence.

After supper they all went to the grand stand to see the parade of fancy costumes.

These were quite separate from the booth attendants, and a prize had been offered for the cleverest conceit, most successfully carried out.

When at last the grand march took place, it showed a wonderful array of thoroughly ingenious costumes.

Of course there were many clowns, historical characters, fairies, and queer nondescript creatures, but there were also many characters which were unique and noteworthy.

Mr. Hepworth, who was in the parade, had chosen to represent the full moon.

How he did it, no one quite knew; but all that was visible was an enormous sphere, of translucent brightness and a luminous yellow color.

Mr. Fairfield declared that the medium must be phosphorus, but all agreed that it was a wonderful achievement, and many thought it would surely take the prize.

The sphere was hollow, and made of a light framework, and Mr. Hepworth walked inside of it, really carrying it along with him. It so nearly touched the ground that his feet were scarcely observable, and the great six foot globe made a decided sensation, as it moved slowly along.

Patty remembered that Roger had declared he was going to take the prize, and as she had knowledge of the boy's ability along these lines, she felt by no means sure that it wouldn't eclipse Mr. Hepworth's shining orb.

And sure enough, when Roger appeared, it was in the character of a Christmas tree!

The clever youth had selected just the right kind of a tree, and cutting away enough twigs and branches near the trunk on one side, he had made a space in which he could thrust the whole of his tall slender self.

To protect his face and hands from the scratchy foliage, and also to render himself inconspicuous, he wore a tight-fitting robe of dark brown muslin, which concealed even his face and arms, though eyeholes allowed him to see where he was going.

In a word, the boy himself almost constituted the trunk of the tree, and by walking slowly, it looked as if the tree itself was moving along without assistance.

The tree was gaily hung with real Christmas trinkets and decorations, and lighted with candles.

The idea was wonderfully clever, and though it had been hard work to arrange the boughs to conceal him entirely, Roger had accomplished it, and the gay decorations hid all defects.

The judges awarded the prize to Roger, who calmly remarked to Patty, afterward, "I told you I'd get it, didn't I?"

"Yes," said Patty, "and so then of course I knew you would."

It was a rather tired party that went back to the Fairfields' house at the close of the evening.

Nan and Mr. Fairfield issued strict orders that everybody must go to bed at once, as there were two more strenuous days ahead, and they needed all the rest they could get.

But next morning they reappeared, quite ready for fresh exertions, and Patty declared that for her part she'd like to be a gypsy all the year round.

"Well I never want to be a Christmas tree again," said Roger, "in spite of my precautions, I'm all scratched up!"

"Never mind," said his sister consolingly, "you took the prize, and that's glory enough to make up for lots of scratches."

The second and third days of the Fair were much like the first, except that the crowds of visitors continually increased.

The fame of the entertainment spread rapidly, and people came, even from distant parts of Long Island, to attend the festivities.

But at last it was all over, and the Fairfield verandah was crowded with young people, apparently of all nations, who were congratulating each other on the wonderful success.

"Of course," said Patty, "the greatest thing was that we had such perfect weather. If it had rained, the whole thing would have been spoiled."

"But it didn't rain," said Nan, "and everything went off all right, and they must have made bushels of money."

"Well, it was lovely," said Patty with a little sigh, "and I enjoyed every minute of it, but I don't want to engage in another one right away. I think I shall go to bed and sleep for a week!"

"I wish I were a bear," said Kenneth, "they can go to sleep and sleep all winter."

"You'd make a good bear," said Patty, in an aside to him, "because you can be so cross."

But the merry smile that accompanied her words robbed them of any unpleasant intent, and Kenneth smiled back in sympathy.

"Just to think," said Nan, "a week from to-day we'll all be back in the city, and our lovely summer vacation a thing of the past."

"It has been a beautiful summer," said Patty, her thoughts flying backward over the past season. "I've never had such a happy summer in my life. It's been just one round of pleasure after another. Everybody has been so good to me and the whole world seems to have connived to help me have a good time."

"In so far as I'm part of the whole world, allow me to express my willingness to keep right on conniving," said big Dick Phelps, in his funny way.

"Me, too," said Kenneth, in his hearty, boyish voice.

Mr. Hepworth said nothing, but he smiled at Patty from where he sat at the other end of the long verandah.