



*The*  
CARTER GIRLS  
OF CARTER  
HOUSE

NELL SPEED

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# THE CARTER GIRLS OF CARTER HOUSE

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By NELL SPEED

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AUTHOR OF  
"The Molly Brown Series," "The Tucker Twins Series," etc.



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## THE CARTER GIRL SERIES

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A SERIES OF STORIES FOR GIRLS  
By NELL SPEED

The Carter Girls  
The Carter Girls' Week End Camp  
The Carter Girls' Mysterious Neighbors  
The Carter Girls of Carter House

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THE CARTER GIRLS OF CARTER HOUSE



On the stair landing Douglas paused and turning threw her bouquet out among the guests.

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*(The Carter Girls of Carter House.)*

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# THE CARTER GIRLS OF CARTER HOUSE

## CHAPTER I. A FLYER IN ANTIQUES.

“Oh, Helen! What a shame!” cried Douglas Carter, and she began reading from the Richmond paper whose news had so distressed her. “Died at her home, Grantley, Sept. 28, in the sixty-ninth year of her life, Louise Garland Grant. She is survived by an only sister, Ellen Spottswood Grant”

“Poor, poor, old Miss Ellen, what in the world will she ever do alone?” and Helen left the letter she had been writing and went to her sister, bending her glossy brown head close over the paper as if by scrutiny she could change Miss Louise’s destiny.

Helen had been particularly fond of this peculiar old lady, perhaps more so than her sisters because she knew her better than the others. Often during the long winter the Carters had spent in the overseer’s cottage they had rented from the Misses Grant, Helen had been the confidante of these queer spinster ladies. While really devoted to each other, they had continually quarreled about trifles, and Helen had always had both sides of the slightest disagreement poured into her unwilling but polite ear. Helen, being the housekeeper in the Carter family since their fallen fortunes, was the possessor of innumerable of the Grants’ choicest receipts. She was so greatly beloved by both ladies that Lucy, the youngest of the Carter girls, declared “those old dames have made a little tin god out of Helen ever since the night of Count de Lestis’ ball.”

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Indeed, since that memorable night when Helen and Dr. George Wright had come in answer to the summons of the old ladies, arriving at Grantley just in time to quell by their cleverness and courage an insurgent mob of negroes, incited by de Lestis, who were planning to burn the old mansion, the Misses Grant had looked on Helen Carter as a heroine. Dr. Wright, called from the de Lestis’ ball in place of their family physician, who was unavailable at the time, had also had his due share of adulation from these lonely women.

[5]

“You know, Helen,” said Nan, abruptly closing the book of verse she had been reading, “I think you ought to go right up to Grantley and see Miss Ellen. She is simply devoted to you and if anybody can be of any comfort to her, you can.”

Nan was the quiet, dreamy, poetry-loving member of the Carter family, but she had the added characteristic of being practical, too, a characteristic not often found with these other qualities. She could make up her mind quickly as to what was the best course for her to carry out and could give useful advice as to what was the best line of action for the other members of her family to follow. She was extremely tactful and gentle, her opinion was always asked for and her advice was frequently taken, a thing which does not often happen to advice. Consequently, when Nan said that she thought Helen ought to go up to Grantley, Douglas, the business head, and Lucy, the coming business woman, immediately agreed.

“But,” objected Helen, “while of course I want to help Miss Ellen if I can, I hate to leave you girls to attend to the closing of camp all by yourselves.”

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The Carter Girls' week-end camp had become a famous place for week-enders during the two summers they had run it. It had served the two-fold purpose of giving them a home for the summer and a means of support for themselves and their mother and father while Mr. Carter's overworked nerves had an opportunity for a much-needed rest. The same people came to the camp again and again, bringing new friends with each return, and the girls had had more applicants for board than they could possibly accommodate. The readiness with which these girls had taken hold of their muddled affairs and crippled finances had won them the admiration of all their friends and the respect of even the few relations, who had said at one time that Robert Carter's daughters were spoiled butterflies and selfish ones, too, else they would never have let their father work himself into his pitiable condition that they might live in luxury. They had just finished another profitable summer and were packing up camp things prefatory to returning to Richmond, where they intended, Douglas and Helen, to open an arts and crafts shop combined with a small tea-room.

“That's alright, Helen,” Lucy reassured her. “You catch the 1.50 to Grantley and Nan and I will just work a little bit harder to make up for not having you.”

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“Very well, then,” consented Helen, “I'll run tell mother I am going.” It was always a matter of ‘telling’ Mother, never of ‘asking’ Mother, as the girls had discovered that their pretty, helpless mother was utterly incapable of assuming any responsibility or of rendering a decision.

At the beginning of their father's long and tedious illness, Douglas had come to the realization that on her young and inexperienced shoulders rested the cares that had so bent her father. In addition to her air of general helplessness Mrs. Carter had added that of semi-invalidism, an affectation that the girls rather encouraged as Mrs. Carter's fancied ill-health somewhat reconciled her to her forced withdrawal from society and to some degree curbed her extravagances. This

little lady seemed unable to learn that money and credit were not synonymous and was totally unable to adjust herself to her altered circumstances.

Her daughters had assumed a half-amused, protective air towards her and treated her in much the same way they would a spoiled child. They made every endeavor to keep her from worrying her husband about money matters, always keeping her recurrent, useless expenditures from him, and paying her bills themselves. The previous winter she had kept herself fairly happy by playing the sick game, but since she had learned that they were again to live in Richmond and in their own attractive house that had hitherto been rented, her invalidism and negligees were dropped at once and she spent her time busily looking at the fashion in 'Vogue.' It was with a feeling of apprehension that her daughters thought of her coming shopping expeditions.

[8]

"I am going to help Helen pack her things," declared Lucy, dashing off after Helen. She was her sister's most ardent admirer and copied her fashion of dress and hair to the minutest detail, with a result sometimes laughable as there was four years' difference in their ages.

"Douglas," said Nan, as Lucy left them alone, "I don't want to seem unfeeling—"

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"As if you could." Her sister smiled at her, amused at the thought of Nan as 'unfeeling' because they had often accused her of having so much feeling that it almost amounted to sentimentality. "But what?"

"I was thinking that now there is only one Miss Grant she can't live at Grantley, and I was wondering what would become of all that wonderful old furniture. You know they are the last Grants. There is no relation to have it. Oh! Douglas, don't you think we might take a flyer in antiques and buy it up and put it on sale at the shop? We must have enough money in bank that we made at camp this summer."

"A flyer in antiques! Heavens, Nan, what a way to put it! It is a sudden idea, but I should think it ought to be a good investment. Do you suppose Miss Ellen will sell, though?"

"Helen is a tactful soul. She can find out and if so, get first chance on it all. I imagine Miss Ellen will sell Grantley and most of the old things, and come into Richmond and board. It seems the logical thing to do, but I am just guessing. Any way, we will have to talk it over with Helen and Lucy."

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This was the rule: that all matters pertaining to all must be discussed by all, that is, by all but Bobby, who was a young and mischievous brother, deeply loved but not considered responsible enough to have the privilege of lifting his voice in sober and solemn conclave.

“What did Mother say?” demanded Nan as Lucy and Helen returned to the tent.

“Wear a veil, dear. It is so sunny. Do you think I might have a brown velvet dinner dress this winter? Of course, tan is the popular shade, but it is not becoming to me since my recent illness has left me so pale.” In spite of themselves, the girls laughed at Helen’s mimicry of their mother. Helen herself loved beautiful clothes and was always exquisitely dressed, and so naturally was more lenient towards her frivolous mother than her sisters. But even she was sometimes exasperated by her mother’s persistent talk of styles, shades and fabrics.

Nan and Douglas unfolded their plan to Lucy and Helen, who accepted it enthusiastically.

“We ought to be able to sell that lovely old mahogany at a good profit and yet give Miss Ellen a fair price, too. She could never find appreciative purchasers out there in the country, and it would hardly be worth while for her to send it all into town on the chance of finding buyers. We would give her more than any of the antique shops would, I am sure. It seems to me that it would be an ideal arrangement all around.” This was Helen’s opinion, delivered as she dutifully pinned on the veil her mother had suggested.

[11]

“Helen, you have about three hours’ wait in Richmond, don’t you think you could drop around to Dr. Wright’s office and talk over this new scheme with him? He has such excellent judgment,” Douglas asked.

Helen was thankful for her veil, as she had discovered lately that she always blushed violently at the mention of George Wright’s name. Moreover, a visit to his office was exactly what she had planned to do with her three hours’ wait in Richmond.

“Whoa, there, Josephus! Can’t you do what we-uns tell you?” demanded Bobby from his seat beside Josh as he proudly drove the spring wagon and the old mule up to the tent. He and Josh were to take Helen and her bag down the mountain side to the train. Helen was grateful to this sudden appearance of Bobby and Josh as it covered the confusion she could not help feeling.

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Completely ignoring Bobby’s flourish of the whip, Josephus slowly ambled off with Helen sitting between Bobby and the little mountain boy, Josh. Josh’s appearance had undergone a marked change from the time the Carters first met him. He had been attractive looking always, but ragged and intensely dirty. Bobby had been seduced by his filth, as he was thoroughly opposed to the lavish use of soap and water himself. However, the preceding summer Lewis Somerville had introduced Josh to the mysteries of a cold shower, and since that occasion he had been transformed into a gleamingly clean little boy. At first

Bobby had been disgusted at this traitorous streak in his new friend but soon had been so won over that he gleefully joined Josh in his morning ablutions. Bobby was his ardent admirer and constant companion. He had labored manfully to acquire the mountain form of speech and never lost a chance to substitute 'we-uns' for 'I,' an accomplishment that distressed his mother and delighted his father.

"Helen, will you set we-uns up to a bottle of pop?" demanded Bobby as they jogged along the mountain road.

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"I'll set you-uns up to a bottle a-piece," laughed Helen.

"An' tell Dr. Wright I will be—I mean we-uns will be back in town day after tomorrow and will be ready to start a-shoverin' for him again." Bobby and Dr. Wright were sworn allies.

"Very well, if I see him. You had better let Josh drive Josephus now as he has got his short leg down the hill and the next curve is a sharp one. We had better hurry up, too, as I can hear the train blowing for the stop before this one," and Helen hastened to change the subject.

Josephus and the train pulled in at the same time, and after kissing Bobby and giving him and Josh each a dime for the promised pop, Helen got aboard, there to wonder on the confidence she and her entire family had grown to have in that young nerve specialist, Dr. George Wright.

[14]

## CHAPTER II. HOME FROM THE WARS.

“Oh dear, but it is good to be in our own house again! I had begun to fear that we would never live here any more,” and Mrs. Carter sighed a fluttering little sigh, settled herself luxuriously on her chaise-longue and glanced contentedly around her charmingly appointed old rose and gray bedroom. Mr. Carter had given especial attention to his wife’s room when he had drawn up the plans for Carter House, sparing neither time nor money to make it perfect, and indeed it was an attractive setting for the exquisite little creature.

“Mummie dear, I am glad you are happy once more, though I am afraid you will find the life we will lead here now very different to what it used to be,” and Douglas bent over her mother and kissed her affectionately.

“It won’t take us long to get back into the old way of living. I will give a series of little dinner parties next week to some of our oldest friends. I want to remind Hiram G. Parker of what an attractive girl you are. Then, too, we must have Jeffrey Tucker and his twins,” and Mrs. Carter began to write a list of names busily.

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A sudden wave of fatigue swept over Douglas. Was she to be forced day after day to explain the situation to her mother? At first she had had both Helen and her mother to deal with, but at last Helen had grasped the state of affairs and realized that economy was demanded. With tears of vexation and despair forcing their way to Douglas’ eyes, she said wearily, “Oh, Mummie, Mummie, will you never learn that we aren’t rich still? How can you give a series of little dinner parties with no one to prepare them or to serve them? Have you forgotten that we are to have no servants? As for Hiram G. Parker I hate him and all he stands for. I don’t care if I never see his foolish face again,” and the usually gentle, courteous Douglas fled weeping from her mother.

In her own room, she flung herself face down across the bed and gave way to sobbing, hating herself all the time for her weakness. Nan, who was in her own room across the hall writing, put down her pen and shoved the loose sheets of paper into the desk and came quickly to her sister.

[16]

“You poor Douglas, what is it? Mummie again? What does she want this time? A limousine for the cook we haven’t got, or is she planning a year abroad to polish up the completely uncultured Lucy? Whatever it is, don’t you mind, Doug; she is obliged to come to her senses again some time or other,” soothed Nan. “I will just get you a wet wash cloth from your bathroom and then we will powder you up and get you ready, because while you were downtown Lewis Somerville ’phoned

and said he would be around about four-thirty. I did not hear you when you came home or I would have told you before.”

With this startling news, Douglas sat up. “Why, Nan, I just had a letter from him yesterday from the Walter Reed Hospital saying that he didn’t know when they would let him out! His arm is allright now but the ill effects of the gas are still present in his lungs, and he gets tired awfully easily.”

“He called up about two o’clock and said he was crazy to see us all, which I don’t believe was strictly true, for when he found that ‘us all’ was down town, he said he would be around about four-thirty, as that is the time ‘us all’ expected to return,” and Nan gave the wet cloth to her sister and watched with interest the transformation the news of Lewis combined with the judicious use of powder wrought.

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Douglas had not seen her cousin since his return, wounded and gassed, from France several months after the armistice, but she had had frequent letters from him. She had often regretted the fact that she had not allowed herself to become engaged to him when he had asked her at camp, as she knew now that the feeling of affection she had for him was not only cousinly. This had been brought home to her when she had received the news that Lewis was seriously wounded and had promptly fainted. His last letters had been so unhappy and depressed that she longed to see him and try to cheer him up as she believed she could. Lewis was a favorite of them all and held a place in Bobby’s heart second only to George Wright.

There was a sound of much stamping on the front porch and the bang of the door announced Bobby’s arrival.

“Doug, Doug,” he shrieked. “What you reckon? Lewis is done come home from the wars, but he ain’t got his arm in no sling like me an’ Josh hoped for. But he is all wound stripes up one arm and serious stripes down the other. He is got on bone glasses and looks mighty funny and gant. I told him he looked most as bony as Josephus and then he said he wished he was half as useful,” and the delighted Bobby paused, entirely out of breath.

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“Come on with me, Bobby,” said the tactful Nan, confident that Douglas would welcome a few minutes in which to compose herself after Bobby’s terrible though unwitting picture of Lewis, “and let’s go get an ice cream soda.”

“Half as useful as Josephus,” Douglas repeated under her breath as Nan and Bobby went down stairs. For the life of her she could not think of Lewis as being useless nor of his regarding himself in such a light. She remembered what a pillar of physical and moral strength he had been for them all that first summer at camp. She dreaded the change in his appearance that her little brother had described as ‘gant’. Above all she wished that he had come at another time, for

how was she to give him the encouragement she knew he needed when she herself felt that the struggle was too great for her?

The front door bell rang and with a heavy heart Douglas went slowly down the stairs to answer it. She saw through the glass panel that it was Lewis. He was standing with the erectness West Point gives to its men and of which no amount of illness can rob them. It seemed to Douglas that his thinness merely accentuated his splendid carriage. He was looking out towards the street but turned as the door opened, and as his eyes met Douglas' she realized for the hundredth time all the horror of war. She rushed into his outstretched arms, sobbing her joy to see him again.

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“Oh, my dear, my dear, it is good to see you again,” she said, as still clutching his hand she led him into the long low library.

Already some of the misery seemed to have departed from Lewis' deep-set gray eyes. “You do care for me, then, Doug, the way I wanted you to at camp, don't you?” he asked.

“Can you doubt it, Lewis, after the unmaidenly and uncousinly way I threw myself at you the moment I saw you?”

“Until I saw you, as one of the men in my company say, ‘I felt so low I would have had to have a step ladder to climb up as far as Hell,’ but now I feel like I am sitting on the world.”

[20]

Douglas laughed at the young officer's unconscious use of the very descriptive army slang. This meeting with Lewis had been easier than she had dared hope for and she felt as if she too were ‘sitting on the world.’

“That is, I feel like I am sitting on the world now that I am with you, but when I leave I'll get all nervous and restless; and I know it is because I haven't anything definite to do,” Lewis said. “I am one of those poor unfortunates who has to be busy. Of course, you know, Mother left me enough money for you and me to live very comfortably on, but I can't seem to see that sort of existence for me, and I know you wouldn't want it either. On the other hand, a West Point education hardly fits you for business and I have no intention of continuing in the army. Doug, the situation is this: I have ignorance and capital to start in business with. You don't mind my talking like this to you, do you?”

Douglas assured him satisfactorily that what affected him affected her, and then said suddenly, “Why, you have more than capital and ignorance! You have capital and an immense amount of knowledge. There is nobody in the world who knows more about the innermost secrets of automobiles than you do, unless perhaps Bill Tinsley.”

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“What do you want me to do, be a jitney driver, a mechanic,

or shall I aspire to chauffeurdom?" Lewis asked with the amused scorn men always have when a woman dares give the business advice they sometimes ask.

"No, nut! That is where your capital comes in. I don't see why you and Bill, who has capital, too, as far as that goes, don't get the agency for several automobiles."

"I swear you are a wonder, Doug, I would have moped a million years and never seen what was right at my door. Bill will be keen about it, I know. It will be a wonderful arrangement all around. He is around at Tillie Wingo's now. I will call him up and make him drop by here and we'll all talk it over." Douglas could but be amused at Lewis's quick change from amused scorn to sincere admiration of her advice.

She found it hard to believe that this was the same man she had let in the front door a scant half hour ago, as she watched his new alert figure cross the room to the phone. He sat on the desk, swinging his long legs and whistling while he waited for the operator to get his number just as she had seen him do so many times before.

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"Hello, this is Lewis Somerville speaking. Why, is that you, Tillie?" By the interruption and the animated buzz-buzz that began in the receiver immediately, he knew that it was indeed Tillie Wingo. He knew by experience that it was useless to try to stem the overpowering flow of Tillie's conversation, so he wisely waited till she stopped a moment to get her breath before he asked to speak to Bill. The buzzing suddenly commenced again and an expression of amused despair spread across Lewis' face. Covering the mouthpiece with his hand, he said to Douglas, "Come here, for the love of Allah, and see if you can make this woman shut up long enough for me to get it over that it is Bill I want to speak to. Tillie is a darling but she is such a rattler," and Lewis withdrew in favor of Douglas.

Laughing at Lewis' hopeless face, Douglas took the phone and said, "Tillie, I dare you to stop talking a minute, just a little minute, I only want to whisper a few sweet nothings to your Bill and then I'll talk—I mean listen—to you for hours."

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Lewis gathered from the fact that the buzz-buzz changed to deep rumble in the receiver that Tillie had at last consented to release the phone in favor of Bill.

Douglas told him briefly that Lewis and she wanted to speak to him on his way home from Tillie's. She sounded so mysterious that it aroused Bill's curiosity and she had hardly resumed her seat when he bounded into the room.

"What's up?" he demanded, still pumping Douglas' hand up and down.

"Nothing but this: while you have been idling at Tillie's,

Douglas and I have been planning your future for you!  
Tomorrow morning you and I are going down town and see a  
lawyer and have him draw up a contract for the Tinsley-  
Somerville Motor Sales Corporation!”

### CHAPTER III.

#### LUCY GETS A JOB AND MRS. CARTER GOES SHOPPING.

Helen arrived on the eight forty-five from Grantley. She met her father going to the office just as she came up the front steps to their house.

“Daddy, you look mighty cheerful for so early in the morning,” she said to him, as he stopped to kiss her.

“I am cheerful, as cheerful can be and for good reason, too. I haven’t time to tell you now, but ask Nan.” Mr. Carter walked away as briskly as he used to do before his illness.

“Nan, do tell me what Daddy is so blithesome about. He said he didn’t have time to tell me but that you would,” demanded Helen, coming into the dining-room just as the rest of the family were getting up from the breakfast table.

“He has just been asked to draw the plans for that big new apartment house Martin and Greene are going to put up on the Boulevard. Of course, it means an awful lot to him to get it because it is the first big order he has had since he went to work again. Then, too, if his plans are accepted he can get all the work he can do, as all the real estate men are putting up apartment houses as fast as they can,” Nan explained as she cleared away the table.

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“But I am afraid he will get to working too hard again and all the good Dr. Wright has done him will come to nothing,” said Lucy.

“We’ll just have to make an iron bound rule about his office hours just as we do about Bobby’s bed time,” said Douglas, reaching out a sisterly hand and napkin to wipe the egg off Bobby’s chin.

“Pooh! men can’t have no fun. There’s too many women in this world to suit me,” announced Bobby, sliding under the table just in time to avoid Douglas’s napkin.

“We are completely forgetting about Helen’s trip to Grantley,” Nan reminded them. “Give us a full report, please, Helen.”

“First, as you suggested, I went to see Dr. Wright and he said he thought it an excellent idea. In fact, he took me up to Grantley in his car. You know, he was very fond of both old ladies.”

“Yes, indeed we understand,” teased Lucy, “he was very fond of both old ladies, so he took you up to Grantley in his car.”

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Ignoring Lucy, Helen continued: "Poor Miss Ellen was very pathetic and really appreciated my coming. She was immensely pleased that Dr. Wright came, too. She expects to sell the place and agreed to sell us the furniture at a reasonable price. Her present plan is to come to Richmond for the winter and board. What the poor old thing is to do in the summer, I don't know. I asked her to consider that she could always come to camp with us, but I am afraid it would be pretty rough for her."

Douglas went into the kitchen to arrange the tray that had to be carried up to Mrs. Carter every morning, and Lucy began busily to scan the 'help wanted female' column of the morning paper. She had been to a business college the previous spring, had rented a typewriter to take to camp and had attended to all the camp correspondence, taking dictation diligently from Douglas all summer so as not to forget her shorthand. It was her intention to get a job as soon as possible.

"Heavens, Lucy, I almost forgot something awfully important I had to tell you," said Helen. "George Wright told me that his secretary had gotten married suddenly and left him high and dry. He wanted to know if there was any chance of getting you to take her place. I told him I would ask you as soon as I came home and have you call him up. He said his old secretary got a hundred and twenty-five a month and that of course he would expect you to have the same. You have to answer the phone, take his mail, and of course he has a good deal, send out the bills and make his appointments for him. The hours aren't bad, from nine to five. What do you say?"

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Lucy's eyes widened with excitement at the prospect, making her look very lovely. "Whew!" she whistled in a most undignified manner for a girl who has just been offered a hundred and twenty-five dollar job. "That isn't a job, that is a position. But Helen, I am scared to death. I would never be able to spell pneumonia and all those horrible things. Do you suppose I could ever do it? Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a hundred and twenty-five dollars that we could absolutely count on coming in regularly every month?"

Helen smiled at Lucy's pretty excitement. She was very fond of this little sister. "Darling child, you can get a medical dictionary that will tell you how to spell any disease in the world, so don't let that worry you. But I don't want to coerce you. You are old enough to decide for yourself, but you must decide quickly, as George has to have somebody immediately," Helen went upstairs to let Lucy think it over by herself.

[28]

She had no sooner left the room than Lucy with the quickness that was typical of her dashed over to the phone and called Dr. Wright.

"Hello, is that Dr. Wright? Well, I want that job and am ready to start in tomorrow," she said breathlessly.

A minute later she went upstairs to Mrs. Carter's room and grabbing Douglas 'round the neck began dancing her about. "My boss is coming for me in his car tomorrow morning at twenty minutes of nine and I will be making fifteen hundred a year!" she sang.

"What in the world is the child talking about?" queried Mrs. Carter in a pretty high voice.

"For goodness sake, Lucy, I feel like a whirling dervish. What in the world has happened?" And Douglas, exhausted, reeled over to the chaise-longue.

[29]

"The youngest daughter of the House of Carter has just accepted a position as Dr. George Wright's secretary and starts to work tomorrow morning and gets a hundred and twenty-five dollars per month for her indispensable services, and now I must call up Lil Tate and tell her," and Lucy capered out of the room in time to miss Mrs. Carter's remarks about her disappointment that none of her girls wanted to make their debut.

"Poor little Mummie, you had better start trying to make a Hiram G. Parker out of Bobby. He is your only chance, now the last and youngest of the Carter girls had declared herself. I hope Lucy makes good, as she needs just that sort of experience to steady her. Now come on, Nan, we must go down to the shop and see about having those partitions knocked down," and Douglas and Nan left Mrs. Carter to continue her dressing and wonder on her youngest daughter's joy at starting to work,— and her other daughters' running a shop! If only they would call it by another name! At each mention of the word 'shop,' an involuntary shiver ran through her.

"Bobby, dear," she called from her window, "come up here and let me put on one of your little white linen suits so I can take you down town shopping with me."

[30]

"Nawm!" shrieked back her son. "My little toad done hopped tereckly under the garage and I gotta set here till he comes out agin."

Mrs. Carter must have felt like the old hen who, after weeks of faithful setting rewarded by a fluffy yellow brood, took her offspring out for their first walk only to see them all swim away at the first little pond. Not that anyone would have thought of the old hen in connection with Mrs. Carter's appearance. She looked more like a tropical bird of brilliant plumage after she settled the scarlet feathered toque over her still dark curly hair, and caught up a handsome beaded bag that went admirably with the fawn-colored jersey dress, heavily embroidered in deep-toned red worsted, that she had chosen to wear upon her first shopping expedition.

Mrs. Carter picked her dainty way along the cement walk that

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led around the side of the house to the garage. Bobby was there waiting for his toad, as he had said he intended to do, but he was not 'setting'. He had gotten on his stomach and insinuated himself half under the garage, and the despised white linen suit that his mother adored to keep him dressed in, was in a state of muddiness and grime almost sufficient to satisfy its small owner.

"Oh, Bobby, Bobby, what a sight you are! I can never take you with me looking as you do, and I haven't time to change your suit," and Mrs. Carter wrung her slender gloved hands in distress.

"Yas'm! I thought if I would get dirty enough you wouldn't make me go," said Bobby quite frankly, wriggling even farther under the garage after the truant toad.

With a little shrug of despair, Mrs. Carter turned and walked slowly to the street. There did not seem to be a chance of making Bobby into a Hiram G. Parker, as her daughter had suggested. She went on down Franklin Street, now and again smiling and bowing to friends in passing automobiles. It was good to be back even if her daughters refused to be the most popular debutantes of the season, as she wished them all to be. As she passed the Commonwealth Club a dapper figure descended the long flight of steps that ran down to the street from the Club porch.

It was that glass of fashion, Hiram G. Parker.

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"Mrs. Carter," he said with a most impressive combination of hat-raising-and bowing, "I am delighted to see you back in town. I was afraid you were going to hibernate in the country again this winter. It should be a pretty gay season this year. These post-war buds aren't half bad. Mrs. Addison Parrish has a very pretty daughter. I have asked her to lead the first Monday German with me. A bit of a flapper, but good looking enough to make up for it."

"Yes we are in for the winter and I can't tell you how glad I am. I enjoy a few weeks at the White but as for the country, I must admit, I hate it," said Mrs. Carter, making a pretty little moue at the thought of the country.

"No, I must say that a woman of your type is distinctly urban." Hiram G. Parker had a flattering way with women, no matter how old or how young. "Will you be out at the club tonight? Same old Saturday night affair. Make Carter bring you out,— and you must save a dance for me. I have got to go to one of the debutante dinners, and then the party is to finish up at the club. I can stand it better if I know relief in the form of you is to be there."

Parker always took the attitude that debutantes and debutante's parties bored him exceedingly, but if that was the case there

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seemed little reason for his perennial attendance at these scorned parties and his marked attention to the pretty debutantes. With another bow and smile, he left Mrs. Carter and turned toward Main Street for a car down to his office, where he spent very little of his time.

Mrs. Carter went on, immensely brightened by her few minutes' talk with Parker. She thought: "I will make Robert take us all out to the club for dinner. Douglas and Lewis, Helen and Dr. Wright, and Robert and me. It will help to get the girls back into the swing of things. It is too bad Douglas is so sunburned, but as she is going to announce her engagement to Lewis immediately I don't suppose it really matters."

She was on Broad Street now, looking in the shop windows at the showing of early winter styles. There was one window especially charming, full of evening capes and wraps. It reminded Mrs. Carter that none of her girls had appropriate wraps, and she went in and chose a gold panne velvet one for Douglas, and a heavy old rose satin one with a deep white fur collar for Helen. She calmly charged these and went on to another shop to get one for herself, as there had been none there to suit her exactly. A strong wind had blown up while she was in the shop and she was conscious of feeling quite chilly as she walked more briskly.

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As she passed a furrier's, she stopped with a thoughtful expression. She needed an evening wrap and her old seal-skin coat needed remodelling. The girls were always talking of economizing. Here was a chance for her to do it. She would get a long moleskin coat that would make a perfectly appropriate evening wrap and take the place of the old seal coat that needed making over. Pleased with her idea, she entered the establishment, the foremost in town, and asked to see mole wraps.

"Madame is charming in this model and we would be pleased to let her have it for very little, nine hundred and fifty, as there is a tiny flaw beneath the collar," said the pseudo-French saleswoman, with a ringed hand smoothing back her sleek dark hair, lifted high off her pale narrow forehead.

"I shall take it. I think I shall just wear it as I am meeting a friend directly and we are to motor to her place out of town for lunch, and it is grown a great deal cooler since I left home this morning. Yes, please charge it to Mr. Robert Carter," and immensely delighted with her purchase the little lady tripped out, looking truly charming in her nine hundred and fifty dollar bargain.

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She could but notice the many admiring glances that followed her smart little figure down the street. It would be nice for Aline Randolph to see her for the first time after so many months when she was looking her best.

The glances that she got from three pairs of young eyes, however, were not admiring. Page Allison and Dum and Dee Tucker rattled down the street in the disreputable Tucker Ford that their new cars could never replace in their esteem, just in time to see Mrs. Carter enter Mrs. Randolph's waiting limousine and drive off.

"Did you ever," the three said indignantly. "Don't you remember we saw Mrs. Carter go into Levinsky's without a fur coat? And now here she is with one. It isn't fair to those dandy daughters of hers. As soon as they get a little money saved up, she dashes off and throws it away," and Dum, who was chauffeuring, honked the horn furiously at the big blue limousine that was turning in the middle of the street.

"Maybe she just went in to get it out of cold storage," soothed Page Allison.

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"Not a chance," tweedled the twins. "We remember her old fur coat. It was seal, trimmed with skunk,—a very extreme style."

"Do you suppose the Carters have got their tea-room open yet? We might all drop around and get something to eat if they have it running," suggested Page.

They found their friends at the shop, all in big aprons busily cleaning up the debris that had been the result of the carpenters' knocking down the partitions.

"We came around to get fed but there does not seem to be much to offer us but shavings," announced Dum. "And as we are just as hungry as ever, please take off the bewitching aprons, pile in Henry Ford, and we'll chug around to Mr. Huyler's establishment and see what he can do for us."

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## CHAPTER IV.

### NAN PAYS THE BILL.

When Mrs. Carter returned from her luncheon party, all of her daughters, except Nan, tired from their various labors of the day, were seated in the library.

“I wish Nan would hurry up and come downstairs so we can tell her how well the shop looks since the partitions have been taken down,” said Helen, diving into her coat pocket for her ever present vanity box as she heard steps in the hallway.

“She got a letter, and in a terrible state of excitement dashed upstairs to read it. I suppose it is from Billy Sutton asking her to come up to V. M. I. for Thanksgiving,” hazarded Douglas.

Then Mrs. Carter entered the room, her arms full of the boxes with the wraps in them that had arrived from the shop a few minutes before she herself had come.

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“Darlings,” she began smilingly, “I have been shopping, and look what I bought you!” Douglas and Helen cast distressed looks towards each other at the word shopping.

“We will have to take it back, whatever it is,” Helen whispered to Douglas, and her sister nodded in reply.

“The gold one is for Douglas and the old rose for you, Helen,” Mrs. Carter explained, holding up to view the two exquisite cloaks. And then before they had had time to catch their breaths from this one shock, their mother gathered her moleskin coat about her, which had escaped the girls’ notice in the twilight library, and pirouetting on her little patent leathered toes, exclaimed, “And see the wonderful bargain I got for myself! Only nine hundred and fifty dollars, and it is worth all of a thousand if it is worth a cent!”

“Ossa piled on Pelion,” thought Nan, who had come in unobserved and stood in the doorway. She hastily stuffed a long white envelope into the pocket of her suit and went over to put an arm around Douglas, who was as yet unable to say a word.

Helen had quietly left her chair, silently relieved her mother of the two beautiful evening wraps, and was intent upon putting them back unwrinkled in their boxes.

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“Nan dear,” she said, “I think you would just have time to take these back to the store before it closes. I am sure if they are returned the day of purchase that we will have no trouble in having them credited to our account. The nine hundred and fifty dollar bargain of Mother’s we will of course be forced to keep as she has worn it. No doubt by hard work we girls can get it

paid for in a few months. I would not ask you to do this, Nan, but Doug and I have been down at the shop all afternoon working like dogs and we are too tired to move.”

Helen took Douglas by the hand and together they left the room, ignoring Mrs. Carter.

“Nan, Nan!” fluttered Mrs. Carter. “What have I done? I thought the girls would be so pleased, and they never even said thank you, but bundled up those lovely things and swept out of the room like I was the dirt under their feet!”

“I am sure I can’t blame them but for one thing,” said Nan, and taking her mother gently by the shoulders, she forced her down on the Chesterfield, “and that is for not giving you the straight from the shoulder talking-to you deserve. Now I am going to do it.”

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Nan brought a chair and placed it opposite her mother. “Of course, it is contrary to all rules of family etiquette for the children to lecture the parents, but you have shirked your responsibility so long that you have lost automatically, in my mind, any claim to the respect or the reverence that is usually attached to the station of parenthood.”

Seeing her mother hold up a ringed hand with a pretty affected gesture of defence, Nan continued sternly, in spite of the wild desire she had to laugh at the unusual situation and her own ridiculous, pedagogic diction. “No! I am not going to spare you one whit. I am going to tell you what you should have been told long ago. You have been like the Old Man of the Sea on our backs ever since Daddy’s illness began. You not only have not been a help to us but you have actually been a hindrance. I could find it in my heart to condone with you if you were feeble-minded, but I regret to say that you have at least the average intelligence; therefore it cannot be that you have not the wit to grasp the situation. You are simply a luxurious soul and crave physical and mental comfort to such an exaggerated degree that you are willing to maintain it at the expense of everyone else’s. You know you play an excellent game of bridge, and I have heard you discuss the latest novel with very good understanding. Therefore I can only think that it is your lack of *feeling* rather than your lack of *sense* that has caused you to behave in the thoroughly selfish way you have in these last years. Now, I am going to leave you here to think it over. I suppose you got the coat at Levinsky’s, as it is the most expensive place in town.”

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Nan assured herself that this was the case by a hasty look at the label, and gathering up the boxes Helen had asked her to return, she left the house and a very subdued, crumpled little mother.

“Whew!” Nan said to herself as she hurried down the street, a big box under each arm. “I am glad that is over. I don’t like the role of a lecturer at all. Specially not when it is my cute little

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mother I am lecturing. But she certainly needed it. Unless I am very much mistaken, she likes to be admired so much that she will start to work and deserve some praise. Poor little thing, she thought she was bluffing us all the time; now she knows she wasn't, she will have to start off on a new tack."

"Hey, Nan," cried a brisk voice, and Jeffrey Tucker, the twins' ridiculously young father, ran back after the girl who had brushed past him without speaking, so absorbed was she in her silent soliloquy.

"Why, I didn't see you at all," Nan apologized, shaking his hand cordially.

"Here, let me take one of those boxes for you to wherever you are going," Zebedee commanded, taking one of them from under her arm. "I am just out for a walk to keep my beautiful figure in trim, and if you don't mind, I'll just go with you."

"I would love to have you come, but—" Nan hesitated then, as she remembered that she had once before taken the gay young parent of her friends into her confidence about the difficulty they were all having trying to convince their mother that they could not afford to have the unwilling Douglas make her debut, and that he had miraculously persuaded Mrs. Carter to give up this plan of hers.

"But, what?" said Mr. Tucker looking at her keenly.

"But nothing," and slipping her free arm through his, Nan gently pulled him with her.

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Nan explained why she was taking the boxes downtown, and then told her companion about the mole coat her mother had bought, and even about the lecture she had read to her mother, —at which they both laughed.

"Now I want to show you something," she said, and pulled out the letter she had stuffed into her pocket on her entrance into the library at the dramatic moment. She opened it and in the late twilight read the following:

Miss Annette Carter,  
Richmond, Virginia.

My dear Miss Carter:

It is with great pleasure that we inform you of your victory in our short story contest for the thousand-dollar prize, check for which please find enclosed.

Your story 'The Wonderful Wallet' will appear in our next issue of —— Magazine.

We would consider it a favor for you to let us have first

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reading of any manuscript you may have on hand.

Yours truly,

CONTEST EDITOR,  
—— Magazine.

“Nan, I am so proud of you, I can hardly stand it,” Zebedee said, openly wiping his eyes as it was a well-known fact that the Tuckers easily gave way to tears under stress of great emotion. “What did your family say?”

“They don’t know it. I had just gotten the letter and had taken it downstairs to read to them, when I butt in on all this mess about the fur coat and these beautiful, silly wraps. I thought I wouldn’t say anything about it till I had payed for Mother’s coat at Levinsky’s. Douglas and Helen wouldn’t let me do it if they knew, so I thought I would do it and then tell about it when it was too late to prevent me,” Nan explained, putting the letter and the opportune check once more into her coat pocket.

“You certainly are one peach of a kid, Nan!” said Zebedee. “We’ll have to take my harum scarums and Page Allison and your sisters and any males we can find and go out to the club for dinner and a dance to celebrate for you. I’ll phone out to them to reserve us a table for twenty while you are returning these wraps,” and Zebedee began to prance involuntarily at the prospect of the fun he knew would be forthcoming.

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“I accept for us all and will guarantee to have the others break any engagements they may have.” Nan smiled at him happily.

“I did not know you wrote things, Nan,” said Zebedee, who was a newspaper man and tremendously interested in things literary.

“I don’t think anybody else did, either. My family always thought when they saw me ‘slinging the ink and pushing the pen along’ that I was writing to the rather numerous people I correspond with. I just let them think that, as it saved explanation, and somehow you don’t mind rejection slips from magazines if you are the only person who knows about them. This story was sent back from two magazines before it was fortunate enough to win this prize. It was about Gwen and her father’s wallet,—you remember about that up at camp, don’t you? Of course I had a good deal about the mountain customs and some rather amusing stuff about Josephus and Josh in it. I imagine its chief merit lay in its simplicity.”

“Humor is as a rule salable and from the fact that Josh and Josephus had a place in it I can well imagine that it was amusing,” Zebedee said, beaming down upon his little friend.

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Nan had no trouble in returning the wraps, and Mr. Tucker, meanwhile, was able to arrange for the party at the club that

night.

“We just will be able to make it to Levinsky’s before it closes. It is five minutes to six now,” Nan said breathlessly as they hurried along.

“Well then, we are perfectly safe, if I know the race. Levinsky wouldn’t risk losing a sale by closing a minute too soon even if the possible sale was nothing but a hook and eye.”

In a very few minutes Nan had endorsed her check and put it into the eager hands of the smiling, suave Levinsky, and she and Zebedee were on their way home in a jitney.

“If that magazine had sent me that money tied up in little bags of fifty centses and quarters I could never have given it up so cheerfully,” observed Nan rather whimsically. As it is, I just feel like I had made fifty dollars.”

And Nan patted affectionately the five ten-dollar bills Levinsky had given her as the change from her thousand-dollar check.

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## CHAPTER V. ARTS AND CRAFTS.

The party at the club, which was a combined celebration of Nan's success and a farewell to the Tucker twins and Page Allison who were going to New York the following Monday, was a great success.

Mrs. Carter had taken Nan's flaying lecture so much to heart that she had astonished them all by appearing at breakfast Sunday morning and announcing shyly that if it would be acceptable to her daughters she would like to pick up her handwork again and put it on sale at their arts and crafts shop. It was acceptable to her daughters, the girls assured her in a surprised chorus. In years gone by, when it was the custom to spend the long summer afternoons in chatting and doing fancy work, Annette Carter had been famous for her exquisitely done embroidery. Never were there such dainty patterns as the fine needle plied by her slender hands turned out with such remarkable rapidity.

"Why, Mummie dear, that will be perfectly splendid," said Nan, overjoyed that her preachment had fallen on such receptive soil and had already begun to bear fruit. "Mrs. Palmer and Mrs. Thornton were in the shop the other day while we were getting things straightened out, and asked us if we were going to have any baby's caps for sale. We said that so far we did not have any, but that if she would come around in a few days we could no doubt fill their order. You see, their trade is very valuable. Don't I sound like a green grocer? I immediately phoned to Miss Sadie Gault to get her to do some for us, but she didn't have time, so if you will jump right in and do them, we will certainly appreciate it."

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The shop, which had an imposing sign done in gold on a black background, had been open for several days and had already had a surprising number of interested visitors, and also a most gratifying amount of sales. Indeed, it was an attractive place. By dint of removing the partitions, the girls had contrived a long L-shaped room. The first section of this L was completely given over to the beautiful old furniture that had been brought from Grantley. It was remarkable in what perfect condition it had arrived. Helen had arranged it so that it had not the air of furniture on display in a shop, but looked more as if it were in a private home. Vases of brilliant autumn leaves reflected themselves in the polished wood of an old sideboard and of an exquisite serving table. A crimson quill pen was thrust in a cut-glass ink well at an escritoire, as though some ruffled belle had left it there when she had finished answering some passionate declaration. There was an old rose satin knitting bag bristling with needles over the arm of one chair, and an old album lying open across the seat of another. Then as the finishing touch,

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several charming old portraits smiled and smirked from the soft-toned walls. Neither these nor the knitting bag were for sale, but Douglas declared that they helped the atmosphere of the place.

The angle of the L was given over to a very businesslike looking desk, on one end of which was an impressive cash register. This had been the despair of Nan, who was as liable to ring up the amount of change returned to the customer as the amount of sale. On a screen behind the desk was pinned dainty needle work, and here a sign announced that orders would be taken and executed promptly for any type of needle work.

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The remaining section of the L was given over to the tea-room, and this was as modern as the other was colonial. It had been decided wisely by the girls that it would be good psychology to make the customers desiring nourishment enter at the other end of the L and walk down through the charming colonial section. Little built-in tables and settees of dark green mission lined the three sides of the room. On each table was a small rose-colored lamp and a runner of coarse natural linen bordered in green. This had been discovered by Nan in their attic and had originally been brought up from New Orleans by Mrs. Carter for tea towels on one of her frequent visits to her old home. It had been unanimously decided that it was far too grand for such degrading service, and Helen and Douglas had added the touch of green linen. The finished product made exactly the right cover for their tea tables. There was a plate rack running around the room, and this held several old bits of china and a great many new bits cleverly designed to have the appearance of age.

Tea and sandwiches and delicious little cakes were served here from four to six. Douglas sat at the desk and received payment, and Helen and Nan waited on the many people that were delighted to have found at last some place in Richmond where good tea could be had in attractive surroundings.

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One afternoon, rather late, two flashily-dressed young women came in and gave their orders superciliously, in decided western accents. Nan deftly served them, hiding her amusement at their common, loud talk. When they arose from the table to leave, one of them beckoned to Nan and gave her a quarter with a patronizing nod. Nan, convulsed with giggles, dropped them a mocking curtsy and made great pretense of biting the quarter to see if it was counterfeit. Realizing their mistake, the two girls hurried out in time to miss the laughter the incident provoked.

“Do you remember when Tillie Wingo tipped Bill Tinsley, that first summer at camp when he drove her up from the station and everybody forgot to introduce them, and she thought from his rough work clothes that he was a sort of hired man of all work?” Nan asked Douglas as she dropped the tip she had received into the cash drawer. “Those girls were as amusing

with their talk intended to impress me, the poor working girl, that I feel as if I should really have tipped them.”

Just then Lucy came into the shop in her habitual state of excitement, “Oh, Helen, listen, I have had the most gorgeous piece of luck! Today one of Dr. Wright’s rich patients from Washington came down to the office, and as he was busy when she got there, I had quite a talk with her. She is very much interested in furniture and is trying to pick up a mahogany sideboard. She described the type she wanted, and while I don’t know beans about that sort of thing, I had enough sense to see she was describing exactly the kind we bought from Miss Ellen. So I told her I knew where I thought it likely she could get one if she didn’t mind paying a pretty steep price for it. She said what I have always wanted to say, *i. e.*; ‘money is no object!’ And she is coming here at five-thirty to see it!”

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“Lucy, you darling,” said Douglas. “Go sit down at one of the vacant tables and order anything you like. I would like to have a couple of bowls of nectar and ambrosia to give you, but you will have to choose between cinnamon toast, pimento marmalade, and lettuce and mayonnaise sandwiches, as you are a little late and the others are all gone.”

Lucy was on her third sandwich when Mrs. Carrington, Dr. Wright’s rich Washington patient, entered the shop. She was stylish, tall and very tense, graying hair showing slightly from beneath the small black feathered toque pulled well down on her forehead.

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“Why, she doesn’t look ill,” thought Nan, as Lucy rose to meet Mrs. Carrington.

“This is a very charming little shop you have here,” Mrs. Carrington said to Douglas, after she had bowed her acknowledgment of Lucy’s introduction to Nan and Helen. “Your youngest sister told me that she thought you had just such a sideboard as I am looking for. She and I had quite a nice long chat on the subject of furniture while I was waiting in Dr. Wright’s office this morning.” Then she added, “She is a very well-informed young woman.”

Lucy nudged Nan at this, but Nan smiled and whispered, “‘well-informed young woman’ much—It was ninety per cent bluff, five per cent luck and five per cent ignorance on the part of the party of the other part.”

Douglas and Mrs. Carrington had gone over to the old sideboard and the latter was running an appreciative hand over its polished surface.

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“It is a beautiful thing, Miss Carter. For what would you be willing to let me have it?”

“When we had these pieces insured, the appraiser said that it

was easily worth five hundred,” Douglas answered.

“I am getting it for my house in Loudon County and would want it shipped there,” said Mrs. Carrington, searching in her bag for her check book.

At her words ‘I am getting it,’ Douglas could hardly control her impulse to shriek to her sister, “Hooray, Nan the ‘flyer in antiques’ is panning out.” Bravely mastering herself, she instead took out her little pad and began writing Mrs. Carrington’s address down.

After Mrs. Carrington had left, Douglas said to Nan: “Dear, I think you ought to have all of this check to make up to some extent the splendid sacrifice you offered when you paid for that coat of Mother’s.”

“Pooh, Doug,” Nan said quickly. “That didn’t mean a thing to me. If you really want to do something for me, why don’t you get me that wonderful book ‘The Home Book of Verse?’ I saw it down at Hunter’s the other day. It has thousands of pages, printed on the most beautiful rice paper, and has almost all the poetry you ever heard of in it. I was wild for it, but it cost fourteen dollars and I couldn’t bear to get it for myself.” Nan’s eyes sparkled as she thought of it. Poetry was the most poignant thing in her life. She could spend hours and hours reading the same things over and over again.

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“Let’s leave Helen and Lucy to close shop and we can go down in time to get it tonight. And then you will sit up all night reading it!” said Douglas, as she ran along to their little dressing room for their hats and coats.

“This seems too good to be true,” Nan confided to her sister as they left the car in front of the book store. “I had a million times rather have this than all the thousand dollar checks in the world.”

“You impractical goose, you,” laughed Douglas, “as if you couldn’t buy all the books you wanted if you had so fabulous a number of thousand dollar checks.”

But Nan did not wait to argue the point. She piloted Douglas to the counter on which was displayed the beautiful big red book.

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“It is the most comprehensive thing that has ever been done in this line,” Nan said, as she eagerly turned the pages, while Douglas attended to its purchase.

“Oh. Listen to this, Doug!” And rather to the amusement of the clerks, Nan began in her surprisingly deep contralto:

GOD’S WORLD.

“O world, I cannot hold thee close enough!

Thy winds, thy wide gray skies!  
Thy mists, that roll and rise!  
Thy woods, this autumn day, that ache and sag  
And all but cry with color! That gaunt crag  
To crush! To lift the lean of that black bluff!  
World, world, I cannot get thee close enough!

Long have I known a glory in it all  
But never knew I this.  
Here such a passion is  
As stretcheth me apart. Lord, I do fear  
Thou'st made the world too beautiful this year.  
My soul is all but out of me—let fall  
No burning leaf; prithee, let no bird call.”

## CHAPTER VI.

### BACK TO “SILK STOCKINGS AND FRENCH CHOPS”.

Lewis and Bill had organized their motor sales business and had done so well that Lewis declared it made him giddy to look at his bank account. The post-war demand for cars was so great that they could hardly fill their share of it. Both young men had charming personalities, though Bill was very quiet, and this made their sales comparatively easy.

“If you handle a reliable line of goods and have any claims at all towards a good line of talk, there is no reason why a salesman can’t make an awful lot of money,” Bill confided to Tillie Wingo, after a particularly good day.

“Of course, dear, we will need all the money you can possibly make,” Tillie smiled up at the big Bill, “but don’t talk so like a Jew drummer.”

They were seated in one of the stock cars in front of Tillie’s house. Tillie always felt a thrill of satisfaction in the fact that she probably rode in more new cars a week than any girl in town.

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“Til, Lewis and I have been hatching up a plan. We think it would be great if you and Doug and Lewis and I could get Mrs. Carter to chaperone us on a trip to New York over this weekend.”

“Oh, Bill, you darling, I could almost hug you right here before all these people on the street,” exclaimed Tillie.

“Go to it,” suggested Bill in an amused tone, for he well knew that Tillie was the most conventional soul in the world.

Lewis Somerville had told Douglas that Tillie was sweet enough but ‘darned tickle-brained’. He was always a little regretful that Bill had chosen this type of girl for his life mate. He was so devoted to the big silent Bill that he thought he deserved the best in the world; but Lewis felt that he himself had gotten that when he had found that Douglas would marry him.

“Do you suppose there would be room enough for a small trunk?” asked Tillie, who had two thoughts, one of them Bill and the other clothes. “I do hate to have my clothes all mussed when I get to a place. I have the loveliest new Alice blue panne velvet dinner dress. Just the shade you like me to wear,—and I must admit I look very well in it.”

“Don’t imagine you can take a trunk. Be five people in the car and each one of them will have a suitcase.” Bill grinned his

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amusement.

“Well, let’s go around and see if Douglas has left the shop, and then I can find out what clothes she is going to take,” and Tillie gently shoved Bill from the driver’s seat as she was anxious to take every opportunity to perfect her chauffeuring.

“Don’t take your foot off the clutch so suddenly, Til,” Bill admonished her as she went from first into second with sufficient jerk to unseat her instructor.

They found Lewis and Douglas still at the shop, drinking tea and eating the day’s left-over sandwiches in a very domestic manner. Douglas jumped up and fixed two more places and brought fresh tea.

“Nan and Helen have gone to a movie. Lucy blew in and began to rave about her day at the office and how good to her Dr. Wright was, and Helen started to weep violently. Nan very diplomatically sent Lucy home to make Bobby study and then took Helen off to the movies. I am afraid Helen is a little jealous of Lucy, which is ridiculous, of course, as all of us know George Wright is in love with Helen and considers Lucy only as a spunky kid. Helen works awfully hard down here. She makes all the sandwiches and attends to the tea-room end of it. I suppose she is just a little tired and nervous.” Douglas looked tired enough as she spoke and Lewis thanked the powers that be that she had consented to go on the little trip he and Bill had planned, provided Mrs. Carter did not object to chaperoning it.

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“Doug is awfully keen to go on the party. We were just going up to see her mother about it. You folks hurry up and finish feeding your faces so we can settle this business.” Lewis had recovered his old time vigor and impatience at delay.

Bill stuffed the last dainty sandwich into his mouth and led the way to the door, while Douglas hustled their tea cups into the little pantry and Lewis went around locking windows. Tillie surreptitiously and unnecessarily powdered her little nose, and then they were off to obtain Mrs. Carter as a chaperone.

Tillie again took the driver’s seat and this time got into high without her usual jerk, and Bill smiled proudly at her.

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“Lewis, there is only one thing about this trip. I am afraid Helen will have to work too hard. She is awfully nervous,” Douglas said.

“Well, she could not be any more tired than you are. Nan will be here to help her, besides. You are entirely too unselfish.”

“Well, I said I would go and I will, but I just can’t help feeling that something is going to happen.”

“You sound like a superstitious old colored woman,” laughed

Tillie as she switched off the engine.

Mrs. Carter was at home and consented with alacrity to chaperone the little party. She and Tillie immediately began to discuss costumes for the occasion, much to the amusement of the others.

“But, Douglas,” said Mrs. Carter suddenly, remembering that she had a young and hopeful son, “what will we do with Bobby?”

“Bobby can stay with Cousin Lizzie Somerville,” suggested Lewis.

“No such a thing,” announced Bobby, suddenly appearing from under the Chesterfield, a feat that his family never quite accustomed themselves to. “That Jane pulls too much bull fer a feller to stand. She is always a-saying these funny kind of poetry-like nonsense. Last time she saw me, she drug me upstairs to the bath room and washed me and scrubbed me and said somethin’ bout children should be clean and not dirt,” a remark that Bobby’s family took to be his own version of “children should be seen and not heard,” which was a favorite saying of this cousin of theirs who never lost an occasion to quote a proverb.

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“But, Bobby, it would just be for a few hours each day, from the time you get out of school until Nan and Helen get home from the shop, and just for a few days,” reasoned Douglas, who well knew that it was useless to command her little brother since he had been brought up by her too fond mother. He was open to argument, however, and though determined to a degree was not stubborn. After a few minutes of earnest conversation with Douglas and Lewis, he said that he would consent to go to Cousin Lizzie’s spotless house and remain until Nan and Helen should call for him on their way home from the tea-room.

“And I will bring you whatever you want most,” promised Bill rashly.

“Don’t know whether I needs a football or a narrowplane most,” ruminated Bobby.

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“I really believe you had better have a football in this season,” said Lewis, coming to the rescue of Bill, “it is a little late for flying.”

Bobby was convinced by the sound argument of his particular idol and contentedly took up the study of the seventh multiplication table to fortify himself against the onslaught of the mathematics teacher on the morrow.

Mr. Carter came in from work and bent with interest over the road map they all were studying. Douglas noted with intense satisfaction that he looked as well and fresh as he had when he

left the house for his office directly after breakfast. His plans for the new apartment houses had been accepted and were already well under way. More work was coming in every day and his office had all the orders it could possibly fill. Moreover his bank account, untouched by the household demands, was rapidly growing to gratifying dimensions.

He took a long oblong box from under his arm and said, "Look, women of the house, what I have brought you." He quickly undid the wrappings and disclosed to the eager view of Douglas, Lucy and Mrs. Carter a surprising number of silk stockings.

At that moment Helen and Nan came in from the movies. Helen thought of that other time not so long ago when she had come into her father's room, to find him prostrate on the couch, tears streaming down his careworn cheeks, and pitiful mumblings about the cost of silk stockings and French chops coming from his trembling lips. Nan seemed unconsciously to have intercepted her thought and squeezed her hand understandingly.

"They are perfectly lovely, Daddy, and I never saw so many in all my life," said Lucy delightedly. "I was just wondering whom I could persuade to darn a pair for me to wear to work tomorrow. A girl must look her best in the office," and Lucy pretended to pull an imaginary piece of chewing gum from her mouth in her best imitation of the proverbial stenographer.

Nan went up and kissed her father. "But, Daddy dear, there are too many per each," she objected. "You know we are none of us centipedes."

"It will be wonderful to start on our trip tomorrow in such beautiful new stockings, won't it, Douglas?" said Tillie.

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## CHAPTER VII. ON THE ROAD.

With a delicious feeling of excitement Douglas woke early to find the day of their departure had dawned with a fair promise. It was crisp and sunny. In fact a typical November Virginia day.

“It seems absurd to take a cold bath on a day like this,” Douglas thought as she was splashing around in her big tub. “Old Mr. Grouch himself couldn’t feel badly on a day like this, and cold water never got anyone clean. Habit is a funny thing. Just because all my family for generations on Daddy’s side always took a cold bath in the mornings, I have to do it, too.”

A few minutes later she and her mother were seated at the breakfast table eating the toast and drinking the delicious coffee that Helen had slipped into the kitchen to make for them.

“Helen, it was good of you to get up and do all this for us. You might have slept a good hour longer and I am sure you need the rest. I feel like a dog for leaving you, but I promised Lewis, and I will be back Monday night,” and Douglas looked anxiously at her sister.

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“Why, that is absurd, Doug, I feel perfectly well and rested today. I was just tired and a little nervous last night. I want you to go and have the best sort of time and don’t think once about the shop, because everything is going along fine.”

“I wasn’t thinking about the shop, dear. I was thinking about you.”

“There is the horn, Douglas. We must not keep them waiting,” and Mrs. Carter fluttered over to kiss Helen goodbye.

Bill and Tillie were ensconced in the tonneau of the big blue car, with Lewis in the driver’s seat. Douglas climbed in beside him and her mother got in with Bill and Tillie.

The motor purred a contented song, as was usually the case with the cars of these two young men, and soon they had left Richmond behind them and fared well into the country. The air had a sparkling quality that was tremendously invigorating and suddenly the silent Bill burst forth with:

“I like a road that leads away to prospects white and fair,  
A road that is an ordered road, like a nun’s evening prayer;  
But best of all I love a road that leads to God knows where.

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You come upon it suddenly—you cannot seek it out;  
It’s like a secret still unheard and never noised about;  
But when you see it, gone at once is every lurking doubt.

It winds beside some rushing stream where aspens lightly  
quiver;  
It follows many a broken field by many a shining river;  
It seems to lead you on and on, forever and forever.

You tramp along its dusty way beneath the shadowy trees;  
And hear beside you chattering birds or happy beeming  
bees,  
And all around you golden sounds, the green leaves' litanies.

And here's a hedge and there's a cot; and then strange,  
sudden turns—  
A dip, a rise, a little glimpse where the red sunset burns;  
A bit of sky at evening time, the scent of hidden ferns.

A winding road, a loitering road, the finger mark of God,  
Traced when the Maker of the world leaned over ways  
untrod.  
See! Here He smiled His glowing smile, and lo, the golden-  
rod!

I like a road that wanders straight; the King's Highway is  
fair,  
And lovely are the sheltered lanes that take you here and  
there;  
But best of all I love a road that leads to God knows where."

"This road is good enough for me," said Tillie, and I know just  
exactly where it is going—to New York."

"That is a charming thing, Bill, but I did not have any idea you  
could talk at such length, even if you did not have to compose  
as you went along. Not that I don't think it is much more  
difficult to recite poetry well than it is to talk all the small talk  
in the world," declared Mrs. Carter.

"I like modern verse and I sort of remember it when I read it,"  
modestly explained Bill.

"Nan almost thinks in metric form but I believe she likes Keats  
and Shelley far better than any of the moderns, which is very  
unstylish of her. She says that the Ezra Pounds of the day hold  
no charm for her," and Mrs. Carter laughed at her recollection  
of a recent Pound effort.

Tillie was getting restless under this conversation in which she  
could take no part, and finally she asked Lewis if he was not  
tired of driving.

"Why, yes, I am, Til," Lewis answered obligingly. "I was just  
wishing that Bill would suggest a shift and give me a chance to  
take in some of the surrounding country. You and Bill come up  
here, and Doug and I will get in with her mother."

In a twinkling they were off again, Tillie having shifted her  
gears dextrously. They were making splendid time, the roads

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were in remarkably good condition for Virginia roads, which are famous for their general poorness, and it seemed probable that they would reach Washington in time for luncheon.

Innumerable wagons with smiling darky drivers passed them, and little, clean, country children on their way to the district school. These politely bobbed their heads; sometimes the less shy waved hands at the gay party in the big blue car. It is the custom in Virginia for all passers on the road to nod or smile at each other.

“I am willing to bet that of all these folks we have seen on the road, who have probably lived all of their lives between Richmond and Washington, not one of them could tell you how far it is to either place,” Lewis said. “It is a funny thing about Virginians, that universal ignorance of distance. Did you ever hear of the old negro who started to drive his mule and buggy from Lynchburg to Danville? Well, he drove along for a couple of hours and then reined in by another old darky and said, ‘Mister, how long I got ter go ’fore I gits ter Danville?’ ‘Near ’bout twenty miles,’ replied the other. Our old friend clucked to the mule and he ambled on for another hour. He drew up by a little pickaninny and asked, ‘Sister, how fur I got ter go ’fore I reaches Danville?’ ‘Near ’bout twenty miles, I reckon,’ answered the little girl. Once more he told the mule to go on. After another hour he met an old colored woman in the road. ‘Whoa there, Jasper,’ he said to his mule; then turning to the woman, ‘How fur is it to Danville, ma’am?’ ‘Near ’bout twenty miles,’ said the woman. The old man sighed heavily, chirruped to Jasper, and said ‘Giddap, mule, you are holdin’ yer own.’”

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As they passed a lovely, ramshackled old farmhouse with a charming, unsanitary open well, Mrs. Carter announced that she was thirsty and asked Tillie to stop and let her go in for a drink. Lewis and Bill and Douglas said that they would go with her, more to stretch their legs than because they were thirsty. Tillie said that she was not thirsty enough or cramped enough to warrant the muddying of her little patent leather French heeled slippers and that she would wait in the car till the others came back.

Tillie watched them troop up to the door and knock, saw the hospitable woman that came in answer to their summons, then saw them enter the house. She turned her head quickly to the other side of the road, for she had a strange feeling that she was being intently eyed by some one. True enough, her eyes met the piercing dark ones of a foreign-looking man who was slipping from the fence rail by the road on which he had been sitting unnoticed.

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He gave Tillie a flashing smile that seemed to her unaccountably familiar and advanced toward the car. She noticed with pleasure the grace and sureness that marked his movements and the perfect fit of his dark brown suit. She found

herself wondering what this type of man was doing, sitting on a fence rail by the side of the road, miles from anywhere. Her glance traveled to his feet which were shod in cordovan oxfords, incongruously muddy.

“Splendid morning, isn’t it,” he said with a faint trace of accent. “Forgive the informality of this, but I wonder if you could tell me how far it is to Washington?”

It was on the tip of Tillie’s tongue to say with Lewis’s friends on the road between Lynchburg and Danville, ‘Near ’bout twenty miles,’ when she noticed the man’s comprehensive look at the gear and instrument board of the car. Some instinct warned her against any such friendliness and she said coolly, “I am sure I don’t know.”

“Well, we shall soon find out,” said the man, and with a leap as lithe as any cat or movie hero, he was in the car. Gently but quickly he picked Tillie up from the driver’s seat and set her down in the other. Himself in the driver’s seat, he switched on the motor, while, spellbound, the girl at his side watched him. As he gained high speed, her wits quickened and she darted out her hand and managed one long terrified scream from the Klaxon. Turning her head, she noted with satisfaction that her friends had run out from the farm house and were waving down a rattling Ford that was careening up the road. Of course it would have no chance of overtaking a car of the speed of the one this strange man was carrying her off in, even had the new driver been an amateur, which was patently not the case.

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Clearly her only chance lay in diminishing the speed of their car. She looked up at the handsome, tense face of the man beside her. Suddenly she remembered that she had wondered why he had on low shoes at this time of the year, and at the same time remembered her own French heels. Quick as a flash she had stretched out her leg and was grinding the wicked little heel into the instep of the man’s foot, while she turned off the motor, snatched out the key and flung it far into the bushes by the roadside. It happened in an instant and too late did the man put a restraining arm around her. As his arm went around her and Tillie looked up into his grimly-smiling, thwarted face, the girl realized who it was. De Lestis! It was not until then that the man recognized the girl. But they had danced a great deal together the memorable night of the de Lestis ball, and the similarity of the position brought recognition.

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Suave as usual, de Lestis released her and murmured, “What a shame you threw away the key! I believe we could have amused each other for a while.”

The pursuing Ford had almost reached them now, and Tillie watched the man beside her with interest. Frightened as she was of him, she asked, “But why don’t you try to escape?”

“My dear young lady, such an attempt would only make me

appear ludicrous,” he smiled down at her. “Imagine me running up the road with that absurd Ford in pursuit of me.”

Tillie could but feel admiration for this handsome man who appeared so calm and unconcerned, almost uninterested in whether or not he was sent to prison as a motor-car thief. Then she remembered his attempt to incite the negroes to an uprising, and scorn took the place of her momentary admiration. It seemed incredible that a person so exquisitely cultured and polished could stoop to such a low action. She lost sight of the fact, as persons are apt to do, that whatever he had done, he had done for the sake of his country, and mistaken as his country may have been, it was still his country.

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With a snort and a groan the Ford, driven by a red-headed young countryman, drew up beside them, and Lewis and Bill vaulted over its battered side.

“Tillie, my darling, are you hurt?” cried her lover anxiously.

Lewis had seized de Lestis by the arms and been assured by him that he surrendered himself and would give over his side arms had he them with him.

“Why, if it isn’t de Lestis!” said the astonished Lewis, who had not recognized him until he spoke in his old smilingly superior manner.

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“Won’t Douglas and Mrs. Carter be amused?” asked Tillie excitedly.

At the mention of Douglas’ name a flush suffused de Lestis’ dark face, for he had been as nearly in love with her as a man of his adventuring nature can be. The thought of appearing ridiculous in her eyes was not a sweet one to him.

His confusion had escaped the eyes of all but Tillie and she felt as much sympathy for him as she had felt first admiration and then scorn.

Douglas and her mother, who had started walking up the road when they had seen the Ford stop beside the big car, now came up to them.

“What has happened?” asked Mrs. Carter rather tremorously.

“Your friend the Count de Lestis has turned automobile thief and abductor,” said Bill.

“Oh, but I am sorry,” said Douglas in genuine distress. Douglas had the kindest heart in the world and it actually pained her to see even de Lestis in trouble.

“The question is now what to do with him,” said Lewis.

The red-headed countryman spoke up in a slow rural drawl, “I

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might take him back to the county jail.”

Douglas noted the slight contraction of de Lestis’ cheek muscles at the words ‘county jail,’ and acting on the impulse of the moment said to the little group around the captured man, “Please let me speak to Mr. de Lestis a moment alone.”

“Why, I—” began Lewis. He was going to add that he would be afraid, but a glance at Douglas’ cool composure reassured him and he consented, and with the others withdrew a short distance down the road.

“What can you have to say to me?” said de Lestis in so contrite a manner that Douglas was surprised.

“I thought perhaps you would have something to say to me,— why you had done this ridiculous thing. The war has been over a long time now—if I could help you in reason, I would.”

“How can you be so charitable to a person you must hate as you do me?” de Lestis asked in wonder.

“I do not hate you. I think you tried to do a great wrong but I think you acted according to your lights.” Douglas’ manner was so sweet and sincere that de Lestis determined to tell her why he had taken their car.

“You may wonder what I am still in this country for, as you probably learned from the papers, there was not enough evidence against me to give me a prison sentence. But I was interned. My release from the internment camp found me penniless. Naturally I found it almost impossible to find employment with my record against me. Yesterday I got a letter in my little hole of a room in Richmond—”

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“In Richmond?” interrupted Douglas. “Why, I have never seen you there.”

“But I have seen you through your shop window. But to go on—I got a letter from my sister saying that my mother was dying and urging me to try to see her once more. You see, my two brothers were killed fighting for my country. My mother is in Austria. It takes a great deal of money to get there. By pawning my watch and two rings I had, I was able to pay a steerage passage over.” Douglas saw the almost imperceptible shudder that ran over him at the thought of a steerage passage. “But I had to get to the port of embarkation, New York, and there was no money, so I thought perhaps I could walk. I started like the conventional hobo along the railroad track, but it was so hideously ugly I was forced to seek a road. I had just cut over and was resting on the fence rail when I saw your car, with only a young girl on the front seat to protect it. Spurred by a crazy impulse formulated by my eagerness to make the first available boat, I just took the car,—and that is all.”

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Douglas was satisfied that the man was telling the truth, and his evident adoration of his old mother moved her to an almost overwhelming pity for this unprincipled Austrian. His eyes had taken on the wretched look of a trapped animal, though his features betrayed not a trace of his mental state. Suddenly Douglas gave him her gloved hand in a sympathetic grasp, and said quietly: "I'll promise to do my best to get you to New York, and then you must do your best to get to your mother."

She turned abruptly and went over to the little group that had been watching them. "You will all say I am crazy, I know, but please do what I ask of you," she said, jumping into the subject with a little gasp. "I am going to ask you to let de Lestis off." And she told him what the man had just told her.

"I am sure that our new friend," she said, smiling at the admiring country boy, "will agree not to say anything about him to the authorities, and of course we needn't."

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"Whatever you say goes with me, ma'm," said the boy, touching his red forelock; and climbing into his Ford, he drove away.

Not very willingly but very politely, Lewis went over to de Lestis and said, "Mr. de Lestis, I learn from Miss Carter that you are on your way to New York. We are, too, and should be very glad to have you join us in our car."

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### COUSIN LIZZIE'S HOUSE.

"The only thing is," objected Bobby to Helen, "that it ain't no use to wash me here at home, 'cause after I get over to Cousin Lizzie's house she is sure goin' to scrub me agin," and Bobby determinedly swayed his grimy face back and forth to avoid the following wash cloth of his sister.

"But, Bobby," pleaded Helen, "what would Cousin Lizzie think of me if I let you go over to her house looking like a chimney-sweep?"

"I already know what she thinks of you, and Cousin Lizzie ain't likely to change none. She said to Miss Sadie Gault yesterday afternoon: 'Poor Helen is so love-sick you can't blame her for anything she says or does.' So she won't fuss at anybody but me, and she will fuss at me anyway, so what's the difference."

Helen laughed in spite of herself at Bobby's sound argument.

"But, Bobby, if you don't care what Cousin Lizzie thinks about your being so dirty, I should think you would mind on your own account."

"No, 'cause I like bein' dirty, just so 'specially since you say I look like a chimney-sweep. Do you reckon I stand much chance of turnin' into a Water Baby like Tom the Chimney Sweep did in the book? I'd like to be a Water Baby but I ain't got no idea of bein' a Soap and Water Baby. It is too bad we ain't got any chimney for me to sweep. Do you reckon you get up and sweep 'em down or stay down and sweep 'em up? It's right funny for chimneys to have a throat and they do, 'cause I heard Daddy talking 'bout some house he had built when he was young that had a too little throat in its chimney, and for swallows to build in a chimney."

"Don't talk so much or you will never get dressed," said Helen, who was really very much interested in her little brother's conversation but who knew with regret that it was past the time for her to open the shop.

She had been up for several hours and had prepared a good breakfast for Nan and her father. Then Nan had hurried off to buy some yellow flowers for the tea-room. Bobby had been allowed to sleep until the last minute, as it simplified matters to be able to feel certain that he was not up to mischief. Now she had to order provisions for that day and for over Sunday for the house, and she had many dozens of sandwiches and little cakes to make for the consumption of the many patrons of the tea-room. Yet already it seemed to her that she had done a good day's work.

Lucy had spent the night with Lil Tate and had borrowed

Helen's last hair net and a pretty frilly blouse that Helen herself had intended to wear to the shop that morning. It was a blouse that George Wright had said he liked on more than one occasion, and Helen had an acknowledgedly absurd feeling that she did not want him to see it on any one else. It seemed to her that she had been seeing less and less of Dr. Wright lately, and Lucy was forever singing his praises in her ears and quoting him. Taking herself severely to task for the twinge of jealousy that swept over her, she stopped her musings and called to Bobby that she was ready to leave the house and would take him by Cousin Lizzie's on her way to the shop.

"Helen," shrieked that youngster. "Do you reckon Cousin Lizzie would make a dirty brawl if I'd take my little toad 'round to her house? He'll promise to set right still in his little box."

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Diplomatically Helen suggested that the toad would prefer his accustomed haunt under the garage to Cousin Lizzie's spotless premises, and at last they were off.

"Cue a nun yack o u tut a lul kuk Tut?" demanded Bobby.

"Yack e sus, I cuc a nun," answered Helen, much to her own surprise and Bobby's delight. She had not tried to converse in Tut since she was a very little girl and was astonished to find how easily she slipped back into the old form.

"Tut" is a language common to most children at one age or another and is formed by a consonant and a vowel and the repetition of the consonant. Each word is spelled. Cat being cuc a tut; dog, dud a gug. It is the despair of all parents, who seem to forget that they used a similar jibberish for communication in their own youth, and the envy of all the unfortunate children who have not as yet been initiated to its simple mysteries.

"Dud a dud yack tut a u gug hash tut mum e," said Bobby proudly, omitting a d from Daddy as he jabbered.

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"It is fun to talk it. But sometimes it gets you in trouble. When I was a kid at school, I remember once in the spelling class the teacher called on me, and not thinking, I spelled the word in Tut. She thought I was trying to be funny and sent me to the principal, who fortunately had spoken Tut when he was a boy and understood, and so let me off very lightly. But," added Helen as she caught the impish gleam in her small brother's clear eyes, "you must promise me not to try the same stunt."

"Well, I'll promise, but it would have been fuf u nun," said Bobby regretfully as Helen left him at Miss Lizzie Somerville's door.

Miss Lizzie Somerville was Lewis Somerville's aunt. She had an excessive fondness for bridge and for proverbs. She was

very strict with everybody, including herself, and kept the most spotless house imaginable. Consequently it was not pleasing to small boys.

Bobby stood for a moment on the porch, watching the figure of Helen hurrying down the street. "She don't look right peart to me," he commented inwardly, using a favorite word of Josh's.

In answer to his loud and vigorous ringing, came an old stiffly starched negro woman who let him into the depressingly dark hall at the end of which was a broad flight of stairs rising to the yet dimmer second story.

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"Aunt Mat," grumbled Bobby, "this here place is so clean it smells musty."

"It do fer a fact," chuckled the old woman, who was much opposed to Miss Lizzie's rigorous tidiness. "I done tole Miss Liz time an' time agin she wouldn't get so tuckered out ef'n she'd jest live keerless some days."

Bobby went up the staircase to hang up his cap and sweater in an upstairs closet, as he had been severely reprimanded on the previous day for dropping them both on the floor in the back hall.

"Miss Lizzie is in de kitchen a-lookin' 'round ter see what we needs in the 'vision line," informed Aunt Mat as she bustled down the hall.

"Reckon I'll just play upstairs for a while then," Bobby called after her.

Aunt Mat still grinning, went into the lofty dining-room. It was a room gloomy enough to force dyspepsia on the healthiest diner. Dark walnut wainscoting met darker brown paper. At one end of the room was a huge Boydell plate in a funereal frame, depicting the smothering of the two little princes in the tower. Balancing it at the other end of the long room was a gruesome portrayal of Marc Anthony over the bloody bier of Caesar, telling the Roman mob that he had come to bury Caesar not to praise him. Over the mantelpiece were crossed confederate swords and a battered canteen.

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The remaining one of the four walls held two high mullioned windows through which trickled a weak little ray of sunshine, picking out the tight gray curls of Miss Lizzie Somerville's severe coiffure. She wore dull black taffeta that looked as stiff as did the clothes of Valasquez's subjects. Before her on the polished wood of the long refectory table lay, incongruously enough, a broken Canton china soup plate and a bone handled knife with a scarcely discernible streak of rust along its steel blade. The grin left Aunt Mat's face.

"Mat, how did this happen?" said Miss Lizzie, pointing to the

broken plate.

“Law, Miss Liz, I wuz standin’ over the gabbage pail with that air plate a-ready to scrape it when Mister Johnson, the ice man, come along. It didn’t take him no time at all to have me laughin’ fit to kill, and fust thing I knowed I had done shuk the plate clean out’n my hand onto the brick walk.”

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“Well, ‘be sure your sins will find you out.’ There was no use wrapping it up in old newspaper and hiding it behind the stove. You should have come at once and told me about it.”

“I’clare fo Gawd, Miss Liz, I jest tuck it back dar ’gainst the time I mought get a chanct to take it down to the five and ten war that gemman mends ’em ef’n you buy two tubes of his mender.”

“There is positively no excuse for the disgraceful condition of this knife. See that it does not happen again,” and Miss Lizzie stalked from the room to continue her round of inspection in the huge old library and parlor.

“‘Be sure your sins will find you out’ much! Nobody but Miss Liz foun’ me out and whatever I mought have done, she ain’t no sin of mine,” and Aunt Mat went out to the one bright spot in the old house, her kitchen.

Meantime Bobby, seated on the floor of the closet, was grinding out a tinkly “After the battle, Mother” from an old music box. At the first turn of the little crank, the result had been a bitter disappointment to him as he had anticipated ground coffee as the basic ingredient for pies to be made in the bathtub. After the first keen pang of regret had passed, he was delighted. He found that by scientifically turning the crank very fast and with many jerks he could get an excellent substitute for jazz, and that by turning it very slowly he could put the effort of the alley cats at night to shame. What a pity it was that the Victrola at home did not need to be wound all the time! It gave him a pleasant sense of power to know that the thin music stopped when he ceased to turn. He was beginning to think that he was playing pretty well considering that it was the first time he had ever done it. He gave the handle a masterful expressive jerk and Whirr! there was a sound of a spring unwinding, and the music stopped.

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“Shucks!” said the disgusted Bobby, “Cousin Lizzie ought to get something new once in a while. You never see our Vic doing anything fool like that.”

Having satisfied herself that there was no dust anywhere, Miss Lizzie began to be alarmed at the unusual quietness of her small cousin.

“Oh! Robert.” she called. “Are you up or down?”

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“U pup!” answered Bobby, unconsciously lapsing into Tut.  
“But I’m coming dud o wack nun,” and straddling the  
balustrade, he slid down.

Jumping off to greet Cousin Lizzie, he faced the counterpart of  
a Fury. Her pale lips drawn tight and her bright eyes gleaming,  
she said, “Robert Carter, how do you dare to say You Pup! to  
me?”

## CHAPTER IX. LUCY AT WORK.

Lucy gave a satisfied little pat to the frilly white blouse she had borrowed from Helen and turned the knob of the office door. Dr. Wright had not yet come and the neat colored maid was straightening the waiting rooms. Dr. Wright's rooms were comfortable and pleasing to the eye at the same time. A large bay window gave on to a vine-covered porch where wicker chairs accommodated his patients in the spring and summer. A broad low window seat ran beneath the bay windows, plentifully furnished with dark, rich-toned cushions. Dr. Wright considered that the darker shades were more restful to shattered nerves than lighter tones, and it was in accordance with this theory of his that the rooms had been arranged.

His pictures had been chosen with a view to the psychological effect they would have on his patients. The usual type of doctor's office picture,—a hotly contested battlefield, a big dog and a little dog disputing over a bone, a beruffled young woman eloping on horseback behind a knee-breeched lover—had no place on his walls. But placid Corots and dreamy landscapes and invigorating sea-scapes were there and well hung. There were ferns on a table and a big bowl of yellow chrysanthemums on a side window sill. On a center table were the indispensable magazines and papers. The floor was almost completely covered by a soft piled Turkey rug of darkest reds.

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Dr. Wright's consulting rooms were modernly equipped but with no terrifying and superfluous array of instruments. Over these a middle-aged graduate nurse had charge. Lucy had a tiny little room almost filled by her typewriting desk and filing cabinet, and it was here that she attended to the business end of the young nerve specialist's tremendous and rapidly growing practice.

After a brisk "Good morning" to the little maid, Lucy passed on into her own domain. There was a pile of unopened letters beside her machine, that bespoke a full morning's work.

Brisk steps came along the hall and George Wright thrust his smiling face around the door. "Whew, Lucy, that is a gay little hat you've got on," he said in a most unprofessional manner.

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These two had always been friends and since Lucy had come to work for him their friendship had been strengthened. Theirs was a sort of mutual admiration society. Every day Lucy marveled anew at the wonderful work Dr. Wright was doing with broken women, shell-shocked returned soldiers, and backward children, and a great part of the work done with this latter class was purely charity. Dr. Wright on his part had begun to regard Lucy as practically invaluable. She was cheery, accurate, business-like and very courteous, and gave to

his office the air he desired. He had the utmost respect for her because of the way she had “buckled down to it” when circumstances made it necessary for her to work.

“Um!” assented Lucy, with a hat pin between her teeth and her arms raised to take off the gay little hat that had caught his fancy. “I ’spose you would have liked it better if it had been a sombre black or some darker tone. You know light tones are very trying to the nerves.” She enjoyed teasing him about his theories.

“You have got enough nerve, young woman, to wear any shade you can invent. Speaking of nerve, I see you have on that waist of Helen’s, and likewise I’ll bet she will be sore when she finds out, because our Helen does like her clothes.”

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“Well, I didn’t have a clean one to my name,” defended Lucy, “and Helen had a drawer just piled full of them, so I took the one on top, and this was it.”

“Lucy, I want to talk to you about Helen,” said George Wright, becoming suddenly grave. “I think she needs a rest—a trip some place. She doesn’t seem to be herself at all.”

“She does seem pretty tired,” agreed Lucy.

“You know, of course, that I love her,” he said simply. “I was afraid that I was over-anxious and in that way had lost the proper perspective professionally, but if you see it too, it must be so. Frequently a person’s own family are the last to notice a change of that sort.”

“She had a letter from Dee Tucker saying that Dum and Page and herself were wild to have any of us or as many of us as our shop can spare and their apartment can hold to come and visit them. I tried to make Helen go but she didn’t want to leave town. I asked her if she didn’t think she owed it to herself to do it, and she gave me a peculiar look and said she owed it to herself not to. I felt awful dumb, not knowing what that cryptic remark meant, but I didn’t like to let on I hadn’t understood what she meant, so didn’t push the subject any farther after that. Wasn’t that funny, though?”

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“I think I will drop by tonight and talk it over with her. You know I am about two-thirds scared of Helen. It took me so long to win her trust and confidence to any degree that I advance with fear and trembling. Do you remember how suspicious she was of me when I first took your father’s case?”

“Most of that was because she was so terribly ashamed of the headstrong way she behaved,” said Lucy, nodding her head sagely. “Isn’t it funny the way people make a mistake, and instead of coming out and owning up to it they go on making it worse and worse?”

The clock in the waiting room announced that it was nine o'clock. George Wright jumped up from the edge of Lucy's desk and became instantly an alert physician instead of a ruminating lover.

"Who is the first on the list this morning?"

Lucy dropped immediately her conversational air and turned the leaves of her pad. "Nine o'clock, Mrs. Kennedy—hypochondriac—no real trouble—self absorption," she read off. She had been trained to jot down a few notes concerning each patient. Their history and in some cases their family history was neatly typed on pasteboard cards and filed in the cabinet. "Nine-thirty, John Randolph—aphasia."

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"That Randolph case is a pathetic one. He used to be one of the finest country lawyers and now sometimes his own name slips his mind."

The maid announced Mrs. Kennedy, and with a faint grimace Dr. Wright went into his office.

Lucy heard the woman groaning like the "eat 'em alive man" at the fair as she came down the hall, bearing heavily on the arm of the maid, who was barely half her size.

"Oh, every step is agony," she said tragically.

"Yas'm, ain't that bad? What you reckon it is?" said the maid with the sympathy that is always to be obtained from the Negro race. They are never so happy as when regaling some listener with their ailments or listening to the complaints of some friend. "Do it pain you all over, ma'm?"

"Sometimes it seems to me that my very finger nails and hair ache," chanted Mrs. Kennedy in a voice that was a running sob.

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"Law, that's the wuss case I ever did hear of. What make you don't try a little Wild Cherry Bark Tea," suggested the girl, completely losing sight of the fact that the woman had come to see Dr. Wright.

Dr. Wright, who had been watching the funereal procession down the hall, came forward to meet them. "That will do, Minnie, thank you," he said to the maid, who was standing in round-eyed admiration of the lady who even had pains in her hair.

"Well, Mrs. Kennedy," he said in a crisp voice. "You are looking well this morning. It is such an invigorating day! I feel like a two-year-old."

Minnie went back down the hall wondering what kind of a doctor her master was that he could tell this woman, so palpably in a dying condition, that she was looking well.

“But I am worse, Dr. Wright. I never closed my eyes the whole night through. My heart felt like a little mouse running around in my chest. I could hardly get my breath at all. I had Charles reading to me till after three.” The words fell from Mrs. Kennedy’s lips as if she had got them by heart.

“Poor Charles, poor Charles,” thought George Wright to himself.

“I haven’t been able to eat anything but a little tapioca pudding for three days. I have been coughing a great deal and get more nervous every minute,” she went on.

On Dr. Wright’s face there spread an expression that was one part amusement and three part boredom.

This passed unnoticed by his patient, who only paused long enough to get a breath and then rushed on with her symptoms.

“My hair is coming out by handfuls, my joints crack when I move,” and here she heaved a sigh that would have been the envy of a man with a tremendous chest expansion.

“Heavens,” thought Lucy who had heard her lamentations through the half-opened door, “why doesn’t she have all those troubles catalogued or card-indexed or something? If she had one-fourth of the diseases her symptoms would lead Dr. Wright to think she had, she would have died a thousand wretched deaths.”

“Mrs. Kennedy,” said Dr. Wright abruptly, “I am going to change your treatment from today.”

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“I was afraid we were doing the wrong thing,” she groaned, “as I seemed to be getting steadily worse and—”

Barely controlling his chuckle, George Wright interrupted her. “I am going to send you to some friends of mine in the country and give you a treatment that is thought very highly of on the continent. A fairly simple one, too!”

“I suppose it is the very latest thing?” asked the woman eagerly, thinking what prestige this would give her among her neighbors, who had lately been decidedly lacking in interest when she had discussed her trials and tribulations with them.

“The very latest thing,” assented Dr. Wright, taking up his prescription pad and writing a formula for the colorless and innocuous liquid that was to lead her to believe she was getting “the very latest thing.” “Be careful only to take three drops in a quarter of a glass of water after each meal. Now as to diet—”

“I suppose that will be very strict,” put in Mrs. Kennedy hopefully.

“No, that is the interesting part of this new method. You can eat

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just exactly what a well person can. However, for breakfast, there is a special menu. You must have a large baked apple, two soft-boiled eggs, three pieces of buttered toast, and only one cup of coffee. You must walk two miles in the morning and two miles in the afternoon; go to bed at nine-thirty and every morning before breakfast you must take a cold sponge in a warm place.”

“Oh! but Doctor, are you sure that it is safe for a woman in my condition to walk so far? Wouldn’t there be danger of my straining my heart? It seems very strenuous,” objected the woman.

“Now, my dear Mrs. Kennedy, do you think I would prescribe a dangerous routine for you? You remember that handsome woman who went around with Hiram G. Parker all the early part of the fall? A New York woman visiting Mrs. Addison Parrish? Well, I wish you could have seen her before she followed these rules.”

“Allright, of course you know best. If you will telegraph your friends in the country, I will try to leave town by day after tomorrow at the latest.”

The words about the friend of Hiram G. Parker had convinced her of the cure, despite the fact that she had never seen the woman. But to admit that she had never seen her would be to argue herself unknown, a thing that Mrs. Kennedy, a *nouveau riche*, did not wish to do.

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Lucy, frankly eaves-dropping in the next room, put a hand up to her mouth to stifle the little exclamation of surprise that forced its way to her lips at George Wright’s statement about the friend of Hiram Parker, because she knew both the Addison Parrishs and him intimately, and knew that there was no such person as the handsome New York woman who had been so completely cured. As soon as Mrs. Kennedy had made her less-moaning way out, Lucy slipped into the consulting room to tell George Wright that he was the most inspired fibber she had ever seen.

“I had just about given up hope of ever making her let herself recover when I thought of faking that stuff about the gleaming lady friend of the shining Parker. But she will come to her senses now. She will get up there in the foot hills, have to take a walk every day, get her lungs full of that bracing air, eat tremendously and in a month she will be enjoying the best of health instead of enjoyin’ po’ health’ as she does now. We have to resort to lots of tricks with that type of woman. But she will get well now, and that is what we are here for, eh, Lucy?”

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## CHAPTER X. RED KNEE CAPS.

Helen arrived at the shop to find that Nan had bought the flowers and arranged them in bowls and placed them on the little tea tables. She had dusted, too, and gotten the rooms beautifully in order. Now Nan was curled up in a little broad, low, old-fashioned chair, reading from her beloved book, "The Home Book of Verse," that Douglas had insisted upon her buying after they had sold the sideboard to the rich Loudon County woman. Whenever there was a lull in the business of the day, Nan seized the book and read it avidly.

"Helen," she greeted her sister, "I am cultivating a taste for the moderns. I may even write *vers libre* myself. Listen to this," and she read:

“Only of thee and me the night wind sings,  
Only of us the sailors speak at sea,  
The earth is filled with wondered whisperings  
Only of thee and me.

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Only of thee and me the breakers chant,  
Only of us the stir in bush and tree;  
The rain and sunshine tell the eager plant  
Only of thee and me.

Only of thee and me, till all shall fade;  
Only of us the whole world's thoughts can be—  
For we are Love, and God Himself is made  
Only of thee and me.”

“Isn't that the hot stuff, though? Why, Helen, what in the world is the matter with you?” Nan asked in surprise, for Helen's eyes had filled with tears and she had begun to blow her nose violently to give them a *raison d'etre*.

“I subbose I've got a gold coming,” sniffed Helen.

“Cold coming, nothing! You are crying and you might as well admit it. There is nobody here but me so there is no reason why you need be ashamed. You better go right home and go to bed. You are too tired. That's what is the matter. You have been up since six and working like a dog all the time. I wish there was some nice trip you could take. But anyway, run along home now. I can get along allright down here.”

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But Helen had stopped crying and was bravely powdering her nose, “Oh, Nan, I am O. K. now. Just forget it. Of course, dear I wouldn't dream of leaving you here alone on Saturday, our very busiest day.”

“I do believe if you were standing on a railroad track with an

express train bearing down upon you, and your nose was the least bit shiny, and you had a choice of getting out of the way or applying the eternal powder puff, you would choose the latter.”

“I wouldn’t be surprised if I did,” Helen was able to smile at Nan.

“What about the mule bird Bobby,” questioned Nan, deeming it best to make Helen talk and think of something else.

“I took him to Cousin Lizzie’s, but he had a certain highly charged air that makes me think an explosion is imminent—But here come some prospective purchasers. I am going to hop it and take off my coat and hat.”

Nan quickly closed her book and slipped behind the order desk. Nan had a lithe, quick grace attendant upon all her motions so that it was a delight to watch her slightest gesture. She devoutly hoped that these “P. C’s,” as they called the prospective customers, would not prove the kind that only come to match some impossible shade of wool that has not been in vogue since the reconstruction period. Judging by their battered bonnets and scrunched appearance, she feared that this would be their mission. However, she greeted them with the most welcoming smile.

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“Good morning, what may I do for you?” she asked.

“Nothing, I expect,” answered the tall thin one, in the most discouraging harsh tones.

“Whew,” thought Nan, “this is a peach of a beginning.” Aloud she said, “Rest assured that we will do anything in our power to serve you.”

Somewhat mollified by Nan’s courteous manner, likewise a little rebuked by the distressed look her companion had given her at her opening remark, the woman assumed a more gracious aspect.

“I did not mean to seem so abrupt,” she said, “but I have met with so little consideration and interest in the young women whom I have questioned on the subject, that I expected the usual brusqueness from you.”

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“Heavens!” thought Nan. “Is she never going to divulge the secret of what she wants to buy. Anybody would think she wanted lyddite or T. N. T. for bombs, she is so *sub rosa*.”

Then her little companion came forward and said in the shyest of voices, rather apologetically, “My sister and I are going abroad and we want to have some knee caps knit to wear on the voyage. We neither of us can knit and no one at any of the other stores seems to understand just what we want.”

Nan controlled the laugh that was struggling to out at the

picture of these two old-fashioned ladies vainly inquiring about worsted knee caps from the silkstockinged, georgette-bloused in the "other stores." At the same time, she remembered that Billy Sutton's nice comfortable mother had knitted herself and Billy and his sister all knee caps for them to wear when sleighing the winter they had spent in the country. She felt sure, too, that her friends' mother would be willing to undertake this order for the strange pair, as she was very interested in the success of the shop.

"Why, I know exactly what you want and I think it an excellent idea to wear them on an ocean voyage. What color would you want them?" she said with pencil poised over the order blanks.

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Here both old ladies blushed. "We always had them red when we were children," they announced together.

"Yes, red is a nice cheerful color, isn't it?" Nan said bravely. "If you give me your name and phone number I can call you when your order is ready. We don't deliver."

Two satisfied old ladies emerged from the shop some minutes later, praising Nan to the skies and vowing to each other that they would send her postcards of all the points of interest.

Helen came in from the little kitchenette to see what was causing the giggles that had finally forced their way to the surface.

"Oh, Helen," said Nan, convulsed. "If you could have seen the two dears who were in here just now! They have been going around trying to buy red knee caps and were surprised that none of the stylish shop girls ever had heard of them! Can't you see them with them on, cavorting over the Alps?"

"Well, I am glad you had to deal with them, because I am afraid I would have been as ignorant as any other shop girl. What on earth did you tell them?"

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"Booked the order and told them I would have them for them in two weeks' time. Now I have got to write and ask Mrs. Sutton to do them for me. I know she will, so I am going to parcel post her the worsted right away."

"I am afraid I leave you too much to do," Helen said.

"Don't be absurd," admonished her sister. "Everybody knows that it is Helen Carter who really runs this teashop. Douglas and I don't begin to do the work you do. And I don't begin to do the work Douglas does."

"I suppose we have turned into a pretty hard working family, even Mother. If somebody had told me several years ago that either Mother or Lucy or I would ever do a lick of work, I should have laughed at them. Now look at the way our little Mother sews, and the really remarkable way Lucy has taken

hold at George's office. Of course, I always knew that you and Douglas had it in you to rise to any occasion, but I must say I am proud of the rest of us."

"Mm!" laughed Nan. "You act as if Douglas and I weren't deserving of praise, too."

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"No, it isn't that, but the people who are expected to do big things never get the lauding that those who aren't considered very worthy and then show themselves so, do—"

"Oh, Helen," interrupted Nan. "Here is a case where somebody is getting what they deserve and more, too, I reckon," and she pointed to the door, through which Cousin Lizzie Somerville was dragging the very reluctant Bobby.

"What do you suppose he has done now?" gasped Helen. "I feel like saying 'That which I have most feared has come upon me.' Whatever it is, I never could fuss at Bobby. You will have to do it."

It was difficult to lecture Bobby because he was capable of producing the most cherubic countenance after committing the most heinous crime,—a feat that always disconcerted his sisters. His mother never undertook to rebuke him and his father was never told of his misdemeanors, as it was still considered best to relieve him of all worries.

Cousin Lizzie stalked to the center of the room, the small culprit well in hand. Her finely chiseled nose was twitching angrily and her still smooth cheeks were suffused with a faint pink.

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"I cannot keep this child at my house any longer," announced Miss Lizzie, at which remark it must be admitted Bobby looked tremendously cheered.

"Oh, Bobby, Bobby, what can you have done?" demanded Helen, looking sorrowfully at her little brother.

"What can you have done, ' much!" said Bobby. "I could have done lots, but you made me promise to be good, so I didn't do anything."

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth is to have a thankless child," said Miss Lizzie.

"Shows how much you know about snakes," said Bobby half under his breath.

"But what has he done?" demanded Nan, anxious to come to the point.

Miss Lizzie turned a warlike eye upon her young cousin, whose hand she still clutched, squirm as he might. "He called me a dog! That is what he has done."

“Oh, Bobby, you couldn’t have,” said both of his sisters.

“No, I ’clare I didn’t,” said Bobby, looking them straight in the eyes, “’n if I had, it’s no reason for her to get so tight about. I think it is a pretty nice thing to call anybody. They are a sight nicer than plenty of people I know.”

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“He has the face to contradict me,” said Miss Lizzie, glaring at him.

“I tell you, Cousin Lizzie,” said the diplomatic Nan. “You let me take Bobby into the pantry and let me hear what he has to say.”

“Very well,—but there is nothing he can say.”

Nan and Bobby disappeared into the pantry, leaving Cousin Lizzie to expatiate to Helen on the difference that had been made in the upbringing of children since she and her equally model brothers and sisters had been children.

“Now, Bobby,” said Nan gently, “what have you got to say?”

“How ’bout me having one of these here san’viches? I reckon I could tell you better on a full stomach.”

So with a mouthful of sandwich, Bobby told the horrible tale. “I was upstairs and the woman asked me if I was up or down, and I’ve been talking ‘Tut’ a lot lately, and with out thinking, I just yelled, ‘U Pup,’ I didn’t mean nothin’ by it, and I am glad that old thing don’t want me at her house any more. I tried to ’splain it to her, but she wouldn’t listen.” And with the comforting knowledge of his own innocence proven, Bobby continued to munch the sandwich.

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“Well, I reckon Cousin Lizzie doesn’t understand little boys very well. I will try and explain it to her. You can just stay here at the shop today with Helen and me, and tomorrow being Sunday we can take care of you at home,” and endeavoring not to smile too openly. Nan went back to Helen and the angry Cousin Lizzie, whom it was difficult to convince that she had not been outraged.

Miss Lizzie at last was pacified and went on her way, rejoicing that she had been relieved of the unwelcome task of caring for Bobby; while Helen and Nan, laughing heartily, wondered how they could combine the amusement of Bobby with the business of the day.

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## CHAPTER XI. LETTERS.

From Bobby to Josh.

Dere Frend:

Nothin has happened for so long there aint nothin to write but hopin youll do the same I am. Mother and Douglas and Tillie and there sweeties has all gone to Nu york in Lewis car and while there I have been at Couzin Lizys in the daytime and it was orful. Today we had such a fuss she brung me back to Nan and Helen at the shop and they gave me some paper and asked me why didn't i write to you so I am. I go to school but dont learn much as i can write and read so what is the use. Me and a boy named Fred set the alarm-clock off in rithmetik the other day and had to learn a peace of potry for it after school but I didn't mind because it was a him and I already knew it from sundy school. I am going to put my toad in the teachers desk monday and Fred is tryin to think of somethin to do. I wish we had a wasps nest like what you had to put under the cooks bed at camp but we aint. I wish it was next summer dont you. I am going to charlie Chaplin this afternoon if Lucy has time and reckon she will cause she likes him herself so will stop now. Hope your mother and Josephus are alright.

From Josh to Bobby.

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Deer Bobby:

Mammy and Josephus are fine but mammy didnt think much of your puttin her name with the old mules. Womin are funny. I bin going to school right stedy this fall and lernin right smart. Gwen asked me to. She went to bordin school this fall like she said she was going to do with the money she found in the walled Dr. right found that day with Miss helen. She says there will be enough for me to go a year some place if I help to work my way. I didn't want to at first but I reckon I mite as well. Only Mammy couldn't tend to Josephus like hes used to. Yestidy I was out squirel huntin and I saw Tom Tit in his pink pants what he wants to wear em fer beats me. I asked him why he didnt wear pants like other folks and he said why didnt other folks wear pretty pants like him. I like tom Tit and the spring keeper in spite of them awful pants. Josephus sliped in the mud and skint his laig right bad but I put some fat bacin on it and it is getting along alright. I behaive right good in my school. Our teacher is a kind of thin girl what dont look right happy and she is pretty good to us and lends us her own books to read on Sunday and she has got a sight of em to. I liked one called Treasure island the best. Yes i do wish it was next summer,

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must close as i have to milk and feed Josephus. Yours,

JOSH.

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Mrs. Carter to Bobby.

My darling Bobby:

I am writing this from Washington where I stopped for lunch as I forgot to tell you something very important, and you must read this to Helen so she will be sure to attend to it. Miss Randolph, your Sunday School teacher, called me the day before I left, and said that there was to be a party at the Parish House Saturday afternoon, and that she wanted you and Andy Scott to be sure to come as you were the only ones who could carry a tune, and Dr. Porter wanted the children to sing some hymns for the visiting minister and his wife. You must wear a fresh white linen suit and a red tie and don't above all, fail to have your nails clean, and be sure to take a handkerchief.

I am missing you already, though we are having a lovely trip and gorgeous weather. Tell Helen that we had lunch with de Lestis at the Shorham. I know she will be surprised. Give my love to everybody. Your loving

MOTHER.

From Dee Tucker to Nan Carter.

Nan dear:

We enjoyed seeing your people so much, only of course we wished for a sight of your foolish face, as we shamelessly admit you are our favorite child. In spite of your highbrowness, which we acknowledge, you have the delightful knack of assuming lowbrowness when the occasion arises, and this faculty endears you to the hearts of us mongrels and mutts.

We had your good folk to tea and a "pleasant time was had by all." I am afraid your mother was scandalized at our unchaperoned state, and of course some of Dum's Bohemian friends from the Art League had to appear the same evening, the men looking very blue chinned and long haired and the girls looking ultra blousy and short haired. Maybe it interested Mrs. Carter, though. The men thought she was exquisite,—and she is,—and wanted to paint her right away.

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Saturday night we all went to Murray's to dinner, thence to the theatre and finished up with a midnight feast. Thereby completing what I call a 'day' even in Manhattan. Page and Dum and I dug up some of our more monied pals for escorts and of course they were lovely to Mrs. Carter, and Til and

Doug were happy with their chosen.

Doug says you are having a very successful time with the shop, and of course we were all delighted to hear it. I only wish you could come up next week. Do try. I have met a number of literary ladies and gents and of course Page has reams of inky friends. I am sure you would enjoy it. We have been having a rather gay winter, but working hard, too.

Please let me have the favor of an early gossip reply as we are dead for some Richmond news. Everybody sends you lots of messages, but this is the end of the paper.

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From Gwen to Douglas.

Dear Douglas:

I have been intending to write you a long letter for weeks but I have been so extraordinarily busy that this is the first opportunity that has presented itself. Of course you know that I think of all my dear Carters continually, and I will always keep in my heart the fact that I would never have had a chance in life had it not been for you and your sisters.

When I arrived at Brixton I felt very shy and lonely as the hundred pupils seemed millions to a new girl. However I was placed in the room with a very popular junior whose intended room mate, her dearest friend, suddenly chose to go abroad with an erratic father. She has been too lovely to me and kept me from feeling so extremely out of place as I otherwise would have felt.

It has been arranged for me to complete the four years' course in three years, thus enabling me to give Josh a year at a good boys' school. I am very anxious for him to have at least one opportunity, and then of course if he chooses he can go to college and work his way. I am so eternally grateful to him and to his mother who so befriended me in my need that I feel any sacrifice I may make for them would be as nothing compared to the kindness they have shown me.

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Naturally I will have to study very hard if I am to carry out my plans, but I realize that I must take care of my physical condition and so I have gone out for basketball and think it probable that I shall make the class team. While I have never played before, the coach says that I am quick to learn and very sure on my feet, which is reasonable when you consider the mountain goat.

The clothes Helen chose for me and helped me to make at the camp last summer have proven very suitable, and I have been complimented on the blue satin afternoon dress a number of times. It seems so strange for me to own a dress of that type when so short a time ago I saw stretching before me only long

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years of calico and bare feet. I wonder if you could understand the thrill that comes to me when I put on that blue gown and glance with conscious admiration at my feet encased in high-heeled black satin slippers with cut steel buckles? Though sometimes I feel a tremendous wave of longing for the freedom of the mountains sweep over me. Then I remember with an equal thrill of delight the squinch of mud between my bare toes.

The girls are very sweet and friendly to me, and my dear room mate, Sarah Taylor, is teaching me to dance. It is the custom to dance every night after supper in the gymnasium before study hall begins.

The food is neither very palatable nor very plentiful, but I learn from girls who have attended other schools that this is not unusual even in the more expensive schools. However, there is an abundance of milk and quite nice bread, so I expect to get along allright. We keep fruit in our room and crackers and cheese. Of course the food does not seem so poor to me as it does to the other girls, who are accustomed to better. You see, the months I spent with you at camp constitute my knowledge of good food. With Josh and his mother, our *piece de resistance* was corn bread, cabbage, bacon and molasses which could hardly be called a very extensive menu.

The teachers are excellent, in particular the English teacher and the Latin. As these are the two subjects in which I am particularly interested, I consider myself very fortunate.

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The bell has rung for 'walk' so I must stop, though there are a number of things I should have liked to tell you. Each day we have to take a walk for forty-five minutes and as there are beautiful woods around here, I am very thankful for this rule.

I know you are very busy in your shop, for which I wish the greatest success, but I hope that you and your sisters will find occasion to write to your very devoted,

GWEN.

From Lucy to Frank Maury at V. M. I.

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Dear Frank:

I know it has been ages since I have written to you so don't rub it in. But I have been busy as can be at the office. Doesn't that sound absurd, coming from me? If you could only see me at work though, you would never know me. In the first place I am the most dignified soul you ever saw and in the second place, I say it with due modesty, I am really a good stenographer. Nobody is more surprised than I am. At first, of course, I was scared to death, 'specially about the spelling of medical terms but with the aid of a dictionary, which George Wright got me, I

advance boldly to tackle any of 'em. Dr. Wright has been too lovely to me. Of course, I realize it is only on account of Helen that he did it at first, but I really think that now I have made myself actually valuable to him. I certainly have "done my durndest."

You know I should adore to come up to V. M. I. for the Christmas hops, and Lil says that Skeeter asked her to come, too. She says she will go if I do and I will ask Dr. Wright at some propitious moment if I can have a few days off.

As soon as I find out, I will telegraph you. I suppose quite a bunch will be coming up from Richmond.

Tell Skeeter "Howdy" for me and my other little pals, in the usual hurry,

LUCY.

From the Count de Lestis to Douglas.

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My dear Miss Douglas:

It would be impossible for me to thank you in any degree for the kindness I received so undeservedly from you. It is possible that if there were more women like you there would be fewer men like me.

I arrived in my country and was given a few days with my dear mother before she died, though she was unconscious the greater part of the time.

There is little left of my estate and less of my more unfortunate neighbors. I shall devote myself in the future to mending these broken lands and people.

If you ever think of me, I hope you will find it in your heart to do so not too scornfully. Believe me always your servant,

DE LESTIS.

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## CHAPTER XII. BOBBY ANSWERS THE TELEPHONE.

The week-enders had returned, happy but weary beyond words. Douglas had kissed the family all around presented the simple gifts she had purchased for them all and gone upstairs to take a much needed nap. Mrs. Carter was fluttering from one of her children to the other, telling them just why she had brought them this and that and giving Helen glowing accounts of the wonderful clothes she had seen.

“Lucy dear, you must put that comb at an angle if you want to get the best effect,—everyone at the theatres had that type of comb, and you really must knot your hair more loosely,” and the little lady thrust the comb into Lucy’s soft hair at the desired angle, and loosened the waves about her face, much to Lucy’s alarm, who was strong in her determination never to look ‘messy.’

“Thanks lots, Mummy, I adore the comb, and you were a darling to bring it to me,” and Lucy went upstairs to smooth out the locks her mother had loosened.

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“And Helen, I just couldn’t resist buying you this pale yellow negligee. Don’t tell me I should not have done it and that we cannot afford it, because I saved the money out of my embroidery money, and besides, I didn’t get a thing for myself but a new veil. You must try it on right away because I am crazy to see you in it.”

“Helen ain’t got no time to neg in that there negigee,” said scornful Bobby, thereby voicing Helen’s secret thoughts, though she was duly grateful and appreciated the sacrifice her mother had made by getting only a veil for herself.

“Why didn’t you bring her something useful like this here football Lewis done brought me and this here air rifle what I got from Bill Tinsely?”

“Hush, Bobby, don’t be so smart alecky,” Helen corrected her little brother. “I can use it, too. Don’t I have my breakfast in bed every Sunday morning?”

“What did you bring Daddy? He ought to have something.” Bobby seemed in a dangerous mood.

“Two books from Brentano’s,” Mrs. Carter answered. “You don’t think I would be likely to forget Robert, do you? I tried to get him on the phone just now and tell him I am here, but the line was busy. His firm seems to be doing almost as much business as it did before his illness. Now, Bobby, all of us are going upstairs and take a nap. Douglas and I are dead tired from our trip, and Helen is worn out from the shop, and Lucy is

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going to a dance tonight, and Nan is busy writing, so you answer the phone and the door bell and excuse us to any callers and take any phone messages and deliver them at supper.” Then Mrs. Carter and Helen joined the others upstairs.

“I would like to know what good a football and an air rifle are going to do me if I got to stay in this Carter House all evening and answer bells that might not even ring,” grumbled Bobby, giving his new playthings a longing glance. “If there don’t nothing ring in fifteen minutes, I am going out. I am going out any way after fifteen minutes,” he decided and sat down on the floor in front of the fire place and fixed a steady gaze on the clock on the mantel.

His mind leaped forward to the time when on a hotly contested gridiron he would make brilliant play after brilliant play, breaking impossible lines, freeing himself from the most scientific of tackles and making phenomenal runs, gaining yard after yard for his team. He could see himself after the game, a sweater flung carelessly across his broad shoulders, shaking hands with the many who thronged about him with congratulations. He could see himself making triumphal progress on the proud shoulders of his winning team.

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His eye left the clock for a moment and found the gleaming barrel of his little rifle. Straightway he was in a jungle. There was a deafening roar of many tremendous beasts enough to send a shiver of fear through any but the bravest. He had put his gun to his shoulder, drawn a bead on the sniffing nose of a huge tiger, his finger wrapped lovingly around the trigger, he pulled it and—“ting-a-ling-a-ling” went the telephone.

As if in a dream, Bobby rose to his feet and crossed to the desk. “Yes, yes,” he said, after putting the receiver to his ear, “I’ll be sure and tell them.” He added, “Goodbye” after he had replaced the receiver.

He sank down before the fire. The tiger lay dead before him with a great stream of blood gushing from his nose. The other beasts, terrified at the approach of the mighty hunter, had fled, leaving him alone with his prey. He let him bleed a little longer, then easily flung him across his shoulder and tramped on through the jungle.

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A coal fell from the grate and startled him back to this land. He glanced at the clock. The fifteen minutes he had allowed himself had lengthened into an hour, and through the window he could see that the street lamps had been lit.

Refreshed by her nap, Helen came downstairs to get Bobby’s supper. Bobby still drowsed before the fire.

“I am going to fix you a cup of cocoa and a poached egg on toast before the others come down, and then you can hop into bed. I will call you in a second,” and Helen went on into the

kitchen.

The mighty hunter and football hero was so nearly asleep that he made no objections whatever to the suggestion that he “hop into bed” immediately after supper. When Helen called him a few minutes later, it was with difficulty that he roused himself sufficiently to go into the kitchen.

Helen was a wonderful cook and a dainty cook. The egg had been poached in milk and was perfect, worthy of a person more Epicurean in his tastes than Bobby. [131]

“You don’t mind eating in the kitchen, do you?” Helen asked as she pulled a chair up to the kitchen table. “I thought it would be nicer for both of us.” And what little boy does not infinitely prefer the kitchen to the dining-room?

“I’m mighty fond of the kitchen, ’specially when there was niggers in it,” said Bobby, remembering the days when Oscar, the butler, and the old cook, and Susan the maid had had long and incomprehensible but fascinating conversations and arguments in this same kitchen in which Helen now ruled supreme.

“Bobby, don’t go to sleep in your cocoa,” warned Helen as she watched his nodding head falling surely and slowly towards the cup.

Then began that tedious process of “being walked to bed.” Helen could remember her own childhood and the part this procedure had played in it. She grasped Bobby beneath the armpits and half dragged him down the hall and up the steps. His head wobbled from side to side and his hands dangled limply. At last his room was reached and Helen deposited him in a chair. Now began the difficult task of undressing him without waking him. His shoestrings were tied in a million hard knots. “Oh for Alexander the Great! I know the Gordian knot would have been mere child’s play to untie compared to the impossible things Bobby does to his shoestrings,” sighed Helen. [132]

At last he was pajamad and in bed. With a rosy cheek on one curved arm he looked more like a sleeping cupid than a grimy football hero or a big game hunter.

Finally the rest of the family appeared downstairs. Lucy and Helen went into the kitchen to cook supper. Nan and Douglas set the table,—and to them, also, would fall the task of washing the dishes.

Lucy sliced apples for Helen to fry while she mixed up dough for biscuits. “I don’t believe there is anything better in the world than good hot biscuits and fried apples and crisp bacon, —unless it’s fried chicken and pop-overs, or some of the other things you can cook better than anybody else,” Lucy said as she [133]

sliced the shiny red apples. Lucy was firm in her belief that Helen was the best looking, best dressed person she knew, and also that she was the best cook the Carter family had ever had. There was absolutely nothing she would not do for Helen and nothing she would not give to be like her. She carefully copied her in dress, and found herself often more or less unconsciously slipping into her little habits of speech and even of thought.

“Whew! I did not have any idea my efforts were so appreciated,” laughed Helen as she slid a pan of her biscuits into the hot oven. Her heart softened toward the little sister against whom of late she had been holding relentless thoughts.

“Helen, why didn’t you see George Wright when he came by here last night?” demanded Lucy abruptly.

“Because I had promised Tillie and Bill that I would go to the movies with them and that man from West Point Bill wanted me to meet.”

“They hadn’t come by for you when George came,” pointed out Lucy.

“I promised Bobby that I would read ‘King Arthur’ to him till they did come,” and Helen left the kitchen to tell Douglas and Nan they could help bring the dishes into the dining-room.

“But Daddy hasn’t come yet,” objected Nan.

“Why, hasn’t he? I thought he was in the library with Mummy, but we will have to have supper now anyway or everything will be ruined. We can save him some. But I wonder where he is? He is usually here before this, and I have supper a little late tonight because Bobby was so hard to get to bed.”

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“Where do you suppose your father is, children?” queried Mrs. Carter as she came into the dining-room.

“I’ll call up the office and see if he is there,” Douglas said, going to the phone. After several minutes she came back to the table saying that her call had not been answered.

“Well, let’s start supper, he will probably come before we are done.”

Mrs. Carter took her place behind the lovely old urn that held Helen’s chocolate, and in a slightly distraught manner began to pour it into the cups. Everybody was hungry and for a moment nothing was said. An impression was soon made on the dish of fried apples and Lucy was sent out for another plate of biscuits.

“I believe I will phone around to the club and see if by any chance Daddy has stayed there with friends for dinner and just neglected to call us up,” said Nan, jumping up suddenly from the table.

Into the minds of all there was creeping a wretched little thought. Suppose the increasing business of the firm had brought about a recurrence of their father's old trouble? Overwork had caused it before and surely now he was very busy. In their anxiety they for the moment lost sight of the fact that they all were self-supporting and his responsibilities had been completely lifted from his shoulders. Each of them began to remember suddenly fearful stories of victims of asphasia, of New York men with homes in Yonkers who had suddenly found themselves walking around the Battery when they had believed themselves to be on the way home; of men who had suddenly forgotten their names, addresses and much of their past life.

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Silently they all waited for Nan to return from the phone, each fearing that the other should read her thoughts, each trying to convince herself that her dreads were groundless.

"No," said Nan, coming from the phone, "he is not there."

Tears welled up in Mrs. Carter's eyes and slipped down her cheeks. Helen saw them and came to her mother and put her arms around her. She seemed as little and helpless to her as had Bobby when she "walked" him to bed.

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"Why, Mummy," she whispered, "you mustn't cry. Daddy is sure to be allright. He has just been delayed. There isn't anything that could happen to him."

"This is just what you get for always having had such a model husband," said Nan with an effort. "Suppose this was the rule instead of the exception? I gather from my indefatigable magazine reading that all husbands from time to time are A. W. O. L. and reappear with some insufficient excuse: 'Bill was sick and I dropped by to see him, and he asked me to sit up with him so his wife could catch a nap!' And that, by the way, is just what you need,—a nap, a good night's rest. As Aunt Susan used to say, 'you are all tuckered out' after your trip, and tired people always make mountains out of mole hills."

And forthwith, Nan and Helen marshalled their mother upstairs, and returned to wait for news of their father.

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## CHAPTER XIII. A SLEEPLESS NIGHT.

“I don’t feel as though I should go to this old dance until we hear something about Daddy,” Lucy said to Helen and Nan.

“Of course you must, dear, you are all dressed and it would be absurd not to go. As soon as we hear from him, one of us will call you up and let you know. You look awfully sweet and I am sure you will have a good time,” Nan assured her.

Lucy did look sweet. She had on a pale yellow satin frock that had been Helen’s in their richer days. It had only been worn twice, as in those other days Helen had never appeared in the same evening dress more than three times. Lucy and Helen had done it over, adding an orchid colored girdle, and with tulle of the same shade around her pretty young shoulders Lucy might well have stepped from the pages of the last *Vogue* or *Vanity Fair*.

“Well, I won’t have a good time a bit because I will be worrying all the time, and you can’t dance with something on your mind.”

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“There is your little beau at the door; run along now,” laughed Nan. “But I ’spect it is pretty true that the best dancers are nearly imbeciles.”

“You are mighty stupid yourself then, Nan, if that is the case. You know all the boys at camp had rather dance with you than any of us. And I say it with due modesty, we are a dancing family,” objected Helen, glad that this light talk was to some extent occupying their minds and keeping them a little freer from anxiety over their father’s whereabouts.

The front door closed after Lucy and suddenly they were serious again.

Helen walked up and down the room, now and again stopping at the library table and turning over the leaves of a magazine. Nan sat on a little foot stool before the hearth, steadily looking into the fire. Douglas came into the room with a few pieces of candy in a saucer, “I was making this for the shop and these pieces crumbled, don’t you want some?”

“Yes, and speaking of the shop, none of us will be fit for work if we sit up all night worrying, and I think we ought to go to bed,” said Nan, rising.

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“You and Doug go on. I am not sleepy yet. I will be up after a while,” and Helen shoved the foot stool nearer the fire and sat down with her arms around her drawn-up knees.

Suppose that after all her father's recovery had been only temporary! Suppose that all the long months of labor on her part and on the part of her sisters had been in vain! Suppose she were to see again her father crying weakly like a tired child! George Wright had warned her months before that too exhaustive work would cause a recurrence of the old nervous collapse. Suppose they had not been careful enough of their father of late! Suppose they had not watched his office hours closely enough! Suppose a million fearful things! These thoughts flashed across her weary brain in rapid succession.

The clock ticked with such tremendous vigor that it almost swayed the room, it seemed to her. She felt a strange, unreasoning resentment for the others that they could with apparent calm go upstairs and to bed. Yet she knew it to be the wiser action. Plausible as seemed the various probable explanations of her father's absence, they failed to satisfy her. She rebuked herself for letting her imagination have full play. But she was unable to check it. A light rain had begun to fall. The drops glistened on the window pane. She thought of her father, wandering hopelessly, helplessly, through the wet night. She shivered before the fire. Perhaps he was wandering up and down before his home, brought there by some quirk in his subconscious mind.

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At this thought, the girl went out on the front porch and looked up and down. By now the asphalt streets had become wet and slick. The street lamps were reflected in the pavement's dark, shining surface. A man with no umbrella, a hat slouched well down on his head and an upturned coatcollar rounded the corner. For a moment her heart beat a little faster and she almost called out. She waited till he came nearer. The light streaming through the open front door fell across the face of a stranger. He passed on with a curious glance at the strained face of the girl.

"I must be going crazy," she said aloud. "I must get something and try to read it."

She went back into the living-room and curled up on the couch, the couch blanket around her shoulders. Page after page she read and turned, unknowingly. A light hand fell on her shoulder, and startled, she turned to find Nan wrapped in a voluminous fuzzy red bathrobe, her tumbled hair about her shoulders.

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"I couldn't sleep so I thought I would come down with you. I peeped in Doug's room and she was sleeping. She was so dead tired from the trip. I 'spect she could have slept standing up, like tired old horses do. I am glad Lucy is going to spend the night at Lil Tate's. She wanted to come back here but I assured her it was no use."

Helen was relieved at Nan's sane conversation. It seemed good to hear a voice. Except for the ticking clock there had

been no sound for hours, and the ticking only seemed to accentuate the silence.

“I am glad you came, Nan. Hasn’t it been awful?” Helen closed the book she had been holding open and made room for Nan beside her.

“Yes,” Nan agreed, “it has. I read for a long while and wrote a bit too, but it was no good and I had to tear it up. Now, I say, let’s go in the kitchen and make us some strong coffee and let’s eat something while we are at it. It is nearly five and we both of us would be better off after some food.”

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“Very well, and then we can make some plan about what we must do. I don’t know who to notify in a case like this do you?”

“I know one person to notify about everything and that is one Dr. George Wright, and you know it, too,” Nan said as she watched Helen color.

“I am going to make this extra strong,” said Helen, reaching on the shelf for the coffee pot. “I am going to put in two extra heaping teaspoonfuls for the pot instead of one.”

Soon the coffee was percolating cheerfully and Nan was scrambling eggs while Helen made toast.

“It was a good idea to eat,” Helen said, as she and Nan sat down to the kitchen table.

“Of course it is; anything you have to stand you can stand lots better on a full stomach than on an empty one,” with which bit of wisdom, Nan went to the kitchen window and looked out.

The little drizzle had stopped and a faint pink was flushing the leaden sky, bringing into bold relief a gnarled old pear tree that leaned over the fence.

““ And down the long and silent street  
The dawn with silver-sandalled feet  
Crept like a frightened girl, ””

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whispered Nan waving her fork.

“But oh, Nan,” said Helen, as she, too, peered from the window, “even if this dawn is like a frightened girl, doesn’t it somehow make you feel more cheerful? Sunsets always make me terribly sad but sunrises are sort of symbolic of something new; and maybe this day won’t be as horrible as last night.”

“Child, it is not so much the sunrise as it is the coffee and toast and eggs.”

“That is a mighty materialistic way for my sister Nan to be talking, specially when she has just been spouting poetry.”

“Yes, but didn’t you notice that I held a fork triumphant in my right hand?”

“Poor little Mummy will be the most wretched person in the world when she wakes up,” said Helen, serious again.

“I don’t know what we are going to tell Bobby about father, that he has gone on a trip, I suppose. Anyway, we had better go upstairs and take cold baths and get dressed and have some breakfast for the rest of us ready ’gainst the time they come down. Helen, I wish to goodness you could get a little sleep. Do you suppose you could? I could fix the breakfast,” and Nan put her arm around her sister as they went up the stairs together.

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“I am allright now. You were an awful peach to come down and be with me last night, or rather this morning,” and the two sisters parted, each going to her own room.

In those few hours together they had felt nearer to each other than they had ever been before. While, of course, they were fond of each other in an abstract sisterly way, there had never been the feeling of being *sympatica* with each other. Nan had always been a little amused at Helen’s love of style and beautiful clothes, and Helen had always been a little bored by Nan’s frequent bursts into poetry.

As Nan splashed in her cold bath she thought of how she had misjudged Helen time and time again. She had always seemed to her a little hard and lacking in feeling. “Why she was the most wretched of us all, last night. And what a night she must have spent! I wish I had gone down to her sooner. She looked like a ghost. I never saw anyone so miserable looking in all my life, and here I was up here trying to write a sonnet about ‘The weary hours creep by with aching limbs.’ I ’spect Helen knows more about the slowness of time than I.”

In her room, Helen was thinking that it was beautiful to see things in the light Nan saw them, and she was taking herself severely to task for ever having teased Nan about her consuming love of poetry. She remembered how she had laughed on the day they went to camp for the first time, when Nan, overcome by the rugged beauty of the mountains, had stopped in the middle of the road and declaimed,

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“Great God! I’d rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn,  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn.”

By eight they were all seated at the breakfast table but Bobby, each trying to talk of trivial matters for the sake of the rest. Suddenly Mrs. Carter put her face in her hands and sobbed out, “Oh, suppose I never see him again!”

As Bobby entered just as she spoke, Douglas summoned her forces and turned to Bobby with a smile. "Daddy has gone to Norfolk on a trip," she said.

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"Ho, you can't fool me. He called up yesterday while you were all sleep and told me he was going out to Tom Graves' place in the country and going turkey hunting," announced Bobby, looking with wonder at the changing expressions on the faces around the table.

"But, Bobby, Bobby, why in the world didn't you tell us?" demanded Helen in a weak voice.

"I forgot," said the young hopeful simply. "And please give me plenty of butter on my batterbread."

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## CHAPTER XIV. NAN'S STORY.

Mr. Carter came in late in the afternoon of the day after his unaccountable disappearance. He had one wild turkey, seven partridges and three hares in his knapsack. Bobby was delighted with the whole procedure and seemed completely unaware of the wretchedness his carelessness had caused.

“Tell us about it, dear,” asked Mrs. Carter, who had decided not to let her husband know of the anxiety his unexplained absence had caused her and his daughters. He was like a young boy in his excitement over his kill, and it seemed to them all a great shame to lessen his enjoyment of his little excursion by one iota.

“There is nothing to tell about turkey hunting. Tom Graves and one of the darkies of his place and I sat in a blind by the river for three hours in the cold grey dawn, yelping the turkeys up before we got a shot. The darky got one turkey and I got the other. Then on the way home we flushed a covey of birds and I got two. Going down to the train, Tom's old setter flushed another and we all got some. The others gave me theirs to bring to you. I had a dandy time. Tom has got good dogs and they are mighty rare now a-days. Tom may have the dogs, but I have certainly got the girls. I got an afternoon paper on the train and what do you think I found on the feature page—and syndicated, too, by Jove?” and Mr. Carter drew a folded paper from his pocket and slapped his thigh delightedly with it.

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“I've just about have time to read it to you before supper,” he said as he crossed over to the table and switched on the reading light. “Bobby, I am going to tell you to be quiet in advance.”

“It is called Rain,” and he began to read:

“Nothin' doin', Sam; I may be a chicken but I ain't no duck!”

“Aw, Maud, come on! You've got a raincoat and here's an umbrella. 'Taint far to the jitney and they said at the store that the pictures were fine.”

“The pictures might be fine but the weather ain't.”

“Gosh, Maud, what's the matter? You're as sour as a pickle tonight.”

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“I don't like rain, and besides—I seen the pictures at the Strand.”

Sam thought he saw a chance. “Well, come to the Globe then,

girlie. You know as long as I am with you the time and place don't count."

"Humph! No sugar in mine! How many times I got to tell you I don't like this sloppy weather before you quit about it?"

Sam's mouth flew open in surprise. Then grabbing his hat and umbrella, he said: "Not again! Good night!" He marched down the hall, slamming the front door after him.

Maud stood still, looking at a little pool of water that had trickled from the umbrella into the middle of a giddy red carpet-rose.

"He ought to'er remembered that tonight we had planned to decide whether we were goin' to live in a flat or board, and what kind of furniture and all we were goin' to get. Hu! I see myself reminding him of it. Let a man know I cared that much about him,—well, I just reckon not!" She punctuated herself with little snorts.

"Maudie! O, Maudie!" came Ma's voice trailin' down stairs  
"Who was that went out just now?"

"Sam," said her daughter shortly.

"Sure enough? Well, I declare! What did he go so early for?"

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"I had to break the date with him." Then Maud added: "I had a rotten headache."

"Oh, that's too-o bad, dearie! When did it come on?" The clapping of Ma's heels on the stairs gave evidence that she was fat, and also that she was descending.

"A little while ago!" Maud was walking restlessly up and down.

"Come here, child, and let me see if you got any fever," said Ma, waddling over to her daughter with outstretched hand.

"No; I ain't got any fever, Ma. I'll just go on up and hit the hay. Had a hard day at the office." Maud dashed up the steps in a surprisingly healthy and unweary way.

"Do tell! Now did you ever!" ejaculated Ma. "She must have a cold comin' on. I'll just fill that hot water bottle and get them aspirin tablets," and she heaved her bulky self back up the stairs after her daughter.

"Dearie, ain't there something I can do for you?" she inquired gliding into Maud's room.

"Just put out the light after I'm in bed and let me alone and I'll thank you."

Ma's fat hand turned out the gas. Then she went over to the bed, kissed Maud good-night and softly left the room.

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Maud twisted and turned, excused herself and blamed Sam twenty times over, each time hunting up more excuses for herself because she was beginning to think something was to be said in favor of Sam. The more she twisted and turned, the more she became convinced of this,—and consequently twisted anew.

“But I can't ever tell him I was wrong,” she groaned, “and I never seen Sam act so queer before. He don't never flare up quick like he done tonight.”

At last she fell asleep and dreamed that Sam was baking her in the sun on a big flat rock, turning her over with an umbrella.

The next day was sunshiny, but somehow Maud wished it would rain just a little. Sam liked rainy weather.

She was late to work. The boss said: “Miss Maud, you are very late today. Now there would be some excuse if it was rainy like it was yesterday,—but as it is,—you know our rule,—I'll just have to dock you.”

It was very strange how everybody said something about rain. But then if you have a bruise, every time you fall you are sure to hurt that spot. Maud's bruise was kept sore for many days.

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She waited every night for Sam to come, but each night went to bed a little more gloomy than the night before.

Sunday morning she lay in bed feeling that there was no use in getting up. It was raining again. There was nothing to do. She could not go to church because everybody would ask where Sam was.

Ma came puffing in with her breakfast on a tray. “Goin' to church, dearie,” she asked.

“No, Ma! I believe I'll put on my raincoat and go take a walk in the park.”

“Aw, honey, you'll get your feet wet and sure catch your death,—and you know you hate to go out in the rain.”

“I'll wear my rubbers, Ma; and anyhow, catching my death would be a change. I've just got to do something.”

“Law, Maudie, how you do talk!” And Ma withdrew from the room, shaking her head slowly from side to side in distress over her daughter's strangeness.

A little later Maud went out into the rain, walking fast to keep up her spirits. Soon the rain spattering in her face and her brisk pace made her more cheerful. She began to think that maybe it

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wouldn't be so nice to "catch her death," after all.

She turned into the park. Walking over to the lake, she stood watching the swans and ducks swimming delightedly in the rain-splashed water.

Still looking at the ducks she moved slowly around the lake. Suddenly she bumped into somebody's clammy, raincoated back. The owner turned and looked in surprise over his wet shoulder.

"Sam!" Maud gasped. Then smiling sheepishly: "Say, ain't this a peach of a day? I just love to walk in the rain."

Mr. Carter put down the paper from which he had read the little story and added, "And the author is one Annette Carter."

"But what tickles Miss Annette Carter most is that it is syndicated stuff and they want more and more and more, and you might as well know it now as later. I intend to start to save, and furthermore to go and live in the Quartier Latin in Paris next year."

She waited for the effect this announcement was to have on her listeners. Mrs. Carter's expression was the only one that changed appreciably. A little sigh escaped her, but she never objected now to her daughters' plans.

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"Oh, and you will bring me a Paris hat, won't you?" pleaded Lucy.

She sounded so much like her own self that Helen was forced to laugh at her. Two years ago the possibility of a Paris hat would have been the first thought to have flashed through Helen's mind. Now she was astonished to find that she was already worrying about the safety of her young sister in Paris. Where would she live and with whom. Did her school French equip her well enough to argue with the French landladies over the rent, an event that was sure to happen if the tales she had heard and read of American students in Paris' Latin Quarter were to be believed.

"Well, little Nan, you will certainly go if you want to because you get whatever you go after, and you deserve it, too," said her father proudly.

"Can I see me in print?" asked Nan, reaching for the paper. "I wonder if I will ever become so jaded that I won't be wild with excitement at seeing myself in print? I have heard newspaper writers say that they never read their own paper after it went to press. It doesn't seem natural. People always like to look at photographs of themselves, and this seems to me to be just as much a part of me as any photograph." Nan bent her head delightedly over the page that bore her words.

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“Oh, listen to what they put right under my story,” she said:  
“Though it is so much better than mine, it ought to be on top. It  
is called ‘Walking at Night’ and is by some one named Amory  
Hare:

“My face is wet with the rain  
But my heart is warm to the core,  
For I follow at will again  
The road that I loved of yore,  
And the dim trees beat the dark,  
And the swelling ditches moan,  
But my heart is a singing, soaring lark,  
For I travel the road alone,  
Alone in the living night,  
Away from the babble of tongues;  
Alone with the old delight  
Of the night wind in my lungs;  
And the wet air on my cheeks  
And the warm blood in my veins,  
Alone with the joy he knows who seeks  
The thresh of the young spring rains,  
With the smell of the pelted earth,  
The tearful drip of the trees,  
Making him dream of the sound of mirth  
That comes with the clearing breeze.  
'Tis a rare and wondrous sight  
To tramp the wet awhile  
And watch the slow delight  
Of the sun's first pallid smile.  
And hear the meadows breathe again  
And see the far woods turn green,  
Drunk with the glory of wind and rain  
And the sun's warm smile between!  
I have made me a vagrant song,  
For my heart is warm to the core,  
And I'm glad, oh, glad that the night is long  
For I travel the road once more.  
And the dim trees beat the dark  
And the swelling ditches moan,  
With the joy of the singing, soaring lark  
I travel the road, alone!

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“Isn't that splendid?” she demanded of her listeners. “Can't  
you just feel yourself swinging along alone through the wet  
night?”

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Mr. Carter smiled at her enthusiasm. It was the same old Nan  
and no amount of little successes could change her. How like  
her to start to read her own story and then be completely  
carried away by the verse of someone else!

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## CHAPTER XV. MARRIED IN HASTE.

Douglas' wedding was to take place on the Eve of New Year's, and Christmas was not a week off. It was the busiest time of the season for the little shop. So busy, in fact, that two young women had been employed to help take care of the many customers. They had had many orders for needle work that they had been forced to refuse. Hosts of people thronged the downtown district and Christmas shopping seemed to arouse tremendous appetites. Many of the shoppers dropped in the tea-room to have the edge taken off their hunger.

"Why, it is as crowded as Schraaft's in New York at lunch time, than which there is no whicher," Dee Tucker told them on one of her flying trips. The Tuckers took turns coming down to Richmond every month to spend the week-end with their young and attractive father, to see, as Dum said, 'that no grasping female has pocketed our only Zebedee.'

The increased business of the shop affected Helen more than the others, as to her fell the task of catering. Nan scribbled violently late at night and even in the few odd moments she could glean at the shop. Douglas endeavored vainly to hold up her end of their industry, but even the simplest of trousseaux is absorbing.

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Mrs. Carter had begged so hard for a church wedding that Douglas had at last given in, which decision entailed endless details in regard to the bridesmaids' gowns. There were to be four bridesmaids: Dum and Dee Tucker, Lucy and Nan. Helen was chosen to be her sister's maid of honor. Bobby sulked for a day because he was to have no part in the ceremony. He amused his family greatly by announcing with great determination that if he could not be in the wedding they could just bet their boots he was not going to be left out on the honeymoon.

Mrs. Carter was happier than she had been for years. She tripped lightly around the house singing. Every few hours she would run into the shop with a bag full of little scraps of lace and satin. She insisted on purchasing things that Douglas was confident she did not need.

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"Why, I will have as many useless clothes as I no doubt will have cheese scoops and candle sticks," laughed Douglas as she consented to having a filmy lavender tea gown made up.

Lewis was so wrapped in bliss that he was constantly breaking the traffic regulations and being called down by the more cautious Bill. "Anyone would think you were the only person in the world who ever got married," grumbled Bill as he pointed out that they were traversing a one way street the

wrong way.

“Well, Big Boy, I am the only person that ever married Douglas!”

“Yes, and I am the only person that is going to marry Tillie Wingo, and I haven’t been pinched for speeding or parking the wrong way.”

“I doubt if you are the only person that is going to marry Tillie, though you might be the first. She would make a fascinating young widow, so fascinating that I doubt if she would continue in that state long.” Lewis delighted in teasing his friend on the flightiness of his intended.

“Well, I reckon she will be widowed soon enough if I ride with you and go round corners on one wheel much longer.”

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The two men were going up town to the apartment Douglas and Lewis had taken. Douglas and Tillie and Mrs. Carter were to meet them there later and direct the hanging of the curtains that filled the tonneau of the car, so recklessly piloted by Lewis.

“I declare it looks comfy in here,” said Bill rather wistfully an hour later. “I don’t see why Tillie wants to wait for another year before she marries me. I get mighty tired of living at the club.”

“You don’t live at the club. I reckon Mrs. Wingo considers that you live at her house,” said Lewis, his mouth full of tacks. “Hand me that hammer,” and he went up the ladder.

After the curtain rods had been put up, Lewis surveyed the room from his perch on the step ladder, a pleased grin overspreading his face. This was his home. His home, and Douglas’s. This would be the spot he would come to after his day’s work. This the place where they would plan and discuss their future, where they would receive their friends, where they would *live*. Never before had the word seemed so poignant.

Suddenly a wave of pity for Bill swept over him. He must ask Douglas to try and tell Tillie convincingly that Bill needed a home. It was not fair of Tillie to hold out on him just because she wanted one more year of gaiety. She could have just as much fun married as not married. They could all have fun together, just as they always had.

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It would be strange to be spoken of as ‘the young married set.’ He had a queer feeling that his happiness was a tangible thing he was bearing before him, and he must take care not to drop it. Suppose something should happen, something unforeseen to change it all! Suppose he should die suddenly! Suppose Douglas should die! Suppose they should have some horrible misunderstanding that would put them apart forever! These things did happen. Absurd to think them, though.

The elevator stopped at their floor and he heard Mrs. Carter's light voice saying, "A rather tight fitting bodice with a cream lace collar and cuffs—"

And Tillie's interruption, "I think that old blue velvet is more becoming to Douglas than the king's blue."

And Douglas's laugh that followed, "You all have been talking clothes ever since lunch, but I suppose it is a good thing I have such experts outfitting me. Just suppose I had gotten the king's blue velvet instead of the old blue, do you reckon Lewis would have married me anyway?"

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"You can just bet I would," whispered Lewis to her as he opened the door.

"I do think this is a charming room," Mrs. Carter said as she looked around. "I am so glad you were able to get an apartment in this building. This was the first designed by Robert after his illness and it seems perfect to me. It is so nice to have the one big living-room rather than two little absurd ones."

It was indeed a charming room and Douglas and Lewis had shown excellent taste in furnishing it. The wall paper was a solid tan; the rug a soft-piled, rich, deep brown that stretched almost to the wood work. A brown velvet Chesterfield almost filled one end of the room. On this were piled cushions of soft shades of blue and deep shades of red. This had been the gift of Cousin Lizzie and Douglas felt that she could never thank her enough for it. It lent a decided air of luxury to the otherwise simply furnished room.

Miss Grant had given them a beautiful old mahogany center table on which was a reading lamp with a deep old rose shade which Helen had made to be put on sale at the shop, and which Lucy had blatantly shop-lifted because she had declared it was just the thing. And so it was. There were two low bookshelves "catty corner" in the far end of the room. These, it must be admitted were nearly empty as yet, but certainly Christmas would help fill them.

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"Oh I just adore it, Doug," said Tillie, ecstatically spinning around on her heels, her little feathered toque slipping more over one eye than ever. "I want one so bad myself, I can hardly stand it. Bill, let's get married right this minute."

Everybody laughed at Tillie's enthusiasm but Bill, who quite seriously pulled out his watch. "It is only half past four. We will have time to get the license and then go up to your house. Lewis and Doug can pick up a preacher somewhere. Come on, everybody." He took Tillie and Mrs. Carter by the arm and imperiously took them towards the door.

"No, no," objected Tillie, "I can never get married in these old gloves, and besides I wanted a huge church wedding."

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“Well, I am tired of fooling, and we are going to get married just as soon as it can be done,” and Bill opened the door and almost bodily set them in the hall.

Douglas and Lewis had been whispering a few minutes, while waiting for the elevator, and Douglas smiled and said to Tillie: “Then you can be matron of honor at my wedding and of course have a dress as individual as you want it. You remember how you were kicking because I wanted all the bridesmaids’ dresses made alike?”

“Well, it would be sort of cute, wouldn’t it?” and Tillie tucked her arm submissively through the powerful and masterful Bill’s.

They all piled into the car and went by the sales rooms, where they got another car, into which changed Douglas and Lewis. Tillie and Bill and Mrs. Carter went down to the city hall to get the license, and Lewis and Douglas to secure a preacher.

“I feel just exactly like we were in the movies, don’t you?” laughed Douglas, her cheeks rosy and her eyes bright with excitement.

“Yes, I sure do,” agreed Lewis. “It seems mighty crazy to me but I am glad in a way. As things were going, there was no telling when Tillie would decide to marry poor old Bill.”

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“Have you got enough money to get them tickets to New York on the night train? And we must go by the florist’s and get some sort of flowers for Tillie. Bill will be so excited he will never think of anything, and Tillie will start her usual talk about clothes. I suspect I will have to help her to pack her bags, and as many as if she were going on the Grand Tour. They can’t stay away very long because they have got to promise to be back for our wedding. They will be *next* to the most important people in it!”

With astonishing quickness the tickets were procured, hotel accommodations in New York wired for, a huge bunch of orchids purchased and the fat little minister that had preached in the Wingos’ church for fifteen years finally persuaded to come as quickly as possible.

When they reached the Wingo house they found Mrs. Wingo rushing round pulling down shades and making lights, laughing and crying in a manner very like Tillie’s own.

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Douglas and Tillie went upstairs to pack the many bags that Tillie insisted on. “Who would ever have thought that I would get married without a trousseau,” sighed Tillie, as she folded innumerable garments that would have graced any trousseau. “Anyway, I can wear this perfectly new suit that was just sent home yesterday, and Bill has never seen me in that henna hat. I s’pose this is an awfully silly way to act, but I am kind of

glad.” She suddenly threw her arms around Douglas and said with more show of feeling than Douglas had believed her capable of, “And Doug, we can get an apartment in the same building with you, and it really will be wonderful, wonderful, wonderful, won’t it?”

Looking as charming as if she had planned her costume for weeks, Tillie came down the stairs and was given away by Lewis. The simple ceremony over, the unique bridal party went to the Jefferson for dinner, where they met many unsuspecting friends and were able to pass as a friendly little dinner party instead of a rather unusual bridal party.

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Once ensconced in the drawing room car, which was nearly filled with her many bags, Tillie put her cheek against her husband’s shoulder and sighed, “What do you suppose everybody will say when they read about us in the paper tomorrow?”

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## CHAPTER XVI. A TUCKER DINNER.

“I just adore the parties the Tuckers give, and I ’specially love dinner parties the Tuckers give, and I most particularly adore dinner parties the Tuckers give at the country club,” Lucy told Nan as she hooked her up.

“You sound like a mixture of Pollyanna and some old Hebrew chant,” Nan laughed, patting her sister’s draperies into place. “You are much too young to be with this crowd, and I think you should have gone to V. M. I. as you intended, instead of telegraphing the poor kid at the last minute that you couldn’t come; but I tell you for your own satisfaction that you look quite grown up and very, very charming.”

“I s’pect it was not very nice of me, but I just simply couldn’t resist this Tucker party. Zebedee and Dum and Dee are such darlings. And oh, Nan, you look perfectly wonderful in that flame-colored dress. I would give anything in the world if I could wear red,” and Lucy looked almost resentfully at the pale green chiffon dress she wore.

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There was the sound of little high-heeled slippers tapping down the hall and Mrs. Carter entered. “You are the most beautiful thing I have ever seen, Mummy,” said Lucy, who never could say quite enough nice things to people she admired. “I did not know you had a new black evening dress. Isn’t it pretty, Nan? Why, you must have gotten it in New York, in spite of the fact that you said you didn’t buy anything for yourself but an ordinary motor veil.”

“Well,” laughed her mother, “I am glad it looks like New York to you, because I made it over from an old dinner dress I got the very first time I went to Paris, and it has been put away in an old trunk ever since. I am proud of it, though.”

Douglas and Helen joined the little group that was so admiring of each other and added their voices to the general paeon of praise.

“Humph,” said Bobby, sticking his tousled head in at the door. “I don’t think you look so nice. You look mighty naked to me. I reckon you will come mighty near freezin’ too, if you are goin’ anywhere out doors. I like the way Douglas looks at camp best,” with which pleasant remarks he withdrew to tell his father that he was ready to be taken over to Cousin Lizzie’s where he was to spend the night, diplomatic relations between them having been resumed.

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The honks of two horns floated up to them and they all went down and piled into the cars that Lewis and Bill and Tillie had brought for them.

Tillie was kissed a great many times by all of them as it was the first time they had seen her since the Bill Tinsleys had returned from their honeymoon.

“Oh, oh,” she squealed in real distress, “stop kissing me; you will simply ruin my hair.” This greatly amused the good looking friend who was staying with Lewis, an old West Pointer, of his class.

“I had it permanently waved in New York, while I was there on my honeymoon,” she explained to the man, who was sitting on the front seat with herself and Bill. “You know, I know you will think I am an awful nut, but I didn’t catch your name, and I am sure I have heard Bill and Lewis talk about you just lots.”

“Rodney Day,” said the man, who wondered greatly at the manner of wife his old friend Bill had chosen, one who seemed to think it perfectly natural to get a permanent wave on her honeymoon. [172]

“And I was simply scared to death,” Tillie rushed on in her confidential way. “You know they divide your hair in a million little sections, and wrap it over metal and put this metal cap like-to-do on your head and then turn on the electricity. I felt exactly like I was going to be electrocuted, except I believe they put a black cap over your face then, or do you know? And then, of course, I couldn’t tell whether my hair would fuzz and crimp or whether it would just come out nice curly waves. It came out perfectly beautiful and I am just so crazy about it that I fix it a million times a day.”

“It looks charming, I am sure,” said Rodney Day gallantly. He was beginning to like this funny little creature who had married his big, silent friend and who had such an odd, impersonal way of speaking of her hair.

Nan on the back seat was wondering if marriage would change Douglas as little as it had Tillie. For surely this was the identical line of talk that Tillie would have gotten off ten days ago. [173]

“I just simply couldn’t bear to have Old Bill see me with my hair up in curlers and I did have to use them, you know, so just as soon as we got to New York and had breakfast, Bill went around to the hotel and I went right straight to this place on Fifth Avenue and had it done.”

“Tillie was so casual about everything that nobody, not even at Niagara, suspected the recentness of our marriage, and everybody at Niagara is supposed to be a honeymooner, I have always heard,” said Bill.

“They probably thought I was your youngest daughter, you solemn old thing,” Tillie giggled up at her lord and master.

The Tuckers were waiting for them at the club with George Wright, who had gone by Cousin Lizzie Somerville's and picked up Mr. Carter. He was still keeping a watchful eye on his onetime patient and then, too, he enjoyed the long talks he was sometimes able to have with Mr. Carter.

"I feel older than anybody in the world tonight," Zebedee confided to Tillie as he helped her out of the car. "To think that little Tillie Wingo is married! I always think of you as a tiny little girl that was always appearing when your mother had callers, dressed up in all sorts of discarded finery. Your mother told me once that nothing in the house was sacred to you when you wanted adornment, and one time I remember seeing you all tricked out in your mother's best luncheon cloth, with a new lamp shade on for a hat,—and very pretty you looked, too."

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"Zebedee, don't talk about feeling old. It is perfectly absurd," Tillie scolded him. "Bobby Carter seems positively ancient by the side of you."

"What is this I hear about the ancientness of one Robert Carter?" demanded Mr. Carter who had come up behind them.

"Don't be a goose, Mr. Carter, I was talking about your young son Bobby. I said that you and Zebedee seemed mere babes by the side of him. Zebedee said that I made him feel old because I was married. Anybody would think I had married him instead of Old Bill over there."

"It would take more than a little thing like marriage to settle our youthful parent," said Dum, who came up to them at that moment. "Dee and I can hardly hold him down. He wanted to have peanuts in the shell with the coffee. It was all we could do to talk him out of it."

"Well, you can't talk, Dum Tucker," said Dee in self defence of the adored Zebedee. "You broke three vases playing tag all over the apartment with him this afternoon."

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"We have four guests of honor tonight and I have only one right hand," explained Zebedee, as he observed his guests hunting for place cards. "As I did not want to hurt the feelings of the three unfortunates who would have to forego the right hand privilege, I thought it would be kind of fun for me to shut my eyes and for all of you to run around the table till I tell you to stop, and then just take the seat in front of you."

"Isn't he the dearest man in the world?" Lucy asked George Wright. "It will be just like playing 'going to Jerusalem.'"

Helen and Rodney Day passed by them just in time for Helen to hear "dearest man in the world" and to see the happy look her little sister gave the young doctor. Her brows knit in a frown but then she turned and said in a clear voice to Rodney Day, "I

do hope I will be fortunate enough to stop next to you, as I want you to finish that delightful story you were telling me about your C. O. and the poilu.”

As Helen had intended, George Wright heard, and his disappointment showed in his face. He had thought that he would endeavor to gain a seat by her, but he could not even try for one in the face of that remark.

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“Faster, faster,’ cried the Queen,” said Zebedee, his hand over his shut eyes, to make assurance doubly sure. “You have to work hard for this dinner, don’t you? Now, *stop!*”

Helen had been fortunate enough to draw the place next to Rodney Day. Then came Zebedee and Nan, Lewis and Mrs. Carter, Douglas and her father, Bill between Dum and Dee and then George Wright and Lucy.

“Whew, there are thirteen of us,” said Zebedee, hopping up quickly. “I am going to eat standing up. Bill and Tillie would probably be divorced before we go home if their welcoming dinner was eaten with thirteen at the table.”

“But, Zebedee, why in the world didn’t you think of it sooner?” laughed Dum. “We are one man shy at that, and as long as we are going to dance afterwards we would need him, anyway. It is the last time I ever let you and Dee tend to a party all by yourselves.”

“Aren’t you ashamed to talk that way,” admonished Dee. “Just for that you have got to stand up every other course and let Zebedee sit down.”

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“And what are you going to do, then?” demanded Dum.

“Oh, I will be the extra man all evening and cut in on the most popular girls after we begin to dance.” And peace was restored with this suggestion of Dee’s.

The Tuckers were always having funny little half-way fusses between themselves that were over as soon as they were begun. When they were younger they had to resort to boxing gloves to settle their disputes, as this was the only way their absurdly young father knew, the days of duelling being over. Nobody ever minded the family fusses of the Tuckers, as they were always amusing and their audiences never felt embarrassed during them.

After the delicious fruit cocktail that had been served first was eaten, Dee called out to Dum to stand up, that it was Zebedee’s turn to sit down.

“O ho,” wailed Dum, “it isn’t fair. I have just counted up and I’ll be standing during all the long courses and sitting during the short ones.”

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“You need not be so sad over that. It is a well known fact that you can eat twice as much if you stand up,” Dee said unfeelingly.

The two colored waiters that were serving the party were completely convulsed. Zebedee whispered to Nan that he was glad he wasn't in low neck because the two negroes had the broad grins that bespoke coming uncontrollable giggles and then the beautiful dinner would go down the necks of the women instead of their throats, as had been the original intention.

George Wright saw that Helen was hardly tasting her food, so engrossed was she in Rodney Day. It seemed to him that the girl had never looked more beautiful nor more unattainable. She wore a very simple dress of a metallic shade of blue, her shoulders gleaming above it. She was paler than he had ever seen her. Her long lashes, drooping from time to time over her white cheeks, cast a purple shadow that enhanced the pallor of her face. In the eyes of Rodney Day was open admiration for her.

“What was that you said, Lucy? I did not quite catch it,” and George Wright strove to collect his thoughts enough to make an agreeable dinner partner for his little secretary.

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“I just said that I would like to go to a dinner party every night in the world. I like people dressed up.”

“Um, yes, yes, I do too,” the young man replied absently.

Lucy slid him an amused look from the corner of her eye and wisely decided to devote herself to talking to Dee. She felt the deepest sympathy for George Wright, for she had seen his face when Helen had said that she hoped to sit next to Rodney Day. Why on earth did Helen want to be so mean to such a nice person as George Wright? Well, anyway, she would be as nice to George Wright as ever she could, and right now the nicest thing she could do to him was to leave him alone.

But he had received the full import of the look she had given him, and had decided that just because his evening had been spoiled for him was no reason Lucy's evening should be spoiled for her. Logically, Rodney Day should have been her partner and as long as Helen had taken him unto herself, he, George Wright would pull himself together and make his little friend have the good time she so deserved. Accordingly, he turned to her and told her amusing stories of his European student days and his medical college days, and won for himself her delicious young laughter.

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It was Zebedee's turn to stand, and he beat on the table with his coffee spoon. “Everybody here knows that everybody else here wishes all kinds of happiness for Tillie and Bill and for Douglas and Lewis, so why waste our time and embarrass them

by toasts. I say, lets go in and dance,” and he led the way into the other room, immensely gratified by the looks of appreciation that had been drawn from the young foursome.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### HELEN.

The orchestra was tuning up when the little party drifted into the big room. There was a fire on the hearth beneath the tremendous mantelpiece that held the club's various trophies. Running cedar was twined around the rail of the balcony and little Christmas trees were in the four corners of the room. Holly was everywhere. Nan was before the fire in her flame-colored dress, her hands outstretched to the blaze.

"Nan, you look like a perfectly charming Christmas card," said Dee, "and as long as I am going to play man at this absurd party, I am going to ask you for the first dance. That is probably just what I would do if I were a man, because I think you are the most attractive looking person here tonight and everybody knows you are the best dancer."

"Oh, Dee, you make me blush, honestly. I am not nearly so goodlooking as Helen nor so good a dancer as Lucy. She dances so much more than I do. But as long as flattery seems to be the thing, let me sincerely tell you that I shall be charmed to give you the first dance," and, laughing, the two glided away.

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Soon they all were dancing, Helen with Rodney Day,—and George Wright, with Lucy on his arm, thought that he had never seen Helen so well matched.

"I adore to dance with you," Lucy said to him, "and isn't it perfect to have this dandy orchestra and not enough people to get in your way, so you can have the music and the floor almost to yourself? You must ask Helen for the next dance. She told me that night at de Lestis' that she had rather dance with you than any one she had ever danced with."

"Well, she seems to be enjoying herself tremendously with that Day fellow," George Wright said gruffly, though he felt a warm glow of satisfaction over the words of Helen's that had been repeated to him, even if they had been said so long ago.

He had danced with Lucy hundreds of times before and enjoyed it, but it seemed to him tonight that this dance of his with her was interminable. Round and round they went on the polished floor, the other dancers laughing and whirling past them. Round and round they went again; miles and miles it seemed to him, would it never end? At last the music stopped and methodically he clapped for the encore, barely conscious of Lucy's smiling face at his shoulder. He looked across to where Helen was laughing up at Rodney Day and clapping. His hands fell to his sides and he looked at Lucy.

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"Oh, George Wright, you poor thing, I didn't know it was as bad as all that," and the smile left Lucy's lips. "I tell you what,

you take me over to the door of the dressing room, I will hold up this drapery a little as if I had torn it. Then you cut in on Helen and that man; it is the only way you will ever get her when we are one man short. She will have to dance with you or it would look too pointed, and then you can take her out doors and settle whatever is wrong between you. I never thought of it, but I s'pect that is just what is wrong with old Helen. She has been behaving so queerly lately. I just thought it was because she has been working so hard, but when I see that you are acting the nut just as much as she, I begin to see daylight."

"But we haven't had any fuss," said the young man disconsolately. "I haven't seen her long enough for the last month even to have had a disagreement. I am afraid it's like the case of the old darky who just plain 'lost his taste' for his good wife."

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"Cheer up and talk to her straight," advised Lucy as they crossed the floor. "Now don't wait till this dance is over, snap through with the business at hand immediately," and Lucy slipped into the dressing room, rather amused at herself for presuming to advise a man twice her age in his *affaires de coeur*. Interestedly she peeped from the dressing room door and saw him go over among the dancers and up to Rodney Day and Helen. A moment later she was relieved to see George Wright dance by with her sister in his arms. Neither one was speaking, and Lucy feared for the success of her plan.

The music stopped and Helen came into the room where Lucy was making a pretext of sewing her diaphanous green draperies. She seemed unaware of Lucy's presence and went over to the coat rack, took down her own wrap and drawing it close around her, left the room.

Lucy smiled. It was the first time in her life she had ever been to a dance with Helen and seen her come into the dressing room and leave with never a glance in the mirror nor a thought for a powder puff.

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Dee and Nan came in, talking. "Rodney Day is divine looking, isn't he?"

"Yes, why on earth hasn't Lewis trotted him out before? 'Spose he wanted to land Douglas before he brought such an Adonis around. No, but really, Rodney has been abroad for a good while. He met your father there, I believe."

"Yes, in Paris. Lucy, where is our friend and sister, the beautiful Helen?"

"She has a little headache and wanted to get some fresh air. She came in here just now for her coat. Do you want her for anything 'specially? She will probably be back in about five minutes," said Lucy glibly, anxious lest someone should call Helen and ruin her best laid plans.

“No, just Rodney Day wanted to know where she was.”

“I am going out after the ‘divine Rodney Day’ and see what he is like. It is not fair for Helen to have him all to herself,” and hastily powdering her nose, Lucy advanced to the attack just as the orchestra resumed its playing.

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Everyone else immediately started dancing, and rather perfunctorily Day came to Lucy and asked her to dance. But in a few moments they were chatting gaily enough, and he was convinced that Lewis Somerville was the luckiest man in the world to be getting two such charming sisters-in-law as were Helen and Lucy. Nan he had not talked to, but as he would have expressed it “she was sure easy to look at.”

Helen and George Wright stepped out into the cold crisp night, lit with innumerable stars that seemed more distant than usual. A half moon had climbed high in the sky and the grounds of the country club were vaguely visible. The white road stretched across the hill, and down this they walked silently. Dimly the dance music followed them.

Dr. Wright looked at the girl beside him. The fur collar of her wrap was drawn up almost to her eyes. Her figure drooped a little. She seemed a creature detached, not of this world even. He was conscious of his own breath coming very fast. If she would turn her head an inch in his direction, he could speak to her. Suddenly a little sob escaped her and in an instant his arms were around her.

“Why did you bring me out here?” she almost whispered.

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“To ask you why you have refused to see me or to have anything to do with me lately, and to tell you what you must have known—that I love you more than anything in the world.”

“But I didn’t know it. I thought it was Lucy you cared for. And I was jealous of her; oh, I was jealous of her. If you could know what this last month has been to me!”

“Of Lucy?” George Wright almost laughed. “Why, my dear, she is the sweetest child in the world, but I have never for one instant thought of her as anything but your little sister.”

“I am ashamed of myself, but I have always had to fight against jealousy, and in this case it was too strong for me. And tonight when I came into dinner, I saw her look at you and heard her say, ‘dearest man in the world,’ I wanted to die. Then I thought that I couldn’t let you know, so I asked Rodney to sit by me if he could, and I said it quite loud so you could hear.”

“I heard,” he said grimly. “And then I wanted to die, but set myself to making myself agreeable to Lucy. I thought for some reason or other you hated the sight of me, and I was utterly wretched. Lucy told me to cut in on you and Day, and to bring

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you out here and try to talk to you. I seemed dazed. I didn't have any initiative. In fact, I was like one of my patients, and little Lucy is a mighty good doctor."

"Isn't it terrible to think what a difference little things are capable of making?" Helen asked. "Just think, you might have gone thinking I hated you, and I might have gone on thinking you were in love with Lucy till the end of time. I can't bear to think how horrid I have been to Lucy. I can only hope she hasn't noticed it too terribly. And all along I knew if you and she were in love with each other that I was being awful, and yet I couldn't help it. Will it make you hate me for me to tell you how horrible I really am?" and she stopped in alarm.

"Do you really think you could do anything to make me hate you? I am glad to have you so human. While we were walking down this road, you frightened me, you seemed so—so—well, not human."

"Just because I didn't speak? I couldn't."

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They had turned now and were walking back toward the club. The moon shed a soft light over the building, and through the windows and the glass doors opening out on the porch they could see the dancers passing to and fro to the gay music.

The two peeped in through the glass door and Helen saw Lucy's face over the shoulder of Rodney Day, with whom she had been dancing steadily, and she felt a hot wave of remorse for the thoughts she had so lately held for her.

As they entered the club the music stopped and Lucy came running toward her, slipped her arm through hers and together they went into the dressing room.

"Head feel allright, now?" Dee called to her.

"The fresh air made her feel perfectly well," Lucy said, thrusting her head quickly around the dressing room door. Then she closed it after her.

"Oh, Helen," she said as she hugged her, "you look just like you ought to now,—and weren't you a nut, though?"

"Yes, I was, and you are the best little sister in the world," Helen said and kissed her.

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## CHAPTER XVIII. A CHURCH WEDDING.

Douglas' wedding would have gratified a soul more avid for form and beauty than Mrs. Carter.

The big Episcopal church was fragrant with myriads of flowers and filled to o'erflowing with the many connections and friends who came to witness the union of two of the oldest families in the state. George Wright and Rodney Day were two of the friendliest of ushers and Bill made a handsome and embarrassed best man. Tillie was a charmingly dressed and pretty matron of honor but distinctly unmatronly. Lucy had told her, and quite truthfully, that she looked younger than she did herself. The bridesmaids were gowned in the orchid shades, their filmy dresses shading from purple to the palest lavender, and they carried great armfuls of yellow rosebuds.

The organ sent notes throbbing through the flower scented church and Douglas came slowly down the side on her father's arm. She wore a simple gown of ivory satin that was a tribute to the art of one of New York's foremost modistes, and her long, long veil trailed after her. Lewis met her at the altar and after an eternity of time she heard her own voice whisper, "I do," and felt the cold platinum circle her finger. She turned and from the sea of faces her mother's face, tears glistening in her dark eyes, stood out, and Bobby's, strangely serious; and she found that she very much needed the strong arm of Lewis on which she was leaning.

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In the vestibule she recovered her faculties and was able to distinguish the faces of her friends.

Carter House almost rivalled the church in its profusion of flowers. Many out-of-town guests were there, among them Gwen and Page Allison, the advent of whom made Zebedee exuberantly happy and, as Dee said, 'more Tuckerish' than ever.

As Douglas came downstairs to join her friends, a hubbub reached her ears. "Did you ever see anyone look so beautiful in your life?" "I honestly believe it was the prettiest wedding I have seen in years." "Such charming bridesmaids' dresses!" "And such flowers! Did you ever see so many?"

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She stopped a moment on the stairs and her mind raced back over the happy years she had spent in this, her home. And now she was leaving it. She remembered funny insignificant happenings of her childhood. She remembered the time she fell down the very stairs on which she was now standing, and the skinned nose that resulted. It seemed so short a while ago that involuntarily she raised her left hand to feel the bridge of her nose, half expecting it to come away bloody. But she saw only

the sparkling diamond and the ring that had felt so cold to her finger when it was slipped on in the church. She saw again her mother's teary eyes in the church; she heard again the great throb of music that had burst from the organ. She couldn't remember going toward the altar, only the long journey away from it.

"Doug, Doug," called Lewis from the stair landing, "come on down, everybody is waiting for you. What is the matter, honey, you look just like you were walking in your sleep."

"I was just thinking," laughed Douglas. "It was not so long ago that you came back from the Walter Reed Hospital, and I saw you for the first time for over a year in this very hall. Do you remember?"

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"Do you suppose I shall ever forget it?"

"Here comes the bride," sang Zebedee, "and I bid to kiss her again," which he did forthwith.

"Looks to me like a mighty lot of people are kissing Lewis' new wife, don't it to you?" Bobby asked of Gwen.

"People always kiss the bride," explained Gwen.

"Bet wouldn't nobody kiss Cousin Lizzie Somerville, if she was a bride," said Bobby, as that lady sailed into the room, her black taffeta skirt billowing around her.

"Sh, Bobby you mustn't talk like that," said Gwen. "I expect she was awfully pretty once, and besides she might have heard you."

"She ain't pretty since I been knowin' her. She is all the time telling me if I got a dirty face, which ain't perlite so I don't care if she hears me or not."

There had been a perceptible change in Gwen. Mixing with the girls at the boarding school and with their friends and families had served to reduce her shyness to a charming reserve only. She was as well dressed as anyone in the room and she had the proverbial English complexion. It was not long before Hiram G. Parker had seen her and requested Zebedee to introduce him. And where Hiram G. Parker saw and approved, others were sure to flock. So in a few moments Gwen was the center of a little group.

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"Do look, Helen," whispered Nan, "at our little mountain wildflower turning into a hothouse rose."

"I suppose Hiram G. Parker doesn't remember her as the little barefooted girl at camp. If he did, I wonder what he would do and think," Helen rejoined.

"If it would be fair to Gwen, I should like to tell him just to see

his expression,” Nan went on. “But look at George Wright. Isn’t he a peach, over there talking to Miss Grant as if she were the only woman in the world, and I know he would ten million times rather be over here talking to you.”

“Yes.”

Nan was forever seeing into the back of people’s minds in the most disconcerting way and surmising correctly what they were thinking of, what they wanted to do.

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“And did you ever see anybody beam the way Daddy is doing? Do you know what he is thinking? Well, he is thinking: ‘Aren’t all of my girls wonderful, and pretty, too! And isn’t it too good to be true, that I am well, perfectly well and able to give this rather gorgeous affair, and not have to ask for credit for a single scrap of food nor a single bud and still have a comfortable total in the bank.’ And Mummy, the dear little thing, is thinking: ‘Douglas made the prettiest bride that has been married in Richmond for many years, and my, I am glad she at last consented to have a big church wedding and to have her gown made in New York by Madame Arnot.’”

“And what are Douglas and Lewis thinking?” demanded Helen, much amused at the aptness of Nan’s little excerpts from the brains of others.

“Just exactly what you and George Wright are thinking, which is that you wish all these people would clear out and leave you,” and, laughing, Nan left her to talk Paris with Rodney Day.

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The number of guests at the reception necessitated a buffet supper, with the bridesmaids and matron of honor to serve it and a delicious supper it was, of creamed chicken and mushroom patties, old Smithfield ham, fruit salad and piping hot beaten biscuits.

With his mouthful of beaten biscuit, Bobby ran up to Helen and whispered audibly and crumbily in her ear, “Mother says for you to get all the people to come into the dining-room ’cause she is ready for the Weddin’ Cake to be cut. And Lordy, but it is sure big, near bout fills up the table.” Bobby was off again, firm in the belief that if he got there first he would get the first “help.”

As Bobby had said, the cake did “near bout fill the table,” leaving just enough room for the six heavy silver candlesticks and the massive cake knife that was really too big to be used except for weddings and, as Nan had added once, “for funereal baked meats.”

“Wisht I’d get the piece of money,” said Bobby, jumping up and down in his excitement. “I’d go away in an arrow plane and live in the mountains with Josh and Josephus.”

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“Oh, Zebedee,” tweedled the twins, “you have simply got to get us a wedding cake right away whether we ever get married or not I never saw anything so lovely.”

“And just think,” said Tillie with a little grimace at Bill, “poor old married me has slept with my last piece of wedding cake under my pillow. I hope you realize the tremendous sacrifices I had to make for you.”

“If the size of the slices are in proportion to the size of the cake, I’ll say that the people who sleep on their slice are going to pass one wretched night,” Bill smiled down on her. He could understand the little pang of regret that Tillie felt in not being able to indulge in this old custom.

“Bet I get the thimble,” said Hiram G. Parker, which, as Dum whispered to Page Allison, was a marked sally for him, adding that he probably could use it if he did.

“What would happen if one person got the thimble and the ring?” demanded Bobby.

“They would probably die of indigestion from eating two big slices of such rich cake,” Lucy told him.

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With a butcherlike flourish of the great knife, Douglas cut into the cake, while everyone silently watched her.

“Please don’t be so quiet,” she begged, “I feel just like a surgeon operating in the amphitheatre down at the medical college.”

“The first incision is a great success.” laughed Zebedee, and he bore the first slice over to Miss Grant.

Soon everyone was served and they all began eating slowly and carefully that they might not swallow the thimble, ring or piece of money.

Suddenly there was a great spluttering and choking from the far corner of the room, and all eyes turned to find Cousin Lizzie Somerville literally purple in the face.

Simultaneously from beneath the table there came a like choking and spluttering, and Bobby was dragged forth. The wedding cake was smeared with a lavish hand over his flushed face, and his cheeks were puffed out with some of it, and in a grimy hand, he held a crushed chunk of it.

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“I think I bust have sobthingk,” said Bobby in a muffled voice.

“Hurry up and see,” tweedled the twins.

All operations were suspended while Bobby slowly masticated and swallowed his Gargantuan mouthful, and wriggled out the ring on the end of his pink tongue.

In the new excitement, Miss Somerville's distress had been forgotten. Then there was a polite but insistent cough from her corner and the attention of the crowd was reattracted to her. Soon she was able to display her prize, which proved to be the thimble.

"Oh," wailed Bobby sleepily, "don't that mean I got to marry her? Here, Zebedee, you kin have the old ring."

Zebedee gallantly stepped forward to take it but just as he did, Lucy called jubilantly, "I got the piece of money. So I don't need the husband."

"Oh, Lucy, Lucy, what a material thing to say at a wedding," said Page Allison, who was an incurable Romantic.

A glance at his watch showed Lewis that there was just time to change and make their train.

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On the stair landing Douglas paused and turning, threw her bouquet out among the guests.

Helen caught it, and George Wright blushed an incriminating shade of red.

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## CHAPTER XIX. RING OUT THE OLD.

After their guests had gone, most of them went out to the club to watch the old year out and the new year in, and after Bobby had been put to bed already asleep, the Carters sat around the library fire to discuss the events of the past year.

“This last year has been a wonderful one to me,” said Mr. Carter. “If any one had told me a year ago that I should ever be able to work again or to take any interest in any thing I should have laughed—or rather I suppose I should have cried at them. Now, thanks to my wonderful daughters and their brave little mother, I am well and strong as ever and surprisingly prosperous.”

“You better not forget George Wright in your little eulogy,” Nan teased, “or Helen will fly at your throat. He was the person that propped us all up until we got on our feet.”

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“I know that out of this last year I have found my better self,” said Mrs. Carter almost dreamily. “And I suppose I have to thank Nan for that—”

“Didn’t I talk to you like a Dutch uncle?” and Nan patted her mother’s hand affectionately.

“Yes, you did,” Mrs. Carter resumed, “but, heavens, didn’t I need it? I have been much happier since I have not been so selfish, and I really think every one ought to have something to do. I have been meaning to tell you that I want to take Douglas’ place down at the shop. Will you let me?”

“Of course we will.” Helen said, “and you will probably get us a lot of new customers. Daddy, can’t you just see Hiram G. Parker coming in to buy a filet lace collar from your fascinating wife?”

“And just consider me,” put in Lucy. “Don’t you think I have improved? I am not nearly so harum scarum as I was. Why, I honestly believe George Wright would have a hard time filling my place. Of course I know I still have all the little faults I used to have, like taking Helen’s blouses and Douglas’ hair nets and interrupting and all that sort of thing.”

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“But on the whole you like yourself pretty well, don’t you?” Mr. Carter asked her soberly.

“Now I didn’t mean to sound conceited,” Lucy defended herself. “I thought we were all talking about what had happened to us during the last year, and I was just speaking my little piece.”

“You are a darling. We all think you are wonderful and we are all crazy about you,” Helen came to her aid.

“What about you, Nan,” asked Mr. Carter. “Seems to me you are mighty silent about what you think about yourself and this last year.”

“I have got no kick coming about this last year. I have almost a sentimental attachment for it. I hate to see it go. It has certainly profited me a great deal, and if I thought the next year would be as kind to me as this one has been, I should open the window with a flourish and let this old year out and welcome the new one in with a right good will. As it is, I am a sort of a reactionary, and have a wild desire to hold on to this year, screaming: ‘Old times are the best, why can’t we let well enough alone?’ I think I will make one New Year’s resolution and that will be to try not to bore people by always reading them some poetry from my lovely big red book. But if you all don’t mind, I should like to take advantage of these few minutes left me of my dear friend, the old year, and read you what Tennyson has to say about the death of the old year.”

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This speech was so typical of Nan that her family could not restrain from laughing, but they all urged her to read them the poem.

“Nan, dear,” said Helen, “don’t swear such a fearful oath as that. We couldn’t stand it to think that this might be the last poetry you would ever read us. It will be bad enough next fall with you gone to Paris. You might at least go Nanning around the house in the few months’ grace that is left to us.”

So Nan got the big red book and sitting on the floor before the fire, she read:

Full knee-deep lies the winter snow,  
And the winter winds are wearily sighing;  
Toll ye the church-bell sad and slow,  
And tread softly and speak low,  
For the old year lies a-dying,  
Old year, you must not die;  
You came to us so readily,  
You lived with us so steadily,  
Old year, you shall not die.

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He lieth still, he doth not move;  
He will not see the dawn of day.  
He hath no other life above,  
He gave me a friend, and a true true-love,  
And the New-year will take ’em away.  
Old year, you must not go;  
So long as you have been with us,  
Such joy as you have seen with us,  
Old year, you shall not go.

He frothed the bumpers to the brim;  
 A jollier year we shall not see,  
 But though his eyes are waxing dim,  
 And though his foes speak ill of him,  
 He was a friend to me.  
 Old year, you shall not die;  
 We did so laugh and cry with you,  
 I've half a mind to die with you,  
 Old year, if you must die.

He was full of joke and jest.  
 But all his merry quips are o'er.  
 To see him die, across the waste  
 His son and heir doth ride post-haste,  
 But he'll be dead before.  
 Every one for his own.  
 The night is starry and cold, my friend,  
 And the New-year, blithe and bold, my friend,  
 Comes up to take his own.

How hard he breathes! over the snow  
 I heard just now the crowing cock.  
 The shadows flicker to and fro;  
 The cricket chirps; the light burns low;  
 'Tis nearly twelve o'clock.  
 Shake hands before you die.  
 Old year, we'll dearly rue for you.  
 What is it we can do for you?  
 Speak out before you die.

His face is growing sharp and thin.  
 Alack! our friend is gone.  
 Close up his eyes, tie up his chin;  
 Step from the corpse, and let him in,  
 That standeth there alone,  
 And waiteth at the door.  
 There's a new foot on the floor, my friend,  
 And a new face at the door, my friend,  
 A new face at the door.

Just as Nan finished reading, the clock struck midnight and the whistles blew.

\* \* \* \* \*

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## Transcriber's Notes

- Copyright notice provided as in the original printed text—this e-text is public domain in the country of publication.
- Silently corrected palpable typos; left non-standard spellings and dialect unchanged.
- Retained the tremulously/timorously portmanteau word “tremorously” for Lewis Carroll fans.
- Retained “asphasia”, which someone apparently forgot how to spell.
- Added a table of contents.

[The end of *Emma Speed Sampson* by Emma Speed Sampson]