Just Patty, by Jean Webster

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[Illustration: "I want a new room-mate"]

Just Patty

By Jean Webster

Author of When Patty Went to College Daddy Long Legs, Etc.

Illustrated by C. M. Relyea

[Illustration]

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Just Patty

I

Reform

"It's a shame!" said Priscilla.

"It's an outrage!" said Conny.

"It's an insult!" said Patty.

"To separate us now after we've been together three years--"

"And it isn't as though we were *awfully* bad last year. Lots of girls had more demerits."

"Only our badness was sort of conspicuous," Patty admitted.

"But we were *very* good the last three weeks," reminded Conny.

"And you should see my new room-mate!" wailed Priscilla.

"She can't be any worse than Irene McCullough."

"She is!--Her father's a missionary, and she was brought up in China. Her name is Keren-happuch Hersey, after Job's youngest daughter. And she doesn't think it's funny!"

"Irene," said Conny gloomily, "gained twenty pounds through the summer. She weighs--"

"But you should see mine!" cried Patty, in exasperation. "Her name is Mae Mertelle Van Arsdale."

"Keren studies every second; and expects me to walk on tiptoe so she can concentrate."

"You should hear Mae Mertelle talk! She said her father was a financier, and wanted to know what mine was. I told her he was a reform judge, and that he spent his time putting financiers in prison. She says I'm an impertinent child," Patty grinned feebly.

"How old is she?"

"She's nineteen, and has been proposed to twice."

"Mercy! Whatever made her choose St. Ursula's?"

"Her father and mother ran away and got married when they were nineteen, and they're afraid she inherited the tendency. So they picked out a good, strict, church school. Mae doesn't know how she's ever going to fix her hair without a maid. She's awfully superstitious about moonstones. She never wears anything but silk stockings and she can't stand hash. I'll have to teach her how to make a bed. She always crosses on the White Star Line."

Patty scattered these details at random. The others listened sympathetically, and added a few of their own troubles.

"Irene weighs a hundred and fifty-nine pounds and six ounces, not counting her clothes," said Conny. "She brought two trunks *loaded* with candy. She has it hidden all over the room. The last sound I hear at night, is Irene crunching chocolates--and the first sound in the morning. She never says anything; she simply chews. It's like rooming with a cow. And I have a sweet collection of neighbors! Kid McCoy's across the hall, and she makes more noise than half-a-dozen cowboys. There's a new French girl next door--you know, the pretty little one with the two black braids."

"She looks rather desirable," said Patty.

"She might be if she could talk, but she only knows about fifty words. Harriet Gladden's rooming with her, as limp and mournful as an oyster, and Evalina Smith's at the end of the corridor. You know what a *perfect* idiot Evalina is."

"Oh, it's beastly!" they agreed.

"Lordy's to blame," said Conny. "The Dowager never would have separated us if she hadn't interfered."

"And I've got her!" wailed Patty. "You two have Mam'selle and

Waddams, and they're nice, sweet, unsuspicious lambs; but the girls in the East Wing simply can't sneeze but Lordy--"

"Sh!" Conny warned. "Here she comes."

The Latin teacher, in passing, paused on the threshold. Conny disentangled herself from the mixture of clothes and books and sofa cushions that littered the bed, and politely rose to her feet. Patty slid down from the white iron foot-rail, and Priscilla descended from the top of the trunk.

"Ladies don't perch about on the furniture."

"No, Miss Lord," they murmured in unison, gazing back from three pairs of wide, uplifted eyes. They knew, from gleeful past experience, that nothing so annoyed her as smiling acquiescence.

Miss Lord's eyes critically studied the room. Patty was still in traveling dress.

"Put on your uniform, Patty, and finish unpacking. The trunks go down to-morrow morning."

"Yes, Miss Lord."

"Priscilla and Constance, why aren't you out of doors with the other girls, enjoying this beautiful autumn weather?"

"But we haven't seen Patty for such a long time, and now that we are separated--" commenced Conny, with a pathetic droop of her mouth.

"I trust that your lessons will benefit by the change. You, Patty and Priscilla, are going to college, and should realize the necessity of being prepared. Upon the thorough foundation that you lay here depends your success for the next four years--for your whole lives, one might say. Patty is weak in mathematics and Priscilla in Latin. Constance *could* improve her French. Let us see what you can do when you really try."

She divided a curt nod between the three and withdrew.

"We are happy in our work and we dearly love our teachers," chanted Patty, with ironical emphasis, as she rummaged out a blue skirt and middy blouse with "St. U." in gold upon the sleeve.

While she was dressing, Priscilla and Conny set about transferring the contents of her trunk to her bureau, in whatever order the articles presented themselves--but with a carefully folded top layer. The overworked young teacher, who performed the ungrateful task of inspecting sixty-four bureaus and sixty-four closets every Saturday morning, was happily of an unsuspicious nature. She did not penetrate below the crust.

"Lordy needn't make such a fuss over my standing," said Priscilla, frowning over an armful of clothes. "I passed everything except Latin."

"Take care, Pris! You're walking on my new dancing dress," cried Patty, as her head emerged from the neck of the blouse.

Priscilla automatically stepped off a mass of blue chiffon, and resumed her plaint.

"If they think sticking me in with Job's youngest daughter is going to improve my prose composition--"

"I simply *can't* study till they take Irene McCullough out of my room," Conny echoed. "She's just like a lump of sticky dough."

"Wait till you get acquainted with Mae Mertelle!" Patty sat on the floor in the midst of the chaos, and gazed up at the other two with wide, solemn eyes. "She brought five evening gowns cut low, and all her shoes have French heels. And she *laces*--my dears! She just holds in her breath and pulls. But that isn't the worst." She lowered her voice to a confidential whisper. "She's got some red stuff in a bottle. She says it's for her finger nails, but I *saw* her putting it on her face."

"Oh!--not really?" in a horrified whisper from Conny and Priscilla.

Patty shut her lips and nodded.

"Isn't it dreadful?"

"Awful!" Conny shuddered.

"I say, let's mutiny!" cried Priscilla. "Let's *make* the Dowager give us back our old rooms in Paradise Alley."

"But how?" inquired Patty, two parallel wrinkles appearing on her forehead.

"Tell her that unless she does, we won't stay."

"That would be sensible!" Patty jeered. "She'd ring the bell and order Martin to hitch up the hearse and drive us to the station for the six-thirty train. I should think you'd know by this time that you can't bluff the Dowager."

"There's no use threatening," Conny agreed. "We must appeal to her feeling of--of--"

"Affection," said Patty.

Conny stretched out a hand and brought her up standing.

"Come on, Patty, you're good at talking. We'll go down now while our courage is up.--Are your hands clean?"

The three staunchly approached the door of Mrs. Trent's private study.

"I'll use diplomacy," Patty whispered, as she turned the knob in response to the summons from within. "You people nod your heads at everything I say."

Patty did use all the diplomacy at her command. Having dwelt touchingly upon their long friendship, and their sorrow at being separated, she passed lightly to the matter of their new room-mates.

"They are doubtless very nice girls," she ended politely, "only, you see, Mrs. Trent, they don't match us; and it is extremely hard to concentrate

one's mind upon lessons, unless one has a congenial room-mate."

Patty's steady, serious gaze suggested that lessons were the end of her existence. A brief smile flitted over the Dowager's face, but the next instant she was grave again.

"It is very necessary that we study this year," Patty added. "Priscilla and I are going to college, and we realize the necessity of being prepared. Upon the thorough foundation that we lay here, depends our success for the next four years--for our whole lives you might say."

Conny jogged her elbow warningly. It was too patently a crib from Miss Lord.

"And besides," Patty added hastily, "all my things are blue, and Mae has a purple screen and a yellow sofa cushion."

"That is awkward," the Dowager admitted.

"We are used to living in Paradise Al--I mean, the West Wing--and we shall--er--miss the sunsets."

The Dowager allowed an anxious silence to follow, while she thoughtfully tapped the desk with her lorgnette. The three studied her face with speculative eyes. It was a mask they could not penetrate.

"The present arrangement is more or less temporary," she commenced in equable tones. "I may find it expedient to make some changes, and I may not. We have an unusual number of new girls this year; and instead of putting them together, it has seemed wisest to mix them with the old girls. You three have been with us a long time. You know the traditions of the school. Therefore--" The Dowager smiled, a smile partially tinged with amusement--"I am sending you as missionaries among the newcomers. I wish you to make your influence felt."

Patty straightened her back and stared.

"Our influence?"

"Your new room-mate," Mrs. Trent continued imperturbably, "is too grown-up for her years. She has lived in fashionable hotels, and under such conditions, it is inevitable that a girl should become somewhat affected. See if you cannot arouse in Mae an interest in girlish sports.

"And you, Constance, are rooming with Irene McCullough. She is, as you know, an only child, and I fear has been a trifle spoiled. It would please me if you could waken her to a higher regard for the spiritual side of life, and less care for material things."

"I--I'll try," Conny stammered, dazed at so suddenly finding herself cast in the unfamiliar rôle of moral reformer.

"And you have next to you the little French girl, Aurelie Deraismes. I should be pleased, Constance, if you would assume an oversight of her school career. She can help you to a more idiomatic knowledge of French--and you can do the same for her in English.

"You, Priscilla, are rooming with--" She adjusted her lorgnette and consulted a large chart.--"Ah, yes, Keren Hersey, a very unusual girl. You two will find many subjects of mutual interest. The daughter of a naval officer should have much in common with the daughter of a missionary. Keren bids fair to become an earnest student--almost, if such a thing were possible, too earnest. She has never had any girl companions, and knows nothing of the give and take of school life. She can teach you, Priscilla, to be more studious, and you can teach her to be more, shall I say, flexible?"

"Yes, Mrs. Trent," Priscilla murmured.

"And so," the Dowager finished, "I am sending you out in my place, as moral reformers. I want the older girls to set an example to the newcomers. I wish to have the real government of the school a strong, healthy Public Opinion. You three exert a great deal of influence. See what you can do in the directions I have indicated--and in others that may occur to you as you mix with your companions. I have watched you carefully for three years, and in your fundamental good sense, I have the greatest confidence."

She nodded dismissal, and the three found themselves in the hall again. They looked at one another for a moment of blank silence.

"Moral reformers!" Conny gasped.

"I see through the Dowager," said Patty, "She thinks she's found a new method of managing us."

"But I don't see that we're getting back to Paradise Alley," Priscilla complained.

Patty's eyes suddenly brightened. She seized them each by an elbow and shoved them into the empty schoolroom.

"We'll do it!"

"Do what?" asked Conny.

"Pitch right in and reform the school. If we just keep at it--steady--you'll see! We'll be back in Paradise Alley at the end of two weeks."

"Um," said Priscilla, thoughtfully. "I believe we might."

"We'll commence with Irene," said Conny, her mind eagerly jumping to details, "and make her lose that twenty pounds. That's what the Dowager meant when she said she wanted her less material."

"We'll have her thin in no time," Patty nodded energetically. "And we'll give Mae Mertelle a dose of bubbling girlishness."

"And Keren," interposed Priscilla, "we'll teach her to become frivolous and neglect her lessons."

"But we won't just confine ourselves to those three," said Conny. "The Dowager said to make our influence felt over the whole school."

"Oh, yes!" Patty agreed, rising to enthusiasm as she called the school roll. "Kid McCoy uses too much slang. We'll teach her manners.

Rosalie doesn't like to study. We'll pour her *full* of algebra and Latin. Harriet Gladden's a jelly fish, Mary Deskam's an awful little liar, Evalina Smith's a silly goose, Nancy Lee's a telltale--"

"When you stop to think about it, there's something the matter with everybody," said Conny.

"Except us," amended Priscilla.

"Y--yes," Patty agreed in thoughtful retrospection, "I can't think of a thing the matter with us--I don't wonder they chose us to head the reform!"

Conny slid to her feet, a bundle of energy.

"Come on! We'll join our little playmates and begin the good work--Hooray for the great Reform Party!"

They scrambled out of the open window, in a fashion foreign to the dictates of Thursday evening manner class. Crowds of girls in blue middy blouses were gathered in groups about the recreation ground. The three paused to reconnoiter.

"There's Irene, still chewing." Conny nodded toward a comfortable bench set in the shade by the tennis courts.

"Let's have a circus," Patty proposed. "We'll make Irene and Mae Mertelle roll hoops around the oval. That will kill 'em both with one stone--Irene will get thin, and Mae Mertelle girlish."

Hoop-rolling was a speciality of St. Ursula's. The gymnasium instructor believed in teaching girls to run. Eleven times around the oval constituted a mile, and a mile of hoop-rolling freed one for the day from dumb-bells and Indian clubs. The three dived into the cellar, and returned with hoops as tall as themselves. Patty assumed command of the campaign and issued her orders.

"Conny, you take a walk with Keren and shock her as much as possible;

we must break her of being precise. And Pris, you take charge of Mae Mertelle. Don't let her put on any grown-up airs. If she tells you she's been proposed to twice, tell her you've been proposed to so many times that you've lost count. Keep her snubbed all the time. I'll be elephant trainer and start Irene running; she'll be a graceful gazelle by the time I finish."

They parted on their several missions. St. Ursula's peace had ended. She was in the throes of reform.

* * * * *

On Friday evening two weeks later, an unofficial faculty meeting was convened in the Dowager's study. "Lights-out" had rung five minutes before, and three harried teachers, relieved of duty for nine blessed hours while their little charges slept, were discussing their troubles with their chief.

"But just what have they done?" inquired Mrs. Trent, in tones of judicial calm, as she vainly tried to stop the flood of interjections.

"It is difficult to put one's finger on the precise facts," Miss Wadsworth quavered. "They have not broken any rules so far as I can discover, but they have--er--created an atmosphere--"

"Every girl in my corridor," said Miss Lord, with compressed lips, "has come to me separately, and begged to have Patty moved back to the West Wing with Constance and Priscilla."

"Patty! *Mon Dieu!*" Mademoiselle rolled a pair of speaking eyes to heaven. "The things that child thinks of! She is one little imp."

"You remember," the Dowager addressed Miss Lord, "I said when you suggested separating them, that it was a very doubtful experiment. Together, they exhaust their effervescence on each other; separated--"

"They exhaust the whole school!" cried Miss Wadsworth, on the verge of tears. "Of course they don't mean it, but their unfortunate

dispositions--"

"Don't mean it!" Miss Lord's eyes snapped. "Their heads are together planning fresh escapades every moment they are not in class."

"But what have they done?" persisted Mrs. Trent.

Miss Wadsworth hesitated a moment in an endeavor to choose examples from the wealth of material that presented itself.

"I found Priscilla deliberately stirring up the contents of Keren's bureau drawers with a shinny stick, and when I asked what she was doing, she replied without the least embarrassment, that she was trying to teach Keren to be less exact; that Mrs. Trent had asked her to do it."

"Um," mused the Dowager, "that was not my precise request, but no matter."

"But the thing that has really troubled me the most," Miss Wadsworth spoke diffidently, "is a matter almost a blasphemy. Keren has a very religious turn of mind, but an unfortunate habit of saying her prayers out loud. One night, after a peculiarly trying day, she prayed that Priscilla might be forgiven for being so aggravating. Whereupon Priscilla knelt before her bed, and prayed that Keren might become less self-righteous and stubborn, and more ready to join in the sports of her playmates with generosity and openness of spirit. They carried on--well, really, one might almost call it a praying match."

"Shocking!" cried Miss Lord.

"And little Aurelie Deraismes--they have been drilling the child in--er--idiomatic English. The phrase that I overheard her repeating, seemed scarcely the expression that a lady would use."

"What was it?" inquired the Dowager, with a slightly expectant note.

"I'll be *gum-swizzled*!"

Miss Wadsworth colored a deep pink. It was foreign to her nature even

to repeat so doubtful an expression.

The Dowager's lips twitched. It was a fact, deplored by her assistants, that her sense of humor frequently ran away with her sense of justice. A very naughty little girl, if she managed to be funny, might hope to escape; whereas an equally naughty little girl, who was not funny, paid the full penalty of her crime. Fortunately, however, the school at large had not discovered this vulnerable spot in the Dowager's armor.

"Their influence," it was Miss Lord who spoke, "is demoralizing the school. Mae Van Arsdale says that she will go home if she has to room any longer with Patty Wyatt. I do not know what the trouble is, but--"

"I know it!" said Mademoiselle. "The whole school laughs. It is touching the question of a *sweetch*."

"Of what?" The Dowager cocked her head. Mademoiselle's English was at times difficult. She mixed her languages impartially.

"A sweetch--some hair--to make pompadour. Last week when they have tableaux, Patty has borrowed it and has dyed it with blueing to make a beard for Bluebeard. But being yellow to start, it has become green, and the color will not wash out. The sweetch is ruin--entirely ruin--and Patty is desolate. She has apologize. She thought it would wash, but since it will not wash, she has suggest to Mae that she color her own hair to match the sweetch, and Mae lose her temper and call names. Then Patty has pretend to cry, and she put the green hair on Mae's bed with a wreath of flowers around, and she hang a stocking on the door for crape, and invite the girls to come to the funeral, and everybody laugh at Mae."

"It's just as well," said the Dowager, unmoved. "I do not wish to favor the wearing of false hair."

"It's the principle of the thing," said Miss Lord.

"And that poor Irene McCullough," Mademoiselle continued the tale, "she dissolves herself in tears. Those three insist that she make herself

thin, and she has no wish to become thin."

"They take away her butter-ball," corroborated Miss Wadsworth, "before she comes to the table; they make her go without dessert, and they do not allow her to eat sugar on her oatmeal. They keep her exercising every moment, and when she complains to me, they punish her."

"I should think," the Dowager spoke with a touch of sarcasm, "that Irene were big enough to take care of herself."

"She has three against her," reminded Miss Lord.

"I called Patty to my room," said Miss Wadsworth, "and demanded an explanation. She told me that Mrs. Trent thought that Irene was too fat, and wished them to reduce her twenty pounds! Patty said that it was hard work, they were getting thin themselves, but they realized that they were seniors and must exert an influence over the school. I really think she was sincere. She talked very sweetly about moral responsibility, and the necessity of the older girls setting an example."

"It is her impudence," said Miss Lord, "that is so exasperating."

"That's--just Patty!" the Dowager laughed. "I must confess that I find all three of them amusing. It's good, healthy mischief and I wish there were more of it. They don't bribe the maids to mail letters, or smuggle in candy, or flirt with the soda-water clerk. They at least can be trusted."

"Trusted!" gasped Miss Lord.

"To break every minor rule with cheerful unconcern," nodded the Dowager, "but never to do the slightest thing dishonorable. They have kind hearts and the girls all love them--"

A knock sounded on the door with startling suddenness, and before anyone could reply, the door burst open and Keren-happuch appeared on the threshold. She was clutching with one hand the folds of a

brilliant Japanese kimono, the other she reserved for gestures. The kimono was sprinkled with fire-eating dragons as large as cats; and to the astonished spectators, Keren's flushed face and disheveled hair seemed to carry out the decorative scheme. The Dowager's private study was a sacred spot, reserved for interviews of formality; never had a pupil presented herself in such unceremonious garb.

"Keren!" cried Miss Wadsworth. "What has happened?"

"I want a new room-mate! I can't stand Priscilla any longer. She's been having a birthday party in my room--"

"A birthday party?" Mrs. Trent turned questioningly to Miss Wadsworth.

She nodded unhappily.

"Yesterday was Priscilla's birthday, and she received a box from her aunt. This being Friday night, I gave her permission--"

"Certainly." The Dowager turned to the tragic figure in the center of the floor. "It is Priscilla's room as much as yours and--"

Keren plunged into a sea of words. The four leaned forward in a strained endeavor to pluck some sense from the torrent.

"They used my bed for a table because it wasn't against the wall, and Patty tipped a pot of chocolate over in the middle of it. She said it was an accident--but she did it on purpose--I know she did! And because I objected, Priscilla said it wasn't polite to notice when a guest spilled anything, and she tipped a glass of current jelly on my pillow, to make Patty feel comfortable. That was the polite thing for a hostess to do, she said; they learned it last year in manner class. And the chocolate soaked right through, and Conny Wilder said it was fortunate I was thin, because I could sleep in a curve around it; if it had happened to Irene McCullough, she would have had to sleep in it, because she's so big she takes up the whole bed. And Priscilla said I could be thankful to-morrow's Saturday when we get clean sheets; it might have

happened so that I would have had to sleep in that puddle of chocolate a whole week. And then the "Lights-out" rang, and they left me to clean up, and the housekeeper's gone to bed, and I can't get any fresh bed clothes, and I *won't* sleep that way! I'm not used to sleeping in chocolaty sheets. I don't like America and I *hate* girls."

Tears were dripping from Keren's cheeks onto the fire-breathing dragons below. The Dowager, without comment, rose and rang the bell.

"Katie," she said, as the maid on duty appeared at the door, "some fresh sheets for Miss Keren, please, and remake her bed. That will do for to-night, Keren. Get to sleep as quickly as possible, and don't talk. You mustn't disturb the other girls. We can see about changing room-mates to-morrow."

Katie and the outraged dragons withdrew.

A silence followed, while Miss Wadsworth and Mademoiselle exchanged glances of despair, and Miss Lord buckled on her war armor.

"You see!" she said, with a suggestion of triumph, "when they get to the point of persecuting a poor little--"

"In my experience of school life," said Mrs. Trent judicially, "it is a girl's own fault when she is persecuted. Their methods are crude, but to the point. Keren is a hopeless little prig--"

"But at least you can't allow her to suffer--"

"Oh, no, I shall do what I can toward peace. To-morrow morning, Keren can move in with Irene McCullough, and Patty and Conny and Priscilla go back to their old rooms in the West Wing. You, Mademoiselle, are somewhat inured--"

"I do not mind them together. They are just--what you say?--exhilarating. It is when they are spread out that it is difficult."

"You mean," Miss Lord stared--"that you are going to *reward* their disgraceful conduct? It is exactly what they have been working for."

"You must acknowledge," smiled the Dowager, "that they have worked hard. Perseverance deserves success."

* * * * *

The next morning, Patty and Conny and Priscilla, their arms running over with dresses and hats and sofa cushions, gaily two-stepped down the length of "Paradise Alley" while a relieved school assisted at the flitting. As they caught sight of Miss Lord hovering in the offing, they broke into the chorus of a popular school song:

"We like to go to chapel And listen to the preachers, We are happy in our work, And we dearly love our teachers. Daughters of Saint Ur-su-la!"

II

The Romantic History of Cuthbert St. John

"The Dowager" had a very sensible theory that boarding-school girls should be kept little girls, until their school life was over, and they stepped out, fresh and eager and spontaneous, to greet the grown-up world. Saint Ursula's was a cloister, in fact, as in name. The masculine half of the human species was not supposed to count.

Sometimes a new girl was inclined to turn up her nose at the youthful pastimes that contented her companions. But in the end she would be drawn irresistibly into the current. She would learn to jump rope and roll hoops; to participate in paper chases 'cross country; to skate and coast and play hockey on winter afternoons, to enjoy molasses-candy pulls and popcorn around the big open fire on Saturday nights, or impromptu masquerades, when the school raided the trunks in the attic for costumes. After a few weeks' time, the most spoiled little worldling lost her consciousness of calls outside of "bounds," and surrendered to

the spirit of the youthful sisterhood.

But the girls in their teens answer readily to the call of ROMANCE. And occasionally, in the twilight hour between afternoon study and the dressing bell, as they gathered in the window-seat with faces to the western sky, the talk would turn to the future--particularly when Rosalie Patton was of the group. Pretty, dainty, inconsequential little Rosalie was preëminently fashioned for romance; it clung to her golden hair and looked from her eyes. She might be extremely hazy as to the difference between participles and supines, she might hesitate on her definition of a parallelopiped, but when the subject under discussion was one of sentiment, she spoke with conviction. For hers was no mere theoretical knowledge; it was gained by personal experience. Rosalie had been proposed to!

She confided the details to her most intimate friends, and they confided them to their most intimate friends, until finally, the whole school knew the entire romantic history.

Rosalie's preëminence in the field of sentiment was held entirely fitting. Priscilla might excel in basket-ball, Conny Wilder in dramatics, Keren Hersey in geometry and Patty Wyatt in--well, in impudence and audacity--but Rosalie was the recognized authority in matters of the heart; and until Mae Mertelle Van Arsdale came, nobody thought of questioning her position.

Mae Mertelle spent an uncomfortable month shaking into place in the school life. The point in which she was accustomed to excel was *clothes*, but when she and her four trunks arrived, she found to her disgust that clothes were not useful at St. Ursula's. The school uniform reduced all to a dead level in the matter of fashion. There was another field, however, in which she might hope for supremacy. Her own sentimental history was vivid, compared to the colorless lives of most, and she proceeded to assert her claims.

One Saturday evening in October, half-a-dozen girls were gathered in Rosalie's room, on piled-up sofa cushions, with the gas turned low and the light of the hunter's moon streaming through the window. They had

been singing softly in a minor key, but gradually the singing turned to talk. The talk, in accordance with the moonlight and flying clouds, was in a sentimental vein; and it ended, naturally, with Rosalie's Great Experience. Between maidenly hesitations and many promptings she retold the story--the new girls had never heard it, and to the old girls it was always new.

The stage setting had been perfect--a moonlit beach, and lapping waves and rustling pine trees. When Rosalie chanced to omit any detail, her hearers, already familiar with the story, eagerly supplied it.

"And he held your hand all the time he was talking," Priscilla prompted.

"Oh, Rosalie! Did he?" in a shocked chorus from the newcomers.

"Y--yes. He just sort of took hold of it and forgot to let go, and I didn't like to remind him."

"What did he say?"

"He said he couldn't live without me."

"And what did you say?"

"I said I was awfully sorry, but he'd have to."

"And then what happened?"

"Nothing happened," she was obliged to confess. "I s'pose something might have happened if I'd accepted him, but you see, I didn't."

"But you were very young at the time," suggested Evalina Smith. "Are you sure you knew your own mind?"

Rosalie nodded with an air of melancholy regret.

"Yes. I knew I couldn't ever love him, because, he--well, he had an awfully funny nose. It started to point in one direction, and then

changed its mind and pointed in the other."

Her hearers would have preferred that she had omitted this detail; but Rosalie was literal-minded and lacked the story-teller's instinct for suppression.

"He asked if there wasn't any hope that I would change," she added pensively. "I told him that I could never love him enough to marry him, but that I would always respect him."

"And then what did he say?"

"He said he wouldn't commit suicide."

A profound hush followed, while Rosalie gazed at the moon and the others gazed at Rosalie. With her gleaming hair and violet eyes, she was entirely their ideal of a storybook heroine. They did not think of envying her; they merely wondered and admired. She was crowned by natural right, Queen of Romance.

Mae Van Arsdale, who had listened in silence to the recital, was the first to break the spell. She rose, fluffed up her hair, straightened her blouse, and politely suppressed a yawn.

"Nonsense, Rosalie! You're a silly little goose to make such a fuss over nothing.--Good-night, children. I'm going to bed now."

She sauntered toward the door, but paused on the threshold to drop the casual statement. "*I've* been proposed to three times."

A shocked gasp arose from the circle at this *lèse-majesté*. The disdainful condescension of a new girl was more than they could brook.

"She's a horrid old thing, and I don't believe a word she says!" Priscilla declared stoutly, as she kissed poor crushed little Rosalie goodnight.

This slight *contretemps* marked the beginning of strained relations. Mae Mertelle gathered her own adherents, and Rosalie's special coterie of friends rallied to the standard of their queen. They intimated to

Mae's followers that the quality of the romance was quite different in the two cases. Mae might be the heroine of any number of commonplace flirtations, but Rosalie was the victim of a *grande passion*. She was marked with an indelible scar that she would carry to the grave. In the heat of their allegiance, they overlooked the crookedness of the hero's nose and the avowed fact that Rosalie's own affections had not been engaged.

But Mae's trump card had been withheld. Whispers presently spread about under the seal of confidence. She was hopelessly in love. It was not a matter of the past vacation, but of the burning present. Her room-mate wakened in the night to hear her sobbing to herself. She had no appetite--her whole table could testify to that. In the middle of dessert, even on ice-cream nights, she would forget to eat, and with her spoon half-raised, would sit staring into space. When reminded that she was at the table, she would start guiltily and hastily bolt the rest of the meal. Her enemies unkindly commented upon the fact that she always came to before the end, so she got as much as anybody else.

The English classes at St. Ursula's were weekly drilled in the old-fashioned art of letter writing. The girls wrote letters home, minutely descriptive of school life. They addressed imaginary girl friends, and grandmothers and college brothers and baby sisters. They were learning the great secret of literary forcefulness--to suit their style to their audience. Ultimately, they arrived at the point of thanking imaginary young men for imaginary flowers. Mae listened to the somewhat stilted phraseology of these polite and proper notes with a supercilious smile. The class, covertly regarding her, thrilled anew.

Gradually, the details of the romance spread abroad. The man was English--Mae had met him on the steamer--and some day when his elder brother died (the brother was suffering from an incurable malady that would carry him off in a few years) he would come into the title; though just what the title was, Mae had not specifically stated. But in any case, her father was a staunch American; he hated the English and he hated titles. No daughter of his should ever marry a foreigner. If she did, she would never receive a dollar from him. However, neither Mae

nor Cuthbert cared about the money. Cuthbert had plenty of his own. His name was Cuthbert St. John. (Pronounced Sinjun.) He had four names in all, but those were the two he used the most. He was in England now, having been summoned by cable, owing to the critical condition of his brother's health, but the crisis was past, and Cuthbert would soon be returning. Then--Mae closed her lips in a straight line and stared defiantly into space. Her father should see!

Before the throbbing reality of this romance, Rosalie's poor little history paled into nothing.

Then the plot began to thicken. Studying the lists of incoming steamers, Mae announced to her room-mate that he had landed. He had given his word to her father not to write; but she knew that in some way she should hear. And sure enough! The following morning brought a nameless bunch of violets. There had been doubters before--but at this tangible proof of devotion, skepticism crumbled.

Mae wore her violets to church on Sunday. The school mixed its responses in a shocking fashion--nobody pretended to follow the service; all eyes were fixed on Mae's upturned face and far-off smile. Patty Wyatt pointed out that Mae had taken special pains to seat herself in the light of a stained-glass window, and that occasionally the rapt eyes scanned the faces of her companions, to make sure that the effect was reaching across the footlights. But Patty's insinuation was indignantly repudiated by the school.

Mae was at last triumphantly secure in the rôle of leading lady. Poor insipid Rosalie no longer had a speaking part.

The affair ran on for several weeks, gathering momentum as it moved. In the European Travel Class that met on Monday nights, "English Country Seats" was the subject of one of the talks, illustrated by the stereopticon. As a stately, terraced mansion, with deer cropping grass in the foreground, was thrown upon the screen, Mae Mertelle suddenly grew faint. She vouchsafed no reason to the housekeeper who came with hot-water bottles and cologne; but later, she whispered to her room-mate that that was the house where he was born.

Violets continued to arrive each Saturday, and Mae became more and more *distrait*. The annual basket-ball game with Highland Hall, a near-by school for girls, was imminent. St. Ursula's had been beaten the year before; it would mean everlasting disgrace if defeat met them a second time, for Highland Hall was a third their size. The captain harangued and scolded an apathetic team.

"It's Mae Mertelle and her beastly violets!" she disgustedly grumbled to Patty. "She's taken all the fight out of them."

The teachers, meanwhile, were uneasily aware that the atmosphere was overcharged. The girls stood about in groups, thrilling visibly when Mae Mertelle passed by. There was a moonlight atmosphere about the school that was not conducive to high marks in Latin prose composition. The matter finally became the subject of an anxious faculty meeting. There was no actual data at hand; it was all surmise, but the source of the trouble was evident. The school had been swept before by a wave of sentiment; it was as catching as the measles. The Dowager was inclined to think that the simplest method of clearing the atmosphere would be to pack Mae Mertelle and her four trunks back to the paternal fireside, and let her foolish mother deal with the case. Miss Lord was characteristically bent upon fighting it out. She would stop the nonsense by force. Mademoiselle, who was inclined to sentiment, feared that the poor child was really suffering. She thought sympathy and tact--But Miss Sallie's bluff common-sense won the day. If the sanity of Saint Ursula's demanded it, Mae Mertelle must go; but she thought, by the use of a little diplomacy, both St. Ursula's sanity and Mae Mertelle might be preserved. Leave the matter to her. She would use her own methods.

Miss Sallie was the Dowager's daughter. She managed the practical end of the establishment--provided for the table, ruled the servants, and ran off, with the utmost ease, the two hundred acres of the school farm. Between the details of horseshoeing and haying and butter-making, she lent her abilities wherever they were needed. She never taught; but she disciplined. The school was noted for unusual punishments, and most of them originated in Miss Sallie's brain. Her title of "Dragonette" was

bestowed in respectful admiration of her mental qualities.

The next day was Tuesday, Miss Sallie's regular time for inspecting the farm. As she came downstairs after luncheon drawing on her driving gloves, she just escaped stepping on Conny Wilder and Patty Wyatt who, flat on their stomachs, were trying to poke out a golf ball from under the hat-rack.

"Hello, girls!" was her cheerful greeting. "Wouldn't you like a little drive to the farm? Run and tell Miss Wadsworth that you are excused from afternoon study. You may stay away from Current Events this evening, and make it up."

The two scrambled into hats and coats in excited delight. A visit to Round Hill Farm with Miss Sallie, was the greatest good that St. Ursula's had to offer. For Miss Sallie--out of bounds--was the funniest, most companionable person in the world. After an exhilarating five-mile drive through a brown and yellow October landscape, they spent a couple of hours romping over the farm, had milk and ginger cookies in Mrs. Spence's kitchen; and started back, wedged in between cabbages and eggs and butter. They chatted gaily on a dozen different themes--the Thanksgiving masquerade, a possible play, the coming game with Highland Hall, and the lamentable new rule that made them read the editorials in the daily papers. Finally, when conversation flagged for a moment, Miss Sallie dropped the casual inquiry:

"By the way, girls, what *has* got into Mae Van Arsdale? She droops about in corners and looks as dismal as a molting chicken."

Patty and Conny exchanged a glance.

"Of course," Miss Sallie continued cheerfully, "it's perfectly evident what the trouble is. I haven't been connected with a boarding-school for ten years for nothing. The little idiot is posing as the object of an unhappy affection. You know that I never favor talebearing, but, just as a matter of curiosity, is it the young man who passes the plate in church, or the one who sells ribbon in Marsh and Elkins's?"

"Neither." Patty grinned. "It's an English nobleman."

"What?" Miss Sallie stared.

"And Mae's father hates English noblemen," Conny explained, "and has forbidden him ever to see her again."

"Her heart is broken," said Patty sadly. "She's going into a decline."

"And the violets?" inquired Miss Sallie.

"He promised not to send her any letters, but violets weren't mentioned."

"H'm, I see!" said Miss Sallie; and, after a moment of thought, "Girls, I am going to leave this matter in your hands. I want it stopped."

"In our hands?"

"The school can't be stirred up any longer; but the matter's too silly to warrant the teachers taking any notice of it. This is a thing that ought to be regulated by public opinion. Suppose you see what you can do--I will appoint you a committee to bring the school back to a solid basis of common sense. I know that I can trust you not to talk."

"I don't exactly see what we can do," said Patty, dubiously.

"You are usually not without resourcefulness," Miss Sallie returned with a flickering smile. "You may have a *carte blanche* to choose your own methods."

"And may we tell Priscilla?" Conny asked. "We must tell her because we three--"

"Hunt together?" Miss Sallie nodded. "Tell Priscilla, and let it stop at that."

The next afternoon, when Martin drove into the village to accomplish the daily errands, he dropped Patty and Priscilla at the florists,

empowered by the school to purchase flowers for the rector's wife and new baby. They turned inside, their minds entirely occupied with the rival merits of red and white roses. They ordered their flowers, inscribed the card, and then waited aimlessly till Martin should return to pick them up. Passing down the counter, they came upon a bill-sticker, the topmost item being, "Violets every Saturday to Miss Mae Van Arsdale, St. Ursula's School."

They stopped and stared for a thoughtful moment. The florist followed their gaze.

"Do you happen to know the young lady who ordered them vi'lets?" he inquired. "She didn't leave any name, and I'd like to know if she wants me to keep on sending 'em. She only paid up to the first, and the price is going up."

"No, I don't know who it was," said Patty, with well-assumed indifference. "What did she look like?"

"She--she had on a blue coat," he suggested. As all sixty-four of the St. Ursula girls wore blue coats, his description was not helpful.

"Oh," Patty prompted, "was she quite tall with a lot of yellow hair and--"

"That's her!"

He recognized the type with some assurance.

"It's Mae herself!" Priscilla whispered excitedly.

Patty nodded and commanded silence.

"We'll tell her," she promised. "And by the way," she added to Priscilla, "I think it would be nice for us to send some flowers to Mae, from our--er--secret society. But I'm afraid the treasury is pretty low just now. They'll have to be cheaper than violets. What are your cheapest flowers?" she inquired of the man.

"There's a kind of small sunflower that some people likes for decoration. 'Cut-and-come-again' they're called. I can give you a good-sized bunch for fifty cents. They make quite a show."

"Just the thing! Send a bunch of sunflowers to Miss Van Arsdale with this card." Patty drew a blank card toward her, and in an upright back hand traced the inscription, "Your disconsolate C. St. J."

She sealed it in an envelope, then regarded the florist sternly.

"Are you a Mason?" she asked, her eye on the crescent in his buttonhole.

"Y--yes," he acknowledged.

"Then you understand the nature of an oath of secrecy? You are not to divulge to anyone the sender of these flowers. The tall young lady with the yellow hair will come in here and try to make you tell who sent them. You are not to remember. It may even have been a man. You don't know anything about it. This secret society at Saint Ursula's is so very much more secret than the Masonic Society, that it is even a secret that it exists. Do you understand?"

"I--yes, ma'am," he grinned.

"If it becomes known," she added darkly, "I shall not be responsible for your life."

She and Priscilla each contributed a quarter for the flowers.

"It's going to be expensive," Patty sighed. "I think we'll have to ask Miss Sallie for an extra allowance while this committee is in session."

Mae was in her room, surrounded by an assemblage of her special followers, when the flowers arrived. She received the box in some bewilderment.

"He's sending flowers on Wednesdays as well as Saturdays!" her room-mate cried. "He must be getting desperate."

Mae opened the box amid an excited hush.

"How perfectly lovely!" they cried in chorus, though with a slightly perfunctory undertone. They would have preferred crimson roses.

Mae regarded the offering for a moment of stupefied amazement. She had been pretending so long, that by now she almost believed in Cuthbert herself. The circle was waiting, and she rallied her powers to meet this unexpected crisis.

"I wonder what sunflowers mean?" she asked softly. "They must convey some message. Does anybody know the language of flowers?"

Nobody did know the language of flowers; but they were relieved at the suggestion.

"Here's a card!" Evalina Smith plucked it from among the bristling leaves.

Mae made a motion to examine it in private, but she had been so generous with her confidences heretofore, that she was not allowed to withdraw them at this interesting point. They leaned over her shoulder and read it aloud.

"'Your disconsolate C. St. J.'--Oh, Mae, think how he must be suffering!"

"Poor man!"

"He simply couldn't remain silent any longer."

"He's the soul of honor," said Mae. "He wouldn't write a real letter because he promised not to, but I suppose--a little message like this--"

Patty Wyatt passing the door, sauntered in. The card was exhibited in spite of a feeble protest from Mae.

"That handwriting shows a lot of character," Patty commented.

This was considered a concession; for Patty, from the first, had held aloof from the cult of Cuthbert St. John. She was Rosalie's friend.

The days that followed, were filled with bewildering experiences for Mae Mertelle. Having accepted the first installment of sunflowers, she could not well refuse the second. Once having committed herself, she was lost. Candy and books followed the flowers in horrifying profusion. The candy was of an inexpensive variety--Patty had discovered the ten-cent store--but the boxes that contained it made up in decorativeness what the candy lacked; they were sprinkled with Cupids and roses in vivid profusion. A message in the same back hand accompanied each gift, signed sometimes with initials, and sometimes with a simple "Bertie." Parcels had never before been delivered with such unsuspicious promptitude. Miss Sallie was the one through whose hands they went. She glanced at the outside, scrawled a "deliver," and the maid would choose the most embarrassing moments to comply--always when Mae Mertelle was surrounded by an audience.

Mae's Englishman, from an object of sentiment, in a few days' time became the joke of the school. His taste in literature was as impossible as his taste in candy. He ran to titles which are supposed to be the special prerogative of the kitchen. "Loved and Lost," "A Born Coquette," "Thorns among the Orange Blossoms." Poor Mae repudiated them, but to no avail; the school had accepted Cuthbert--and was bent upon eliciting all the entertainment possible from his British vagaries. Mae's life became one long dread of seeing the maid appear with a parcel. The last straw was the arrival of a complete edition--in paper--of Marie Corelli.

"He--he never sent them!" she sobbed. "Somebody's just trying to be funny."

"You mustn't mind, Mae, because they aren't just the sort that an American man would choose," Patty offered comfort. "You know that Englishmen have queer tastes, particularly in books. *Everybody* reads Marie Corelli over there."

The next Saturday, a party of girls was taken to the city for shopping

and the matinée. Among other errands, the art class visited a photograph dealer's, to purchase some early Italian masters. Patty's interest in Giotto and his kind was not very keen, and she sauntered off on a tour of inspection. She happened upon a pile of actors and actresses, and her eye brightened as she singled out a large photograph of an unfamiliar leading man, with curling mustache and dimpled chin and large appealing eyes. He was dressed in hunting costume and conspicuously displayed a crop. The picture was the last word in Twentieth Century Romance. And, most perfect touch of all, it bore a London mark!

Patty unobtrusively deflected the rest of the committee from a consideration of Fra Angelico, and the three heads bent delightedly over the find.

"It's perfect!" Conny sighed. "But it costs a dollar and fifty cents."

"We'll have to go without soda water *forever*!" said Priscilla.

"It is expensive," Patty agreed, "but--" as she restudied the liquid, appealing eyes--"I really think it's worth it."

They each contributed fifty cents, and the picture was theirs.

Patty wrote across the front, in the bold back hand that Mae had come to hate, a tender message in French, and signed the full name, "Cuthbert St. John." She had it wrapped in a plain envelope and requested the somewhat wondering clerk to mail it the following Wednesday morning, as it was an anniversary present and must not arrive before the day.

The picture came on the five-o'clock delivery, and was handed to Mae as the girls trooped out from afternoon study. She received it in sulky silence and retired to her room. Half a dozen of her dearest friends followed at her heels; Mae had worked hard to gain a following, and now it couldn't be shaken off.

"Open it, Mae quick!"

"What do you s'pose it is?"

"It can't be flowers or candy. He must be starting something new."

"I don't care what it is!" Mae viciously tossed the parcel into the wastebasket.

Irene McCullough fished it out and cut the string.

"Oh, Mae, it's his photograph!" she squealed. "And he's per-fect-ly beau-ti-ful!"

"Did you ever see such eyes!"

"Does he curl his mustache, or it is natural?"

"Why didn't you tell us he had a dimple in his chin?"

"Does he always wear those clothes?"

Mae was divided between curiosity and anger. She snatched the photograph away, cast one glance at the languishing brown eyes, and tumbled it, face downward, into a bureau drawer.

"Don't ever mention his name to me again!" she commanded, as, with compressed lips, she commenced brushing her hair for dinner.

On the next Friday afternoon--shopping day in the village--Patty and Conny and Priscilla dropped in at the florist's to pay a bill.

"Two bunches of sunflowers, one dollar," the man had just announced in ringing tones from the rear of the store, when a step sounded behind them, and they faced about to find Mae Mertelle Van Arsdale, bent on a similar errand.

"Oh!" said Mae, fiercely, "I might have known it was you three."

She stared for a moment in silence, then she dropped into a rustic seat and buried her head on the counter. She had shed so many tears of late

that they flowed automatically.

"I suppose," she sobbed, "you'll tell the whole school, and everybody will laugh and--and--"

The three regarded her with unbending mien. They were not to be moved by a few tears.

"You said that Rosalie was a silly little goose to make such a fuss over nothing," Priscilla reminded her.

"And at least he was a live man," said Patty, "even if he did have a crooked nose."

"Do you still think she was a silly goose?" Conny inquired.

"N--no!"

"Don't you think you've been a great deal more silly?"

"Y--yes."

"And will you apologize to Rosalie?"

"No!"

"It will make quite a funny story," Patty ruminated, "the way we'll tell it."

"I think you're perfectly horrid!"

"Will you apologize to Rosalie?" Priscilla asked again.

"Yes--if you'll promise not to tell."

"We'll promise on one condition--you're to break your engagement to Cuthbert St. John, and never refer to it again."

Cuthbert sailed for England on the *Oceanic* the following Thursday; St.

Ursula's plunged into a fever of basket-ball, and the atmosphere became bracingly free of Romance.

III

The Virgil Strike

"I'm tired of Woman's Rights on Friday afternoons," said Patty disgustedly. "I prefer soda water!"

"This makes the third time they've taken away our holiday for the sake of a beastly lecture," Priscilla grumbled, as she peered over Patty's shoulder to read the notice on the bulletin board, in Miss Lord's perpendicular library hand.

It informed the school that instead of the usual shopping expedition to the village, they would have the pleasure that afternoon of listening to a talk by Professor McVey of Columbia University. The subject would be the strike of the women laundry workers. Tea would be served in the drawing-room afterwards, with Mae Van Arsdale, Harriet Gladden, and Patty Wyatt as hostesses.

"It's not my turn!" objected Patty, as she noted the latter item. "I was hostess two weeks ago."

"That's because you wrote an essay on the 'Eight Hour Day.' Lordie thinks you will ask the professor-man intelligent questions; and show him that St. Ursula's is not a common boarding-school where only superficial accomplishments are taught, but one in which the actual problems of--"

"And I did want to go shopping!" Patty mourned. "I need some new shoe-strings. I've been tying a knot in my old ones every day for a week."

"Here she comes," whispered Priscilla. "Look happy or she'll make you translate the whole--Good morning, Miss Lord! We were just noticing

about the lecture. It sounds extremely interesting."

The two smiled a perfunctory greeting, and followed their teacher to the morning's Latin.

Miss Lord was the one who struck the modern note at St. Ursula's. She believed in militant suffragism and unions and boycotts and strikes; and she labored hard to bring her little charges to her own advanced position. But it was against a heavy inertia that she worked. Her little charges didn't care a rap about receiving their rights, in the dim future of twenty-one; but they were very much concerned about losing a present half-holiday. On Friday afternoons, they were ordinarily allowed to draw checks on the school bank for their allowances, and march in a procession--a teacher forming the head and tail--to the village stores, where they laid in their weekly supply of hair ribbons and soda water and kodak films. Even had one acquired so many demerits that her weekly stipend was entirely eaten up by fines, still she marched to the village and watched the lucky ones disburse. It made a break in the monotony of six days of bounds.

But every cloud has its silver lining.

Miss Lord preceded the Virgil recitation that morning by a discussion of the lecture to come. The laundry strike, she told them, marked an epoch in industrial history. It proved that women, as well as men, were capable of standing by each other. The solidarity of labor was a point she wished her girls to grasp. Her girls listened with grave attention; and by eagerly putting a question, whenever she showed signs of running down, they managed to stave off the Latin recitation for three quarters of an hour.

The professor, a mild man with a Van Dyke beard, came and lectured exhaustively upon the relations of employer and employed. His audience listened with politely intelligent smiles, but with minds serenely occupied elsewhere. The great questions of Capital and Labor, were not half so important to them, as the fact of the lost afternoon, or the essays that must be written for to-morrow's English, or even that this was ice-cream night with dancing class to follow. But Patty, on the

front seat, sat with wide, serious eyes fixed on the lecturer's face. She was absorbing his arguments--and storing them for use.

Tea followed according to schedule. The three chosen ones received their guests with the facility of long-tried hostesses. The fact that their bearing was under inspection, with marks to follow, did not appreciably diminish their case. They were learning by the laboratory method, the social graces that would be needed later in the larger world. Harriet and Mae presided at the tea table, while Patty engaged the personage in conversation. He commented later, to Miss Lord, upon the students' rare understanding in economic subjects.

Miss Lord replied with some complaisance that she endeavored to have her girls think for themselves. Sociology was a field in which lessons could not be taught by rote. Each must work out her own conclusions, and act upon them.

Ice-cream and dancing restored the balance of St. Ursula's, after the mental exertions of the afternoon. At half-past nine--the school did not retire until ten on dancing nights--Patty and Priscilla dropped their goodnight courtesy, murmured a polite "*Bon soir, Mam'selle*," and scampered upstairs, still very wide awake. Instead of preparing for bed with all dispatch, as well-conducted school girls should, they engaged themselves in practising the steps of their new Spanish dance down the length of the South Corridor. They brought up with a pirouette at Rosalie Patton's door.

Rosalie, still in the pale blue fluffiness of her dancing frock, was sitting cross-legged on the couch, her yellow curls bent over the open pages of a Virgil, tears spattering with dreary regularity on the lines she was conning.

The course of Rosalie's progress through senior Latin might be marked by blistered pages. She was a pretty, cuddling, helpless little thing, deplorably babyish for a senior; but irresistibly appealing. Everyone teased her, and protected her, and loved her. She was irrevocably predestined to bowl over the first man who came along, with her ultra feminine irresponsibility. Rosalie very often dreamed--when she ought

to have been concentrating upon Latin grammar--of that happy future state in which smiles and kisses would take the place of gerunds and gerundives.

"You silly little muff!" cried Patty. "Why on earth are you bothering with Latin on a Friday night?"

She landed herself with a plump on Rosalie's right, and took away the book.

"I have to," Rosalie sobbed. "I'd never finish if I didn't begin. I don't see any sense to it. I can't do eighty lines in two hours. Miss Lord always calls on me for the end, because she knows I won't know that."

"Why don't you begin at the end and read backwards?" Patty practically suggested.

"But that wouldn't be fair, and I can't do it so fast as the others. I work more than two hours every day, but I simply never get through. I know I shan't pass."

"Eighty lines is a good deal," Patty agreed.

"It's easy for you, because you know all the words, but--"

"I worked more than two hours on mine yesterday," said Priscilla, "and I can't afford it either. I have to save some time for geometry."

"*I just simply can't do it,*" Rosalie wailed. "And she thinks I'm stupid because I don't keep up with Patty."

Conny Wilder drifted in.

"What's the matter?" she asked, viewing Rosalie's tear-streaked face. "Cry on the pillow, child. Don't spoil your dress."

The Latin situation was explained.

"Oh, it's awful the way Lordie works us! She would like to have us

spend every moment grubbing over Latin and sociology. She--"

"Doesn't think dancing and French and manners are any good at all," sobbed Rosalie, mentioning the three branches in which she excelled, "and I think they're a lot more sensible than subjunctives. You can put them to practical use, and you can't sociology and Latin."

Patty emerged from a moment of revery.

"There's not much use in Latin," she agreed, "but I should think that something might be done with sociology. Miss Lord told us to apply it to our everyday problems."

Rosalie swept the idea aside with a gesture of disdain.

"Listen!" Patty commanded, springing to her feet and pacing the floor in an ecstasy of enthusiasm. "I've got an idea! It's perfectly true. Eighty lines of Virgil is too much for anybody to learn--particularly Rosalie. And you heard what the man said: it isn't fair to gage the working day by the capacity of the strongest. The weakest has to set the pace, or else he's left behind. That's what Lordy means when she talks about the solidarity of labor. In any trade, the workers have got to stand by each other. The strong must protect the weak. It's the duty of the rest of the class to stand by Rosalie."

"Yes, but how?" inquired Priscilla, breaking into the tirade.

"We'll form a Virgil Union, and strike for sixty lines a day."

"Oh!" gasped Rosalie, horrified at the audacity of the suggestion.

"Let's!" cried Conny, rising to the call.

"Do you think we can?" asked Priscilla, dubiously.

"What will Miss Lord say?" Rosalie quavered.

"She can't say anything. Didn't she tell us to listen to the lecture and apply its teaching?" Patty reminded.

"She'll be delighted to find we have," said Conny.

"But what if she doesn't give in?"

"We'll call out the Cicero and Cæsar classes in a sympathetic strike."

"Hooray!" cried Conny.

"Lordy does believe in Unions," Priscilla conceded. "She ought to see the justice of it."

"Of course she'll see the justice of it," Patty insisted. "We're exactly like the laundry workers--in the position of dependents, and the only way we can match strength with our employer, is by standing together. If Rosalie alone drops back to sixty lines, she'll be flunked; but if the whole class does, Lordie will *have* to give in."

"Maybe the whole class won't want to join the union," said Priscilla.

"We'll make 'em!" said Patty. In accordance with Miss Lord's desire, she had grasped some basic principles.

"We'll have to hurry," she added, glancing at the clock. "Pris, you run and find Irene and Harriet and Florence Hissop; and Conny, you route out Nancy Lee--she's up in Evalina Smith's room telling ghost stories. Here, Rosalie, stop crying and dump the things off those chairs so somebody can sit down."

Priscilla started obediently, but paused on the threshold.

"And what will you do?" she inquired with meaning.

"I," said Patty, "will be labor leader."

The meeting was convened, and Patty, a self-constituted chairman, outlined the tenets of the Virgil Union. Sixty lines was to constitute a working day. The class was to explain the case to Miss Lord at the regular session on Monday morning, and politely but positively refuse to read the last twenty lines that had been assigned. If Miss Lord

proved insistent, the girls were to close their books and go out on strike.

The majority of the class, hypnotized by Patty's eloquence, dazedly accepted the program; but Rosalie, for whose special benefit the union had been formed, had to be coerced into signing the constitution. Finally, after a wealth of argument had been expended, she wrote her name in a very wobbly hand, and sealed it with a tear. By nature, Rosalie was not a fighter; she preferred gaining her rights by more feminine methods.

Irene McCullough had also to be forced. She was a cautious soul who looked forward to consequences. One of the most frequently applied of St. Ursula's punishments was to make the culprit miss desserts. Irene suffered keenly under this form of chastisement; and she carefully refrained from misdemeanors which might bring it upon her. But Conny produced a convincing argument. She threatened to tell that the chambermaid was in the habit of smuggling in chocolates--and poor harassed Irene, threatened with the two-fold loss of chocolates and dessert, sullenly added her signature.

"Lights-out" rang. The Virgil Union adjourned its first meeting and went to bed.

* * * * *

Senior Latin came the last hour of the morning, when everyone was tired and hungry. On the Monday following the founding of the Union, the Virgil class gathered outside the door, in growing perturbation as the actual time for the battle approached. Patty rallied them in a brief address.

"Brace up, Rosalie! Don't be a cry-baby. We'll help you out if the last lines come to you. And for goodness' sake, girls, *don't* look so scared. Remember you're suffering, not only for yourselves, but for all the generations of Virgil classes that come after you. Anyone who backs down now is a COWARD!"

Patty established herself on the front seat, directly in the line of the fire, and a slight skirmish occurred at the outset. Her heavy walking boots were conspicuously laced with pale blue baby ribbon, which caught the enemy's eye.

"That is scarcely the kind of shoe laces that a lady adopts. May I ask, Patty--?"

"I broke my other laces," Patty affably explained, "and since we didn't go shopping on Friday, I couldn't get any more. I don't quite like the effect myself," she conceded, as she stuck out a foot and critically surveyed it.

"See that you find some black ones immediately after class," Miss Lord acidly suggested. "Priscilla, you may read the first ten lines."

The lesson progressed in the usual manner, except that there was a visible tightening of nerves as each recitation was finished, and they waited to hear the next name called. Conny's turn ended with the sixtieth line. No one had gone beyond that; all ahead was virgin jungle. This was the point for the Union to declare itself; and the burden, true to her forebodings, fell upon poor trembling little Rosalie.

She cast an imploring glance toward Patty's sternly waiting countenance, stammered, hesitated, and miserably plunged into a sight translation. Rosalie never had the slightest luck at sight translations; even after two hours of patient work with a dictionary, she was still extremely hesitant as to meanings. Now, she blindly forged ahead,--amid a profound hush--attributing to the Pious Æneas a most amazing set of actions. She finished; and the slaughter commenced. Miss Lord spent three minutes in obliterating Rosalie; then passed the lines to Irene McCullough.

Irene drew a deep breath--she felt Conny encouragingly patting her on the back, while Patty and Priscilla, at either hand, jogged her elbow with insistent touch. She opened her mouth to declare the principles that had been foisted upon her over night; then she caught the cold gleam of Miss Lord's eye. Rosalie's sobs filled the room. And she fell.

Irene was fairly good at Latin--her sight translation was at least intelligible. Miss Lord's comment was merely sarcastic, as she passed to Florence Hissop. By this time the panic had swept through the ranks. Florence would like to have been true to her pledged troth, but the instinct of self-preservation is strong. She improved on Irene's performance.

"Take the next ten lines, Patty, and endeavor to extract a glimmering of sense. Please bear in mind that we are reading poetry."

Patty raised her head and faced her superior in the manner of a Christian martyr.

"I only prepared the first sixty lines, Miss Lord."

"Why did you not finish the lesson that I gave out?" Miss Lord inquired sharply.

"We have decided that eighty lines are more than we can do in a day. It takes too much time away from our other lessons. We are perfectly willing to do sixty lines, and do them thoroughly, but we can't consider any more."

Miss Lord for a moment simply stared. Never had she known such a flagrant case of insubordination. And it was purely insubordination, for Patty was the most capable person in the class.

"What do you mean?" she gasped at last.

"We have formed a Virgil Union," Patty gravely explained. "You, Miss Lord, will appreciate the fairness of our demands better than any of the other teachers, because you believe in unions. Now, the girls in this class feel that they are overworked and underpa--er--that is, I mean the lessons are too long."

Patty fetched a deep breath and started again.

"Eighty lines a day doesn't leave us any time for recreation, so we have

determined to join together and demand our rights. We occupy the position of skilled laborers. You can get all the girls you want for Cæsar and beginning Latin, but you can't find anybody but us to read Virgil. It's like the laundry trade. We are not just plain boilers and starchers; we are fancy ironers. If you want to have a Virgil class, you have *got* to have us. You can't call in scab labor. Now, we aren't trying to take advantage because of our superior strength. We are perfectly willing to do an honest day's work, but we can't allow ourselves to be--er--to be--"

Patty fumbled a moment for her word, but in the end she brought it out triumphantly.

"We can't allow ourselves to be exploited. Singly, we are no match for you, but together, we can dictate our own terms. Because two or three of us can keep up the pace you set, is no reason why we should allow the others to be overworked. It is our duty to stand by one another against the encroachments of our employer. We women are not so advanced as men. But we are learning. Upon the solidarity of labor depends the life of Rosalie. In case you refuse to meet our demands, the Virgil class will be obliged to go out on strike."

Patty pronounced her ultimatum, and leaned back with folded arms.

A moment of silence followed. Then Miss Lord spoke. The class went down in hopeless, abject terror before the storm. Miss Lord's icy sarcasm was, in moments of intensity, lightened by gleams of fire. She had Irish ancestors and red hair. Patty alone listened with head erect and steely eyes. The red blood of martyrs dyed her cheeks. She was fighting for a CAUSE. Weak, helpless, little Rosalie, sniffling at her elbow, should be saved--the cowardice of her comrades put to shame. She, single-handed, would fight and win.

Miss Lord finally drew breath.

"The class is dismissed. Patty will remain in the schoolroom until she has translated perfectly the last twenty lines. I will hear her read them after luncheon."

The girls rose and pressed in a huddled body toward the hall, while Patty turned into the empty schoolroom. On the threshold she paused to hurl one contemptuous word over her shoulder:

"Scabs!"

* * * * *

The lunch bell rang, and Patty at her desk in the empty schoolroom heard the girls laughing and talking, as they clattered down the tin-covered back stairs to the dining-room. She was very tired and very hungry. She had had five hours of work since breakfast, with only a glass of milk at eleven o'clock. Even the pleasurable sensation of being abused did not quite offset the pangs of hunger. She listlessly set about learning the morrow's lesson in French History. It dealt with another martyr. Louis the Ninth left his bones bleaching on the plains of Antioch. The cause was different, but the principle remained. If she was not to be fed until she learned the Latin--very well--she would leave her bones bleaching in the schoolroom of St. Ursula's.

An insistent tapping sounded on the window. She glanced across an angle, to find Osaki, the Japanese butler, leaning far out from his pantry window, and extending toward her a dinner plate containing a large, lone slab of turkey.

"Leave plate in wastebasket, Missy," he whispered hoarsely.

Patty, for an instant, struggled with dignity and martyrdom, but hunger and a love of intrigue triumphed. She tiptoed over and received the offering. There was no knife or fork, but primitive methods suffice in a case of real starvation. She finished the turkey and buried the plate beneath a pile of algebra papers. It was Osaki's daily business to empty the wastebasket; the plate in due course would be restored to its shelf.

A few moments later a scurrying footfall sounded at the door, and a little Junior A. darted to Patty's side. She cast a conspiratorial glance over her shoulder as she drew from a bulging blouse two buttered rolls.

"Take 'em quick!" she panted. "I must hurry back, or they'll suspect. I asked to be excused to get a handkerchief. Keep up your courage. We won't let you starve. It's splendid!"

She thrust the rolls into Patty's lap and vanished.

Patty found it comforting to know that the school was with her. The attractions of martyrdom are enhanced by the knowledge of an audience. Also, the rolls were a grateful addition to the turkey; her five-hour appetite was still insistent. She finished one of them and was about to begin on the second, when furtive footfalls sounded behind her, and one of the maids slipped a paper plate over her shoulder.

"Here's some fresh gingerbread, Miss Patty. Cook says--"

The sound of a closing door startled her, and she scurried off like a detected thief.

Patty placed her second roll in the wastebasket in company with the turkey plate, and was just starting on the gingerbread, when a scrambling sounded at the end window. A blue hat appeared momentarily over the sill, its owner boosted from below, and an unidentified hand sent an orange rolling down the center aisle. Patty hastily intercepted its course and dropped it into the wastebasket. Luncheon would be over momentarily, and a visit from Miss Lord was imminent. This influx of supplies was growing embarrassing.

She heard the rising flood of talk as the girls poured from the dining-room. She knew that sympathetic groups were viewing her from the open doors behind. Judging from the ceaseless shuffle of footsteps, all Saint Ursula's had errands that led past the schoolroom door. Patty did not cast a glance behind, but with rigid shoulders stared into space. Presently a rattling sounded above her head. She raised startled eyes to a register set in the ceiling, and saw Irene McCullough's anxious face peering through the opening.

"You can live for days on chocolates," came in a stage whisper. "I'm awfully sorry there's only half a pound; I ate the rest last night."

The register was lifted out, and a box was swiftly lowered by a string. Irene was chief of the scabs.

"Thank you, Irene," Patty returned in a haughty stage whisper. "I do not care to accept any--"

Miss Lord's voice became audible in the hall.

"I thought, young ladies, that afternoon recreation was to be spent out of doors?"

Patty just had time to snatch the box and drop it in her lap, with an open essay book above, when Miss Lord advanced into the room. Patty's face assumed an air of suffering stoicism, as she stared ahead, in the profound hope that Irene would have sense enough to remove eight feet of dangling string. Miss Lord was followed by Osaki, carrying a tray with two slices of dry bread and a glass of water.

"Have you finished your Latin, Patty?"

"No, Miss Lord."

"Why not?"

"I am going to do to-morrow's lesson in afternoon study hour."

Patty's tone was respectful, but her meaning was clear. She emphasized slightly the word "to-morrow."

"You will do the twenty lines immediately."

A speaking silence from Patty.

"Do you hear me?"

"Yes, Miss Lord."

"Well?" The monosyllable was sharp enough to cut.

"I stand by my principles," said Patty. "I am not a scab."

[Illustration: Patty just had time to snatch the box]

"You may sit here until those twenty lines are finished."

"Very well, Miss Lord."

"I do not wish you to suffer. Here is bread and water."

She motioned Osaki to set down the tray.

Patty waved it aside.

"I am not a convict," she said with dignity. "I refuse to eat until I am served properly at the dining-room table."

A fleeting grin replaced for a moment Osaki's Oriental calm. Miss Lord set the bread on a neighboring desk, and the two withdrew.

All through recreation and afternoon study, Patty sat at her desk, the plate of bread conspicuously untouched at her elbow. Then the five-o'clock bell rang, and the girls trooped out and dispersed on their various businesses. The hour between afternoon study and dressing bell, was the one hour of the day entirely their own. Patty could hear them romping up the back stairs, and racing through the corridors. Kid McCoy was conducting a pillow fight in Paradise Alley above her head. Groups passed the schoolroom window with happy calls and laughter. Pepper and Tabasco, the two riding horses, were saddled and brought out. She could see the girls taking turns in galloping around the oval, while Martin, as ringmaster, waved his whip and urged them on. Martin now was bent with rheumatism, but in his far-off reckless youth he had been a cowboy, and when he taught the girls to ride, it was with a disregard of broken bones that dismayed even the adventurous gymnasium teacher. Patty was his star pupil; she could stick on Red Pepper's back with nothing but a blanket to hold her. It was only very occasionally, when Martin was in a propitious mood, that the horses were saddled for mere public amusement. Patty's heart was sore as she

watched Priscilla and Conny, her two dearest friends, disport themselves regardless of their incarcerated mate.

It grew dusk; nobody came to furnish a light, and Patty sat in the semi-darkness, her head bent wearily on her arms. Finally she heard footsteps in the hall, and Miss Sallie entered and closed the door behind her. Patty braced herself anew; one needed keen wits to match the "Dragonette."

Miss Sallie had been talking with Miss Lord, and she was inclined to think that Patty needed chastisement of a rare sort; but it was her practice to hear both sides. She drew up a chair, and commenced with business-like directness.

"See here, Patty, what is the meaning of all this nonsense?"

Patty raised reproachful eyes.

"Nonsense, Miss Sallie?"

"Yes, nonsense! Miss Lord says that you refused to learn the lesson that she assigned, and that you incited the rest of the girls to mutiny. You are one of the most able pupils in the class, and your failure to finish the lesson is nothing in the world but stubbornness. If it were Rosalie Patton now, there might be some sense in it."

"I don't think you understand," said Patty gently.

"It might be well for you to explain," suggested Miss Sallie.

"I must stand by my principles."

"By all means!" Miss Sallie affably agreed. "And what are your principles?"

"To hold out for sixty lines of Virgil. It isn't because I *want* to strike, Miss Sallie. It would be much easier for me to do the eighty lines, but that wouldn't be fair to Rosalie. The working day should not be gaged by the capacity of the strongest. Miss Lord will flunk Rosalie if the rest

of us don't take care of her. Upon the solidarity of labor depends the welfare of the individual worker. It is the fight of the oppressed against the encroachments of--of--er--organized authority."

"Um--I see!--I really begin to believe that you listened to that lecture, Patty."

"Of course I listened," Patty nodded, "and I must say that I am awfully disappointed in Miss Lord. She *told* us to apply our knowledge of sociology to the problems of our daily lives, and when we do, she backs down. But anyway, we intend to maintain the strike, until she is ready to meet our just demands. It isn't through selfish motives that I am acting, Miss Sallie. I should a lot rather have something to eat and go horseback riding. I am fighting for the cause of my suffering sisters."

The ceiling above shook at the impact, as four of her suffering sisters came down on top of one another, while the walls resounded with their shrieks and laughter.

Miss Sallie's lip twitched, but she controlled herself and spoke with serious gravity.

"Very well, Patty, I am glad to know that this unprecedented behavior is caused by charitable motives. I am sure that when Miss Lord fully understands the case she will feel gratified. Suppose I act as intermediary and lay the matter before her? We may be able to arrive at an--er--compromise."

The half hour that followed dinner was usually devoted to dancing in the big square hall, but to-night the girls were inclined to stand about in groups with furtive glances toward the schoolroom. A conference was going on inside. Miss Lord, the Dowager and the Dragonette had passed in and shut the door. Kid McCoy, returning from Paradise Alley, where she had been stretched on her stomach with her face to the register, reported that Patty had fainted through lack of food, that the Dowager had revived her with whiskey, and that she had come to, still cheering for the Union. Kid McCoy's statements, however, were apt to

be touched by imagination. The school was divided in its opinion of Patty's course. The scabs were inclined to make light of her achievement, but Conny and Priscilla staunchly fanned enthusiasm.

Finally, the schoolroom door opened, and the faculty emerged and passed into the Dowager's private study, while the dancing commenced with sudden fervor. No one to-day liked to be caught by Miss Lord whispering in a corner.

Patty followed alone. Her face was pale, and there were weary circles about her eyes, but in them shone the light of victory.

"Patty!"

"Are you dead?"

"How'd it come out?"

"It was perfectly splendid!"

"Was she furious?"

"What did she say?"

"We arbitrated the question and have settled on a compromise," Patty replied with quiet dignity. "Hereafter the lesson will be seventy lines. The Virgil strike is declared off."

They pressed about her eager for details, but she separated herself, and kept on toward the dining-room door. There was an aloofness about her, an air of having experienced the heights alone. She was not quite ready to rub shoulders with common humanity.

The school settled itself to evening study, and Patty to her dinner. They could see her across the court, through the lighted window, as she sat in state at the end of a long table. Osaki on one side, tendered preserved strawberries, and Maggie on the other, frosted cakes. The rewards of martyrdom, in Patty's case, were solidly substantial.

IV

The Third Man from the End

"Oh, Patty! Did you bring us some wedding cake?"

"Did you have any adventures?"

Conny and Priscilla, with the dexterity of practice, sprang upon the rear step of the hearse as it turned in at the school gate, and rolled up the curving drive to the porte-cochère. The "hearse" was the popular name for the black varnished wagonette which conveyed the pupils of St. Ursula's from church and station. It was planned to accommodate twenty. Patty and her suit-case, alone in the capacious interior, were jolting about like two tiny peas in a very big pod.

"Adventures!" she called back excitedly. "*Wait till you hear!*"

As they came to a stop, they were besieged by a crowd of blue-coated girls. It was afternoon recreation, and the whole school was abroad. The welcome that she received, would have led an onlooker to infer that Patty had been gone three months instead of three days. She and her two postilions descended, and Martin gathered up his reins.

"Come on, youse! All who wants a ride to the stables," was his hospitable invitation.

It inundated him with passengers. They crowded inside--twice as many as the hearse would hold--they swarmed over the driver's seat and the steps; and two equestriennes even perched themselves on the horses' backs.

"What's the adventure?" demanded Conny and Priscilla in a breath, as the cavalcade rattled off.

Patty waved her hand toward the suit-case.

"There it is. Take it upstairs. I'll be with you as soon as I've reported."

"But that isn't your suit-case."

Patty shook her head mysteriously.

"If you tried a thousand years you'd never guess who owns it."

"Who?"

Patty laughed.

"Looks like a man's," said Conny.

"It is."

"Oh, Patty! Don't be so exasperating. Where'd you get it?"

"Just a little souvenir that I picked up. I'll tell you as soon as I've interviewed the Dowager. Hurry, and slip in while Jelly isn't looking."

They cast a quick glance over their shoulders toward the gymnasium instructor, who was arguing fat Irene McCullough into faster movements on the tennis court. Miss Jellings was insistent that "recreation" should be actively pursued out of doors. The two could easily have obtained permission to greet Patty's return inside; but it was the policy of the trio never to ask permission in minor matters. It wasted one's credit unnecessarily.

Priscilla and Conny turned upstairs lugging the suit-case between them, while Patty approached the principal's study. Ten minutes later she joined her companions in Seven, Paradise Alley. They were sitting on the bed, their chins in their hands, studying the suit-case propped on a chair before them.

"Well?" they inquired in a breath.

"She says she's glad to see me back, and hopes I didn't eat too much wedding cake. If my lessons show any falling off--"

"*Who* owns it?"

"The man with the black eyebrows and the dimple in his chin who sang the funny songs third from the end on the right hand side."

"Jermyn Hilliard, Junior?" Priscilla asked breathlessly.

"Not really?" Conny laid her hand on her heart with an exaggerated sigh.

"Truly and honest!" Patty turned it over and pointed to the initials on the end. "J. H., Jr."

"It *is* his!" cried Priscilla.

"Where on earth did you get it, Patty?"

"Is it locked?"

"Yes," Patty nodded, "but my key will open it."

"What's in it?"

"Oh, a dress suit, and collars, and--and things."

"Where'd you get it?"

"Well," said Patty languidly, "it's a long story. I don't know that I have time before study hour--"

"Oh, tell us, please. I think you're beastly!"

"Well--the glee club was last Thursday night."

They nodded impatiently at this useless piece of information.

"And it was Friday morning that I left. As I was listening to the Dowager's parting remarks about being inconspicuous and reflecting credit on the school by my nice manners, Martin sent in word that

Princess was lame and couldn't be driven. So instead of going to the station in the hearse, I went with Mam'selle in the trolley car. When we got in, it was *cram* full of men. The entire Yale Glee Club was going to the station! There were so many of them that they were sitting in each other's laps. The whole top layer rose, and said perfectly gravely and politely: 'Madame, take my seat.'

"Mam'selle was outraged. She said in French, which of course they all understood, that she thought American college boys had disgraceful manners; but I smiled a little--I couldn't help it, they were so funny. And then two of the bottom ones offered their seats, and we sat down. And you'll never believe it, but the third man from the end was sitting right next to me!"

"Not really?"

"Oh, Patty!"

"Is he as good-looking near to, as he was on the stage?"

"Better."

"Are those his real eyebrows or were they blacked?"

"They looked real but I couldn't examine them closely."

"Of course they're real!" said Conny indignantly.

"And what do you think?" Patty demanded. "They were going on my train. Did you ever hear of such a coincidence?"

"What did Mam'selle think of that?"

"She was as flustered as an old hen with one chicken. She put me in charge of the conductor with so many instructions, that I know he felt like a newly engaged nursemaid. The Glee Club men rode in the smoking-car, except Jermyn Hilliard, Junior, and he followed me right into the parlor car and sat down in the chair exactly opposite."

"Patty!" they cried in shocked chorus. "You surely didn't speak to him?"

"Of course not. I looked out of the window and pretended he wasn't there."

"Oh!" Conny murmured disappointedly.

"Then what happened?" Priscilla asked.

"Nothing at all. I got out at Coomsdale, and Uncle Tom met me with the automobile. The chauffeur took my suit-case from the porter and I didn't see it near to at all. We reached the house just at tea time, and I went straight in to tea without going upstairs. The butler took up my suit-case and the maid came and asked for the key so she could unpack. That house is simply running over with servants; I'm always scared to death for fear I'll do something that they won't think is proper.

"All the ushers and bridesmaids were there, and everything was very jolly, only I couldn't make out what they were talking about half the time, because they all knew each other and had a lot of jokes I couldn't understand."

Conny nodded feelingly.

"That's the way they acted at the seaside last summer. I think grown people have horrid manners."

"I did feel sort of young," Patty acknowledged. "One of the men brought me some tea and asked what I was studying in school. He was trying to obey Louise and amuse little cousin, but he was thinking all the time, what an awful bore it was talking to a girl with her hair braided."

"I told you to put it up," said Priscilla.

"Just wait!" said Patty portentously. "When I went upstairs to dress for dinner, the maid met me in the hall with her eyes popping out of her

head.

"'Beg pardon, Miss Patty,' she said. 'But is that your suit-case?'

"'Yes,' I said, 'of course it's my suit-case. What's the matter with it?'

"She just waved her hand toward the table and didn't say a word. And there it was, wide open!"

Patty took a key from her pocket, unlocked the suit-case, and threw back the lid. A man's dress suit was neatly folded on the top, with a pipe, a box of cigarettes, some collars, and various other masculine trifles filling in the interstices.

"Oh!" they gasped in breathless chorus.

"They belong to him," Conny murmured fervently.

Patty nodded.

"And when I showed Uncle Tom that suit-case, he nearly died laughing. He telephoned to the station, but they didn't know anything about it, and I didn't know where the glee club was going to perform, so we couldn't telegraph Mr. Hilliard. Uncle Tom lives five miles from town, and there simply wasn't anything we could do that night."

"And just imagine his feelings when he started to dress for the concert, and found Patty's new pink evening gown spread out on top!" suggested Priscilla.

"Oh, Patty! Do you s'pose he opened it?" asked Conny.

"I'm afraid he did. The cases are exact twins, and the keys both seem to fit."

"I hope it looked all right?"

"Oh, yes, it looked beautiful. Everything was trimmed with pink ribbon. I always pack with an eye to the maid, when I visit Uncle Tom."

"But the dinner and the wedding? What did you do without your clothes?" asked Priscilla, in rueful remembrance of many trips to the dressmaker's.

"That was the best part of it!" Patty affirmed. "Miss Lord simply wouldn't let me get a respectable evening gown. She went with me herself, and told Miss Pringle how to make it--just like all my dancing dresses, nine inches off the floor, with elbow sleeves and a silly sash. I hated it anyway."

"You must remember you are a school girl," Conny quoted, "and until--"

"Just wait till I tell you!" Patty triumphed. "Louise brought me one of her dresses--one of her very best ball gowns, only she wasn't going to wear it any more, because she had all new clothes in her trousseau. It was white crêpe embroidered in gold spangles, and it had a train. It was long in front, too. I had to walk without lifting my feet. The maid came and dressed me; she did my hair up on top of my head with a gold fillet, and Aunt Emma loaned me a pearl necklace and some long gloves and I looked perfectly beautiful--I did, honestly--you wouldn't have known me. I looked *at least* twenty!

"The man who took me in to dinner never dreamed that I hadn't been out for years. And you know, he tried to flirt with me, he did, really. And he was getting awfully old. He must have been almost forty. I felt as though I were flirting with my grandfather. You know," Patty added, "it isn't so bad, being grown up. I believe you really do have sort of a good time--if you're pretty."

Six eyes sought the mirror for a reflective moment, before Patty resumed her chronicle.

"And Uncle Tom made me tell about the suit-case at the dinner table. Everybody laughed. It made a very exciting story. I told them about the whole school going to the Glee Club, and falling in love in a body with the third man from the end, and how we all cut his picture out of the program and pasted it in our watches. And then about my sitting across

from him in the train and changing suit-cases. Mr. Harper--the man next to me--said it was the most romantic thing he'd ever heard in his life; that Louise's marriage was nothing to it."

"But about the suit-case," they prompted. "Didn't you do anything more?"

"Uncle Tom telephoned again in the morning, and the station agent said he'd got the party on the wire as had the young lady's case. And he was coming back here in two days, and I was to leave his suit-case with the baggage man at the station, and he would leave mine."

"But you didn't leave it."

"I came on the other road. I'm going to send it down."

"And what did you wear at the wedding?"

"Louise's clothes. It didn't matter a bit, my not matching the other bridesmaids, because I was maid of honor, and ought to dress differently anyway. I've been grown up for three days--and I just wish Miss Lord could have seen me with my hair on the top of my head talking to men!"

"Did you tell the Dowager?"

"Yes, I told her about getting the wrong suit-case; I didn't mention the fact that it belonged to the third man from the end."

"What did she say?"

"She said it was very careless of me to run off with a strange man's luggage; and she hoped he was a gentleman and would take it nicely. She telephoned to the baggage man that it was here, but she couldn't send Martin with it this afternoon because he had to go to the farm for some eggs."

Recreation was over, and the girls came trooping in to gather books and pads and pencils for the approaching study hour. Everyone who passed

number Seven dropped in to hear the news. Each in turn received the story of the suit-case, and each in turn gasped anew at sight of the contents.

"Doesn't it smell tobaccoey and bay rummish?" said Rosalie Patton, sniffing.

"Oh, there's a button loose!" cried Florence Hissop, the careful housewife. "Where's some black silk, Patty?"

She threaded a needle and secured the button. Then she daringly tried on the coat. Eight others followed her example and thrilled at the touch. It was calculated to fit a far larger person than any present. Even Irene McCullough found it baggy.

"He had awfully broad shoulders," said Rosalie, stroking the satin lining.

They peered daintily at the other garments.

"Oh!" squealed Mae Mertelle. "He wears blue silk suspenders."

"And something else blue," chirped Edna Hartwell, peering over her shoulder. "They're pajamas!"

"And to think of such a thing happening to Patty!" sighed Mae Mertelle.

"Why not?" bristled Patty.

"You're so young and so--er--"

"Young!--Wait till you see me with my hair done up."

"I wonder what the end will be?" asked Rosalie.

"The end," said Mae unkindly, "will be that the baggage man will deliver the suit-case, and Jermyn Hilliard, Junior, will never know--"

A maid appeared at the door.

"If you please," she murmured, her amazed eyes on Irene who was still wearing the coat, "Mrs. Trent would like to have Miss Patty Wyatt come to the drawing-room, and I am to take the suit-case down. The gentleman is waiting."

"Oh, Patty!" a gasp went around the room.

"Do your hair up--quick!"

Priscilla caught Patty's twin braids and wound them around her head, while the others in a flutter of excitement, thrust in the coat and relocked the suit-case.

They crowded after her in a body and hung over the banisters at a perilous angle, straining their ears in the direction of the drawing-room. Nothing but a murmur of voices floated up, punctuated by an occasional deep bass laugh. When they heard the front door close, with one accord they invaded Harriet Gladden's room, which commanded the walk, and pressed their noses against the pane. A short, thick-set man of German build was waddling toward the gate and the trolley car. They gazed with wide, horrified eyes, and turned without a word to meet Patty as she trudged upstairs lugging her errant suit-case. A glance told her that they had seen, and dropping on the top step, she leaned her head against the railing and laughed.

"His name," she choked, "is John Hochstetter, Jr. He's a wholesale grocer, and was on his way to a grocers' convention, where he was to make a speech comparing American cheese with imported cheese. He didn't mind at all not having his dress-suit--never feels comfortable in it anyway, he says. He explained to the convention why he didn't have it on, and it made the funniest speech of the evening. There's the study bell."

Patty rose and turned toward Paradise Alley, but paused to throw back a further detail:

"He has a dear little daughter of his own just my age!"

V

The Flannigan Honeymoon

The Murphy family, with a judicious eye to the buttered side of the bread, had adopted Saint Ursula as their patron saint. The family--consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Murphy, eleven little Murphys and "Gramma" Flannigan--occupied a five-room cottage close to the gates of St. Ursula's school. They subsisted on the vicarious charity of sixty-four girls, and the intermittent labor of Murphy *père*, who, in his sober intervals, was a sufficiently efficient stone-cutter and mason.

He had built the big entrance gates, and the long stone wall that enclosed the ten acres of "bounds." He had laid the foundation of the new west wing--known as Paradise Alley--and had constructed all the chimneys and driveways and tennis courts on the place. The school was a monument to his long and leisurely career.

Mr. and Mrs. Murphy, with an unusual display of foresight, had christened their first baby after the school. Ursula Murphy may not be a euphuistic combination, but the child was amply repaid for carrying such a name, by receiving the cast-off clothes of generations of St. Ursula girls. There was danger, for a time, that the poor little thing would be buried beneath a mountain of wearing apparel; but her parents providentially discovered a second-hand clothes man, who relieved her of a part of the burden.

After Ursula, had come other little Murphys in regular succession; and it had grown to be one of the legendary privileges of the school to furnish the babies with names and baptismal presents. Mrs. Murphy was not entirely mercenary in her yearly request. She appreciated the artistic quality of the names that the girls provided. They had a distinction, that she herself, with her lack of literary training, would

never have been able to give. The choosing of the names had come to be a matter involving politics almost as complicated as the election of the senior president. Different factions proposed different names; half-a-dozen tickets would be in the field, and the balloting was conducted with rousing speeches.

There was one hampering restriction. Every baby must have a patron saint. Upon this point, the Murphys stood firm. However, by a careful study of early Christian martyrs, the girls had managed to unearth a list of recondite saints with fairly unusual and picturesque names.

So far, the roll of the Murphy offspring read:

Ursula Marie, Geraldine Sabina, Muriel Veronica and Lionel Ambrose (twins), Aileen Clotilda, John Drew Dominick, Delphine Olivia, Patrick (he had been born in the summer vacation, and the long-suffering priest had insisted that the boy be named for his father), Sidney Orlando Boniface, Richard Harding Gabriel, Yolanda Genevieve. This completed the list, until one morning early in December, Patrick Senior presented himself at the kitchen door, with the news that another name--a boy's--would be seasonable.

The school immediately went into a committee of the whole. Several names had been put up, and the discussion was growing heated, when Patty Wyatt jumped to her feet with the proposal of "Cuthbert St. John." The suggestion was met with cheers; and Mae Van Arsdale indignantly left the room. The name was carried by unanimous vote.

Cuthbert St. John Murphy was christened the following Sunday, and received a gold-lined porridge spoon in a green plush box.

So delighted was the school at Patty's felicitous suggestion, that, by way of reward, they elected her chairman of the Christmas Carnival Committee. The Christmas Carnival was a charitable institution contemporaneous with the founding of the school. St. Ursula's scheme of education was broad; it involved growth in a wide variety of womanly virtues, and the greatest of these was charity. Not the modern, scientific, machine-made charity, but the comfortable, old-fashioned

kind that leaves a pleasant glow of generosity in the heart of the giver. Every year at Christmastide a tree was decked, a supper laid, and the poor children of the neighborhood bidden to partake. The poor children were collected by the school girls, who drove about from house to house, in bob-sleighs or hay-wagons, according to the snow. The girls regarded it as the most diverting festival of the school year; and even the poor children, when they had overcome their first embarrassment, found it fairly diverting.

The original scheme had been for each girl to have an individual protégé, that she might call upon the family and come into personal relations with a humbler class. She was to learn the special needs of her child, and give something really useful, such as stockings or trousers or flannel petticoats.

It was an admirable scheme on paper, but in actual practice it fell down. St. Ursula's was situated in an affluent district given over to the estates of the idle rich, and the proletarian who clung to the skirts of these estates was amply provided with an opportunity to work. In the early days, when the school was small, there had been sufficient poor children to go round; but as St. Ursula's had grown, the poor seemed to have diminished, until now the school was confronted by an actual scarcity. But the Murphys, at least, they had always with them. They yearly offered thanks for this.

Patty accepted her chairmanship and appointed sub-committees to do the actual work. For herself and Conny and Priscilla she reserved the privilege of choosing the recipients of St. Ursula's bounty. This entailed several exhilarating afternoons out of bounds. A walk abroad is as inspiring to the inmates of a prison as a trip through Europe to those at large. They spent the better part of a week canvassing the neighborhood, only to reveal the embarrassing fact that there were nine possible children, aside from the Murphy brood, and that none of these nine were from homes that one could conscientiously term poor. The children's sober industrious parents could well supply their temperate Christmas demands.

"And there are only six Murphys the right age," Conny grumbled, as

they turned homewards in the cold twilight of a wintry day, after an unprofitable two hours' tramp.

"That makes about one child to every five girls," Priscilla nodded dismally.

"Oh, this charity business makes me tired!" Patty burst out. "It's fun for the girls, and nothing else. The way we dole out stuff to perfectly nice people, is just plain insulting. If anybody poked a pink tarlatan stocking full of candy at me, and said it was because I'd been a good little girl, I'd throw it in their face."

In moments of intensity, Patty's English was not above reproach.

"Come on, Patty," Priscilla slipped a soothing hand through her arm, "we'll stop in at the Murphys' and count 'em over again. Maybe there's one we overlooked."

"The twins are only fifteen," said Conny hopefully. "I think they'll do."

"And Richard Harding's nearly four. He's old enough to enjoy a tree. The more Murphys we can get the better. They always love the things we give."

"I know they do!" Patty growled. "We're teaching the whole lot of them to be blooming beggars--I shall be sorry I ever used any slang, if we can't put the money to better use than this."

The funds for the carnival were yearly furnished by a tax on slang. St. Ursula demanded a fine of one cent for every instance of slang or bad grammar let fall in public. Of course, in the privacy of one's own room, in the bosom of one's chosen family, the rigor was relaxed. Your dearest friends did not report you--except in periods of estrangement. But your acquaintances and enemies and teachers did, and even, in moments of intense honorableness, you reported yourself. In any case, the slang fund grew. When the committee had opened the box this year, they found thirty-seven dollars and eighty-four cents.

Patty allowed herself, after some slight protest, to be drawn to the door of the Murphy domicile. She was not in an affable mood, and a call upon the Murphys required a great deal of conversation. They found the family hilariously assembled in an over-crowded kitchen. The entire dozen children babbled at once, shriller and shriller, in a vain endeavor to drown each other out. A cabbage stew, in progress on the stove, filled the room with an odorous steam. Shoved into a corner of the hearth, was poor old Gramma Flannigan, surrounded by noisy, pushing youngsters, who showed her gray hairs but scant consideration. The girls admired the new baby, while Yolanda and Richard Harding crawled over their laps with sticky hands. Mrs. Murphy, meanwhile, discanted in a rich brogue upon the merits of "Coothbert St. Jawn" as a name. She liked it, she declared, as well as any in the list. It sure ought to bring luck to a child to carry the name of two saints. She thanked the young ladies kindly.

Patty left Conny and Priscilla to carry off the social end of the call, while she squeezed herself onto the woodbox by Gramma Flannigan's chair. Mrs. Murphy's mother was a pathetic old body, with the winning speech and manners of Ireland a generation ago. Patty found her the most remunerative member of the household, so far as interest went. She always liked to get her started with stories of her girlhood, when she had been a lady's maid in Lord Stirling's castle in County Clare, and young Tammas Flannigan came and carried her off to America to help make his fortune. Tammas was now a bent old man with rheumatism, but in his keen blue eyes and Irish smile, Gramma still saw the lad who had courted her.

"How's your husband this winter?" Patty asked, knowing that she was taking the shortest road to the old woman's heart.

She shook her head with a tremulous smile.

"I'm not hearin' for four days. Tammas ain't livin' with us no more."

"It's a pity for you to be separated!" said Patty, with quick sympathy, not realizing on how sore a subject she was touching.

The flood gates of the old woman's garrulity broke down.

"With Ursuly an' Ger-r-aldine growin' oop an' havin' young min to wait on thim, 'twas needin' a parlor they was, an' they couldn't spare the room no longer for me'n Tammas. So they put me in the garret with the four gurrls, an' Tammas, he was sint oop the road to me son Tammas. Tammas's wife said as Tammas could sleep in the kitchen to pay for carryin' the wood an' watter, but she couldn't take us both because she takes boarders."

Patty cocked her head for a moment of silence, as she endeavored to pluck sense from this tangle of Tammases.

"It's too bad!" she comforted, laying a sympathetic hand on the old woman's knee.

Gramma Flannigan's eyes filled with the ready tears of old age.

"I'm not complainin', for it's the way o' the world. The owld must step off, an' make room for the young. But it's lonely I am without him! We've lived together for forty-seven years, an' we know each other's ways."

"But your son doesn't live very far away." Patty offered what solace she might. "You must see Thomas very often."

"That an' I don't! You might as well have a husband dead, as a mile an' a half away an' laid oop with rheumatism."

The clock pointed to a quarter of six, and the visitors rose. They had still to walk half a mile and dress before dinner.

The old woman clung to Patty's hand at parting. She seemed to find more comfort in the little stray sympathy that Patty had offered, than in all her exuberant brood of grandchildren.

"Isn't it dreadful to be old, and just sit around waiting to die?" Patty shuddered, as they faced the cold darkness outside.

"Dreadful!" Conny cordially agreed. "Hurry up! Or we'll be late for dinner, and this is chicken night."

They turned homeward at a jog trot that left little breath for speech; but Patty's mind was working as fast as her legs.

"I've got a perfectly splendid idea," she panted as she turned in at the gate and trotted up the driveway toward the big lighted house that spread wide wings to receive them.

"What?" they asked.

The quick insistent clang of the gong floated out to meet them, and on the instant, hurrying figures flitted past the windows--the summons to meals brought a readier response than the summons to study.

"I'll tell you after dinner. No time now," Patty returned as she peeled off her coat.

They were unlacing their blouses as they clattered up the back stairs, and pulling them over their heads in the upper hall.

"Go slow--please!" they implored of the down-going procession whose track they crossed. Dinner was the only meal which might be approached by the front stairs, which were carpeted instead of tinned.

Their evening frocks were fortunately in one piece, and they dove into them with little ceremony. The three presented themselves flushed of cheek and somewhat rumpled as to hair, but properly gowned and apologetic, just as grace was ended. To be late for grace only meant one demerit; the first course came higher, and the second higher still. Punishment increased by geometrical progression.

During the half hour's intermission before evening study, the three separated themselves from the dancers in the hall, and withdrew to a corner of the deserted schoolroom.

Patty perched herself on a desk, and loudly stated her feelings.

"I'm tired of having the Dowager get up at prayers, and make a speech about the beautiful Christmas spirit, and how sweet it is to make so many little children happy, when she knows perfectly well that it's just a lark for us. I'm chairman this year and I can do as I please. I've had enough of this fake charity; and I'm not going to have any Christmas tree!"

"No Christmas tree?" Conny echoed blankly.

"But what are you going to do with the thirty-seven dollars and eight-four cents?" asked Priscilla, the practical.

"Listen!" Patty settled to her argument. "There aren't any children around here who need a blessed thing, but Gramma and Granpa Flannigan do. That poor old woman, who is just as nice as she can be, is crowded in with all those horrid, yelling, sticky little Murphys; and Granpa Flannigan is poked into Tammas Junior's kitchen, running errands for Tammas Junior's wife, who is a per-fect-ly *terrible* woman. She throws kettles when she gets mad. Gramma worries all the time for fear he has rheumatism, and nobody to rub on liniment, or make him wear the right underclothes. They're exactly as fond of each other as any other husband and wife, and just because Ursula wants to have callers, I say it's a mean shame for them to be separated!"

"It is too bad," Conny agreed impartially. "But I don't see that we can help it."

"Why, yes! Instead of having a Christmas tree, we'll rent that empty little cottage down by the laurel walk, and mend the chimney--Patrick can do that for nothing--and put in new windows, and furnish it, and set them up in housekeeping."

"Do you think we can do it for thirty-seven dollars and eighty-four cents?" Priscilla asked.

"That's where the charity comes in! Every girl in school will go without her allowance for two weeks. Then we'll have more than a hundred dollars, and you can furnish a house perfectly beautifully for that. And

it would be real charity to give up our allowances, because they are particularly useful at Christmas time."

"But will the girls want to give their allowances?"

"We'll fix it so they'll have to," said Patty. "We'll call a mass meeting and make a speech. Then everybody will file past and sign a paper. No one will dare refuse with the school looking on."

Patty's fire kindled an answering flame in the other two.

"It is a good idea!" Conny declared.

"And it would be a lark, fixing the house," said Priscilla. "Almost as much fun as getting married ourselves."

"Exactly," Patty nodded. "Those poor old things haven't had a chance to see each other alone for years. We'll give 'em a honeymoon all over again."

Patty was outwardly occupied with geometry the next hour, but her mind was busy hemming sheets and towels and tablecloths. It being Thursday evening, the hour between eight and nine was occupied with "manners." The girls took turns in coming gracefully downstairs, entering the drawing-room, announced by Claire du Bois in the rôle of footman, and shaking hands with their hostesses--Conny Wilder, as dowager mama, and towering above her, as débutante daughter, Irene McCullough, the biggest girl in the school. The gymnasium teacher who assigned the rôles, had a sense of humor. An appropriate remark was expected from each guest, the weather being barred.

"Mrs. Wilder!" Priscilla gushed, advancing with outstretched hand, "and dear little Irene! It doesn't seem possible that the child is actually grown. It was only yesterday that she was a mite of a thing toddling about--"

Priscilla was shoved on by Patty.

"Me dear Mrs. Wilder," she inquired in a brogue that would have put the Murphys to shame, "have ye heard the news that's goin' round? Mr. and Mrs. Tammas Flannigan have taken the Laurel Cottage for the season. They are thinkin' of startin' a salon. They will be at home ivery afternoon during recreation hour--and will serve limonade and gingerbread in summer, and soup and sandwiches in winter. Ye must take Irene to call on thim."

The moment "manners" was over, the three withdrew to the seclusion of Patty's and Conny's room in Paradise Alley, and closed the door against callers. Between nine and nine-thirty was the fashionable calling hour at St. Ursula's. The time was supposed to be occupied in getting ready for bed, but if one were clever about undressing in the dark, one might devote the thirty minutes to social purposes.

"Gone to sleep! Don't disturb us!" the placard read that they impaled upon the door, but the clatter of tongues inside belied the words.

"Isn't my idea fine about the lemonade and soup?" Patty demanded.

"The great thing about charity is not to make it charity. You must keep people self-supporting," Priscilla quoted from their last lesson in sociology.

"We'll fix little tables under the apple tree in summer and in the parlor in winter," Patty planned, "and all the school girls and automobiles will stop for lemonade. We'll charge the girls five cents a glass and the automobiles ten."

"And I say, let's make Patrick and Tammas each contribute a dollar a week toward their support," Conny proposed. "They must eat up a dollar's worth of potatoes as they are living now."

They continued planning in whispers until long after "lights-out" had rung; and Priscilla, in a laudable desire to be inconspicuous, was obliged to crawl on hands and knees past Mademoiselle's open door, before she gained her own room at the end of the corridor.

The moment recreation sounded the next afternoon, they obtained permission to be out of bounds, and set off at a brisk trot. It was their business-like intention to have all the statistics complete, before submitting the matter to the assembled school.

"We'll first call on Patrick and Tammas and make 'em promise the dollar," said Patty.

Patrick readily promised his dollar--Patrick was always strong in promises--and the girls proceeded gaily to Tammas Junior's. They found Granpa on the back doorstep anxiously wiping his feet; he was a tremulous reed that bowed before every blast of the daughter-in-law's tongue. Tammas Junior, after being taken aside and told the project, thought he could manage two dollars a week. An expression of relief momentarily took the hunted look from his eyes. He was clearly glad to rescue his father from the despotic rule of his wife.

The girls turned away with their minds made up. It only remained to secure the cottage, coerce the school, and hem the sheets.

"You go and price furniture and wall paper," Patty issued her orders, "while I see about the rent. We'll meet at the soda-water fountain."

She found the real-estate man who owned the cottage established in an office over the bank; and by what she considered rare business ability, beat him down from nine dollars a month to seven. This stroke accomplished, she intimated her readiness for the lease.

"A lease will not be necessary," he said. "A month to month verbal agreement will do for me."

"I can't consider it without a lease," said Patty, firmly. "You might sell or something, and then we'd have to move out."

The gentleman amusedly filled in the form, and signed as party of the first part. He passed the pen to Patty and indicated the space reserved for the signature of the party of the second part.

"I must first consult my partners," she explained.

"Oh, I see! Have them sign here, and then bring the lease back."

"All of them?" she asked, dubiously scanning the somewhat cramped quarters. "I'm afraid there won't be room."

"How many partners have you?"

"Sixty-three."

He stared momentarily, then as his eye fell on the embroidered "St. U." on Patty's coat sleeve, he threw back his head and laughed.

"I beg your pardon!" he apologized, "but I was a bit staggered for a moment. I am not used to doing business on such a large scale. In order to be legal," he gravely explained, "the paper will have to be signed by all the parties to the contract. If there is not enough room, you might paste on an er--"

"Annex?" suggested Patty.

"Exactly," he agreed and with grave politeness bowed her out.

As the bell rang that indicated the end of study that evening, Patty and Conny and Priscilla jumped to their feet, and called a mass meeting of the school. The door was closed after the retreating Miss Jellings, and for half an hour the three made speeches separately and in unison. They were persuasive talkers and they carried the day. The allowance was voted with scarcely a dissenting voice, and the school filed past and signed the lease.

For two weeks St. Ursula's was a busy place--and also Laurel Cottage. Bounds were practically enlarged to include it. The girls worked in gangs during every recreation hour. The cellar was whitewashed by a committee of four, who went in blue, and came out speckled like a plover's egg. Tammas Junior had volunteered for this job, but it was one the girls could not relinquish. They did allow him to kalsomine the

ceilings and hang the wall paper; but they painted the floors and lower reaches of woodwork themselves. The evening's hour of recreation no longer found them dancing, but sitting in a solid phalanx on the stairs hemming sheets and tablecloths. The house was to be furnished with a completeness that poor Mrs. Flannigan, in all her married life, had never known before.

When everything was finished, the day before the holidays, the school in a body wiped its feet on the door-mat and tiptoed through on a last visit of inspection. The cottage contained three rooms, with a cellar and woodshed besides. The wall paper and chintz hangings of the parlor were flaming pink peonies with a wealth of foliage--a touch of flamboyant for some tastes, but Granpa's and Gramma's eyes were failing, and they liked strong colors. Also, crafty questioning had elicited the fact that "pinies" were Gramma's favorite flower. The kitchen had turkey-red curtains with a cheerful strip of rag carpet and two comfortable easy chairs before the hearth. The cellar was generously stocked from the school farm--Miss Sallie's contribution--with potatoes and cabbages and carrots and onions, enough to make Irish stew for three months to come. The woodbin was filled, and even a five-gallon can of kerosene. Sixty-four pairs of eyes had scanned the rooms minutely to make sure that no essential was omitted.

Both the Murphy and Flannigan households had been agog for days over the proposed flitting of the pair. Even Mrs. Tammas had volunteered to wash the windows of the new cottage, and for a week she had scarcely been cross. The old man was already wondering at life. When the time arrived, Mrs. Murphy secretly packed Gramma's belongings and dressed her in her best, under the pretext that she was to be taken in a carriage to a Christmas party to have supper with her husband. The old woman was in a happy flutter at the prospect. Granpa was prepared for the journey by the same simple strategy.

Patty and Conny and Priscilla, as originators of the enterprise, had been appointed to install the old couple; but with tactful forbearance, they delegated the right to the son and daughter. They saw that the fires

were burning, the lamps lighted, and the cat--there was even a cat--asleep on the hearth rug; then when the sound of carriage wheels in front told them that Martin had arrived with his passengers, they quietly slipped out the back way and jogged home to dinner through the snowy dusk.

They were met by a babel of questions.

"Was Gramma pleased with the parlor clock?"

"Did she know what to do with the chaffing-dish?"

"Were they disappointed at not having a feather bed?"

"Did they like the cat, or would they rather have had a parrot?" (The school had been torn asunder on this important point.)

At the dinner table that night--such of the school as was left--chattered only of Laurel Cottage. They were as excited over Gramma and Granpa's happiness, as over their own approaching holiday. All sixty-four were planning to drink tea, on the first day of their return, from Gramma's six cups.

Toward nine o'clock, Patty and Priscilla, by a special dispensation that allowed late hours in vacation, received permission to accompany Conny and ten other dear friends to the station for the western express. Driving back alone in the "hearse," still bubbling with the hilarity of Christmas farewells, they passed the Laurel Cottage.

"I believe they're still up!" said Priscilla. "Let's stop and wish 'em a Merry Christmas, just to make sure they like it."

Martin was readily induced to halt; his discipline also was relaxed in vacation. They approached the door, but hesitated at sight of the picture revealed by the lighted window. To interrupt with the boisterous greetings of the season, seemed like rudely breaking in upon the seclusion of lovers. Only a glance was needed to tell them that the house-warming was successful. Gramma and Granpa were sitting

before the fire in their comfortable red-cushioned rocking-chairs; the lamp shed a glow on their radiant faces, as they held each other's hands and smiled into the future.

Patty and Priscilla tiptoed away and climbed back into the hearse, a touch sobered and thoughtful.

"You know," Patty pondered, "they are just as contented as if they lived in a palace with a million dollars and an automobile! It's funny, isn't it, what a little thing makes some people happy?"

VI

The Silver Buckles

"To be cooped up for three weeks with the two stupidest girls in the school--"

"Kid McCoy isn't so bad," said Conny consolingly.

"She's a horrid little tomboy."

"But you know she's entertaining, Patty."

"She never says a word that isn't slang, and *I* think she's the limit!"

"Well, anyway, Harriet Gladden--"

"Is perfectly dreadful and you know it. I would just as soon spend Christmas with a weeping angel on a tombstone."

"She is pretty mournful," Priscilla agreed. "I've spent three Christmases with her. But anyway, you'll have fun. You can be late for meals whenever you want, and Nora lets you make candy on the kitchen stove."

Patty sniffed disdainfully as she commenced the work of resettling her

room, after the joyous upheaval of a Christmas packing. The other two assisted in silent sympathy. There was after all not much comfort to be offered. School in holiday time was a lonely substitute for home. Priscilla, whose father was a naval officer, and whose home was a peripatetic affair, had become inured to the experience; but this particular year, she was gaily setting out to visit cousins in New York--with three new dresses and two new hats! And Patty, whose home was a mere matter of two hours in a Pullman car, was to be left behind; for six-year old Thomas Wyatt had chosen this inopportune time to come down with scarlet fever. The case was of the lightest; Master Tommy was sitting up in bed and occupying himself with a box of lead soldiers. But the rest of the family were not so comfortable. Some were quarantined in, and the others out. Judge Wyatt had installed himself in a hotel and telegraphed the Dowager to keep Patty at St. Ursula's during the holidays. Poor Patty had been happily packing her trunk when the news arrived; and as she unpacked it, she distributed a few excusable tears through the bureau drawers.

Ordinarily, a number remained for the holidays,--girls whose homes were in the West or South, or whose parents were traveling abroad or getting divorces--but this year the assortment was unusually meager. Patty was left alone in "Paradise Alley." Margarite McCoy, of Texas, was stranded at the end of the South Corridor, and Harriet Gladden of Nowhere, had a suite of eighteen rooms at her disposal in "Lark Lane." These and four teachers made up the household.

Harriet Gladden had been five years straight at St. Ursula's--term time and vacations without a break. She came a lanky little girl of twelve, all legs and arms, and she was now a lanky big girl of seventeen, still all legs and arms. An invisible father, at intervals mentioned in the catalogue, mailed checks to Mrs. Trent; and beyond this made no sign. Poor Harriet was a mournful, silent, neglected child; entirely out of place in the effervescing life that went on around her.

She never had any birthday boxes from home, never any Christmas presents, except those that came from the school. While the other girls were clamoring for mail, Harriet stood in the background silent and

unexpectant. Miss Sallie picked out her clothes, and Miss Sallie's standards were utilitarian rather than æsthetic. Harriet, with no exception, was the worst dressed girl in the school. Even her school uniform, which was an exact twin of sixty-three other uniforms, hung upon her with the grace of a meal-bag. Miss Sallie, with provident foresight, always ordered them a size too large in order to allow her to grow and Harriet invariably wore them out, before she had established a fit.

"What on earth becomes of Harriet Gladden during vacation?" Priscilla once wondered on the opening day.

"They keep her on ice through the summer," was Patty's opinion, "and she never gets entirely thawed out."

As a matter of fact this was, as nearly as possible, what they did do with her. Miss Sallie picked out a quiet, comfortable, healthy farmhouse, and installed Harriet in charge of the farmer's wife. By the end of three months she was so desperately lonely, that she looked forward with pleasurable excitement to the larger isolation of term time.

Patty, one day, had overheard two of the teachers discussing Harriet, and her reported version had been picturesque.

"Her father hasn't seen her for years and years. He just chucks her in here and pays the bills."

"I don't wonder he doesn't want her at home!" said Priscilla.

"There isn't any home. Her mother is divorced, and married again, and living in Paris. That was the reason Harriet couldn't go abroad with the school party last year. Her father was afraid that when she got to Paris, her mother would grab her--not that either of them really wants her, but they like to spite each other."

Priscilla and Conny sat up interestedly. Here was a tragic intrigue, such as you expect to meet only in novels, going on under their very noses.

"You girls who have had a happy home life, cannot imagine the loneliness of a childhood such as Harriet's," said Patty impressively.

"It's dreadful!" Conny cried. "Her father must be a perfect *Beast* not to take any notice of her."

"Harriet has her mother's eyes," Patty explained. "Her father can't bear to look at her, because she reminds him of the happy past that is dead forever."

"Did Miss Wadsworth say that?" they demanded in an interested chorus.

"Not in exactly those words," Patty confessed. "I just gathered the outline."

This story, with picturesque additions, lost no time in making the rounds of the school. Had Harriet chosen to play up to the romantic and melancholy rôle she was cast for, she might have attained popularity of a sort; but Harriet did not have the slightest trace of the histrionic in her make-up. She merely moped about, and continued to be heavy and uninteresting. Other more exciting matters demanded public attention; and Harriet and her blasted childhood were forgotten.

Patty stood on the veranda waving good-by to the last hearseful of Christmas travelers, then turned indoors to face an empty three weeks. As she was listlessly preparing to mount the stairs, Maggie waylaid her with the message:

"Mrs. Trent would like to speak to you in her private study, Miss Patty."

Patty turned back, wondering for just which of her latest activities she was to be called to account. A visit to the Dowager's private study usually meant that a storm was brewing. She found the four left-behind teachers cosily gathered about the tea table, and to her surprise, was received with four affable smiles.

"Sit down, Patty, and have some tea."

The Dowager motioned her to a chair, while she mingled an inch of tea with three inches of hot water. Miss Sallie furnished a fringed napkin, Miss Jellings presented buttered toast, and Miss Wadsworth, salted almonds. Patty blinked dazedly and accepted the offerings. To be waited on by four teachers was an entirely new experience. Her spirits rose considerably as she mentally framed the story for Priscilla's and Conny's delectation. When she had ceased to wonder why she was being thus honored, the reason appeared.

"I am sorry, Patty," said the Dowager, "that none of your special friends are to be here this year; but I am sure that you and Margarite and Harriet will get on very happily. Breakfast will be half an hour later than usual, and the rules about bounds will be somewhat relaxed--only of course we must always know where to find you. I shall try to plan a matinée party in the city, and Miss Sallie will take you to spend a day at the farm. The ice is strong enough now for you to skate, and Martin will get out the sleds for you to coast. You must be in the open air as much as possible; and I shall be very pleased if you and Margarite can interest Harriet in out-of-door sports. Speaking of Harriet--"

The Dowager hesitated momentarily, and Patty's acute understanding realized that at last they were getting at the kernel of the interview. The tea and toast had been merely wrapping. She listened with a touch of suspicion, while the Dowager lowered her voice with an air of confidence.

"Speaking of Harriet, I should like to enlist your sympathy, Patty. She is very sweet and genuine. A girl that anyone might be proud to have for a friend. But through an accident, such as sometimes happens in a crowded, busy, selfish community, she has been overlooked and left behind. Harriet has never seemed to adjust herself so readily as most girls; and I fear that the poor child is often very lonely. It would be highly gratifying to me if you would make an effort to be friendly with her. I am sure that she will meet your advances half way."

Patty murmured a few polite phrases and retired to dress for dinner,

stubbornly resolved to be as distant with Harriet as possible. Her friendship was not a commodity to be bought with tea and buttered toast.

The three girls had dinner alone at a little candle-lit table set in a corner of the dining-room, while the four teachers occupied a conveniently distant table in the opposite corner.

Patty commenced the meal by being as monosyllabic as possible; but it was not her natural attitude toward the world, and by the time the veal had arrived (it was Wednesday night) she was laughing whole-heartedly at Kid's ingenuous conversation. Miss McCoy's vocabulary was rich in the vernacular of the plains, and in vacation she let herself go. During term time she was forced to curb her discourse, owing to the penny tax on slang. Otherwise, her entire allowance would have gone to swell the public coffers.

It was a relief to let dinner-table conversation flow where it listed; usually, with a teacher in attendance and the route marked out, there was a cramped formality about the meal. French conversation was supposed to occupy the first three courses five nights in the week, and every girl must contribute at least two remarks. It cannot be said that on French nights the dining-room was garrulous. Saturday night was devoted to a discussion (in English) of current events, gleaned from a study of the editorials in the morning paper. Nobody at St. Ursula's had much time for editorials, and even on an English Saturday conversation languished. But the school made up for it on Sunday. This day, being *festa*, they could talk about anything they chose; and sixty-four magpies chattering their utmost, would have been silence in comparison to St. Ursula's at dinner time on Sunday.

* * * * *

The four days preceding Christmas passed with unexpected swiftness. A snow-storm marked the first, followed by three days of glistening sunshine. Martin got out the bobs, and the girls piled in and rode to the wood-lot for evergreens. There were many errands in the village, and the novelty of not always having a teacher at one's heels, proved in

itself diverting.

Patty found the two companions which circumstances had forced upon her unexpectedly companionable. They skated and coasted and had snow fights; and Harriet, to Patty's wide-eyed astonishment, assumed a very appreciable animation. On Christmas Eve they had been out with Martin delivering Christmas baskets to old time protégés of the school; and on the way home, through pure overflowing animal spirits, for a mile or more they had "caught on" the back of the bob, and then tumbled out and run and caught on again, until they finally dove head foremost into the big piled-up drift by the porte-cochère. They shook the snow from their clothes, like puppies from a pond, and laughing and excited trooped indoors. Harriet's cheeks were red from contact with the snow, her usually prim hair was a tangled mass about her face, her big dark eyes had lost their mournful look. They were merry, mischievous, girlish eyes. She was not merely pretty, but beautiful, in a wild, unusual gypsyish way that compelled attention.

"I say," Patty whispered to Kid McCoy as they divested themselves of rubbers and leggins in the lower hall. "Look at Harriet! Isn't she pretty?"

"Golly!" murmured the Kid. "If she knew enough to play up to her looks, she'd be the ravingest beauty in all the school."

"Let's make her!" said Patty.

At the top of the stairs they met Osaki with a hammer and chisel.

"I open two box," he observed. "One Mees Margarite McCoy. One Mees Patty Wyatt."

"Hooray!" cried the Kid, starting at a gallop for her room in the South Wing.

A Christmas box to Kid McCoy meant a lavish wealth of new possessions out of all proportion to her desserts. She owned a bachelor guardian who was subject to fits of such erratic generosity that the

Dowager had regularly to remind him that Margarite was but a school girl with simple tastes. Fortunately he always forgot this warning before the next Christmas--or else he knew Kid too well to believe it--and the boxes continued to come.

Patty had also started without ceremony for Paradise Alley, when she became aware of deserted Harriet, slowly trailing down the dim length of Lark Lane. She ran back and grasped her by an elbow.

"Come on, Harry! And help me open my box."

Harriet's face flushed with sudden pleasure; it was the first time, in the five and a half years of her school career, that she had ever achieved the dignity of a nickname. She accompanied Patty with some degree of eagerness. The next best thing to receiving a Christmas box of your own, is to be present at the reception of a friend's.

It was a big square wooden box, packed to the brim with smaller boxes and parcels tied with ribbon and holly, and tucked into every crevice funny surprises. You could picture, just from looking at it, the kind of home that it came from, filled with jokes and nonsense and love.

"It's the first Christmas I've ever spent away from home," said Patty, with the suggestion of a quiver in her voice.

But her momentary soberness did not last; the business of exploration was too absorbing to allow any divided emotion. Harriet sat on the edge of the bed and watched in silence, while Patty gaily strewed the floor with tissue paper and scarlet ribbon. She unpacked a wide assortment of gloves and books and trinkets, each with a message of love. Even the cook had baked a Christmas cake with a fancy top. And little Tommy, in wobbly uphill printing, had labeled an elephant filled with candy, "FOR DERE CISTER FROM TOM."

Patty laughed happily as she plumped a chocolate into her mouth, and dropped the elephant into Harriet's lap.

"Aren't they dears to go to such a lot of trouble? I tell you, it pays to

stay away sometimes, they think such a lot more of you! This is from Mother," she added, as she pried off the cover of a big dressmaker's box, and lifted out a filmy dancing frock of pink crêpe.

"Isn't it perfectly sweet?" she demanded, "and I didn't need it a bit! Don't you love to get things you don't need?"

"I never do," said Harriet.

Patty was already deep in another parcel.

"From Daddy, with all the love in the world," she read. "Dear old Dad! What on earth do you s'pose it is? I hope Mother suggested something. He's a perfect idiot about choosing presents, unless--Oh!" she squealed. "Pink silk stockings and slippers to match; and look at those perfectly lovely buckles!"

She offered for Harriet's inspection a pink satin slipper adorned with the daintiest of silver buckles, and with heels dizzily suggestive of France.

"Isn't my father a lamb?" Patty gaily kissed her hand toward a dignified, judicial-looking portrait on the bureau. "Mother suggested the slippers, of course, but the buckles and French heels were his own idea. She likes me sensible, and he likes me frivolous."

She was deep in the absorbing business of holding the pink frock before the glass to make sure that the color was becoming, when she was suddenly arrested by the sound of a sob, and she turned to see Harriet throw herself across the bed and clutch the pillow in a storm of weeping. Patty stared with wide-open eyes; she herself did not indulge in such emotional demonstrations, and she could not imagine any possible cause. She moved the pink satin slippers out of reach of Harriet's thrashing feet, gathered up the fallen elephant and scattered chocolates, and sat down to wait until the cataclysm should pass.

"What's the matter?" she mildly inquired, when Harriet's sobs gave place to choking gasps.

"My father never sent me any s-silver b-buckles."

"He's way off in Mexico," said Patty, awkwardly groping for consolation.

"He never sends me anything! He doesn't even know me. He wouldn't recognize me if he met me on the street."

"Oh, yes, he would," Patty assured her with doubtful comfort. "You haven't changed a bit in four years."

"And he wouldn't like me if he did know me. I'm not pretty, and my clothes are never nice, and--" Harriet was off again.

Patty regarded her for a moment of thoughtful silence, then she decided on a new tack. She stretched out a hand and shook her vigorously.

"For goodness' sake, stop crying! That's what's the matter with your father. No man can stand having tears dripped down his neck all the time."

Harriet arrested her sobs to stare.

"If you could see the way you look when you cry! Sort of streaked. Come here!" She took her by the shoulder and faced her before the mirror. "Did you ever see such a fright? And I was just thinking, before you began, about how pretty you looked. I was, honestly. You could be as pretty as any of the rest of us, if you'd only make up your mind--"

"No, I couldn't! I'm just as ugly as I can be. Nobody likes me and--"

"It's your own fault!" said Patty sharply. "If you were fat, like Irene McCullough, or if you didn't have any chin like Evalina Smith, there might be some reason, but there isn't anything on earth the matter with you, except that you're so *damp*! You cry all the time, and it gets tiresome to be forever sympathizing. I'm telling you the truth because I'm beginning to like you. There's never any use bothering to tell people the truth when you don't like them. The reason Conny and Pris and I

get on so well together, is because we always tell each other the exact truth about our faults. Then we have a chance to correct them--that's what makes us so nice," she added modestly.

Harriet sat with her mouth open, too surprised to cry.

"And your clothes are awful," pursued Patty interestedly. "You ought not to let Miss Sallie pick 'em out. Miss Sallie's nice; I like her a lot, but she doesn't know any more than a rabbit about clothes; you can tell that by the way she dresses herself. And then, too, you'd be a lot nicer if you wouldn't be so stiff. If you'd just laugh the way the rest of us do--"

"How can I laugh when I don't think things are funny? The jokes the girls make are awfully silly--"

Speech was no longer possible, for Kid McCoy came stampeding down the corridor with as much racket as a cavalcade of horses. She was decked in a fur scarf and a necklace set with pearls, she wore a muff on her head, drum-major fashion; a lace handkerchief and a carved ivory fan protruded from the pocket of her blouse and a pink chiffon scarf floated from her shoulders; her wrist was adorned with an Oriental bracelet and she was lugging in her arms a silver-mounted Mexican saddle, of a type that might be suited to the plains of Texas, but never to the respectable country lanes adjacent to St. Ursula's.

"Bully for Guardie!" she shouted as she descended upon them. "He's a daisy; he's a ducky; he's a lamb. Did you ever see such a perfectly corking saddle?"

She plumped it over a chair, transformed the pink chiffon scarf into a bridle, and proceeded to mount and canter off.

"Get up! Whoa! Hi, there! Clear the road."

Harriet jumped aside to avoid being bumped, while Patty snatched her pink frock from the path of the runaway. They were shrieking with laughter, even Harriet, the tearful.

"Now you see!" said Patty, suddenly interrupting her mirth. "It's perfectly easy to laugh if you just let yourself go. Kid isn't really funny. She's just as silly as she can be."

Kid brought her horse to a stand.

"Well I like that!"

"Excuse me for telling the truth," said Patty politely, "I'm just using you for an illustration--Heavens! There's the bell!"

She commenced unlacing her blouse with one hand, while she pushed her guests to the door with the other.

"Hurry and dress, and come back to button me up. It would be a very delicate attention for us to be on time to-night. We've been late for every meal since vacation began."

* * * * *

The girls spent Christmas morning coasting. They were on time for luncheon--and with appetites!

The meal was half over when Osaki appeared with a telegram, which he handed to the Dowager. She read it with agitated surprise and passed it to Miss Sallie, who raised her eyebrows and handed it to Miss Wadsworth, who was thrown into a very visible flutter.

"What on earth can it be?" Kid wondered.

"Lordy's eloped, and they've got to hunt for a new Latin teacher," was Patty's interpretation.

As the three girls left the table, the Dowager waylaid Harriet.

"Step into my study a moment. A telegram has just come--"

Patty and Kid climbed the stairs in wide-eyed wonder.

"It can't be bad news, for Miss Sallie was smiling--" meditated Patty. "And I can't think of any good news that can be happening to Harriet."

Ten minutes later there was the sound of footsteps on the stairs, and Harriet burst into Patty's room wild with excitement.

"He's coming!"

"Who?"

"My father."

"When?"

"Right now--this afternoon--He's been in New York on business, and is coming to see me for Christmas."

"I'm so glad!" said Patty heartily. "Now, you see the reason he hasn't come before is because he has been away off in Mexico."

Harriet shook her head, with a sudden drop in her animation.

"I suppose he thinks he ought."

"Nonsense!"

"It's so. He doesn't care for me--really. He likes girls to be jolly and pretty and clever like you."

"Well, then--*be* jolly and pretty and clever like me."

Harriet's eyes sought the mirror, and filled with tears.

"You're a perfect idiot!" said Patty, despairingly.

"I'm an awful fright in my green dress," said Harriet.

"Yes," Patty grudgingly conceded. "You are."

"The skirt is too short, and the waist is too long."

"And the sleeves are sort of queer," said Patty.

Faced by these dispiriting facts, she felt her enthusiasm ebbing.

"What time is he coming?" she asked.

"Four o'clock."

"That gives us two hours," Patty rallied her forces. "One can do an awful lot in two hours. If you were only nearer my size, you could wear my new pink dress--but I'm afraid--" She regarded Harriet's long legs dubiously. "I'll tell you!" she added, in a rush of generosity. "We'll take out the tucks and let down the hem."

"Oh, Patty!" Harriet was tearfully afraid of spoiling the gown. But when Patty's zeal in any cause was roused, all other considerations were swept aside. The new frock was fetched from the closet, and the ripping began.

"And you can wear Kid's new pearl necklace and pink scarf, and my silk stockings and slippers--if you can get 'em on--and I think Conny left a lace petticoat that came back from the laundry too late to pack--and--Here's Kid now!"

Miss McCoy's sympathies were enlisted and in fifteen minutes the task of transforming a remonstrating, excited, and occasionally tearful Harriet into the school beauty, was going gaily forward. Kid McCoy was supposed to be an irreclaimable tomboy, but in this crucial moment the eternal feminine came triumphantly to the fore. She sat herself down, with Patty's manicure scissors, and for three-quarters of an hour painstakingly ripped out tucks.

Patty meanwhile addressed her attention to Harriet's hair.

"Don't strain it back so tight," she ordered. "It looks as though you'd done it with a monkey-wrench. Here! Give me the comb."

She pushed Harriet into a chair, tied a towel about her neck, and accomplished the coifing by force.

"How's that?" she demanded of Kid.

"Bully!" Kid mumbled, her mouth full of pins.

Harriet's hair was rippled loosely about her face, and tied with a pink ribbon bow. The ribbon belonged to Conny Wilder, and had heretofore figured as a belt; but individual property rights were forced to bow before the cause.

The slippers and stockings did prove too small, and Patty frenziedly ransacked the bureaus of a dozen of her absent friends in the vain hope of unearthing pink footwear. In the end, she had reluctantly to permit Harriet's appearing in her own simple cotton hose and patent leather pumps.

"But after all," Patty reassured her, "it's better for you to wear black. Your feet would be sort of conspicuous in pink." She was still in her truthful mood. "I'll tell you!" she cried, "you can wear my silver buckles." And she commenced cruelly wrenching them from their pink chiffon setting.

[Illustration: Patty meanwhile addressed her attention to Harriet's hair.]

"Patty! *Don't!*" Harriet gasped at the sacrilege.

"They're just the last touch that your costume needs." Patty ruthlessly carried on the work of destruction. "When your father sees those buckles, he'll think you're *beautiful*!"

For a feverish hour they worked. They clothed her triumphantly in all the grandeur that they could command. The entire corridor had contributed its quota, even to the lace-edged handkerchief with a hand-embroidered "H" that had been left behind in Hester Pringle's top drawer. The two turned her critically before the mirror, the pride of creation in their eyes. As Kid had truly presaged, she was the ravingest

beauty in all the school.

Irish Maggie appeared in the door.

"Mr. Gladden is in the drawin'-room, Miss Harriet." She stopped and stared. "Sure, ye're that beautiful I didn't know ye!"

Harriet went with a laugh--and a fighting light in her eyes.

Patty and Kid restlessly set themselves to reducing the chaos that this sudden butterfly flight had caused in Paradise Alley--it is always dreary work setting things to rights, after the climax of an event has been reached.

It was an hour later that the sudden quick patter of feet sounded in the hall, and Harriet ran in--danced in--her eyes were shining; she was a picture of youth and happiness and bubbling spirits.

"Well?" cried Patty and Kid in a breath.

She stretched out her wrist and displayed a gold-linked bracelet set with a tiny watch.

"Look!" she cried, "he brought me that for Christmas. And I'm going to have all the dresses I want, and Miss Sallie isn't going to pick them out ever again. And he's going to stay for dinner to-night, and eat at the little table with us. And he's going to take us into town next Saturday for luncheon and the matinée, and the Dowager says we may go!"

"Gee!" observed the Kid. "It paid for all the trouble we took."

"And what do you think?" Harriet caught her breath in a little gasp. "*He likes me!*"

"I knew those silver buckles would fetch him!" said Patty.

VII

"Uncle Bobby"

While St. Ursula's was still dallying with a belated morning-after-Christmas breakfast, the mail arrived, bringing among other matters, a letter for Patty from her mother. It contained cheering news as to Tommy's scarlet fever, and the expressed hope that school was not too lonely during the holidays; it ended with the statement that Mr. Robert Pendleton was going to be in the city on business, and had promised to run out to St. Ursula's to see her little daughter.

The last item Patty read aloud to Harriet Gladden and Kid McCoy (christened Margarite). The three "left-behinds" were occupying a table together in a secluded corner of the dining-room.

"Who's Mr. Robert Pendleton?" inquired Kid, looking up from her own letter.

"He used to be my father's private secretary when I was a little girl. I always called him 'Uncle Bobby.'"

Kid returned to her mail. She took no interest in the race of uncles, either real or fictitious. But Patty, being in a reminiscent mood, continued the conversation with Harriet, who had no mail to deflect her.

"Then he went away and commenced practising for himself. It's been ages since I've seen him; but he was really awfully nice. He used to spend his entire time--when he wasn't writing Father's speeches--in getting me out of scrapes. I had a goat named Billy-Boy--"

"Is he married?" asked Harriet.

"N-no, I don't think so. I believe he had a disappointment in his youth, that broke his heart."

"What fun!" cried Kid, reëmerging. "Is it still broken?"

"I suppose so," said Patty.

"How old is he?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. He must be *quite* old by now." (Her tone suggested that he was tottering on the brink of the grave.) "It has been seven years since I've seen him, and he was through college then."

Kid dismissed the subject. Old men, even with broken hearts, contained no interest for her.

That afternoon, as the three girls were gathered in Patty's room enjoying an indigestible four o'clock tea of milk and bread and butter (furnished by the school) and fruit cake and candy and olives and stuffed prunes, the expressman arrived with a belated consignment of Christmas gifts, among them a long narrow parcel addressed to Patty. She tore off the wrapping, to find a note and a white pasteboard box. She read the note aloud while the others looked over her shoulder. Patty always generously shared experiences with anyone who might be near.

"*My Dear Patty,*--

"Have you forgotten 'Uncle Bobby' who used to stand between you and many well-deserved spankings? I trust that you have grown into a VERY GOOD GIRL now that you are old enough to go away to school!

"I am coming to see for myself on Thursday afternoon. In the meantime, please accept the accompanying Christmas remembrance, with the hope that you are having a happy holiday, in spite of having to spend it away from home.

"Your old playfellow, "ROBERT PENDLETON."

"What do you s'pose it is?" asked Patty, as she addressed herself to unknotting the gold cord on the box.

"I hope it's either flowers or candy," Harriet returned. "Miss Sallie says it isn't proper to--"

"Looks to me like American Beauty roses," suggested Kid McCoy.

Patty beamed.

"Isn't it a lark to be getting flowers from a *man*? I feel awfully grown up!"

She lifted the cover, removed a mass of tissue paper, and revealed a blue-eyed, smiling doll.

The three girls stared for a bewildered moment, then Patty slid to the floor, and buried her head in her arms against the bed and laughed.

"It's got real hair!" said Harriet, gently lifting the doll from its bed of tissue paper, and entering upon a detailed inspection. "Its clothes come off, and it opens and shuts its eyes."

"Whoop!" shouted Kid McCoy, as she snatched a shoe-horn from the bureau and commenced an Indian war dance.

Patty checked her hysterics sufficiently to rescue her new treasure from the danger of being scalped. As she squeezed the doll in her arms, safe from harm's way, it opened its lips and emitted a grateful, "*Ma-ma!*"

They laughed afresh. They laid on the floor and rolled in an ecstasy of mirth until they were weak and gasping. Could Uncle Bobby have witnessed the joy his gift brought to three marooned St. Ursulites, he would have indeed been gratified. They continued to laugh all that day and the following morning. By afternoon Patty had just recovered her self-control sufficiently to carry off with decent gravity Uncle Bobby's promised visit.

As a usual thing, callers were discouraged at St. Ursula's. They must come from away, accredited with letters from the parents, and then must pass an alarming assemblage of chaperones. Miss Sallie remained in the drawing-room during the first half of the call (which could last an hour), but was then supposed to withdraw. But Miss Sallie was a social soul, and she frequently neglected to withdraw. The poor girl

would sit silent in the corner, a smile upon her lips, mutiny in her heart, while Miss Sallie entertained the caller.

But rules were somewhat relaxed in the holidays. On the day of Uncle Bobby's visit, by a fortuitous circumstance, Miss Sallie was five miles away, superintending a new incubator house at the school farm. The Dowager and Miss Wadsworth and Miss Jellings were scheduled for a reception in the village, and the other teachers were all away for the holidays. Patty was told to receive him herself, and to remember her manners, and let him do a little of the talking.

This left her beautifully free to carry out the outrageous scheme that she had concocted over night. Harriet and Kid lent their delighted assistance, and the three spent the morning planning for her entrance in character. They successfully looted the "Baby Ward" where the fifteen little girls of the school occupied fifteen little white cots set in fifteen alcoves. A white, stiffly starched sailor suit was discovered, with a flaring blue linen collar, and a kilted skirt, that was shockingly short. Kid McCoy gleefully unearthed a pair of blue and white socks that exactly matched the dress, but they proved very much too small.

"They wouldn't look well anyway," said Patty, philosophically, "I've got an awful scratch on one knee."

Gymnasium slippers with spring heels reduced her five feet by an inch. She spent the early afternoon persuading her hair to hang in a row of curls, with a spanking blue bow over her left ear. When she was finished, she made as sweet a little girl as one would ever find romping in the park on a sunny morning.

"What will you do if he kisses you?" inquired Kid McCoy.

"I'll try not to laugh," said Patty.

She occupied the fifteen minutes of waiting in a dress rehearsal. By the time Maggie arrived with the tidings that the visitor was below, she had her part letter-perfect. Kid and Harriet followed as far as the first landing, where they remained dangling over the banisters, while Patty

shouldered her doll and descended to the drawing-room.

She sidled bashfully into the door, dropped a courtesy, and extended a timid hand to the tall young gentleman who rose and advanced to meet her.

"How do you do, Uncle Wobert?" she lisped.

"Well, well! Is this little Patty?"

He took her by the chin and turned up her face for a closer inspection--Mr. Pendleton was, mercifully, somewhat near-sighted. She smiled back sweetly, with wide, innocent, baby eyes.

"You're getting to be a great big girl!" he pronounced with fatherly approval. "You reach almost to my shoulder."

She settled herself far back in a deep leather chair, and sat primly upright, her feet sticking straight out in front, while she clasped the doll in her arms.

"Sank you very much, Uncle Bobby, for my perfectly beautiful doll!" Patty imprinted a kiss upon the smiling bisque lips.

Uncle Bobby watched with gratified approval. He liked this early manifestation of the motherly instinct.

"And what are you going to name her?" he inquired.

"I can't make up my mind." She raised anxious eyes to his.

"How would Patty Junior do?"

She repudiated the suggestion; and they finally determined upon Alice, after "Alice in Wonderland." This point happily disposed of, they settled themselves for conversation. He told her about a Christmas pantomime he had seen in London, with little girls and boys for actors.

Patty listened, deeply interested.

"I'll send you the fairy book that has the story of the play," he promised, "with colored pictures; and then you can read it for yourself. You know how to read, of course?" he added.

"Oh, yes!" said Patty, reproachfully. "I've known how to read a *long* time. I can read anyfing--if it has big print."

"Well! You are coming on!" said Uncle Bobby.

They fell to reminiscing, and the conversation turned to Billy-Boy.

"Do you remember the time he chewed up his rope and came to church?" Patty dimpled at the recollection.

"Jove! I'll never forget it!"

"And usually Faver found an excuse for not going, but that Sunday Mover *made* him, and when he saw Billy-Boy marching up the aisle, with a sort of dignified smile on his face--"

Uncle Bobby threw back his head and laughed.

"I thought the Judge would have a stroke of apoplexy!" he declared.

"But the funniest thing," said Patty, "was to see you and Father trying to get him out! You pushed and Father pulled, and first Billy balked and then he butted."

She suddenly realized that she had neglected to lisp, but Uncle Bobby was too taken up with the story to be conscious of any lapse. Patty inconspicuously reassumed her character.

"And Faver scolded me because the rope broke--and it wasn't my fault at all!" she added with a pathetic quiver of the lips. "And the next day he had Billy-Boy shot."

At the remembrance Patty drooped her head over the doll in her arms. Uncle Bobby hastily offered comfort.

"Never mind, Patty! Maybe you'll have another goat some day."

She shook her head, with the suggestion of a sob.

"No, I never will! They don't let us keep goats here. And I loved Billy-Boy. I'm *awfully* lonely without him."

"There, there, Patty! You're too big a girl to cry." Uncle Bobby patted her curls, with kindly solicitude. "How would you like to go to the circus with me some day next week, and see all the animals?"

Patty cheered up.

"Will there be ele-phunts?" she asked.

"There'll be several," he promised. "And lions and tigers and camels."

"Oh, goody!" she clapped her hands and smiled through her tears. "I'd love to go. Sank you very, *very* much."

Half an hour later Patty rejoined her friends in Paradise Alley. She executed a few steps of the sailor's hornpipe with the doll as partner, then plumped herself onto the middle of the bed and laughingly regarded her two companions through over-hanging curls.

"Tell us what he said," Kid implored. "We nearly pulled our necks out by the roots stretching over the banisters, but we couldn't hear a word."

"Did he kiss you?" asked Harriet.

"N-no." There was a touch of regret in her tone. "But he patted me on the head. He has a very sweet way with children. You'd think he'd had a course in kindergarten training."

"What did you talk about?" insisted Kid, eagerly.

Patty outlined the conversation.

"And he's going to take me to the circus next Wednesday," she ended,

"to see the elephunts!"

"The Dowager will never let you go," objected Harriet.

"Oh, yes, she will!" said Patty. "It's perfectly proper to go to the circus with your uncle--'specially in vacation. We've got it all planned. I'm to go into town with Waddy. I heard her say she had an appointment at the dentist's--and he'll be at the station with a hansom--"

"More likely a baby carriage," Kid put in quickly.

"Miss Wadsworth will never take you into town in *those* clothes," Harriet objected.

Patty hugged her knees and rocked back and forth, while her dimples came and went.

"I think," she said, "that the next time I'll give him an entirely different kind of a sensation."

And she did.

Anticipatory of the coming event, she sent her suit to the tailor's and had him lengthen the hem of the skirt two inches. She spent an entire morning retrimming her hat along more mature lines, and she purchased a veil--with spots! She also spent twenty-five cents for hairpins, and did up her hair on the top of her head. She wore Kid McCoy's Christmas furs and Harriet's bracelet watch; and, as she set off with a somewhat bewildered Miss Wadsworth, they assured her that she looked *old*.

They reached the city a trifle late for Miss Wadsworth's appointment. Patty spied Mr. Pendleton across the waiting-room.

"There's Uncle Robert!" she said; and to her intense satisfaction, Miss Wadsworth left her to accost him alone.

She sauntered over in a very blasé fashion and held out her hand. The spots in the veil seemed to dazzle him; for a moment he did not

recognize her.

"Mr. Pendleton! How do you do?" Patty smiled cordially. "It's really awfully good of you to devote so much time to my entertainment. And so original of you to think of a circus! I haven't attended a circus for years. It's really refreshing after such a dose of Shakespeare and Ibsen as the theaters have been offering this winter."

Mr. Pendleton offered a limp hand and hailed a hansom without comment. He leaned back in the corner and continued to stare for three silent minutes; then he threw back his head and laughed.

"Good Lord, Patty! Do you mean to tell me that you've grown up?"

Patty laughed too.

"Well, Uncle Bobby, what do you think about it?"

* * * * *

Dinner was half over that night before the two travelers returned. Patty dropped into her seat and unfolded her napkin, with the weary air of a society woman of many engagements.

"What happened?" the other two clamored. "Tell us about it! Was the circus nice?"

Patty nodded.

"The circus was charming--and so were the elephants--and so was Uncle Bobby. We had tea afterwards; and he gave me a bunch of violets and a box of candy, instead of the fairy book. He said he wouldn't be called 'Uncle Bobby' by anyone as old as me--that I'd got to drop the 'Uncle'--It's funny, you know, but he really seems younger than he did seven years ago."

Patty dimpled and cast a wary eye toward the faculty table across the room.

"He says he has business quite often in this neighborhood."

VIII

The Society of Associated Sirens

Conny had gone home to recuperate from a severe attack of pink-eye. Priscilla had gone to Porto Rico to spend two weeks with her father and the Atlantic Fleet. Patty, lonely and abandoned, was thrown upon the school for society; and Patty at large, was very likely to get into trouble.

On the Saturday following the double departure, she, with Rosalie Patton and Mae Van Arsdale, made a trip into the city in charge of Miss Wadsworth, to accomplish some spring shopping. Patty and Rosalie each needed new hats--besides such minor matters as gloves and shoes and petticoats--and Mae was to have a fitting for her new tailor suit. These duties performed, the afternoon was to be given over to relaxation; at least to such relaxation as a Shakespearean tragedy affords.

But when they presented themselves at the theater, they were faced by the announcement that the star had met with an automobile accident on his way to the performance, and that he was too damaged to appear; money would be refunded at the box office. The girls still clamored for their matinée, and Miss Wadsworth hurriedly cast about for a fitting substitute for Hamlet.

Miss Wadsworth was middle-aged and vacillating and easily-led and ladylike and shockable. She herself knew that she had no strength of character; and she conscientiously strove to overcome this cardinal defect in a chaperon, by stubbornly opposing whatever her charges elected to do.

To-day they voted for a French farce with John Drew as hero. Miss Wadsworth said "no" with all the firmness she could assume, and herself picked out a drama entitled "The Wizard of the Nile," under the

impression that it would assist their knowledge of ancient Egypt.

But the Wizard turned out to be a recent and spurious imitation of the original historical wizard. She was ultra-modern English, with a French flavor. The time was to-morrow, and the scene the terrace of Shepherd's Hotel. She wore long, clinging robes of chiffon and gold cut in the style of Cleopatra along Parisian lines. Her rose-tinted ears were enhanced by drooping earrings, and her eyes were cunningly lengthened at the corners, in a fetching Egyptian slant. She was very beautiful and very merciless; she broke every masculine heart in Cairo. As a climax to her shocking career of wickedness, she *smoked cigarettes*!

Poor bewildered Miss Wadsworth sat through the four acts, worried, breathless, horrified--fascinated; but the three girls were simply fascinated. They thrilled over the scenery and music and costumes all the way back in the train. Cairo, to their dazzled eyes, opened up realms of adventure, undreamed of in the proper bounds of St. Ursula's. The Mecca of all travel had become Shepherd's Hotel.

That night, long after "Lights-out" had rung, when Patty's mind was becoming an agreeable jumble of sphinxes and pyramids and English officers, she was suddenly startled wide awake by feeling two hands rise from the darkness and clutch her shoulders on the right and left. She sat upright with a very audible gasp, and demanded in unguardedly loud tones, "Who's that?"

The two hands instantly covered her mouth.

"Sh-h! Keep quiet! Haven't you any sense?"

"Mademoiselle's door is wide open, and Lordy's visiting her."

Rosalie perched on the right of the bed, and Mae Mertelle on the left.

"What do you want?" asked Patty, crossly.

"We've got a perfectly splendid idea," whispered Rosalie.

"A secret society," echoed Mae Mertelle.

"Let me alone!" growled Patty. "I want to go to sleep."

She laid down again in the narrow space left by her visitors. They paid no attention to her inhospitality, but drawing their bath robes closer about them, settled down to talk. Patty, being comfortably inside and warm, while they shivered outside, was finally induced to lend a drowsy ear.

"I've thought of a new society," said Mae Mertelle. She did not propose to share the honor of creation with Rosalie. "And it's going to be *really* secret this time. I'm not going to let in the whole school. Only us three. And this society hasn't just a few silly secrets; it has an *aim*."

"We're going to call it the Society of Associated Sirens," Rosalie eagerly broke in.

"That *what*?" demanded Patty.

Rosalie rolled off the sonorous syllables a second time.

"The Sho-shiety of Ash-sho-she-ated Shi-rens," Patty mumbled sleepily. "It's too hard to say."

"Oh, but we won't call it that in public. The name's a secret. We'll call it the S. A. S."

"What's it for?"

"You'll promise not to tell?" Mae asked guardedly.

"No, of course I won't tell."

"Not even Pris and Conny when they get back?"

"We'll make them members," said Patty.

"Well--perhaps--but this is the kind of society that's better small. And

we three are the only ones who really ought to be members, because we saw the play. But anyhow; you must promise not to tell unless Rosalie and I give you permission. Do you promise that?"

"Oh, yes! I promise. What's it for?"

"We're going to become sirens," Mae whispered impressively. "We're going to be beautiful and fascinating and ruthless--"

"Like Cleopatra," said Rosalie.

"And avenge ourselves on Man," added Mae.

"Avenge ourselves--what for?" inquired Patty, somewhat dazed.

"Why--for--for breaking our hearts and destroying our faith in--"

"My heart hasn't been broken."

"Not yet," said Mae with a touch of impatience, "because you don't know any men, but you will know them some day, and then your heart will be broken. You ought to have your weapons ready."

"In time of peace prepare for war," quoted Rosalie.

"Do--you think it's quite ladylike to be a siren?" asked Patty dubiously.

"It's *perfectly* ladylike!" said Mae. "Nobody but a lady could possibly be one. Did you ever hear of a washerwoman who was a siren?"

"N-no," Patty confessed. "I don't believe I have."

"And look at Cleopatra," put in Rosalie. "I'm sure she was a lady."

"All right!" Patty agreed. "What are we going to do?"

"We're going to become beautiful and fascinating, with a fatal charm that ensnares every man who approaches."

"Do you think we can?" There was some doubt in Patty's tone.

"Mae's got a book," put in Rosalie eagerly, "about 'Beauty and Grace.' You soak your face in oatmeal and almond-oil and honey, and let your hair hang in the sun, and whiten your nose with lemon juice, and wear gloves at night, and--"

"You really ought to have a bath of asses' milk," interrupted Mae. "Cleopatra had; but I'm afraid it will be impossible to get."

"And you ought to learn to sing," added Rosalie, "and have some one song like the 'Lorelei!' that you always hum when you're about to ensnare a victim."

The project was foreign to Patty's ordinary train of thought, but it did have an element of novelty and allurement. Neither Mae nor Rosalie were the partners she would naturally have chosen in any enterprise, but circumstances had thrown them together that day, and Patty was an obliging soul. Also, her natural common sense was wandering; she was still under the spell of the Egyptian sorceress.

They discussed the new society for several minutes more, until they heard the murmur of Miss Lord's voice, bidding Mademoiselle goodnight.

"There's Lordy!" Patty whispered warily. "I think you'd better to go to bed. We can plan the rest in the morning."

"Yes, let's," said Rosalie, with a shiver. "I'm freezing!"

"But we must first take the vow," insisted Mae Mertelle. "We ought really to do it at midnight--but maybe half-past ten will do as well. I've got it all planned. You two say it after me."

They joined hands and whispered in turn:

"I most solemnly promise to keep secret the name and object of this society; and if I break this oath, may I become freckled and bald and

squint-eyed and pigeon-toed, now and forever more."

The three members of the S. A. S. devoted their leisure during the next few days to a careful study of the work on Beauty; and painstakingly set about putting its precepts into practice. Some of these seemed perplexingly at variance. The hair, for example, was to be exposed to air and sunlight, but the face was not. They cleverly circumvented this difficulty however. The week's allowance went for chamois-skin. During every recreation hour, they retired to an airy knoll in the lower pasture, and sat in a patient row, with hair streaming in the wind, and faces protected by homemade masks.

One afternoon, a little Junior A, wandering far afield in a game of hide-and-seek, came upon them unawares; and returned to the safe confines of the playground with frightened shrieks. Dark rumors began to float about the school as to the aim and scope of the new society. Suggestions ranged all the way from Indian squaws to Druid priestesses.

They almost met with disaster while acquiring the ingredients of the oatmeal poultice. The oatmeal and lemon were comparatively easy; the cook supplied them without much fuss. But she stuck at the honey. There were jars and jars of strained honey in the storeroom; but the windows were barred, and the key was in the bottom of Nora's pocket. Confronted by the immediate necessity of becoming beautiful, they could not placidly sit down for five days, and wait for the weekly shopping trip to the village. Besides, with a teacher in attendance, there would be no possible chance of making the purchase. Honey was a contraband article, in the same class with candy and jam and pickles.

They discussed the feasibility of filing through the iron gratings, or of chloroforming Nora and stealing the key, but in the end Patty accomplished the matter by the use of a little simple blarney. She dropped into the kitchen one afternoon with the plaintive admission that she was hungry. Nora hastened to supply a glass of milk and a piece of bread and butter, while Patty perched on a corner of the carving-table and settled herself for conversation. The girls were not supposed to visit the kitchen, but the law was never rigidly enforced.

Nora was a social soul and she welcomed callers. Patty praised the apple dumplings of last night's dessert; progressed from that to a discussion of the engaging young plumber who at the moment claimed all of Nora's thoughts; then, by a natural transition, she passed to honey. Before she left, she had obtained Nora's promise to substitute it for marmalade the next morning at breakfast.

The members of the S. A. S. brought pin-trays to the meal, and unobtrusively transferred a supply from their plates to their laps.

But even so, disaster still threatened. Patty had the misfortune to collide with Evalina Smith in the upper hall, and she dropped her pin-tray, honey-side down, in the middle of the rug. At the same instant, Miss Lord bore down upon her from the end of the corridor. Patty was a young person of resource; the emergency of the moment rarely found her napping. She plumped down on her knees in the midst of the puddle, and with widespread skirts, commenced frantically searching for an imaginary stick-pin.

"Is it necessary for you to block up the entire hall?" was Miss Lord's only comment as she passed.

The rug was happily reversible, and by the simple process of turning it over, Patty satisfactorily cleaned up the mess. The other two girls were generous, and shared their supply: so in the end she obtained her honey.

For three wakeful nights they stuck to the poultice--though perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the poultice stuck to them. In spite of many washings in hot water, their faces became noticeably scaly.

Miss Sallie, who represented St. Ursula's board of health, met Patty Wyatt in the hall one morning. She took her by the chin and turned her to the light. Patty squirmed embarrassedly.

"My dear child! What is the matter with your face?"

"I--I don't know--exactly. It seems sort of--of--dandruffy."

"I should think it did! What have you been eating?"

"Only what I get at meals," said Patty, relievedly telling the truth.

"There's something the matter with your blood," diagnosed Miss Sallie. "What you need is a tonic. I shall prescribe boneset tea for you."

"Oh, Miss Sallie!" Patty earnestly remonstrated. "I don't need it, *really*. I'm sure I'll be all right." She had tried boneset tea before; it was the bitterest brew that was ever concocted.

When Miss Sallie met Mae Van Arsdale suffering from the same complaint, and later still, Rosalie Patton, she commenced to be perturbed. The apple trees under her care at the farm had been afflicted that spring with San José scale, but she had hardly expected the disease to spread to the school girls. That afternoon she superintended an infusion of boneset, of gigantic proportions, and at bedtime a reluctant school formed in line and filed past Miss Sallie, who, ladle in hand, presided over the punch bowl. Each received a flowing cupful and drank it with what grace she might, until Patty's turn came. She disposed of hers in a blue china umbrella holder which stood in the hall behind Miss Sallie's back. The remainder of the line successfully followed her lead.

Miss Sallie watched her little charges closely for the next few days; and sure enough, the scales disappeared. (The Associated Sirens had discarded poultices.) She was more than ever convinced of the efficacy of boneset.

Shortly after the founding of the society, Mae Mertelle returned from a week-end visit to her home. (Her mother was ill and she had been sent for. Someone in Mae's family was conveniently ill a great deal of the time.) She brought with her three bracelets of linked scales representing a serpent swallowing his tail. S. A. S. in tiny letters was engraved between the emerald eyes.

"They are perfectly sweet!" said Patty, with grateful appreciation. "But why a snake?"

"It isn't a snake; it's a serpent," Mae explained. "To represent Cleopatra. She was the Serpent of the Nile. We'll be Serpents of the Hudson."

With the appearance of the bracelets, curiosity in the S. A. S. increased, but unlike the other secret societies which had appeared from time to time, its *raison d'être* remained a mystery. The school really commenced to believe that the society had a secret. Miss Lord, who had the reputation of being curious, stopped Patty one day as she was leaving the Virgil class, and admired the new bracelet.

"And what may be the meaning of S. A. S.?" she inquired.

"It's a secret society," said Patty.

"Ah, a secret society!" Miss Lord smiled. "Then I suppose the name is a DEEP MYSTERY." She lowered her voice, as she said it, to sepulchral depths.

There was something peculiarly irritating about Miss Lord's manner; it always suggested that she was amused by the vagaries of her little pupils. She did not possess Miss Sallie's happy faculty of meeting them on a level. Miss Lord peered down from above (through lorgnettes).

"Of course the name is a secret," said Patty. "If that got out, it would give the whole thing away."

"And what is the object of this famous society? Or is that too a secret?"

"Why, yes, that is, I mustn't tell you exactly."

Patty smiled up at Miss Lord with the innocent, seraphic gaze that always warned those who knew her best that is was wisest to let her alone.

"It's a sort of branch of the Sunshine Society," she added confidentially. "We're to--well--to smile on people, you know, and make them like us."

"I see!" said Miss Lord, with an air of friendly understanding. "Then S.

A. S. stands for 'Sunshine and Smiles?'"

"Oh, please! You mustn't say it out loud," Patty lowered her voice and threw an anxious glance over her shoulder.

"I wouldn't tell anybody for worlds," Miss Lord promised solemnly.

"Thank you," said Patty. "It would be dreadful if it got out."

"It is a very sweet, womanly society," Miss Lord added approvingly. "But you ought not to keep it all to yourselves. Can't you let me be an honorary member of the S. A. S.?"

"Certainly, Miss Lord!" said Patty sweetly. "If you care to belong, we should *love* to have you."

"Lordy wants to be a Siren!" she announced to her two fellow members when she met them shortly in the gymnasium. The account of the interview was received with hilarity. Miss Lord was anything but the accepted type of siren.

"I thought a few smiles might relieve the gloom of Latin class," Patty explained. "It amuses Lordy to think she's helping the children in their play; and it doesn't hurt the children."

For a time the S. A. S. flourished with the natural health of youth, but as the novelty wore off, the business of becoming beautiful grew onerous. Mae and Rosalie continued to study the beauty book with dogged perseverance,--the subject lay along the line of their natural ambitions--but Patty felt other matters calling. Spring field sports had commenced, and the nearness of the annual match with Highland-Hall, crowded out her interest in cold cream and almond meal. She and Mae were not naturally *simpatica*, and in spite of Mae's insistence, Patty became an apathetic siren.

One Saturday just after the spring recess, Patty received permission to lunch in town with "Uncle Bobby." He was an uncle by courtesy only, but Patty had failed to inform the Dowager that the title was not his by

natural right. She knew well what the result would be. It is quite proper to have luncheon with an uncle; and quite improper with even the oldest and baldest of family friends.

When the "hearse" returned from the station at dusk with Mademoiselle and the city contingent, Rosalie Patton was waiting the arrival on the porte-cochère. She separated Patty from the group and whispered in her ear.

"The most awful thing has happened!"

"What?" Patty demanded.

"The S. A. S. All is discovered!"

"Not really!" cried Patty, aghast.

"Yes! Come in here."

Rosalie drew her into the empty cloak-room and shut the door.

"You mean--they've found out the name--and everything?" Patty demanded breathlessly.

"Not quite everything, but they would have if it hadn't been for Lordy. She saved us for once."

"Lordy saved us!" There was incredulity mixed with Patty's horror. "What do you mean?"

"Well, yesterday, Mae went shopping in the village with Miss Wadsworth--and you know what kind of a chaperone Waddy makes." Patty nodded impatiently. "*Anybody* could fool her. And Mae, right under her very nose, commenced a flirtation with the *Soda-Water Clerk*."

"Oh!" said Patty hotly. "How perfectly horrid!"

"She didn't care anything about it, really. She was just trying to put the

principles of the S. A. S. into practice."

"She might at least have picked out somebody decent!"

"Well, he is quite decent. He's engaged to the girl at the underwear counter in Bloodgood's, and he didn't want to be flirted with a bit. But you know how persistent Mae Mertelle is, when she makes up her mind. The poor young man just couldn't help himself. He was so embarrassed that he didn't know what he was doing. He gave Hester Pringle half chocolate and half sarsaparilla, and she says it was a *perfectly awful* combination. It made her feel so sick that she couldn't eat any dinner. And all this time Waddy just sat and smiled into space and saw nothing; but all the girls saw,--and *so did the drugstore man*!"

"Oh!" said Patty breathlessly.

"And this morning Miss Sallie went to the drugstore to get some potash for Harriet Gladden's sore throat, and he told her all about it."

"What did Miss Sallie do?" Patty asked faintly.

"Do! She came back with blood in her eye, and told the Dowager, and they called up Mae Mertelle and then--" Rosalie closed her eyes and shuddered.

"Well," said Patty impatiently. "What happened?"

"The Dowager was *perfectly outraged*! She told Mae that she had disgraced the school and that she would be expelled. And she wrote a telegram to Mae's father to come and take her away. And she asked Mae if she had anything to say for herself, and Mae said it wasn't her fault. That you and I were to blame just as much as she, because we were all in a society together, but that she couldn't tell about it because she'd sworn."

"Beast!" said Patty.

"So then they sent for me and commenced asking questions about the S.

A. S. I tried not to tell, but you know the way the Dowager looks when she's angry. Even a sphinx would break down and tell everything it knew, and I never did pretend to be a sphinx."

"All right," said Patty, bracing herself for the shock. "What did they say when they heard?"

"They didn't hear! I was just on the point of breaking my vows and telling all, when who should pop in but Lordy. And she was *perfectly splendid*! She said she knew all about the S. A. S. That it was a very admirable institution, and that she was a member herself! She said it was a branch of the Sunshine Society, and that Mae had never meant to flirt with the young man. She had just meant to smile and be kind to everybody she came in contact with, and he had taken advantage. And Mae said, yes, that was the way of it, and she shoved off all the blame on that poor innocent soda-water clerk."

"Just like her," Patty nodded.

"And now Mae is *perfectly furious* with him for getting her into trouble. She says that he's a horrid little thing with a turn-up nose, and that she'll never drink another glass of soda-water as long as she stays in St. Ursula's."

"And they're going to let her stay?"

"Yes. The Dowager tore up the telegram. But she gave Mae ten demerits, and made her go without dessert for a week, and learn Thanatopsis by heart. And she can't *ever* go shopping in the village any more. When she needs new hair ribbons or stockings or anything, she must send for them by some of the other girls."

"And what's the Dowager going to do to us?"

"Nothing at all--and if it hadn't been for Lordy, we'd all three have been expelled."

"And I've always detested Lordy," said Patty contritely. "Isn't it

dreadful? You simply can't keep enemies. Just as you think people are perfectly horrid, and begin to enjoy hating them, they all of a sudden turn out nice."

"I hate Mae Mertelle," said Rosalie.

"So do I!" Patty agreed cordially.

"I'm going to leave her old society."

"I'm already out." Patty glanced toward the mirror. "And I'm not freckled and I'm not squint-eyed."

"What do you mean?" Rosalie stared; she had for the moment forgotten the dread nature of the oath.

"I've told Uncle Bobby."

"Oh, Patty! How could you?"

"I--I--that is--" Patty appeared momentarily confused. "You see," she confessed, "I thought myself that it would be sort of interesting to practice on somebody, so I--I--just tried--"

"And did he--"

Patty shook her head.

"It was awfully uphill work. He never helped a bit. And then he noticed my bracelet and wanted to know what S. A. S. meant. And before I knew it, I was telling him!"

"What did he say?"

"First he roared; then he got awfully sober, and he gave me a long lecture--it was really very impressive--sort of like Sunday School, you know. And he took the bracelet away from me and put it in his pocket. He told me he'd send me something nicer."

"What do you s'pose it will be?" asked Rosalie interestedly.

"I hope it won't be a doll!"

Two days later the morning mail brought a small parcel for Miss Patty Wyatt. She opened it under her desk in geometry class. Buried in jeweler's cotton she found a gold linked bracelet that fastened with a padlock in the shape of a heart. On the back of one of Uncle Bobby's cards was written:--

"This is your heart. Keep it locked until the chap turns up who has the key."

Patty deflected Rosalie as she was turning into French and privately exhibited the bracelet with pride.

Rosalie regarded it with sentimental interest.

"What has he done with the key?" she wondered.

"I s'pose," said Patty, "he's got it in his pocket."

"How awfully romantic!"

"It sounds sort of romantic," Patty agreed with the suggestion of a sigh. "But it isn't really. He's thirty years old, and beginning to be bald."

IX

The Reformation of Kid McCoy

Miss McCoy, of Texas, had been subjected to the softening influences of St. Ursula's School for three years, without any perceptible result. She was the toughest little tomboy that was ever received--and retained--in a respectable-boarding-school.

"Margarite" was the name her parents had chosen, when the itinerant

bishop made his quarterly visit to the mining-camp where she happened to be born. It was the name still used by her teachers, and on the written reports that were mailed monthly to her Texas guardian. But "Kid" was the more appropriate name that the cowboys on the ranch had given her; and "Kid" she remained at St. Ursula's, in spite of the distressed expostulation of the ladies in charge.

Kid's childhood had been picturesque to a degree rarely found outside the pages of a Nick Carter novel. She had possessed an adventurous father, who drifted from mining-camp to mining-camp, making fortunes and losing them. She had cut her teeth on a poker chip, and drunk her milk from a champagne glass. Her father had died--quite opportunely--while his latest fortune was at its height, and had left his little daughter to the guardianship of an English friend who lived in Texas. The next three turbulent years of her life were spent on a cattle range with "Guardie," and the ensuing three in the quiet confines of St. Ursula's.

The guardian had brought her himself, and after an earnest conference with the Dowager, had left her behind to be molded by the culture of the East. But so far, the culture of the East had left her untouched. If any molding had taken place, it was Kid herself who shaped the clay.

Her spicy reminiscences of mining-camps and cattle ranches made all permissible works of fiction tame. She had given the French dancing master, who was teaching them a polite version of a Spanish waltz, an exposition of the real thing, as practised by the Mexican cow-punchers on her guardian's ranch. It was a performance that left him sympathetically breathless. The English riding master, who came weekly in the spring and autumn, to teach the girls a correct trot, had received a lesson in bareback riding that caused the dazed query:

"Was the young lady trained in a circus?"

The Kid was noisy and slangy and romping and boisterous; her way was beset with reproofs and demerits and minor punishments, but she had never yet been guilty of any actual felony. For three years, however, St. Ursula's had been holding its breath waiting for the crash. Miss

McCoy, from her very nature, was bound to give them a sensation sometime.

When at last it came, it was of an entirely unexpected order.

Rosalie Patton was the Kid's latest room-mate--- she wore her room-mates out as fast as she did her shoes. Rosalie was a lovable little soul, the essence of everything feminine. The Dowager had put the two together, in the hope that Rosalie's gentle example might calm the Kid's tempestuous mood. But so far, the Kid was in her usual spirits, while Rosalie was looking worn.

Then the change came.

Rosalie burst into Patty Wyatt's room one evening in a state of wide-eyed amazement.

"What do you think?" she cried. "Kid McCoy says she's going to be a lady!"

"A what?" Patty emerged from the bath towel with which she had been polishing her face.

"A *lady*. She's sitting down now, running pale blue baby ribbon through the embroidery in her night gown."

"What's happened to her?" was Patty's question.

"She's been reading a book that Mae Mertelle brought back."

Rosalie settled herself, Turk fashion, on the window seat, disposed the folds of her pink kimono in graceful billows about her knees, and allowed two braids of curly yellow hair to hang picturesquely over her shoulders. She was ready for bed and could extend her call until the last stroke of the "Lights-out" bell.

"What kind of a book?" asked Patty with a slightly perfunctory note in her voice.

Rosalie was apt to burst into one's room with a startling announcement and then, having engaged everybody's attention, settle down to an endless, meandering recital sprinkled with anti-climaxes.

"It's about a sweet young English girl whose father owned a tea estate in Asia--or maybe Africa. But anyway, where it was hot, and there were a lot of natives and snakes and centipedes. Her mother died and she was sent back home to boarding-school when she was a tiny little thing. Her father was quite bad. He drank and swore and smoked. The only thing that kept him from being awfully bad, was the thought of his sweet little golden-haired daughter in England."

"Well, what of it?" Patty inquired, politely suppressing a yawn. Rosalie had a way of trailing off into golden-haired sentiment if one didn't haul her up sharp.

"Just wait! I'm coming to it. When she was seventeen she went back to India to take care of her father, but almost right off he got a sunstroke and died. And in his death-bed he entrusted Rosamond--that was her name--to his best friend to finish bringing up. So when Rosamond went to live with her guardian, and took charge of his bungalow and made it beautiful and homelike and comfortable--she wouldn't let him drink or smoke or swear any more. And as he looked back over the past--"

"He was eaten with remorse at the thought of the wasted years," Patty glibly supplied, "and wished that he had lived so as to be more worthy of the sweet, womanly influence that had come into his wicked life."

"You've read it!" said Rosalie.

"Not that I know of," said Patty.

"Anyway," said Rosalie, with an air of challenge, "they fell in love and were married--"

"And her father and mother, looking down from heaven, smiled a blessing on the dear little daughter who had brought so much happiness to a lonely heart?"

"Um--yes," agreed Rosalie, doubtfully.

There was no amount of sentiment that she would not swallow, but she knew from mortifying experience that Patty was not equally voracious.

"It's a very touching story," Patty commented, "but where does Kid McCoy come in?"

"Why, don't you see?" Rosalie's violet eyes were big with interest. "It's exactly Kid's own story! I realized it the minute I saw the book, and I had the *awfulest* time making her read it. She made fun of it at first, but after she'd really got into it, she appreciated the resemblance. She says now it was the Hand of Fate."

"Kid's story? What *are* you talking about?" Patty was commencing to be interested.

"Kid has a wicked English guardian just like the Rosamond in the book. Anyway, he's English, and she thinks probably he's wicked. Most ranchmen are. He lives all alone with only cow-punchers for companions, and he needs a sweet womanly influence in his home. So Kid's decided to be a lady, and go back and marry Guardie, and make him happy for the rest of his life."

Patty laid herself on the bed and rolled in glee. Rosalie rose and regarded her with a touch of asperity.

"I don't see anything so funny--I think it's very romantic."

"Kid exerting a sweet womanly influence!" Patty gurgled. "She can't even pretend she's a lady for an hour. If you think she can *stay* one--"

"Love," pronounced Rosalie, "has accomplished greater wonders than that--you wait and see."

And the school did see. Kid McCoy's reformation became the sensation of the year. The teachers attributed the felicitous change in her deportment to the good influence of Rosalie, and though they were

extremely relieved, they did not expect it to last. But week followed week, and it did last.

Kid McCoy no longer answered to "Kid." She requested her friends to call her "Margarite." She dropped slang and learned to embroider; she sat through European Travel and Art History nights with clasped hands and a sweetly pensive air, where she used to drive her neighbors wild by a solid hour of squirming. Voluntarily, she set herself to practising scales. The reason she confided to Rosalie, and Rosalie to the rest of the school.

They needed the softening influence of music on the ranch. One-eyed Joe played the accordion, and that was all the music they had. The school saw visions of the transformed Margarite, dressed in white, sitting before the piano in the twilight singing softly the "Rosary," while Guardie watched her with folded arms; and the cowboys, with bowie knives sheathed in their boots, and lariats peacefully coiled over their shoulders, gathered by the open window.

Lenten services that year, instead of being forcibly endured by a rebellious Kid, were attended by a sweetly reverent Margarite. The entire school felt an electric thrill at sight of Miss McCoy walking up the aisle with downcast eyes, and hands demurely clasping her prayer book. Usually she looked as much in place in the stained-glass atmosphere of Trinity Chapel as an unbroken broncho colt.

This amazing reform continued for seven weeks. The school was almost beginning to forget that there was ever a time when Kid McCoy was not a lady.

Then one day a letter came from Guardie with the news that he was coming East to visit his little girl. Subdued excitement prevailed in the South Corridor. Rosalie and Margarite and an assemblage of neighbors held earnest conferences as to what she should wear and how she should behave. They finally decided upon white muslin and blue ribbons. They pondered a long time over whether or not she should kiss him, but Rosalie decided in the negative.

"When he sees you," she explained, "the realization will sweep over him that you are no longer a child. You have grown to womanhood in the past three years. And he will feel unaccountably shy in your presence."

"Um," said Margarite, with a slightly doubtful note. "I hope so."

It was on a Sunday that Guardie arrived. The school--in a body--flattened its nose against the window watching his approach. They had rather hoped for a flannel shirt and boots and spurs, and, in any case, for a sombrero. But the horrible truth must be told. He wore a frock coat of the most unimpeachable cut, with a silk hat and a stick, and a white gardenia in his buttonhole. To look at him, one would swear that he had never seen a pistol or a lariat. He was born to pass the plate in church.

But the worst is still to tell.

He had planned a surprise for his little ward. When she should come back to the ranch, it would be to a real home. A sweet, womanly influence would have transformed it into a fitting abode for a young girl. Guardie was not alone. He was accompanied by his bride--a tall, fair, beautiful woman with a low voice and gracious manners. She sang for the girls after dinner, and as sixty-four pairs of eyes studied the beautiful presence, sixty-four--no, sixty-three--of her auditors decided to grow up to be exactly like her. Margarite did the honors in a state of dazed incomprehension. Her make-believe world of seven weeks had crumbled in an hour, and she had not had time to readjust herself. Never--she realized it perfectly--could she have competed in femininity with Guardie's wife. It wasn't in her, not even if she had commenced to practise from the cradle.

They went back to the city in the evening, and before the entire school, Guardie patted her on the head and told her to be a good little kiddie and mind her teachers. His wife, with a protecting arm about her shoulders, kissed her forehead and called her "dear little daughter."

After evensong on Sundays, came two hours of freedom. The teachers

gathered in the Dowager's study for coffee and conversation, and the girls presumably wrote letters home. But that night, the South Corridor followed no such peaceful occupation. Margarite McCoy experienced a reversion to type. In her own picturesque language, she "shot up the town."

The echoes of the orgie at last reached the kaffee klatsch below. Miss Lord came to investigate--and she came on her tiptoes.

Miss McCoy, arrayed in a sometime picture hat cocked over one ear, a short gymnasium skirt, scarlet stockings and a scarlet sash, was mounted upon a table, giving an imitation of a clog dance in a mining-camp, while her audience played rag-time on combs and clapped.

"Margarite! Get down!" someone suddenly warned in frightened tones above the uproar.

"You needn't call me Margarite. I'm Kid McCoy of Cripple Creek."

Her eye caught sight of Miss Lord towering above the heads crowded in the doorway and she quite suddenly climbed down. For once, Miss Lord was without words. She stared for a space of three minutes; finally, she managed to articulate:

"Sunday evening in a Church school!"

The audience dispersed, and Miss Lord and Miss McCoy remained alone. Rosalie fled to the farthermost reaches of Paradise Alley and discussed possible punishments with Patty and Conny for a trembling hour. "Lights-out" had rung before she summoned courage to steal back to the darkened South Corridor. The sound of smothered sobbing came from Margarite's bed. Rosalie sank down on her knees and put her arm around her room-mate. The sobbing ceased while Margarite rigidly held her breath.

"Kid," she comforted, "don't mind Lordie--she's a horrid, snooping old thing! What did she say?"

"I'm not to leave bounds for a month, have to learn five psalms by heart and take f-fifty demerits."

"Fifty! It's a perfect shame! You'll never work them off. She had no *right* to make a fuss when you'd been good so long."

"I don't care!" said Kid, fiercely, as she struggled to free herself from Rosalie's embrace. "She'll never have a chance again to call me her sweet little daughter."

X

Onions and Orchids

"The perimeters of similar polygons are as their homologous sides."

Patty dreamily assured herself of this important truth for the twentieth time, as she sat by the open schoolroom window, her eyes on the billowing whiteness of the cherry tree which had burst into blossom overnight.

It was particularly necessary that she should finish her lessons with dispatch, because it was Saturday, and she was going to the city with Mademoiselle's party to spend an hour in the dentist's chair. But the weather was not conducive to concentrated effort. After an hour of half-hearted study, she closed her geometry, and started upstairs to dress, leaving the stay-at-homes to another hour of work.

She started upstairs; but she did not get very far on the way. As she passed the open door that led to the back porch, she stepped outside to examine the cherry tree at close range; then she strolled the length of the pergola to see how the wistaria was coming on; from there, it was just a step to the lane, with its double row of pink-tipped apple trees. Before she knew it, Patty found herself sitting on the stone wall at the end of the lower pasture. Behind her lay the confines of St. Ursula's. Before her the World.

She sat on the top of the wall, and dangled her feet out of bounds. The very most scandalous crime one could commit at St. Ursula's was to go out of bounds without permission. Patty sat and gazed at the forbidden land. She knew that she had no time to waste if she were to catch the hearse and the train and the dentist's chair. But still she sat and dreamed. Finally, far across the fields on the highroad, she spied the hearse bowling merrily to the station. Then it occurred to her that she had forgotten to report to Mademoiselle that she was going, and that Mademoiselle, accordingly, would not be missing her. At the school, of course, they would think that she had gone, and likewise would not be missing her. Without any premeditated iniquity, she was free!

She sat a few moments longer to let the feeling penetrate. Then she slid over the wall and started--a joyous young mutineer, seeking adventure. Following the cheery course of the brook, she dipped into a tangled ravine and stretch of woodland, raced down a hillside and across a marshy meadow, leaping gaily from hummock to hummock--occasionally missing and going in. She laughed aloud at these misadventures, and waved her arms and romped with the wind. In addition to the delicious sense of feeling free, was added the delicious sense of feeling bad. The combination was intoxicating.

And so, always following the stream, she came at last to another wood--not a wild wood like the first, but a tame, domesticated wood. The dead limbs were cut away, and the ground was neatly brushed up under the trees. The brook flowed sedately between fern-bordered banks, under rustic bridges, and widened occasionally into pools carpeted with lily pads. Mossy paths set with stepping-stones led off into mysterious depths that the eye could not penetrate: the leaves were just out enough to half hide and to tantalize. The grass was starred with crocuses. It looked like an enchanted wood in a fairy tale.

This second wood, however, was bordered by a solid stone wall, and on top of the wall, by four strands of barbed wire. Signs appeared at intervals--three were visible from where Patty stood--stating that these were private grounds, and that trespassers would be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

Patty knew well to whom it belonged; she had often passed the front gates which faced on the other road. The estate was celebrated in the neighborhood, in the United States, for the matter of that. It comprised 500 acres and belonged to a famous--or infamous--multi-millionaire. His name was Silas Weatherby, and he was the originator of a great many Wicked Corporations. He had beautiful conservatories full of tropical plants, a sunken Italian garden, an art collection and picture gallery. He was a crusty old codger always engaged in half-a-dozen lawsuits. He hated the newspapers, and the newspapers hated him. He was in particularly bad repute at St. Ursula's, because, in response to a politely couched note from the principal, asking that the art class might view his Botticelli and the botany class his orchids, he had ungraciously replied that he couldn't have a lot of school girls running over his place--if he let them come one year, he would have to let them come another, and he didn't wish to establish a precedent.

Patty looked at the "No Trespassing" signs and the barbed wire, and she looked at the wood beyond. They couldn't do anything if they did catch her, she reasoned, except turn her out. People weren't jailed nowadays for taking a peaceable walk in other people's woods. Besides, the millionaire person was attending a directors' meeting in Chicago. This bit of neighborhood gossip she had gleaned that morning in her weekly perusal of the daily press--Saturday night at dinner they were supposed to talk on current topics, so Saturday morning they glanced at the headlines and an editorial. Since the family were not at home, why not drop in and inspect the Italian garden? The servants were doubtless more polite than the master.

She selected a portion of the wall where the wire seemed slack, and wriggled under, stomach-wise, tearing only a small hole in the shoulder of her blouse. She played with the enchanted wood half an hour or so; then following a path, she quite suddenly left the wood behind, and popped out into a garden--not a flower garden, but a kitchen garden on an heroic scale. Neat plots of sprouting vegetables were bordered by currant bushes, and the whole was surrounded by a high brick wall, against which pear trees were trained in the English fashion.

A gardener was engaged, with his back toward Patty, in setting out baby onions. She studied him dubiously, divided between a prompting to run, and a social instinct of friendliness. He was an extremely picturesque gardener, dressed in knickerbockers and leather gaiters, with a touch of red in his waistcoat, and a cardigan jacket and a cap on the side of his head. He did not look very affable; but he did look rheumatic--even if he chased her, she was sure that she could run faster than he. So she settled herself on his wheelbarrow and continued to watch him, while she pondered an opening remark.

He glanced up suddenly and caught sight of her. The surprise nearly tipped him over.

"Good morning!" said Patty pleasantly.

"Ugh!" grunted the man. "What are you doing there?"

"Watching you plant onions."

This struck Patty as a self-evident truth, but she was perfectly willing to state it.

He grunted again as he straightened his back and took a step toward her.

"Where'd you come from?" he demanded gruffly.

"Over there." Patty waved her hand largely to westward.

"Humph!" he remarked. "You belong to that school--Saint Something or Other?"

She acknowledged it. Saint Ursula's monogram was emblazoned large upon her sleeve.

"Do they know you're out?"

"No," she returned candidly, "I don't believe they do. I am quite sure of it in fact. They think I've gone to the dentist's with Mam'selle, and she

thinks I'm at school. So it leaves me entirely at leisure. I thought I'd come over and see what Mr. Weatherby's Italian garden looks like. I'm interested in Italian gardens."

"Well I'll be--!" He commenced, and came a trifle nearer and stared again. "Did you happen to see any 'No Trespassing' signs as you came through?"

"Mercy, yes! The whole place is peppered with 'em."

"They don't seem to have impressed you much."

"Oh, I never pay any attention to 'No Trespassing' signs," said Patty easily. "You'd never get anywhere in this world if you let *them* bother you."

The man unexpectedly chuckled.

"I don't believe you would!" he agreed. "I've never let them bother me," he added meditatively.

"Can't I help you plant your onions?" Patty asked politely. It struck her that this might be the quickest route to the Italian garden.

"Why, yes, thank you!"

He accepted her offer with unexpected cordiality, and gravely explained the mode of work. The onions were very tiny, and they must be set right-side up with great care; because it is very difficult for an embryonic onion to turn itself over after it has once got started in the wrong direction.

Patty grasped the business very readily, and followed along in the next row three feet behind him. It turned out sociable work; by the end of fifteen minutes they were quite old friends. The talk ranged far--over philosophy and life and morals. He had a very decided opinion on every subject--she put him down as Scotch--he seemed a well-informed old fellow though, and he read the papers. Patty had also read the paper

that morning. She discoursed at some length upon whether or not corporations should be subject to state control. She stoutly agreed with her editor that they should. He maintained that they were like any other private property, and that it was nobody's damned business how they managed themselves.

"A penny, please," said Patty, holding out her hand.

"A penny?--what for?"

"That 'damn.' Every time you use slang or bad grammar you have to drop a penny in the charity box. 'Damn' is much worse than slang; it's swearing. I ought to charge you five cents, but since this is the first offense, I'll let you off with one."

He handed over his penny, and Patty gravely pocketed it.

"What sort of things do you learn in that school?" he inquired with a show of curiosity.

She obligingly furnished a sample:

"The perimeters of similar polygons are as their homologous sides."

"You will find that useful," he commented with the suggestion of a twinkle in his eye.

"Very," she agreed--"on examination day."

After half an hour, onion-planting grew to be wearying work; but Patty was bound to be game, and stick to her job as long as he did. Finally, however, the last onion was in, and the gardener rose and viewed the neat rows with some satisfaction.

"That will do for to-day," he declared; "we've earned a rest."

They sat down, Patty on the wheelbarrow, the man on an upturned tub.

"How do you like working for Mr. Weatherby?" she inquired. "Is he as

bad as the papers make out?"

The gardener chuckled slightly as he lighted his pipe.

"Well," he said judiciously, "he's always been very decent to me, but I don't know as his enemies have any cause to love him."

"I think he's horrid!" said Patty.

"Why?" asked the man with a slight air of challenge. He was quite willing to run his master down himself, but he would not permit an outsider to do it.

"He's so terribly stingy with his old conservatories. The Dowager--I mean Mrs. Trent, the principal, you know--wrote and asked him to let the botany class see his orchids, and he was just as rude as he could be!"

"I'm sure he didn't mean it," the man apologized.

"Oh, yes, he did!" maintained Patty. "He said he couldn't have a lot of school girls running through and breaking down his vines--as if we would do such a thing! We have perfectly beautiful manners. We learn 'em every Thursday night."

"Maybe he was a little rude," he agreed. "But you see, he hasn't had your advantages, Miss. He didn't learn his manners in a young ladies' boarding-school."

"He didn't learn them anywhere," Patty shrugged.

The gardener took a long pull at his pipe and studied the horizon with narrowed eyes.

"It isn't quite fair to judge him the way you would other people," he said slowly. "He's had a good deal of trouble in his life; and now he's old, and I dare say pretty lonely sometimes. All the world's against him--when people are decent, he knows it's because they're after something. Your teacher, now, is polite when she wants to see his

conservatories, but I'll bet she believes he's an old thief!"

"Isn't he?" asked Patty.

The man grinned slightly.

"He has his moments of honesty like the rest of us."

"Perhaps," Patty grudgingly conceded, "he may not be so bad when you know him. It's often the way. Now, there was Lordy, our Latin teacher. I used to despise her; and then--in the hour of trial--she came up to the scratch, and was *per-fect-ly bully*!"

He held out his hand.

"A penny."

Patty handed him back his own.

"She kept me from getting expelled--she did, really. I've never been able to hate her since. And you know, I miss it dreadfully. It's sort of fun having an enemy."

"I've had a good many," he nodded, "and I've always managed to enjoy them."

"And probably they're really quite nice?" she suggested.

"Oh, yes," he agreed, "the worst criminals are often very pleasant people when you see their right side."

"Yes, that's true," said Patty. "It's mainly chance that makes people bad--I know it is in my own case. This morning for instance, I got up with every intention of learning my geometry and going to the dentist's--and yet--here I am! And so," she pointed a moral, "you always ought to be kind to criminals and remember that under different circumstances you might have been in jail yourself."

"That thought," he acknowledged, "has often occurred to me.

I--we--that is," he resumed after a moment of amused meditation, "Mr. Weatherby believes in giving a man a chance. If you have any convict friends, who are looking for a job, this is the place to send them. We used to have a cattle thief taking care of the cows, and a murderer in charge of the orchids."

"What fun!" cried Patty. "Have you got him now? I should love to see a murderer."

"He left some time ago. The place was too slow for him."

"How long have you been working for Mr. Weatherby?" she asked.

"A good many years--and I've worked hard!" he added, with a slight air of challenge.

"I hope he appreciates you?"

"Yes, I think on the whole that he does."

He knocked the ashes from his pipe and rose.

"And now," he suggested, "should you like me to show you the Italian garden?"

"Oh, yes," said Patty, "if you think Mr. Weatherby wouldn't mind."

"I'm head gardener. I do what I please."

"If you're head gardener, what makes you plant onions?"

"It's tiresome work--good for my character."

"Oh!" Patty laughed.

"And then you see, when I have a tendency to overwork the men under me, I stop and think how my own back ached."

"You're much too nice a man to work for him!" she pronounced

approvingly.

"Thank ye, Miss," he touched his hat with a grin.

The Italian garden was a fascinating spot, with marble steps and fountains and clipped yew trees.

"Oh, I wish Conny could see it!" Patty cried.

"And who is she?"

"Conny's my room-mate. She's awfully interested in gardens this year, because she's going to get the botany prize for analyzing the most plants--at least, I think she's going to get it. It's between her and Keren Hersey; all the rest of the class have dropped out. Mae Van Arsdale is working against Conny, to spite me, because I wouldn't stay in an old secret society that she started. She gets orchids from the city and gives them to Keren."

"H'm," he frowned over this tangle of intrigue. "Is it entirely fair for the rest to help?"

"Oh, yes!" said Patty. "They have to do the analyzing, but their friends can collect and paste. Every time anybody goes for a walk, she comes back with her blouse stuffed full of specimens for either Conny or Keren. The nice girls are for Conny. Keren's an awful dig. She wears eye-glasses and thinks she knows everything."

"I'm for Miss Conny myself," he declared. "Is there any way in which I could help?"

Patty glanced about tentatively.

"You have quite a number of plants," she suggested, "that Conny hasn't got in her book."

"You shall take back as many as you can carry," he promised. "We'll pay a visit to the orchid house."

They left the garden behind, and turned toward the glass roofs of the conservatories. Patty was so entertained, that she had entirely forgotten the passage of time, until she came face to face with a clock in the gable of the carriage house; then she suddenly realized that St. Ursula's luncheon had been served three quarters of an hour before--and that she was in a starving condition.

"Oh, goodness gracious! I forgot all about luncheon!"

"Is it a very grave crime to forget about luncheon?"

"Well," said Patty, with a sigh, "I sort of miss it."

"I might furnish you with enough to sustain life for a short time," he suggested.

"Oh, could you?" she asked relievedly.

She was accustomed to having a table spread three times a day, and she cared little who furnished it.

"Just some milk," she said modestly, "and some bread and butter and--er--cookies. Then, you see, I won't have to go back till four o'clock when they come from the station, and maybe I can slip in without being missed."

"You just wait in the pavilion, and I'll see what the gardener's cottage can supply us."

He was back in fifteen minutes, chuckling as he lugged a big hamper.

"We'll have a picnic," he proposed.

"Oh, let's!" said Patty joyously. She did not mind eating with him in the least, for he had washed his hands, and appeared quite clean.

She helped him unpack the hamper and set the table in the little pavilion beside the fountain. He had lettuce sandwiches, a pat of cottage cheese, a jug of milk, orange marmalade, sugar cookies, and

gingerbread hot from the oven.

"What a perfectly bully spread!" she cried.

He held out his hand.

"Another penny!"

Patty peered into an empty pocket.

"You'll have to charge it. I've used up all my ready money."

The spring sun was warm, the fountain was splashing, the wind was sprinkling the pavilion floor with white magnolia petals. Patty helped herself to marmalade with a happy sigh of contentment.

"The most fun in the world is to run away from the things you ought to do," she pronounced.

He acknowledged this immoral truth with a laugh.

"I suppose you ought to be working?" she asked.

"There are one or two little matters that might be the better for my attention."

"And aren't you glad you're not doing them?"

"Bully glad!"

She held out her hand.

"Give it back."

The cent returned to her pocket, and the meal progressed gaily. Patty was in an elated frame of mind, and Patty's elation was catching. Escaping from bounds, trespassing on a private estate, planting onions, and picnicking in the Italian garden with the head gardener--she had never had such a dizzying whirl of adventures. The head gardener also

seemed to enjoy the sensation of offering sanctuary to a runaway school girl. Their appreciation of the lark was mutual.

As Patty, with painstaking honesty, was dividing the last of the gingerbread into two exact halves, she was startled by the sound of a footstep on the gravel path behind; and there walked into their party a groom--a crimson-faced, gaping young man who stood mechanically bobbing his head. Patty stared back a touch apprehensively. She hoped that she hadn't got her friend into trouble. It was very possibly against the rules for gardeners to entertain runaway school girls in the Italian garden. The groom continued to stare and to duck his head, and her companion rose and faced him.

"Well?" he inquired with a note of sharpness. "What do you want?"

"Beg pardon, sir, but this telegram come, and Richard says it might be important, sir, and he says for me to find you, sir."

He received the telegram, ran his eyes over it, scribbled an answer on the back with a gold pencil which he extracted from his pocket, and dismissed the man with a curt nod. The envelope had fluttered to the table and lay there face up. Patty inadvertently glanced at the address, and as the truth flashed across her, she hid her head against the back of the stone seat in a gale of laughter. Her companion looked momentarily sheepish, then he too laughed.

"You have enjoyed the privilege of telling me exactly how rude you think I am. Not even the reporters always allow themselves that pleasure."

"Oh, but that was before I knew you! I think now that you have perfectly beautiful manners."

He bowed his thanks.

"I shall endeavor to have better in the future. It will be my pleasure to put my greenhouses at the disposal of the young ladies of St. Ursula's some afternoon soon."

"Really?" she smiled. "That's awfully nice of you!"

They repacked the hamper and divided the crumbs among the goldfish in the fountain.

"And now," he inquired, "which will you visit first--the picture gallery or the orchids?"

Patty emerged from the orchid house at four o'clock, her arms filled with an unprecedented collection for Conny's book. The big yellow four-in-hand coach was standing outside the stable being washed. She examined it interestedly.

"Should you like to have me drive you home on that?"

"Oh, I'd love it!" Patty dimpled. "But I'm afraid it wouldn't be wise," she added on second thought. "No, I am sure it wouldn't be wise," she firmly turned her back. Her eyes fell on the road, and an apprehensive light sprang to her face.

"There's the hearse!"

"The hearse?"

"Yes, the school wagonette. I think I'd better be going."

He accompanied her back, through the vegetable garden and the enchanted wood, and held her flowers while she crawled under the fence, tearing a hole in the other shoulder of her blouse.

They shook hands through the barbed wire.

"I've enjoyed both the onions and the orchids," said Patty politely, "and particularly the gingerbread. And if I ever have any convict friends in need of employment, I may send them to you?"

"Do so," he urged. "I will find them a job here."

She started off, then turned to wave good-by to him.

"I've had a perfectly bully time!"

"A penny!" he called.

Patty laughed and ran.

XI

The Lemon Pie and the Monkey-Wrench

Evalina Smith was a morbid young person who loved to dabble in the supernatural. Her taste in literature was for Edgar A. Poe. In religion she inclined toward spiritualism. Her favorite amusement was to gather a few shuddering friends about her, turn out the gas, and tell ghost stories. She had an extensive repertoire of ghoulish incidents, that were not fiction but the actual experience of people she knew. She had even had one or two spiritual adventures herself; and she would set forth the details with wide eyes and lowered voice, while her auditors held one another's hands and shivered. The circle in which Evalina moved had not much sense of humor.

One Saturday evening St. Ursula's School was in an unusually social mood. Evalina was holding a ghost party in her room in the East Wing; Nancy Lee had invited her ten dearest friends to a birthday spread in Center; the European History class was celebrating the completion of the Thirty-Years War by a molasses-candy pull in the kitchen; and Kid McCoy was conducting a potato race down the length of the South Corridor--the entrance fee a postage stamp, the prize sealed up in a large bandbox and warranted to be worth a quarter.

Patty, who was popular, had been invited to all four of the functions. She had declined Nancy's spread, because Mae Van Arsdale, her particular enemy, was invited; but had accepted the other invitations, and was busily spending the evening as an itinerant guest.

She carried her potato, insecurely balanced on a teaspoon, over one table and under another, through a hoop suspended from the ceiling,

and deposited it in the wastebasket at the end of the corridor, in exactly two minutes and forty-seven seconds. (Kid McCoy had a stop-watch.) This was far ahead of anyone else's record, and Patty lingered hopefully a few minutes in the neighborhood of the bandbox; but a fresh inrush of entries postponed the bestowal of the prize, so she left the judges to settle the question at their leisure, and drifted on to Evalina's room.

She found it dark, except for the fitful blue flare of alcohol and salt burning in a fudge pan. The guests were squatting about on sofa cushions, looking decidedly spotty in the unbecoming light. Patty silently dropped down on a vacant cushion, and lent polite attention to Evalina, who at the moment held the floor.

"Well, you know, I had a very remarkable experience myself last summer. Happening to visit a spiritualist camp, I attended a materializing séance."

"What's that?" asked Rosalie Patton.

"A séance in which spirits appear to mediums in the material form they occupied during life," Evalina condescendingly explained. Rosalie was merely an invited guest. She did not belong to the inner cult.

"Oh!" said Rosalie, vaguely enlightened.

"I didn't really expect anything to happen," Evalina continued, "and I was just thinking how foolish I was to have wasted that dollar, when the medium shut her eyes and commenced to tremble. She said she saw the spirit of a beautiful young girl who had passed over five years before. The girl was dressed in white and her clothes were dripping wet, and she carried in her hand a monkey-wrench."

"A monkey-wrench!" cried Patty. "What on earth--"

"I don't know any more than you do," said Evalina impatiently. "I'm just telling what happened. The Medium couldn't get her full name, but she said her first name commenced with 'S.' And instantly, it came over me that it was my Cousin Susan who fell into a well and was drowned.

I hadn't thought of her for years, but the description answered perfectly. And I asked the medium, and after a little, she said yes, it was Susan, and that she had come to send me a warning."

Evalina allowed an impressive pause to follow, while her auditors leaned forward in strained attention.

"A warning!" breathed Florence Hissop.

"Yes. She told me never to eat lemon pie."

Patty choked with sudden laughter. Evalina cast her a look and went on.

"The medium shivered again and came out of the trance, and she couldn't remember a thing she had said! When I told her about the monkey-wrench and the lemon pie, she was just as much puzzled as I was. She said that the messages that came from the spirit world were often inexplicable; though they might seem to deal with trivial things, yet in reality they contained a deep and hidden truth. Probably some day I would have an enemy who would try to poison me with lemon pie, and I must never, on *any* account, taste it again."

"And haven't you?" Patty asked.

"Never," said Evalina sadly.

Patty composed her features into an expression of scientific inquiry.

"Do you think the medium told the truth?"

"I've never had any cause to doubt it."

"Then you really believe in ghosts?"

"In spirits?" Evalina amended gently. "Many strange things happen that cannot be explained in any other manner."

"What would you do if her spirit should appear to you? Would you be

scared?"

"Certainly not!" said Evalina, with dignity. "I was very fond of Cousin Susan. I have no cause to fear her spirit."

The smell of boiling molasses penetrated from below; Patty excused herself and turned toward the kitchen. The spiritual heights on which Evalina dwelt, she found a trifle too rare for ordinary breathing.

The candy was on the point of being poured into pans.

"Here, Patty!" Priscilla ordered, "you haven't done any work. Run down to the storeroom and get some butter to keep our hands from sticking."

Patty obligingly accompanied the cook to the cellar, with not a thought in the world beyond butter. On a shelf in the storeroom stood to-morrow's dessert--a row of fifteen lemon pies, with neatly decorated tops of white meringue. As Patty looked at them, she was suddenly assailed by a wicked temptation; she struggled with it for a moment of sanity, but in the end she fell. While Nora's head was bent over the butter tub, Patty opened the window and deftly plumped a pie through the iron grating onto the ledge without. By the time Nora raised her head, the window was shut again, and Patty was innocently translating the label on a bottle of olive oil.

As they pulled their candy in a secluded corner of the kitchen, Patty hilariously confided her plan to Conny and Priscilla. Conny was always game for whatever mischief was afoot, but Priscilla sometimes needed urging. She was--most inconveniently--beginning to develop a moral nature, and the other two, who as yet were comfortably un-moral, occasionally found her difficult to coerce.

Priscilla finally lent a grudging consent, while Conny enthusiastically volunteered to acquire a monkey-wrench. Being captain of sports, she could manage the matter better than Patty. On a flying visit to the stables, ostensibly to consult with Martin as to a re-marking of the tennis courts, she singled out from his tool bench the monkey-wrench

of her choice, casually covered it with her sweater, and safely bore it away. She and Patty conveyed their booty by devious secret ways to Paradise Alley. A great many alarms were given on the passage, a great deal of muffled giggling ensued, but finally the monkey-wrench and the pie--slightly damaged as to its meringue top, but still distinctly recognizable as lemon--were safely cached under Patty's bed to await their part in the night's adventure.

"Lights-out" as usual, rang at nine-thirty, but it rang to deaf ears. A spirit of restless festivity was abroad. The little girls in the "Baby Ward" larked about the halls in a pillow fight, until they were sternly ordered to bed by the Dowager herself. It was close to ten o'clock when the candy-pullers washed their sticky hands and turned upstairs.

Patty found a delegation of potato racers waiting with the news that she had won the prize. An interested crowd gathered to watch her open the box; it contained a tin funeral wreath that had been displayed that winter in the window of the village undertaker--Kid had bought it cheap, owing to fly specks that would not rub off. The wreath was hoisted on the end of a shinny stick and marched through the corridor to the tune of "John Brown's Body," while Mademoiselle ineffectually wrung her hands and begged for quiet.

"*Mes chères enfantes*--it is ten o'clock. *Soyez tranquilles.* Patty--*Mon Dieu*--How you are bad! Margarite McCoy, you do not listen to me? *Nous verrons!* Go to your room, dis in-stant! You do not belong in my hall. Children! I implore. Go to bed--all--*tout de suite*!"

The procession cheered and marched on, until Miss Lord descended from the East and commanded silence. Miss Lord when incensed was effectual. The peace of conquest settled for a time over Paradise Alley, and she returned to her own camp. But a fresh hub-bub broke out, when it was discovered that someone had sprinkled granulated sugar, in liberal quantities, through every bed in the Alley. Patty and Conny would have been suspected, had their own sheets not yielded a plentiful harvest. It was another half hour before the beds were remade, and the school finally composed to sleep.

When the teacher on duty had made her last rounds, and everything was quiet, Patty turned back the covers of her bed and cautiously stepped to the floor. She was still fully clothed, except that she had changed her shoes for softer soled bedroom slippers, better fitted for nocturnal adventures. Priscilla and Conny joined her. Fortunately a full moon shone high in the sky, and they needed no artificial light. Aided by her two assistants, Patty draped the sheets of her bed about her into two voluminous wings, and fastened them securely with safety pins. A pillow slip was pulled over her head and the corners tied into ears. They hesitated a moment with scissors suspended.

"Hurry up and cut a nose," Patty whispered. "I'm smothering!"

"It seems sort of too bad to spoil a perfectly good pillow slip," said Priscilla, with a slight access of conscience.

"I'll drop some money in the missionary box," Patty promised.

The nose and eyes were cut; a grinning mouth and devilishly curved eyebrows were added with burnt cork. The pillow slip was tied firmly about her neck to allow no chance of slipping, the ears waved lopsidedly; she was the most amazing specter that ever left a respectable grave.

These preparations had occupied some time. It was already ten minutes of twelve.

"I'll wait till the stroke of midnight," said Patty. "Then I'll flutter into Evalina's room, and wave my wings, and whisper, 'Come!' The monkey-wrench and the pie, I'll leave on the foot of her bed, so she'll know she wasn't dreaming."

"What if she screams?" asked Priscilla.

"She won't scream. She loves ghosts--especially Cousin Susan. She said to-night she'd be glad to meet her."

"But what if she does scream?" persisted Priscilla.

"Oh, that's easy! I'll dash back and pop into bed. Before anybody wakes, I'll be sound asleep."

They made a reconnoitering excursion into the empty corridors to make sure that all was quiet. Only regular breathing issued from open doors. Evalina fortunately lived in a single, but unfortunately, it was at the extreme end of the East Wing in the opposite corner of the building from Patty's own domicile. Conny and Priscilla, in bedroom slippers and kimonos, tiptoed after Patty as she took her flight down the length of the Alley. She sailed back and forth and waved her wings in the moonlight that streamed through the skylight in the central hall. The two spectators clung together and shivered delightedly. In spite of having been behind the scenes and assisted at the make-up, they received a distinct sensation--what it would be to one suddenly wakened from sleep, to a believer in ghosts, they were a bit apprehensive to consider. At the entrance to the East Wing, they handed Patty her pie and monkey-wrench, and retreated to their own neighborhood. In case of an uproar, they did not wish to be discovered too far from home.

Patty flitted on down the corridor, past yawning doors, into Evalina's room, where she took up a central position in a patch of moonlight. A few sepulchral "Comes!" brought no response. Evalina was a sound sleeper.

Patty shook the foot of the bed. The sleeper stirred slightly but slept on. This was annoying. The ghost had no mind to make noise enough to disturb the neighbors. She laid the pie and the monkey-wrench on the counterpane, and shook the bed again, with the insistence of an earthquake. As she was endeavoring to resume her properties, Evalina sat up and clutched the bed clothes about her neck with a frenzied jerk. Patty just had time to save the pie--the monkey-wrench went to the floor with a crash; and the crash, to Patty's startled senses, was echoed and intensified from far down the hall. She had no chance to wave her wings or murmur, "Come." Evalina did not wait for her cue. She opened her mouth as wide as it would open, and emitted shriek after shriek of such ear-splitting intensity, that Patty, for a moment, was too

aghast to move. Then, still hugging the pie in her arms, she turned and ran.

[Illustration: Evalina sat up and clutched the bedclothes about her neck]

To her consternation the cries were answered ahead. The whole house seemed to be awake and shrieking. She could hear doors banging and frightened voices demanding the cause of the tumult. She was making a quick dash for her own room, trusting to the confusion and darkness to make good her escape, when Miss Lord, gaily attired in a flowered bath-robe, appeared at the end of the corridor. Patty was headed straight for her arms. With a gasp of terror, she turned back toward the shrieking Evalina.

She realized by now that she was in a trap.

A narrow passage led from the East Wing to the servants' quarters. She dived into this. If she could reach the back stairs it would mean safety. She pushed the door open a crack, and to her horror, was confronted by a worse uproar. The servants' quarters were in a state of panic. She saw Maggie dashing past, wrapped in a pink striped blanket, while above the general confusion rose Norah's rich brogue:

"Help! Murther! I seen a bur-r-gu-lar!"

She shut the door and shrank back into the passage. Behind her Evalina was still hysterically wailing:

"I saw a ghost! I saw a ghost!"

Before her the cry of "Burglars!" was growing louder.

Utterly bewildered at this double demonstration, Patty flattened herself against the wall in the friendly darkness of the passage, while she soulfully thanked Heaven that the proposed electric lights had not yet been installed. A dozen voices were calling for matches, but no one seemed to find any. She pantingly tugged at the pillowcase fastened about her neck; but Conny had tied it firmly with a white hair ribbon,

and the knot was behind. In any case, even if she could remove her masquerade, she was lost if they found her; for she was still wearing the white dress of the evening, and not even Patty's imagination could compass an excuse for that at twelve o'clock at night.

The search was growing nearer; she caught the glimmer of a light ahead. At any moment they might open the door of the passage. The linen closet was the only refuge at hand--and that was very temporary. She felt for the door handle and slipped inside. If she could find a pile of sheets, she might dive to the bottom and hope to escape notice, being mostly sheet herself. But it was Saturday, and all the linen had gone down. A long, slippery, inclined chute connected the room with the laundry in the basement two floors below. Steps were already audible in the passage. She heard Miss Lord's voice say:

"Bring a light! We'll search the linen closet."

Patty did not hesitate. In imagination she could already feel the pressure of Miss Lord's grasp upon her shoulder. A broken neck was preferable.

Still hugging the lemon pie--in all her excitement she had clasped it firmly--she climbed into the chute, stretched her feet out straight in front, and pushed off. For two breathless seconds she dashed through space, then her feet hit the trap door at the bottom, and she shot into the laundry.

One instant earlier, the door from the kitchen stairs had cautiously opened, and a man had darted into the laundry. He had just had time to cast a glance of boundless relief about the empty, moonlit room, when Patty and the pie catapulted against him. They went down together in a whirl of waving wings. Patty being on top picked herself up first. She still clutched her pie--at least what was left of it; the white meringue was spread over the man's hair and face; but the lemon part was still intact. The man sat up dazedly, rubbed the meringue from his eyes, cast one look at his assailant, and staggered to his feet. He flattened himself against the wall with arms thrown wide for support.

"Holy gee!" he choked. "What in hell uv I got into?"

Patty excused his language, as he did not appear to know that he was addressing a lady. He seemed to be laboring under the impression that she was the devil.

Her pillow slip by now was very much askew; one ear pointed northward, the other southeast, and she could only see out of one eye. It was very hot inside and she was gasping for breath. For a palpitating moment they merely stared and panted. Then Patty's mind began to work.

"I suppose," she suggested, "you are the burglar they are screaming about?"

The man leaned back limply and stared, his wide, frightened eyes shining through a fringe of meringue.

"I," said Patty, completing the introduction, "am the ghost."

He muttered something under his breath. She could not make out whether he was praying or swearing.

"Don't be afraid," she added kindly. "I won't hurt you."

"Is it a bloomin' insane asylum?"

"Just a girl's school."

"Gosh!" he observed.

"Hush!" said Patty. "They're coming this way now!"

The sound of running feet became audible in the kitchen above, while bass voices were added to the shrill soprano that had sounded the former tocsin. The men had arrived from the stables. The burglar and the ghost regarded each other for a moment of suspended breathing; their mutual danger drew them together. Patty hesitated an instant, while she studied his face as it showed through the interstices of the

meringue. He had honest blue eyes and yellow curls. She suddenly stretched out a hand and grasped him by an elbow.

"Quick! They'll be here in a minute. I know a place to hide. Come with me."

She pushed him unresisting down a passage and into a storeroom, boarded off from the main cellar, where the scenery of the dramatic society was kept.

"Get down on your hands and knees and follow me," she ordered, as she stooped low and dived behind a pile of canvas.

The man crawled after. They emerged at the farther end into a small recess behind some canvas trees. Patty sat on a stump and offered a wooden rock to her companion.

"They'll never think of looking here," she whispered. "Martin's too fat to crawl through."

A small barred window let in some faint moonlight and they had an opportunity to study each other more at leisure. The man did not yet seem comfortable in Patty's presence; he was occupying the farthest possible corner of his rock. Presently he rubbed his coat sleeve over his head and looked long and earnestly at the meringue. He was evidently at a loss to identify the substance; in the rush of events he had taken no note of the pie.

Patty brought her one eye to bear down upon him.

"I'm simply melting!" she whispered. "Do you think you could untie that knot?"

She bent her head and presented the back of her neck.

The man by now was partially reassured as to the humanness of his companion, and he obediently worked at the knot but with hands that trembled. At last it came loose, and Patty with a sigh of relief emerged

into the open. Her hair was somewhat tousled and her face was streaked with burnt cork, but her blue eyes were as honest as his own. The sight reassured him.

"Gee!" he muttered in a wave of relief.

"Keep still!" Patty warned.

The hunt was growing nearer. There was the sound of tramping feet in the laundry and they could hear the men talking.

"A ghost and a burglar!" said Martin, in fine scorn. "That's a likely combination, ain't it now?"

They made an obligatory and superficial search through the coal cellar. Martin jocularly inquiring:

"Did ye look in the furnace, Mike? Here Osaki, me lad, ye're small. Take a crawl oop the poipes and see if the ghost ain't hidin' there."

They opened the door of the property-room and glanced inside. The burglar ducked his head and held his breath, while Patty struggled with an ill-timed desire to giggle. Martin was in a facetious mood. He whistled in the manner of calling a dog.

"Here, Ghostie! Here, Burgie! Come here, old fellow!"

They banged the door shut and their footsteps receded. Patty was rocking back and forth in a species of hysterics, stuffing the corner of the sheet into her mouth to keep from laughing audibly. The burglar's teeth were chattering.

"Lord!" he breathed. "It may be funny for you, Miss. But it means the penitentiary for me."

Patty interrupted her hysterics and regarded him with disgust.

"It would mean expulsion for me, or at least something awfully unpleasant. But that's no reason for going all to pieces. You're a nice

sort of a burglar! Brace up and be a sport!"

He mopped his brow and removed another portion of icing.

"You must be an awful amateur to break into a house like this," she said contemptuously. "Don't you know the silver's plated?"

"I didn't know nuthin' about it," he said sullenly. "I see the window open over the shed roof and I clum up. I was hungry and was lookin' for somethin' to eat. I ain't had nothin' since yesterday mornin'."

Patty reached to the floor beside her.

"Have some pie."

The man ducked aside as it was poked at him.

"W-what's that?" he gasped.

He was as nervous as a mouse in a cage.

"Lemon pie. It looks a little messy but it's all right. The only thing the matter with it is that it has lost its meringue top. That's mostly on your head. The rest of it is spread over me and the laundry floor and Evalina Smith's bed and the clothes chute."

"Oh!" he murmured in evident relief, as he rubbed his hand over his hair for the fourth time. "I was wonderin' what the blame stuff was."

"But the lemon's all here," she urged. "You'd better eat it. It's quite nourishing, I believe."

He accepted the pie and fell to eating it with an eagerness that carried out the truth of his assertion as to yesterday's breakfast.

Patty watched him, her natural curiosity struggling with her acquired politeness. The curiosity triumphed.

"Do you mind telling me how you came to be a burglar? You make

such a remarkably bad one, that I should think you would have chosen almost any other profession."

He told his story between bites. To one more experienced in police records, it might have sounded a trifle fishy, but he had an honest face and blue eyes, and it never entered her head to doubt him. The burglar commenced it sullenly; no one had ever believed him yet and he wasn't expecting her to. He would like to have invented something a little more plausible, but he lacked the imagination to tell a convincing lie. So, as usual, he lamely told the truth.

Patty listened with strained attention. His tale was somewhat muffled by lemon pie, and his vocabulary did not always coincide with her own, but she managed to get the gist of it.

By rights he was a gardener. In the last place where he worked he used to sleep in the attic, because the gentleman he was away a lot, and the lady she was afraid not to have a man in the house. And a gas-fitter, that he had always thought was his friend, give him some beer one night and got him drunk, and took away the key of the back door. And while he (the gardener) was sound asleep on the children's sand pile under the apple tree in the back yard, the gas-fitter entered the house and stole an overcoat and a silver coffee-pot and a box of cigars and a bottle of whisky and two umbrellas. And they proved it on him (the gardener) and he was sent up for two years. And when he come out, no one wouldn't give him no work.

"An' ye can't make me believe," he added bitterly, "that that beer wasn't doped!"

"Oh, but it was terrible of you to get drunk!" said Patty, shocked.

'"Twas an accident," he insisted.

"If you are *sure* that you'll never do it again," she said, "I'll get you a job. But you must promise, on your word of honor as a gentleman. You know I couldn't recommend a drunkard."

The man grinned feebly.

"I guess ye'll not be findin' anybody that will be wantin' a jailbird."

"Oh, yes, I will! I know exactly the man. He's a friend of mine, and he likes jailbirds. He realizes that it's only luck that made him a millionaire instead of a convict. He always gives a man a chance to start again. He used to have a murderer in charge of his greenhouses, and a cattle thief to milk the cows. I'm sure he'll like you. Come with me, and I'll write you a letter of introduction."

Patty gathered her sheets about her and prepared to crawl out.

"What are ye doin'?" he demanded quickly. "Y' aren't goin' to hand me over?"

"Is it likely?" She regarded him with scorn. "How could I hand you over, without handing myself over at the same time?"

The logic of this appealed to him, and he followed meekly on hands and knees. She approached the laundry door and listened warily; the search had withdrawn to other quarters. She led the way along a passage and up a flight of stairs and slipped into the deserted kindergarten room.

"We're safe here," she whispered. "They've already searched it."

She cast about for writing materials. No ink was to be found, but she discovered a red crayon pencil, and tore a sheet of paper from a copy book. "Honesty is the best policy," was inscribed in flowing characters at the top.

She hesitated with her crayon poised.

"If I get you a nice job in charge of onions and orchids and things, will you promise never again to drink any beer?"

"Sure," he agreed, but without much enthusiasm.

There was a light of uneasiness in his eye. Nothing in his past experience tallied with to-night's adventure; and he suspected an ambush.

"Because," said Patty, "it would be awfully embarrassing for me if you did get drunk. I should never dare recommend another burglar."

She wrote her note on the window ledge, by moonlight, and read it aloud:

"*Dear Mr. Weatherby*,--

"Do you remember the conversation we had the day I ran away and dropped into your onion garden? You said you thought criminals were often quite as good as the rest of us, and that you would find a job for any convict friend I might present. This is to introduce a burglar of my acquaintance who would like to secure a position as gardener. He was trained to be a gardener and much prefers it to burglaring, but finds it difficult to find a place because he has been in prison. He is faithful, honest and industrious, and promises to be sober. I shall appreciate any favor you may show him.

"Sincerely yours, "PATTY WYATT."

"P. S.--Please excuse this red crayon. I am writing at midnight, by moonlight in the kindergarten room, and the ink's all locked up. The burglar will explain the circumstances, which are too complicated to write.

"Yours ever, "P. W."

She enclosed her note in a large manila envelope that had contained weaving mats, and addressed it to Silas Weatherby, Esq. The man received it gingerly. He seemed to think that it might go off.

"What's the matter?" said Patty. "Are you afraid of it?"

"Ye're sure," he asked suspiciously, "that Silas Weatherby ain't a cop?"

"He's a railroad president."

"Oh!" The burglar looked relieved.

Patty unlocked the window, then paused for a final moral lecture.

"I am giving you a chance to begin again. If you are game, and present this letter, you'll get a job. If you're a coward, and don't dare present it, you can keep on being a burglar for the rest of your life for all I care--and a mighty poor one you'll make!"

She opened the window and waved her hand invitingly toward the outside world.

"Good-by, Miss," he said.

"Good-by," said Patty cordially. "And good luck!"

He paused, half in, half out, for a last reassurance.

"Ye're sure it's on the straight, Miss? Y' ain't pitchin' me no curve?"

"It's on the straight." She pledged her word. "I ain't pitchin' you no curve."

Patty crept upstairs the back way, and by a wide detour avoided the excited crowd still gathered in the East Wing. A fresh hub-bub had arisen, for Evalina Smith had found a monkey-wrench on the floor of her room. It was shown to the scoffing Martin as visible proof that the burglar had been there.

"An it's me own wrench!" he cried in wide-eyed amazement. "Now, what do ye think of his nerve?"

Patty hurriedly undressed and tumbled into a kimono. Sleepily rubbing her eyes, she joined the assemblage in the hall.

"What's happened?" she asked, blinking at the lights. "Has there been a fire?"

A chorus of laughter greeted the question.

"It's a burglar!" said Conny, exhibiting the wrench.

"Oh, *why* didn't you wake me?" Patty wailed. "I've wanted all my life to see a burglar."

* * * * *

Two weeks later, a groom arrived on horseback with a polite note for the Dowager.

Mr. Weatherby presented his compliments to Mrs. Trent, and desired the pleasure of showing the young ladies of the Senior class through his art gallery on Friday next at four o'clock.

The Dowager was at a loss to account for this gratuitous courtesy on the part of her hitherto unneighborly neighbor. After a moment of deliberation, she decided to meet him half way; and the groom rode back with an equally polite acceptance.

On Friday next, as the school hearse turned in at the gates of Weatherby Hall, the owner stood on the portico waiting to welcome his guests. If there were a shade more *empressement* in his greeting to Patty than to her companions, the Dowager did not notice it.

He made an exceptionally attentive host. In person he conducted them through the gallery and pointed out the famous Botticelli. Tea was served at little tables set on the western terrace. Each girl found a gardenia at her plate and a silver bonbonnière with the St. Ursula monogram on the cover. After tea their host suggested a visit to the Italian garden. As they strolled through the paths, Patty found herself walking beside him and the Dowager. His conversation was addressed to Mrs. Trent, but an occasional amused glance was directed toward Patty. They turned a corner behind a marble pavilion, and came upon a fountain and a gardener man, intent upon a border of maiden-hair ferns.

"I have a very remarkable new Swedish gardener," Mr. Weatherby

casually remarked to the Dowager. "The man is a genius at making plants grow. He came highly recommended. Oscar!" he called. "Bring the ladies some of those tulips."

The man dropped his watering-can, and approached, hat in hand. He was a golden-haired, blue-eyed young chap with an honest smile. He presented his flowers, first to the elder lady and then to Patty. As he caught her interested gaze, a light of comprehension suddenly leaped to his eyes. Her costume and make-up to-day were so very dissimilar to those which she had assumed on the occasion of their first meeting, that recognition on his part had not been instantaneous.

Patty fell back a step to receive her flowers and the others strolled on.

"I have to thank ye, Miss," he said gratefully, "for the finest job I ever had. It's all right!"

"You know now," Patty laughed, "that I didn't pitch you no curves?"

XII

The Gypsy Trail

"Heels together. Hips firm, one, two, three, four--Irene McCullough! *Will* you keep your shoulders back and your stomach in? How many times must I tell you to stand straight? That's better! We'll start again. One, two, three, four."

The exercise droned on. Some twenty of the week's delinquents were working off demerits. It was uncongenial work for a sunny Saturday. The twenty pairs of eyes gazed beyond Miss Jellings' head--across ropes and rings and parallel bars--toward the green tree tops and the blue sky; and twenty girls, for that brief hour, regretted their past badnesses.

Miss Jellings herself seemed to be a bit on edge. She snapped out her orders with a curtness that brought a jerkily quick response from forty

waving Indian clubs. As she stood straight and slim in her gymnasium suit, her cheeks flushed with exercise, she looked quite as young as any of her pupils. But if she appeared young, she also appeared determined. No instructor in the school, not even Miss Lord in Latin, kept stricter discipline.

"One, two, three, four--Patty Wyatt! Keep your eyes to the front. It isn't necessary for you to watch the clock. I shall dismiss the class when I am ready. Over your heads. One, two, three, four." Finally, when nerves were almost at the breaking point, came the grateful order, "Attention! Right about face. March. Clubs in racks. Double quick. Halt. Break ranks."

With a relieved whoop, the class dispersed.

"Thank heaven, there's only one more week of it!" Patty breathed, as they regained their own quarters in Paradise Alley.

"Good-by to Gym forever!" Conny waved a slipper over her head. "Hooray!"

"Isn't Jelly awful?" Patty demanded, still smarting from the recent insult. "She never used to be so bad. What on earth has got into her?"

"She is pretty snappy," Priscilla agreed. "But I like her just the same. She's so--so sort of *spirited,* you know--like a skittish horse."

"Urn," growled Patty. "I'd like to see a good, big, husky man get the upper hand of Jelly once, and *just make her toe the mark*!"

"You two will have to hurry," Priscilla warned, "if you want to get into your costumes up here. Martin starts in half an hour."

"We'll be ready!" Patty was already plunging her face into an inky mixture in the wash bowl.

The fancy-dress lawn fête, which St. Ursula's School held on the last Friday in every May, had occurred the evening before; and this

afternoon the girls were redonning their costumes to make a trip to the village photographer's. The complicated costumes, that required time and space for their proper adjustment, were to be assumed at the school and driven down in the hearse. Those more simple of arrangement were to go in the trolley car, and be donned in the cramped quarters of the gallery dressing-room.

Patty and Conny, whose make-up was a very delicate matter, were dressing at the school. They had gone as Gypsies--not comic opera Gypsies, but real Gypsies, dirty and ragged and patched. (They had daily dusted the room with their costumes for a week before the fête.) Patty wore one brown stocking and one black, with a conspicuous hole in the right calf. Conny's toes protruded from one shoe, and the sole of the other flapped. Their hair was unkempt and the stain on their faces streaked. They were the last word in realism.

They scrambled into their dresses to-day with little ceremony, and hitched them together anyhow. Conny caught up a tambourine and Patty a worn-out pack of cards, and they clattered down the tin-covered back stairs. In the lower hall they came face to face with Miss Jellings, clothed in cool muslin, and in a more affable frame of mind. Patty never held her grudges long; she had already forgotten her momentary indignation at not being allowed to look at the clock.

"You cross-a my hand with silver? I tell-a your fortune."

She danced up to the gymnasium teacher with a flutter of scarlet petticoats, and poked out a dirty hand.

"Nice-a fortune," Conny added with a persuasive rattle of the tambourine. "Tall, dark-a young man."

"You impudent little ragamuffins!" Miss Jellings took them each by the shoulder and turned them for inspection. "What have you done to your faces?"

"Washed 'em in black coffee."

Miss Jellings shook her head and laughed.

"You're a disgrace to the school!" she pronounced. "Don't let any policeman see you, or he'll arrest you for vagabonds."

"Patty! Conny!--Hurry up. The hearse is starting."

Priscilla appeared in the doorway and waved her gridiron frantically. Priscilla, late about finding a costume, at the last moment had blasphemously gone as St. Laurence, draped in a sheet, with the kitchen broiler under her arm.

"We're coming! Tell him to wait." Patty dashed out.

"Don't you want a coat?" Conny shrieked after her.

"No--come on--we don't need coats."

The two raced down the drive after the wagonette--Martin never waited for laggards; he let them run and catch up. They sprang onto the rear step; and half-a-dozen outstretched hands hauled them in, head first.

They found the photographer's waiting-room a scene of the maddest confusion. When sixty excited people occupy the normal space of twelve, the effect is not restful.

"Did anyone bring a button-hook?"

"Lend me some powder."

"That's *my* safety-pin!"

"Where'd you put the burnt cork?"

"Is my hair a perfect sight?"

"Fasten me up--please!"

"Does my petticoat show?"

Everybody babbled at once, and nobody listened.

"I say, let's get out of this--I'm simply roasting!"

St. Laurence seized the Gypsies by the shoulder and shoved them into the vacant gallery. They squeezed themselves, with a sigh of relief, onto a shaky flight of six narrow stairs before the breezes of an open window.

"I know exactly what ails Jelly!" Patty spoke with the air of carrying on a conversation.

"What?" asked the others, with interest.

"She's had a quarrel with that Laurence Gilroy man who is manager at the electric light place. Don't you remember how he used to be hanging about all the time? And now he never comes at all? He was out every day in the Christmas vacation. They used to go walking together--and without any chaperone, too! You would think the Dowager would have made an awful fuss, but she didn't seem to. Anyway, you should have seen the way Miss Jellings treated that man--it was *per-fect-ly dreadful*! The way she jumps on Irene McCullough is *nothing* to the way she jumped on him."

"*He* doesn't have to work off demerits. He's a fool to stand it," said Conny simply.

"He doesn't stand it any more."

"How do you know?"

"Well, I--sort of heard. I was in the library alcove one day in the Christmas vacation, reading the 'Murders in the Rue Morgue,' when Jelly and Mr. Gilroy walked in. They didn't see me, and I didn't pay any attention to them at first--I'd just got to the place where the detective says, 'Is that the mark of a *human* hand?'--but pretty soon they got to scrapping so that I couldn't help but hear, and I felt sort of embarrassed about interrupting."

"What did they say?" asked Conny, impatiently brushing aside her apologies.

"I didn't grasp it entirely. He was trying to explain about something, and she wouldn't listen to a word he said--she was *perfectly horrid*. You know,--the way she is when she says, 'I understand it perfectly. I don't care to hear any excuse. You may take ten demerits, and report on Saturday for extra gymnasium.'--Well, they kept that up for fifteen minutes, both of 'em getting stiffer and stiffer. Then he took his hat and went. And you know, I don't believe he ever came back--*I've* never seen him. And now, she's sorry. She's been as cross as a bear ever since."

"And she can be awfully nice," said Priscilla.

"Yes, she *can*," said Patty. "But she's too cocky. I'd just like to see that man come back, and show her her place!"

The masqueraders trooped in and the serious business of the day commenced. The school posed as a whole, then an infinity of smaller groups disentangled themselves and posed separately, while those who were not in the picture stood behind the camera and made the others laugh.

"Young ladies!" the exasperated photographer implored. "Will you kindly be quiet for just two seconds? You have made me spoil three plates. And will that monk on the end stop giggling? Now! All ready. Please keep your eyes on the stove-pipe hole, and hold your positions while I count three. One, two, three--thank you very much!"

He removed his plate with a flourish, and dove into the dark room.

It was Patty's and Conny's turn to be taken alone, but St. Ursula and her Eleven Thousand Virgins were clamoring for precedence on the ground of superior numbers, and they made such a turmoil that the two Gypsies politely stood aside.

Keren Hersey, as St. Ursula, and eleven little Junior A's--each playing

the manifold part of a Thousand Virgins--made up the group. It was to be a symbolical picture, Keren explained.

When the Gypsies' turn came a second time, Patty had the misfortune to catch her dress on a nail and tear a three-cornered rent in the front. It was too large a hole for even a Gypsy to carry off with propriety; she retired to the dressing-room and fastened the edges together with white basting thread.

Finally, last of all, they presented themselves in their dirt and tatters. The photographer was an artist, and he received them with appreciative delight. The others had been patently masqueraders, but these were the real thing. He photographed them dancing, and wandering on a lonely moor with threatening canvas clouds behind them. He was about to take them in a forest, with a camp fire, and a boiling kettle slung from three sticks--when Conny suddenly became aware of a brooding quiet that had settled on the place.

"Where is everybody?"

She returned from a hasty excursion into the waiting-room, divided between consternation and laughter.

"Patty! The hearse has gone!--And the street-car people are waiting on the corner by Marsh and Elkins's."

"Oh, the beasts! They knew we were in here." Patty dropped her three sticks and rose precipitately. "Sorry!" she called to the photographer, who was busily dusting off the kettle. "We've got to run for it."

"And we haven't any coats!" wailed Conny. "Miss Wadsworth won't take us in the car in these clothes."

"She'll have to," said Patty simply. "She can't leave us on the corner."

They clattered downstairs, but wavered an instant in the friendly darkness of the doorway; there was no time, however, for maidenly hesitations, and taking their courage in both hands, they plunged into

the Saturday afternoon crowd that thronged Main Street.

"Oh, Mama! Quick! Look at the Gypsies," a little boy squealed as the two pushed past.

"Heavens!" Conny whispered. "I feel like a circus parade."

"Hurry!" Patty panted, taking her by the hand and beginning to run. "The car's stopped and they're getting in--Wait! Wait!" She frenziedly waved the tambourine above her head.

An express wagon at the crossing blocked their progress. The last of the Eleven Thousand Virgins climbed aboard, without once glancing over her shoulder; and the car, unheeding, clanged away, and became a yellow spot in the distance. The two Gypsies stood on the corner and stared at one another in blank interrogation.

"I haven't a cent--have you?"

"Not one."

"How are we going to get home?"

"I haven't an idea."

Patty felt her elbow jostled. She turned to find young John Drew Dominick Murphy, a protégé of the school, and an intimate acquaintance of her own, regarding her with impish delight.

"Hey, youse! Give us a song and dance."

"At least our friends don't recognize us," said Conny, drawing what comfort she could from her incognito.

Quite a crowd had gathered by now, and it was rapidly growing larger. Pedestrians had to make a detour into the street in order to get past.

"It wouldn't take us long," said Patty, a spark of mischief breaking through the blankness of her face, "to earn money enough for a

carriage--you thump the tambourine and I'll dance the sailor's hornpipe."

"Patty! Behave yourself." Conny for once brought a dampening supply of common sense to bear on her companion. "We're going to graduate in another week. For goodness' sake, *don't* let's get expelled first."

She grasped her by the elbow and shoved her insistently down a side street. John Drew Murphy and his friends followed for several blocks, but having gazed their fill, and perceiving that the Gypsies had no entertainment to offer, they gradually dropped away.

"Well, what shall we do?" asked Conny when they had finally shaken off the last of the small boys.

"I s'pose we could walk."

"Walk!" Conny exhibited her flapping sole. "You don't expect me to walk three miles in that shoe?"

"Very well," said Patty. "What *shall* we do?"

"We might go back to the photographer's and borrow some car-fare."

"No! I'm not going to parade myself the length of Main Street again with *that* hole in my stocking."

"Very well," Conny shrugged. "Think of something."

"I suppose we could go to the livery stable and--"

"It's on the other side of town--I can't flap all that distance. Every time I take a step, I have to lift my foot ten inches high."

"Very well." It was Patty's turn to shrug. "Perhaps you can think of something better?"

"I think the simplest way would be to take a car, and ask the conductor to charge it to us."

"Yes--and explain for the benefit of all the passengers that we belong at St. Ursula's School? It would be all over town by night, and the Dowager would be furious."

"Very well--what shall we do?"

They were standing at the moment before a comfortable frame house with three children romping on the veranda. The children left off their play to come to the top of the steps and stare.

"Come on!" Patty urged. "We'll sing the 'Gypsy Trail.'" (This was the latest song that had swept the school.) "I'll play an accompaniment on the tambourine, and you can flap your sole. Maybe they'll give us ten cents. It would be a beautiful lark to earn our car-fare home--I'm *sure* it's worth ten cents to hear me sing."

Conny glanced up and down the deserted street. No policeman was in sight. She grudgingly allowed herself to be drawn up the walk, and the music began. The children applauded loudly; and the two were just congratulating themselves on a very credible performance, when the door opened and a woman appeared--a first cousin to Miss Lord.

"Stop that noise immediately! There's somebody sick inside."

The tone also was reminiscent of Latin. They turned and ran as fast as Conny's flapping sole would take her. When they had put three good blocks between themselves and the Latin woman, they dropped down on a friendly stepping-stone, and leaned against each other's shoulders and laughed.

A man rounded the corner of the house before them, pushing a mowing machine.

"Here, you!" he ordered. "Move on."

They got up, meekly, and moved on several blocks further. They were going in exactly the opposite direction from St. Ursula's school, but they couldn't seem to hit on anything else to do, so they kept on moving

mechanically. They had arrived in the outskirts of the village by now, and they presently found themselves face to face with a tall chimney and a group of low buildings set in a wide enclosure--the water-works and electric plant.

A light of hope dawned in Patty's eyes.

"I'll tell you! We'll go and ask Mr. Gilroy to take us home in his automobile."

"Do you know him?" Conny asked dubiously. She had received so many affronts that she was growing timid.

"Yes! I know him *intimately*. He was under foot every minute during the Christmas vacation. We had a snow fight one day. Come on! He'll love to run us out. It will give him an excuse to make up with Jelly."

They passed up a narrow tarred walk toward the brick building labeled "Office." Four clerks and a typewriter girl in the outer office interrupted their work to laugh as the two apparitions appeared in the door. The young man nearest them whirled his chair around in order to get a better view.

"Hello, girls!" he said with cheerful familiarity. "Where'd you spring from?"

The typewriter, meanwhile, was making audible comments upon the discrepancies in Patty's hosiery.

Patty's face flushed darkly under the coffee.

"We have called to see Mr. Gilroy," she said with dignity.

"This is Mr. Gilroy's busy day," the young man grinned. "Wouldn't you rather talk to me?"

Patty drew herself up haughtily.

"Please tell Mr. Gilroy--*at once*--that we are waiting to speak to him."

"Certainly! I *beg* your pardon." The young man sprang to his feet with an air of elaborate politeness. "Will you kindly give me your cards?"

"I don't happen to have a card with me to-day. Just say that two ladies wish to speak with him."

"Ah, yes. One moment, please--Won't you be seated?"

He offered his own chair to Patty, and bringing forward another, presented it to Conny with a Chesterfieldian bow. The clerks tittered delightedly at this bit of comedy acting, but the Gypsies did not condescend to think it funny. They accepted the chairs with a frigid, "Thank you," and sat stiffly upright staring at the wastebasket in their most distant society manner. While the deferential young man was conveying the message to the private office of his chief, public comment advanced from Patty's stockings to Conny's shoes. He returned presently, and with unruffled politeness invited them please to step this way. He ushered them in with a bow.

Mr. Gilroy was writing, and it was a second before he glanced up. His eyes widened with astonishment--the clerk had delivered the message verbatim. He leaned back in his chair and studied the ladies from head to foot, then emitted a curt:

"Well?"

There was not a trace of recognition in his glance.

Patty's only intention had been to announce their identity, and invite him to deliver them at St. Ursula's door, but Patty was incapable of approaching any matter by the direct route when a labyrinth was also available. She drew a deep breath, and to Conny's consternation, plunged into the labyrinth.

"You Mr. Laurence K. Gilroy?" she dropped a curtsy. "I come find-a you."

"So I see," said Mr. Laurence K. Gilroy, dryly. "And now that you've

found me, what do you want?"

"I want tell-a your fortune," Patty glibly dropped into the lingo she and Conny had practised on the school the night before. "You cross-a my hand with silver--I tell-a your fortune."

This was no situation of Conny's choosing, but she was always staunchly game.

"Nice-a fortune," she backed Patty up. "Tall young lady. Ver' beautiful."

"Well, of all the nerve!"

Mr. Gilroy leaned back in his chair and regarded them severely, but with a gleam of amusement flickering through.

"Where did you get my name?" he demanded.

Patty waved her hand airily toward the open window and the distant horizon--as it showed between the coal sheds and the dynamo building.

"Gypsy peoples, dey learn signs," she explained lucidly. "Sky, wind, clouds--all talk--but you no understand. I get message for you--Mr. Laurence K. Gilroy--and we come from long-a way off to tell-a your fortune." With a pathetic little gesture, she indicated their damaged foot gear. "Ver' tired. We travel far."

Mr. Gilroy put his hand in his pocket and produced two silver half dollars.

"Here's your money. Now be honest! What sort of a bunco game is this? And where in thunder did you get my name?"

They pocketed the money, dropped two more curtsies, and evaded inconvenient questions.

"We tell-a your fortune," said Conny, with business-like directness. She brought out the pack of cards, plumped herself cross-legged on the

floor, and dealt them out in a wide circle. Patty seized the gentleman's hand in her two coffee-stained little paws, and turned it palm up for inspection. He made an embarrassed effort to draw away, but she clung with the tenacious grip of a monkey.

"I see a lady!" she announced with promptitude.

"Tall young lady--brown eyes, yellow hair, ver' beautiful," Conny echoed from the floor, as she leaned forward and intently studied the queen of hearts.

"But she make-a you lot of trouble," Patty added, frowning over a blister on his hand. "I see li'l' quarrel."

Mr. Gilroy's eyes narrowed. In spite of himself, he commenced to be interested.

"You like-a her very much," pronounced Conny from below.

"But you never see her any more," chimed in Patty.
"One--two--three--four months, you no see her, no spik with her." She looked up into his startled eyes. "*But you think about her every day!*"

He made a quick movement of withdrawal, and Patty hastily added a further detail.

"Dat tall young lady, she ver' unhappy too. She no laugh no more like she used."

He arrested the movement and waited with a touch of anxious curiosity to hear what was coming next.

"She feel ver' bad--ver' cross, ver' unhappy. She thinks always 'bout that li'l' quarrel. Four months she sit and wait--but you never come back."

Mr. Gilroy rose abruptly and strode to the window.

His unexpected visitors had dropped from the sky at the psychological

moment. For two straight hours that afternoon he had been sitting at his desk grappling with the problem, which they, in their broken English, were so ably handling. Should he swallow a great deal of pride, and make another plea for justice? St. Ursula's vacation was at hand; in a few days more she would be gone--and very possibly she would never come back. The world at large was full of men, and Miss Jellings had a taking way.

Conny continued serenely to study her cards.

"One--More--Chance!" She spoke with the authority of a Grecian sibyl. "You try again, you win. No try, you lose."

Patty leaned over Conny's shoulder, eager to supply a salutary bit of advice.

"Dat tall young lady too much--" she hesitated a moment for fitting expression--"too much head in air. Too *bossy*. You make-a her mind? Understand?"

Conny, gazing at the round-faced, chubby Jack of Diamonds, had received a new idea.

"I see 'nother man," she murmured. "Red hair and--and--*fat*. Not too good-looking but--"

"*Very dangerous!*" interpolated Patty. "You have no time to waste. He comes soon."

Now, they had fabricated this detail out of nothing in the world but pure fancy and the Jack of Diamonds, but as it happened, they had touched an open wound. It was an exact description of a certain rich young man in the neighboring city, who loaded Miss Jellings with favors, and whom Mr. Gilroy detested from the bottom of his soul. All that afternoon, mixed in with his promptings and hesitations and travail of spirit, had loomed large, the fair, plump features of his fancied rival. Mr. Gilroy was a common-sense young business man, as free as most from superstition; but when a man's in love he is open to omens.

He stared fixedly about the familiar office and out at the coal sheds and dynamo, to make sure that he was still on solid earth. His gaze came back to his visitors from the sky in absolute, anxious, pleading bewilderment.

They were studying the cards again in a frowning endeavor to wrest a few further items from their overtaxed imaginations. Patty felt that she had already given him fifty cents' worth, and was wondering how to bring the interview to a graceful end. She realized that they had carried the farce too impertinently far, ever to be able to announce their identity and suggest a ride home. The only course now, was to preserve their incognito, make good their escape, and get back as best they could--at least they had a dollar to aid in the journey!

She glanced up, mentally framing a peroration.

"I see good-a fortune," she commenced, "if--"

Her glance passed him to the open window, and her heart missed a beat. Mrs. Trent and Miss Sarah Trent, come to complain about the new electric lights, were serenely descending from their carriage, not twenty feet away.

Patty's hand clutched Conny's shoulder in a spasmodic grasp.

"Sallie and the Dowager!" she hissed in her ear. "Follow me!"

With a sweep of her hand, Patty scrambled the cards together and rose. There would be no chance to escape by the door; the Dowager's voice was already audible in the outer office.

"Goo' by!" said Patty, springing to the window. "Gypsies call. We must go."

She scrambled over the sill and dropped eight feet to the ground. Conny followed. They were both able pupils of Miss Jellings.

Mr. Laurence K. Gilroy, open-mouthed, stood staring at the spot where

they had been. The next instant, he was bowing courteously to the principals of St. Ursula's, and striving hard to concentrate a dazed mind upon the short-circuit in the West Wing.

Patty and Conny left the car--and a number of interested passengers--at the corner before they reached the school. Circumnavigating the wall, until they were opposite the stables, they approached the house modestly by the back way. They had the good fortune to encounter no one more dangerous than the cook (who gave them some gingerbread) and they ultimately reached their home in Paradise Alley none the worse for the adventure--and ninety cents to the good.

* * * * *

When the long, light evenings came, St. Ursula's no longer filled in the interim between dinner and evening study with indoor dancing, but romped about on the lawn outside. To-night, being Saturday, there was no evening study to call them in, and everybody was abroad. The school year was almost over, the long vacation was at hand--the girls were as full of bubbling spirits as sixty-four young lambs. Games of blindman's-buff, and pussy-wants-a-corner, and cross-tag were all in progress at once. A band of singers on the gymnasium steps was drowning out a smaller band on the porte-cochère; half-a-dozen hoop-rollers were trotting around the oval, and scattered groups of strollers, meeting in the narrow paths, were hailing each other with cheerful calls.

Patty and Conny and Priscilla, washed and dressed and chastened, were wandering arm in arm through the summer twilight, talking--a trifle soberly--of the long-looked-forward-to future that was now so oppressively close upon them.

"You know," Patty spoke with a sort of frightened gulp--"in another week we'll be *grown-up*!"

They stopped and silently looked back toward the gay crowd romping on the lawn, toward the big brooding house, that through four tempestuous, hilarious, care-free years had sheltered them so kindly.

Grown-upness seemed a barren state. They longed to stretch out their hands and clutch the childhood that they had squandered with so little thought.

"Oh, it's horrible!" Conny breathed with sudden fierceness. "*I want to stay young!*"

In this unsocial mood, they refused an offered game of hare-and-hounds, and evading the singers on the gymnasium steps--the song was the "Gypsy Trail"--they sauntered on down the pergola to the lane, sprinkled with fallen apple blossoms. At the end of the lane, they came suddenly upon two other solitary strollers, and stopped short with a gasp of unbelieving wonder.

"It's Jelly!" Conny whispered.

"And Mr. Gilroy," Patty echoed.

"Shall we run?" asked Conny, in a panic.

"No," said Patty, "pretend not to notice him at all."

The three advanced with eyes discreetly bent upon the ground, but Miss Jellings greeted them gaily as she passed. There was an intangible, excited, happy thrill about her manner--something *electric*, Patty said.

"Hello, you bad little Gypsies!"

It was a peculiarly infelicitous salutation, but she was smilingly unconscious of any slip.

"*Gypsies?*"

Mr. Gilroy repeated the word, and his benumbed faculties began to work. He stopped and scanned the trio closely. They were clothed in dainty muslin, three as sweet young girls as one would ever meet. But Patty and Conny, even in the failing light, were still noticeably brunette--it takes boiling water to get out coffee stain.

"Oh!"

He drew a deep breath of enlightenment, while many emotions struggled for supremacy in his face. Conny dropped her gaze embarrassedly to the ground; Patty threw back her head and faced him. He and she eyed each other for a silent instant. In that glance, each asked the other not to tell--and each mutely promised.

The breeze brought the chorus of the "Gypsy Trail"; and as they sauntered on, Miss Jellings fell softly to humming the words in tune with the distant singers:

"And the Gypsy blood to the Gypsy blood Ever the wide world over. Ever the wide world over, lass, Ever the trail held true Over the world and under the world And back at the last to you. Follow the Romany patteran--"

The words died away in the shadows.

Conny and Patty and Priscilla stood hand in hand and looked after them.

"The school has lost Jelly!" Patty said, "and I'm afraid that we're to blame, Con, dear."

"I'm glad of it!" Conny spoke with feeling. "She's much too nice to spend her whole life telling Irene McCullough to stand up straight and keep her stomach held in."

"Anyway," Patty added, "he has no right to be angry, because--without us--he never would have dared."

They kept on across the meadow till they came to the pasture bars, where they leaned in a row with their heads tipped back, scanning the darkening sky. Miss Jellings's mood was somehow catching; the little contretemps had stirred them strangely. They felt the thrill of the untried future, with Romance waiting around the corner.

"You know," Conny broke silence after a long pause--"I think, after all, maybe it will be sort of interesting."

"What?" asked Priscilla.

She stretched out her arm in a wide gesture that comprised the night.

"Oh, everything!"

Priscilla nodded understandingly, and presently added with an air of challenge:

"I've changed my mind. I don't believe I'll go to college."

"Not go to college!" Patty echoed blankly. "Why not?"

"I think--I'll get married instead."

"Oh!" Patty laughed softly. "*I* am going to do both!"

* * * * *

Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

Page 21, "chose" changed to "choose" (endeavor to choose)

Page 35, "Cony" changed to "Conny" (Conny Wilder in dramatics)

Page 36, "Rosaile" changed to "Rosalie" (When Rosalie chanced)

Page 76, "or" changed to "of" (majority of the)

Page 85, "exhanced" changed to "enhanced" (are enhanced by)

Page 86, "skurried" changed to "scurried" (she scurried off)

Page 92, "Sally" changed to "Sallie" (Miss Sallie affably)

Page 107, "Connie" changed to "Conny" (Conny murmured fervently)

Page 109, "wail" changed to "wait" (Just wait till)

Page 152, "esthetic" changed to "æsthetic" (rather than æsthetic)

Page 206, "same" changed to "some" (There was some)

Page 230, "or" changed to "of" (quiet confines of)

Page 247, "cheery" changed to "cherry" (of the cherry tree)

Page 320, "freindly" changed to "friendly" (the friendly darkness)

Page 329, "airly" changed to "airily" (her hand airily)

Page 330, "sings" changed to "signs" (dey learn signs)

Page 338, "tempestous" changed to "tempestuous" (through four tempestuous)

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