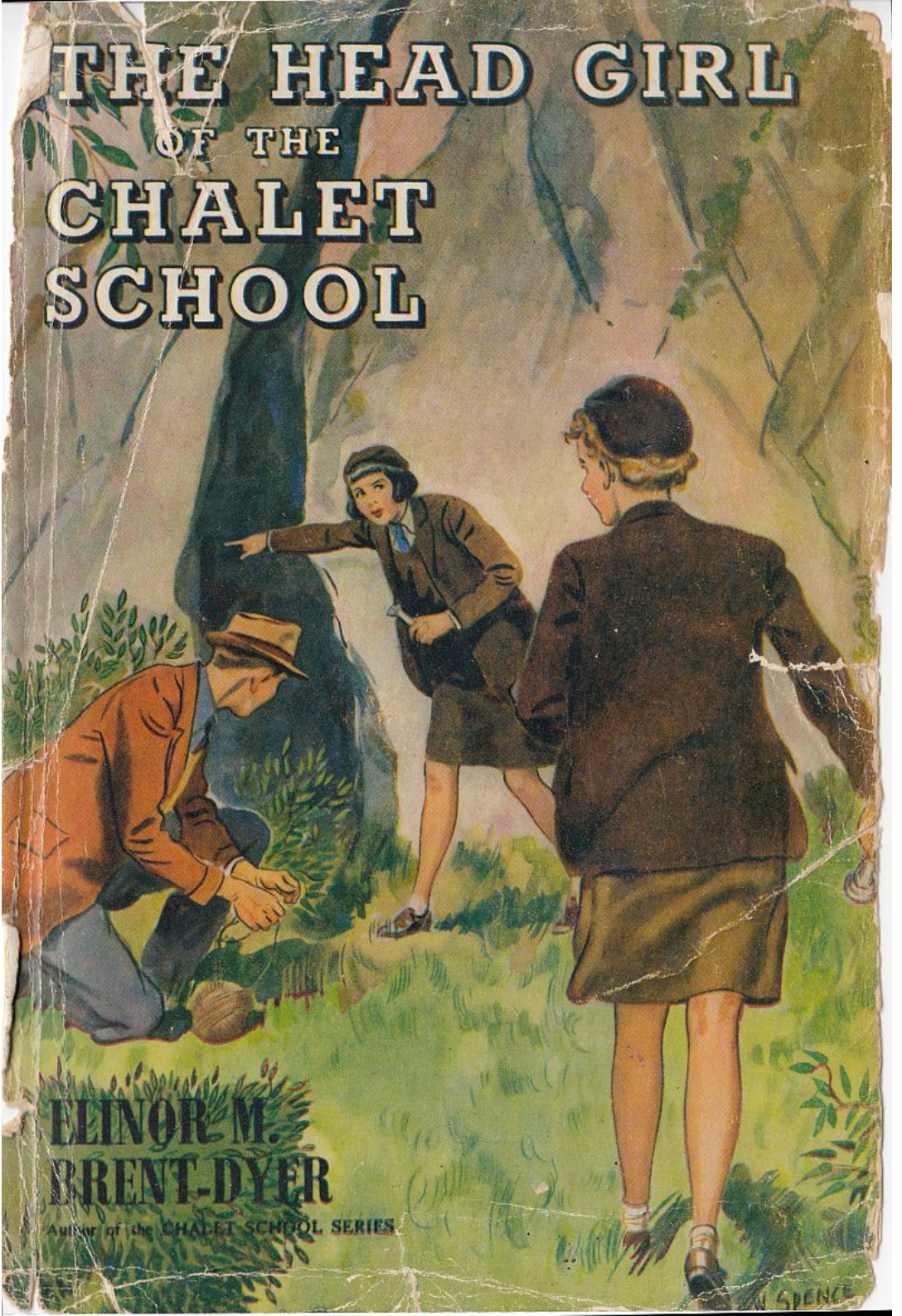
THE HEAD GIRL OF THE CHALET SCHOOL



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THE HEAD-GIRL
OF THE
CHALET SCHOOL

By
ELINOR M. BRENT-DYER

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TO

ETHEL ANGEL

WITH LOVE FROM HER FRIEND

ELINOR M. BRENT-DYER

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I.
THE COMING TERM.

Two girls were walking down Palmerston Road, Portsmouth, with a graceful swing which drew the eyes of the passers-by to them. The elder of the two, slender and pretty, with an unusual amount of brown curling hair tied loosely back from a vivid face, was holding forth to the other, a much smaller girl, with black eyes shining out of a pale pointed face, which looked the paler for the straight black hair cut round it, page's fashion. They were a noticeable pair in any place, but the more so because of their swift graceful movements, and their trick—an unusual one in English girls, as they obviously were—of using their hands when they talked.

'It's going to be difficult, you see, Joey,' said the older girl as they paused before a café, where they evidently expected to meet someone. 'If only Madame hadn't gone and got married this year!' she added with a sigh.

Joey pulled her brown cap more firmly on to her head before she replied. 'I think you are a bit selfish about that, Grizel,' she said mildly. 'After all, she did wait a whole year before she did it, and it's worse for Robin and me than for you. Now, where is Maynie? She said she'd be here by one, and it's past that now! Do you think she's missed the train or anything?'

Grizel shook her head. 'Not likely; Maynie is always all there when it comes to trains and boats. But to go back to what we were saying, I do wish Bette had stayed on till the end of the year! After all, she's only just eighteen, and heaps of girls go to school long after that. Why, the Head of the High when we were there had her hair up and was nearly nineteen!'

'Yes; and now she's shingled, and at Oxford,' said Joey. 'Bette is only going to be at home. I'm sorry if you feel like that about it, old thing, but it can't be helped!—And there's Maynie and the Robin *at last*!'

The two girls turned to look down the road to where a tall, graceful girl of twenty-two or three was coming along, holding the hand of a small girl of eight, whose lovely little face was lifted to her companion's as she talked rapidly and eagerly, with the same gesticulations as the other two had used. Only, in Robin Humphries, they were not so surprising, for she was half Polish.

As they saw the two girls awaiting them, the pair hurried their steps, and presently they were all seated round a table, chattering away, while Miss Maynard, who was maths mistress at the Chalet School to which they belonged, gave her orders to the smiling waitress.

'Didn't know you were coming, Robin,' said Joey, as she helped the small girl to unfasten her coat and hang up her hat. 'Thought you were going to stay with Mrs Maynard this morning.'

'It was such a fine day,' said the mistress as the waitress withdrew, 'that I thought she might as well come. She loves Portsmouth—don't you, *mein Vöglein*? And we go back to-morrow.'

'Isn't it joyous?' said Joey eagerly. 'I love England, of course; but the Tyrol is home now, and I'm dying to see my sister again! How she *could* be so stupid as to get mumps at Christmas is more than I can think! It's messed up her holidays, anyway!'

'Poor Tante Marguérite!' said the Robin pensively. 'Will she be quite well now, Joey? Shall we go to see her when we get home?'

‘Sure of it,’ said Joey. ‘Shouldn’t wonder if she wasn’t at Innsbruck waiting to welcome us.—Salt, please, Grizel, unless you want it all to yourself!’

‘I wish Madame was back at the chalet!’ sighed Grizel, her mind reverting to her own particular problems once more. ‘It won’t be easy this term—Easter term never is!’

‘But you’ve been games prefect long enough to be able to carry responsibility,’ said Miss Maynard bracingly. ‘Why are you so upset about being head-girl?’

‘Games give you a certain hold,’ explained Grizel. ‘Gertrud will do well as games pre, but it seems to me she’d have done just as well as head-girl. I wish I hadn’t been chosen.’

The Robin looked up from her roast chicken. ‘Me, I will be *very* good, Grizelle,’ she promised.

Grizel looked at her, with a smile. ‘I know you will. It isn’t that, either! You can’t understand, little pet! Of course, I shall do my best, Miss Maynard; but it *won’t* be easy.’

‘Nothing worth while ever is,’ replied the mistress. Then she changed the conversation. It was true that the Robin never repeated things; still, it was better that she should not hear Grizel’s woes voiced quite as plainly as this. Therefore Miss Maynard turned to Joey and asked her some question about the books she had come to buy.

‘Got three of them,’ replied the girl. ‘The Francis Thompson was five bob, but worth it—I’ve wanted him for ages! The Green’s history was five too. The other thing was sixpence.’

‘I can’t understand *how* you can read those awful goody-good books,’ interposed Grizel. ‘It isn’t you a bit, really!’

‘I think they’re so priceless,’ said Joey, with a grin. ‘And, anyway, they do teach you a lot of history.’

‘But they’re so biased,’ objected Grizel. ‘The one you lent me seemed to be fairly reeking with hate for the English and George III. and his ministers. It’s so silly, too, when it all happened more than a hundred years ago.’

‘Well, they had a lot to put up with,’ said Joey broadmindedly. ‘After all, Grenville and his idiotic Stamp Act was enough to drive anyone mad, specially when they hadn’t a chance of saying anything one way or another. And Miss Annersley says that it was a very good thing for us that the American colonies *did* break away. So it was all for the best.’

Grizel shrugged her shoulders. She was not historically inclined, and, to her way of thinking, it didn’t really matter whether the Americans had remained part of the empire, or whether they broke away from it. She simply could not understand Joey Bettany’s interest in people long since dead and gone. However, she wasn’t going to quarrel with the younger girl about it, so she subsided, and Joey remained victor of the field. They finished their lunch with an amiable discussion of books for the school library, in which even the Robin joined, for she read a good deal for her eight years, and had her own views on the subject of stories.

‘We’ve got plenty to take with us,’ said Miss Maynard at last. ‘That case will be full now; and I won’t have any more to look after than I can help. Those three you have got to-day must go in your suitcase, Jo. As it is, we shall have a good deal of luggage, even though I’m going to register most of it through.’

‘That’s the only bother about bringing books from England,’ said Grizel. ‘I’ve got one to put in *my* case too.’

‘Well, we can’t help it,’ said Jo philosophically. ‘After all, we can’t expect to get books there in English—at least, not all the books we want.—Yes, thank you, Miss Maynard,’ in answer to a question from that lady, ‘I’ve quite finished. Shall we get ready to go now?’

‘Yes, I think so. Fasten up your coat collars, and collect your possessions, girls.—Jo, see to the Robin.—I want to go to the china shop to get one or two things, so we must hurry, as we ought to catch the early train if we possibly can. I don’t like motoring through the forest after dark in this weather.’

They got their things together, and left the restaurant. A thin drizzling sleet was falling now, which made them shiver. It is true that winter in the Tyrol is intensely cold as a rule, but it is a dry cold, not the raw dampness of our English climate, which penetrates through the whole system. Miss Maynard made all the haste she could, however, and an hour later saw them in the train for Southampton, the girls glancing at their books while the mistress made up her accounts and the Robin peered out at the fast falling dusk. ‘Me, I do not like the English winter,’ she announced suddenly.

‘Don’t you, darling?’ asked Miss Maynard absently, as she tried to account for a missing sevenpence which refused to be accounted for. ‘Never mind; we’ll soon be back at the Tiern See. You like winter there.—Oh, *there* it is, thank goodness! I’d forgotten the stamps.—Girls, we are nearly at Southampton; close your books and pack up, or we may miss the train. We shall have a rush as it is. This train is late.’

They got ready once more, and in the scurry for the little local train that took them to Lyndhurst, they forgot what they had been talking about. Once in the Lyndhurst train, they began discussing school once more, for all of them loved their school in the lovely, picturesque Tyrol; and though they had had a very good time at Miss Maynard’s home in the heart of the New Forest, yet to all three, Briesau, the little triangular valley on the Tiern See where the Chalet School was situated, spelt home for them. The school had been run by Joey Bettany’s sister, Madge, until the previous summer, when she had married Dr James Russell, head of the big new sanatorium on an alm high up the Sonnenscheinspitze, a mountain on the opposite side of the lake. The present head was Mademoiselle Lapâttre, who had been joint-head with Miss Bettany until her marriage. Miss Maynard was senior and mathematical mistress, and four other English girls formed the rest of the resident staff. An excellent matron ran the domestic side of the school, and Herr Anserl from Spärtz, the little market-town at the foot of the mountains where the Tiern See lies, three thousand feet above sea-level, came twice a week to give piano-lessons to the most promising of the girls. Singing was taught by Mr Denny, who was obliged for the sake of his health to remain in the district, and whom the girls privately thought rather mad. Masters came from Innsbruck for the violin, cello, and harp; and young Mrs Russell had, for the last term, come down from the Sonnalpe twice a week to give lessons in English literature. This term, however, the state of the roads would make such a thing an impossibility. When March should come, bringing with it the rapid thaw, the paths would be well-nigh impassable on the lake side of the mountain, and Dr Jem, as all the girls called him, had vetoed the idea for that term, at any rate. Consequently, when Miss Maynard had informed her ex-head that she intended to spend the Christmas holidays at home, and had begged leave to take Joey and the Robin with her that they might have a really English Christmas, Mrs Russell had agreed. It suited her better, for her husband had been summoned to a medical conference at Vienna for the week between Christmas and New Year, and she naturally wanted to go with him. So Joey and Robin had come to England, and Grizel Cochrane had come with them to spend her Christmas at her own home in Devonshire. A week ago she had joined the others in the New Forest, and was to travel back with them to Austria. This would be her last year at the Chalet School, for she would be eighteen in May,

and then she was to go to Florence to study music in earnest under one of the best masters there.

It cannot be said that Grizel looked forward to her future with much enjoyment. She was not really musical, though hours of practice rigorously enforced by her step-mother while she had been in England, and then carried on under Herr Anserl in Briesau, had made her a brilliant instrumentalist. Her chief interest lay in games, and she would far rather have been a second Betty Nuthall than an Adela Verne. However, her opinion had not been asked, and, as Jo had said once, 'hers not to question why.' What was to happen after Florence no one seemed to know—Grizel herself least of all. She and her step-mother were not in sympathy with each other, and her father was too much immersed in his profession—he was a barrister with a wide practice—to care overmuch about the daughter he had seen comparatively rarely. Since she was ten, Grizel had been very much a lonely child, and to her the Chalet School was the only home she had ever known.

It was home to Joey Bettany too, though she knew that her sister and brother-in-law wanted her to feel that the pretty chalet outside the Sonnalpe stood for that now. She liked Jem very well, and she adored her sister, but Briesau, where she knew everyone and everyone knew her, was far dearer to her than the Sonnalpe with the big sanatorium and its sad community of people who had come there in search of health. Like most children, Joey shrank from sickness and suffering, though she had personally known a good deal of both in her short life, for the first years of her existence had been one long struggle with delicacy. Now, however, after nearly four years in the life-giving air of the mountains, that had been overcome. Robust she would never be, but the awful colds and attacks of bronchitis which had been sapping away her life as long as she had remained in England were practically a thing of the past.

As for the Robin, she had been left motherless two years before this story opens, and had been sent to the school while her father was in Russia on business. The business had long since been finished, and Captain Humphries was secretary to Dr Jem. The little girl was a frail little creature, and her mother had died in rapid decline, so, since she was happy at school, it was deemed better to keep her there, away from the sorrow of the Sonnalpe except at holiday times, when she and Joey would generally be at the chalet, where the doctor, 'Uncle Jem,' and his pretty wife, and her father lived.

So for all the girls, and also for Miss Maynard, whose eldest brother was assistant at the Sonnalpe, Briesau and the Chalet School meant far more than school ordinarily does to most folk. They had all enjoyed their stay in England, but they were all very glad to be returning to Austria so soon, and they talked about it as they were trundled along to Lyndhurst, where the Maynards' car would meet them, and whirl them through the forest for seven miles to Pretty Maids, the Maynards' big house.

'What I think is so topping,' said Jo, as she accepted a lump of toffee from the sticky packet Grizel was offering her, 'is the idea of seeing Basle. We've only rushed through in the train before, and I *do* like seeing new places. It's got heaps of history, too. All sorts of jolly interesting things happened there, and I'm simply yearning to see it!'

'You and history!' jeered Grizel, who was mathematically inclined, and regarded her history lessons as evils to be avoided whenever possible. 'You're simply cracked over history, Jo!'

'It's so jolly interesting! I like to know what people did and how they lived, and so on. It's heaps better than horrid old geometry and algebra, anyway!' retorted Joey, whose views on

mathematics were revolutionary in the extreme.

At this point Miss Maynard thought it best to interfere. Jo and Grizel were ordinarily good friends, but both had fiery tempers, and neither fully understood the other, so that battles between them were apt to be fierce if short-lived.

'There is plenty to see in Basle,' she said. 'I know Robin will love the Zoo—won't you, baby? And there is a very interesting museum and a good picture gallery.'

'Topping!' approved Jo. 'I love animals, and pictures are awfully interesting. What's in the museum, Maynie?'

Out of term, the girls were allowed to use this nickname of a popular mistress since they had stayed at her home more than once, and were very welcome visitors there.

'All kinds of things,' said Miss Maynard. 'A good part of it is devoted to natural history.'

'Butterflies and things?' said Grizel vaguely.

'I suppose so. Then there is the picture gallery with some very famous pictures—one or two by Hans Holbein the Younger, I believe. There is a special history museum in the Barfüsser Kirche, which is famous. Don't make faces, Grizel! You will like the armoury collection and the treasury, I know, even if the historical side of them doesn't interest you. And you will want to see Father Rhine, of course.'

'I love the Rhine, ever since I read *The First Violin*,' agreed Grizel. 'Of course, I'd rather see it at Cologne with the Bridge of Boats; still, it won't be bad fun there. Shall we have time to go to Schaffhausen to see the Falls?'

Miss Maynard shook her head. 'I'm afraid not, Grizel. We are spending one day in Paris, and three in Basle, and Schaffhausen is a good four hours or so from Basle. You'll have to wait for that till the summer. Then, if we do as we have planned, I will take you there for a few days on our way to Cologne and the Rhine cities.'

'But Joey and Robin won't be with us,' objected Grizel. 'I know it's awfully decent of you to say you'll take me to the Rhine cities before I go to Florence, but Jo is going to spend the summer hols with Elisaveta in Belsornia, and the Robin is to go to Paris with the Lecoutiers. Even Juliet won't be there, as she is going to the Sonnalpe to be with Madame.' She referred to Mrs Russell's ward, Juliet Carrick, who was at present at London University, reading for a mathematical degree.

'I'm sorry, Grizel,' said Miss Maynard. 'If we could do it, I should say "yes" at once. But we mustn't even think of it. There will be a good deal to get through before term begins, and we shall have none too much time as it is. Later on we may be able to arrange for the four of you to go together. Just now it is out of the question.'

Grizel gave up worrying, and as they were nearing Lyndhurst, they all gathered up their parcels and prepared to leave the train. But she was bitterly disappointed, and had by no means given up the idea as yet. That was not Grizel Cochrane's way. It had led to trouble in the past, and was to do so again before she learned her lesson. At present, mercifully, no one could foresee what was to come, and as they were whirled through the dusk in the comfortable car, they left the question of the Basle visit alone, and discussed the hockey team, the skating parties, and the Hobbies Club.

CHAPTER II.
ON THE JOURNEY.

'Now, have we got everything? Four cases—two bundles of rugs—your attaché cases—Grizel's music case—the picnic basket? Is that all? Then come along, girls, or we shall miss the train, and I don't want to do *that*!—Come, Robin! Keep close to me.'

Followed closely by the Robin and at a little distance by Grizel, Joey, and a burdened porter, Miss Maynard walked down the long platform of the Gare de l'Est, where the Paris-Wien express was standing, and quickly found the carriage reserved for them and two other people who had not yet come. It was nearly nine at night, and they would reach Basle round about five the next morning; but all four were accustomed travellers, and Miss Maynard much preferred to do the travelling at night when the girls would be sleeping and she would know where she had them, than through the day, when active Grizel and tiny Robin would find the time pass slowly. Joey was less of a trial on long train journeys, for she was always happy as long as she had a book. Now, the mistress quickly made a nest for the baby in one corner with rugs and an air-pillow, pulled off the sturdy little boots, and tucked her up comfortably. The Robin had been trained to obedience, and she snuggled down and shut her eyes. As she was tired from a long day in Paris, she fell asleep almost at once, heedless of the bright lights, the hoarse shouts of the busy porters, the low-toned chatter and occasional giggles of the two elder girls, and Miss Maynard's own softly spoken rebukes to them. Nor did she stir when a Cook's guide opened the door and ushered in two ladies of middle age, who looked with horror at the school-room party among which they found themselves, and protested loudly to the courteous guide, who had to listen to a lengthy argument on the iniquity of putting ladies with a pack of children—this last with a withering look of scorn at Miss Maynard, who, it must be confessed, did not look her twenty-three years by any means.

The guide was very sorry, but they were the only seats they could have. It so happened that a big conference of learned men had broken up that day in Paris, and most of those who lived in the east were going home by this very train. Hence, instead of its being little more than half-full, as it should have been at this time of the year, it was crammed, and there was not a seat to be had. Already, elderly men were passing up and down the narrow corridor, several of them peeping in as they passed, and it was obvious that what the man said was correct. Finally, after prolonged grumbling, the elder of the pair settled herself in the corner opposite to Miss Maynard, who had Joey next her, while her companion meekly took the seat between her and Grizel, who had the corner opposite the Robin. The man went as soon as this was done, evidently thankful to get away from such unpleasant clients as quickly as he could, and Miss Maynard turned her attention to the girls.

Since they had been in Paris all day, and had been talking French, which came as naturally to them as their own tongue—all four were trilingual as a result of being in a school where English, French, and German were all spoken freely—she fell into French in bidding them prepare for the night, though, as she herself said afterwards, it was an accident on her part, and she had no idea what it was going to lead to.

Joey and Grizel did as they were told to the extent of rolling themselves in rugs, and curling up on the seats which had been widened by the pulling out of a kind of underseat. Experienced travellers, they slipped off their boots, exchanged their brown velour hats for

tarns, and in ten minutes were ready. The mistress herself did not attempt her preparations yet. She knew that she would read for an hour or two as soon as they got off. The children were different, and all were accustomed to early hours both at school and in her own home, for Mrs Maynard had old-fashioned ideas on the subject, and even Grizel had been in bed by half-past nine most nights. Miss Maynard sincerely hoped that their fellow-travellers would follow their good example; or, at least, not talk too much. Jo still wearied rather quickly, and she tired by her day of sight-seeing.

Unfortunately the pair had no idea of being so accommodating. They settled themselves after a good deal of fuss, and then, while Joey's lashes were beginning to droop on her white cheeks, the elder remarked, 'Very wrong for such young children to be travelling at this hour! But Continentals have no idea of bringing up children properly! These four ought all to have been taken to a hotel for the night, with someone *responsible* in charge! They should make their journey in the daytime!'

The senior mistress of the Chalet School blushed at being thought an irresponsible schoolgirl, but made no attempt to correct the error into which the pair had fallen. As for Grizel and Jo, who was now wide-awake again, *they* were overjoyed, of course, and were prepared to enjoy what came their way.

The meeker of the two twittered an agreement to these statements, and added that it was easy to see how little French people appreciated the necessity for care where young girls were concerned!

'One always hears how much fuss these foreigners make about girls never going anywhere unchaperoned,' said the elder lady; 'but this just proves that it is all talk!'

Joey spluttered under her rugs as she remembered the careful chaperoning of her Tyrolese friends, who were never allowed to be out without a maid or someone quite grown up with them. She dared not catch Grizel's eye, or she would have laughed outright. *They* knew just how carefully 'foreign' girls were looked after! They had had to submit to the same treatment themselves many a time, for Mrs Russell had pointed out that when in Rome one must do as the Romans, and had been as insistent on the need of chaperonage as the strictest Tyrolean parent could have been.

The meeker lady now proceeded to try to make herself comfortable, but as she retained her boots and hat, and merely tucked her rug round her knees, it was difficult to see how she expected to manage. Her friend had at least the additional comfort of the corner seat, but she made no other arrangements either. 'I hope I shall sleep,' she said, in the tones of a martyr. 'I'm sure, if I had known how full this train would be, I should have postponed the journey till to-morrow, at least. Have you got my Eliot tartan rug, Maria?'

'Maria' disavowed all responsibility for the said rug, and a hunt set in for it which had the effect of rousing the Robin just as the train began to move and they left the station. She sat up, and looked about her confusedly. 'Where, then, are we?' she asked in the French, which was her native language.

'Only in the train, little beloved,' replied Grizel in the same language. 'Lie down again, and I will cover thee over.' She threw aside her own rugs and, leaning forward, tucked in the Robin once more.

'You must go to sleep, Robin,' said Miss Maynard, also in French.—'Grizel, lower the window a little. The carriage grows very stuffy.'

Grizel did as she was bidden, and aroused a whirlwind of reproach from the two ladies.

‘Open the window? On a winter’s night? You must be mad!’ cried the elder one; while ‘Maria’ murmured plaintively that she would most certainly suffer agonies from neuralgia if the window were opened!

Miss Maynard looked as she felt—dismayed. Already the small compartment was stuffy with its six passengers, and she knew that it would be bad for the children to sleep in such an atmosphere of breathlessness. She scarcely liked to refuse to comply with the ladies’ requests, but she was determined that some air they should have. She signed to Grizel to close the window a little, but to leave a space of two inches or so at the top. This helped to freshen the air a little, and was better than nothing. But the two were by no means satisfied. They shivered and complained, and twisted about till Joey, in rapid French, suggested to Grizel that their antics ought to keep them warm if nothing else did. Grizel promptly exploded, and Miss Maynard was roused to check the pair, though she sympathised with them. Never had she had such troublesome travelling companions! At about ten o’clock she put away the book she had been trying in vain to read, and turned to see that her charges were all right for the night. The Robin had dropped off again, and Joey was drowsy. Grizel, after a murmured word or two, settled herself down with her rugs well over her, and presently Miss Maynard felt herself dropping off. She was nearly over when she was awakened by a triumphant *bang*! and she opened her eyes in time to see the elder lady pull up the window and fix it firmly. Then she retreated to her corner. As she went the flying train swayed, and she slipped and nearly fell. She put out a hand to save herself, and caught hold of Joey, who, thus rudely awakened, sat up with a start, and hit out, catching her fellow-traveller on the shoulder.

‘Disgraceful!’ exclaimed the lady, getting to her seat. ‘You little hooligan!’

Miss Maynard was up in arms at this. After all, it had not been Jo’s fault, and the lady had only herself to blame. ‘I beg your pardon, madam,’ she said in icily polite tones, ‘but you must see for yourself that, had you not awakened the child suddenly by catching at her as you did, the accident would never have occurred.’

‘Had you done as you were asked, young woman,’ retorted the infuriated lady, ‘I should not have needed to get up and shut that window, and *then* the accident, as you call it, would most certainly not have occurred! I insist on having that window shut!’

The light of battle came into Miss Maynard’s eyes, and it is to be feared that she forgot her position as a mistress as she replied, ‘Pardon me, but that window shall not remain shut tightly. It is exceedingly bad for anyone to sleep with closed windows; and in a small place as this compartment is, I will not permit the children to sleep without fresh air coming in.’ She got up, made her way to the window, and opened it again to its former width. Then she went carefully back to her seat and sat down.

At once ‘the Stuffer,’ as naughty Jo christened her, bounced up and pulled the window up again. ‘I shall complain to the company!’ she thundered.

The noise woke the Robin, who began to cry, partly from fright, partly because her head was aching from the unaccustomed close atmosphere in which she had been sleeping, and a big hairy professor from next door came to request that they would hush the child and cease their conversations and *Kaffeeklatschen*, as he and his comrades wished to sleep.

In a few words Jo explained the situation—Miss Maynard was too busy hushing the wailing Robin. The professor heard her to the end; then he made his way into their compartment, banged down the window to its fullest extent, with various objurgations about ‘women fools’ who lived in an oven-like atmosphere, and retired to his own place, leaving the

two ladies gasping and breathless, Miss Maynard on the verge of wild laughter, and Jo—Grizel slept through all this!—staring with round black eyes.

'Joey, do you know who that was?' asked Miss Maynard, when finally she had recovered her self-control.

'Not an earthly,' replied Jo. 'He hasn't much opinion of women, has he?'

'He was like Fazere Christmas,' observed the Robin, now calmed and happy.

'It was Professor Christian von der Witt of Wien,' said Miss Maynard. 'He is a fresh-air fiend—sleeps in his garden all the year round, I believe. Now, Robin, I am going to tuck you in again, and you must go off to sleep like a good *Mädchen*.'

'Yes,' responded the Robin drowsily; 'it is so nice—now—the air—is—com—ing——'

She dropped off with the last word, and Miss Maynard left her after a final tucking in of the big rug that was wrapped round her. She went back to her own seat after making sure that the soundly sleeping Grizel was warm enough, and settled Joey. Then she turned to the other two. 'I regret that I must ask you to leave this other window alone,' she said. 'If you will roll your rugs round you as the girls and I do, I am sure you will find that you are quite warm enough.'

'Maria,' who seemed to be a peaceable enough soul if left to herself, promptly got up, and proceeded to make a woolly cocoon of herself with two rugs. 'The Stuffer' snorted, and pulled up *her* rugs to her chin. Then silence settled down over them all, and Miss Maynard presently fell asleep.

She was awakened two hours later by the most extraordinary grunting. She opened her eyes and found that 'the Stuffer' was struggling with the window once more. Her efforts were vain, for when Professor von der Witt had banged that window down, he had done it with such force that it required more than the strength of an elderly lady to loosen it and pull it up again. The young mistress had realised this, which was why she had left it alone. Otherwise, she would have preferred it not to be quite so far open.

Her movement as she sat up made 'the Stuffer' realise that she was caught, and she turned round, saying with what dignity she could, 'I am trying to close this window a little. It is very cold indeed, and I am sure the little girl'—she cast a glance at the Robin's lovely little face, flushed with sleep—'should not be lying in such a draught.'

She looked cold enough, for her long nose-end was pinched and blue, and her teeth were inclined to chatter. Miss Maynard suddenly felt remorseful for the struggle which had ended in the window's being stuck like this. She got up cautiously so as not to wake Jo, and went up to the poor lady. 'I'm afraid we can do nothing with the window,' she said in carefully lowered tones. 'The Professor banged it down so hard that it will take a man's strength to pull it up again. But I have some hot coffee in a thermos. If you will let me give you some and roll you up in your rugs as I rolled up the children, I think you will soon find yourself warm again.'

'The Stuffer' gave in. She agreed to let Miss Maynard tuck her into her rugs and doctor her with hot coffee which had a tiny drop of brandy in it to warm her through, and at length dropped off to sleep, comfortable, as she had not been before on the journey.

At four o'clock the collector came for their tickets, but after that there were no more interruptions till at a quarter to five an attendant came along announcing that they were nearly into Basle, and would arrive there in ten minutes' time. Moving as quietly as she could, Miss Maynard woke up Joey and Grizel, and bade them get ready to leave the train. The Robin she left. It would be better if they could get her to the pension where they were going without

waking her at all. The elder girls quickly and deftly put their things together, rolling up rugs, and strapping them with a neatness and precision which told of experience in journeys. 'Maria' and her friend woke up, and watched them curiously.

'Do you live in this place—Basle?' asked 'the Stuffer.'

'Oh, no,' said Joey, seeing that Miss Maynard was busy with the cases; 'we live at Briesau am Tiernsee, but we are breaking the journey here to see Basle. We've been home with Maynie for the hols,' she added lucidly. 'School begins in ten days' time.'

'Are you at school at—at this place with the outlandish name, then?' asked the lady.

Joey nodded. 'Yes; but my sister lives across the lake at Sonnalpe, and the Robin's father lives there too.'

At this point the train slackened speed, and ran into the deserted station, where only the flaring lights and a few sleepy-eyed porters spoke of the life that thronged it through the day. Miss Maynard leaned out of the window, and summoned one to come and get their things, while she herself picked up the Robin, who slept on serenely through it all, and Joey and Grizel took their rugs.

As they were leaving the compartment 'the Stuffer' plucked at Jo's arm and thrust a card on her. 'This is my card,' she said. 'I should like to hear about your school. Will you write to this address and tell me about it? And, my dear, please tell that nice young lady who showed me how to arrange my rugs and gave me the coffee that I have been warm ever since.'

'Of course,' said Joey, 'you can get coffee here, I know. Shall I ask one of the porters to fetch you some—and some sandwiches? They are *topping*!'

'Thank you. I shall be obliged' was the reply.

Jo had to go then, but she did not forget her promise, and presently the two ladies were drinking hot coffee and eating delicious rolls sliced down and filled with meat, and feeling that travelling by night was not so bad after all.

As for the other four, they were whisked to their pension, where a drowsy night-porter let them in, and they were shown up to their rooms, where they all went straight to bed, and slept till noon.

CHAPTER III.
BASLE.

Joey was the first to wake. She swept up her lashes and sat up in bed, wide awake in a moment. Then she looked across to where Grizel lay, still fast asleep in the bed in the corner. She looked very pretty as she lay there, her cheeks rose-flushed with sleep, and her long brown curls scattered over the pillow. But æsthetic sights were not in Miss Bettany's mind at the moment. Moving quietly, she lifted her pillow, stood up in bed to get a surer aim, and then hurled it well on to Grizel's face.

That young lady sat up with a muffled howl, wildly clearing curls and sleep-mists out of her eyes while the pillow fell to the floor. 'Joey Bettany! You little brute! And I was having such a gorgeous dream!'

'Time you were beyond dreams, my dear!' retorted Joey, curling herself up on the bed, and hauling the *plumeau* round her shoulders. 'It's midday! Nearly time for *Mittagessen*! Get up, you lazy object!'

'Lazy object yourself!' said Grizel indignantly. 'You've only just wakened yourself! I know you, Jo Bettany! And if you hurl any more things at me I'll yell the house down!'

'Funk—cry-baby—cowardy, cowardy custard!' jeered Joey.

'I'm not! But I'm not going to have you chucking things round the room like that.—I say! there's someone coming—chambermaid or something! Cave!'

Joey made a wild dive, and when the round-cheeked Gretchen came in bearing rolls and honey and coffee on a tray for the two, she found them both lying very properly in bed, though, to be sure, the younger fräulein did not seem to have any pillow, and the other one had two!

When she had gone, Joey sat up, and demanded her pillow back again.

'No fear!' retorted Grizel. 'You chucked it at me most brutally, so now you may do without! It's no good coming and scrapping for it, for you'll only upset the coffee if you do, and then there'll be a row!—Stop it, Joey! You'll have the tray all over the bed if you go on like this!'

'Give me my pillow, then!' retorted Jo, hauling away at it with such goodwill that she finally succeeded in getting it out from under Grizel's shoulders, nearly upsetting the tray and its contents as she did so. With a cry of triumph she darted back to her own bed and *Frühstück*.

'Pig!' said Grizel indignantly. 'You *are* a little horror, Joey!'

'Hurry up and get on,' was the only answer Joey vouchsafed as she devoured her rolls and honey, and drank the bowl of milky coffee which she appreciated far more than the tea she had in England.

Seeing nothing else to do, Grizel did as Joey suggested, and presently they were dressed in their pretty frocks, so that when Miss Maynard came, as she imagined, to waken them, they were standing at the window, looking out at the quiet street below, ready dressed. They turned as she entered.

'*Grüss Gott*,' said Joey, with the charming Tyrolean greeting which she loved so. 'Oh, Maynie! Just look at those darling dogs!'

Miss Maynard laughed as she crossed the room, and looked out of the window at the sight she had expected to see—a low-wheeled cart with big milk-can slung across it, and drawn by two big dogs, who were padding sedately along as if they knew how important was their charge. The whole equipage was guarded by a small boy of about ten, who bore a long whip, which he cracked continually to encourage his steeds, not that they took any notice of either it or him. Still, it looked well, and it pleased his heart.

'Jo! You baby!' laughed Miss Maynard. 'You must have seen the same thing dozens of time before this! They do it in practically every European country! I'm sure you saw it when you were in Munich!'

'Yes; I know,' agreed Joey. 'But those are such *dear* dogs—nearly as nice as my Rufus!'

'They aren't the same breed,' said Grizel critically. 'Rufus is a St Bernard, and I don't know what you would call those!'

'Just plain dog, I should think,' said Miss Maynard as she turned from the window. 'Well, I came to call you two; but as you are ready, I will go back to Robin. *Mittagessen* is at one, but I didn't think we should want any so soon after *Frühstück*. What do you say to going out now? We can get *Kaffee* at a *pâtisserie*, and you can make up for it at our evening meal. Do you agree?'

'Oh, rather!' cried Jo. 'Where are we going first? I want to see that history museum you told us about. Can we go there?'

'If you like. I believe the Robin is longing for the Zoo. What would you like, Grizel?'

'I'd like to look at the shops and the town,' said Grizel.

'Well, we can't do everything,' said Miss Maynard, with a little inward smile for the difference between the two girls shown in their replies to her question. 'We might look at the shops and do a little shopping, and also see the Barfüsser Kirche to-day, if you like. Then to-morrow we must give the Robin her turn, and go to the Zoo. In the afternoon I should like to see the museum in the Augustinergasse—that's where the picture gallery is, Grizel, so I think you would enjoy it. Then on Thursday we might explore round the town, and see if we can see some of the old university buildings. Basle is one of the oldest university towns in Europe, you know, and any number of famous men came here during the Renaissance. What do you think of that programme? Does it meet with your approval?'

'Yes, rather,' said Joey emphatically.

But Grizel shook her head. 'I do so want to go to Schaffhausen and see the Falls. Couldn't we possibly?'

'No, Grizel,' said Miss Maynard. 'I've already said we can't. Please put Schaffhausen right out of your head. In any case, this is not the weather to go and see waterfalls. I have told you I will take you in the summer; please let that be sufficient.'

Grizel was obliged to subside, but she was not satisfied, and Joey knew it.

'What on earth makes you so mad on the Rhine Falls, Grizel?' she asked curiously when Miss Maynard had gone off to help the Robin to dress. 'You are an ass to fuss like this. Maynie won't go, and you ought to know it by this time. She means what she says.'

But Grizel was a determined young lady, and when she took an idea into her head it required a good deal of dislodging. She had by no means put Schaffhausen out of her thoughts, and so Joey was to find later on. Now, she merely requested the younger girl not to bother, and began to get into her hat and coat.

It was a cold day, colder than that day when they had been in Portsmouth, but it was a dry, bracing cold, and as they were warmly wrapped up, they looked forward to their walk. At

Briesau it had to be very bad weather for the girls to be kept indoors. Of course, when they had the terrific rainstorms that sometimes came, or when the snow was whirling in a blizzard, they could not go out. But otherwise, they took walks in all weathers. So Joey and Grisel put on stout boots, and tied big scarves across their chests, and turned up the fur collars on their coats, and when they had wriggled into their warm woollen mitts, made fingerless like baby gloves, felt ready for anything. Miss Maynard and the Robin, similarly attired, met them at their door, and they all trooped downstairs, laughing and chattering.

The first thing to do was to get to the shops, for Grizel was anxious to see them, and to buy some ribbons to send to 'Cooky' in her far-away Devonshire home. Cooky had always been a great ally of hers, and Grizel remembered many a kindness the big sonsy woman had shown her, and always did her best to repay. One of the things Cooky liked best was a 'scrap o' summat furren.' Ribbon from Basle to trim her new spring hat would be greatly appreciated. It was a good point in a character that was inclined to be hard, and the Chalet School people had always encouraged it. The discipline Grizel had undergone at the hands of her step-mother for four and a half years had been very bad for the girl. As a consequence of it, she fought for her own hand first, and was very selfish, only trying to get what *she* wanted, without much regard for other people. It was, as Mrs Russell had said at the end of the previous term, when she was discussing the point with Mademoiselle, a big experiment putting Grizel into the position as head-girl. 'She will either do magnificently—or she will fail badly,' she had said. 'But, Elise, I feel sure that Grizel will try to make a success of it. It may mean the difference to her in after life. And we have only these two last terms to influence her. After that she goes to Florence, and it is out of our hands.'

Mademoiselle had agreed, and so they had sent for Grizel, and had informed her of their decision. As has been seen, she had been disturbed by it. She knew, for Mrs Russell bad told her, that to be successful she must set the school first; herself last. Grizel hated to do anything and fail; but she did not like the sound of that 'School first; self last.' It looked as if things would not be too comfortable. She had tried to get out of it; had pointed out that Gertrud Steinbrücke was her age, and as old a member of the Chalet School as she was; that she was Captain of the Games, and had her music to work at. It had all been of no avail.

'I want you to take it, and to do your best with it, Grizel,' Mrs Russell had said, holding the girl's grey eyes with her own steady gaze as she spoke. 'Come, dear! You say you have been happy here. It isn't asking much to ask you to give us your best work for the last two terms you will spend with us. I know you will come back to see us, Grizel, but it's not the same. *Now*, as a member of the school, you can give us what will not be yours to give once you have left us for the wider world. Will you give it?'

And, drawn to it by the appeal in those deep brown eyes fronting her, Grizel had agreed. But she had made a proviso to herself. She would accept, and would do her level best. School should come first all the time, and self should have a poor chance, so far as she could manage it; but—she would have her own way during the holidays. At school, she would try to follow worthily in the steps of the three other girls who had held the post. That would not be an easy task, for Gisela Marani, Juliet Carrick, and Bette Rincini had left splendid examples, and Grizel felt that for her own sake she must not fall short of them. Therefore, during the holidays she should have her fling. Part of it was to come off this very week had the others but known it.

They went gaily down the street, turning out of it into a main road where electric trams carried them into the shopping part of the town in a few minutes. It was a glorious day for a

walk, sharp and crisp, with a snap of frost in the air and frozen snow on the pavements crunching under their tread. The Robin danced along, clinging to Joey's hand, while Grizel herself walked demurely by the side of Miss Maynard, chattering to her in German. She had been far slower than Jo to pick up languages, but they had come at last through ceaseless practice and association with people who spoke little else, and now she was as fluent as anyone. As for Jo, English, French, or German, it was all one to her. She knew a certain amount of Italian too, and had a slender portion of Russian, a fact which had proved of great use to her during the summer term, and which had been the means of rescuing her friend, Elisaveta, Crown Princess of Belsornia, from the hands of her father's cousin, a half-mad man, who had tried to kidnap and hold her as a hostage against her father, now King of Belsornia, and her grandfather, who had been the reigning king at that time. The old king had died during the previous term, and Elisaveta was now Crown Princess, and too important a personage to finish her education in any school, so she had had to go back to governesses in Belsornia. But the friendship between her and Jo was not likely to die, even though they could not meet, and Joey got letters every week from 'Your loving Veta.'

As in Portsmouth, people turned to look at them. Grizel and the Robin were so very pretty, and Joey, with her pointed face and big black eyes, so out of the usual. All four were so graceful, too, moving with a free, easy grace that had its roots in constant practice of the old English folk-dances. Miss Maynard smiled as she noted how elderly men looked at the Robin with her almost angelic loveliness, and how they smiled to receive one of her fearless beams at them. Nearly all her little life the Robin had met with love. She was rarely afraid of people.

In the shops she still attracted attention, and while Grizel was debating whether Cooky would like vivid purple or lurid green for her hat, the assistants were murmuring among themselves about '*das Engelkind*.' The marvel was that the child was not made conceited by all the petting she received. It never seemed to affect her in the least, however, and she was not spoiled by it.

When, finally, Grizel had fixed on a green ribbon, which was bright enough to please Cooky, and yet did not scream at one, they went out and visited the toy-shops, where the baby bought two little wooden bears, one for Inga Eriksen, and the other for Amy Stevens, these two people being her greatest friends. 'And Tante Marguérite,' she pleaded. 'I have two francs left. What can I buy for Tante Marguérite?'

It was while Miss Maynard was helping her to choose a little wooden chalet that Grizel drew Jo to one side and said, 'Joey, are you game for a rag?'

'Rather; what is it?' demanded Jo.

'You know I want to go to Schaffhausen and see the Rhine there? Well, let's go to-morrow when Maynie takes the Robin to the Zoo. We don't want to see it—there's only chamois and bears and things like that. We'll leave a note saying where we've gone, and slip off about eight in the morning. Then we can go there and see the Falls, and get back in the afternoon. What do you say?'

'I think you must be mad,' said Jo, staring at her. 'Quite mad you must be! There'd be a fiendish row, and we'd jolly well deserve it after doing down Maynie like that when she's being so awfully decent about stopping here for three days to let us see the place! I knew you went off it sometimes, but I never thought you did it to that extent! It's one of the rottenest things I've ever heard of!'

Grizel was furious. It was bad enough to have a mere kid like Jo Bettany say such things to her; but what hurt most was the look in Joey's eyes. There was scorn there, and disgust.

There was also that which reminded the elder girl of the time when she had run away in a fit of rage to climb the Tiernjoch, a dangerous mountain, perilling both her own life and Joey's in the attempt. Jo had followed her to fetch her back, and the pair had been caught in a mist on the verge of a dangerous precipice, where they had had to wait till help came. Grizel had lost her head on that occasion too completely to move, though they had only been a few yards away from the safety of the alm. Jo had not meant to remind the elder girl of this, but Grizel remembered all the same. It added to her fury, and she flung herself away with a low 'Little *prig*!' which brought the angry colour to Jo's face. Happily, before anything further could happen, the Robin appealed to them for assistance in making up her mind which of two chalet models she should choose, and by the time this knotty point was settled both looked more or less normal again. They were far enough from feeling it though.

From the shops they went to the Barfüsser Kirche, a church dating from the fourteenth century, but now used as the historical museum. There the Lallenkönig attracted the Robin, and she insisted on standing to watch the head stick out its tongue and roll its eyes at her. She was fascinated by it, and they could scarcely get her away. However, Miss Maynard finally got them to the great collection of arms, where Joey revelled to her heart's content in the curious weapons of the ages, weaving stories about them in her head, while Grizel wandered round, interested in the growth and development of warfare. So far, things interested her more than people. With Jo it was the other way. From the armoury they went to the series of rooms intended to show the development in the furnishing and arranging of rooms from the fifteenth century onwards, and here Jo was in her element indeed. She invented stories for the Robin about the people who had lived in the different rooms, and gave them the most astonishing adventures. The guide listened open-mouthed, and the Robin was entranced. Miss Maynard had to cut them short, or they would never have seen the rest of the building.

The Treasury, containing relics of the days when Basle had been one of the foremost of the Catholic sees, didn't interest them half so much, though Joey looked at the beautiful altar vessels with awe, and was specially pleased with the reminders of Erasmus, the great Renaissance scholar, who became the friend of Sir Thomas More, one of her heroes. She was rather disappointed to find no relics of her favourite Napoleon, but the rooms containing the musical instruments, from quaint old citherns and citoles, lutes and harps, and the beautiful specimens of stained glass delighted her, and the Robin admired them because she did.

'Only think,' said Jo, pausing before one beautiful example of a cithern; 'Laura may have played to Petrarca on that!'

'What on earth do you know about Laura and Petrarca?' demanded Miss Maynard in astonishment, though, as she afterwards said, Jo's knowledge was so varied that she had no real reason for her surprise.

'Oh, only that they were lovers, and he wrote sonnets to her, and invented a type of sonnet,' returned Jo.

After that Miss Maynard decreed that it was time for *Kaffee*, and hustled them all out and to a *pâtisserie*, where they had milky coffee and delicious cakes all honey and nuts and cream. If Grizel was a little quiet, no one noticed it, and the other two more than made up for her silence. They had to hurry back to the pension in the end, for it was getting late, and *Abendessen* was at seven. The Robin had rolls and butter and milk in bed, but the others went down and made a good meal, after which they went out for a short walk along the lighted streets, where sleighs were dashing along the snowy roads, and the night was gay with the jangling of sleigh-bells.

When they came in it was after nine, so Miss Maynard decreed that they should all go to bed. She saw the other two to their room, made sure they had everything they wanted, and then left them, bidding Grizel see that the light was switched off at ten.

As soon as she had gone, Joey dropped the frock she had just taken off on to a chair, and turned to Grizel. ‘Now,’ she said.

CHAPTER IV.
THE FALLS OF RHINE.

Grizel turned sharply at the word, and looked at the other girl. ‘What do you mean?’ she asked coldly.

‘I’m going to have it out with you—that’s all!’ Joey sat down on the edge of her bed and looked Grizel squarely in the face.

‘Have what out? And I do wish, Jo, you would try to remember, occasionally, that I am nearly three years older than you are. You speak sometimes as if you thought I were as old as —as—the Robin.’

‘I don’t think you’re as old, sometimes,’ retorted Joey. ‘You don’t behave like it, any old how!’

‘That will do! Even if we do go away together for holidays, that’s no reason why you should cheek me like this. I’m head-girl, remember!’

‘I wish *you* would try to remember it!’ said Joey fervently. Then her tone changed. ‘Grizel, don’t go to Schaffhausen! It isn’t playing the game by Maynie! If you want us with you, I’ll ask if I can go in the summer before I go to Belsornia to Elisaveta.’ But her first words had done the mischief, and even this sacrifice had no effect on Grizel, who could be thoroughly wrong-headed on occasion. She now looked at the younger girl with an expression of scorn, and said, ‘Mind your own business!’

‘But, Grizel——’ began Jo.

‘That will do! I’m not going to be spoken to like that by a mere junior. If you can’t talk about anything else, you’d better be silent. Anyway, I don’t want to talk to you. You’re a bit swelled-headed, Jo. I suppose it’s because Madame is your sister. It’s a pity, because you *could* be quite a nice child, if it weren’t for that. As it is, you’ll have to learn your place sooner or later.’

Jo went white with anger at this unpleasant speech, but she said nothing. She got up from the bed, and went on with her undressing. Grizel followed her example, and they went to bed in utter silence. Joey had a hot temper, and Grizel had said an unforgivable thing just now. Incidentally, Jo’s tactless speeches about the elder girl’s behaviour had proved the reverse of soothing to Grizel. Things were at a deadlock, and seemed likely to remain so.

Grizel soon fell asleep, for she was not imaginative, and, angry as she was, her emotions were little likely to disturb her rest. Joey, sensitive and temperamental, tossed about restlessly in her bed for two hours or more before she finally dropped off. When at last her black eyes closed she slept soundly, and no noises roused her.

Grizel woke up at six o’clock in the morning, and, as soon as she was sufficiently wide awake to realise what had occurred the night before, slipped out of bed, and, with a cautious glance at the bed in the opposite corner, switched on the little reading-lamp over her own. Then she dressed herself swiftly and warmly, putting on her thickest things. She had determined to get to the Falls of Rhine somehow, and knew that to do so she must make an early start. She wasn’t sure how far Joey’s sense of duty might carry her, either. That young lady scorned to tell tales, but no one knew better than Grizel that this was a case when she might rightfully feel that she was reporting, and not ‘sneaking.’

Jo slept on soundly, and never stirred when the door opened and her companion slipped out and shut it carefully after her. She slept on till long after her usual time for waking, and, indeed, until Miss Maynard, wondering at the unusual quiet in their room, came along to see that they were all right.

In the meantime Grizel, her head held very high, her curls drawn back into a long plait which added years to her age, went downstairs, disturbing a busy maid-servant on the way, ordered hot coffee and rolls for herself at the bureau, and consumed them when they came in as airy a fashion as if she were not doing things she knew very well to be wrong. To the *Kellnerin* who served her she said that she was going on to Schaffhausen by the early train, and the others would join her later. She felt pretty safe in saying that last, for she knew that Miss Maynard, at any rate, would come to seek her, and she had no intention of hiding from her once she had got her own way. She had made inquiries the night before, and had found that there was two hours between the train by which she intended travelling and the next one. By that time, as she reckoned, she would have seen all she wanted to see, and would be quite content to come home. She finished her meal, and then set off for the Bahnhof. She had found out the night before that the train left from the Baden, and not from the Central, at which they had come in from Paris. This meant crossing the river, and either going by electric tram or by the cross-city railway; Grizel decided to do the latter, and was soon sitting in a carriage, watching the houses by which they passed.

Basle is a very old and picturesque city, and the long streets, with their quaintly gilded and frescoed houses, had reminders at every corner of the time when Basle was one of the great university towns of Europe. They soon reached the Badenischbahnhof, and there Grizel found that she had just time to get her ticket for Schaffhausen, and they were off.

It was still dusk, for the light was slow in coming this January morning, and mists lay low over everything; Grizel felt in her satchel for her book, and settled down for a good read. People passing the compartment in which she was looked curiously at her. In Switzerland the young girl of the upper classes no more roves about by herself than her sister in other European countries does. There is a great deal of freedom, it is true, but *la jeune fille* is well chaperoned for all that. To see a girl of seventeen quite without any relative or maid to look after her was unusual. No one interfered with her, however, and when the daylight finally came, with bright wintry sunshine, Grizel put aside her book to look at the view, without any idea that she had aroused such interest.

She found the landscape uninspiring on this cold morning, when everything was covered with snow, and there were no mountains such as she loved. The railway here runs through the Rhine valley, which is low-lying, and only shows gentle undulations till it nears the environs of Zurich. It is a fairly populous valley, but Grizel was bored with the towns—she had seen dozens prettier during the four years she had lived abroad—and she soon lost interest in them and returned to her book. But this, too, seemed to have become dull, and so she took refuge in her thoughts. She wondered what they were saying at Basle. She could imagine Joey's indignation when she woke up and found herself alone and her companion gone. Miss Maynard would be furious, of course, and the Robin would be full of wonder. It wouldn't be a pleasant journey back to Innsbruck.

For the first time, Grizel began to repent her daring. After all, her idea at the first had been to have Joey and the Robin with her, and here she was—alone. If Jo hadn't been so emphatic she would have left it alone. Then she pulled herself up short. It wasn't playing the game to blame Joey—Grizel rather prided herself on being fair. It was rather unfortunate that she had

got on to that tack, for now a doubt came into her mind as to whether she was playing fair anyhow. Miss Maynard would be worried she knew, and, after all, she *was* head-girl. Suddenly she sat bolt upright. An awful thought had struck her. What if Madame, who still had a good deal to do with the school, should think that, since she had gone off in this mad way, therefore she wasn't fit to be head-girl?

Grizel's eyes widened in horror at the idea. If it were so, she could never stay on at the school. Everyone knew that she had been chosen, and the disgrace of being degraded would be more than she could endure. Just supposing——!

The slowing-down of the train warned her at this point that they were nearing a station. She would get out and go back at once. With Grizel, to think was to act. She collected her things in double quick time, and when they drew up by the platform at Waldshut, went along the corridor, and descended the little steps, and made for the barrier. There she had no easy time of it in explaining to the ticket-collector why she had got out at a place twenty-four miles before the destination marked on her ticket. At first he thought that she had made a mistake, and got out, thinking she was already at Schaffhausen. Her bungling explanation that she had forgotten something—so she had!—roused deep suspicion in his mind, and he questioned her till she was ready to cry with vexation. However, he could see nothing for it but to let her go, and told her when the next train back to Basle was. She found she had a forty minutes' wait before her, and the snow had begun to fall again. She decided to go out and find a *pâtisserie*, and see if she could get chocolate and cakes. Her early *Frühstück* had been rather hurried, and she felt hungry now. She went out into the street, feeling rather forlorn, and, after losing herself twice, managed to find a shop where she got some indifferent chocolate and some stale cakes. She had spent so long over finding it that she had to hurry, and scalded her mouth with the hot chocolate. Then it was helter-skelter back to the station, where she only just caught her train, and had to find a seat in a crowded compartment with two or three voluble Swiss ladies who talked the whole time, an old curé, who read his breviary industriously, and two youths of school age who were obviously German, and who stared at her unceasingly, and made remarks about her and giggled to each other. Of all the uncomfortable journeys she had ever taken, that struck Grizel as the worst. To make matters worse, the ladies began to discuss her, and to comment on the folly of the English, who allowed young ladies to go about unchaperoned. They had no idea, of course, that she could understand them, and she was too weary by this time—and too ashamed of herself—to correct them. It seemed a never-ending age before she saw that they were nearing Basle, and then she could have cried with relief. As soon as the train drew up inside the station she was out of it and off through the streets, where the snow was now whirling down, as hard as she could go. At length she turned into the Sternen Gasse, where their pension was, and made her best pace along it. The doors were shut, of course, and she had to wait while the porter came to open them. When he saw her he exclaimed in surprise, but Grizel was past minding that. She pushed past him and along the hall to the stairs, where she was met by the manageress, who was coming down. At sight of the English girl she stopped with uplifted hands. 'Fräulein Cochrane! But *das Fraülein* has gone to seek thee at Schaffhausen!'

'Well, I'm here,' said Grizel. 'Where are the other two?'

Frau Betts looked at her severely. 'Fräulein Bettany and *das Liebling* have gone too. Fräulein Maynard said that they would go straight to Innsbruck from Schaffhausen once they had found you. They have taken the luggage—all. Fräulein Maynard was very angry—as in

truth she had right to be! She said she would not feel happy till she had you all safely with your relatives. They have been gone these two hours!'

Grizel sat down limply on the stairs. She had got herself into a nice mess! If she had had any sense she would have wired them from Waldshut, and then no one would have gone chasing off after her. As it was, she had no idea what to do or where to go.

She did the best thing she could have done for herself. Worn-out, remorseful, and hungry, she forgot her pride and burst into tears.

At the sight Frau Betts, who was a good-natured soul, forgot her indignation, and hastened to apply comfort. 'Hush, *mein Kind*! You are wearied, and must rest. Fritzi shall hasten to the post-office and send a telegram to the station at Schaffhausen to say that you are here. You shall have a meal, and we will send you to them there. Come to my room.'

She led the wearied girl to her own little sitting-room, and made her lie down on a sofa while she went off to find Fritzi and send him with the telegram. Then she came with a tempting little meal on a tray, and after the girl had eaten all she could, sent the long-suffering Fritzi out once more to seek a *droschke*. Into this she packed Grizel, seeing that she was warm and comfortable. Then she bade her *Auf wiedersehn* and went back into the pension, shutting the door firmly behind her.

Oh, that weary journey! Grizel hated it the whole time. She couldn't fix her mind on her book, for she was too worried over what Frau Betts had said about Miss Maynard's anger to trouble with it. She positively shivered when she learned that they were nearing Neuhausen, the station for the Falls, and for a moment she felt as if she would have preferred to stay where she was. However, cowardice was not one of Grizel's faults, so she pulled herself together and left the train as bravely as she could. At the other side of the barrier she saw Miss Maynard waiting for her—a very grave Miss Maynard, who made no comments, good, bad, or indifferent, on her behaviour, but simply bade her hurry up and get into the sleigh that she had hired.

Grizel did as she was told in a dreary silence, and no word was spoken till they reached the hotel. There she was bidden to get out, and go in at once. In the vestibule she waited till Miss Maynard joined and, still in that terrifying silence, led her to the room where Joey and the Robin awaited them.

At sight of Grizel the Robin ran forward, out Miss Maynard stopped her.

'No, Robin; not yet.—Take off your things, Grizel. Put them on that sofa for the time being. Now I want an explanation of your conduct.'

Grizel stood there, twisting her fingers together. 'I—I'm very sorry,' she said.

'I hope you are,' said Miss Maynard, still in that grave, cold voice. 'You have given us all, Frau Betts, Joey, and myself, a very anxious time. You have given us needless trouble, and added to our length of journey. If you have any real reason for doing so, please let me hear it. If there is anything that will serve as an excuse for your conduct, I want to hear it.'

Grizel stood there, fighting desperately with her tears.

Joey saw it, and braved the mistress's wrath. 'Grizel,' she said, 'I honestly didn't mean to put your back up. If it was what I said made you do it, it's my fault as much as yours. I *am* a tactless ass!'

It was a way out; but Grizel had her code, and she stuck to it. 'It was my own idiocy, Joey,' she said.

'But I expect it was my being so beastly about it made you go on and do it,' urged Joey, whose soft heart couldn't bear to see Grizel look so unhappy. 'Word of honour, Miss Maynard,

I'll bet it was me as much as anything! You know what I am!'

Miss Maynard looked at her. 'Yes, Joey, I know. But Grizel——'

She got no further, for Grizel interrupted her. 'It wasn't really Joey at all! I wanted to go, so I just—went. It's like that time I went off to climb the Tiernjoch. You'd think I'd have learnt a little sense from that, but I haven't! I'm awfully sorry, Miss Maynard. I simply didn't think. I know I'm not fit to be head-girl now.'

'Oh, tosh!' said Jo easily. 'Of course you are. Maynie will forgive you 'cos you are sorry —won't you, Maynie?'

Miss Maynard shook her head. 'It's not so easy as all that, Jo. As Grizel herself truly says, if she can go off like this for a mere whim, then she *isn't* fit to be Head at the Chalet School. We've got to feel we can depend on our head-girl.'

'Well, you will on Grizel after this,' declared Joey. 'Anyhow, this isn't school-time—it's hols! So do let it go at that, won't you? I'm sure Madge would.'

'Do you think so?' asked Miss Maynard, with a smile.

'Yes. She always trusts us to carry on and do our best. Look at the times she's forgiven *me* for doing mad things!'

'I shall have to tell her,' said Miss Maynard, taking a sudden decision. 'It will lie in her hands, Grizel. Meanwhile, we had better go and have *Kaffee*. Our train goes at six, and I want to see about one or two things. As far as I am concerned, the thing is shelved for the moment. But give me your word that you will stay here till I tell you.'

'Guide's honour she will,' said Jo, promising for her. 'Won't you, old thing?'

Grizel flushed deeply. Her behaviour had scarcely been Guide-like that day.

Luckily the Robin created a diversion by flinging herself on the girl. '*Pauv'* Grizel,' she murmured, in the French that was her native tongue.

Grizel picked her up and hugged her, thankful to hide her face among the black curls for a minute or two. When she looked up again Miss Maynard had gone off to see the manager about *Kaffee* and a picnic basket, for they would not get into Innsbruck till the next day. Nothing further was said, and they embarked on the last part of their journey very peacefully.

Only Joey referred to the bone of contention. 'It's hard luck to have been in the place and never seen the Falls,' she lamented.

Miss Maynard did not answer her, and Grizel buried herself in her book. She felt she had had enough of the Falls of Rhine to satisfy her for a very long time to come.

CHAPTER V.
HOME AGAIN.

'Innsbruck at last! What ages it has seemed since the tunnel! Buck up, Robinette! We're nearly in! Pack up, Grizelda! We're almost there! Oh! hurrah for dear little Innsbruck and Madge.'

It was Joey, of course. The rest of the party got their things together in more orderly fashion, while she hung out of the window, talking and gesticulating wildly as the great train swept through the suburbs of Innsbruck, and finally slowed down by the platform. Standing waiting on it was a slight, graceful girl—she looked no more—clad in long green coat with big fur collar turned up, and a soft green hat. Her face was flushed with excitement, and as her dark eyes encountered the wildly waving Jo at the window they glowed with welcome. The next minute the train had stopped, and Joey made a wild dive along the corridor and nearly fell down the steps into her sister's arms. 'Madge—Madge, old thing! It's topping to see you again!'

'It's splendid to see you, Joey,' replied the voice she loved better than any other sound in the world. 'You've grown again, you monkey! You're as tall as I am now!' Madge Russell looked with a smile at the clever, sensitive face on a level with her own, and then turned to greet the others. 'Robin! My little Cecilia Marya! Have you had a good time, *mein Vöglein*?'

The Robin, clasped tightly in the arms that had come to take the place of her mother's, tucked her curly head into 'Tante Marguérite's' neck, and squeezed her rapturously. 'Oh, so nice! Tante Marguérite, *bien aimée*, I do so *love* you!'

'Well, leave a little of me for the others, my pet!' laughed Mrs Russell as she set the little girl down and turned to greet Miss Maynard and Grizel.

The latter flushed under the welcoming kiss, but her ex-Head didn't notice it, for she was shaking hands with Miss Maynard, and asking questions as to their journey. 'Did you have a good time, Mollie? Decent fellow-travellers? We just got back from Vienna two days ago. Jem had to go, of course, and I joined him there last week. It was so jolly. We stayed with the von Eschenaus—they are back again. And I've got some news for you all. Wanda is betrothed.'

'Who to?' demanded Joey as they all moved to the barrier.

'A young officer in her father's regiment.'

'Gee! How priceless! Fancy Wanda engaged! That makes two of our old girls! First Gisela, and now Wanda! When's she to be married?'

'In the summer. I met him while we were there, and he is a charming young man. He adores Wanda, and she him, so I think they will be very happy.' Madge Russell, happily married herself, smiled reminiscently. 'You will hear all about it from Maria when term begins. She was wildly excited about it. Wanda is very sweet, and is longing for the spring to come. They mean to pay us a visit at Briesau then. She wants to show him her English school, and he is very anxious to see it.'

Joey sighed. 'It's awfully nice for them, of course—I mean Gisela and Wanda. But it does seem as though we were all growing up frightfully quickly! Don't you think they are too young, Madge?'

'Gisela is twenty and Wanda is nineteen. Girls marry young out here, Joey. And at least we shall have Gisela fairly near us. I am so glad Gottfried Mensch decided to join Jem at the

Sonnalpe. I shall like to have my first head-girl living next door, so to speak.' She smiled at the new head-girl as she spoke, but Grizel looked very grave. She was wondering whether she would be allowed to follow in the footsteps of Gisela Marani now. Luckily the Robin tugged at Mrs Russell at that moment, so the girl's expression passed without comment for the moment, though Madge Russell had noticed it, and wondered what it meant.

'Tante Guito'—the Robin sometimes abbreviated the longer name this way—'are we to stay with Onkel Riese and Tante Gretchen?'

Madge laughed at the 'Uncle Giant,' a name of Joey's bestowing on the kindly father of two of the Chalet School girls, who had been a great friend of theirs ever since the school had been opened. Then she nodded, 'Yes, littlest and best! They would have come to meet us, but they thought I should like you to myself at first.'

'Where's Jem?' asked Joey.

'He had to go back to the Sonnalpe at once,' explained his wife as she tucked the Robin into the big sleigh which was awaiting them in the Bahnhof Platz, and which they had reached by this time. 'He is looking forward to seeing you all to-morrow. You are to come to us for the rest of the week, you know.'

'Good!' Joey heaved a rapturous sigh, and then sank down into her corner on the other side of her sister.

'Has Mademoiselle come back yet?' asked Miss Maynard as she took her seat facing them, with Grizel by her side.

'Yes; she arrived yesterday. Simone is with her, but Renée has a sprained ankle, so Madame Lecoutier is keeping her at home till half-term. Then she will bring her, and see the school for herself. Cosy, Robin?'

'Yes, thank you,' replied the Robin, slipping her hand into the slender one at her side. 'Tante Marguérite, have Gisela and Gottfried arranged for their wedding yet?'

'Yes; that's another piece of news for you. But Gisela was to be at Maria Hilfe to welcome you, so I am going to leave her to tell you all about it. She wants you three to be her bridesmaids, with Frieda and Maria, I know. Wanda is to be married in August too.'

'Shall we go to Wien for that?' asked Joey anxiously. 'I hope it won't be late, or it will cut up my time with Elisaveta. Have you any idea of the date, Madge?'

'It will be during the first week,' said Mrs Russell. 'As for cutting up your visit to Belsornia, Elisaveta will be there too, and I expect you will go back with her. At least the King said so when he wrote to tell me about it.'

'That's good; I suppose Wanda will have a very swish wedding. Where will Gisela be married, do you think? In the Hof-Kirche?'

Madge refused to commit herself. She had no idea where Gisela's wedding was likely to take place. Joey must wait and find that out from the bride-elect herself.

By this time they were driving down the Friedrich-Hertzog Strasse, making for the bridge, for the Maria Hilfe is a suburb across the river, at some little distance from the actual city. Joey looked out at the busy streets, where sleighs were going about crunching the crisp snow under their shining runners and filling the air with the silvery jangle of bells. The celebrations of Christmas and New Year were over, but the shops still had a gay appearance, and the good-natured Tyroleans still wore a festive aspect. The snow lay thick on the ground and the steep roofs, and gave what the English girls were wont to call a 'Christmas card' air to the town. It was early afternoon, but already the short winter day showed signs of fading into dusk, and some of the shop windows were already lighted up. They turned down the Markt-Platz, and in

a few minutes they were going smoothly along by the side of the Inn, which lay still and black under its coating of ice. Across the fine stone bridge they turned, and then they drove up the long Mariahilf Strasse to the door, where two tall, pretty girls of twenty or thereabouts were standing, eagerly awaiting them.

'Here at last!' exclaimed the taller and fairer of the two as the sleigh stopped, and Joey scrambled out to be seized and kissed warmly by both. 'And our little bird! How well thou art, *mein Blümchen*!'

The Robin, well accustomed to endearments, held up her face for a kiss before she ran into the house, and began to skip up the stairs. It was a long way up, for the Mensches' flat was on the third floor, and the stairs were steep and narrow. At length she was there, and springing into the arms of a slight, fair girl of fifteen. Frieda Mensch was much smaller than the rest of her family, typically German, with long flaxen plaits on her shoulders, blue eyes, and an apple-blossom skin. She was very pretty, though by no means as attractive looking as her elder sister, who followed a minute or two later with Joey. Bernhilda, with her corn-coloured hair in a coronal of plaits round her head, was charming enough to have stood for one of the princesses in *Grimm's Tales*. She was a good head taller than her sister, and carried herself with the same easy grace so noticeable in Joey and Grizel. A door opened at Frieda's joyful exclamations, and Frau Mensch, very fat, very fair like her daughters, and with one of the kindest faces in the world, rolled out and caught the visitors in a close embrace. 'But how we have missed you, my children! There seemed to be something lacking in our joy this Christmas. *Die Grossmutter* has wearied for your return; she is in the salon now. Come, my children, and greet her.'

She led the way to the long narrow salon where a tiny old woman, Herr Mensch's mother, was sitting by the big white porcelain stove. Old Frau Mensch was only two years short of her century, and she was very frail, but her eyes still snapped with aliveness, and she made herself felt in the little household. Joey went up to her, curtseying first in the pretty, old-fashioned way the old dame liked, and then offering her hand. The Robin followed her example, but she was kissed and crooned over. Nearly seventy years had passed since Frau Mensch had lost her one little daughter, and the Robin possessed the same rosy face and dark eyes and hair of baby Natalie, who had gladdened the world for seven short years before she had gone to the Paradise of little children.

Then the others came in, and there was a general rejoicing for the next few moments. But once that was over Frau Mensch the younger—Tante Gretchen, as the girls had learned to call her—swept them all off for a meal, which she was sure they needed after their journey.

Joey heaved a sigh of joy as she settled down to a bowl of soup and a big slice of rye bread, which she loved. 'English food's all very well,' she said, 'but I love what we have here. I used to get so bored with the white bread. I *love* this!' She took a large bite out of her slice, and beamed on them all.

'Joey, you needn't act so like a little pig,' said her sister severely. 'Even if you *are* glad to get back, I think you might have a little less to say about your food!—I hope she didn't behave like this in England, Grizel?'

She purposely included the elder girl in the conversation. That there was something wrong with Grizel was patent to anyone. What it was, Mrs Russell had made up her mind to find out before they were all very much older. Now, as the girl shook her head, she bit her lips. What *could* be the matter? However, it was no time to ask questions now, so she turned to Miss Maynard with some idle remark about the journey.

‘Quite simple,’ was the answer. ‘Paris was delightful, and we had a good time seeing the shops at Basle.’

‘I thought you meant to stay longer,’ said Mrs Russell. ‘Why did you leave it so soon?’

‘It was pouring with snow,’ said Joey hastily. ‘You never saw anything like it! If it’s going to be bad weather, it’s best to be at home, *I* think!’

Madge frowned. Then she decided to say nothing, though Jo’s rudeness in bursting in like this on her conversation with Miss Maynard was both unusual in her and outrageous. As for Grizel, she had no more to say, but ate her soup and bread, and drank the coffee which Bernhilda set before her. The meal was a compromise between *Mittagessen* and *Kaffee*, since it came at three o’clock—fifteen, if you are going to count time as the Continentals do. When it was over, the girls went off together for a chat, and the Robin, who was sleepy, was tucked up on the sofa to take a nap. Frau Mensch had some household tasks to see to, so she went out, leaving the other two together after excusing herself. She had barely closed the door behind her when Madge Russell turned eagerly to the other. ‘Mollie! What is the matter? What happened at Basle? I’m sure something did, or you would never have come off so suddenly. Why on earth did you go to Schaffhausen at this time of year? I got the shock of my life when I got your wire from there saying you were coming back at once. And what is wrong with Grizel? Has she been doing anything she ought not?’

Miss Maynard frowned. ‘It’s difficult to tell you, my dear. Yes, Grizel has been as mad as usual. I thought she was cured of wanting to go off on expeditions of her own, but evidently she isn’t. As for Schaffhausen, it was her doing we went there. The monkey ran away to see the Falls of Rhine yesterday morning without saying anything about where she was going, though she and Joey had had a battle royal over it the night before. At least, as far as I can gather, that’s what happened. Jo seems to think that it was partly her fault that Grizel went off as she did. I don’t know. There may be some truth in it. She’s not exactly tactful on occasion. It’s quite possible she did say things that put Grizel’s back up. At the same time, Grizel has no excuse for going off as she did. If it hadn’t been for what Jo was able to tell me, I shouldn’t have known where she had gone. Then, when she was half-way there, the silly child seems to have repented, and turned back—without wiring to let us know that she was returning. The result was that I packed up and took the other two off to Schaffhausen to seek her, and was met on the platform by a wire from Frau Betts saying that Grizel was there, and asking what they were to do. I wired them to send her on by the next train. She was very penitent, I must say, and has behaved very well since then. But honestly, my dear, I think we shall have to reconsider making her head-girl. It seems to be impossible to place the smallest reliance on her.’

Madge sighed. ‘Poor child! That’s what’s wrong with her, of course. She’s dreading being degraded. I can’t decide yet, Mollie; it’s altogether too big a thing. And it’s quite true that Jo can be horribly tactless when she is roused. I wish I knew what to do!’ She got up, and began to pace backwards and forwards.

Miss Maynard watched her. She saw the difficulties, of course; but she was not blessed with much imagination, and she did not know Grizel so well as the ex-Head did. To her way of thinking, it would be very unwise to risk having such a girl as head-girl of the school. ‘It’s hard luck on Grizel,’ she agreed; ‘but what else are you to do?’

‘I can try her again,’ said Mrs Russell briefly.

‘My dear, how often have we done that already? Grizel has always been a problem. It seems to be the most difficult thing in the world for her to submit to authority! And this isn’t

the first time she's run away to gratify her own self-will, remember!'

'The trouble with Grizel is that she had far too much authority over her for four years. The second Mrs Cochrane has always resented her existence, you know, and she scarcely allowed the child to call her soul her own. I think it's that which makes her difficult at times now; and when I'm tempted to be angry with her, and deal strictly with her, I remember that. It's often the only way I've been able to make allowances for her.'

'But other children are made to be obedient,' Miss Maynard reminded her. 'Where would you find parents expect more unquestioning obedience than with the Maranis? The Mensches are pretty strict, but Gisela and Maria have been taught the most unquestioning and absolute obedience. And it's the same with most of our girls—the continental ones, at any rate. Evadne is a handful, I admit; and the Stevens are not as instantly obedient as most of the others. Still, it's no bad thing for a child. I like it better than the calm disregarding of orders that one gets nowadays from children.'

'So do I,' returned her friend. 'The trouble is that Grizel was thoroughly spoilt by her grandmother for five years before her father's second marriage. Then, though our girls have been taught to obey on the word, they aren't nagged at. That's bad for anyone, and it is Mrs Cochrane's chief failing.'

'Well, what are we to do? I know that she expects to be degraded. If you think we ought to try her again, I am quite willing. Only I do hope she's learnt her lesson *this* time, and will play no more such wild pranks. I know you think me very hard, but I *cannot* see how any girl of nearly eighteen can be so mad!'

Mrs Russell nodded. 'I know. But it's just Grizel. I will have a talk with her, and see what she says, and, of course, we must consult Mademoiselle. Then, if you and she agree, I think we must give the child a last chance. I *don't* want to degrade her. That sort of thing sticks, and it might harm her more than it would do her good. She is a difficult girl. These complex characters always are.'

The door opened at that moment, and Grizel herself came in. She had slipped away from the others, and had come to learn her fate, if possible. She came across the room with lagging steps, her cheeks burning. 'Has Miss Maynard told you, Madame?' she faltered.

'Told me what?' asked Mrs Russell.

'About my running away to Schaffhausen? I know it was a mad thing to do, but I wanted to see the Falls of Rhine so much, and I didn't think.'

Miss Maynard got up and left the room. She felt that it would be easier for Grizel to make her confession if she were alone with the Head—for so they all thought of Mrs Russell, though she had left the school a term before.

That lady now nodded as she looked keenly at the girl. 'Yes, Grizel. She has told me. I am very disappointed in you.'

Grizel's lips quivered. 'I'm awfully sorry, Madame. I just didn't think.'

'That is the trouble with you, Grizel,' said Madge gravely as she drew the girl down on a chair beside her. 'You *don't* think; and so you give everyone endless trouble. Do you think that a girl who doesn't think in this way ought to be our head-girl?'

Grizel shook her head. She couldn't speak, for she was fighting desperately for self-control. If she had spoken, she must have cried.

'I want you to have another chance,' said Mrs Russell quietly. 'Miss Maynard and I are going to talk it over with Mademoiselle. If she agrees, we will try you for this term. But

remember, Grizel, if it should be decided to try you, it will really be your last chance this time. I dare not hurt the school for the sake of one girl.'

She dismissed the girl after that, but Grizel went away happier than she had come. She knew that kind-hearted Mademoiselle Lapâttre would agree to giving her this chance, and she felt that she would not be degraded this time. But she knew that she must be very careful. Also, she felt more thoroughly ashamed of herself than ever before. Mrs Russell had said little, but that little had gone home.

CHAPTER VI.
THE PREFECTS' MEETING.

In the pretty prefects' room, Grizel sat alone. It was Saturday afternoon—the first Saturday of term, and she was to hold her first prefects' meeting. She had been looking forward to it, but now that it was here she felt sudden doubts as to whether she would be able to manage as well as her predecessors had done. Sitting there by herself, she went over them in her own mind. Tall, graceful Gisela, with her wide common-sense and her quiet tact, which had helped to bring her through that first test year; big, steady Juliet, who had been the Head's right hand, and the beloved of all the juniors; pretty Bette, who had had only one term of office, but had proved in that term that she, too, possessed the something which goes to make leaders. Yes; they were a fine trio to follow, and she must work hard if she meant to rise to their level. For once in her life Grizel saw herself with open eyes; saw how her actions really looked. She did not like it. Something foreign to it came into her charming face as she sat there, looking unseeingly out of the window that gave on to the long narrow valley which runs into the mountains from the shores of the Tiern See. She vowed to herself that she would make good in this term of trial. She would *not* let Miss Bettany—the old name persisted in spite of the fact that Miss Bettany had been Mrs Russell for nearly six months now—Miss Maynard, or Mademoiselle down, come what might. In her grim determination she clenched her hands and squared her jaw, robbing her face of half its beauty, but giving it an added character.

Well might Rosalie Dene, the second prefect, who entered the room just then, exclaim, 'Grizel! What in the world has happened?'

Grizel's face resumed its normal appearance as she said hastily, 'Nothing! What should have happened?'

'I don't know, I'm sure,' said Rosalie, pulling up a chair to the table and sitting down. 'You looked as if—as if—oh, I don't know! As if you were declaring war on someone.'

'What nonsense!' Grizel laughed, albeit she coloured.

'Well, that's what you looked like,' insisted Rosalie. 'Who's been upsetting you?'

'No one. What an imagination you've got, my child!'

Rosalie shot a quick glance at her, then she decided to change the subject. 'Where do you think the others are? They're late!'

'Here they are,' said Grizel, whose quick ear had heard the sound of light footsteps on the stairs. 'Come along, you people! I was beginning to think you'd forgotten all about it!'

'I am sorry,' said Gertrud Steinbrücke, still as pretty as she had been at the time of another journal of the school. 'I was talking with Mademoiselle about the library, and had not noticed how late it was.'

'And we were getting the middles and juniors started with their hobbies,' added Mary Burnett, a sturdy English girl, with a pleasant face and downright manner. 'Jo, Paula, and Marie are looking after the little ones, and the middles are with Eva and Dorota. Jo says, Grizel, do you want to discuss the magazine at all? Because if so she'll come. But if you don't she'll stay where she is.'

Grizel thought. 'No; I don't think we shall need her this afternoon,' she said slowly. 'We must have a meeting of the committee soon, though. Do you mind running down and telling

her, Mary, old thing? Ask her to find out from the others if they can have a meeting after tea, will you?'

'Righto!' Mary went off on her errand, and the rest of the prefects and sub-prefects settled down.

They made an attractive group as they sat there. There were eight of them. Grizel was head-girl, and looked it in her place at the head of the table. Next her was Rosalie, fair, quiet, and very English-looking. On her other hand was Gertrud, who had taken her place as games captain, and below her, Luigia di Ferara, an Italian girl, who was the eldest of them all, since she would be eighteen in three weeks' time. Below these grandees sat the sub-prefects—Vanna di Ricci, another Italian girl, and a great favourite with everybody; Lisa Bernaldi, the only day-girl to be a prefect; Mary Burnett, when she should come; and Deira O'Hagan, a wild Irish girl from County Cork, whose glowing, dark prettiness told of her Spanish grandmother. Deira was something of a firebrand in the school, for she was hot-tempered, haughty, and very nearly as strong-headed as Grizel herself. The two always sparred when together. They were too much alike in character to get on well. Deira had several good points, however. She might have a quick temper and sometimes sulked, but she was strictly truthful and honourable to a degree, and at least she was not vain. Of the rest, Rosalie was always strongly on the side of law and order, and Mary, who was her cousin, backed her up on all occasions. Gertrud was only anxious to have things as 'English' as possible; Luigia was almost as quiet as Rosalie, and Vanna and Lisa were pleasant girls enough, but they were apt to follow the strongest person present. In Grizel's present mood that was as well. If only the mood would last things should be all right.

Mary came back presently and took her seat, and Grizel stood up to open proceedings. 'This is the new term,' she said slowly. 'We have, unfortunately, lost Bette Rincini, who made such a splendid head-girl last term, and I've got to do my best to carry on the tradition she has left. I will, of course, and I hope you'll all help me.' She paused and looked round at them all, but even Deira was smiling and nodding approval. She went on: 'We had better have the report of last term now, I think, and then we can decide what we are to do this term. Rosalie, will you please read it.'

She sat down, and Rosalie stood up and read out the following report. ' "Last term was a good term. The snow did not come till half-way through November, so we were able to have hockey and netball nearly the whole of the term. Inter-form matches were played, and the Sixth Form came first, with the Fourth second, the Fifth third in hockey. In netball, the Lower Fourth were first, the Second second, and the Third third. During October a party of English schoolgirls were staying at the Stephanie, and they made up a team and challenged us. The game was won by the Chalet School by three goals to one."—That was in hockey,' she added, turning to the others for a minute. 'They also challenged us at netball, and won by seventeen goals to twelve. "In the Hobbies Club good work was done in handcrafts, and an exhibition was held on the last Saturday of term. The cup offered by the staff to the form that did the best and most original work went to the Fifth Form, who gained it through Frieda Mensch's dolls of all nations, and Josephine Bettany's marionette theatre which she had made herself. In the Guides, two girls, Grizel Cochrane and Mary Burnett, won the all-round cord, and Gertrud Steinbrücke, Deira O'Hagan, Josephine Bettany, Paula von Rothenfels, and Marie von Eschenau passed the First Class test. Other Guides did well in the tests exams held at the end of term, ninety-two per cent. passing in these for which they had entered. In folk-dancing we all worked hard, and we learned several new dances, and also began sword-dancing. We did

Flamborough, and hope to do Kirkby this term. The eighth number of our magazine, the *Chaletian*, appeared, and was better than ever. It has been decided to have a copy of each number bound and placed in the school library so that girls may always see how we have progressed since we began it. It was also decided to hold an Old Girls' Day once a year, and this was fixed to come in the summer term, and, if possible, on Madame's birthday, the fourth of July. Our annual Nativity play was given in the new hall, which Herr Braun had built for us during the last summer holidays, and was a great success." That's all,' went on Rosalie, closing the exercise book from which she had been reading. 'It was a fairly full term, though nothing like *some* we've had!'

'No dashing off after kidnapped princesses!' laughed Gertrud, with a reminiscence of the happenings of the summer term, when Princess Elisaveta had been kidnapped by her father's cousin, Prince Cosimo, and Joey had gone after them and rescued her with the assistance of Rufus, the big St Bernard dog, who was part of the Chalet School as much as anyone.

'No floods,' added Grizel; 'nor any fires or raging thunderstorms. It was a dull term on the whole, wasn't it? We've got so into the way of expecting these little accidents that it seems weird when they don't occur! All right, Rosalie, I can't think of a single thing you've left out. Shall we sign it, you people?'

They all agreed, so the book was passed round, and the eight people signed the report.

The next thing was to decide what they were going to do about games for that term. Easter was always rather a difficulty for them. The first few weeks gave them ice sport, but March generally brought the spring thaw with it, and everything was muddy, and skating, ski-ing, and snowball fights had to be taken off the programme. On the other hand, neither netball nor hockey was possible, as the field was more or less a swamp. This meant that something else had to be provided, and it was the prefects' duty to make suggestions. They bent their minds to this task with great goodwill, for it appealed to them all.

'What about tracking games?' suggested Gertrud.

'All right if the thaw is quick. If it isn't, well, it's all wrong,' replied Grizel. 'You know what it's like then—knee-deep in mud! Matey would have a fit if we brought the babes into anything of the kind. As far as that goes, she'd have a fit over any of us. The cleanest person can't help looking like a tramp after tracking through mud and puddles.'

'What about rounders?' suggested Mary.

'Where's the use? If we could have rounders, we could have hockey and netball—netball, anyhow.'

'I suppose it'll resolve itself into our usual walks,' said Rosalie. 'The middles hate them, but it can't be helped, I suppose. That's the only drawback to living here.'

'Well, it's a jolly small drawback!' declared Deira. 'I'd a million times rather be at school here and put up with the thaw than be in a town—even Innsbruck!'

'All the same, I think we ought to try to think of *something* fresh,' insisted Grizel. 'As Rosalie says, the middles hate walks, even when they can break rank and wander. Can't anyone think of something?'

'I have thought of something,' said Lisa shyly, 'but I do not know if we may do it.'

'Well, let's have it, anyway,' said Grizel.

'It is that perhaps we might make expeditions for geography and history at the week-end. Do you think it would be possible? We could not go every week-end, of course, but if the middles knew that they would have a trip to Hall one Saturday to see it, and to learn all they

could from it of history, do you not think they would make fewer objections to a walk the other Saturdays?'

'It's an idea,' said Grizel slowly. 'There's a good deal we could see. We ought to do Innsbruck thoroughly, you know. And then there's Salzburg. And the Stubai glacier. It would be gorgeous if we could. The only thing is, it would cost rather a lot, wouldn't it?'

'Not if we made a large party,' said Vanna, joining in for the first time. 'Surely we could manage it then. The big difficulty to me is how we should get to Spärtz. The railway does not open till May. We should have to walk down the mountain-side, and in thaw time that would not be pleasant. Also, we could not take the juniors.'

'No, there's that to think of too. If expeditions can be arranged for the rest of the school, we must manage something for the babes,' said Grizel slowly. 'They could manage Innsbruck, perhaps—even Hall, they might do. But Salzburg is a longish train journey, and would tire them; and the Stubai is out of the question, of course. But it is an idea, and a jolly fine one. We'll see what the staff say, anyway.'

'Then what can we arrange for the little ones?' asked Rosalie. 'We must have something ready for them, you know, or the other idea will be squashed at once.'

There was truth in what she said, and the eight girlish faces wore heavy frowns in their endeavours to settle this difficulty. One or two suggestions were made, but all had to be rejected. Some of the little ones were very little—no older than the Robin. One or two were delicate; and there was always the fear of Matron before their eyes. 'Matey' was a good sort, but she waged war on mud and dirt of all kinds. It was Mary who made the best suggestion.

'Couldn't they have little expeditions of their own? They love Spärtz. If we could get them down there they could have a good time in the gardens, and there is a good *conditorei* where they could have cakes and coffee. Then they couldn't do as much as we could in one day, so they might take two or even three over Innsbruck.'

'It isn't so much the getting them there as getting them back,' said Grizel thoughtfully. 'It's a long pull up the mountain, and they would be tired to begin with. Even if two of the staff and a pre and a sub-pre were with them it would be a business getting them home again. People like the Robin and Paulo's little sister would be done, and the staff won't agree to anything that's going to keep them in bed all next day—which is what would happen.'

Things were at an impasse, so they decided to leave the question alone and get on to the next business, which was settling duties for the term. Here the first dispute arose. Grizel as head-girl had so much on her hands that beyond taking her turn at prep and cloakroom duty she had no other. Gertrud was Captain of the Games, and that would keep her occupied. Rosalie Dene agreed to undertake stationery, a task which just suited her, for she was orderly and methodical—two very necessary qualities for the work.

'Then, if I may, I will see to break, Grizel,' said Lisa. 'As I am here during school hours only, it will be as well for me to do that.'

'It's a good deal of work,' said Grizel doubtfully. 'Oughtn't you to take turns with someone?'

But Lisa refused to hear of it. She had no evening duties, she said, and no morning work. She would rather do the break duties herself. It meant no more than seeing that every girl got her milk and biscuits, and that the monitress for the week took the staff coffee to the staff-room. Still, it would mean that she would be tied for at least half of every break. However, she was very urgent, so Grizel gave way at last, and it was arranged so.

‘Then, Luigia, will you do library?’ asked Grizel. ‘Joey will help you as usual, I suppose. And Vanna, you had better be music prefect again. You learn with Herr Anserl, and know just how he likes things. Plato needs looking after too,’ she went on, referring to their somewhat eccentric singing-master. ‘Mary, you had better see to the form-rooms, I think, and also the staff-room, if you don’t mind. That leaves hobbies for you, Deira.’

Mary and Vanna had agreed with nods to the duties she assigned them, but Deira was not pleased, and took pains to let them all know at once.

‘I don’t want to be hobbies prefect,’ she said. ‘It’s the most tiresome job of the lot, and you never get a chance to get on with your own work. I don’t like it at all, at all!’ The others stared at her in undisguised amazement. So far, no one had ever objected to any duty given her by the head-girl. It was not the tradition of the school. You simply accepted what was given you, and did your best with it. When Grizel had recovered her breath she said so.

‘I don’t care what you’ve always done,’ said Deira calmly. ‘A change is a good thing sometimes, and I’m not liking the work. Why shouldn’t I be music pre?’

‘ ’Cos Vanna is,’ Grizel told her. ‘She knows Herr Anserl, and you scarcely do—you don’t even have lessons with him. If you did you’d not be talking rubbish about wanting to have more to do with him than you could help!’

‘Deira can have form-rooms if she likes, and I’ll do hobbies,’ said Mary, who was by way of being a peacemaker, and who saw that both Deira and Grizel were likely to have a quarrel if left long to themselves. ‘I don’t mind in the least, Grizel. I’m not doing anything special this term—only going on with my stamps. You know the babes take a lot of time sometimes, and if Deira has anything extra she wants to do it would be rather a trial.’

‘Have you?’ asked Grizel of Deira.

‘No; I haven’t,’ said Deira sulkily.

‘Then you can’t change, Mary.—I’m sorry you don’t like being hobbies pre, Deira, but all the other jobs are settled. Besides, anyhow, I don’t see why you want to argue about it. The rule here is that the head-girl settles the work, and the others simply take on.’

‘ ’Tis a rotten rule, it is, then!’ responded Deira with spirit. ‘I’m not agreeing with it at all, at all, Grizel Cochrane! Why should you choose for us, as if we were kids?’

‘Because I happen to be head-girl,’ Grizel told her firmly.

‘Don’t be silly, Deira,’ said Rosalie. ‘We’ve always settled things this way, and no one ever made a fuss about it before! You didn’t object last term yourself.’

‘Ah, Bette was head-girl then,’ said Deira.

‘So you’re making this fuss just because *I’m* head-girl now?’ said Grizel. ‘Well, you can go on making a fuss, but you’ll be hobbies pre till the end of term. And so I tell you!’

‘And I won’t do it! And so I tell *you*!’ retorted Deira. ‘ ’Tis a tyrant you are, Grizel Cochrane! I’m not going to put my neck under your heel!’

‘Nobody asked you! Don’t be so absurd!’ said Grizel crossly. ‘And if you won’t be hobbies pre, then you won’t have any job at all! You can either take it or leave it You’ll be the only one of us left out, anyway.’

Fire flashed in Deira’s grey eyes, and her face was flushed with passion. What might have happened next there is no saying, but just then the Robin knocked at the door. ‘Please, it is *Kaffee*, and Miss Durrant says will you have it up here, or have you finished your meeting, and will you come downstairs?’

‘We’ll have it up here, Robin,’ said Grizel. ‘Will two of you go and fetch it, please? Now, Deira,’ she went on, turning to the girl as Mary and Vanna followed the Robin out of the

room, ‘I’m sorry I didn’t know before you disliked being hobbies pre, but it can’t be helped now. Next term, if you *still* want it, you can have a shot at music, if you like. For this term the duties are arranged, and will have to stay put. I showed the list to Mademoiselle last night when Madame was down, and they both saw it, and said it was all right. Of course, they couldn’t know how you would object. If they had, I dare say they would have asked me to alter it! As it is, they didn’t, and it’s signed. Madame won’t be down for a fortnight now, so it will have to stay. *Don’t* do your duty if you feel all that bad about it. I dare say we can manage. But it’ll be rotten of you if you don’t!’

Deira turned white, and her eyes gleamed black with rage. She felt the sarcasm that edged Grizel’s voice throughout this last speech, and she also knew that the head-girl had the whip hand. Mrs Russell was no longer working Head of the school, but she still took part in it, and all lists were signed by her, and all big arrangements had to be discussed with her. Mademoiselle Lapâttre had insisted on that before she had agreed to become the nominal Head. If Madame, as they still loved to call her, were not coming from the Sonnalpe for a fortnight, then the lists must remain as she had passed them. All the same, Deira was very angry. She had protested, not so much because she disliked the work, as because she objected to Grizel’s rather dictatorial manner. Her protest had not worked, but she loved Grizel none the better for that.

‘If I must, I must,’ she choked out at length. ‘All the same, Grizel Cochrane, I’ll be even with you yet!’

‘Rats!’ said Grizel briefly, and began to discuss prep and cloakroom duties with them as if nothing had happened. Deira made no attempt to listen. She was too angry.

Mary and Vanna brought in *Kaffee und Kuchen*, their afternoon meal, and they were all too busy settling days and work to notice how silently the Irish girl sat through their discussion. She agreed mechanically to taking Saturday duty, which was the lightest of the lot, without noticing which day was hers. She drank her coffee and ate the cakes they passed her without realising what she was eating or drinking. Her temper was aroused, and she was resolved to make Grizel Cochrane smart for what she had said before many hours were over.

When the meeting had ended, and Lisa had gone home with her father, who had called to fetch her, most of the prefects went off to their dormitories to change into light frocks, as they were going to dance that evening. Grizel was left behind, and Gertrud stayed with her.

‘I wish you had not spoken to Deira quite as you did, Grizel,’ said the Austrian girl rather nervously, for she did *not* like speaking about it at all to Grizel, who was quite likely to turn on her. But Gertrud felt that Deira was up to something, and she ought to warn Grizel.

Grizel looked at her frowningly. ‘I rather wish I hadn’t myself,’ she owned; ‘but she does rile me so! After all, Gertrud, I couldn’t have given in. It isn’t the way we do.’

‘No; but you were very sarcastic,’ said Gertrud bravely. ‘She is angry, Grizel.’

‘Well, let’s hope she gets over it quickly,’ said Grizel. ‘Oh, Gertrud, I wish Bette had stayed on! I didn’t want to be head-girl one bit! But if I’m it, I’ll *be* it!’ she added.

Gertrud said nothing. There seemed to be nothing to say.

Grizel slipped an arm through hers. ‘Gertrud, I couldn’t alter things like that! You *do* agree with me there, don’t you?’

‘Oh, yes; I agree with that,’ said Gertrud readily. ‘But, Grizel, Deira is very angry, and she does bad things when she is angry. She is sorry after, I know; but it never stops her from doing them the next time she is—how do you call it?—upset.’

Grizel stood still, a funny look on her face. This description might have fitted her, and she knew it. ‘Well, it’s done now,’ she said finally. ‘But I will try to keep out of her way and not make things worse.’

With that she dragged Gertrud off to change, but though she seemed to be one of the gayest that night she couldn’t help thinking over Gertrud’s words: ‘She is very sorry after, but it never stops her from doing them the next time she is upset.’

She wished she had kept her temper, and *not* been sarcastic about those lists.

CHAPTER VII.
DEIRA GETS HER OWN BACK.

'Has anyone seen my manuscript book?' asked Grizel Cochrane abruptly, coming into the big form-room on Sunday afternoon.

The middles, who were all there, stared at her.

'Your manuscript book, Grizel? No, I haven't,' said Margia Stevens at length, since Grizel was looking at her. 'When did you have it last?'

'It was in my music locker on Friday,' replied Grizel. 'I put it away just before afternoon school, and, as I was in a hurry, I slipped a letter from home into it. Now I can't find it, and I want it—at least I want that letter.'

'Did you have a letter? Lucky you!' said Margia.

'It was an old one,' said Grizel briefly. 'Don't any of you know where the wretched thing is?'

They all assured her that they did not, so she left them to their devices and went off to hunt through all the lockers in case she had slipped her book into the wrong one. Mademoiselle came along while she was engaged, and stopped in sheer astonishment at the sight. 'Grizel!' she cried in her own language, 'what are you doing here?'

'I am looking for my manuscript book, Mademoiselle,' explained Grizel, lifting a flushed face.

'But this is Sunday! You cannot do harmony on Sunday!' protested Mademoiselle.

'Oh, it wasn't for that I wanted it,' said Grizel, rising from her knees to stand before the nominal Head of the school. 'I left a letter in it, and I want the letter. I thought I had put the book into my locker, but it isn't there, so I was looking to see if I had made a mistake and put it into someone else's, as I was in rather a hurry.'

'Yes, *ma petite*; in that case you may look for the book,' said Mademoiselle, passing on and leaving Grizel to go on with her hunt—a fruitless hunt, as it proved to be.

Wherever that book was, it wasn't in the music lockers. Finally Grizel gave it up and went to turn out her desk, though she was certain she had not carried her harmony into form with her.

Gertrud came in as she was busy, and opened her eyes widely.

'It's my wretched manuscript book,' explained Grizel once more as she ran through a pile of exercise books. 'I simply can't find the thing! It seems to have vanished off the face of the earth!'

'But harmony!' protested Gertrud.

The rule about work on Sunday was strictly kept at the Chalet School. No lessons at all might be done then. In the mornings the girls went to the little Roman Catholic chapel if there was a service—all of them that were Catholics, that is. The rest had a little service of their own in one of the form-rooms. In the afternoon they were free to amuse themselves with books, puzzles, or painting. The little ones had to lie down for an hour, and any girl who seemed to need it was also sent off. After *Kaffee und Kuchen* Mademoiselle took the Catholics, and Miss Maynard had the English Church girls for an hour, and they had quiet talks together. After that they were free once more till bedtime. Margia Stevens in her first term at the school had told her mother that they had 'such gentle Sundays.' The quaint epithet

best describes the day too. The girls were never likely to forget their Sundays at the Chalet School. Hence Gertrud's surprise at Grizel's statement.

The head-girl knew what was passing in her mind, and laughed. 'Oh, it isn't harmony, my dear; only I left a letter of Grannie's—the last she ever wrote me—in it, and I want that letter.'

Gertrud's pretty face softened. Everyone knew that Grizel had loved her grandmother, who had died two years previously, and who had adored and petted her. The Austrian, emotional as most of her race are, felt a deep sympathy with the English girl, though she knew better than to say so. Grizel was not sentimental, and hated any show of sentiment. She kept that particular letter because in it was a good deal of gentle, loving advice which she very seldom followed, it is true, but which she liked nevertheless.

'Perhaps the book has been taken to our room,' suggested Gertrud practically, that being the only sort of sympathy Grizel would permit. 'Shall I go and see?'

'It's awfully good of you, but I think I'll go myself. Come, though, if you like.'

Gertrud slipped an arm through her friend's, and they went upstairs together. In the prefects' room they found Vanna, who was writing letters, and Deira, who was reading. The Irish girl scowled as the two came in, and turned her back on them. Vanna, deep in her home letter, took no notice of them as they hunted through the cupboard, and then went through the long, low book-shelves that ran along the wall at one side.

'It isn't here,' said Gertrud at length, when the most consistent search had proved that, wherever the missing book was, it wasn't in the room. She spoke in low tones out of consideration for the other two, and they never heard her.

'Where on earth can it be?' said Grizel, a puzzled frown on her face. 'I'm *sure* I put it into my locker, because I remember I had finished all my harmony for Herr Anserl, and I put it there to be ready for Monday. If I bring it up here, I nearly always forget to take it to my lesson, and nothing makes him madder than to wait while I go and fetch it. As they were ghastly exercises, all on suspended ninths, I thought it would be as well not to make him more furious than I could help. I wasn't too sure of any of them. I *know* I put it there with my music; and now it's gone!'

'Perhaps it has fallen out and been put into lost property,' suggested Gertrud.

'It might. I'll go and see. Who has the key? Whose week is it?'

'Deira's,' said Gertrud, after a glance at the neatly written list on the notice board.

Grizel turned to Deira. 'I beg your pardon, Deira,' she said, 'but may I have the key to lost property?'

'It's hanging up beside the board there,' mumbled Deira, not looking up from her book.

Grizel, thinking that Deira was still angry over yesterday, took no notice of her manner, but got the key and went off. Gertrud did, however, and remained where she was, looking at the Irish girl with a frown. Grizel came back in five minutes' time, empty-handed, and hung up the key on its nail. 'No; it wasn't there,' she said. 'I can't imagine where it can have got to.'

'What are you looking for?' asked Vanna, who had roused out of her letter by this time, and was taking an interest in proceedings.

'My harmony book. You haven't seen it, by any chance?'

'No; not since you had it on Friday,' said Vanna. 'But harmony, Grizel?'

'It's the book I want. There's an old letter in it—that's all.'

At this Deira started and went white.

Gertrud noticed it. 'Deira, have you seen Grizel's book?' she asked.

Deira faced her and remained silent. She hardly dared tell the truth, and she could not lie over the matter.

Grizel's attention was now attracted to her. 'Deira! Do you know where it is?' she asked sharply.

'Not now,' said Deira, almost inaudibly.

'Not now? What on earth d'you mean?' demanded Grizel impatiently.

Her impatience had one good effect. It made Deira speak up. 'I meant what I said. I haven't the least idea where it is at this moment. On the ash-heap, I should think.'

'The ash-heap? What on earth are you talking about?' Grizel had gone paler, and her eyes were beginning to look steely.

'Well, isn't that where the ashes are thrown?' Deira spoke defiantly, but inwardly she was feeling anything but defiant.

'Ashes? D'you mean you've *burnt* it?' Grizel was white now, and her lips were set in a thin straight line. She looked suddenly older, and Deira felt frightened at this result of her own temper. However, she wasn't going to let Grizel Cochrane know it, so she shrugged her shoulders.

'If you know, why ask?'

'You've *burnt* it?' repeated Grizel, as if she could scarcely believe her ears.

'Yes, I've burnt it! I vowed I'd make you pay for your sarcasm yesterday, and I have! It's fine and early you'll have to be getting up to-morrow, if you want to get that harmony done again before your lesson, Grizel Cochrane!'

'Deira! But how *could* you?' cried Gertrud. 'It was a wicked thing to do! And you have burnt Grizel's letter too! Her letter that she cherished!'

'Oh, dry up!' said Grizel impatiently. 'What does it matter about the letter now it's gone? As for the book, Deira O'Hagan, what right had you to burn school property to satisfy your silly temper? Of all childish things to do, I must say that strikes me as *the* most childish I've ever heard of! The Robin wouldn't do a mad thing like that! Oh, I sha'n't tell!' with unutterable scorn in her voice. 'You needn't be afraid of *that*——'

'I'm not afraid!' retorted Deira. 'If it comes to that, I'll tell myself!'

'Yes; I can see you!' Grizel was realising her loss, and her hot temper boiled up. 'Dash off to Mademoiselle's room now, and tell her that you lost your temper, and did a thoroughly childish, spiteful thing like that just to work it off! I can see you!'

'I will! Do you suppose I care for you, Grizel Cochrane?' raged Deira.

'Girls! What does this mean?' Miss Maynard had come into the room after vainly rapping for admittance, since everyone was too much interested in what was going on to heed anything else.

At the mistress's words Gertrud looked distressed, and Vanna frightened. Grizel uttered a scornful laugh and turned away. Deira, stung to utter fury by that laugh, sprang forward. 'I have been after telling Grizel Cochrane what I think of her, Miss Maynard,' she exploded, becoming more and more Irish as she went on. ' 'Tis not meself would be afraid of her, for all the haughty airs of her. And, since actions spake louder than words, I been telling her 'tis I have burnt her harmony book!'

'You've—*what*?' exclaimed Miss Maynard, startled out of her usual self-possession by this remarkable statement.

'I've burnt her harmony book,' repeated Deira, still too angry to care what happened.

'*Deira!* Have you taken leave of your senses?'

Deira treated this as if it had never been uttered and swept on, ‘ ’Tis not meself’ll be submitting to the tyranny of her, be she fifty times head-girl here, and so I’ve shown her! She may be English—the curse of Cromwell on thim all!’ (this last with a sudden hazy remembrance of her old nurse)—‘but I’m Irish, and there’s niver a one of us fears the tyrant ——’

But by this time Miss Maynard had recovered herself, and she interrupted what promised to be a long harangue on the wrongs of Ireland. ‘Deira, leave the room at once—at once! Go to your dormitory, and don’t leave it till I give you permission.’

Deira glared at her, but Miss Maynard was to be obeyed, and the look the excited girl received from the mistress helped to cool her down considerably. She turned and left the room without another word. Miss Maynard waited till she had gone, and then attended to Grizel. ‘Grizel, will you kindly explain to me the meaning of this *disgraceful* scene? What has happened between you and Deira?’

Grizel shook her head. Tell tales she would not; also, she was too angry to speak.

Seeing how matters stood, Miss Maynard turned to Gertrud. ‘Gertrud, you seem to have kept your head. Will you please tell me what all this is about—and at once?’

‘Grizel and Deira had quarrelled,’ said Gertrud, after a moment’s pause. ‘Deira has burnt Grizel’s harmony.’

‘Is it really true? She really has done such a childish thing?’

‘Yes, Madame, she says she has.’ Poor Gertrud felt miserable over the whole thing.

Miss Maynard stood in silence for a moment. ‘Why has she done this, Grizel?’

‘Deira didn’t like all the arrangements yesterday,’ mumbled Grizel at last, when she had kept the mistress waiting as long as she dared. ‘I made her angry, and this is to pay me out, I suppose.’

‘How did you make her angry?’

‘I—said things.’

Miss Maynard forbore to question further. She sent Grizel off downstairs to the others, and managed to get a more detailed account from Vanna and Gertrud. She got more than she had bargained for; for Vanna, thoroughly frightened, told about the precious letter that must have gone, too, and this helped to explain Grizel’s attitude. When the young mistress had finally got everything there was to get she told the girls to go back to their pursuits, and went off to Mademoiselle to report to her the latest occurrence in the school.

‘And now, what are we to do?’ she asked when she had finished.

Poor Mademoiselle put her hand to her head. ‘I cannot think. I only wish our dear Marguérite had never left us and got married. How to deal with this extraordinary happening I do not know. Deira must be punished, of course, but I fear that will do little good. It will not make her really repentant for what she has done, nor will it return the letter. As for what Herr Anserl will say when he hears about the harmony, I shudder to think!’

‘He’ll roar, I suppose,’ agreed Miss Maynard, meaning it in its most unpleasant sense. ‘He always is noisy over things like that. But Grizel certainly can’t get all that work done over again in time. As for Deira, I think she must have gone mad! Of all idiotic things to do, that strikes me as the most idiotic!’

‘Doubtless, my dear Mollie,’ replied Mademoiselle dryly; ‘but that will not help us in dealing with the matter. Here comes Marie with the coffee. We had better try to forget it for the time being, and take our rest while we can. As for Deira, she had better stay by herself.

Will you go and ask Matron to put her in the sick-room for the rest of to-day. She will be better left alone, I think, till she has had time to realise what she has done. *Entrez*, Marie!'

CHAPTER VIII.
A DEADLOCK.

‘Here’s Madame at last!’ The cry came from Grizel, who had been anxiously watching the mountain path along which their head-mistress must come to reach the school. Thing’s were uncomfortable, and had been since that memorable Sunday when Deira had revenged herself by burning the head-girl’s harmony. Deira had been allowed to join the rest of the school the next day, but she kept by herself, obviously miserable, and speaking to no one.

‘What to do, I know not,’ said Mademoiselle, speaking to a conclave of Miss Maynard, Miss Durrant, who was the junior mistress, and Miss Wilson, who taught general subjects.

‘We had better send for Madame, I think,’ said Miss Wilson thoughtfully.

Miss Maynard shook her head. ‘I don’t think we ought to bother her, if we can help it. The Sonnalpe is a good way away for a tramp in this weather’—it was snowing heavily, and threatening to become a blizzard before long—‘the paths won’t be safe. Also, I do think we ought to settle our own difficulties, if we can.’

‘What I cannot comprehend is Deira’s behaviour,’ said Mademoiselle plaintively. ‘She has a temper, but it is strange that she should cling to a grievance like this. I have not known it happen before.’

‘It’s the Spanish blood in her coming out,’ said Miss Maynard easily.

Luckily for them all, Mrs Russell sent a message by Eigen, the boy who helped with the rough work at Die Blumen, her chalet beyond the Sonnalpe, to say that she was coming down to see Joey, so the matter had been shelved for the time being. Deira found herself left severely alone by the others, and Grizel, anxious to do her best to prove to ‘Madame’ that she had been justified in her forgiveness by being an excellent head-girl, had worried from morning till night about the trouble in the school. She had done what she could to set matters right. She spoke to the Irish girl as nicely as if she had done nothing—which further enraged Deira, who was under the impression that Grizel’s attitude meant that she didn’t care—and fulfilled all her duties as carefully as she could. Joey even accused her of becoming old-maidish, but Grizel was too much taken up with her own concerns to trouble about what an impertinent young person of fifteen said. When at length the day Mrs Russell had fixed for her coming arrived, Grizel spent all her spare time at the window, watching. Joey and the Robin joined her half-way through break, and the three of them were in the prefects’ room, staring up the valley, when the head-girl’s joyful exclamation told them that their expected visitor was coming. Joey promptly tumbled off her perch on the back of a chair, and made for the door, an example closely followed by the Robin. Grizel waited by herself. Slowly, very slowly, she was beginning to see things from other people’s point of view, and she knew that the three would prefer to have their first meeting in privacy.

As it happened, they were all doomed to disappointment, for the bell rang just then, and all three had to go to classes. The Robin heaved a sigh, and trotted off to her own quarters at Le Petit Chalet, the junior house. Joey turned aside from the passage, and went to her form-room, where she proceeded to display the most remarkable ignorance of the doings of Louis the Ninth and his Crusaders; and Grizel went down to the Sixth, and tried to forget her troubles in German literature and ‘Wilhelm Meister.’

Meantime the person so eagerly looked for came up to the gate, which had been built into the high log fence which cut off the school from the rest of the peninsula, opened it, and went quietly up the snowy path to the house, where she was welcomed by Mademoiselle, who drew her into the little room still known as 'Madame's study,' and rang the bell for Luise, the little maid, to bring *Kaffee und Brödchen*. Luise, whose sister Marie had been at the chalet prior to Mrs Russell's wedding, and had now gone to the Sonnalpe to be with her there, trotted off, all beams, and while she fulfilled her commands the two ladies discussed the weather, which had now cleared, and Dr Jem's work.

'Oh, but it's good to be back, Elise!' sighed Mrs Russell, leaning back in her chair and looking round the familiar room with tender eyes. 'I am as happy as can be at the Sonnalpe, but I do miss my girls at times.'

'But you are happy, *ma Mie*?' queried Mademoiselle. 'You would not be without *Monsieur le Docteur*?'

Madge shook her head. 'Oh, no! But the Chalet School is part of me still. You don't know how much I sometimes wish I could be in both places at once! If only Jem could have built his sanatorium down here it would have been ideal. But the Sonnalpe is better for his work, and—and I wouldn't really change, even to be Madge Bettany of the Chalet School again.'

Luise entered at this moment with the little meal, and the two joined in it and more school gossip till the bell rang for the end of morning school. Then Mademoiselle rose, 'You will excuse that I run away, *ma petite*. There are one or two little things to which I must attend before *Mittagessen*. I will send Jo to you.'

She went off, and three minutes later Joey appeared and hugged her sister tempestuously. 'Madge! It's just like old times seeing you here! It was rotten of the bell to ring just when we saw you coming! Just like the thing, though! How long are you going to stay?'

'Three days,' replied her sister. 'Jem has had to go off to Vienna again, so I said I'd rather come here till he comes back. They are full of a new cure for tuberculosis there, and they asked him to attend a meeting of specialists to discuss this thing. I don't know what it is, but it's likely to prove important, and they think it may mean that they can stamp out the disease. I'm sure I hope they will.'

Jo nodded wisely. 'You see a good deal of it up there, don't you, even though you are out of the village? I know it always makes me feel a pig to be so well when I see those poor things up there so jolly brave and plucky!'

Madge smiled at the dear, quaint face with its troubled look, and said, 'You mustn't think about it, Joey. Remember that many of those who come are more or less cured, anyway. And many who have to live there are pretty well. Now, tell me your news.'

'Except for this idiotic fuss with Deira and Grizel, I don't think there is any,' replied Jo, rumpling up her hair with her hand.

'Fuss with Deira and Grizel? *What* fuss?' demanded her sister sharply.

'Oh, it isn't Grizel's fault,' declared Joey. 'I think she's been jolly decent about it all. Only, Deira went mad, and burned her harmony, and her grannie's last letter with it!'

'*What?* This is the first I've heard of this! Sit down, and tell me what it all means!' commanded Madge.

'I can't tell you much more. Deira had a row of sorts with Grizel—don't know what about, though, but I think it had something to do with the Prees. You know what Deira is. She lost her temper, and tried to pay Grizel out by burning her things. *I* think it was an utterly mad thing to do!' stated Miss Bettany, curled up on the sofa by her sister. 'She doesn't seem to

care, either. Grizel has been jolly nice about it, and I know she was upset about the letter. No one can do anything with Deira, and she mopes about all day by herself. None of us want to talk to her, though we're polite, of course. We couldn't be anything else here! Austrians *do* insist on their twopence-half-penny worth of manners! Deira won't say she's sorry, and it's been jolly unpleasant!'

Madge Russell turned matters over in her own mind. She felt glad, on the whole, that she had decided against accompanying her husband to Vienna. During the three days she would be at the school surely she could clear up this trouble. She wondered what had happened to bring about such a state of affairs. Not unnaturally, she felt inclined to blame Grizel herself in the first instance. That young lady had no reputation for making allowances for anyone, and she possessed a sarcastic tongue. It seemed almost certain that she had brought this trouble on herself.

Joey, watching her sister's face, guessed what was passing through her mind, and tried to put matters as straight as she could. 'Madge, I don't think this is Grizel's fault. In fact, the other prees practically say it isn't, though they won't tell *us* what's happened. Grizel has been awfully upset about it all, and she's done her best to straighten it up—honour bright, she has. Only, Deira doesn't seem to want it straightened.'

Madge frowned. 'Are you sure of this, Joey?'

'Positive certain,' declared Joey. 'Honour, Madge. Grizel's been trying to be a decent head-girl, and she's been doing everything she can to keep things running just as they did before. She does lots of odd duty, and is jolly nice to the babes——'

'Joey,' interrupted Mrs Russell, 'haven't you another adverb you can use? Everything's "jolly" with you just now. I don't object to the word, but it gets monotonous when you never use anything else.'

'Well, *very* nice, then,' amended Joey. 'She's not been nearly so sarkey this term, either. Do believe that it isn't her fault, Madge.'

'Do you think I'm condemning her unheard?' asked her sister dryly. 'You've never called me unfair before, Joey.'

Joey crimsoned. 'No; but I think—things—make you feel that—that—that——'

'That—what?' demanded Mrs Russell, as the orator came to a distressed halt.

'Well, that it is more likely to be her fault than Deira's.'

Madge Russell looked at her sister again. Then she nodded. 'You're right, Joey—though I didn't think it of myself. And it *is* unfair!'

'I didn't say so!'

'Not exactly. But you *meant* it, didn't you?'

Jo fidgetted. Then she looked up. 'Yes; I think I did. I can't bear you to be wrong in anything!'

'I'm often wrong, Joey-baba,' sighed her sister, an arm round the slender shoulders. 'I certainly was there!—Listen! Here comes the Robin!'

Joey wriggled away, and stood up as the Robin came racing into the room and flung herself on 'Tante Marguérite' with cries of joy. 'Tante Guito! How lovely to have you again! School isn't so nice without you!'

Mrs Russell kissed the rosy face upturned to hers, and ruffled the short curls as she said, 'You have me in the holidays, *Bübchen*.'

'That's not the same,' said the Robin sagely. 'We want you all the time—Joey an' me!'

'And I want you! Are you being a very good girl, sweetheart?'

‘I was second—but *second* in my form last week,’ said the Robin impressively. ‘And I have no order marks all this term!’

‘Papa will be pleased to hear that. He sent his love to you, my pet, and when Uncle Jem comes home again he will come down for a week-end at the Post, and you and Joey are to stay with him.’

The Robin squeezed her hands together in her joy. ‘But that will be *jolly*!’ she said emphatically.

‘Topping!’ Jo added her comment. ‘Will it be next week-end, Madge?’

‘Yes, I think so. And I am here for three days this time, Robin; and I am going to ask Mademoiselle if I may take my classes again. She tells me that Miss Annersley has a bad cold, so we will send her to sick-room, and give her a rest while I am here.’

The Robin hugged her again as the only possible means of expressing her joy, and the bell rang for *Mittagessen* just when everyone was nicely tousled, for Joey had joined in the hug. They made a frantic rush for the ‘splasheries’ on that, and the two children had to run off to join the others, while Mrs Russell followed more soberly to the staff-room, where she was greeted with acclamations as the staff filed out to go to the *Speisesaal*.

‘You will take your own seat, Madame?’ said Mademoiselle, who was already in her old place, leaving the head of the staff table to the younger woman. Mrs Russell nodded, and went there. Then she said grace, and they all sat down.

It was like old times to sit there, looking down the room at the long tables with the fresh girl-faces turning to her; and yet there were differences. Gisela, Bernhilda, Juliet, Wanda, and Bette were no longer there. Grizel Cochrane sat in the head-girl’s seat, dispensing the soup to the little ones, and Joey was no longer a child. Others had grown up, too, and there were new faces among the little ones. Even the Robin was losing her baby chubbiness, and shooting up into a slim little girl, though she still wore her pretty pinafores. Particularly, Mrs Russell noticed Grizel and Deira. The former looked grave and preoccupied, and the latter was plainly miserable. She merely played with her food, and made no attempt to join in the merry chattering in which even Frölich Amundsen, a new little Norwegian, was managing to take part, though it was French day, and till she came to the school she had never heard a word of French.

Mademoiselle’s eyes followed the girl’s, and she looked very serious, though she said nothing. When the meal was over, however, she caught Deira outside, and brought her back to insist on her eating some of the soup which Luise had kept warm. ‘You must eat, Deira,’ she said firmly. ‘You will make yourself ill if you do not, and that I cannot permit. Please take it, or I shall treat you as if you were an infant like Robin Humphries, and feed you myself.’

Deira took it then, but with a very ill-used air. She escaped as soon as she could, and went off to her own quarters, feeling that the whole world was against her.

Madge Russell had gone up to the prefects’ room, meanwhile, and was having a chat with her girls. They were all delighted to see her, and rejoiced loudly when she told them that she was going to teach during her visit.

‘Oh, Madame! But that will be so nice!’ cried Luigia. ‘It will be as it was before the summer!’

‘I am so glad,’ said Rosalie. ‘We do miss you, Madame.’

‘What books shall we need?’ asked Mary Burnett. ‘It’s literature for us first lesson this afternoon?’

A shout of laughter rose at this; even Grizel joining in.

‘But how like Mary!’ chuckled Gertrud. ‘You are in haste to begin, my dear.’

‘Well, it’s better not to waste any time,’ said Mary in her matter-of-fact way.

‘Shall it be Shakespeare?’ asked Vanna. ‘It is so long since we had a Shakespeare lesson with you, Madame.’

‘Yes; if you like,’ said Madge. ‘What are you doing this term?’

‘*The Tempest*,’ said Rosalie. ‘We’re just finishing the first act.’

‘Very well, then. Bring your *Tempests*, and we’ll go on.’

Grizel produced hers from the shelf, and the others made haste to find theirs. While they were busy, the head-girl turned to the ex-Head of the school. ‘Madame, may I speak to you after school? I do want a talk.’

Mrs Russell looked at her thoughtfully. ‘Yes, Grizel. Come to my study and have *Kaffee* with me, will you? I shall be alone.’

‘Thank you,’ murmured Grizel. ‘It is good of you, Madame. I do want a talk with you.’

Madge looked at her anxiously. The girl was paler than usual, and there where shadows under her eyes. She had been taking this thing hardly.

‘I am sure you are working well in all ways this term, Grizel,’ said Mrs Russell gently. ‘I can see that for myself.’

The colour touched Grizel’s face, but she said nothing more, and the return of the others waving their books put an end to the conversation for the time. Lessons began almost immediately, and in the joy of being at the beloved work of teaching once more, Madge forgot most of the news she had received, and the girls forgot their feud with Deira, who awakened to a little more life under the influence of the old Head.

From the Sixth, which numbered six girls only, Mrs Russell went on to the Fourth, which was the largest form in the school, and there she received a rapturous welcome, and felt herself back in the old days indeed, for not one of her girls was missing, save the little Crown Princess of Belsornia. The afternoon finished up in the First, where the babies, as the older girls called them, were having ‘At the Back of the North Wind’ read to them, with explanations where they were needed. This lasted only twenty minutes, and then the last school-bell rang, and the few day-girls went off to get ready for their walk to the various chalets round the lake where they lived. Mrs Russell retired to her old bedroom, which was still hers, and changed her frock, and brushed out her pretty curly hair before she twisted it up into its usual knot at the back of her head. Then she went down to the study, where she was waylaid by Jo, who wanted to know if she and the Robin might come to *Kaffee*.

Madge shook her head. ‘I’m sorry, Joey, but Grizel is coming, and I want to see her alone.’

Joey’s face fell grievously. ‘Oh, Madge! We do so want to be with you!’

‘I shall go over to put the Robin to bed,’ said her sister quietly. ‘You may come to my room early to-morrow morning.—At least, you may come after six,’ she added hastily.

Jo was given to waking up early, and her interpretation of the time might be earlier than her sister liked.

‘Righto, then,’ said Jo reluctantly. ‘But it’s rotten luck all the same!’

‘Can’t help that,’ said Madge austerely. ‘Grizel needs me more than you do just now.’

‘I wish Deira had been in—her beloved Ireland before she’d behaved like this!’ said Jo. ‘I think she’s an ass!’

‘I can’t help that. And your English, my child, is in sad need of reform.’

Jo grinned. ‘I think you’d better come back, Madge. We can’t get on without you.’

‘Very kind of you, but I have to think of Jem, remember.’

‘You would spend the hols with him,’ suggested Joey.

Madge shook her head laughingly. ‘I’m afraid he would scarcely be contented with that. And I shouldn’t like it either! Now you must run away. Grizel will be here in a minute, and *Kaffee* will be ready for you sooner than that. Run along, baby! You shall have your innings to-morrow morning.’

Joey went off, fairly contented with this promise, and her sister went into the study and sat down. Grizel put in an appearance three minutes later, and then Luise arrived with *Kaffee und Kuchen*, and they were left alone.

Grizel started the ball. She took her coffee from the Head, accepted a cake, and then said nervously, ‘Have you heard of what has happened, Madame?’

‘Do you mean between you and Deira? Yes; Jo told me.’

A little silence followed. Then the girl set down her coffee and turned to the Head. ‘Madame, on my honour as a Guide, I *have* tried!’

Madge looked her full in the face, but the grey eyes never dropped beneath hers, so she said, ‘Give me your version of the story, Grizel. I want to know everyone’s side before I say anything.’

Grizel told her story, and told it very fairly. She admitted that Deira had ‘made her wild,’ and she had been sarcastic about it. ‘But I never meant to make her as mad as this,’ she concluded. ‘I’m awfully sorry, Madame.’

Madge looked at her thoughtfully. ‘You don’t realise what a bitter tongue you have when you are roused, Grizel,’ she said. ‘I am not excusing Deira’s action. It was a piece of most unpleasant revenge, and thoroughly childish into the bargain. But what I want you to realise is that you are by no means blameless. I shall not say any more. I think you have suffered over this, and there is no need for anything else. That is all. I want to tell you now that if you only go on as you have been doing lately, I shall be quite satisfied to have you as head-girl. As for Deira, I will see her presently, and try to put this right. Now, tell me what you have been doing in games so far.’

After that she kept the talk to the games till it was time for Grizel to take prep. She sent the girl off, a different being from the one who had come in at half-past four, and asked her to tell one of the middles to send Deira to her.

Grizel went, happier than she had been since the beginning of term, and for a few minutes Mrs Russell was alone. She got up and wandered round the room, examining her old treasures, till the sound of footsteps outside sent her back to the sofa, and a tap sounded at the door. In answer to her call it opened, and Deira came in.

It was easy to see that the girl was in a bad mood. She dropped her little regulation curtsey, and then stood near the door with a defiant air.

‘Come and sit down, Deira,’ said Mrs Russell cheerily, though she was far from feeling it.

Deira sat down on the edge of a chair, and waited for what was to come in a truculent manner.

Madge Russell promptly tackled her with, ‘Well, are you happy this term?’

‘I’m all right,’ said Deira sulkily.

‘Really and truly, Deira?’

The girl opened her lips to confirm it, but something in the deep brown eyes fronting her checked her speech.

‘Are you *really* happy, Deira?’ repeated the low, musical voice.

Deira sat struggling hard for self-control. She won it, and as her eyes hardened, Madge realised that it was going to be no easy matter to put things right.

'I'm as happy as I want to be,' she said.

'You are easily satisfied,' said the Head. Then leaning forward, 'Deira, you are *not* happy. No girl could be after doing what you have done. Why did you do it, child? It's not like you to bear malice like this. What has Grizel done to you to make you feel like this towards her?'

Deira shut her lips firmly, and sat in stolid silence. Mrs Russell tried every means in her power to get her to talk, but she obstinately refused to say one word, good, bad, or indifferent. Finally, the Head had to give it up. But she had learnt enough to know that in this instance Grizel was comparatively blameless, and she rather wondered that the English girl had managed to show such patience and forbearance.

'You may go, Deira,' she said at length. 'I am disappointed in you.'

Deira went—and stood not upon the order of her going. She just managed to get up to her cubicle before her self-control vanished, and, lying on her bed, she cried heart-brokenly. That last sentence of the Head's had cut home. She would have given anything to have been able to go back to the study and say she was sorry for it all. But she felt she could not do that—yet.

The devil of pride was having it all his own way with poor Deira.

CHAPTER IX.
A QUIET EVENING.

After Deira had gone, Madge Russell went off to fulfil her promise to the Robin, and put that small person to bed. The girls all knew the close bond between the school-baby and their ex-Head, so there would be no question of jealousy. In any case, the Robin went earlier than anyone else, partly because she was nearly a year younger than the other juniors, partly because she was a delicate little mortal. The pretty Polish mother, who was little more than a vague memory to her now, had died in decline, and they were all very careful of her tiny daughter. Care was lavished on the Robin that would have spoilt her, had she not been possessed of a sweet nature and a very low idea of her own importance. Dr Jem had said that, if she was well looked after during her growing years, the chances were that the trouble would pass her by. He had drawn up a régime for her which was strictly adhered to, and she was watched by all the staff. Early bed, plenty of fresh air and milk were the main parts of it. No slightest ailment was neglected, and already she was showing the good results of it. Her lesson hours were shorter than those of the others, for the doctor considered that it was wiser not to keep her too much at books yet awhile. Luckily, she was one of those happy children who seem to pick up knowledge as they live, and she was quite well-advanced for her age. Joey told her endless stories which brought in a good deal of history, for that young person was 'history-crazy,' to quote Grizel. The Robin loved the tales, and took in a good deal of information with them.

She was sitting on her bed pulling off her long stockings when 'Tante Marguérite' appeared, and, at sight of the woman who was mother to her now, she flung down the one she was holding, and scrambled off her perch to fling her arms round Mrs Russell, and croon in low tones, as was her habit when she was very pleased.

'Off the floor with your bare feet, bad child!' cried Madge, picking her up. 'Do you want to catch a cold?'

'No; only I am so pleased to see you, dearest,' replied the small maid, as she rubbed her cheek against the soft curly hair. 'Will you bath me, Tante Marguérite?'

'Bath you, and brush you, and hear your prayers and everything! Come along, sweetness. It's a cold night, and we mustn't waste time. Put on your bedroom slippers, and let me finish undressing you,' replied Madge, diving for the articles mentioned, and presenting them to the child.

The Robin put them on, and then stood still while her clothes were discarded, and she was put into her dressing-gown. The bath was a quick matter, for Tante Marguérite would allow of no playing. It was a bitterly cold night with a promise of more snow in the north wind that was howling round the chalet, and there must be no dawdling. Twenty minutes later the Robin was in bed, her curls brushed, her prayers said, and the long lashes already beginning to droop on her cheeks.

'Sing me to sleep,' she begged in her pretty French. 'Sing "The Red Sarafan." '

Madge complied. Both she and Joey were well able to sing the old Russian folk-song which had been the baby's lullaby from her earliest days. She had taught it to them long since, and Captain Humphries, who had learned it from his wife, was able to correct any bad pronunciation. The Robin loved it because it was 'mamma's song,' and it was a treat to her to

be sung to sleep with it. She generally got it in the holidays, but in term time it was a rare thing, for she was usually popped into bed, the night-light she always had lighted, and then she was left to go to sleep. She was 'over' before the last sweet notes had sounded, and Mrs Russell, after tucking the clothes more firmly round her, and seeing that the bar of wood they put in to open the sashes of the window was fixed, kissed her as she lay, lit the night-light, and stole out.

Mademoiselle met her at the door. 'She is asleep, our *bébé*?' asked the older woman.

'Went off almost at once. She looks well, Elise. I do believe we shall bring her safely through if only we can ward off any colds. Jem's methods seem to be working all right.'

'She has been very well this winter,' agreed Mademoiselle, as they went downstairs together. 'All the same, *ma chère*, one is always anxious about her.'

'As long as she doesn't notice it! She is such a frail little being, for all her high spirits and rosy cheeks. And then, I can't forget her mother.'

'But that was largely what she suffered during the war,' said Mademoiselle, ushering her visitor into the little room that was hers. 'First, she had the terrible flight from Poland when the Germans took it, and then there were the long years of struggling along on food that was insufficient and poor in quality. With the Robin we are making as certain as we can of laying an excellent foundation for good health, and one gathers that that was not thought of in the case of Madame Humphries. Dr Jem was quite satisfied with her the last time he saw her. I think you need not trouble.'

Madge laughed. 'It's silly of me, I know. But I always feel as if she was one of the most precious charges I possess. I don't have to worry over Juliet's health, thanks be! she is as strong as a horse. And Jo has gained enormously since we came out here to live. She isn't the same child. Jem thinks she will completely outgrow that awful delicacy of hers that used to make me so anxious. It's queer, Elise,' she went on thoughtfully, 'but I seem to have to worry about the strength of my children always. Four years ago, if anyone had told me that I should worry as much over any child as I did over Jo, I should have laughed at them. I never would have thought it possible. But I do over the Robin. Still, I'm really borrowing trouble, I suppose, that silliest of all things to do! But one can't help loving the baby.'

'No; that is very true.' There was a little silence after Mademoiselle's last speech, and then she roused herself and inquired, 'And what about Grizel and Deira, *chérie*? Have you been able to settle their differences?'

'As far as Grizel is concerned, Deira is absolutely hopeless just now. I simply can't imagine what has happened to make her like this. She always had a temper—we knew *that*! But she's never kept up a grudge before. It's always been one flash, and then over. Now she won't listen to me, and I tried everything I could think of. What are we to do about it?'

'Nothing, I fear. She is not happy, of course, and she has taken to refusing her food, but that I will not allow. If she will not eat, she shall be fed; also, she shall have a tonic. I wish Dr Jem to see her when he returns—unless matters are settled by then. But she must first see how wrong she has been, and then we shall all be glad to forgive.'

'Grizel appears to have forgiven.'

'Yes; I think she realises that she was in the wrong at first, and is anxious to make amends. That is true repentance,' pronounced Mademoiselle, who was a faithful Catholic. 'If only Deira would see it too, we should soon have no trouble.'

'Well, things go well as a rule,' said Madge. 'Oh, I know we've had some exciting times since we came! *Never* shall I forget the flood—or the fire last summer, either. And, of course,

there were the times when Grizel and Joey were lost on the Tiernjoch; and again, when Elisaveta was kidnapped, and Joey went off to rescue her. Still, it's been very plain sailing on the whole, and the school hasn't suffered by those same mad exploits. Who would have thought, Elise, that we could begin with nine girls, and reach fifty-seven in four years?'

'We have fulfilled a need,' said Mademoiselle. 'That explains it.'

'Yes; I suppose it does. Well, I've never regretted my decision to come here, though I *have* had some thrilling moments when I *wondered*!'

'All has been for the best,' returned her friend comfortably. 'For me, I have had no regrets either. I am able to help my good cousin by having Simone and Renée here, so that they receive a good education, and in the years to come will be able to help their parents as well as themselves. It is Simone's wish to teach, and if she does well I intend to send her to the Sorbonne, that she may be the better fitted to do so. I am saving for that now. Renée is musical, and she shall have a thorough training. She will not be an artiste as Margia Stevens is, but she will do well, I think. I shall always be glad of that wet and windy day you came to the Withers and told me of your wishes. I could never have done so much for the children if I had remained *gouvernante* in a family, as I must have done. We owe much to you, *ma mie*.'

'Nonsense, Elise! I owe equally as much to you; I couldn't have married if you had not been here to take over when I left. As it is, I can feel quite happy about the school, and also Joey. I know they are safe with you.' Madge got up as she spoke, and began to wrap herself up in the big shawl she had worn when she came across.

'Must you go, Marguérite?'

'Yes; I think so. Prep will be nearly over by the time I get back, and I want to be there, so that if the girls want to talk to me they can find me.'

'Ah, then, I will bid you *bonne nuit*. The blessed saints have you in their keeping.'

'And you too. *Auf wiedersehn!*' Madge went off to the chalet, and left Mademoiselle to trot off to the *Speisesaal* in Le Petit Chalet, to see that *Abendessen* would be ready for the juniors when they came from prep.

Arrived back at the main building, Madge went off to tidy her hair, and then retired to the study, where she picked up a book and settled herself for a while. Her peace, however, was soon disturbed. First, Gertrud came for a few minutes' chat with the Head she reverenced so much. Then Margia Stevens trotted in to ask Madame to look at her latest composition—a little dance. Margia, was expected to do great things in later years, for she was gifted beyond the ordinary, and already her compositions showed a remarkable gift of melody. The 'dance' was a marked improvement on anything she had hitherto done, and, secretly, Madge was surprised at it, though she took good care not to let the composer know that. Margia had a very good conceit of herself as it was. There was no need to increase it.

She had just gone when Mademoiselle's little cousin, Simone Lecoutier, put in an appearance to ask if they might all go sledging on the morrow.

'That will depend on the weather,' said Mrs Russell. 'If it snows—and I'm afraid it will—there'll be no outside games of any kind.'

'I am so weary of the snow!' sighed Simone. 'Always it falls and spoils our fun! We could not go out this morning because it snowed, I had hoped that it had ceased.'

'You can dance,' said her Head.

Simone threw out her hands with an indescribable gesture. 'But dance!' she remarked.

Madge looked up, surprised. 'Why, I thought you loved your dancing?'

‘Oh, I do! But one can weary of anything which one has every day. For me, I would sledge. I am *ennuyée* when we are so long in the house.’

Mrs Russell laughed. ‘You are an ungrateful child, Simone. How would you like it if you *had* to be out in this weather all the time?’

‘I should not like it at all,’ said Simone calmly; ‘but I do not ask for that, Madame.’

‘Well, if it keeps fine, I expect you will get out to-morrow. If it snows, you will have to content yourself indoors. When the thaws are over you will be out most of the time, so you must look forward to that. I can’t help you any further.’

Simone nodded. ‘I will try, but it is not easy.’ Then she vanished in search of Jo, whom she adored, though she had learned to keep her adoration to herself. In the beginning there had been many scenes between them, for Simone was emotional and demonstrative, and Jo was certainly not that last. The four years they had been together had taught the French child self-restraint however, and there existed a firm friendship between the pair now.

The bell for *Abendessen* rang before anyone else had time to come, and Mrs Russell went in to take her old place, and beam on her girls with deep enjoyment. Deira put in an appearance, looking subdued and red-eyed, but she ate what was put before her without demur, which was a tribute to Mademoiselle’s methods of managing her.

After the meal they all went to the big class-rooms, where the folding doors between had been thrown back, and there they danced the old English country-dances which Miss Durrant, the junior mistress, had taught them. She was an enthusiastic member of the English Folk Dance Society, and had succeeded in making the girls as keen as she was. The seniors, at any rate, knew a good many dances, and even those girls who had joined the school during the past term could manage several. So Mrs Russell went to the piano, and they danced *Butterfly*, *Gathering Peascods*, *Black Nag*, *Mary and Dorothy*, *Haste to the Wedding*, *If All the World Were Paper*, *Three Meet*, *Tink-a-Tink*, and many others. Naturally, the Head was not allowed to be sole musician. The older girls took their turns in playing the lovely old tunes, and she danced with sundry people till they were all hot and breathless, and glad of a rest. Then they gathered round the big stove, the doors of which were flung open, and, while the middles reluctantly marched off to bed, the seniors told their Head of their plans for the term, and discussed school matters with her with a frankness that spoke well for the confidence between them. Only Deira sat at a table, turning over the pages of a magazine, and refusing to join the merry circle.

‘Come over here, Deira,’ said Grizel, moving to make room for her. ‘You’ll be chilly sitting over there.’ She might as well have saved her trouble. Deira neither answered nor moved, and the head-girl had, perforce, to give up her efforts at conciliation, and turn back to the gay chatter of the rest.

‘If only it would cease snowing, and freeze instead,’ Vanna was sighing, ‘we might skate. Just think, Madame! Three weeks we have been returned, and we have not been on the ice once!’

‘Even if it froze all to-night we couldn’t skate to-morrow,’ said Gertrud. ‘The ice will be rough with the snow and the wind, and it would not be safe.’

‘We could sledge though,’ remarked Grizel. ‘I’m sick of the house—really, I am!’

‘Poor, ill-used things!’ laughed Miss Maynard, who had come back from doing ‘lights out’ in the middles’ dormitories. ‘I wonder how you survive it!’

They joined in her laughter, but Grizel repeated her assertion when they had quieted down once more. ‘Well, I *am* sick of the house! We’ve had three walks in three weeks, and that’s all!

I hate being stuck all the time!'

'So do I,' said Mary. 'It makes me feel all criss-cross! Do you know what I'd like to do now? I'd like a good snow-fight!'

'So should I,' said Rosalie unexpectedly. 'Being indoors all day makes one feel ready to fight with one's own shadow!'

'Well, perhaps it may cease snowing during the night—though I don't think it will,' said Madge. 'Listen to that wind! Dr Jem and I will be lucky if we get back the day after to-morrow!'

'What will happen if it still snows, then?' asked Gertrud.

'Well, I expect he will have to get up to the Sonnalpe somehow. If it's like this, though, I suppose I must stay till it clears. It would be difficult enough for him by himself. If I went, it would make it three times as bad! The path was pretty dreadful coming down. Now that all this fresh snow has fallen, it will be infinitely worse. It took us five hours to come. What it will be like returning, I don't know.'

'Oh, good! Then I hope it *does* go on snowing!' cried Grizel.

'Thank you, Grizel! You mean well, I know; but you don't bother to think about him!' laughed the Head.

'He's a man, and can look after himself,' said Grizel wisely. 'But we do need you, Madame.' She cast a glance at the solitary figure at the other side of the room, and Madge knew that she was thinking that if only the trouble could be put right, all would be well. She also knew that the head-girl had great faith in the powers of her old Head, and thought that this silly feud could only be straightened out by her.

The clock chimed just then, warning them all that the seniors' bedtime was come, so they had to get up and put things right for the night, and there was no more conversation on the subject. Only, as Grizel came to the study whither the Head had betaken herself, the girl ventured to say, 'You will help us, Madame; won't you?'

'If it's possible, Grizel. But I can't do impossibilities, you know. Try not to worry over it. You have done your part, and more than your part, now. I am pleased with you, child. Gisela herself could have done no more.'

Mrs Russell kissed the head-girl as she spoke, a rare caress, and Grizel flushed. 'You are most awfully kind, Madame. I *do* want to make good, if I can.'

'You *are* making good,' was the reply. 'Now run away to bed. If it's fine to-morrow we will have a good time out of doors, and that may make all the difference to Deira.'

'Oh, do you think so, Madame? I had thought it might have been being stuck in the house all day that was upsetting her.'

'That may have something to do with it. We'll hope so, anyhow. Good-night, Grizel.'

'Good-night, Madame. Thanks ever so!'

Grizel went off tolerably reassured, and the Head, after going the rounds to make sure that all was safe, followed her example.

CHAPTER X.
THE SNOW-FIGHT.

Contrary to all expectations, the wind died down during the night, and the frost set in. Joey Bettany, waking at the unearthly hour of five, tumbled out of bed to look out at the starry sky, and saw the white and silver tracery on the windows, which told that the earth was in an iron grip which was likely to continue for the next few weeks. By dint of breathing hard on the panes and rubbing the place with the corner of her dressing-gown, she managed to make a peephole for herself, and to view the landscape. The snow lay white and sparkling under the light of the dying moon, and the brilliance of the stars was a good augury. 'Thanks be!' she breathed, as she got back into bed after a look at her watch to reassure herself that it was much too early to go to Madge. 'Now we'll get out for a bit!'

She lay awake, for she dared not switch on the light, or she would have awakened the others. However, she had plenty to think about. She was in the middle of writing an exciting story about the Napoleonic wars, and she wanted to think out her next chapter. For the first time in her life she was finding her work difficult. The characters would not do as she wanted. They insisted on going their own sweet way, and the story was developing on quite other lines than she had intended. 'I can't think what's wrong with the silly things!' she grumbled under her breath. 'Why can't they do as I want? They seem to go in all directions!'

It was, had she but known it, a very promising sign. Her paper children were becoming real. It is only when a story tells itself that it is worth much. Jo was too young and inexperienced to know this, of course. Fifteen is not the age at which even a brilliant talent such as she gave evidence of possessing can do much. She had written stories ever since she had first learned how to print her letters, but this was the first thing that had struggled out of the ruck, and Jo didn't like it. At times she was beginning to have fears that her dream of being a novelist must come to an end. It was very good for her, but hard discipline. Still, most of us have to go through it some time or other, and the sooner one does, the better.

Jo lay quite happily planning the deeds of her hero, little recking that when it came to writing them down they would work out differently, and cause her endless trouble and annoyance. The minute she heard the clock chime six she scrambled out of bed again, and struggled into her dressing-gown. Then, with her electric torch to light the way, she tiptoed out of the room and up the stairs to the little room where her sister lay, pretty hair tumbled about her, dreaming happily of her absent husband.

Madge was rudely awakened by cold feet wriggling down beside her, and she sat upright in the shock of the moment.

'All right; it's only me,' said Joey in carefully guarded tones. 'Lie down again, old thing. I've come for a chat.'

'Did you put on your bedroom slippers?' demanded Madge, as she lay down with a caution justified by the narrowness of the bed, and put an arm round her sister.

'I did; but it's freezing like everything. Shouldn't wonder if the wolves don't come out on the plains again. They did that first winter we were here. 'Member?'

'Yes, I do! For goodness' sake keep your feet to yourself, and get them warm! They're like lumps of ice! And so are your hands!' as she encountered one of them.

'All right! I'll warm up soon. Have you got enough bed?'

‘Yes; heaps! Have you? For any sake, don’t fall out, and waken the rest of the house!’

Jo chuckled as she snuggled closer to her sister. ‘What a shock they’d get! Maynie’s just beneath. She’d think it was a young earthquake!’

Madge gurgled in company as she wriggled herself comfortable. ‘That’s better! You’re still on the bony side, Jo! I wish you’d fatten up a little!’

‘Oh, I’m as fat as I want to be,’ returned Joey easily. ‘I should hate to be square—like Mary, fr’instance!’

‘Mary’s not *fat*. She’s built that way.’

‘Well, *I’m* not fat cos I’m built *that* way—sort of sylph-like, you know!’

Madge buried her face in the pillow to stifle her laughter. Joey was straight and thin. ‘Sylph-like’ was the last expression one would have used to describe her. She was much too bony.

‘Well, I’d rather be scraggy than tubby!’ declared the insulted lady. ‘And *you* can’t talk, anyway! There’s nothing chubby about *you*, my lamb.’

‘Chubby? Well, I should think not!’ Madge, whose round slenderness certainly gave no evidence of fat, sounded indignant.

‘Keep your hair on! I’ve just said you aren’t!’

Madge felt the slim hands again, but they were already warmer, so she lay silent for a few minutes. Jo did the same. The warmth was making her pleasantly drowsy, and she felt like dropping off to sleep. She was roused by her sister’s voice.

‘Jo, do you think we could manage a snow-fight this morning?’

‘Rather!’ Jo was wide-awake in a minute. ‘What a topping idea! D’you really think we could?’

‘Well, I don’t see why not. You people have been shut up closely since term began. It will be as well to make the most of the fine weather, for one never knows how soon it may begin to snow again. I think we’ll cut lessons, and stay out most of the morning. You can make it up another day. Skating will be out of the question, I’m afraid, as the ice will be too rough for it yet. A snow-fight seems to me to be the best thing. You’ll have to keep moving, you know.’

‘Righto! The others’ll love it, of course!’

They discussed the idea for a short while, then Joey drifted off into other things, and they talked till the rising-bell went. Then Madge sent her sister off to dress, and rose herself.

At *Frühstück* it required no penetration for her to know that Joey had already passed on her idea of the snow-fight to as many of her friends as possible. There was an air of excitement about the middles, and they giggled and murmured together as much as they dared or were able. When all conversation has to be in a language foreign to some, at least, of the members of a school, views are apt to remain rather limited in expression. Still, they made quite noise enough, and Mrs Russell rather wished that she had warned Jo to say nothing till the whole school was told. It was too late now, however, and the table was lively, to say the least of it.

None of the seniors knew, for Jo had not mentioned it to them. They looked mildly surprised at the animation of their juniors, and Grizel began to wear a worried air. She knew that this sort of thing generally preceded a piece of outrageous naughtiness. The Head decided to keep them all in suspense no longer, so when grace had been said she checked them as they were about to leave the room, and told them what she proposed. Everyone was delighted, of course, and they raced away to make their beds, chattering gaily, while the staff congregated round the empty tables and discussed the affair a little further. It was decided that the babies

were to have their own snow-fight in front of Le Petit Chalet, as the older ones might be unintentionally rough. The others were to divide into two camps, one captained by Grizel, the other by Gertrud, and have a good battle.

'Let them stay out as long as they want—or can,' said Mrs Russell, with a glance at the barometer, which was very low. 'We must be about to send in anyone who gets tired, of course. Some of them can't stand as much as the others. Mademoiselle and Miss Durrant will look after the juniors, and they can all have a good time. I haven't seen the sky yet, but it wouldn't surprise me if it started to snow again this afternoon. The clouds were very heavy yesterday, and though the wind has fallen, it is certain to get up again. I believe our trouble with Deira will be straightened after she has had a good two hours or so of exercise in the open air. The confinement of the last few weeks has probably helped to upset her. Some girls take more badly with it than others.'

'Quite likely,' said Miss Maynard. 'I only hope it is so. Well, shall we go and do what we have to do? The girls won't be long now.'

They dispersed laughing, and half an hour later the whole party were ready to go out and make the most of what fine weather there was. Everyone was well wrapped up, and everyone wore stout boots, with heavily nailed soles. The door was opened, and they rushed out, shouting and laughing.

It was very silent outside, and a heavy grey sky showed that the Head was right in her surmise that the snow would soon be falling again. The lake lay black and lifeless in its frame of white, and the pines of the forest showed black against the snow. From Le Petit Chalet there came the sound of the juniors' voices as they tumbled about, laughing and dancing, and making snowballs. Mrs Russell left the girls, to go and see that they were all right, and Miss Maynard and Miss Wilson set to work to get the sides organised. Grizel and Gertrud had 'picked up' in the house, so the two parties separated, and were each given a part of what was the flower garden in summer. They were to settle their own tactics, and the one that was driven from its own part was to be accounted the vanquished side. Several of the youngest girls were busy making snowballs, piling them up ready, while the seniors directed their movements. Gertrud, anxious to keep the peace as far as possible, had chosen Deira for her own side, and now set her to over-seeing the efforts of the middles, while she herself posted various people at different places along her front. Then the battle began, and raged furiously. The mistresses had their work cut out to keep out of the line of fire, and yet be on the spot to see that no accidents happened.

Joey Bettany, fighting for Grizel, slipped in the snow, and went down with a wild yell, which was echoed by two of the enemy, who promptly bombarded her, so that it was some time before she was able to struggle to her feet again. Frieda Mensch, caught by Paula von Rothenfels of the other side, had her face well scrubbed with snow before she managed to retaliate in the same way. The white garden was trampled underfoot, and looked as if a regiment had been at work in it. The shouting became more and more breathless, and the laughter shriller, as the excited girls rushed and swooped, and flung handfuls of snow at each other. The dry powder could hurt no one, and the balls were not hard, so it was all very good fun. Even Deira lost her sullen air, and dashed about and shouted as hard as anyone.

Grizel, leading her side, and gradually forcing the other from its place, seemed to be everywhere at once. Now she was driving one of the enemy away; now she was rescuing one of her own followers from a hot fire; now she was hurling snowballs as fast and as hard as she could go at her foes. One struck Deira in the face, though, as a matter of fact, it had been

aimed at Gertrud. Gertrud, however, had dodged, and the snow passed by her, and caught Deira. The girl was already excited by the exercise. She scarcely knew what she was doing. To her eyes it looked as though Grizel had taken deliberate aim at her. She stooped, and grabbed at something which was lying on the ground and had been turned up in the scrimmage. Without hesitating one second, giving herself no time to realise what it was or what she was doing, she flung it with a sure aim, and caught the other side's leader full on the temple.

Grizel flung up her hands, gave a little cry, and went down.

At first it was looked on as a joke. Shrieking to the head-girl to 'get up, an' come on!' Joey dashed to the rescue from another point. It was only when Grizel lay there horribly still and silent that they realised that something had happened. The fight stopped at once. Gertrud dropped the ball she had poised to hurl at Jo, and hurried to the other girl's side. Miss Maynard raced across the garden and dropped on her knees. Grizel lay quite still, her face as white as the snow, and a thin trickle of blood showing where the missile, whatever it was, had struck her. The mistress wiped it gently away, and her lips tightened as she saw the nasty cut.

'Go and get one of your mattresses, girls,' she said quietly.—'Joey, go and ask Madame to come here; she is over at Le Petit Chalet.—Gertrud, bring me the brandy from Matron, and ask her to get a bed ready at once.—The rest of you go in, all except Mary Burnett, Rosalie Dene, Deira O'Hagan, and Eva von Heiling.—Luigia, will you please take charge till someone comes?'

They did as they were told at once. Joey shot off like an arrow to fetch her sister; Gertrud went to tell Matron; and two more of the seniors rushed up to the nearest dormitory to get a mattress. Mrs Russell had come by the time they returned with it, and was kneeling by the side of the unconscious girl. Except for the little group round Grizel, the garden was deserted now. By Grizel's side lay what had caused the accident—a sharp piece of stone, which Deira in her blind fury had flung without noticing what it was. She stood amongst the others, very white and frightened. No one, of course, had any idea that she had done it. In the heat of the battle her action had passed unnoticed. But she knew herself, and was already in an agony of remorse. They got Grizel on to the mattress, and then the girls named by Miss Maynard, helped by the staff who were there, slowly lifted it, and the girl was borne off to the sick-room, where Matron, calm and capable, already had a bed opened for her, and dressing ready for the wounds. Miss Wilson went off to ring up Dr Jem at Innsbruck to bring him posthaste, while Mrs Russell and Miss Maynard did what they could for the girl.

They had got her undressed and into bed, when she began to moan, and Madge Russell turned at once to her colleague. 'Mollie, go and tell the girls that she is alive, please. I dare do nothing more till Jem comes—I don't know enough about it. It has been a near thing though, and I am afraid of concussion.'

Miss Maynard went off to relieve the anxious girls, who were in the big classroom talking in subdued tones. Deira was there too. She dared do nothing else but obey. She heard what the mistress said, and her white face became whiter. Miss Maynard, preoccupied and worried, never noticed her. She gave Mrs Russell's message, and left the room. Outside, in the passage, she was startled to feel a tense, nervous grip on her arm. Turning round, she saw Deira, and, eager to return to the sick-room as she was, she felt that she must stop to change the child's look if she could. 'Deira, my dear, don't look like that. Grizel is alive; we hope she will soon be all right again.'

'You don't understand,' said Deira in husky tones. 'It's my fault—if Grizel dies, I am a murderess! I did it!'

CHAPTER XI.
THE FEUD ENDS.

'If Grizel dies, I am a murderess,' repeated Deira tremblingly.

Miss Maynard looked at her keenly. She realised that the girl was on the verge of hysterics, so she pushed open the door of the study, and drew her in. 'Now, Deira, sit down and tell me what you mean,' she said quietly, as she closed the door and switched on the lights, for the sky had darkened ominously, and the little room was dusky.

'It was my fault,' said Deira. 'I was angry with Grizel. She threw a snowball at me, and it hit me. Sure, I thought 'twas on purpose she'd done it, and out of spite, so I picked up what was handy, and threw it. 'Deed Miss Maynard, I never saw what it was. I didn't think at all, at all! Oh, Miss Maynard, will she die?'

'Nonsense,' said Miss Maynard briskly. 'She's alive, and she may be ill; I can't tell you that she won't be. But we hope it won't be very bad. Only, Deira, think what your temper has done, and might have done. If Grizel had been killed you would never have forgiven yourself, I think. Now I must go. Mrs Russell may be wanting me.'

Deira nodded. She was putting a tremendous restraint on herself at the moment. Actually she wanted to scream and cry; to fling herself at the mistress's feet; to pour out all her repentance. She realised, however, that this was scarcely the time to do it. Miss Maynard would be wanted in the sick-room, and, apart from that, if she gave way she knew that she would probably be unable to control herself, and would make trouble. She had made enough of that already.

Miss Maynard knew what was passing in her mind, and guessed that, for the present, the girl was best left to herself. 'You may stay here, Deira,' she said gently. 'I think you would rather do that than go back to the others. I will send someone to you later. If anything happens with Grizel, you shall be told at once.'

Then she left the room, and Deira, settling back in her chair, tried to recover herself a little.

The house was very silent now. The girls had gone to their form-rooms, and were trying to fix their minds on their work. Mademoiselle had come over from Le Petit Chalet, and was giving the Fourth their lesson in French literature. The Sixth were working at maths by themselves, since Miss Maynard was still upstairs in the sick-room. The Fifth were doing geography with Miss Wilson; and Miss Durrant was busy with the babies in their own house. As for the Third, Gertrud had come to them, and was giving them German *Dictat*. Outside, the snow had begun to drift down again, and in the study the only sound was the crackling of the wood in the stove. The quiet soothed Deira. She got up from the chair, and moved over to the stove to feed it, and to warm herself. Now that her excitement was gone, she felt cold.

She had been alone for more than an hour, when the door opened, and the Robin peeped in. 'I want Tante Marguérite,' she said.

'Madame is with Grizel,' said Deira.

The Robin shut the door, and came up to her. 'Is Grizel then sick?' she asked, lifting big dark eyes to the elder girl's face.

'She—is not well,' stammered Deira. It was plain that the school-baby knew nothing of what had happened. Could she tell her?

The Robin was full of sympathy. '*Pauvre* Grizel!' she said. 'Has she eaten too much of chocolate?'

'She—has had—an accident. Madame and Miss Maynard are with her,' said Deira.

'And you are sorry 'cos you were cross with her? Never mind, *pauvre* Deira. She will soon be well,' replied the Robin comfortingly. 'Don't look so sad. Me, I will stay with you.'

She slipped a chubby hand into Deira's, and snuggled up. The Irish girl sank on to the sofa, and lifted the baby on to her knee. The Robin put warm arms round her neck, and hugged her.

'Oh, but 'tis the darlin' you are!' murmured Deira, returning the hug.

The Robin took it quite calmly as her due. She was accustomed to being loved. Deira had never said as much to her before, for she had no particular love for small children, and had little to do with the juniors. Still, that made no difference to the Robin, who possessed a large heart, and was ready with consolation whenever it was required.

'How did Grizel hurt herself?' she asked suddenly, when she had bestowed a few more hugs on the elder girl.

Deira did not dare to tell her of what had happened. For all she knew, it might be Mrs Russell's wish that the juniors should know nothing of what had happened. So she temporised. 'She got hit with a stone which was flung by mistake,' she said, going as near the truth as she could.

'Oh!' The Robin drew in her breath in a long-drawn sigh. Then she turned and looked at Deira. 'How dreadful!'

'It's—awful!' said Deira unsteadily.

'An' it's dreadfuller for the one who threw the stone,' went on the Robin, pondering things out in her baby way. She looked up, and caught sight of Deira's face. 'Deira! was it *you*?'

There was a moment's silence. Then, 'Yes,' said Deira.

She half-expected the child to draw away from her in horror, but the Robin simply snuggled closer. 'Oh, *pauvre* Deira!' she said, lapsing into the French that came easiest to her.

Deira had heard the others say more than once that the Robin was the best comforter to have when you were in trouble, but she had never felt it before. Now, as the baby's arm encircled her neck, and the warm, soft weight tumbled into her lap, she felt the truth of it. 'The stone—was—a mistake, Robin,' she said unevenly. 'I—I didn't know what it was I was throwing.

' 'Course you didn't! Never mind, Deira. Tante Marguérite will understand—she always does! She'll know you're sorry, and she'll forgive you. So will Grizel. Don't cry, poor Deira!' For Deira had begun to cry, softly and bitterly, but in a very different way from what she had wished an hour ago. Unfortunately, once she had begun, she found it hard to stop; and when Mrs Russell, leaving Grizel for a few minutes to find the girl whom she had just been told was the cause of all the mischief, she came on a Niobe-like scene, for by this time the Robin was crying too, out of sympathy for a grief she could feel, even if she couldn't understand it.

'Girls! Why are you crying like this?' asked the Head quietly. 'Robin, you must stop at once.'

The Robin had been trained to complete obedience, so she choked back her sobs and said brokenly, 'Tante Guito, Deira is *so* sorry.'

'I am sure she is,' said Mrs Russell. 'Crying won't help matters, though. So you must both stop at once, and you can run over to Le Petit Chalet, Robin. I will come to you at bedtime, but I can't come before. You will be good, *mein Vöglein*, won't you?'

‘I will try,’ said the Robin soberly.

‘That’s my baby. Yes, you may kiss Deira, and then run away. Joey shall come presently. Ask Gertrud to take you across—she is in the prefects’ room. And be sure you are well wrapped up.’

The Robin kissed what she could see of Deira’s face, and then trotted off to seek Gertrud, and give her Madame’s message. Deira still sobbed on, though she was making heroic efforts to check her sobs.

The Head gave her a minute or two. Then she stooped over her. ‘Deira, I want you to try to control yourself. You can if you try. I cannot stay here long, for I must go back to Grizel. But I can’t leave you like this. Come!’

Deira fumbled for her handkerchief, and the Head put her own into the hot hands. Then, while the girl dried her eyes, Madge Russell made up the fire in the stove again, and made the room look better with a few deft touches here and there. When she thought that Deira had herself in hand, she spoke again. ‘Deira, Miss Maynard tells me that you say that you are to blame for what has happened.’

‘Yes, Madame. ’Tis the truth she has told you.’

‘I am very sorry for you, dear. And yet, I am glad in this. I think you will learn a very terrible lesson from this—how far your temper can take you when you give way to it. Will you try to think about it? I don’t think you will ever again let yourself bear malice or carry on a feud with anyone as you have done this time. It has ended too awfully for that. But remember that the girls are not to know if we can help it. It must lie between Grizel and yourself, and me. Miss Maynard knows, and I think we must tell Mademoiselle. But no one else is to learn it if we can manage it. Do you understand, dear?’

‘The—the Robin knows,’ said Deira with a catch in her voice.

‘Yes; but I shall tell her she is to say nothing. I am sorry she does know, but I suppose you couldn’t help it. I don’t want the girls to guess that you had anything to do with it. I don’t believe, in the excitement of the moment, that they knew who threw the stone. I am going to ask you to be as much your usual self as possible. That will keep them from guessing. If they have missed you, they will only think that you were upset because you and Grizel had been on bad terms, and you were sorry you hadn’t made it up. You are very tired now, so I am going to send you to bed. You look as if you had cried yourself into a headache, and you will be better alone for the present. Go and undress yourself, and lie down. Try to sleep, and, when you join the others, remember I have forbidden you to tell them anything about it.’

Deira nodded and got up. She was worn out with the force of her emotions, and Madge had been right when she guessed at a headache. Her head was beginning to throb badly. She got to bed, and was there for the rest of the day. No one came near her, for they were still very anxious about Grizel, who had never recovered consciousness, but still lay in a state of coma. The others decided, as Mrs Russell had said, that Deira was upset by the thought that she had refused to make friends, and now she couldn’t.

‘Poor old thing! I bet she feels rotten!’ said Jo Bettany to her own particular clan.

‘I guess she’s mad with herself all right,’ agreed Evadne Lannis, an American child, famed in the school for her extensive slang vocabulary, which after three years was as unique as ever it had been, though she managed to curb her tongue a little during term-time. ‘I’d feel a skunk if I were her!’

‘She must be very unhappy,’ sighed Frieda Mensch.

'Is—is Grizel going to *die*?' asked Simone in awed tones. The next minute she was sorry she had spoken, for Joey rounded on her with startling vehemence.

'For pity's sake, Simone, dry up! Of course she isn't! If you can't be more cheerful, just be quiet! You're a regular Job's comforter!'

What Simone might have replied to this tirade nobody ever knew, for just then Paula von Rothenfels announced that Dr Jem was coming up the path, and Jo darted out of the room to welcome him. She got little satisfaction, for Madge had been watching the path eagerly for the last hour, and was already in the passage, and sent her young sister back to the form-room post haste.

Jo went, but she felt rebellious. She had been anxious to pour out *her* views on the subject to him, and now there would be no chance of it. She retired to the others with a very ill-used expression on her face, and proceeded to snap at them all till they sheered off and left her to her own devices. Evadne left the room in the wake of the rest, declaring that she was 'fed to the teeth with other people who let other people get their goats for nothing!'—an involved sentence that brought down on her own head the wrath of Miss Wilson, who chanced to overhear it.

It was after seven that evening before the doctor left Grizel's bedside, and then he went to see Deira. Mrs Russell, however, came down to tell the anxious girls that it was all right. Grizel had come to herself, and had murmured something about a 'rotten head' before she dropped off into natural sleep. She would be in bed for the next few days, but she would soon be herself again.

The girls were overjoyed at this news. It had seemed such a terrible thing that their jolly snow-fight should have ended in this way. The older ones, at any rate, realised that there might have been a tragedy, though no one yet knew what had caused it all. The general idea was that the ball which it was supposed had been flung at Grizel had got frozen—this was Joey's ingenious idea—and had been harder than the others. As for the stone, only one other person besides Deira and Grizel herself had known what the missile was, and that was Gertrud, and she would say nothing. For one thing, she had not seen who had flung it. In the excitement of the battle, and when so many people were throwing snowballs, it would have been hard for any of the combatants to say who had hurled which.

The school went to bed that night happy once more, and Vanna even took the trouble to peep into Deira's cubicle to see if she were awake, so that she might hear the good news. Deira, however, was asleep, exhausted by pain, repentance, and excitement, so the Italian girl went on to her own domain, and the dormitory undressed in silence.

Grizel slept for most of the next two days, sleeping herself well again, as Dr Jem had prophesied she would. He went off to the Sonnalpe the next day, leaving his wife behind, for the path would be very difficult, since the snow was still falling, and also she was anxious to see Grizel out of bed before she left her.

It was not till four days after the affair that Grizel asked anything about the other girls. Then, one afternoon, when Madge was sitting knitting by her side, she spoke. 'Madame, will Deira come and see me, do you think?'

'I'll send her up after *Kaffee*,' answered Mrs Russell, without any further comment. She had wondered how much Grizel knew of the accident, and if she was aware that the Irish girl was to blame for it. It was impossible to tell from the head-girl's manner if this was so, but it looked rather like it. She had lain back on her pillows with a satisfied air, and said no more on the subject. Instead, she demanded to know when she might get up.

‘I *loathe* bed!’ she remarked. ‘It’s all very well at the proper time, but I hate it when you’ve got to stay there!’

The Head laughed. ‘Bed in the early mornings is very desirable, I suppose,’ she said.

‘Rather! But I’ve had enough of it now. Can I get up to-morrow, Madame?’

‘We’ll wait till Dr Jem comes and sees you again,’ said Madge cautiously.

Grizel heaved a deep sigh, but the bell ringing for *Kaffee* precluded what she might have had to say, and Mrs Russell went off to join the others, leaving her in Matron’s charge with a mischievous smile.

Five o’clock brought Deira to the room. A shame-faced Deira she was, with a scared look in her eyes, for she guessed that Grizel knew all there was to know about the accident.

Matron tucked some more wood into the stove, warned the visitor against exciting the invalid, and then went out, leaving them alone together.

When she had gone Grizel held out her hand. ‘Will you shake now?’ she asked.

Deira took it. ‘Do you know?’ she said.

‘Know what? About that stone? Yes; but you never meant it.’

‘I didn’t,’ said Deira. ‘It was just—temper. I’d have chucked a—a *log* at your head just then.’

‘Let’s be thankful there wasn’t one handy!’ said Grizel with a grin. ‘Half a brick’s good enough for me, thank you! ‘She gave Deira’s hand a friendly grip.

‘I’m sorry,’ said Deira.

‘Righto! It was my own fault as much as yours! I’ve a beastly tongue, and you’ve a beastly temper, so we’d better cry quits on it, I think!’

Deira suddenly bent down and kissed Grizel. ‘You’re jolly forgiving,’ she said; ‘ ’tis meself will remember that.’

And so the feud was ended, and when Matron came half an hour later they were discussing the absolute awfulness of their last French translation-book.

CHAPTER XII.
NOTHING MUCH.

After all the excitements told in the last few chapters, the girls of the Chalet School settled down for a while to work and dancing. Games—outdoor ones, at least—they were unable to have, for the snow fell steadily for a week. Hansi, the boy-of-all-work, was kept hard at it, shovelling it away from the sides of the doors during the brief moments when it cleared off. But at the end of the week both chalets and the big hall were banked up on all sides with snow, which kept the houses warm, if it did darken the lower windows. While it was still fairly soft, everyone was turned out, and they all shovelled away till the windows were free once more. It was a sight to see them, for they wore their gym knickers over two pairs of ordinary ones, jumpers, shawls tied crosswise over their breasts, mitts, and woollen scarfs knotted round their heads. They all had on two pairs of stockings and their thickest boots, and they worked till they were in a fine glow with their labours. It took the whole of one morning, and then they were all sent to lie down in the afternoon, with their books if they wished to read. Most of the middles went to sleep, and a good many of the seniors too. As for the juniors, though they had done more play than work, they were all safely off ten minutes after Mademoiselle and Miss Durrant had tucked the last one in, and retired to their own rooms for a siesta.

Mrs Russell had set off that morning as soon as ever it was light enough. Dr Jem and Eigen had come for her: and while the girls and the staff where slumbering sweetly through the afternoon, she was wandering round her pretty home beyond the Sonnalpe, putting things to rights, and making it as home-like as possible. She had been obliged to stay down in Briesau till the snow stopped, and for many things she had been glad. She had resumed all her old classes, and had been the Head for a delightful eight days. Now she was glad to be at home once more.

'I think they will have peace for the rest of the term,' she said to her husband when he came in from his visit to the sanitorium. 'Deira seems to have had a shock that will last for her life, and Grizel has learnt a lesson too. Jo is immersed in a new tale, and the others are working hard at their dancing and the Hobbies Club. They mean to have a sale of work at the end of this term in aid of the free ward here, so they have their work cut out if they are to have enough ready by that time. We shall be into February soon, and Easter comes early this year, so they will break up at the end of March. I advised Elise to give them only a fortnight, and break up early in July for the summer holidays. The weather is better then, and the Lannises are talking of going over to New York for July and August. Also, there will be Gisela's and Wanda's weddings that month, and it would mean giving holidays to all who are asked.'

'Well, Gisela will be married in Innsbruck, so I imagine the whole school will be expected to attend,' said Dr Jem, as he filled his pipe. 'Aren't Joey and the Robin and Frieda to be bridesmaids?'

'Gisela wants it, and, of course, Maria will be, in any case. There will be Marie's wedding at Easter, too. She wants our children there, I know, and I've partly promised her that they shall go to the dancing as well.'

'What—all of them? The baby as well?'

'Yes; I don't think it will hurt her for once. What do you think?'

‘It all depends on how she is. However, that’s not for three months yet. We can think about it nearer the time. What I’m thankful about is that Marie will still be here. It’s a good thing she decided to fall in love with my own servant. Andreas will make her a good husband. It was a brainwave of yours to have those extra rooms built on at the end. And, luckily, there seems to be a never-ending stream of little Pfeiffens coming on who can come and help. How many are there?’

‘Seven more, besides Luise and Hansi, at the school. Rosa, the next girl, is nearly fourteen now, and will be ready to come to us after Easter. Jem!’

‘Well—what?’

‘Do you think we might have Grizel here for Easter, instead of letting her go with the others to the Schwarzwald? You see, she leaves us this year, and I want her to be with us as much as possible till then. We can’t have her in the summer. Jo and the Robin are off to Belsornia with Juliet—I hope she’ll be all right, travelling all that distance by herself—and it seems the only chance I shall have.’

‘Please yourself,’ said the doctor. ‘You needn’t worry about Juliet. That young woman has her head screwed on the right way, and, after all, it’s a straight journey from Paris. Have Grizel with the kids if you like, Honey. I sha’n’t object.’

Marie Pfeiffen, formerly maid at the Chalet School, but, since her young mistress’s marriage, head of the domestic staff at the chalet beyond the Sonnalpe, brought in *Kaffee* at this moment, so the talk ceased; and after the meal was at an end, Dr Jem had to go back to the sanatorium to see a patient who was very ill, and Madge settled down to arrears of mending.

Down at the school the girls were lounging about their rooms, thankful that all prep had been excused for the night.

‘Ouf! I’m stiff!’ yawned Jo Bettany, stretching her arms above her head. ‘It was fun this morning, but one does pay up for things like that!’

‘It’s a mercy Mademoiselle cut prep,’ said Mary Burnett, looking up from her raffia work for a moment. ‘I couldn’t have settled down to French and trig to-night. My brain wouldn’t have taken it in!’

‘My arms ache so,’ grumbled Margia Stevens. ‘It’s to be hoped it stops before to-morrow, or Herr Anserl will have something to say! I couldn’t play a scale to-night, let alone that awful Schumann *Nachtstück* that we always fight over!’

‘I’ll come and rub you with embrocation if you like,’ offered Grizel. ‘If you have a hot bath, and some of that rubbed in, you’ll be all right to-morrow.’

‘Don’t worry! Matie said she was coming to rub me when we went to bed,’ said Margia.

‘I suppose she remembered Herr Anserl and his wrath,’ laughed the head-girl. ‘He went completely off the deep end last week. I thought he was going to fling the music at my head before we were through!’

‘Thank goodness I don’t learn with him!’ said Jo.

‘Hear—hear! I’d be sorry for whoever came after your lesson!’

‘How d’you think you’ll like Florence, Grizel?’ asked Rosalie curiously. ‘It’ll be a change from this, anyway.’

‘I don’t want to think of Florence at all,’ replied Grizel. ‘I wish I weren’t going. Oh, I don’t mean that I don’t want to see the place!’—forestalling the exclamation on Jo’s lips —‘but I shall never be a real musician, and I think it’s waste of time to work at it as I’m doing.’

‘What would you like to do then, my Grizel?’ asked Gertrud.

‘I’d like to go to coll as Juliet is doing, and read maths. Then I should like to do research work of some kind. I couldn’t teach, for I simply haven’t the patience.’

‘Well, why don’t you write to your poppa, and tell him?’ Evadne wanted to know. ‘I guess that’s what I’d do! And make *some* fuss, too, till he said I might!’

‘Father wouldn’t agree for a moment,’ said Grizel briefly. ‘It wouldn’t be any use.’

‘Well, I guess I’d make him see reason if he was *my* poppa,’ declared Evadne, who could twist her indulgent father round her little finger, and had never known what it was to be refused anything she wanted that he could get her.

‘You don’t know what you’re talking about,’ said Jo. ‘Your father may be like that, but everyone’s isn’t. Herr Marani wouldn’t let Gisela or Maria argue with him, I know.—Would he, Maria?’

Maria Marani, brought up to render implicit obedience to her parents, looked shocked at the very idea; although, as Jo said later, she should have been accustomed to Evadne by this time. ‘Papa would be very angry,’ she said simply, ‘and I should not be happy.’

‘Nor I,’ added Frieda. ‘Papa would be sad, and so would mamma.’

‘Well, say! I don’t think you people have brought up your parents right,’ said the irrepressible Evadne. ‘I guess there’d be *some* doings if I had to do as I was told all the time! Me for good old U.S.A. all the time!’

‘You’re talking rubbish,’ Grizel told her; ‘and you are too young to understand’—a statement that made Evadne wildly indignant.

However, no one paid any attention to her splutterings, for Gertrud had raised the question of their sale of work, and they were all hard at discussing it. So the American child recovered her temper, and joined in.

‘We shall have a needlework table,’ said Gertrud, ‘and one for handcrafts. But what else shall we do?’

‘Mademoiselle is going to show us how to make sweets,’ said Rosalie. ‘Don’t you think the little ones might have a lucky dip, Grizel?’

‘But what is that—a lucky dip?’ inquired Vanna di Ricci with interest.

‘A tub with sawdust, and you hide parcels in the sawdust,’ explained Jo. ‘Then people pay so much, and dig for a parcel. It’s jolly fun.’

‘That will be a new thing here,’ said Gertrud. ‘I think it a good idea, Rosalie. What do you say, Grizel?’

‘I don’t see why not,’ responded Grizel. ‘Some of us will have to help them, but it ought to go, I think.’

‘I’ve cut five jig-saw puzzles,’ said Jo, whose hobby this was. ‘If I can cut five more, I think they’ll sell, and we ought to get about two *Schillings* for each.’

‘Let’s see what we’ve got already,’ said Grizel. ‘Some of you people go and get the boxes from the prefects’ room, will you?’

Three middles dashed off, and presently returned with the two big boxes in which the girls placed their work as they finished it. Grizel, rising with a stifled groan at her stiffness, removed the lids, and began to take out what they had. There were three baby gowns, beautifully embroidered; fifteen pin-cushions of various kinds; a goodly pile of undergarments, all exquisitely made; a couple of towels, handsomely worked; a small collar of pillow-lace, and handkerchiefs edged with the same, for many of the girls were experts at it. This was in the smaller box. In the other were napkin-rings, blotters, and raffia baskets; Jo’s

five jig-saw puzzles, in boxes covered with wall-paper; two fretwork brackets; some wooden boxes, the lids carved with floral designs; one or two picture-frames; and a dozen book-marks of stamped leather—Grizel's own contribution.

'It isn't much,' said Mary, with vivid memories of what had been accumulated for the church bazaars at home. 'We'll have to work like niggers if we want to have a decent show in March. What else is there to come in that we know of?'

'Bernhilda is making some frocks,' said Frieda shyly; 'and mamma is also helping.'

'Wanda paints some china for us,' Marie von Eschenau added, 'but she will not send it till nearer to the time, in case it should get broken.'

'Here's my tray-cloth!' Rosalie waved it at them. 'And Gertrud has her sets of collars and cuffs.'

They went through the list carefully, but, even when the last napkin-ring to be given by the Robin had been counted, it seemed to the elder girls that they would not have a great deal.

'We must give up all our spare time,' Grizel decided. 'If we have a sale of work, it's got to be worth while. We want to send a good sum up to the san. It would be very jolly if we could manage to get enough to pay for keeping one bed occupied for a year. We might, if we tried hard. Help me to put away these things, some of you, and let's all go and fetch our work. We ought to get something done to-night.'

They eagerly obeyed her; and when Miss Maynard came in to see what they were doing, she found them all hard at it. 'What amazing industry!' she cried, as she looked round the room. 'What *has* happened to you all? I should have thought this morning's labours would have taken all desire to work from you.'

'It is the sale of work,' explained Gertrud. 'We do not wish to have a small one, so we thought we would do something to-night, when there is no preparation to think about.'

'May I see what you have ready?' asked Miss Maynard.

Grizel opened the boxes, and showed their stock. 'It isn't much, is it?' she said.

'Oh, I don't think it's so bad for a beginning,' replied the mistress cheerily. 'If you all work from now till the day, we ought to have quite a good sale, I think.'

'We mean to,' said Joey, coming up. 'I must get on with these puzzles. Do you think I could sell fifteen if I made them? Are they likely to go well?'

'I should think so,' returned Miss Maynard. 'You cut them well, Jo, and you have some very pretty pictures. Make fifteen, by all means, if you can. We can always raffle them at the end if they don't sell.'

Jo went back to her fret-saw, and Miss Maynard went the rounds to see what the others were doing. Then she suggested reading to them while they worked, and this idea was received with acclamations.

'Read us something exciting,' said Jo. 'Something like *Treasure Island* would be nice. I love pirates!'

The maths mistress laughed, and left the room, to return presently with *Stalky and Co.*, whereat Jo uttered a squeal of delight. The work went on steadily after that, until Luise rang the bell for *Abendessen*, and they all had to stop.

'I've done a lot,' said Evadne, looking at her nearly-finished napkin-ring with approval. It's lots easier when you're read to!'

'And I have finished my collar,' said Vanna, holding up a collar embroidered in Richelieu work most beautifully done. 'That makes another set, Grizel. I will just finish it off to-morrow —there are one or two stitches to correct—and then I will give you the set.'

After *Abendessen* the middles went off upstairs. They were expected to go to bed, but Joey, who at fifteen might have been expected to have given up childish ways, spent a good ten minutes in making an apple-pie bed for Mary. Paula, Margia, Evadne, Frieda, and Marie von Eschenau followed her example, with the result that they had to scramble in order to be in bed by the time Miss Wilson, who was on duty, came up to put their lights out. Luckily for them, she was a minute or two late, and even Paula, who was slower than the others, was between the sheets when the mistress appeared on the scene. There was no talking allowed after lights out, though they might talk after seven in the morning, but sundry gurgles and chuckles told of their deep satisfaction in their evil works. They tried to stay awake to hear what the seniors had to say when they tried to get into bed, but nature was too strong for them, and they were all sleeping when Grizel and her compeers came upstairs.

What the seniors thought may be gathered by their actions. Jo woke early the next morning, feeling thirsty. She got out of bed, switched on her electric torch, and proceeded to make her way out of her cubicle. To her amazement the curtains would not open. Neither could she get under them when she tried. She was a prisoner for the present. Being thus effectually checked, she naturally felt madly thirsty, and persuaded herself that she simply *couldn't* wait till seven to get the water. She struggled with the obstacle, but in vain. All she succeeded in doing was in waking up Frieda, who slept next to her. 'Jo,' whispered that young lady, 'what is wrong? Are you, then, ill?'

'No; but I can't get out of my cubie,' replied Jo savagely.

Frieda got out of bed with a bump and tried to come to her, but found it impossible. She, too, was a prisoner. By this time several of the others had awakened, and, since they dared not talk aloud, the dormitory was filled with hissing, as people whispered what they thought of the matter to each other. Try as they would, they could not move those curtains one inch. Jo did contrive to tug one of hers a little way, but a rending sound warned her that there would be trouble if she went on with it, so she gave it up in disgust. Finally, they went back to bed, where they had to stay in durance vile till seven o'clock brought a tap at the door, and then two or three people entered.

'Nice, isn't it?' said Mary Burnett's voice cheerfully.

'What an orderly room! None of the little dears rushing about as usual!' added another that they knew belonged to Eva von Heiling.

'Let us out, you brutes!' cried Evadne.

'Not till you ask politely,' retorted Mary promptly.

'Undo this curtain,' commanded Joey. 'We'll all be late for our baths if you don't!'

'Say "please," Joey dear, and then we may,' was all she got for her pains.

And it was so! Rage the middles never so violently, they had to climb down, and say 'please' before the three people who had come in would agree to remove the drawing-pins with which they had secured the curtains to the floor.

'You can take out the sewing for yourselves,' said Mary cheerfully.

Eight girls were only just in time that morning. They dared not leave the curtains as they were, and they all had to turn to and undo the tacking with which the seniors had successfully imprisoned them before they could leave the dormitory.

'I rather think you'll leave our beds alone for the future,' said Mary to Jo when they met in the passage after *Frühstück*.

Jo scowled at her, but Mary had spoken truly. The middles avoided the seniors' beds after this as if they dreaded the plague from them.

CHAPTER XIII.
MARIE'S NEWS.

Marie von Eschenau went home for a week-end to be present at Wanda's betrothal party. That was the beginning of it all, as was proved later. Joey had been invited to go too, but she had started a cold, and, in her case, colds were never things to be neglected. So she was relegated to the sick-room, while Marie went off with the aunt who came to bring her. It is a thirteen hours' run from Innsbruck to Vienna where Marie lived, so they had to start on the Thursday night, as the feast was on the Friday. Sunday would see her on the return journey, so that she might miss as little of school as possible.

'Lucky wench!' grumbled Joey when Marie came to say good-bye and tell her how sorry she was that they couldn't both be there as they had hoped. 'I say, you might bring me something from the show—a sprig of myrtle, or something.'

'I will bring all I can,' replied Marie, who was very fond of Joey in a quiet fashion, totally unlike Simone's rather hectic adoration. 'I will also bring some cakes from that pastry-cook's you so much like. What will you have? Some *Obsttorte*?'

'Rather! Marie, you *gem*! And some of those honey and nut things with cream in them! I love them!'

'Also a large piece of Wanda's betrothal cake,' added Marie. 'I must go now, *Hertzliebchen. Auf Wiedersehen.*'

She went off, and Jo burrowed under her blankets and growled to herself about her ill-luck. Grizel, coming to sit with her later on, found her thoroughly disgruntled and ready to grouse about everything. Frieda had no better luck; and Simone left the room in tears.

'What on earth are you howling about *now*?' demanded the head-girl, who happened to meet her on the stairs. 'Really, Simone, I never met anything like you for crying! You're always at it!'

Simone refused to say, however. Four years in the school had taught her not to voice all her grievances aloud, and she pushed past Grizel, and went on to her dormitory to have her cry out in peace, and get rid of the tear-stains as soon as she was finished.

On the Sunday Jo was pronounced to be all right again, and was allowed to join the rest of them in the house. There was to be no going out for her for another day or two. The snow had ceased to fall, but it was freezing hard, and there was a bitter wind. As it was, she was too thankful to get away from the sick-room and Matron, who was kind but dull, and be with all her friends again. So she made the best of things, though it was very tantalising to see the pale winter sunshine turning the frozen snow into a thousand sparkling diamonds, and not go out in it. The Robin stayed with her while the others went for a long walk in the morning, there being no service in the little chapel where the old priest came once in three weeks to celebrate Mass. When they had returned, Miss Durrant took the school-baby for a brisk run to Seespitz, the tiny hamlet at the end of the lake, and they both returned with glowing cheeks.

As it was Sunday, the juniors came over to the Chalet to spend the day as usual, and there was enough noise made to justify Miss Maynard's remarks about 'monkey-houses.' This was the one day in the week when the girls might speak their own language all the time without let or hindrance, and they made the most of it. French, German, and Italian were the chief languages, but there was English, of course, and some Norwegian, for there were four

Norwegian girls in the school now; and a little Hungarian. As Miss Wilson had once said when they all got started, the Tower of Babel wasn't in it!

Simone regarded Jo very shyly. She had not been near her idol since that unlucky Friday when Jo had quarrelled with everyone in her disappointment. Jo, with a feeling of reproach—after all, it hadn't been Simone's fault that she had caught cold—made a point of being specially nice to her, and Simone would have forgiven her beloved Jo any crime, so things were soon all right between them.

In the afternoon they passed the time in the usual way, and *Kaffee* was taken by themselves as usual, the staff having a much-deserved rest over at Le Petit Chalet. The prefects were in charge, and Luise was in the kitchen with Rosa, the sister next in age to her—a treat always allowed the maid on Sundays.

After a while the talk turned on to the legends which surrounded the place. The Tyrol is full of stories of various kinds, and Jo Bettany had learnt as many of them as possible, with an eye to the future, when she meant to use them in the books she was going to write. Frieda's father had been born and brought up by the Tiern See, and he had told the future novelist many tales, rejoicing in the deep interest she showed in them.

This afternoon, when they had finished their *Kaffee und Kuchen*, and had carried the china back to the kitchen as was the rule, the little ones insisted that Jo should tell them some of the stories.

'Tell how the Tiern See became a lake, Joey,' pleaded Margia Stevens's little sister Amy. 'I love that story. I'm going to make a ballad of it some day.'

Like Jo, Amy had resolved to be a writer when she grew up, but her bent was for verse, and she had written some very pretty things already. Their father was foreign correspondent to one of the big London dailies, and the two girls had lived in many places on the Continent, leading a gipsy life till they had been sent to the school four years before this. Both were clever children, and their wandering years had given them a wide knowledge, as well as a fairly full vocabulary in more languages than little girls generally attain. Amy was a great favourite at school, where she had been baby till the arrival of the Robin. So when she clamoured for the tale, the rest joined in, and Joey, nothing loth, began at once.

'Once upon a time,' she said, dropping her voice to a mysterious undertone, 'there was a great city where the lake now is. Its streets were thronged with citizens; beautiful houses rose on either hand; and in the centre was a magnificent church. Every week-day the streets rang with the cries of the merchants and pedlars; the clinking of the hammers on the beaten gold and silver work, which was the chief industry of the town; the shrill voices of chaffering women, buying for the needs of their households; and the clatter of wooden shoon on the wide pavements. On Sundays the golden bells in the church steeple called folk to prayer, and the songs of sweet-voiced choristers rose to heaven from the heart of these mountains, where men lived in such wonderful surroundings. But the day came when the great prosperity of the people made them careless of what they owed to God. They forgot Him in their eager seeking after wealth and pleasure. Sunday by Sunday the bells called them to come to worship Him in vain, and things got to such a pass that the young lads used to play skittles in the aisles of the church even while divine service was going on, and the very priests themselves never said them nay.

'A good old hermit who lived near warned them that a judgment must fall on them as it did on Sodom and Gomorrah if they continued in their evil course, but they only mocked at him and paid no heed to his warnings. There came a Sunday when the sun shone down

brightly on the city, with its ways thronged with people—men, women, and children all going off on pleasure bent. Save for the priests who droned out the Mass so carelessly and badly that it was an insult to God, none had been near the church except the skittles-players. All seemed well, and they thought they had nothing to fear. Then, even while the streets rang with careless laughter, a terrible thing happened.' Jo dropped her voice a full tone, and some of the little ones crept nearer together. 'Water began to rise above the paving-stones of the church, and to wash about the feet of the false priests. The skittles were overthrown, and the players scattered in terror. But still the water kept on rising. It flowed out of the church now, and the houses were soon awash to the sills of the windows. Terrified, the people tried to flee, but there was no safety for them. The water rose and rose with appalling rapidity, and, ere the sun had sunk to his rest in the flaming west, there was no city left. Where it had been was a still blue lake, cradled amongst the mountains, and nevermore did anyone see the wicked people who had forgotten God in the days of their prosperity. Only on fine moonlight nights, when the summer stars are glowing in the skies, if you row across the Tiern See in a boat, you may see, if you look down through the water, the gilded spire of the church gleaming up from the depths; and if you listen, you may catch faintly the chime of its golden bells, rocked to and fro by the current.'

Jo told the story well—it was one that appealed to her. When she had finished a deep sigh arose from the listening throng of girls, and there were cries for more. So she told them the story of the Bärenkopf mountain, which was rather similar, and which taught the same lesson; only, in this case, it was a wicked baron who was punished by the earth on which his castle was built being raised up to its present height, so that castle, baron, and all were flung down again into the valley, and some of the earth with them, till they were covered from sight.

It was very dark in the room, for someone had switched off the lights to give the tales more dramatic value, and the fire in the stove had sunk to a red glow, which made the shadows very big and fearsome. In their interest in Jo's narrative, no one noticed that the door had opened and shut again, and it came as a terrific shock to everyone when someone came across the room asking in astonished tones, 'What do you do, then?'

Wild screams arose at the shock, and Gertrud made a mad dive across the room to switch on the electric light. When they could see once more, Marie von Eschenau stood before them, her eyes like saucers in her astonishment. Never had she been welcomed like this!

'Marie!' cried Margia, characteristically the first to recover herself; 'when did you come?'

'Just now—with papa,' replied Marie. 'What is the matter with you all?'

'It's Jo's fault,' returned Evadne. 'She was telling us bogey-tales of round here, and we never heard you till we did.'

Marie laughed at this Irish speech, and kissed Jo, who was standing looking rather pale. She had succeeded in frightening herself as well as her audience, and was slow to recover. '*Marie*?' she said. 'I thought—I thought it was the wicked Baron Rheinhardt.'

'Me, I thought it was the Devil,' remarked the Robin, who was still standing clutching Grizel, on whose lap she had been sitting.

'Well, it is me only,' returned Marie. 'Papa has to go to München, and he said that he would bring me with him to-day instead of waiting till to-morrow, as Tante Sofie does not wish to go home yet.—Paula, I have here a box of bonbons for you from mamma, and some confitures from Tante Sofie.' She held them out to her cousin, who took them rather dazedly. 'Also, Wanda had two betrothal cakes, and I have one for us. It is outside in the auto.'

'Was it a decent show?' asked Jo, who was recovering from her shock rapidly now.

‘But yes; it was very nice, and Wanda had on a new gown of white satin. There was a great feast and many speeches, and Wanda’s *Brautigam* has sent chocolate for us all. I had a new frock, too—blue silk, and we were very merry. Mamma made Wolfram and me go to bed two hours before the end, for she said it was not fitting we should stay up all that time; but it was very nice. Wanda had many betrothal gifts, and she is very happy. They will be wedded in July, and Paula and I are to be her maids. Wanda wants as many of us to be there as possible. She and Frieda will come to see us next term.’

Having scattered this information on them all, she sat down by the stove and warmed her hands at the blaze which Grizel had just made. The others now came round her and poured out questions on her, demanding details, and wanting to know just how Wanda had looked and what had been said.

‘Wanda would be like a princess from Madame d’Aulnoy,’ murmured Simone sentimentally.

‘Well, that’s nothing fresh for her,’ said Jo amiably.

The rest agreed with her. Marie von Eschenau occupied the place of school beauty now, but everyone who had known her sister was agreed that Wanda far outdid the younger girl. She had passed into a sort of legend as far as the school was concerned, and was regarded as a real fairy-tale princess, of the good, old-fashioned kind—hair like gold, eyes like violets, and a rose-petal skin. The picture of her in her white frock with her wreath of myrtle, and the string of pearls her uncle, the Graf von Rothenfels, Paul’s father, had given her, was lovely enough to please the severest critic.

Herr Hauptmann Friedel von Glück came in for a very second share of the interest, though Marie had assured the girls that he was very amiable, and handsome as a prince out of the *Märchen*.

‘Friedel’s father is very kind,’ said Marie presently. ‘He asked many questions of me about us here, and says he thinks it is a very good school. Oh, and Joey, he knows all this part, for he used to climb the mountains round here when he was a boy, and he says he knows there are some wonderful caves near. He says you reach them through a narrow opening in the mountains, and you go down and down till you come to them, and they are all glittering inside as if they are made of diamonds. He thinks they must be under the lake, for he says they pass on to another cave, where there are stalactites, very beautiful. But no one knows about them, for people are afraid to venture, lest the water should break through.’

‘I say! How interesting!’ Jo’s fancy was enchained at once. ‘What else did he say about them, Marie?’

But the others were not very enthusiastic, and refused to listen to chatter about caves. What they wanted was to hear more of the betrothal feast. So Marie and Jo had to put this piece of news on one side while the former told them all they wished to hear. Herr Rittmeister von Eschenau came to say good-bye to his daughter before they were satisfied, and Marie had to stop her tale, to kiss him, and listen to his commands for good work and behaviour. Then he had to say a few words to Jo and Grizel, whom he knew quite well, and pat Maria Marani on the head before he went off, for he wanted to reach Munich as soon as possible. When he went out some of them went with him to rescue the spoils of the feast from the car, and then the bell for *Abendessen* rang, and after that the juniors were packed off to bed, and the middles had to follow half an hour later, for Sunday always meant early bed for everyone.

However, once they were undressed and in their pyjamas and dressing-gowns, Jo went through to Marie’s cubicle, and, sitting on the bed with the *plumeau* tucked round her,

proceeded to extract all that had been said about the caves. It was not much, but it was quite sufficient to excite the imagination of the future novelist. ‘I wonder where the opening is,’ she remarked, sitting with her knees hunched up, and her hair all on end as usual. ‘Wouldn’t it be a topping thing if some of *us* could find it? Just think! They might make a show place of it, and then they would need guides, and ever so many people would come, and the peasants would be able to make lots more money in the summer, so that they wouldn’t be so poor!’

She spoke with fervour, for four years in the Tiern valley had taught her how pitiably poor the peasantry were. They had only the summer in which to garnish their harvest. In the winter they had to live on their summer earnings, and often that meant hard living and being on the verge of starvation for most of them. In the mountainous regions the Tyrolese pray for a short winter, and a mild one. Otherwise, life is a bitter thing for them. In the summer most of the men are cowherds, taking the cows up to the pastures on the grassy alms which run like shelves along the lower slopes of the mountains, and live up there with them, many never coming down till the cows come down in the autumn. When winter comes they have to return to their homes in the villages, while the cattle are safely housed in sheds and byres, where one man can do the work that three or four do from May to September or thereabouts. They have no other means of livelihood, and in the little wooden huts, which are their homes, tragedy stalks near during a long or hard season.

Jo knew this. She had come near it herself one year, when a poor family had been obliged to drown the pups of their great St Bernard, Zita, and had even spoken of shooting Zita herself. Joey had managed to rescue one of the poor puppies, and Madge had bought him for her. He was now a magnificent fellow, living up on the Sonnalpe, where he had more freedom than at school. The young headmistress had also taken care of Zita for the winter months, thus relieving the family of a heavy charge. After that, she had told them that if ever they were in such straits again, the big dog might winter at school. Since Zita’s pups, when they arrived in the summer, were a source of income, the people had gladly accepted this offer, and Zita had been at the school part of the previous winter. So far, she had not come this year, for the snow had come late, but if it continued for long the girls knew they might expect their great guest.

Hence Jo’s eagerness over the caves.

Marie, however, was a girl of very different kind. She was by no means adventurous, and rather shrank from the idea of going down into the bowels of the earth to hunt for caves. ‘I would rather not, Jo,’ she said. ‘But perhaps some of the men might go.’

‘Oh, but it would be gorgeous if our girls did it!’ declared Joey. ‘It—it would be like saying “thank you” for all they have done for us here.’

‘Well, I don’t suppose we should be let,’ said Margia, who had strayed into the cubicle to listen to the conversation. ‘Think of the fuss they made when Grizel went off up the Tiernjoch, and that wasn’t half so dangerous as this would be!’

‘It was jolly dangerous,’ said Jo. ‘That beastly mist came down, and she was caught on that precipice place! It was ghastly, I can tell you!’

‘Well, I don’t see you getting permission to go hunting for caves in the mountains,’ insisted Margia. ‘Madame would have a fit!’

‘She mightn’t know about it till we’d found it.’

‘Don’t be an ass! The very first thing they’d do if any of us went missing like that would be to ring them up at the Sonnalpe to see if we’d gone there!’

There was a good deal of truth in this, but what further Jo might have said on the subject was prevented by the ringing of the silence bell, and Miss Maynard came along five minutes

later to see that they were all right, and to switch their lights off. They had to settle down to sleep then, and Joey, at any rate, had an exciting time of it, for she dreamed that she was in the heart of the Bärenkopf hunting for the caves, and just as she had found the entrance the wicked Baron Rheinhardt appeared, and invited her to go for a walk in the streets of the submerged city at the bottom of the lake. She refused, and began to try to go back, but wherever she turned he was there, grinning and jeering at her. Finally, she got so frightened that she began to shriek for help, when he began to smother her, and she woke up to find Margia and Evadne stuffing their pillows over her mouth to stop her cries in case they brought anyone. 'What's up?' demanded Jo, when she had come to her senses.

'You've been yelling like one of Deira's dear banshees,' Margia informed her. 'What on earth were you dreaming about?'

'Oh, things,' said Jo vaguely. 'Thanks for waking me; I was having nightmare, I think.'

'I should think you *were*! Anything more bloodcurdling than those howls you let out just now I've never heard before! It's a wonder you haven't had the whole house here to see what was happening!'

'I guess you had too much supper,' said Evadne. 'That's what's wrong with you.'

'Oh, go back to bed!' said Jo disgustedly. 'You'll wake up all the dormy if you're not quieter.'

She rolled herself over, and snuggled down again in bed, while the others, after looking at each other uncertainly for a minute or two, took her advice, and retired to their own beds, where they soon fell asleep again, and this time slept till the rising bell woke them, to jeer at the others for rivals of the Seven Sleepers, since they had heard none of Jo's outcries during the night.

CHAPTER XIV.
HALF-TERM.

The days passed quickly after this. Too quickly, Grizel thought, as she counted the weeks of school-life left her, and felt how the time was going. She was devoted to her school, and she dreaded the break that the summer would bring when she would have to go to Florence. Always energetic, she now devoted herself to doing all she could for the school, and, amongst other things, worked hard for the sale of work.

'I'm sick of fretsawing,' grumbled Joey one Wednesday afternoon as she sat down to her treadle machine, and proceeded to adjust a fresh saw-blade. 'As for the sale, I never want to hear of it again!'

'But there's so little time,' said Grizel, who was standing near, and had heard her. 'It will be half-term in three days' time, and after that we shall be in the thick of it before we know where we are.'

'Thank goodness it *is* half-term!' said Jo vigorously. 'And thank goodness the snow has ceased to fall at last. Luise says that she thinks there will be no more now till the thaw. We always get a little then. I say, Grizel, d'you think we'll have a flood this year? There's heaps more snow than ever I remember. It came late, but when it *did* come, it—well it *came*!'

'Shouldn't think so. Not since they deepened the bed of the stream again. Anyhow, we shall be safe enough. With that ditch all round the place, I should think any flood there was would be drained off completely.'

'You never know! Look at the Mississippi floods! They seem to get those every year, whatever they do.'

'Oh, talk sense! This isn't the Mississippi, or anything like it! It's a different kind of soil, for one thing! The Mississippi flows through soft soil. Our stream has to go through limestone. There's a slight difference.'

Jo cut a piece of her new puzzle, and then sat back. 'We aren't having any excitements this term. We generally have something thrilling at least once in the term. I don't count your accident, 'cos it didn't affect all of us, except that we all had fits about you. I mean something like the flood we had two years ago. Or the fire last summer term, when the fireball dropped during the thunder storm. *That's* what I call an excitement!'

'I dare say you do!' retorted Grizel. 'Personally, I prefer a quiet life. There's the sale at the end of term if you want any excitement. And we are going up to the Sonnalpe for half-term. You be contented with that, and get on with your puzzles. I want twenty, if you can manage them.'

'I've got nine done,' said Jo. 'This is the tenth. I don't believe you'll sell more than fifteen, anyway, even if I can get them done. I wish Friday was here.'

'It'll come jolly soon. You'd better wish for decent weather while you *are* about it! I know that it's unlikely to snow again, but if a howling wind gets up, we sha'n't be allowed to go. That path is fairly well exposed to a west wind, and it's not too nice in a north gale.'

'Oh, the wind's going to stay put,' declared Jo, turning back to her work. 'It *couldn't* be so maddening as to rise when we want it to be calm!'

'The wind never does do what you want,' said Grizel. 'I say, Joey, *do* get on. It will be time for singing in about ten minutes, and you could get a lot done now if you chose.'

Joey grunted, but made her treadle go as fast as she could, cutting the puzzle carefully, but at such a speed that it was small wonder that her saw suddenly broke off. ‘That settles it! I’m not going to fuss to stick another in!’ she announced. ‘Plato’s arrived already, and the bell will go in a minute. I’ve cut a third of this beastly thing, and I’ve only three saws left. Someone going to Innsbruck on Saturday will have to fetch me some more.’

‘I will buy them, Joey,’ said Frieda.

‘Thanks awfully. Then I’m going to give it a rest till after the exeat.—And there’s the bell!’

She finished putting her work away, and then dashed off to the singing class, where Mr Denny—Plato, to the girls—proceeded to be more eccentric than usual. He always spoke in the language of Tudor times, and, since his one idea was his art, he made many and startling statements. From his point of view, all education should be based on music, and he quoted from Plato’s *Republic* in season and out.—Hence his name. After a refreshing time with him the girls had their coffee, and the day passed without incident. The rest of the week was full of hard work, though Jo obstinately refused to touch her fretwork again, in spite of all Grizel could say. ‘I told you I was fed up,’ she said. ‘I’m not going to touch the wretched thing again till we come back from the Sonnalpe.’

To this resolution she firmly adhered, and when Friday came she had done no more to the puzzle.

It was a beautiful day, with a nip of frost in the air, just enough to make brisk walking enjoyable, and the climb up to the Sonnalpe a real treat. The Robin was to be carried up the path on her father’s back—he having come over to Briesau to fetch the three girls—and the others would scramble and climb as best they could. They started off about eleven o’clock, for it would take them four hours, and the daylight would be fading by two, since the mountains cut it off soon.

Well wrapped up, they tramped down to the lakeside, and there Captain Humphries, a sad, quiet man who adored his little daughter, and was fond of Joey in an avuncular fashion, strapped on their skates for them, and they set off across the frozen lake. They were all expert skaters now, even the Robin managing well on her small blades, and they were soon at Seespitz, the nearest point to the foot of the Sonnenscheinspitze, the mountain of the Sonnalpe. There they took off their skates and left them with Frau Hamel, mother of two of the girls, Sophie and Gretel, who were still in school, before they set off along the narrow path till they came to the foot of the mountain.

‘Gorgeous day!’ said Joey, stopping to sniff the fresh, bracing air. ‘I do love a sharp, clear day like this! Think what it’ll be like in England now!’

Captain Humphries smiled as he lifted the Robin, preparatory to beginning the climb. ‘I have not been in England for a good many years now, but I can imagine it!’

‘Wet—cold—*slushy*!’ said Jo, with a pause between each of the words. ‘I love England, of course, but oh, I loathe her winters!’

‘Me, I do not like them at all,’ said the Robin from her perch on her father’s shoulder. ‘I like the Tiern See, though, and I *love* going to see Tante Marguérite!’

‘We all do,’ said Grizel as she struggled up the rocky path, where the snow lay hard and crisp. ‘Come on, Jo! Don’t lag, old thing!’

‘It’s so slippery,’ complained Joey as she scrambled breathlessly after the others.

‘Never mind; we shall soon be there,’ said the captain, who was swinging over the ground as if he had no burden at all. Then he set his little girl down, and went back to help the older

girls.

It took three hours' hard scrambling to bring them to the easier path which led finally to the Sonnalpe, and the sun had disappeared by that time. Joey stood and looked down at the valley below. The lake was black with its ice, and the snow lay white all round it. Immediately beneath them was Seespitz, with its Gasthaus and villas. Farther along was Buchau, where there were two or three farmhouses, and the ferry-landing. Across the lake was Briesau, looking like a toy village, with its scattered hotels and pensions, and the villas and huts of the peasants. They could see the school, surrounded by its fence, and lights twinkling in the windows told them that it was already dusk in the valley. Beyond lay the pine-woods, black against the snow, and beyond them the great limestone crags and peaks of the mountains.

In the west the sun was sinking in a glory of saffron light, which told of high winds for the morrow, but Jo paid no heed to this at the moment. She stood there, her little pointed face glowing with the beauty of it all, her black eyes soft and unfathomable.

'Come on!' said matter-of-fact Grizel at last when her patience was worn out. 'It's after three, and we've got half an hour's walk yet before we reach the Sonnalpe.'

With a deep sigh Jo turned her back on the glory, and they set off on the last part of the way. It was very easy now, so the Robin was walking, her hand in her father's, her tongue going at a great rate. Jo and Grizel came behind them, arm in arm, for the path was fairly broad hereabouts, and saying little. Jo was still entranced by the memory of the loveliness she had witnessed, and Grizel was tired and out of breath. They reached the alpe itself at last, and here they found Dr Jem waiting for them. 'Hullo!' he said. 'I saw you people from the sanatorium, so I waited for you. I've got the runabout here, so I'll take you all along to Die Blumen in it. Come along! You'll be at home in ten minutes, or less, now!'

'Thank goodness!' sighed Grizel as she fell into step between them. 'I'm pumped!'

'You're like Hamlet, my child—fat and scant of breath,' he said teasingly.

'I'm *not* fat!' returned Grizel indignantly. 'I'm out of training, if you like. We've had no chance of it this term with such awful weather. But fat I am *not*!'

'You ass, Grizel!' said Joey. 'You always rise to Jem. I can't think why you do it!'

Grizel laughed, her momentary indignation forgotten as they rounded a curve and saw the doctor's little runabout standing before the steps that led up to the great sanatorium. 'Well, I'm tired, anyway! I'm jolly glad you saw us and waited, Dr Jem!'

'You're late, aren't you?' he said. 'I know Madge expected you earlier than this!'

'It was such a pull up,' explained Joey. 'It's beastly slippery too.'

'We're here now, anyway, and that's all that matters,' laughed Grizel as she slipped into her seat and held out her arms for the Robin. 'Can you squeeze in, Jo?'

'Rather! How's Uncle Ted going to manage though?'

'I'm going to walk,' said the captain.—'Yes, Russell, I want to. I have a call to make at Wald Villa before I come up to Die Blumen. Tell Mrs Russell I'll be along presently, will you?'

'Very well,' said the doctor. 'All safe, you people? All right! So-long, Humphries!' He put down the self-starter, and they were off and bowling jerkily over the snowy ground.

'I don't think much of your roads,' chuckled Joey. 'A bit on the bumpy side, aren't they?'

'A bit,' agreed the doctor. 'We are going to have them seen to during the spring. What? My good child, I'm no engineer to tell you that. Have them macadamised or something of the kind, I should think. Here we are! Tumble out, and run along in. Madge will be waiting for you.'

They scrambled out and ran up the long path which led to the door, where Madge, wrapped in a shawl, was waiting to welcome them. In the summer the ground on either side would be a beautiful flower-garden; but now it was white and bare, with a few miserable-looking bushes here and there. Not that they paid any heed to that. They raced to the door where their hostess was standing, and were all caught in a clump as she pulled them in. 'How late you people are! I was beginning to think something had happened and you weren't coming! Come along in! Straight upstairs, and get your things off and change your shoes! You know your rooms, don't you? Joey's next to ours, and Grizel on the other side of her. Robin, you are to sleep in papa's dressing-room, just opposite. See to her, Joey. I'm busy cooking, and can't leave my work.'

Joey nodded, and they ran upstairs and along the passage till they came to their rooms. They were very dainty, furnished in the fashion of the country, with panelled walls and high white-washed ceilings. The beds had white, tent-like curtains, and one or two copies of famous pictures hung on the walls. Jo's room communicated with her sister's, and the Robin's with her father's. None of them had brought any clothes, for they kept some there in case of need. They got out of their outdoor things, changed their sturdy boots and stockings for silk and dancing sandals, brushed their hair—a very necessary thing in Joey's case—and finally ran downstairs again, looking fresh and dainty.

'What were you making?' Jo demanded of her sister as she entered the room.

'Treacle toffee,' was the reply. 'It's done now and cooling outside.'

'Scrummy!' sighed Jo, whose weakness for treacle toffee was well known. 'Madge, you're a dear! I adore your treacle toffee!'

'I am hungry,' observed the Robin.

'Are you, dearie? Well, Marie is bringing *Kaffee und Kuchen* now, so you won't be hungry long,' replied Madge, lifting the small girl on to her knee.

'That's a mercy!' declared Joey. 'I'd have had to tighten my girdle or something if you had wanted us to wait much longer. Here's Jem again. I say, Jem, I've nearly finished my story! The only thing I can't decide is what to do about marrying them.'

'Aren't you going to marry them?' asked Madge, who had been privileged to read the first part of this tale. 'Oh, I think I should, Joey. What else do you want to do with them?'

'I could kill "Raymonde" off,' said Jo. 'Then "Adelaide" could—could——'

'Well? Could—what?' demanded Jem.

'Go into a convent?' suggested Grizel.

'Of course not, idiot! She's not a Catholic!'

'Marry them, of course,' said Madge. 'Don't make them unhappy, Jo! Even if it's only a story, let them end up all right.'

'Lots of stories don't,' argued Jo as well as she could for a mouthful of cake. 'Look at *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *The Mill on the Floss*.'

'It requires genius to write a tragedy, Jo,' said her brother-in-law. 'I grant you that Dickens and George Eliot got away with it; but nothing is worse than the mawkish rot that some people write.'

'Well, there's *Comin' through the Rye*, an' *Trilby*.'

'I've never read the first, but Du Maurier was as much a genius as Dickens,' said Jem. 'And may I ask who gave *you Trilby* to read?'

'I read it when I was at the Maynards,' explained Jo. 'Why? Oughtn't I?'

No one answered her. Truth to tell, Jo was such an omnivorous reader that there was never any saying what she would get hold of. Usually she was allowed to go her own sweet way, but Jem felt that she was too young to have understood the sad beauty of Du Maurier's masterpiece. It should have been kept from her till she was old enough to appreciate it.

Jo never bothered about it. She had just remembered that Madge would know nothing about the caves, and she promptly poured out all she had gleaned from Marie, together with her own theories on the subject. The doctor was interested at once. 'I say, that's interesting!' he said. 'When I was last in Vienna I met that open-air fiend, Professor von der Witt—you remember, Madge? He said he thought there ought to be something of the kind hereabouts, but I don't think he knew anything definitely. I must write and let him know about this! Well, what are you monkeys giggling about?'

'The last time we met him!' choked Jo. 'Grizel, shall you ever forget "the Stuffer" and "Maria"?'

'*Never!*' said Grizel with conviction.

'What is this?' asked Captain Humphries, who had come into the room in time to hear the last two speeches.

'Yes; who are your friends with the inviting names?' queried Jem.

'Oh, didn't Madge tell you?'

'No; I forgot all about it,' said Madge.

'Oh, *priceless*!' Jo settled herself firmly in her chair and proceeded to give a somewhat lurid version of their journey from Paris to Basle.

The two gentlemen roared over it, and declared that they wished they had been there to see the fun. The Robin sat looking very serious. 'But me, I never knew this, Joey,' she said when Jo had finished. 'I was asleep.'

'You were, *petite*,' said Grizel, slipping an arm round her. 'But it was fun! Jo, have you ever written to the old thing as she said?'

'Ages ago! I wrote the first Sunday we were back. I've never heard from her, though.'

A ring at the telephone put a stop to their chatter just then, and Jem went to answer it. He came back looking serious. 'It's the sanatorium. That poor fellow is worse again.—Maynard thinks he can't last many hours now. I must go, dear.'

Madge rose at once. Seven months as a doctor's wife had taught her many things. Her face was very grave as she followed her husband from the room. The girls looked at each other miserably.

Only the Robin seemed untouched. 'Papa, is it someone going to Paradise?' she asked.

'Yes, my pet,' he replied quietly.

'I am so sorry; but if he is ill, I 'spect he'll be glad to get there,' decided the baby, for whom death, as yet, held no terrors.

'Let's go and see Rufus,' suggested Grizel, shying away from the subject with instinctive dread. 'He's in the shed, Captain Humphries, isn't he?'

'Yes,' said the captain. 'Go through the kitchen, children, and don't stay long. Perhaps you had better go and bring him here.'

They went off to call Joey's best-loved possession, a magnificent specimen of a magnificent breed, and presently returned with him, just as Madge entered the salon. The Robin's father had gone, but she joined in the romping of the others very gaily. Six o'clock brought the baby's bedtime, and she was whisked off, Rufus following, to have her bath, while the elder girls settled themselves with books.

There was a long silence in the pretty room, then Jo put her book down. ‘Grizel!’

‘Yes?’

‘Grizel, isn’t it awful? Just when we are having a jolly time, that poor man over there is—dying.’

Grizel nodded. She was older than Jo, but she had not thought as deeply as the younger girl. Her mind had been running on the same subject while she had been pretending to be buried in her book. She had neither the Robin’s baby faith, nor Jo’s contemplative nature, and she shied away from her thoughts. ‘You’d better go on with your book,’ she said. ‘It’s nearly time for *Abendessen*.’

Jo returned to the pages, but she was not following them. Her thoughts were all on that mysterious thing that was happening at the sanatorium.

Madge divined it as soon as she entered the room after tucking up the Robin, and she crossed over to her sister. ‘Joey, you need not be sorry for this poor fellow. He has nothing to live for, and he will be joining those he loved best to-night. The priest was here this morning, and he is prepared.’

The two girls came and sat on the floor beside her.

‘Madame, what is death?’ asked Grizel suddenly.

‘Just falling asleep with God—to awake in His presence—that’s all,’ said Madge Russell quietly.

‘Then why are we afraid of it?’

‘Because it means a change, and most of us are afraid of changes that we don’t understand. But, Grizel, there is nothing to fear, really, any more than there is anything to fear when we fall asleep at night.’

Grizel sat silent, thinking this over.

‘God is with us through it all?’ asked Joey.

‘Yes, Jo. He never leaves us if we have faith in Him.’

It was not many weeks later that this came back to both girls in another and very different place, and those quiet sentences helped them to face what looked like certain death with courage and calm.

Now, as they sat there, the telephone bell shrilled again. Madge rose and answered it.

Presently she came back. The two faces turned to her with questioning in their eyes.

She nodded. ‘Yes; he has fallen asleep, and will waken in Paradise.’

They said no more, but the rest of the evening was a quiet one. Their week-end had begun sadly, but, somehow, they were not as sad as they had thought they would be, and the event cast no gloom over their holiday, as the elders had feared it might.

Jem had not returned by nine o’clock, when Madge insisted on Joey and Grizel going to bed, since they were tired from their scramble.

‘I’d like to go on with my book,’ Joey protested.

‘You may do that to-morrow,’ said her sister serenely. ‘Bedtime for you now. Your eyes are like saucers, and Grizel’s aren’t much better. Off you go, both of you! I’ll come round and put the lights out presently.’

Grizel was already asleep when she went to them, but Joey was lying awake. ‘That’s all it is?’ she asked, apropos of nothing, as her sister bent to kiss her.

Madge understood. ‘Yes, Jo; that’s all.’

‘I sha’n’t forget,’ said Joey. ‘O-o-ow! How tired I am! G’night, Madge!’

CHAPTER XV.
THE ROBIN IS LOST.

‘Girls, have you seen the Robin?’

The prefects looked up as Miss Maynard came into their room, this question on her lips.

‘But no, Madame,’ said Vanna. ‘I have not seen her all day.’

‘Nor I,’ added Rosalie. ‘When did anyone last see her?’

‘Nobody seems to know,’ replied the mistress with a worried look. ‘Amy says she went off for her afternoon nap as usual, and Klara saw she was tucked up. Since then, no one knows anything about her.’

‘Is she with Joey?’ asked Grizel doubtfully.

‘Jo has been working all the afternoon, and knows nothing about her. She was never missed till half an hour ago, when Mademoiselle sent for her to have her new frock tried on. Girls, are you *sure* you haven’t seen her anywhere?’

They shook their heads.

‘We had German literature at two,’ said Grizel, ‘and at three we came up here. I had my lesson with Herr Anserl at half past, but I certainly saw nothing of her then.’

‘Well it’s very mysterious,’ said Miss Maynard. ‘Where *can* she have got to?’

‘Could she have gone to talk to Luise?’ suggested Gertrud. ‘She is very fond of her, and Luise loves our baby.’

‘That’s an idea. She may be in the kitchen.’

‘I’ll run down and see, shall I?’ proposed Mary, getting to her feet. ‘I won’t be a second, Miss Maynard.’

She tore off downstairs, but returned to say that Luise had seen nothing of the Robin that day. ‘And please, Miss Maynard, she thinks she may be in the shed with Rufus.’

Rufus had come back from the Sonnalpe with his mistress, who had declared that she simply *must* have him with her for the rest of the term. As there were only five weeks left, Madge had agreed, and the big dog had been duly installed in the shed when the girls came down with him on the Tuesday. So Miss Maynard promptly went off to see if she could find Robin there, and the prefects returned to their various pursuits without thinking any more about it. It was something of a shock to them, therefore, when the mistress returned ten minutes later to say that only Joey was with the big dog, and she had declared that the Robin had not been there when she had come.

The seniors dropped their work, and at once began to discuss how they were to find the baby. Grizel organised a search party, and sent them over to Le Petit Chalet, forming another with which she hunted through the chalet till there was not a hole nor a corner which they had not investigated. It was all in vain. The Robin had vanished as completely as if she had never been there.

‘It’s as strange as it was the day that you and Eigen rescued Rufus, Joey,’ said Simone, referring to one of Jo’s exploits of two years before; ‘we couldn’t find you then, and we can’t find the Robin now.’

‘Well, there are no pups to save from drowning just now,’ said Mary, who was standing near, ‘so you must think of something better than that!’

But at the reminder, Jo had rushed out of the room.

‘Where has she gone?’ demanded Marie von Eschenau.

They were answered by the return of Jo, leading Rufus, and Grizel behind her.

‘Rufus can track her!’ cried his owner. ‘He helped me find Elisaveta in the summer, and this is snowtime. St Bernards are always able to do things in the snow! Hang on to him, someone, while Grizel and I get our coats and tammies!’

Evadne obligingly caught the dog’s harness—he wore no collar, as they were afraid of spoiling his neck—and the pair vanished, to reappear wearing their outdoor things, while Grizel had the Robin’s rolled up into a bundle under her arm. Jo was waving a vacuum flask which she had persuaded Luise to fill with hot coffee, and they looked well equipped for their expedition.

There was no staff to stop them, for all the staff were busy hunting through the grounds in case the little girl had got lost there. Grizel gave her orders to her satellites. ‘Gertrud, go over and tell Klara to have the Robin’s bed warmed for her.—Rosalie, see that there is a hot bath ready.—Vanna and Luigia, you might go and look after the babes.—Deira, you and Mary must see to the middles.—Eva, go and tell Mademoiselle that we have gone with Rufus to see if he can track her. Say that we will come back as soon as we have found her, and ask Matey to ring up the Sonnalpe, and ask if Doctor Jem can come down *without alarming Madame*! The rest of you, for any sake, be good! There’s enough trouble as it is. Come on, Jo!’

They dashed off, and presently the girls saw them at the gate of the fence, showing the dog something small, which Evadne pronounced to be one of the Robin’s gloves.

Evidently Rufus found the scent at once, for he dashed forward at a pace that made the girls pant breathlessly after him. Jo had hold of his chain, but he towed her along, Grizel running hard to keep up with them. Right round the fence he led them, and up to the pinewoods that covered the slopes of the Bärenbad Alpe. There he began to lead them through the trees, keeping far from the path which they usually followed.

‘Help!’ thought Grizel. ‘How on earth has she got this far?’

On went Rufus, never slackening his pace for a moment, and on went the girls. They were now reaching a part of the mountain that they did not know. They had never been here, and, what was more, they had heard that the peasantry never came, as report had it that the place was haunted by devils. How the Robin’s baby feet had carried their owner this distance was a question neither Grizel nor Jo could settle at the moment. For one thing, they were too breathless to think much about it. For another, they couldn’t have answered it if they had.

Just as both of them were beginning to feel that they could not go on any longer, and Joey was starting a stitch in her side, the dog suddenly stopped, circled round restlessly once or twice, and then, sitting down on his haunches, threw up his nose and bayed loudly. The melancholy sound nearly finished Jo, who was tired, and Grizel felt suddenly helpless and despairing. ‘What *has* happened to her,’ cried the head-girl. ‘Oh, Rufus, do stop that awful noise! Make him dry up, Joey!’

Joey put her arms round his neck, and kissed him on his cold nose. Then she turned to Grizel. ‘Grizel, where has she gone to? Do you think Rufus means that she’s buried in the snow?’

But Grizel had managed to pull herself together, and was now able to use her common-sense. ‘Nonsense! How could she? It’s as hard as iron!’ She stamped on the ground to give emphasis to her words, and the ringing sound of her nail-studded boots on the frozen snow gave point to her rejoinder.

‘Then what has happened?’

‘Someone may have found her, and carried her,’ suggested Grizel.

‘But who?’

‘That’s more than I can tell you. I didn’t think anyone came here. It’s supposed to be haunted, you know. Look here, Jo, suppose we go on a little farther and try him again. He might be able to pick up the scent. I don’t think she’s been carried off, if that’s what you are thinking. There’s no one—*what’s that?*’

Jo turned, and looked fearfully in the direction in which she was pointing. What she expected to see, neither she nor anyone else could have told at the moment. What she actually did see was a deep cleft in the rock wall not far from where they were standing, and asleep in it was a strange old man with long white beard and hair, and in his arms, warmly wrapped up in an old deerskin, was the Robin. Both recognised her black curls at once, and both made for the group immediately. Rufus followed them, barking vociferously.

The noise woke the strange bedfellows, and the Robin sat up, holding out her arms to the girls, while the man lay where he was, gazing at them with wild blue eyes in which there was something which Grizel mentally described as ‘uncanny.’

‘*Herzliebchen!*’ Jo had caught the baby to her. ‘Little beloved! How could you run away like this and leave us? Are you cold, *Bübchen*?’

‘But no, Joey, I am very warm,’ replied the Robin, rubbing her curls well into Jo’s mouth as she snuggled to her. ‘This gentleman, Herr Arnolfi he is, and he has kept me so warm. He was taking me to see where the fairies live, and we got tired, so we sat down to rest.’

Grizel turned to the old man, seeing that Joey was too busy hugging the fond lamb to trouble with him. ‘Why did you take her off?’ she demanded in German.

He chuckled in a meaningless manner, rising slowly to his feet. ‘It is the queen of the fairies, my little lady. I was but taking her back to her own realms.’

With a little gasp of horror Grizel realised that they had to do with a madman. He might be harmless, but none the less he was insane. If he chose to resist them they were only two girls, and she had read stories which told her of the strength of insanity. Somehow they must get the baby home without frightening her, if they could manage it. She was a sensitive little creature, and the head-girl knew well that such a scene as might ensue, if he chose to oppose them, would have a bad effect on her. Choosing her words carefully, she answered, ‘It is the wrong time of year, Herr Arnolfi. Now, the fairies are all asleep till the spring shall come. Then she may go back, but now, she would be alone without attendants to wait on her. You would not be so cruel as to condemn a queen to that, would you?’

He looked at her, a madman’s cunning in his eyes, that wandered restlessly over them. ‘How do I know that you mortals will let her go? I am of the fairy-folk myself. Give me the little queen, and I will be her faithful attendant until the spring shall come.’

‘But it is not fitting that she should go thus,’ persisted Grizel, all her wits bent on getting them away before his insane anger should break out. ‘She is not robed as befits a queen. Neither has she jewels.’ In English she added, ‘Joey! Get her wrapped up, and away! Put her on Rufus’s back.’

Jo at once lifted the child on to the back of the great dog, who was well able to take the light weight, and had often acted the part of horse before. But she made no attempt to move. She had grasped what was the matter, and she had no intention of leaving Grizel to face the maniac by herself. The Robin, not realising, simply took the dog’s fur in her hands, prepared for a merry ride on his back.

‘Get off with her,’ said Grizel urgently. ‘*Quick*, Joey!’

‘And leave you to this lunatic? It’s likely, isn’t it?’ remarked Jo scornfully.

‘Then tie her on, and send Rufus home. He can carry her easily. But get her away from here!

Joey obeyed promptly, tying the Robin as well as she could with gym girdle and scarf. ‘Hold tight, darling,’ she murmured. ‘Tell them to let Rufus bring them here when you get home.’

The lunatic had watched their movements with increasing suspicion. Now he turned to Grizel. ‘The queen has her steed, so she enters well into her kingdom. But you must go. It is not fitting that mortals should behold the court of the fairies. Go, I tell you! Go!’

He was plainly becoming excited. Grizel nodded to Jo, who guessed what it meant. Flinging out her arm in the direction in which they had come, the younger girl cried, ‘Home, Rufus! Home, boy!’

The gallant animal at once set off, loping along easily. The Robin was very small and light for her age, and he felt no discomfort from his burden. The instincts of his great race were aroused, and he seemed to realise that it was a question of life and death. As he sped off the madman gave vent to such an eldritch yell as terrified the two girls left behind, and he made off after the great dog, tearing over the snow with gigantic bounds, that, it seemed, must bring him up to Rufus in no time. But Rufus was alarmed, and he quickened his pace, the Robin clinging with terrified grip to him.

‘Come on, Jo!’ shrieked Grizel, catching Joey’s hand. ‘*Run!*’

They set off at their best pace, running down the slope away from the cleft. The lunatic was still pursuing Rufus and his precious burden, but even his insane strength was running out, and already he was losing ground. Grizel realised that as soon as he saw this he would probably make for them, to wreak his vengeance on them, and she made no attempt to follow the dog’s tracks. Instead, she ran steadily out from them, trusting that the shape of the valley would bring them to some well-known path sooner or later. As for Jo, she couldn’t even think. She simply ran blindly on, clinging to Grizel in a blind faith which was their salvation, for had she known that they were not following Rufus, the chances are that she would have argued the point. As it was they tore on, breathless, terrified, and well-nigh blind with fear. Finally, Jo tripped up over a buried tree-trunk and fell headlong, dragging Grizel after her.

They were up in a moment and dashing on with bursting lungs, but the fall had broken their headlong flight, and in less than three minutes they knew that they could not go on. Their run fell to a walk, and, finally, Joey sank down on the ground, her hand at her side where the cruel stitch was catching, and fighting for breath. Grizel was not in much better case, but she was able to realise that they must not stay there. The cold was cruel, and was becoming more intense as night stole on. Already the stars were beginning to show in the skies, and they had no means as yet of knowing where they were.

The head-girl bent down and pulled Jo to her feet. ‘Come on, Joey! We can’t stop here. Hang on to me, old thing, and I’ll haul you along.’

‘I can’t!’ gasped Jo. ‘Grizel, I can’t! Let me alone! Let me alone!’

But Grizel persisted. In spite of her own weariness she managed to drag Jo along with her, though it was a slow progress, and she was terrified in case they were going round in a circle, and should come up with the old madman again. She scanned the skies eagerly for the North Star; but it had not risen yet, so they were forced to go on as straight as they could. Joey was becoming a dead weight and was ceasing to protest against being made to walk. Grizel knew

that she herself could not go on much longer, and she shuddered inwardly as she thought of what might happen if they had to go much farther.

Mercifully, help was nearer at hand than she had supposed. Just as she was beginning to decide that she could not move another foot, the sound of voices came to them from amongst the trees, and there were lights to be seen moving in their direction. With a final effort the head-girl let go her hold of Joey and called as loudly as she could. Then she, too, sank down on the ground, utterly exhausted. The three men who had come over the great Tiern Pass from Germany found them there two minutes later when they left the trees, and had to carry them to Lauterbach, the little hamlet at the Austrian end of the pass. Neither of them recovered consciousness till they were safely in one of the little chalets, where the rescuers dosed them with brandy, bringing them to effectually. It was some time before they could recover their wits sufficiently to say where they came from, and by that time the Chalet people, led by Dr Jem and Rufus, had succeeded in tracking them to the hamlet.

Both were so completely done that they had to stay where they were for the night, and when they were brought home next day they were put straight to bed and kept there for the rest of the week. Joey was in the worse case. Grizel was strong as a young pony, and, except for a stiffness which soon wore off, she recovered from her fright and exertion rapidly.

Jo, on the other hand, was so worn-out that it was decided to separate her from everyone, and she was taken to her sister's little bedroom, where she stayed for ten days, finally coming downstairs looking white and big-eyed, and inclined to be easily upset. Of the three the Robin came off best. She had been frightened by the old man's chasing of her and Rufus, but they had soon got away from him, and they had not gone far before the search party from the Chalet, which had set out as soon as Eva had found Mademoiselle and given her Grizel's message. It had been quite by accident that they had gone in that direction at all, but the baby was quickly taken from her perch and carried home in Miss Durrant's arms, and bathed and put to bed.

Her story, when they got it from her, was that she had finished her afternoon nap, and had got up, dressed herself, and gone out into the playing-field, as she was permitted to do on fine days. She had been running along by the fence when the old man had suddenly appeared at the other side, and had called to her and told her to come with him, for he would take her to Fairyland. She had never thought of its being naughty, but had gone off quite happily, and he had been very good to her. When she had grown tired he had offered to carry her, but she had refused, for she wanted to be a real school-girl, and she was a Brownie, anyway, and Brownies don't fuss over trifles. At last, when they had reached the cleft, he had picked her up, and told her that now he was going to take her through it to Fairyland, where she would be queen. Only he was tired and must rest. So he had sat down and taken her in his arms. The next thing she knew, Joey and Grizel and Rufus were there, and then they had put her on Rufus's back, and sent him home with her, and the old man had been *very* angry—but very, *very* angry. He had run after them, but Rufus had run faster, and then Miss Maynard and Miss Durrant and Miss Wilson had come, and Miss Durrant had carried her home. And she was very sorry. Please would they forgive her?

'You were very naughty, my child,' said Mademoiselle, 'for only think! You are not permitted to leave the school by yourself. Poor Joey and Grizel had a terrible time, and now they are ill in bed because you were so naughty.'

The Robin wept bitterly. She adored Joey, who was her ideal in everything, and she was not allowed to go near her beloved. Grizel, too, had been very kind to her. They could have

inflicted no worse punishment on her than she had brought on herself, and after a little more talk Mademoiselle consented to forgive her, and kissed her.

But that escapade of the Robin's was to have much further reaching results than they yet realised. They thought it was at an end, and, after Grizel had been gently told that she should never have gone off as she did, nothing more was said. In Jo's case, scolding had to be put on one side. Her nerves had received a severe shock, and she was not herself all the rest of the term.

As for the old man, he had vanished as completely as if he had never existed. If it had not been that all three girls told the same story, and told it independently, those in authority would have decided that he had been a figment of imagination.

The Briesau people had another explanation of him. *They* said that he was a devil who had vanished by the aid of Satan, and that the children had had a narrow escape from being carried off to hell!

CHAPTER XVI.
THE HOLIDAYS.

The rest of that term passed quietly and quickly. The girls busied themselves with their preparations for the sale, and Joey managed to content herself with her fretwork. She remained very quiet, and was still easily upset, even when the end of term came, so that the staff were thankful that in a few days she would be safely in her sister's care. Madge had had to hear all about the adventure, of course, and she had been horror-stricken at the thought of the peril in which all three girls had been. She had come down to the school posthaste, and had stayed there for a week, spending her time with Jo, who clung to her sister. When she had gone back, she had gone with the promise that none of them would venture beyond the fence without a mistress in charge. As a matter of fact, no one was given the chance. Nothing had been heard about 'Herr Arnolfi,' and Mademoiselle lived in a perpetual state of fear lest he should come back and try to take the Robin away again, either by cajolery or force.

Rufus, who had proved himself such a hero, was well on the way to being spoiled, for everyone petted him, and he was rewarded with tit-bits dear to his doggish heart, and some of the middles nearly came to blows over the question of who was to look after him while his mistress was absent from him. It was finally settled by the prefects themselves, who undertook to see to his grooming and baths, and so saved the school from what looked like some promising feuds.

'For goodness' sake, try to behave as though you *were* middles, and not juniors!' said Grizel, whose first act on leaving the sick-room had been the settlement of this affair. '*None* of you will have anything to do with him, because *we* will do all he needs. Simone, if you whimper, I'll send you away! At your age you ought to be a little less babyish. You're a regular sponge!'

This bracing treatment had the effect of making Simone mop her eyes and choke down her sobs while she replied with dignity, 'You do not understand, Grizel. It is that I care for Joey, and wish to help her in every way, that I wish to tend Rufus while she is not able.'

'Your English,' said Grizel dispassionately, 'is simply horrible! Even Renée speaks better than you do. After four years I should have thought you'd manage to be—well, more idiomatic than you are.'

This was adding insult to injury, and Simone stalked off with her nose in the air. Still, as she managed to keep from wailing—at least in public—Grizel felt that she had accomplished *some*thing.

The sale was a huge success. By the time the girls had laid out all they had made themselves, and added to it all the contributions from other people, they found that they had enough for two needlework stalls, one hand-work stall, a sweet stall, a toys stall, and the little ones' lucky dip. When it was all over they counted their takings, and there was wild rejoicing when they found that they had made enough to keep one of the free beds filled for a whole year.

'I vote we do this every year,' said Grizel, as she locked her cash-box; 'then it could be the Chalet School bed, and Doctor Jem would always feel sure of *that*, anyway.'

'Good idea,' said Mary. 'I vote we do. What do you others think?'

They all agreed, and Grizel was made to sit down then and there and write to Doctor Jem, telling him what they intended doing.

The result of this was that when Grizel, Joey, and the Robin put in an appearance at the Sonnalpe on the first day of their holidays, they were escorted ceremoniously to the sanatorium, and taken to the big free ward for children. There were no patients there yet, though some would be arriving very shortly. It was a big, sunny room, with picture-flowers, and a glorious view from the windows. But the girls paid no heed to all this. One thing only caught their eyes. The middle cot had a brass plate over it, and on this was printed 'The Chalet School Bed.'

'Jem! You *ripper*!' gasped Jo. 'Oh, how decent of you to get it done before we came up!'

'It's topping!' said Grizel. 'Ever so nice, Doctor Jem!'

'I like the shiny thing,' remarked the Robin gravely. 'Why has it our name up, Oncle Jem?'

They explained it to her carefully, and she listened with a beaming face. When they had finished, she heaved a deep sigh. 'I will save all my *Schillings*,' she said.

Doctor Jem stooped and kissed her. 'You are a darling,' he said.

The Robin kissed him back, and then turned to Mrs Russell. 'Will it please you, Tante Guito?'

'Very much, my pet.'

'How much can I save in a year if I save one *Schilling* every week?' demanded the baby.

'Oh, I don't think you can save all your pocket-money *every* week,' laughed Madge. 'You will want money for stamps and birthday presents and church collections. But you may save half of it. In English money that will be fifteen shillings.'

'Then what is the Austrian *Schilling* worth at that rate?' asked Jo with interest. 'I never thought of it before, somehow. *Isn't* it worth as much as one of ours?'

'No; only about sevenpence,' said her brother-in-law. 'So, although your allowance of five *Schillings* a week sounds sumptuous, it really runs into about three shillings, and, as you have a good deal to do with it, it isn't much.'

Jo, who had to provide gloves, stockings, and handkerchiefs out of her pocket-money, agreed. 'It sounds all right; but it isn't! I wish I didn't lose so many hankeys!'

'Same here,' added Grizel. 'And what makes it worse is that, just as I've got accustomed to thinking in *Schillings*, I've got to go to Italy, and get accustomed to thinking in *liras*. What are *they* worth?'

'That's a problem,' replied the doctor. 'They should be worth ninepence, but they're not; you see—oh dear, it's too complicated!'

'Never mind, then,' said the head-girl, looking back at the bed. 'Anyway, I'll send all I can save for the cot. It mayn't be *much*, but it'll always be something.'

'I'll do the same,' decided Joey; 'but what will happen about hankeys I can't imagine.'

'I'll leave you most of mine when I go,' promised Grizel. 'I had a letter from my step-mother yesterday, and she says father says I've to have a new rig-out for Italy, so she wants me to go to Paris in the summer, and she will meet me there and get me what I need. So you may have them, Jo. I've got about forty just now, and I'll try not to lose any before then.'

'You're a sport,' said Jo warmly. 'Thanks awfully, Grizel.'

The next few days were spent in taking walks in the neighbourhood, but they soon exhausted all the possibilities, and by the time they had climbed the mountain twice they were ready for something fresh.

‘That’s the only drawback to here,’ said Grizel, as they sat in the salon after *Kaffee* one day. ‘There aren’t many places you can go to, and now it’s thawing, the whole place is ankle-deep in mud! This is the second time to-day I’ve had to change my stockings!’

‘Well, I had to change every solitary thing,’ declared Jo between two bites of *apfeltorte*. ‘You’ll have fits when you see my laundry, Madge!’

Madge Russell laughed. ‘I don’t doubt it for one moment. If there *is* any mud you can get into, you seem to make for it headlong, Jo. I never knew anyone like you for it! You’re worse than Dick used to be!’

‘Has the Indian mail come to-day?’ asked Jem, looking up from his occupation of teasing Rufus.

‘Yes; but I haven’t opened it yet. It’s a thick package this time, so I expect Mollie managed to get time to put in a decent letter for once,’ said his wife, as she produced the letter from her twin brother, who was in the forestry in the Dekkan. ‘Yes; there’s something from her.’

‘Goodness! What a screed!’ ejaculated Jo. ‘Read’s what she says, Madge.’

Madge nodded and began:

> Dear People,—It is such ages since I wrote you a decent letter, that I thought I’d take this opportunity, while mother is with us and looking after the twins and baby, to let you know what we are doing. I should say, what we are going to do, I suppose. Because this is to warn you that we are coming home in June, and hope to be with you in August. Dick gets leave early in May, and it’s a six months’ furlough this time. We are coming straight to you, so I hope you can have us. If you can’t, we’ll go to one of the hotels by the lakeside till you can.
>
> If you’re not all dying to see your nephew and nieces, you ought to be! Rix and Peggy are imps of wickedness. Where they get it from I can’t imagine! Not from me, that’s certain. I suppose it must be Jo, for Dick says you were never as sinful as our twins are. As for Babs, she’s still at the stage when she sleeps most of the time, and is a good little thing. She is like Dick—the image of him, I think! He, of course, says he doesn’t know where I see it. The first time I told him he had the cheek to go off to the nearest mirror and examine himself carefully, murmuring all the time, ‘I *may* be plain, but I’m not as bad as all that!’ As I told him, he doesn’t deserve a daughter at all!
>
> Rix is like that photo of Madge she sent us on her wedding-day or thereabouts—I wasn’t there, so can’t say as to the actual date. Peggy is dark—like me, and, Dick says, like Joey too. Can you picture them *my* children? Dick and me with three kiddies. Of course, Babs is only three weeks old yet, but still it does make us seem *old*! After all, the twins are thirteen months now; they can walk and talk, though a lot of their conversation is absolutely unintelligible.
>
> Babs is to be christened next Sunday. We are going to call her Mary—after me; and Bridget after my little sister, who died before I was born. I suppose she will be Biddy as soon as she is old enough for a name. That won’t be for ages yet.
>
> What is happening at school? Have you had any more excitements this term? I am longing to see it, and to get to know all the girls. You’ve written so much about them that I feel as if I knew them all. We want to stay till term begins again—I suppose you’ll have broken up by the time we arrive? Still, I shall hope to see the

Robin and Juliet and Grizel, if she hasn't left you by then. When does she go to Florence?

Babs is howling for me, so ayah will be fetching her. Therefore, my dear relations, I must wind up this epistle. You can't say I haven't done you proud this time!—Much love to all, from

MOLLIE.

'Isn't she a sport?' said Jo enthusiastically. 'Fancy me with three nieces and nephews!'

'You've only one nephew and two nieces,' Grizel pointed out to her.

'Oh, well, you know what I mean. What does Dick say, Madge?'

'Mainly full of his furlough,' replied her sister. 'I'm glad they're coming. I've been wanting to know Mollie ever since I first heard of her. From her letters, she's a dear. Also, I *am* longing to see the babies. How nice of Rix to be like me!'

'He must be a discerning youth,' laughed the doctor, with an admiring glance at his charming wife. 'Mollie will have her hands full with those three kiddies!'

'Oh, she'll have an ayah for them,' said Madge easily. 'Well, what are we going to do with ourselves now?'

'Let's play at something,' suggested Joey. 'The Robin will have to go to bed soon.'

'There are yet two hours,' protested the Robin.

'Well, two hours goes jolly fast when it's near bedtime,' declared Joey. 'What would you like to play at?'

' "Walking Up the Hill-side," ' decided the Robin. 'Oh! Here comes papa!' She ran to meet her father, who picked her up, and came into the room with her on his shoulder. He was smiling as he came, and Joey thought, not for the first time, that 'Uncle Ted' was a dear when he looked like that.

'I've some news for you all,' he said as he sat down, transferring his little daughter to his knee. 'You may have three guesses among you.'

'An expedition to-morrow,' said Jo instantly.

'That's right as far as it goes. But you must get nearer than that, Joey.'

'We are going to Salzburg,' said Grizel instantly. It was a long-desired trip, and had been promised to them for some time.

'Clever girl! Yes; I saw the Lannisses to-day, and Mr Lannis has to go over on business. He offers to take you three and Mrs Russell if she can come. What do you say?'

'The children may go,' replied Madge. 'I'm afraid I can't.'

'Oh, Madge! Why not?' Jo's voice was full of disappointment.

'Because I have other things to do,' said her sister. 'I'm sorry, Jo, but I simply haven't the time. What arrangements did you make with Mr Lannis, Captain Humphries?'

'I said we would ring them up and let them know,' replied the captain. 'He is going by car, and is taking Evadne. If the children may go, he will meet us at the foot of the mountain at nine o'clock. They must bring things for the night, as he thinks it is too far to go and come in one day, and his business may take a little time. Mrs Lannis is not going, but her French maid will be there, so that the girls won't be left alone while he is at his meeting. He hoped you would go, Mrs Russell; but if you couldn't, he says Suzette is quite capable of looking after them. They will, of course, promise to do as she says.' He glanced down at his own little girl, who nodded her curly head. 'Me, I will be very good, papa; I will do all Suzette tells me.'

'And you others?' He looked across at Joey and Grizel.

‘Oh, rather!’ said Jo. ‘I’ll be an angel without wings if you let us go, Madge.’

Madge laughed. ‘If you are, it’ll be the first time, and I can *not* imagine you being angelic on any occasion, Jo. Still, I feel sure you will do as you are told, and not give Mr Lannis any trouble.’

‘I’ll look after them,’ promised Grizel, and Madge was satisfied. She knew that if Grizel kept the other two out of mischief, she would necessarily keep out of mischief herself.

So it was arranged, and as soon as Captain Humphries had had his coffee, he went off to ring up the hotel where the Lannisses were staying and tell them that it was all right, and the girls would come.

As for those young ladies themselves, they rushed upstairs to pack a small case with their belongings as soon as the meal was over. Madge followed to suggest early bed, since they would have to be up by five the next morning, and would have a full day. Incidentally, she knew that Mr Lannis could not be relied on to see that they went off early while they were with him. Evadne did as she chose with her father, and if she wanted to stay up, he would permit it. Privately, Mrs Russell resolved to give Grizel instructions that the Robin was to be tucked up in her nest as near her usual time as possible. She felt rather doubtful about allowing the baby to go on this trip at all. However, Captain Humphries had made no demur, and he was her father, so Madge felt that she couldn’t very well interfere now. She drew Grizel to one side while the other two were joyfully arguing about their trip.

‘Grizel, I want you to promise me that you will try to see that the Robin is in bed by eight o’clock at latest. I know that Evadne sits up to all hours at home, and I expect you and Jo will not get off before ten. But the Robin *must* go as near her usual time as possible. It won’t hurt Jo to sit up for once, and, of course, you are much older, and ten is not too late in holiday times when you are not working, and can sleep later the next morning. But the Robin would be worn out for the rest of the week if it was permitted her. Will you see to it, dear?’

Grizel nodded. ‘Yes, of course I will, Madame. I wish you were coming with us,’ she added wistfully.

‘I’m sorry, but I’m afraid I can’t! Oh, and just one other thing! Don’t let the child eat too many sweets. Mr Lannis has spacious ideas about the possibilities of small children’s stomachs, and, though it hasn’t upset Evadne, neither Jo nor the Robin is accustomed to unlimited chocolate, and I don’t want you all bilious after this trip. I will speak to Jo myself, and the Robin will do as she is told, of course. I’m sorry to burden you with all this responsibility, Grizel; but after all, if I can’t trust my head-girl, whom can I trust?’

‘I’ll do my honest best,’ promised Grizel, a little more colour than usual touching her pretty face. ‘I can’t do more.’

‘Then I can let you all go quite happily,’ said her Head with a smile. ‘You are a great comfort to me, Grizel. I feel I can trust you with them anywhere.’

The commendation was deserved, for that term had shown that Grizel, when she put her mind to it, could be as trustworthy and as steady as ever Gisela or Juliet had been. Jo had taken good care that everyone should know how the head-girl had tried to send her off with the Robin, and faced the maniac alone, and it had been Grizel’s doing that they had got off as they had. Madge felt that the turning-point in the girl’s career had come when they had resolved to give her one more chance, and was glad that she had done so; and though she had had a good many qualms at first, she was proud of Grizel now.

There was no chance of saying anything more, for Joey and the Robin came racing up at that minute to demand if it was really necessary to take an extra pair of stockings, as Marie

Pfeiffen, who had come to help them, insisted.

'It'll be such a bore carting all that along!' said Jo.

'Well, if you don't take the stockings, it will mean that you'll have to stay at the hotel if you get your feet wet. Of course, if you like that idea, you can leave the extra pair behind. But you may please yourself about it.' Eventually the stockings went in, though it entailed twenty minutes spent with a darning-needle, which had been her reason for objecting. Jo loathed mending, but she had no intention of spending the precious hours in Salzburg shut up in a hotel.

They were all in bed by eight o'clock, since they would have such an early start the next morning; and Jo, as was her wont when excited, lay on her back, and had such awful nightmares that she woke up Grizel, who came in to shake her awake, and found her sister coming in, bent on the same errand. The dreamer was roused, and turned on to her side, and slept again till Marie appeared with hot water and coffee, and the day had begun.

CHAPTER XVII.
SALZBURG.

Getting up early in the morning was not a favourite pastime of Grizel's, though Joey was an early riser at all times. On this morning, however, the head-girl was first out of bed, and she was nearly dressed before Jo made any move. Madge was dressing the Robin, who was wild with excitement at the prospect of seeing Salzburg, and it was the faithful Marie who woke up Miss Joey, and saw that she left her sheets.

Once that young person was up, however, she made short work of her bath and dressing, and was downstairs as soon as anyone. Grizel's long curls took time to arrange, and Jo had straight bobbed hair which was readily combed into order.

They were to go down as quickly as possible, for Mr Lannis had said he could not afford to wait, as his business appointment must be punctually kept, and he wanted to have lunch first. In the afternoon, while he was away, Suzette would take the girls to see the house where Mozart was born, and where the Mozart Museum is. From there, they would go on to the cathedral, though Joey refused to be very much interested in it. Her favourite period of architecture was the Gothic, and the Salzburg Cathedral was built in the early part of the seventeenth century in the Italian baroque style, which she disliked. Still, it contains some very interesting things, such as the high-altar piece by Mascagni, and a beautiful old bronze font, so she decided that she could put up with it for a short time. The Robin was anxious to see the famous fountain, the Hof-Brunnen in the Residencz-Platz, of which Amy Stevens had often told her. The Stevens had spent more than one winter in this beautiful town, and the great fountain had been Amy's favourite spot in it. Grizel had no special desires, and Evadne only wanted to go for the sake of the trip.

She greeted them joyfully when they arrived at the foot of the mountain, escorted by the doctor. 'Say! Isn't this real nice?' she inquired, as she made room for them in the car.

'Gorgeous!' replied Jo ecstatically. 'I'm dying to see Salzburg!'

'Your old Nap had a lot to do with it, I suppose? That's why you want to see it all so much, I guess. What I want is to hear that weird music thing at the Franciscan Church, and they don't let females in—mean skunks!'

'*What* weird music thing?' demanded Grizel.

'Don't remember its name, but I'm real mad to see it!'

'Well, if they don't let women in, I don't see you doing so,' grinned Joey unsympathetically. After a pause she continued, 'I say, isn't this positively gorgeous? I love mountain scenery!'

Evadne looked out of the window casually. 'It's not so dusty. I say, Joey, what d'you bet I get in and hear it, after all?'

'Nothing! You jolly well won't! Talk sense, Evadne, and let it alone! You'll only get run in if you try it on! They'd be safe to send for the *gendarmerie*. Don't make such an ass of yourself!'

Grizel, who had been staring out of the window, roused up to what was going at this point, and demanded to know what they were talking about. Jo enlightened her, and she promptly squashed her hostess. 'Don't be mad, Evadne! Do you want to let your father in for paying a big fine? For that's what it would come to at the very least.'

Evadne murmured something about ‘Poppa could afford it all right,’ but she ceased to discuss it any further, and the four returned to their gazing out of the window at the scenery.

It was very wonderful. At this point the road runs through mountains—the junction of the Tyrolean and Bavarian Alps, though they never crossed the frontier. Then it turns down into the Salzach valley, and follows the silver Salzach along till it reaches the suburbs of Salzburg. The suburbs are no more interesting than those of any other city, but in the great Hispaniola car they were soon left behind, and they came to old Salzburg, the great ecclesiastical city that generations of archbishops have built up on either side of the stream. On the east rises the great Kapuzinerberg hill, and on the west the city is flanked by the Mönschberg, both with well-wooded slopes, and charming houses nestling among the pines, larches, and silver birches.

The old houses, with their deep-red tiles and steeply sloping roofs, make one think of fairy-tales; and the glimpses of the silver river, the old cobbled streets, and the views of the grim castle of Hohen-Salzburg, which can be caught now and then, all go to add to the impression.

Joey was wild with delight, and the Robin shared her joy, though the other two unromantically declared that they were hungry, and wanted lunch!

Their wishes were fulfilled almost immediately, for Mr Lannis drew up outside a restaurant labelled Restaurant Mirabell, on the far side of the river, and, when he had arranged for the care of the car, he told them all to ‘come out, and get a hustle on about it.’

Joey looked about her with a dissatisfied air, for they were now in modern surroundings, and there was nothing in her eyes that was interesting. The others pressed after the busy American into the restaurant, where they were quickly served with a delicious meal.

‘Well, Miss Joey, how do you like this place?’ queried their host, as they ate soup full of macaroni and very delicious.

‘It’s awfully pretty, of course,’ said Joey, ‘but I love the old town that we came through to get here.’

‘Joey’s mad on history, poppa,’ said Evadne. ‘I guess she doesn’t think much to *this*!’

Mr Lannis laughed. ‘Why, we’re right next door to the Schloss’—he pronounced it ‘slosh’—‘Mirabell, which they reckon to be a fine sight, and chock-full of history.’

‘Oh, can we see it?’ begged Jo eagerly.

‘Why, I guess so. You’ll like the gardens, anyway, and they have a wonderful aviary here. I ken’t take you myself, but Susie will look after you all, and to-morrow we’ll go and visit the castle—if it’s open on the Sabbath, which I guess it is in these parts.—See here, Grizel, I’ll give you the money now, and you all meet me at our hotel at six. You’re to get your *Kaffee* at four as usual, and you ken go shopping, for I want you should all take back a little gift to remember this visit. I guess there’s enough there to give you each twenty *Schillings* spending-money, and the rest will pay for your sight-seeing and *Kaffee und Kuchen*.—Evadne, you’ll do as Grizel wants, and play no tricks, or I won’t bring you out again. Finished your soup? Hi, *Kellner*!’

The waiter came to change their plates, and serve them with tiny trout-like fish which were cooked in some wonderful sauce, and which they all enjoyed. It was followed by a fricassee of chicken and a pudding that made Evadne regret aloud that she had eaten so much of the other courses. Then they had coffee, and then Mr Lannis rose, paid the bill, and delivered them over to Suzette, whom he charged to take good care of them. After that he went off in the car, and they were left to their own devices till six o’clock.

Suzette took the Robin's hand firmly, and sent the other three on in front of her where she could keep an eye on them all the time, and they made their way to the entrance to the beautiful gardens of the Schloss, which the Archbishop Wolf Dietrich von Raitenau had had built for the lovely daughter of a Salzburg merchant in 1606. Grizel paid the small fee demanded, and they entered the grounds, where they were soon gasping with admiration. Here, in this sheltered part, the flowers bloom nearly all the year round, and at the end of March, when their own part of the country was just beginning to wake up, the beds were showing daffodils, narcissi, snowdrops, hyacinths, and many other spring flowers, while the velvety turf of the fine lawns was as green as if winter were not just ended. The place is almost a miracle of beauty, with long avenues, bordered by fine trees; ponds, fountains—at which the Robin cried delightedly—mazes, and beautiful groups of statuary. High above this, across the river, towers the huge fortress of the Hohen-Salzburg, like a grim sentinel keeping watch over a Sleeping Beauty.

Even Evadne, who was a perfect little heathen where art of any kind was concerned, was struck with it all, and remarked in hushed tones of awe, 'Say! I guess this sort of hits you in the eye! That old chap knew how to do things, didn't he?'

Matter-of-fact Grizel laughed. 'Well, from all accounts, he was a well-educated old thing, and he had lived in Rome and other places in Italy, so I suppose he just took all that was loveliest that he had seen, and designed this. It *is* wonderful, though!'

'It's gorgeous!' cried Jo. 'Fancy living here, and being able to come into this whenever you wanted to! What was the name of the lady? Anyone know?'

Nobody did, and she had to wait till they saw Mr Lannis again to learn that the lady's name had been Salome Alt, and that she had been a great friend of the archbishop's, who also had the credit of the great cathedral to his name.

At the aviary the Robin went nearly wild with delight, and insisted on staying there so long, watching the many birds that fluttered about or came for the seed with which Suzette provided her for feeding purposes, that it was nearly four before they could persuade her to leave it, and come to the town for *Kaffee und Kuchen*.

The town pleased them, though Joey declared that the shops were 'rotten' compared with those of Vienna, which she knew well. Still, they got an excellent meal in a pretty Café Corso on the Gisela Kai, where they looked on to the silver river winding its way through the heart of the city, and feasted on wonderful cakes, with Suzette keeping a watchful eye on them all to see that they did not overdo it. She was very proud of her four charges, for Grizel, Evadne, and the Robin were pretty children, and Joey made up in distinction of appearance what she lacked in beauty. When their appetites were satisfied they went shopping, and in the despised shops they found many charming things. Grizel bought 'Cookie' a view of the cathedral, and also provided herself with some handkerchiefs embroidered with peasant embroidery for Mrs Russell. Evadne invested in a paper-knife adorned with a head of the great archbishop for her father, and presented Jo with a pen-holder wonderfully and weirdly carved. Jo bought post-cards, a tiny ash-tray for Jem, a doll for the Robin, and a collar for her sister; and the Robin, after many confabulations with all of them, spent her money on—a pencil-case for the doctor, a brooch for his wife, handkerchiefs for the three girls, a collar for Suzette, a match-box for Mr Lannis, and a new tie for her father.

'Papa will like it, *n'est-ce pas*?' she said to Joey, displaying its glories of blue dashes on a mauve ground to them all.

'He'll be overcome,' vowed Joey, when she had recovered her breath.

‘You see,’ explained the small girl, ‘papa always wears such sad colours, so I thought he might like this. It is so pretty.’

The thought of what Captain Humphries, who was always clad in dark things, and whose ties certainly bore no affinity to the lurid thing exposed to their view, would say on being informed that he was expected to wear it nearly convulsed Grizel and Jo, though Evadne, not knowing him as they did, saw nothing to laugh at, and opened her eyes when Joey, with a feeble excuse about ‘something awfully funny in that policeman,’ gurgled wildly, and Grizel joined her.

‘He’s just like all of them, I guess,’ she said, after a prolonged scrutiny of the unconscious gendarme. ‘I don’t see anything to laugh at about him.’

‘And it is not *comme il faut*,’ added Suzette severely. ‘Young ladies should not thus laugh in the street. They should be calm and well-behaved. Permit that I wrap up the cravat, *ma Petite*, and let us now return to our hotel.’

The Robin gave up the tie, and she folded it up inside its paper, and, with a final look of reproach at the girls, sent Evadne and Grizel on in front, keeping Jo and the Robin with her.

As the Robin was not permitted to sit up for dinner, they showed Mr Lannis their purchases before that, and he was highly gratified at their gifts. He was in a fine good humour, for his business had gone well, and it was finished. He told them that he was going to take them all to the theatre except the baby, who was to go to bed presently, with Suzette to look after her, and on the next day he would take them to the Mozart Museum and the cathedral, as well as the castle. Then the gong sounded for dinner, and the Robin trotted off to bed cheerfully, for Suzette had promised to sit beside her and tell her fairy-tales before she went to sleep, and Evadne had said that Suzette was a ‘ripper at stories! Guess she makes ’em up half the time, but they’re *pie*!’

A pretty musical comedy from Vienna was under way when they reached the theatre, and the three girls enjoyed it immensely. As for the host, like Suzette, he took great pride in his charming party, and rejoiced in the many admiring glances that were cast at it. So they all had a thoroughly good time, and when they went to bed they declared that it had been one of the jolliest evenings they had ever spent.

‘One of the very nicest times I’ve ever known,’ said Jo, as she shook hands with him. ‘If to-morrow’s like to-day’s been, this will be a topping visit!’

However, much was to happen before then.

It was half-past two in the morning, and Jo was having wild dreams in which Archbishop Wolf Dietrich, Salome Alt, the play they had seen that night, and the Robin’s gift to her father were all thoroughly mixed up, when a bell suddenly clanged out sharply, startling her awake at once. At the same time, there was a wild shriek of ‘Fire!’ through the building, and a noise of people hastily and horrifyingly awakened from sleep. She started to her feet at once, grabbing the first garments that came handy, and struggling into them at top speed, while she shrieked to Grizel, who was sleeping in a bed in the opposite corner, to get up. Grizel tumbled out, and made for the electric switch, but in vain. She, too, grabbed her clothes, and got into them in hot haste, while Jo, dressed after a fashion, made for the door to get to the Robin. It was opened as she reached it, and Mr Lannis came in, the baby in his arms, Evadne following him, and Suzette, completely unnerved, and in wild hysterics, clinging to his arm. His face brightened as he saw, by the light of his electric torch, that the girls were awake and quite self-controlled. A wave of smoke came in with him too, and they could hear the dull roaring of the fire, though, as yet, they could see no flames.

‘Here, Grizel,’ he said sharply; ‘take the baby! There’s a fire-escape at the end of this corridor. Come along, all of you!’

He hustled them out, flinging an arm round Suzette, who screamed incessantly, and literally carrying her along the corridor, down which he ran, the children after him. They found the window to the escape blocked with people, many of them frantic with terror; and the noise of their cries, the agony in their faces, made the two English girls sick with horror. Evadne was crying quietly with fright, though she made no scene, only clung to Joey. The American realised that it would be dangerous to take the girls into that panic-stricken crowd, and turned back. He remembered having seen another escape at a window on the story above them. Without a word he dragged Suzette along, the girls following him. Up the stairs they went, and came into a much narrower corridor. Here there was only one man, who was wrestling with the fastening of the window that gave on to the escape, and a fat, elderly woman. Awful as was their peril, Jo suddenly gave vent to a little giggle as she recognised her. ‘It’s Frau Berlin!’ she said to Grizel. ‘We’re always running over her at times like this.’

Grizel, the Robin close in her arms, looked, and remembered the woman they had met during their first term at the chalet who had treated them so rudely, and whom Madge had later saved from a burning train when they were coming from the Dolomite district. Mr Lannis had not heard them. He had dropped Suzette, who sank on the ground, moaning in terror, and made for the window, which he broke open with the first thing that came handy. Then he lifted Evadne out, and bade her go down as quickly as she could. Grizel put the Robin out next, and Jo followed. The American directed her to go on, and was turning back to pull Suzette up, when Frau Berlin made a dash, and clambered through the space, rushing down at a pace that was likely to endanger the lives of the children who were in front.

‘Go on and stop her,’ said the strange man. ‘I will see to the woman.’

Mr Lannis obeyed—there was no time for argument, for already the flames were beginning to lick through from the lower windows, and the girls were in fearful peril. He reached the frenzied woman just in time to stop her from trying to thrust Grizel aside, and, holding her in a grasp that bruised her, shouted to the girl to go on steadily, and keep to the outside hand-rail. Frau Berlin writhed and struggled in his grip, but he was a big man, luckily, and the thought of the harm she might do to the children gave him the strength to hold her, while his unknown friend got through with Suzette, and joined him.

It was a journey none of them was likely to forget, that journey down the iron stairs. By the time the two men with their charges had reached the first floor of the hotel the escape was almost wrapped in flames, and it was a miracle that they got through alive. Mr Lannis’s first thought was for the girls. They were all standing at the bottom, in charge of one of the firemen, who was trying to get them away. The Robin had been thrust by Jo to the outside of the escape, and, with the elder child’s skirt flung round her, was unhurt. Evadne and Jo were sights to behold, with their grimed faces and singed hair, but, save for one or two superficial burns, they were not damaged. Grizel was much worse off, though they did not know this till later on, when they were all retiring to bed in another hotel where they had taken refuge. She had been scorched by the flames, but not badly. The burns smarted, but she had reassured her host that she was all right; then when she put up her hands to tie back her hair, she gave a shriek, for a long curl came off in her fingers. Her cry was echoed by the other children, and Mr Lannis, very much bandaged, and still red-eyed from the smoke, came in to see what had happened. In the centre of the big room where the four were to sleep stood Grizel, holding her severed lock, while Jo and Evadne were standing aghast, and the Robin, from the bed where

she had been tucked in by a now steadied and remorseful Suzette, was sitting up, and eyeing them with deep interest.

'What's got you all?' asked the big man.

For reply Grizel dropped her curl, put her hands to her head again, and literally ran off the lengthy locks. Then she stood there, denuded of her long hair, and looking scared It had all been scorched in the flames as she had torn through them, and so had come off at the first tug.

Mr Lannis was horrified. At first he was afraid that her neck was burned, but the hair had saved it. Only—Grizel was fated not to put up her curls for some time to come. There was nothing to be done. Once he realised that the girls were really all right, Mr Lannis ordered them off to bed, and stayed there till they were safely between the sheets. In the morning he took Grizel to a hairdresser's and had her cropped, as that was the only thing to do. The hair had been scorched pretty close to her head, and was all uneven.

'What *will* Madge say when she sees you?' said Joey. 'She'll have a fit, I should think!'

'She'll be so glad that we are all alive she will say nothing,' replied Grizel soberly. 'If I hadn't shaken my hair over my face, *it* would have been burned, and I'd rather lose my hair than that.'

'Oh, well, it'll be a saving of time in the morning, said her friend comfortingly. 'But *oh*, Grizel, you do look so different with it all gone!' She gave a hysterical little giggle.

Grizel shook her slightly. 'Jo, shut up, you ass! Suzette's bad enough without *you* starting! You're to come and see if your new things will fit.'

She and Mr Lannis had been shopping, for all their things had gone in the fire which had left their hotel completely gutted. He had insisted on refitting them, and, what was more, had bought their gifts over again, though the head-girl had tried to stop him. Several coats and hats had been brought to their present resting-place for them to try on, and they were soon all fitted out, even down to underclothes, for they had all put on very little in their escape, and the Robin had had nothing but her pyjamas and dressing-gown.

When that business had been done, Mr Lannis marched them off to the station. He was not fit to drive the car, which had to be left in the garage where it was till someone could bring it home. They were to be met at Spärtz by Dr Jem, to whom he had wired, with the runabout, for the railway was not yet opened.

'What happened to Frau Berlin?' asked Joey as she sat down in her corner, the Robin cuddled close to her.

'Hanged if I know,' replied Mr Lannis forcefully. 'That woman should be shut up! She might have——' He paused and looked at them. He was doubtful how much they realised of the danger from the frantic woman.

Joey answered this unconsciously. 'She might have fallen down and killed herself. I don't like her, but it would have been horrid if that had happened, and it might have done.'

'She's a pie-faced, rubber-necked four-flusher,' said Evadne. 'Those railings were as open as anything. She'd have gone *some* crash if she *had* gone.'

Grizel shivered slightly. She knew what danger had threatened them all, if the others didn't. It wouldn't have been Frau Berlin who would have fallen through the railings. Mr Lannis noticed it, and promptly began to talk about the history of Salzburg to divert her mind from the memory. He was so successful that twenty minutes later Jo and the head-girl were well away with their old argument as to whether Napoleon was a great man or not, and they kept off dangerous topics for the rest of the journey, much to the American's relief.

CHAPTER XVIII.
THE NEW TERM.

'Matron, can I unpack now, please?'

'Please, Matron, which is to be the new girl's cubey in our dorm?'

'Matron, may I have the window cubey this term? *Do* say I may!'

'Please, Matron, Miss Maynard says if the new girl, Cornelia Flower, is unpacked, can she go to the study? If she isn't, can she go as soon as she *is*?'

Matron sat back on her heels and glared round the importunate throng. 'If you don't all stop talking for five minutes,' she remarked, 'you'll drive me into the nearest lunatic asylum. Now, Jo, give me Miss Maynard's message again, please.'

Like a parrot Jo repeated her message gravely, and the harrassed lady who saw to the physical welfare of the Chalet School nodded. 'Cornelia Flower is unpacked, and may go with you now. Her cubicle is Number Five; can you remember that, Cornelia?'

'Ya-as,' drawled Cornelia, a fair, sturdy girl with enormous blue eyes.

'Then trot along with Jo. She can look after you for the present.—No, Evadne; you may *not* have a window cubicle. I know what that would mean! You will sleep in Number Seven, as you did last term.—Yes, Ilonka; I am ready to unpack you now, so come along, and don't waste time.—Paula and Frieda, you may be getting your cases opened; and, Simone, you can help to carry Ilonka's things to her cubicle.'

Having thus disposed of her charges, Matron turned back to her work, and Jo walked off with Cornelia, landing her safely in the study, where Miss Maynard was waiting to interview her before deciding into which form to put her.

Term had begun that day, though Jo, Grizel, the Robin, and one or two of the others had come the day before, and long-distance people like Marie von Eschenau and the Rincinis would not arrive till much later. It was the last week of April, and the weather was gloriously fine, so when Joey had seen Cornelia close the study door after her, she wandered out into the flower garden, where she found her own special gang, with the exception of the people who were unpacking, all congregated together, and discussing the new term in a variety of languages. Rules were still more or less in abeyance, and would be so till the morrow, when they would come into full force, and everyone would have to use English most of the time. Her appearance was hailed with cries of delight.

'Here comes Jo! Now she will tell us everything!' The speaker, Bianca di Ferrara, ran forward and linked her arm in her leader's. 'Jo, we wish to know if it is true that Madame is not coming down to school at all this term? Luigia says that Grizel has said so.'

'Yes; quite true,' replied Jo. 'Jem thinks the walk will be too much for her in the hot weather, and she's not strong, you know. So she's going to stay up at the Sonnalpe, where it will be cooler than down here.'

'But, Jo, what happens about her birthday, then?' demanded Margia Stevens.

'Don't know, I'm sure! We'll have to have the "do" without her, I suppose.'

The girls looked at each other in dismay. Ever since Mrs Russell had come to the Tyrol and established her school on the shores of the Tiern See, they had kept her birthday as a festival, and the idea of not having her with them for it was one they did not relish.

'How very—not nice!' said Klara Melnarti at length, after a blank silence.

‘Can’t be helped! P’raps they’ll have us up there for it,’ suggested Jo. ‘Jem said he would think of it. It all depends.’

‘Oh, but that would be ravishing!’ declared Bianca, beginning to smile. ‘And Jo, Grizel said that we were to have some new girls this term. Do you know anything about them?’

‘I’ve just carted Cornelia Flower off to Maynie,’ said Jo cheerfully.

‘What is she like?’ asked Klara. ‘She has a pretty name.’

‘Well, she doesn’t live up to it—as far as looks go,’ said Jo. ‘She’s nearly square, and she has a jaw like—like—well, like a ramrod! About fourteen, I think, and she’s in the Yellow dorm. Who’s Head there this term? Anyone know?’

‘Mary is, I think,’ said Bianca.

‘Well, she’s got a handful in Cornelia, or I’m blind! What possessed Matey to put two Americans in one dorm?’

No one felt able to reply to this question, so they passed it over, and asked if Jo knew anything about the other new girls.

‘Two more middles—but they’re to be day,’ was the response. ‘Sisters, who are at the Post with their people. And I believe the babes are getting one.’

‘Then we are more than sixty this term,’ remarked Bianca with satisfaction. ‘That goes well! Of what nationality are the new girls, my Jo?’

‘Bavarian,’ replied Jo. ‘They come from München, I think. Oh, and I’ve got some topping news for you all! R’member Marie Pfeiffen? Well, she’s to be married next week, and we’re all to go to the wedding! There’s richness for you!’

A hurricane of exclamations of joy greeted this announcement. Many of the girls knew Marie very well, for she had been maid at the school for three years, only leaving it when her young mistress went to the Sonnalpe. Also, the prospect of attending the wedding was one which appealed to them all.

‘Are we going to the dancing as well?’ demanded Margia, when they had calmed down a little.

‘*Rather!* What do *you* think? That’s the best part of it. We’re to go for three hours, and I’ve promised to have a dance with Andreas!’

‘Rot! How can you? You don’t know the *Schuhplattler*!’ retorted Margia.

‘I do! He and Marie taught us one during the hols. Grizel and I are going to teach you people, so that you can all do it. Besides, they are going to have some waltzes as well.’

‘Mean to say we’re going to lift great men off the ground like they do?’ asked Margia incredulously.

‘Talk sense! This is one of the milder ones. But it’s awfully jolly, and folk, of course! Even the babes are to go for a while! There’ll be some excitement, won’t there?’

Bianca laughed. ‘There won’t be any work done next week,’ she said. ‘When does the wedding take place?’

‘On Thursday—a week to-day. Marie was awfully bucked with her present, by the way. She’s hung it in her kitchen, and she’s going to stick a table underneath, and keep flowers on it as long as she can. Isn’t it topping of her?’

‘Very nice indeed,’ said Bianca.

The Chalet School’s gift to the maid had been a large group of the whole school, which they had had framed, and had sent up at the end of the previous term. Marie had been overjoyed at it—partly because one exactly the same hung in Madame’s salon—and she

meant to show her gratitude in this pretty way. The girls felt that their present was duly appreciated, and were thrilled to know how highly Marie esteemed them.

The group broke up after that, Jo going back to the study to see if Miss Maynard had finished with Cornelia, and the others scattering to various parts of the school ground, some to see if they could see any fresh arrivals, some to examine the form-rooms, some to look at the tennis-courts and cricket-pitches, and discuss the games.

At the study door Jo encountered Grizel, who was coming in search of her, to tell her that Cornelia was waiting for her, and grinned at the head-girl cheerfully. 'Hello, old thing! Haven't seen you since *Mittagessen*! What have you been doing?'

'A million things, I should think,' said Grizel, running her fingers through her neatly-cropped hair—this departure had created quite a sensation already!—and heaving a sigh. 'Miss Maynard has finished with Cornelia, Jo, and sent me to find you.'

'Righto! I was just going to fetch her. Wonder where Maynie's put her.'

'You'll know pretty soon, I expect. *Not* with Evadne, I hope, or prep *will* be gorgeous if she's anything like *her*!' declared Grizel, who had suffered many things from Evadne during prep.

'Oh, Evvy's an ass,' said Jo cheerfully. 'Well, I'd better be pushing off, I s'pose.'

'Yes; and while you're about it, I should advise a little less slang! Where you pick it all up, I can't think!'

'It must be in the atmosphere,' returned Jo, as she tapped at the door.

Grizel went on, and left her to take charge of the new girl once more, which she did with the utmost cheerfulness.

'I have put Cornelia in the Lower Fourth for the present, Jo,' said Miss Maynard. 'Will you show her her form-room, and introduce her to some of the other girls.—You must make haste and learn some German and French, Cornelia, or you may not be able to talk at all meal-times.'

'Ya-as,' drawled Cornelia again. Then they went out, Jo dropping the little regulation curtsey, while the new girl stared at her, and walked soberly down the narrow passage to the big form-room where two or three of the Lower Fourth were busily putting their desks in order for the morrow.

'D'you always do that?' asked Cornelia, as they went in.

'Do what?'

'Duck like that.'

'Rather! It's manners all the time here, and so you'll jolly well find out.'

Cornelia looked at her with limpid eyes that said nothing, and then followed her up to a little group where Evadne Lannis was holding forth about the hotel fire.

'Hi, Evvy! This is Cornelia Flower,' said Jo, interrupting ruthlessly. 'She's to be in your form, so you can look after her.—These other people are Cyrilla Maurus, Giovanna Donati, Selma Khrakhovska, and Signa Johansen, Cornelia. They're all about your age, I think. Thirteen, aren't you?'

'Most fourteen,' said Cornelia.

'Oh, then, that's all right.—Which desk can she have, Giovanna?' She turned to Giovanna, the form-prefect the term before.

'That one by the window, Joey,' said Giovanna in her soft, un-English voice. 'We will all look after Cornelia.'

‘Thanks!’ Joey turned on her heel, and left the room. She had a rooted objection to ‘doing sheep-dog,’ and her theory was that new girls got on best if left to find their own feet. Perhaps if Cornelia had shown any signs of being nervous she would have stayed, but that was the last thing the new girl was. So Jo went off on some quest of her own, and thereafter forgot Cornelia Flower except on the occasions when she met her. Then she generally stopped to inquire if she was all right, and Cornelia always assured her that she was getting on well.

Meanwhile, the Lower Fourth found to their joy that they had welcomed a genius into their midst. Cornelia was original when it came to sin, and she soon showed that she had no intention of being the form’s conscience, or anything like that. On the contrary, she brightened them all up by her exploits, and they soon followed in her lead. Even Evadne, the self-sufficient, had to admit that the new girl could outdo them all in wickedness.

It was an inspiration of hers that livened up the maths lesson when Miss Maynard discovered to her horror that the room seemed to be full of ants. How they had got there it never dawned on her to inquire, but she was determined that they should not stay there. So, while the girls removed themselves and their possessions to the garden, she gave Luise instructions to scrub the whole place with a strong solution of disinfectant and boiling water. By the time that she had mixed the disinfectant, and seen the little maid set to work with a long-handled broom, the bell had rung, and she had barely time to set them some revision prep, since what she had planned could not be given, as it was set on the lesson they should have had. It was Cornelia who introduced one of the harmless little green snakes they sometimes found outside into prep, sending half the girls screaming on to the tops of their desks while Grizel, who was in charge, gingerly lifted the creature with a shovel borrowed from the kitchen for the purpose, and carried it off to the fence, over which she dropped it with a little suppressed scream.

She also suggested vaselining the blackboards, but Margia squelched that idea by the crushing remark, ‘We did that *ages* ago! You *are* behind the times in your ideas!’

But it was she who mixed salt with the tooth-powder used by some of the seniors, and it was this prank that brought about her own undoing. Grizel, on being informed by Dorota Heilinge and Eva von Heiling of what had occurred, held an inquiry, and found out the author of the misdeed, with the result that Cornelia went before a prefects’ meeting, and startled them all into notice of her small self by her calm impudence. As it was a first offence—so far as they knew—they let her off with a reprimand, and she went, not noticeably quenched at all.

‘We must keep an eye on that kid,’ said Grizel when she had gone. ‘There’s more in her than meets the eye!’

She fell foul of Jo Bettany on the third day of term, when she had a battle royal with Simone, and reduced that young lady to such a fury of weeping as drew even unsentimental Jo’s attention. After sundry inquiries as to the cause of the squabble, Miss Jo told Cornelia what she thought of her; and as Jo’s tongue could, on occasion, outdo anything even Grizel could produce, she got home more than once, and left the new girl mentally writhing. Not that Simone received much consolation from her friend. She was ordered ‘to stop being a sponge!’ and taken off to play a slashing set of tennis which left her no time to brood over her wrongs. All the same, Jo was not going to have one of her special friends tormented by a ‘cheeky brat of a new girl.’ Cornelia, on her side, resolved to get even with Jo. But just then—luckily for them all—Marie’s wedding intervened, and hostilities were postponed.

CHAPTER XIX.
MARIE'S WEDDING.

The Thursday morning of Marie Pfeiffen's wedding-day dawned bright and clear. Usually, the Tyrolean peasant prefers to hold his wedding during the Carnival time—that is, in the winter. But Marie had been impressed by her young mistress's happy wedding-day in the previous July, and had refused to be married at the usual time. Her bridegroom, Dr Jem's servant, had lived in towns a good deal, and he had backed her up in her request to hold their festival when the days were sunny, so they had braved local custom, and chosen May for their wedding-day. It was easier for them to do so, because the Tiern valley is a tourist centre during the summer months, and, save for the very old folk, who sadly complained that all the old good customs were dying away, there were very few protests. In any case, Marie meant to have all the other details of her great day in accordance with the best traditions of the valley, and the girls knew, for they had been told, that there would be all the usual dancing, shooting matches, sports, and feasts that had from time immemorial been the leading features of a Tiernthal wedding. Their invitations had duly come to them in envelopes tied with red and green ribbons, which they had all put away to keep as mementoes of the occasion. There would be no school, for the marriage service would take place at half-past nine, and they were specially bidden to it. So at ten past nine they all walked down to the little white-washed chapel, clad in their white frocks, big white hats, and white shoes and stockings. They were solemnly escorted to seats near the front, and at half-past nine punctually the wedding party appeared.

Marie was attired in the dress of the valley—a short, full, red skirt, a black velvet bodice with full sleeves of white linen, and a lace kerchief knotted over the bodice. On her head was the wreath of rosemary which is worn in many of the Tyrol valleys by brides, and called by them 'Mary's Flowers,' in honour of the Virgin. Her bridegroom also wore his national costume, and they made a striking pair as they stood before the old white-haired priest who served the church along with all the other churches round the Tiern See.

The service was not a long one, and presently they moved out to the fresh sunshine. At the door of the church stood two of the bride's brothers with huge bunches of artificial gold and silver flowers with which they presented those guests who were expected to come to the feast. The girls were all presented with one of those posies, and followed the bridal procession across the grass to the Kron Prinz Karl, where the feasting was so be. Herr Braun acted as host, for, in this valley, as in many others, the parents have as little to do with the actual arrangements as possible. A table had been set aside for the school-girls, and here they sat, and were feasted on strange foods. One dish consisted of pork, boiled in fat; another was of veal, cooked in some strange way, and adorned with slices of potatoes and cabbage; yet another was of bacon, cooked in butter, and served with spoonfuls of the butter poured over it. These were followed by dishes of dried figs, oranges, pears, and grapes, and the whole was—literally, as far as the peasants were concerned—washed down with huge mugs of beer. The girls were given tiny glasses of wine to drink, and then milky coffee.

The staff kept an anxious eye on their charges, for there was no saying how this unusual food would agree with them. Luckily, they were able to serve themselves by Herr Braun's

special arrangement, so no one got more than a taste of any of the queer dishes. Joey, who hated fat in most forms, solaced herself on fruit, and several of the others did the same.

The peasants, meanwhile, ate steadily through enormous servings of the same things, and seemed no worse for it. Merry shoutings and laughter kept the whole room in an uproar, and it went on for two hours!

By this time most of the little ones were drowsy, but when a move was made to go into the other room where the musicians could be already heard playing softly, they roused up and followed with the rest.

The first business to attend to was the giving of the money gifts. Marie's godmother sat before a table on which stood a large dish, covered by a napkin. Her Uncle Gustav sat at one side, with a big sheet of paper, a pen, and a bottle of ink before him. The guests advanced, one by one, and slipped into the old dame's hand a small sum of money which she hid under the napkin, while the uncle wrote down the sum on the paper.

'What on earth is that for?' murmured Mary to Grizel.

'So that when there are any weddings in the guests' families, Marie and Andreas will know how much to give,' replied Grizel cautiously. 'Don't stare so, Mary! Your eyes look as if they were going to drop out!'

'Well, it's so weird!' retorted Mary. 'Of all the business-like ways of doing things! I don't think I quite like it.'

'I think it's rather a good idea,' said Deira, joining in the conversation. 'You get what you give. Jolly neat, I think!'

Mary shook her head. She didn't approve, in spite of Grizel's murmured, 'It's the custom, you ass! They've always done it like this!'

The girls had all been warned to bring money, so when the other guests had put in their contributions, they advanced and slipped their *Schillings* into the old lady's hand.

'She might look a bit more cheerful over it,' murmured Jo to the faithful Simone, who was standing beside her. 'It might be her own funeral she was attending!'

As the commentator was standing very near the lady, it was just as well that the latter had very little English, and didn't understand the remark, otherwise she would have been hurt. It is no part of the *Ehrenganger* to show gratification at the gifts. They are not for her, but for the wedded pair, and they must thank their friends—not she. When the giving was over, they passed on to where Marie and Andreas stood side by side, she with a glass of wine in her hand, he with a huge bun, both greasy and solid, with which the guests were presented as they left the 'pay-table.' The wine had to be drunk to the health of the newly wedded pair, and the bun was taken away to be eaten at some future date.

Knowing Mrs Russell's ideas on the subject, Marie was careful to give the girls mere sips of the wine, though she might have laid herself open to the charge of meanness by so doing. Luckily, the people knew that at the foreign school the girls had little to drink but water, milk, and coffee, so there was no unpleasantness.

The Robin surveyed her huge bun with a plaintive expression. 'Me, I am so full, I cannot eat him now,' she complained to Grizel, who was hard put to it not to laugh.

'You can take it home to eat, darling,' said the head-girl, when she had bitten her lips hard to straighten her face. 'Put it away in this bag. They are going to dance now.'

And how those peasants did dance! Some of them were content with merely waltzing round and round; but some of the young men went in for far more spectacular doings. Jo was spinning round the room in the arms of good Herr Braun when one of Marie's younger uncles

suddenly fell on his knees with a resounding bang, and, folding his arms across his breast, bent backwards till his head touched the ground, when he kept up a rhythmic tap-tapping with it, while his partner continued dancing round him. As suddenly as he had gone down, he sprang to his feet, his arms still folded, and, catching the pretty girl with whom he had been dancing, went on as if nothing had occurred.

Others among the men were not so vigorous as this, but kept up a continuous slapping of the soles of their shoes, and all in strict time to the music. Two or three athletic youths fell on their knees, and moved round and round on them, beating the floor in a way that made the girls ache for very sympathy, though these hardy young fellows made nothing of it, and after a minute or two of it would spring up, and go on waltzing as if they had never stopped.

'Goodness! 'gasped Rosalie to Gertrud, with whom she was dancing. 'Have they *any* skin left on their knees?'

The Tyrolean girl laughed. 'Oh yes! They are accustomed to doing this, and they don't mind it. What you ought to see—only we cannot have it here, as the ceiling is so high—is the figure where the girl swings up her man and then goes on revolving, while he dances with his feet on the ceiling and his hands on her shoulders.'

Rosalie stopped dead. 'Are you pulling my leg?' she demanded.

Gertrud shook her pretty head. 'No. It is really so. I have heard my father speak of it. I do not know if it is done in this valley; but I know it is in some. I have heard my father say that he has seen a couple dance like this for six minutes without stopping.'

Rosalie gave it up, and continued her waltz. It was beyond her.

After about an hour of this kind of entertainment the musicians stopped playing, and one of the young men sprang up and sang a couple of lines, his partner standing beside him, her eyes modestly on the floor. Miss Maynard, who knew that sometimes these *Schnadahüpfler*, as they are called, are inclined to be questionable, was rather worried, but there was nothing to trouble her, and presently the orchestra went on. Jo, who had given the bridegroom his promised dance, and was rather weary now, slipped aside, and watched the trio with deep interest. There was a pipe, a zither, and a *Hackbrettel*. This last is a weird arrangement of bits of wood of various lengths and shapes, fixed on plaits of straw, and struck with, a wooden mallet. Each gives out a different sound according to its size or form, and the result is not so bad as might be expected. Finally, there was a little silence, in which people crowded back to the dining-room to quench their thirst, and then began the *Ehrentanz*, which is danced by the bridal couple, the nearest of her relations, and any guests whom the bridegroom specially wishes to honour. The rest of the dancers crowd round the walls and watch it in silence, while the host and his wife stand near the musicians. As the couples waltz slowly round the room, these two present each with a full glass of wine, of which the lady sips a little. She then hands the rest over to her partner, who drains it. While this is going on, the brother of the bride sings a short rhyme in praise of his new brother-in-law as that worthy passes him every time he goes the round of the room. Sometimes this is turned into rather a rowdy affair, but on this occasion everyone liked the groom, so no one rose to challenge all that Fritzel Pfeiffen sang about Andreas.

Naturally Jo, Grizel, and the Robin were requested to join in the dancing, and so were Mademoiselle, Miss Maynard, and Miss Carthew. It is impossible to refuse without giving hurt to the feelings of the happy pair, so they joined in, and waltzed slowly round in imitation of the others. When it was over, Marie and Andreas set out for their home, and the guests prepared to give themselves full swing. The girls also left the dancing-room at the quiet

suggestion of Herr August, who had danced the *Ehrentanz* with Mademoiselle, and went to watch the shooting-matches, of which they soon tired. It was two o'clock by this time, and the sun was growing hot. Several of the little ones were tired out, and were inclined to be fractious, so Miss Carthew and Mademoiselle took them off home, where they were sent to bed, and left to have a quiet nap till four o'clock. The others stayed where they were or wandered about on the grass, where several couples, temporarily tired of the dancing, were doing likewise.

Among them was Herr August, as they all called him, to distinguish him from his brother, Herr Pfeiffen. He was one of the men on the little steamboats which run on the Tiern See in the summer, and the girls knew him well, and liked him immensely. Evadne, Jo, Margia, Simone, Paula, Frieda, and Cornelia, who had patched up a temporary peace with Jo, ran up to him when they saw him by himself, and demanded accounts of other weddings which he had attended. He was very willing to accede to their requests, and sat down with them round him, and told them stories of shooting-matches and *Schuhplattler* exhibitions, in which the most marvellous feats had been performed.

When he had exhausted his repertoire, he sat silent for a minute. Then he turned to Jo. 'Fräulein Joey, I have heard that the demon who tried to bear away the little Fräulein Robin has been seen again of late.'

Jo sat up—she had been lounging against Frieda—and demanded, 'Where?'

'Up on the haunted glen. He is as you say—tall, and with white hair and very blue eyes. He wears deerskins, and has neither hat nor shoes, and he dances and sings all the while.'

'Horrid old thing!' said Jo, with an involuntary shudder.

'Who is it?' asked Cornelia, who had not heard of this before.

They nearly fell over themselves to tell her, till Joey, shrieking above the others, induced them to be quiet and let her tell it. She told it as well as she had told those legends during the previous term, and, hot day as it was, Margia averred that her blood ran cold at Jo's description of the maniac's anger when they had sent Rufus off with the Robin.

Cornelia listened with bated breath. 'What an adventure,' she said.

'It was indeed a terrible happening,' said Herr August. 'Luckily Our Blessed Lady was watching over *das Engelkind*, and so saved her from being dragged down to the demon's lair.'

'It wasn't! 'cried Frieda indignantly. 'At least, I mean, it was Grizel and Joey who saved her! Our Lady helped them, but they were there!'

'Ah, but it was our dear Lord and His Holy Mother who prompted the thought to take the dog,' said Herr August, who possessed the simple, unquestioning faith of his race. 'I think, too, that They watched over *die Fräulein* in their hour of peril, and saved them from the wrath of the demon.'

'I'm jolly *sure* it was God,' said Jo in her own language. 'If He hadn't been with us all the time, goodness only knows *what* would have happened!'

'Joey,' said Margia abruptly, 'what do you think that cleft was?'

'A hole in the mountains,' responded Jo promptly.

'Yes; but *what* hole?'

'Why, just any hole! What d'you mean? Are you driving at something?'

'Well, I don't *know*, of course, but——' Margia paused.

'But—what? Oh, get on,' cried Jo impatiently. 'What's your idea—if you've *got* one, that is!'

Margia looked at them all. Herr August had got up, and sauntered off, seeing that the little ladies were well occupied. They were all literally hanging on her words.

'Get on!' said Jo again. 'What is it?'

'Well,' began Margia, 'do you remember what Marie said Wanda's fiancé's father said about our lake?'

Jo shook her head. 'No—oh yes, though, I do! He said that there were some wonderful caves either near it or under it. D'you mean, Margia, that you think that hole was the way in?'

'Well, it looks rather like it, doesn't it? It's in the part they all swear is haunted. None of the lake folk will go near it. You heard what Herr August thought of that old looney? I'll bet you what you like that's the way into the caves, and he lives there.'

There was a thrilled silence after she had finished speaking. Then Jo spoke slowly. 'I see what you mean. If one of them is all glittering and crystally, he might think it was Fairyland. That's why he's got that crack-brained notion about taking our Robin there. Oh, Margia! Supposing he had! Supposing we *hadn't* got there in time?'

'Well, you did,' said Margia, in matter-of-fact tones, for Jo looked rather as if she might cry. 'The thing is: If that's the way, then the caves can be found; and if they're safe, they can be used as you said.'

'Oh!' Jo sat up again, her face blazing at the thought. 'And it's *us*—it's the school that will have helped to discover them! Oh, Margia! You brain!'

'Come along, you people! I've been yelling at you till I'm hoarse! Why on earth can't you listen, you little nuisances?' It was Grizel, of course, and an irritated Grizel, who had to walk across from the other side of the pasture under the blazing sun to bring them.

They got meekly to their feet, but, just as Jo was about to announce their glorious idea, the head-girl cut in with, 'Now don't talk! Come along at once! It's nearly four o'clock, and we have to get *Kaffee und Kuchen* for ourselves to-day. You can hold your tongue, Jo.'

Thus adjured, Jo held it in a disgusted silence which lasted till they reached the chalet, where they found the rest bringing their afternoon meal out into the flower garden, and setting the tables in the shade of the two big trees that grew at one end of it.

'Come, children!' cried Miss Maynard, as she saw them. 'Run along and change your frocks, and then come and help. What *has* made you so long in coming?'

She did not pause for an answer, and they went off to change and wash before they came downstairs to help bring out the china and cakes. Then the little ones came racing across from Le Petit Chalet, and since all mention of the Robin's adventure before any of them had been banned, they were obliged to be silent.

The chances are, however, that they would have discussed it some time during the evening, and the seniors would have heard of it, in which case much might have been saved. But just as Mademoiselle was marshalling the little ones off to bed, Miss Maynard's brother appeared on the scene. He came straight across to Jo. 'Go and get your hat,' he said. 'Put on strong shoes, and come at once.'

Miss Maynard who was standing near, turned white. 'Jack! What is it?' she asked.

'Mrs Russell has a little son, born this morning, and she wants Jo,' he said brusquely. Jo was off like a shot, and was back in almost less time than it takes to tell. They set out for the Sonnalpe, leaving a startled and troubled school behind them, and all thought of the caves passed completely out of the minds of everyone for the next twenty-four hours. It was not till a flushed and, wonderful to relate, tearful Jo reappeared on the scenes that they settled down to tranquillity again.

She had very little to say, but she assured them that the baby was a darling, and Madge was all right—now. She was to go up again on Sunday, and stay for a few days, and they hoped that Grizel and the Robin would be able to go up two weeks later. That was all she would say, and she remained uncannily reserved and taciturn for her. When Cornelia referred to the caves, she shook her off. ‘Bother the old caves! I don’t care a toss for them! Go away and leave me alone!’

Cornelia went; but the patched-up peace was at an end as far as she was concerned. She would take jolly good care to get her own back somehow!

CHAPTER XX.
REBELLION.

On the Sunday, Jo departed for the Sonnalpe, accompanied by Miss Maynard, who wanted to see her brother, and bearing a message from the school to her sister, as well as a big armful of flowers from the garden, which the girls had all joined in gathering. Grizel, the Robin, and Miss Carthew escorted them to the lake-landing where the Chalet School boat was moored, and saw them off, Miss Carthew, who was holding the baby firmly, calling after them that they were to stay as long as they wanted, since everything would go well in their absence, while Grizel waved her hand silently. 'Jo seems different since Thursday,' she said to the mistress as they turned to go back, the Robin running on in front.

Miss Carthew glanced at her. 'Yes; she is beginning to grow up a little. But you needn't regret it, Grizel. We shall need some of our elder middles to grow up, for so many of you big girls are leaving this term.'

Grizel nodded. 'I know,' she said. 'Gertrud, Luigia, Lisa, Eva, Dorota, and me. Rosalie may go too, if her people come home, as they were saying. That leaves very few of our original girls indeed. Jo will be sixteen next term, though it hasn't seemed possible till this last day or two. I think she will make a splendid senior, don't you?'

'Yes,' said Miss Carthew. 'She has been very young for her age, of course; but this has made her older.'

'Well, can you wonder? She adores Madame. We all do that, of course; but with Jo it's something much bigger.'

'Someone else has grown tremendously this year, Grizel,' said Miss Carthew, as she passed through the gate the head-girl held open for her. 'You have been a splendid head-girl, dear. I don't know who will follow in your steps, but, whoever she is, she will have her work cut out to keep up with you four.'

Grizel coloured. 'Thank you, Miss Carthew,' she said simply. 'I *have* tried.'

'And succeeded.' The mistress laid her arm round the slender shoulders of the girl at her side. 'I am only sorry I shall not be here next term to see how the school goes on when you, the last of the original "big" girls, have left.'

Grizel sighed. 'That's the worst of getting fond of a place! You have to leave it. But after all, Miss Carthew, you are going because you are getting married. I've got to go because my people say so. Well, I've had four gorgeous years, and after all—I'm almost eighteen now; week after next I shall be—I suppose I've had my fair share of school-life. But I wish it wasn't coming to an end. I'd give worlds if I could think I might come back here to teach, like Juliet! But I never shall. I wouldn't teach music for anything on this earth, and father won't let me have a physical training, as I want. He won't even let me go to the Royal Holloway College to read maths, as I used to want. I did think he would agree to that, but he won't. It's to be two years in Florence, and then home, I suppose!'

Miss Carthew looked down at the pretty face at her shoulder. She was a very tall woman, and Grizel was small. Her curly crop somehow made her look older than the floating curls had done, and the mistress realised that the girl was growing up almost as fast as Joey. 'Things may turn out differently, Grizel,' she said gently. 'In two years' time you will be twenty. Other things may have come into your life by that time—you might not want to come back.'

‘Do you mean I might want to marry?’ asked Grizel. ‘I don’t think so, Miss Carthew. I can’t imagine it, anyway.’

‘Not now; and it’s as well not to worry about it till it comes—if it does. But if it does, Grizel, it’s one of the ends for which God made woman. Never forget that. Madame loved her school. She still loves it. But I think she would tell you that she is happier now than she ever thought she could be.’

She changed the subject after that. It was one rarely touched on at the Chalet School, although, in the very nature of things, the majority of these girls must go home to wed. Gisela and Wanda were going this term. Probably it would not be long before others followed their example. Grizel would be far more alone presently than she had ever been before, and Miss Carthew felt that a word spoken now might come back as a help later on when she had to be entirely responsible for her own actions.

Grizel referred to it when they went in at the summons of the bell for *Frühstück*. ‘I will remember, Miss Carthew,’ she said. ‘Thanks for what you said just now.’

There was no need for anything more, and Miss Carthew smiled gratefully at the girl. She was able to guess how shy Grizel felt of saying anything about it at all.

They went in to find Cornelia and Frieda in the middle of a battle royal—a rare thing for quiet Frieda, who lived up to the meaning of her name on most occasions, and had earned for herself the title of ‘Peacemaker’ among them.

Frieda wouldn’t, and Cornelia scarcely dared say what was wrong, so Grizel had to content herself with administering a conduct mark apiece to them, and sending them into *Frühstück* with the remark that they ought both to be ashamed of themselves.

‘I’m not!’ said Cornelia defiantly.

‘Then you ought!’ snapped Frieda, so surprisingly, that Grizel nearly sent her to Matron to have her temperature taken. It was so unlike Frieda.

Cornelia contented herself by pulling a face at her adversary, and Grizel thought it wiser to take no further notice. As the priest was at Briesau, there would be Mass to-day, and most of the girls, including Frieda, would go with Mademoiselle and Miss Carthew. The rest would have their own little service with Miss Wilson and Miss Annersley. That would separate the pair for the morning, and in the afternoon she meant to keep them apart if she could.

‘Cornelia’s a perfect little brute,’ she thought, as she ate her rolls and honey, ‘Just like what I used to be.—Mercy, Simone! What is the matter?’ For Simone had suddenly dissolved into tears.

Matron, who was sitting at the next table, took matters in hand at once. She had been glancing across, wondering what made the head-girl so grave, and she had caught sight of Cornelia administering a sharp nip to her next-door neighbour.

‘Mademoiselle, will you excuse Cornelia?’ she said, rising.

‘Certainly, Matron,’ said Mademoiselle, who at the distant staff-table had seen nothing. ‘Go with Matron, Cornelia.—Simone, why do you weep?’

Simone pulled herself together, and murmured something unintelligible to anyone. Seeing that she appeared to be all right, Mademoiselle ceased her inquires. She knew her young cousin to be given to tears on all occasions, and came to the conclusion that the child was missing Joey, whom she adored. That Matron’s abstraction of Cornelia had anything to do with it never struck her at the time.

Meanwhile the new girl was marched off by Matron, and up to sick-room, where she was ordered to take off her clothes and go to bed.

‘Why?’ she demanded.

‘You know well enough why,’ retorted Matron. ‘If you really don’t, you can spend your time between now and *Mittagessen* in finding out! For sheer unpleasant, cowardly tricks, Cornelia Flower, you beat everything in my experience. A good whipping is what you deserve!’

Cornelia dared say no more. Matron was a martinet, and—well, that pinch bestowed on Simone would have an unpleasant sound if it were retailed to Mademoiselle. She undressed herself sulkily and got into bed, while Matron closed the jalousies after opening the slats to let the air in.

‘There you stay till one o’clock,’ she said grimly, when she had seen Cornelia between the sheets. ‘If ever I catch you at such a nasty thing again, miss, I’ll take you straight to Mademoiselle! So just remember that, please! And don’t you dare to stir till I give you permission!’

With that she marched out, closing the door behind her, and leaving a thoroughly rebellious Cornelia to toss about and listen to the gay voices of the others as they wandered about the grounds in the interval before they went to church. She would have set Matron at defiance if she had dared. But even Cornelia the rebel drew the line at that. They were all rather in awe of Matron, and she was no exception to the rule. So she stayed there all through the pleasant, sunny hours, thinking how she could revenge herself on Jo, Matron, Frieda, Simone, and Grizel, whom she quite unfairly included in her vendetta, since that young lady had had no idea as to why she had been suddenly deprived of the American child, and was still wondering, since Matron had given her no explanation.

To Mademoiselle Matron had simply said that Cornelia was behaving very badly at table, and she had sent her to bed as punishment. Mademoiselle, her thoughts with her young Head on the Sonnalpe, had scarcely listened, and merely replied that it was all right.

The greater part of the school was, of course, Roman Catholic, so only a very few were present in the big school-room for the little service they had there, and inquiries as to Cornelia’s whereabouts were only answered by Grizel’s statement that Matron knew about it. When service was over the girls put on their hats, since the sun was hot, and once more went into the garden. Most of them got chairs and books, and read quietly till the others came home. But Mary Burnett, Margia and Amy Stevens, and Signa Johansen elected to bring cushions, and sit under the great lime-tree that grew near the sick-room window. On the still air their voices floated up to the prisoner, and, even as Grizel herself had done long since, she heard their opinion of her stated in clear unvarnished terms.

‘I don’t like Cornelia,’ said Amy, apparently *à propos* of nothing; for Margia answered, ‘Who on earth asked you to? And what makes you drag *her* up so suddenly?’

‘Well, I was wondering where she was,’ explained Amy. ‘No one’s seen her since Matey hauled her out from *Frühstück*.’

‘She’s no loss,’ declared Mary. ‘She’s an absolute little brute. Evadne’s a monkey, but she’s straight enough!’

‘Cornelia tells lies,’ observed Amy slowly.

‘She cheats,’ added Margia, who had already had one battle with Cornelia over the question.

‘It’s a jolly good thing she’s not a Guide! She’d let us down wholesale!’

‘Perhaps it’s Guides she needs,’ suggested Mary. ‘After all, Margia, that’s what Guides are *for*—to help people to play straight.’

Grizel's voice was to be heard at this juncture calling Mary, so she evidently went, for Cornelia heard her no more. However, Signa had something to say on the subject. 'Is it because Cornelia is American and not English zat she does not play zee game?'

'Rats!' said Margia. 'That's got nothing to do with it! Evvy's American, and she's as straight as a die! No; it's just general nastiness.'

They must have gone away after this, for Cornelia heard no more, but what she *had* heard had roused every bad feeling in her. She literally squirmed as she lay there thinking, thinking what she could do. Suddenly she sat up, rubbing her fair hair out of her eyes. 'The caves!' she said aloud. 'That's how I can get back at them!'

Till that moment she had never given another thought to the caves since Thursday, which had been so eventful. Now they came rushing back to her memory. She knew no more than she had heard on that day, but she had realised then that they were of enormous importance to Jo. She had said something about the school having discovered them. Well, if she, Cornelia, were to go and find out the way herself, it wouldn't be the school, because she meant to write to her father and ask him to take her away at the end of the term. If she coaxed hard enough, she felt sure he would! Then, if she had to go and look for them, it would give the people in charge a nice fright when she wasn't to be found. It was a *lovely* plan!

She was so pleased with herself that she actually lay still, and when Matron came upstairs an hour later to tell her to get up and dress, she found the child sound asleep. It took some shaking to waken her, she was so sound, but Matron accomplished it at last, and bade her hurry up and come downstairs. 'And just try and keep your hands to yourself for the future!' she concluded.

Cornelia got up meekly, and dressed herself and came downstairs, looking, so Margia said, as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth. Inwardly she was hugging herself with glee over her plan. She was very subdued for the rest of the day, and Matron, watching her, congratulated herself on having found a method of subduing a most unsubduable child. But all the time she was watching her opportunity, and, late in the afternoon, she managed to catch Marie von Eschenau alone, and asked her to come for a stroll.

Marie was a very nice child, but she was by no means clever. She felt sorry for Cornelia, who had had such a bad morning of it, so she agreed, and by the time they came in for *Kaffee und Kuchen*, Cornelia knew as much as she did about those caves. She also knew just why Jo Bettany was so keen on finding them. Cornelia had never spent a winter here, so she was unable to appreciate the reason behind Jo's idea, and it struck the American child as 'rather mad, but just like that horrid Jo!' She didn't say so to Marie, who would have been up in arms at once at the merest suggestion of it. All she *did* say was, 'What a funny idea!'

'But I think it is a very good one,' said Marie in her soft, pretty voice. 'The people here are so poor, and such a sight would mean a great deal to them. So I hope Jo and Grizel find the caves, for that would be a very nice thing to be able to say that it was they who had done it; though I know they do not think of it that way.'

Cornelia said nothing, and as the bell rang just then, summoning them to *Kaffee und Kuchen*, she had a good excuse for making no answer. But to herself she thought, 'Oh, *will* they? I know better!'

CHAPTER XXI.
JOEY RETURNS.

Cornelia fully intended to carry out her great scheme as soon as possible, but various events occurred which made it impossible. To begin with, she was watched carefully by Matron and the prefects. Matron's opinion of the young lady was that she was a little demon, and goodness knew what she would do if left to herself. The prefects' impression was that there was more in her than met the eye. Grizel, who had herself been a nuisance in the early days of the school, was aware that the American child was quite likely to break out sooner or later, so warned the others to be careful.

Time was fully planned out at the school, and, though the girls had a certain amount of freedom, there was also a good deal of supervision—more so than in many English boarding-schools. Besides, in the summer term there was always more to do, and the girls devoted a great deal of their time to games. All played tennis, and most of them were keen about cricket. Games were compulsory, and had to be played in the evenings, as the afternoons in summer were very hot as a rule. Work began at half-past eight, and went on till a quarter to one. This included preparation periods. After *Mittagessen* there was an hour's rest, when they went to their cubicles and lay down. After that they had singing, sewing, hand-work, or music-lessons. Then came *Kaffee und Kuchen*, and after that tennis or cricket. *Abendessen* was at seven, and when it was over, they were free till bedtime. Work was considerably lightened too, so that the short preparation periods might be sufficient, and all practice had to be done before *Frühstück*, which was at a quarter to eight.

Under these circumstances Cornelia found that it was not going to be easy to get away. This upset her so badly that she became a perfect nuisance in lessons—fidgeting, not attending, and answering the mistresses with so much impertinence when called to order that it was scarcely surprising that she found herself in the black books of the entire staff. Finally, she came into violent collision with Miss Maynard, and was marched off to bed—the only punishment she appeared to mind—and there left to come to her senses. It would have been a good opportunity for slipping off if Matron had not been working in the room across the passage, and there could be no question of her climbing down from the balcony as Grizel had done on one occasion, and Joey and the little Crown Princess of Belsornia on another, for the Lower Fourth's form-room was immediately beneath the dormitory, and they would have seen her. Since getting away was out of the question, the young lady proceeded to revenge herself for her punishment by getting the sponges of the seven other people who slept in the same dormitory, soaking them thoroughly, and placing them in the exact centres of their owners' beds. Then she retired to her own, and lay looking again—for it was becoming a characteristic pose with her—as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth.

Her suspicions aroused by the silence in the Yellow dormitory—the last time Cornelia had been sent to bed she had sung all the songs she knew at the top of her voice—Matron came in to see if all was right. So far as she could judge, there was nothing wrong—except Cornelia's expression. *That* was too good to be true! Matron looked round the room sharply. Then her eye was caught by a spot of wet on Paula von Rothenfels's counterpane. She made a dive, threw back the clothes, and displayed a nicely soaked bed. Five minutes later all the beds had

been taken to pieces, and there were the wet sponges. They had been there for half an hour, so the beds were thoroughly damp.

Just at that moment the bell rang for break, and Matron, popping her head out of the window, called to Margia Stevens to send Mademoiselle to her. 'And at *once*!' she concluded. Then she turned back to where Cornelia was lying. 'We'll see what Mademoiselle has to say to this, miss! Of all the outrageous things to do! You deserve a good sound whipping!'

And this is exactly what Mademoiselle thought when she surveyed the beds.

A long lecture, the confiscation of her pocket-money for three weeks, gating to grounds, and five French fables to be learned and repeated to the irate Head of the school were among her punishment. But what she felt far more was Matron's decree that she should take all the beds and the bedding, put everything outside in the garden to dry, and, when it was ready, remake all the beds. The mattresses were to be hung over the balcony; the clothes to be carried downstairs, and spread out on the playing-field. Finally, the mattresses were to be put into fresh covers, and Cornelia was to do it.

It took her all day, and Matron saw to it that she had nothing but dry bread and milk till it *was* done. What made this one of the sharpest parts of her punishment was the fact that Herr Marani came up from Innsbruck for a short visit, and brought with him a big basket of his wife's cakes for them.

Sitting on the floor of the dormitory, stitching at one of the hated covers, Cornelia shed bitter tears as she heard the others making merry over the cakes which they had with their *Kaffee* out-of-doors, as they usually did when the day was hot. She heard the Robin's exclamation of, 'Me, I love Herr Marani!' followed by Maria's, 'Mamma has made these cakes even better than usual!' and she looked at the plate of dry bread and the big cup of milk which Luise had brought up for her with loathing.

Her first idea was to go on a hunger strike, and refuse to eat what they had given her, but Matron's contemptuous 'Well, it won't hurt you to fast for once!' put an end to *that*. With tears dripping saltily down her face, she swallowed the hated meal, and then turned again to her task. She would have rebelled against it if she had dared, but she knew that if she did Matron would keep her word, which was that she should have no play at all till it was done, and that she should also do the other beds which would be changed at the week-end. So she kept on, and by seven o'clock she put in the last stitch, and that part of her punishment was over.

Miss Durrant came for her then, and made her wash her face and hands, brush her hair, and come for a walk along the lakeside. 'You have had no exercise to-day,' she said quietly, 'and that will not do. Get your hat; the sun is still hot.'

Cornelia did as she was told in sulky silence, but, as Miss Durrant had no idea of talking to her, her silence fell rather flat. She was out for an hour; then she was brought back, and sent to bed in the sick-room, which was the only one of the rooms to be without a balcony, so there was no possible escape from it, for it opened into Matron's room, and that lady was popularly reported to sleep with one ear open.

Joey came back on the next day, and was promptly assailed by several people all wanting to know how 'Madame' was; what the baby was like; and when they were going to see them both. She was willing to chatter now, but she still had that curiously older air. 'Madge is splendid,' she said, 'and the baby's a dear! He's got the duckiest little hands and feet you ever saw, and heaps of soft, black hair.'

'What are they going to call him?' asked Grizel.

‘David, after my father,’ said Jo. ‘And James too, of course.’

‘David James Russell,’ said Simone, trying it over to see how it sounded. ‘I think it is veree nice, Joey.’

‘Oh, so do I!’ put in Evadne eagerly. ‘What will they call him for short?’

‘David, of course. Madge objects to Dave, which was what Dr Maynard suggested. All the same,’ added the baby’s aunt with a chuckle, ‘I bet he’ll be Davy before very long!’

‘But that is a pretty name too,’ said the Robin, who had been listening with all her might. ‘Joey, when are Grizel and I to see him? I do so want to see a very *little* baby!’

‘The week after next,’ said Jo. ‘You and Grizel are to go up for the week-end, and I’m coming for the Sunday.’

‘But why not for the whole time with us?’ objected Grizel.

‘Madge says it wouldn’t be fair. I’ve just had a week with her, and she thinks I ought not to have any more than just a day till half-term now.’

‘That’s like Madame,’ said Mary. ‘She is the very fairest person I’ve ever met, I think.’

‘We’ve some news for you—guess what?’ chimed in Margia.

‘Yes; make her guess!’ laughed Rosalie. ‘Come along, Jo.’

Jo thought hard, screwing up her mouth and frowning deeply the while. ‘Someone else is engaged,’ she hazarded.

‘No! Not that! And who is there, anyway?’

‘Well, Bette might.’

‘At seventeen and a half? Talk sense, Joey!’

‘There’s Bernhilda.’

‘No; Bernhilda is not betrothed *yet*!’ said Frieda, nodding her head as if she could tell secrets if she only would.

Jo was on her in a flash. ‘Do you mean she’s going to? Who to?’

But Frieda only shook her head, and refused to state, in spite of all their eager entreaties.

‘Well, they’ve put the trains on early, as it’s such glorious weather.’

‘I don’t think much of your guessing capacities!’ said Grizel scornfully. ‘The trains *were* put on on Monday, but it won’t make a lot of difference to us just now.’

‘Someone’s coming to see us, then?’

‘Ah, now you’re getting at it. Yes; guess who.’

‘Elisaveta?’ asked Jo excitedly, her mind going to this dear friend of hers.

‘Elisaveta may be coming, but no one has told us of it,’ said Marie von Eschenau. ‘No; it’s Wanda and Friedel.’

‘Marie! You little horror!’ cried Rosalie. ‘You shouldn’t have told!’

‘Oh well, I was going to say them next,’ said Jo easily. ‘How topping! When are they coming, Marie?’

‘On Friday. Tante Sofie is coming with them, and Wanda is to stay here, but Friedel is to go to the Kron Prinz Karl. They are coming for three days while Tante Sofie visits her cousins in Innsbruck, and then they will go back with her.’

‘Gorgeous! It will be nice to have Wanda again! Perhaps Gisela and Bernhilda could come too, and Bette as well! Then it would be almost like old times again! What do you think, Grizel?’

‘Let’s go and ask Mademoiselle. It’s a splendid idea, Jo! If only Juliet could come, we should be all here at once, for Stephanie would come too. And as so many of us are leaving this term, I don’t suppose we’ll get another opportunity to be all together again.’

They trooped off to the flower-garden, where the staff were taking their ease in deck-chairs, and Jo proffered her request.

'I am glad you like the idea,' said Mademoiselle, smiling as she looked at their eager faces. 'I have already written to our dear girls, and they are all coming, so Friday, Saturday, and Sunday we will make a little fête.'

Jo swung off her hat, and waved it above her head. 'Three cheers for Mademoiselle!' she cried. 'Come along, all of you!'

They cheered with a vim which made outsiders look towards the long fence that shut them out from public view and inquire of each other what was happening at the school. Then, seeing that the staff probably wanted their free time to themselves, Grizel herded the noisy group away, and they went discussing the unexpected holiday in all its aspects. 'It won't be quite like old times, though,' said Grizel with a sigh to Jo, when they were alone a little later on. 'Madame will not be with us.'

Jo followed the direction of her gaze towards the Sonnalpe, and nodded. 'No; but you can tell her all about it when you go up for the week-end.'

Grizel looked at her curiously. 'Jo! Don't you mind our going without you?'

Jo shook her head sturdily. 'Of course I don't. I've had a week with her—or five days, anyway. Of course, I haven't seen much of her; but I've been there, anyway. And I shall see lots of her later on!'

'And I sha'n't,' sighed Grizel. 'I'm dreading Florence, Joey. I feel as if I should never come back, once I get there!'

'That's rot,' said Jo. 'Of course you will! You might as well say that when I go to Belsornia to be with Elisaveta *I* shall never come back! But I jolly well *shall*! I'll always come in the hols—and so must you!'

'It's different for you, Jo. You're sisters; I'm only a friend!'

Jo's black eyes grew soft. 'You've been a good friend, Grizel. We'll want you, and you must come. Think of all we've done together.'

Grizel turned away once more, and looked up at the beautiful mountain on the other side of the lake.

'We've been in some tight places, you and I,' pursued Jo. 'That makes us more than just ordinary friends, Griselda, my lamb.'

'I'm glad you look on it like that, Jo. Oh, I'll come if I can! I don't often yarn, but you know how much I owe Madame and the Chalet School! It's been home to me these last four years.'

'It can be home to you still,' said Jo.

'There's Evadne on the yell for us! What does she want *now*?'

Evadne came racing over the grass to them, shrieking their names as she came. 'Gri-zel—Joey! Come on and play tennis! Rosalie's bagged the end court, and we're waiting!'

The two ran, glad on the whole for this interruption. Neither of them was in the habit of discussing her feelings, and both felt a little awkward about it, now that it was over. A fast set of tennis was just the thing they wanted.

It was also the thing they got. Rosalie was a steady player, and Evadne was brilliant on occasion, with a service which could be untakeable at times. Grizel was promising to be more than average, and Jo played a good average game, with odd flashes of inspiration and an uncanny gift for placing her balls, which made her a difficult opponent when she used it, as she did this evening.

The set finished, leaving Rosalie and Evadne as the victors with a score of nine-seven to their credit. Every point had been hotly contested, and the winners had only just got their two games, and that was all.

'We're jolly good, aren't we?' said Jo most immodestly, as they walked together to the games-shed to put away the balls. 'That last service of yours was a brute, Evvy! I couldn't do a thing with it!'

'No one ever called you conceited, did they?' teased Rosalie. 'Upon my word, Jo, to hear you, anyone would think you were Betty Nuthall, Suzanne, and Helen Wills all rolled into one!'

Jo laughed. 'I didn't mean it *quite* like that! But you must own that we aren't bad for school-girls, anyhow!'

'You'd be a good deal better if you'd only think what you were doing all the time instead of only occasionally,' Grizel told her severely. 'You can play decently when you try, but half the time you simply make wild swipes at the ball, and send it into the net or out of the court.'

Jo did not look very much disturbed at this stricture, but she said as they hung the balls-net up, 'Well, anyhow, *you* are awfully good, and Rosalie's as steady as old Time! We ought to have a very decent four this term!'

Then the bell rang for *Abendessen*, and they went in to struggle for a place at the Splasheries, and make themselves tidy.

CHAPTER XXII.
CORNELIA TAKES HER CHANCE.

On the Friday Wanda von Eschenau and her bethrothed arrived at three o'clock in the afternoon. Gisela, Bernhilda, and Bette had come up in the morning, and Stephanie from Lauterbach had walked to school in time for prayers. There were lessons for half the morning, then all work was at an end. A message had been sent down to Herr Anserl to say that the girls would not be having music lessons that afternoon, and Grizel, at any rate, had heaved a deep sigh of relief. 'Thank goodness! I've scarcely looked at my Bach, and what I know about those Scriabin preludes would go into a nutshell! I must get up early and have a go at them to-morrow, for he'll expect them to be almost perfect by Tuesday. Still that's five days off!'

Jo, whose music was of a very negligible quality, and who had patient Mademoiselle for a teacher, grinned. 'If you mean those awful caterwauling things I heard you struggling with last night, I'm not surprised! There's neither tune nor meaning in them!'

'Oh yes, there is!' said Margia, who had learnt two of the preludes in question. 'It's only because Grizel doesn't know them yet.'

'The first one is a brute,' declared Grizel. 'Groups of three against groups of five! And he knows I hate contrary rhythms!'

'I wanted to do that one badly,' said Margia wistfully, 'but he wouldn't hear of it.'

At this point in the conversation Evadne had dashed up to shriek excitedly that the boat was leaving Buchau at the other side, and there was a wild stampede to get hats and make for the Briesau landing, where they all stood waiting till the little lake steamer would come in. It came at last, and there stood pretty Bette, quiet Bernhilda, and graceful, Italian-looking Gisela waving to them from the deck.

After that there was little talk of work. The old girls were welcomed vociferously, and escorted back to the chalet, where they were regaled on cakes and lemonade, while everybody talked at once, and tried to tell them all that had happened during the term.

'And Madame, Joey?' said Gisela, when at length she could get in a word edgeways. 'Maria told us when she wrote. How is she?'

'Topping!' said Jo. 'And just wait till you see David! Imagine it, Gisela, I have now two nephews and two nieces! Isn't it priceless?'

Gisela looked at her with a smile. 'I think it must be very pleasant. I am glad for you, Joey.'

A wild shriek from Marie at this moment startled all of them.

'Marie! What has happened?' demanded Grizel. 'Anything stung you?'

'No! But oh, Grizel! Just think! Kurt, my eldest brother, is betrothed!'

'What? Who to?' exclaimed Jo, with a great lack of grammar.

Grizel's eyes fell on Bernhilda's fair face, rosy with blushes. 'Why, it's Bernhilda!' she cried.

'Bernie! *You?*' gasped Jo. 'I say! How splendid!'

Poor shy Bernhilda scarcely knew which way to look as they all crowded round her, asking questions and discussing the latest excitement at the tops of their voices.

'So *that's* what you were driving at the other night, Frieda,' said Margia, when they had calmed down a little. 'I say! Aren't we growing up? Three of us engaged, and two going to be

married soon! When are you going to do anything like that, Bette?'

Bette laughed, and shook her pretty head. 'I am too young yet. You must wait, Margia.'

The arrival of the staff made fresh pandemonium, for everyone wanted to tell them the news. When they understood it, they wished Bernhilda every happiness, and she was the centre of attraction till Mademoiselle, having pity on her discomfort, suggested a move to the pine-woods where they were to picnic. 'Some of you may go to meet Wanda and Herr von Glück by the three o'clock boat,' she said. 'And now, who will carry the baskets?'

They all made for the house to load themselves up, and presently they were straggling across the playing-field to the gate which led to the mountain slopes. The middles had taken the food baskets; the seniors carried the big cans of milk; and the juniors bore long loaves of bread, which they would cut up when they began to eat. Everyone was responsible for her own mug, and the chalet was shut up for the day, Luise and Hansi going home for a short while.

'We've turned the people out of the Green dormy,' said Grizel, who was walking with Bette, 'and you people are to have your own old beds. Wanda is going into the Blue dormy where she was, Bianca being sent over to Le Petit Chalet. We shall be a full house this week-end! It's hard luck Juliet couldn't come, isn't it?'

'I am sorry she isn't here,' agreed Gisela. 'I am very fond of Juliet. And now, my Grizel, how does it go with you this term? Is all well?'

Grizel shook her head. 'I can't exactly say that, Gisela. D'you see that fair, fat child walking with Evadne?'

Gisela looked in the direction she was indicating, and nodded. 'Yes; what is wrong with her, Grizel?'

'She's the limit!' said Grizel. 'Honestly, Gisela, she's hopeless. What do you think of this?' and she plunged into an account of Cornelia's last activities.

Gisela listened in startled silence. 'But what a senseless thing to do!' she exclaimed.

'Yes! I was pretty bad in the old days, but I never did a mad thing like that,' said Grizel. 'And she's so untruthful too!'

'Ah, well, *that* you never were,' said Gisela. 'You were full of mischief, Grizel, but we all knew that we could rely on your word. What are you laughing for?'

'Do you remember Frau Berlin that day your father took us to Innsbruck to buy Madame's present, and then we went up the Brenner Road?'

'But, of course, I do. Why? Have you seen her again?'

'Rather! And where do you think?'

'I do not know. Where was it?'

'In that fire in the hotel at Salzburg. She was nearly frantic with terror, and tried to wipe me off the fire escape. She didn't succeed, of course! Mr Lannis stopped her. But isn't it funny? We always seem to be meeting her in some catastrophe or other.'

'What's that?' demanded Jo, who had left Bernhilda to fall back with the other two.

'Frau Berlin. Do you remember her at Salzburg, Joey?'

'I should think I did! She was a bigger sight than she was when Madge hauled her out of the burning train on our journey from the Rosengarten Baum to Innsbruck, and her skirt got left behind! You should have seen her, Gisela! Hair in curling-pins, and a lurid pink flannelette dressing-gown which did *not* match her face! She looked awful!'

Gisela laughed. 'She was not a pleasant person. Papa often speaks of her, and the scene she made in the Maria Theresien Restaurant. He will be interested to hear that you have met

her again.'

'Hi, there, you people! Don't you want any *Mittagessen*?' Mary Burnett hailed them at this moment, and they found that the others had settled on a little clearing which they had been passing, and were already laying the cloth, and setting out the eatables. They made haste to join them, and presently they were all sitting round, and eating as if they hadn't seen food before that day.

'It's funny how much more one can eat out of doors than in,' sighed Jo, as she began on her seventh sandwich.

'Yes; I notice you generally eat enough for three when we picnic,' observed Margia.

'People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. That's your fifth, anyhow! And Evadne is outdoing all of us!'

'Well, you aren't a bad second,' laughed Miss Durrant, who was sitting near enough to hear them. 'More milk, Robin?'

The Robin nodded her head—her mouth was too full for speech. The mistress attended to her wants, and then turned to see that Cornelia, who was sitting on the other side of her, had all she required.

Strictly speaking, Cornelia should not have been there, but it was not in Mademoiselle's heart to deprive her of the fête, and she had told her that the rest of her punishment should be remitted during this week-end. 'We do not wish that our old girls should have to see one of our present girls so punished, my child,' the good lady had said gently. 'So we will forgive you now, and you will try to do better, will you not?'

Cornelia had muttered something which might have been a promise to this effect. Mademoiselle hoped it was, and accepted it as such, so the young lady was out of durance vile and with the others once more. Her own friends still looked rather askance at her. They were a sinful crowd, but they had never aspired to the things she did, and, had they known what was at the back of her mind all the time, they would assuredly have cut her. After *Mittagessen* was over, and the baskets were repacked, the girls sauntered off in twos and threes to gather flowers, hunt for early wild strawberries, and chatter about school affairs. The three old girls stayed with the staff, talking; and Grizel, Joey, Rosalie, Mary, and Marie von Eschenau prepared to walk down to the boat-landing to meet Wanda and Herr von Glück.

'Where's Paula?' demanded Joey just before they set off. 'Oughtn't she to come too? Wanda's her cousin.'

'She's over there with Cornelia and Evadne,' said Mary, pointing. 'Run and bring her, Joey, old thing.'

Jo went off, and presently returned with the trio.

'Here, we don't want the entire crowd,' protested Grizel. 'You two run off and find the others. Paula may come if she likes; but not you, Evadne, nor you, Cornelia.'

'Why not?' demanded Cornelia. 'I want to see her.'

'You'll see her when they get here. Now you're not coming, so don't start making a fuss about it. Come along, you people. It's hot, and we don't want to hurry if we can help it. Go and join the others, Evadne and Cornelia.'

It must be admitted that Grizel's tones were rather dictatorial, but she really felt out of patience with them. Cornelia, at any rate, had no right to ask to go. The head-girl considered that she had done very well to be let off her punishment as it was.

Evadne turned away, with a growled 'Guess I want to see Wanda as much as anyone!' Then she made off to join Frieda and Simone, who were looking for last year's pine-cones.

Cornelia sat down on a nearby stump, a gloomy frown on her face, and glared after the departing girls. She hated Grizel at that moment. She could have gone off if she liked then, for no one was watching her, but she had got it into her head that Herr von Glück might be able to tell her more about the caves than Marie knew, and she had decided to pump him for all she was worth.

'Silly kid!' commented Grizel, looking back and seeing her.—'Come on, you folk! It's a good way to walk in this heat.'

They strolled along, glad of the shade in the pines. When they reached the edge of the forest they would have to cross the open pasture-land, and the sun was blazing down. The great limestone crags of the mountains glared white beneath its rays, and the Tiern See was blue as a piece of lapis-lazuli. No breath of wind stirred its calm surface, and it was so still that their own voices sounded louder than usual.

'Ouf! It's hot!' panted Mary, who was scarlet with the heat. 'If it's like this in May, what will it be like in June?'

'Well, June's nearly here,' said Rosalie, who still contrived to keep cool and fresh. 'Next Sunday will be the first. Oh, look! Isn't that the boat setting off from Seespitz? We'd better hurry a little.'

'Heaps of time,' said Grizel easily. 'It's got to go to Buchau first, and it doesn't hurry itself.'

Still, they broke into a trot, and managed to get to the landing just as the graceful little white steamer neared the moorings. Five minutes later they were welcoming Wanda and her fiancé. Herr Hauptmann Friedel von Glück was a tall, dark young man, with a pleasant face and a merry laugh, and it was obvious that he adored his lovely Wanda, who looked more like a fairy-tale princess than ever in her white frock and big shady hat. Jo made up her mind that he was nice; and while Wanda and Grizel went on ahead with Paula and the other two English girls, she and Marie escorted him over the meadowland and through the dark pines, chattering away all the time. The newly arrived pair received quite a little ovation when they reached the picnic ground, and then everyone sat down to milk and cakes, while Wanda heard all the school news, and he was presented to various people of whom he had heard.

Cornelia, standing with Evadne, was introduced as 'one of our American girls—this is the other.' She was on her best behaviour for once, and her best behaviour was very charming. She soon induced the young man to talk of the caves, though he really knew little more than Marie, and the rest listened with deep interest.

'It would be topping if the entrance really could be discovered,' said Mary, when he had finished.

'I think we've found it,' said Jo quickly. Then she told them what she and Margia had discussed at Marie's wedding.

'It seems likely,' he said, when she had finished. 'As you say, the very fact that the peasants fear the spot would help to keep it secret through all these years. If it is so, then it is to you two that they will owe it. Herr Professor von der Witt is coming soon to see if he can find them. He is interested in the question, for he is a great geologist, as you may have heard.'

'We've seen him,' said Jo eagerly. 'In the train! Remember, Grizel? The man who came and shoved down the carriage window when "the Stuffer" *would* have it up!'

Grizel nodded. 'Rather! Wasn't he funny? I do hope he finds the caves, and that they can be used for sight-seeing. But how will he manage? I'm certain none of the men round here will go near the place, even if they weren't all busy all the time as they are.'

‘He is bringing a party with him,’ said Herr von Glück. ‘I think he spoke of coming this week-end. We must bring him to see you—if Mademoiselle will permit,’ he bowed to Mademoiselle as he spoke; ‘then you and Fräulein Grizel can show him where your cleft is. That would save him a great deal of work, if it is really the entrance to the caves!’

‘I’m sure it is,’ said Margia. ‘It’s the only possible place.’

‘Could you show me whereabouts it is from here, Fräulein Grizel?’ asked the captain.

Grizel got up from the log on which she had been sitting, and turned to the north. ‘It’s over there, somewhere. Right below here, you know, and along nearly to where the river turns to enter the valley. I can’t tell you exactly, but that’s the direction. It is a long, narrow cleft; I don’t think we’d have noticed it if we hadn’t seen that awful old man and the Robin.’ She glanced round to make sure that none of the juniors were anywhere near, but they had gone off on some business of their own, with Miss Durrant in charge, and there were only the seniors and the middles round them. ‘You cut across that grass-land, and turn round to the left. It’s right under the mountain, really. They say, you know, that that old lunatic has come back. Herr August told us at Marie’s wedding.’

‘Only he called him a demon,’ added Jo. ‘They all think he comes from hell, I believe, and I know they think he was going to carry off the Robin to hell!’

The return of the juniors from their expedition put an end to the tale, and they all moved off in other directions. But *one* young person had heard all she wanted, and it would not be Cornelia’s fault if she did not get ahead of them in finding the caves. ‘And that’ll be one in the eye for Joey and that pig Grizel!’ she thought complacently to herself. Her greatest difficulty would be in getting away. She must manage it through the night, if she could. Fortune favoured her for once. Matron, who had been looking rather white and poorly, now owned to a headache, which increased so that when they got home she was only fit for bed.

‘You must go at once,’ said Miss Maynard. ‘As for Cornelia—I’m sure you don’t want a tiresome child next door to you to-night—she can go over to Le Petit Chalet for the night. I’ll tell her to get her things and go at once.’

When Miss Maynard made up her mind to a thing it was generally done quickly. On this occasion Cornelia found herself bundled off to Le Petit Chalet, along with three or four other middles, who had had to turn out to make room for the four old girls. Her joy when she found that she was given a window cubicle was great. She had managed to secrete her electric torch, and she went to bed with unusual serenity. One of her minor grievances against the school lay in the fact that she was not allowed to sit up as long as she chose, and she generally made a fuss about this. To-night, however, she went off as quietly as the others, and unsuspicious Mademoiselle was under the impression that she was tired by the long day in the woods, and took no notice of it, as Matron certainly would have done.

Cornelia waited till she heard the last door shut, keeping herself awake by sitting up in bed; and when she thought she had given everyone sufficient length of time to fall asleep, she got up, dressed herself with the utmost quietness, and climbed out of the window on to the balcony. From there it was an easy matter for her to drop to the ground, and then she set off at her best pace, making for the cleft in the rock of which the girls had spoken that afternoon; while Frieda, who had been disturbed by the sound of her drop sat up and looked round her wonderingly. However, Frieda could not see through the curtains; she decided that it must have been a dream, and lay down again, and was soon fast asleep. Cornelia was not missed till *Frühstück* next morning, and by that time she was safely at the cleft, and was making her way

in, undeterred by any fears, though, had she known what was before her, she would have turned tail, and never stopped running until she was safely back at school again.

CHAPTER XXIII.
IN THE CAVES.

It was almost eight o'clock when Cornelia reached the cleft of which Jo and Grizel had spoken. She recognised it at once—long, and narrow, and almost under the mountain. She was hungry, so she sat down and ate one of the apples she had bought at a chalet on her way. Then, throwing away the core, and cleansing her fingers by the simple method of licking them, she felt in her pocket to see that the two new batteries she had put there were all right, switched on her torch, and squeezed her way in.

She found herself in a dark, narrow passage, which went on as far as she could see. Walking warily, for she had no desire to tread on any snakes, and one *might* have made its home here, she went slowly along, her torch casting its bright light on the ground in front. For a long way the passage went fairly straight, then it suddenly took a sharp turn to the left, and she found that she was going downhill. It was quite dry underfoot, and as she went, the roof, which had been low at first, seemed to rise. There was no sound to be heard save the ring of her own feet on the hard ground, and many children would have been terrified. Not so Cornelia! She had made up her mind that she was going to discover those caves, and discover them she would. Of what dangers might be ahead of her, she never even thought. Her one idea was to go on.

When she had been walking a long time—or so it seemed—she came to a kind of crossroads. This was the first check she had received, and she looked in dismay as she wondered which way she ought to take. She was tired now, for she had been up all night, and her legs were aching. With a little sigh, she sank down on the ground, and stared dismally round her. What should she do?

As if in answer to her question, one of the apples in her coat pocket rolled out, and trundled off on the path that led to the left, as if setting forth on a journey on its own account.

'I'll go that way,' decided Cornelia, getting on to her weary feet again. 'Of course, they said that the caves were probably under the lake, so this must be the path. But I wonder where the others go.'

She stooped down, picked up the apple, which had come to rest against a hump in the ground, and walked on, munching as she went. She was dreadfully tired, and only her indomitable will kept her going. Suddenly she tripped up over an unexpected depression in the earth, and fell headlong. She was not hurt, but she felt that she simply could not drag herself one step farther. She *must* rest a little before she went on!

She stretched herself out, sighing for very relief, and switched off her torch. The air was fairly fresh here, and she had sense enough to realise that she must not waste light. The thick darkness which descended on her dismayed her a little, but she argued that she didn't need a light to rest by. Then weariness did its work, and before she had grasped anything she was asleep.

For long hours she lay there, slumbering as peacefully as if she were in her own bed at school. She never heard light, almost stealthy steps coming along the passage, nor saw the flare of a rude torch of pinewood and resin. Neither did she feel herself lifted up in strong arms, and borne on steadily, while a cracked voice murmured exclamations of wonder over her. She had no knowledge of being carried for some two miles thus, and then of being laid

down on a heap of deerskins, while the strange being who had found her hung over her, and talked to himself in queer gutturals.

It was, in point of fact, nearly five o'clock when she awakened, and by that time the whole valley had been roused, and was out searching for her. Dr Jem had been summoned from the Sonnalpe, and had come down to hear that she had vanished. She had not gone *downwards*, for she had not been seen on any of the trains. Equally, no one had met her on the mountain path leading to Spärtz. The only clue they had to go on was that she had bought apples at one of the cottages on the way to Lauterbach; but that she had not gone on to the great Tiern Pass was proved, for a party of German students came that way, and they all agreed that they had seen nothing of a little girl with fair bobbed hair, a blue cotton frock, and a short brown coat.

'Can she have tried to go up the Tiernjoch?' questioned Grizel of Jo.

'Goodness knows' was Jo's gloomy response. 'I don't *think* so, though. She's not keen on climbing—you know the fuss she made about going up to the Bärenbad alpe.'

Grizel flashed a quick glance at her friend. 'Dr Jem won't tell Madame yet, Joey,' she said.

'My goodness! I hope not!' returned Jo vigorously. 'It would make her ill if she knew!'

Mademoiselle came up to them at this moment—a distraught Mademoiselle, with her hair untidy, and her face white. 'Come, *mes enfants*. You must come and eat. Going without food will help no one!'

The two turned and followed her in from the garden where they had been talking. There was wisdom in her words, as they knew, but they felt as if they could never touch food until Cornelia had been found. They sat down at the table and ate their bread and butter, and drank their milk in silence, which even the talkative middles didn't break. Once, towards the end of the meal, Marie turned to her next-door neighbour, Deira. 'It's almost as if the Kobolds had carried her off,' she said seriously.

'Ah, then, hold your tongue, will you?' said Deira in answer, and Marie obeyed.

When they had finished, the girls wandered out again, and roamed restlessly about the grounds. What they ought to have done was to settle to games, but Gertrud and Grizel were busy conferring together with Jo, and no one else bothered to attempt any organisation. The babies were soon swept away to bed by Miss Annersley, who had undertaken to look after them while the other staff joined in the hunt. The younger middles clustered together in the flower-garden, and tried to think of *where* Cornelia could have gone. The rest just mooned about—to quote Mary Burnett—and did nothing.

The great fear in everyone's heart was that the child might have got herself into difficulties on one of the mountain slopes, and might be lying, even now, hurt and helpless. Their main consolation was that she could not have fallen into the lake, since she had been going in the opposite direction. At nine o'clock the middles were sent to bed, and the seniors were made to follow at half-past. Only Grizel sat with the old girls, her face white with anxiety, while the staff still searched through the nearby pine-woods, even Mademoiselle having gone with them.

Herr von Glück was with the five girls in the study, having just come back from an apparently fruitless hunt through the woods across the little stream. He was tired and hungry, and Grizel had gone to the kitchen to get Luise to bring *Kaffee und Butterbrod* for him. She returned with her laden tray, and he had just sprung up and taken it from her, when there came the sound of bare feet running down the stairs, and then Joey, clad only in her pyjamas, and with her hair standing on end, burst into the room. She paid no heed to anyone but Grizel, on

whom she flung herself. ‘Grizel! I believe I know where she’s gone! It’s the caves! Don’t you remember all the questions she’s asked about them? Well, I believe she’s gone off to try to find them on her own! Come on! I’m going to fetch her out!’

‘Oh *no*, Joey!’ It was Gisela who spoke, springing to her feet, and nearly overturning the tray the captain still held. ‘You must not! Think of what Madame would say!’

‘I’m going,’ repeated Jo, her jaw set square. ‘I *am* thinking of Madame! If she knew about this, it would be enough to kill her. Grizel and I are the only two who know exactly where that entrance is, and, if we go, we can get there without wasting any time. She must be brought back before Madge has to hear about it, and I’m *going*!’

Herr von Glück set down the tray, and spoke with determination. ‘I will come with you, Fräulein Joey. What you say is right.—Listen, Wanda.’ He turned to his betrothed. ‘I will take Fräulein Joey and Fräulein Grizel with me now, and we will set off at once. You must tell the others, and bid them follow us as soon as they come back. We will take string, so that we may leave a guiding cord for them to follow, and so that we may not lose our way when we are returning. Fräulein Joey, go and dress at once, and put on thick shoes. You also, Fräulein Grizel.—Fräulein Marani,’ he turned to Gisela, ‘you must find me some brandy. We may need it!’

The girls hurried off to do his bidding, and an hour later found the three who formed the vanguard of this wild expedition creeping along the face of the mountain, hunting for the cleft.

Could poor terrified Cornelia have known how near they were, things would have been better. Unfortunately, she had no idea that help was coming, and it seemed to her as if she was alone—abandoned to the tender mercies of a maniac.

When she had awakened, shortly after five in the afternoon, it had been to find herself in a gigantic hollow place, full of pillars that glittered in the light cast by rude torches which someone had lit and placed in holes here and there. The shape was nearly circular, and for a moment Cornelia lay and wondered if she were dreaming. She seemed to have got into some fairies’ palace. Then, there was a movement near her, and, looking round, she repressed a scream with difficulty, for coming towards her was the man whom she recognised as being the lunatic of Grizel’s and Joey’s story of the Robin’s rescue. He came softly, smiling at her, and with a strange light in his crazy blue eyes which scared her. ‘The gracious lady has slept long,’ he said in his soft, mumbling patois. ‘Almost I thought her under a spell, and would not open her eyes for a century. What does the gracious lady will that I, her servant, shall do for her?’

With a mighty effort Cornelia pulled herself together, and stood up. ‘Take me back,’ she said.

He shook his head with a cunning smile. ‘Nay, gracious lady. That may not be. They who come here are prisoners of the Kobolds and other fairy-folk. Anything but that!’

He had raised his voice as he spoke, and it boomed through the great pillared cave, echoing and re-echoing weirdly among the pillars. He came nearer as he spoke, and stretched out his hand to her. Cornelia shrank back against the pillar under which she had been lying. In her movement, she tripped over the deer-skins which had formed her bed, and reeled, and would have fallen had not the maniac caught her, and set her gently on her feet again.

‘The gracious lady must be careful,’ he said reproachfully. ‘You shiver, my little princess. Are you cold? Permit that I wrap this round you.’

He picked up one of the skins, and drew it round her shoulders; then, stooping, he picked her up, and carried her to the other side of the place, where two pillars rose on each side of a mound, forming a kind of fantastic throne, on which he placed her.

How it was Cornelia managed to keep her senses was something no one was ever able to understand. Jo declared after it was all over that she would have died if it had been she. However, she *did* keep them, and, when he brought her some bread and a handful of berries, she even managed to control herself sufficiently to take them and eat them. He brought her a wooden cup full of water, and she drank it thankfully, for she felt uncommonly thirsty. When her meal was over she felt better, and rose from her seat, anxious to explore.

She had been right in coming here, so far as the caves were concerned—she recognised that. Margia had been quite correct when she had guessed the cleft to be the entrance. Cornelia looked round her in wonder at the white, gleaming walls. What could it be? She thought it looked like diamonds. Wondering, she scraped her finger over the nearest pillar, and then took it to her lips. Salt! It was salt!

She knew of the great salt-mines in the Salzburg district at Hall, nearer to Innsbruck. It was evident that this was a kind of off-shoot from them, and, if that was so, then these caves would be of even more value to the people than Joey had imagined. She wondered where her strange host was, and glanced round. He had stolen on noiseless feet to a nearby pillar, and was standing there, watching her with a child-like smile of benevolence.

'I wish to go farther,' she said in halting German, forcing her lips to utter the words.

He shook his head. 'But no, gracious lady. That may not be. This is your home, little princess, and here you must dwell till the queen come to you. But have no fear! I, Sigismund Arnolfi, will guard you, and keep all harm from you. Does the gracious lady will that I sing for her?'

Terrified lest she should rouse his anger, Cornelia agreed, and the strange creature took her hand in a claw-like grasp, and led her back to the throne, on which he seated her. Then from some niche he took down a zither, and, running his fingers across the strings, sounded a shower of silvery notes which the echoes took up, returning them in an elfin chorus of beauty which would have enchanted the child had she heard it under other circumstances. As it was, she had to clench her hands and set her teeth to keep herself from springing up and screaming.

The old man paid no heed to her. He lifted up his voice, and howled—no other word will describe the sounds he made!—a song about a beautiful lady and her true knight up to the vaulted roof. It was terrible; and the mocking echoes made it far worse. When he had finished it he started another, and he went on singing—or howling—for nearly two hours. After that he advanced once more to the throne, picked up the child, and, carrying her over to the heap of deer-skins on which she had wakened, laid her down.

'My little princess looks weary and must sleep,' he said, covering her over very gently; but there was a strength in his hands which the terrified child sensed rather than felt. She dared not dispute him. She lay submissively still, and when he had attended to the torches, and replaced those which were flickering to their death with fresh ones, he went and lay down himself before an opening which she rightly guessed to be the entrance from the passage. He was asleep in a minute, and his snores resounded through the cave. Cornelia waited a full half-hour. Then she got up cautiously, slipped off her shoes, and, carrying them in her hand, went towards another opening she had noticed when she had been wandering round the cave before. She had just reached it, when she suddenly heard a wild yell of rage, and, looking back, she saw him leaping across the floor to her. With a scream of uncontrollable terror she rushed through the entrance, and made off down a path which felt damp to her feet. She tore on, expecting every minute to feel his claw-like grasp on her shoulder. Suddenly, she crashed into

something with stunning force. A blaze of stars followed; then thick darkness, and she knew no more.

CHAPTER XXIV.
RESCUE.

How long she lay there unconscious, Cornelia never knew. She came to herself with a splitting headache, to find that she was very damp, and in a thick darkness that frightened her. She tried to get up, but her legs gave way under her, and her head throbbed so sickeningly that she was thankful to lie back again. She wondered, half-dazedly, how long she would have to lie there before help came. Mercifully for her, she never doubted but that help *would* come, sooner or later. She guessed that the school would be frantic about her being lost, and she had a hazy recollection of the fact that Rufus had helped to track the Robin. He would help to find her, and then she would be taken back to the Chalet School. Once there, she would honestly behave herself, and be as good as she knew how.

'I'd just despise to be anything else!' she thought to herself. 'Oh, I wish my head would stop aching for a bit! How cold and damp it is! There must be a fog!'

By this time she was half-delirious, and had no idea that she was talking aloud. It never crossed her mind to wonder why 'Herr Arnolfi' hadn't come on her. She had forgotten all about him. By-and-bye she fell into an uneasy slumber, in which she tossed and moaned, talking at intervals in rapid undertones.

It was a mercy for her that help was very near. At the moment when she had been making her effort to escape, Grizel, Joey, and Friedel von Glück were entering the cleft in the mountain-side, and the young man was fastening one end of the first of the enormous balls of string which they had brought to a bush just outside. All three had torches, and all three had spare batteries with them. Friedel carried a tiny flask of brandy in one pocket and some bandages in the other, though the girls knew nothing of these. Time enough to tell them when they were needed, he thought. Joey had stuffed her pockets full of ripe gooseberries, which she had snatched from a dish in the Speisesaal, and Grizel had grabbed up some of the *Butterbrod* which Friedel had left from his hasty meal.

It was an easy journey till they came to the cross-roads, but there they paused. Which way would the child have taken? The two Guides hunted round for some sign, and Grizel uttered a sigh of relief when she found a small piece of apple-peeling, which Cornelia had dropped as she walked. 'Here it is! This is the way she has gone!' she cried.

Friedel von Glück was at her side at once. 'You will pardon that I lead the way, *mein Fräulein*? It is *necessary*!'

Grizel stared at him, but she squeezed herself against the wall and let him pass her. Then it suddenly struck her that he feared lest the lunatic might be there with Cornelia, and, recognising her as the saviour of the Robin, harm her. Meekly she followed him, insisting on Jo keeping behind her.

'It's—horribly dark!' said the latter impressionable young lady, with a shudder. 'Don't get too far ahead, Grizel.'

'All right, old thing,' replied Grizel gently. 'Grab my coat, and we'll keep together.'

At this point the young captain stopped, and demanded another ball of string. Grizel produced it, and rapidly knotted the two ends together with a reef-knot. Then they went on.

'We're going downhill,' said Joey in low tones presently.

‘I know,’ murmured the head-girl in reply. ‘I’m certain now that Margia was right, and this *is* the way to the caves. I only hope we’ve enough string to last us!’

‘Pardon that I ask that you do not talk,’ said their leader, stopping and turning round. ‘We cannot know how sound will carry in this place.’

There was common sense in what he said, and they were silent as they went on. Presently they came to the place where Cornelia had lain down to rest, and here they had proof of the fact that she was here, for on the ground was her torch, just as it had fallen from her relaxed grip when she had gone to sleep. Friedel von Glück picked it up and examined it. Her name was on a narrow band of silver round it, so there was no more doubt.

‘Thank goodness!’ thought Grizel. ‘But what a little ass!’

The path had been going steadily downhill for some time, but now they found that it took a sharp turn upwards, and went on at a fairly steep gradient. Both girls were tired and the young captain was weary, too, for he had been out nearly all day hunting for the missing child. Their progress was slow, and Grizel, glancing round, was rather horrified at Jo’s white face. They did not dare to pause, however. None of them could help thinking of the maniac who had tried to kidnap the Robin those few short months ago.

Suddenly Herr von Glück gave vent to a low exclamation and stopped. The girls stopped too, and crowded up to him. ‘There is a light ahead,’ he said, pointing.

They looked. Yes; it was true. A faint glow straight ahead of them told them that the first part of their journey was at an end. Rapidly the captain gave them their orders. They were to follow him till he said ‘Stop!’ Then they were to stay where they were till they heard him call ‘Come!’ If he called ‘Run!’ they were to turn and run as quickly as they could till they came to the crossroads. There they were to turn to the right, extinguishing their torches, and go a little way down. If he did not come soon after that, they were to listen for sounds, and, if all was quiet, to go back and follow the string till they got outside, where they were to go straight back to meet the search-party he felt sure would be hastening after them even now, and warn them that there was danger from the madman. He made them repeat his orders, and then exacted from them a promise on their honour as Guides that they would be obedient. After that he led them on for another ten minutes. Then, short and sharp, came the order to stop. They stopped instantly, and he went on, while they crouched down by the wall, fearful of some unseen danger.

Jo was praying to herself very softly, but Grizel heard her. ‘Our Father Who art in Heaven, oh save us all from danger, and bring us safe back to the chalet!’

The elder girl bent her head. ‘Joey, let’s say the “Lighten our darkness,’ ” she whispered.

Jo began at once, and the murmured sound of the words strengthened them. Never had they put so much prayer into the words ‘and defend us from all perils and dangers of this night’ before. They felt that there might be such dreadful peril and danger for them all. When they had finished, Grizel put her arm round Jo, and held her close. ‘I’ve *tried*!’ she said. ‘You’ll tell Madame, Joey.’

‘Yes,’ said Jo, ‘but I don’t think there’ll be any need, Grizel.’

A long silence followed. Then Jo suddenly turned towards the elder girl. ‘Death—is just falling asleep to wake with God,’ she said softly.

‘I know, Joey. It’s just the memory of Madame’s words that is helping me now.’

Then they turned and faced what might be coming, calm with that thought.

Suddenly a call of ‘Come!’ sounded through the passage. They started to their feet and bolted along to the glow. Suddenly they came on the great salt cave which had so filled

Cornelia with wonder some hours since. The torches 'Herr Arnolfi' had lit were beginning to die, but there was still enough light for them to see the glistening crystals, and Jo uttered an exclamation of admiration. In the centre of the cave, before a huge pillar, Herr von Glück was kneeling beside a dark heap. He seemed to be laying something white over part of it. Even as they looked he crossed himself and bent his head. A horrible fear that it was Cornelia, and that she was dead, came to Jo, and she swayed against Grizel, who caught her. 'No, Joey! It's too big! 'cried the elder girl 'It must be the lunatic.'

Friedel von Glück, his brief prayer for the repose of the poor lost soul ended, rose to his feet. 'It is safe now,' he said gravely. 'He died in my arms just before I called you. He says that the child ran away down the path that leads to the other caves—she is somewhere down there, and I am going to find her. Will you be afraid to stay here while I seek for her? I will not be long. He said he thought he heard her stumble, but he fell himself, and broke his leg in falling, or he would have gone to her. He struck his own head, and the double shock is what has killed him. He was very old, and I gather that his heart was not right. His senses had come back at the last, and he was able to tell me so much. Will you stay here, dear children, while I bring the other little one? You might say a prayer for the repose of his soul.'

Grizel nodded. 'Yes; we will stay. Go quickly and get Cornelia, please. Come, Joey; we will go over there to those skins, and wait.' She led Joey to the heap of deer-skins on which poor Cornelia had lain, and made her lie down in her arms. Herr von Glück saw that they were all right, and went off on his final quest. Grizel held Joey close.

'Poor old thing!' said the younger girl. 'I am glad he is dead, Grizel!'

'So am I,' said Grizel. Then she added softly, 'He has fallen asleep to wake with God.'

They lay there quietly, and presently both fell asleep. Friedel found them like that when he came back to the salt cave, carrying Cornelia, who was now in a heavy stupor. He did not wake them, but he laid the other child down beside them, and proceeded to bind up the nasty cut on her forehead, after scraping some salt from one of the pillars and rubbing it in. It was spartan treatment, but the best antiseptic he had at hand. The smarting of the salt on the open wound brought Cornelia to her senses, and she sat up with a low cry which awakened the other two. 'Oh, where are we?' she wailed. 'What has happened? And oh, my head does hurt so!'

'It's all right, old thing,' said Jo soothingly. 'You're quite safe, and we're here with you. You must have banged your head a bit.'

'But the madman!' cried Cornelia. 'Oh, he'll come and kill us all!'

Friedel pointed to the still figure with his handkerchief over its face. 'He will never hurt anyone again,' he said gently. 'He is dead.' Then he stripped off his coat and gave it to Grizel. 'Her clothes are damp—that is a wet place. Undress her, and put that on her. Then I will wrap her up in one of the skins, and we must get her home as quickly as possible.'

He moved over to the other side of the cave, out of sight, and they undressed her, and wrapped her in the coat. Grizel took off her own frock, and put that on her, too. Then they called to him, and he came and rolled her in one of the deer-skins. Just as he was about to lift her, they heard the tread of many feet and the sound of voices. Lights showed at the entrance from the passage, and a throng of people poured into the cave. Mademoiselle was there, and Miss Maynard and Miss Durrant. Good Herr Braun from the Kron Prinz Karl, Dr Jem, Herr August, and—Joey rubbed her eyes in amazement, but it really was—Herr Anserl, looking more like a shaggy bear than ever, with his long hair all tangled and untidy. There was also a big man who seemed to be vaguely familiar, and two or three others, who were armed with

ropes and pickaxes. But she heeded none of them. Like a flash she had run across the floor, and was in her brother-in-law's arms. 'Jem! Is Madge all right? She doesn't know?'

He caught her to him. 'Jo! Thank God—thank God! No; she doesn't know!'

'We're all here,' went on Joey, 'only Cornelia has hurt her head. Herr Friedel has tied it up.'

Jem set her down and hurried across to the little group. Then Joey found herself seized by a weeping Mademoiselle, who kissed her over and over again—rather to the young lady's disgust—and called her '*Chérie—ma mie—ma bien-aimée!*' till unsentimental Jo simply didn't know where to look. It was Grizel's turn after that, and while Miss Maynard helped the doctor to bandage Cornelia rather more scientifically than Herr von Glück had done it, the two girls were passed round among the company, and made to tell their story. Then the big, vaguely familiar man grabbed Joey—'Just as if I was a pickpocket!' grumbled Miss Jo later on—and demanded whether they knew where was the road to the other caves.

'Friedel knows,' returned the young lady, dropping all formalities. 'You'd better ask *him*!'

'What! Young Friedel *here*?' roared the big man. He let Jo go, and the next minute she saw him pouncing on Wanda's betrothed, and pouring out a perfect flood of questions. By this time Dr Jem had finished his work, and Miss Maynard was rolling Cornelia in a big shawl she had brought with her.

'Come,' said the doctor, lifting up the bundle. 'We must get back now.'

'But I will stay!' roared the big man. 'I am assured that we have the way, and I doubt not but that we shall make some marvellous discoveries! Here!' he turned to the men with the ropes and pickaxes, who had been standing to one side looking on. 'Come, you! We go forward now! Do not wait for me, Herr Doktor! Take that imp of a child home, and those others, too. You may look for me some time on the morrow!'

With that he plunged down the path where Friedel had found Cornelia, the men following him, and was soon lost to sight. Jem laughed as he turned to the other entrance. 'I suppose we must leave him to his discoveries. These children should be got to bed as soon as possible, and if I know Herr Professor von der Witt, no power on earth would turn him back now when he knows that the caves *must* be near!'

Joey and Grizel looked at each other. So *that* was who it was! No wonder he seemed to be familiar to them!

They had no time to discuss it, however, for Herr Braun approached them, and with a 'Pardon, *gnädiges Fräulein*!' picked up Joey in his arms, and strode off in the wake of the doctor, leaving Herr August to treat Grizel in precisely similar manner. The rest trooped after them, and they were carried in safety up the passage, and across the bush-grown turf till they came to the road where the path leads to the Tiern Pass, where they found three motors awaiting them. They were all bundled in, and then they set off. It was daylight by this time, and the sun was shining when Joey and Grizel, after a good meal, were finally tucked up in bed in their cubicles, and left to sleep off the effects of their latest escapade.

CHAPTER XXV.
‘THREE CHEERS FOR GRIZEL!’

‘I *hate* end of term when it’s the summer term!’ Thus Joey, viciously.

Grizel Cochrane, to whom she was speaking, looked at her seriously. ‘It’s worse when it’s your last term, Jo! And don’t say anything to make it worse, my lamb! I will *not* make a sentimental ass of myself, but I can’t answer for the consequences if you rub things in.’

Jo cleared her throat. ‘Righto!—Oh, there’s Rosa with David! Come on and see him!’

She turned and raced across the grass to where Rosa Pfeiffen was wheeling Master David Russell along in his white pram. Joey came up panting, for the day was hot, and hung over the pram, and made cooing noises to her small nephew, who lay looking at her with bland indifference, though when she slipped a finger into his dimpled paw he gripped tightly. ‘Isn’t he a darling?’ said his adoring aunt.

‘Jolly little chap,’ replied Grizel, peeping at him over her shoulder. ‘He’s going to be awfully like Madame, Joey.’

‘Yes; isn’t he? I think he’s very like young Rix, too,’ replied Jo. Her brother had brought his family to the Tiern See three weeks ago, and the entire school had gone in for a course of baby-worship. Mrs Russell had come down with her small son to join them in the chalet Dick had taken for three months, and the girls had revelled in having their beloved Madame so near. Peggy and Rix were delightful small people, full of original sin; Baby Bridget proved to be ‘the *image* of Dick!’ to quote Joey; and little David was declared to beat them all by every girl in the school.

After that eventful night when they had rescued Cornelia the term had gone on fairly evenly. Cornelia had had a sharp attack of rheumatic fever as the result of lying in a damp place for many hours, but she was a tough little mortal, and had come through all right. The next event of importance had been Gisela’s wedding, which had taken place in Innsbruck. The entire school had gone down for it, and had had a remarkably good time. Then, on his mother’s birthday, David had been christened, and his christening feast had been the treat for this holiday. Finally, Wanda and Herr Hauptmann Friedel von Glück had been wedded a week ago, and were now enjoying their honeymoon at Partenkirchen in the Mittelwald.

The big event of the term, however, was the opening up of the caves, which proved to be wonderful beyond expectation. Herr von der Witt had found that the passage led right down to the first, which had the most marvellous stalactite formations, and thence to three others. In the last one were discovered relics of what must have formerly been a great city. Pavements and fragments of walls, all encrusted with lime, were there; excavations were going on, and more was being found every day. Jo was wildly excited about it all, for it proved that the legend of the lake’s origin was no legend, but a statement of fact. Experts who had come to see the place agreed that the lake must have risen quite suddenly and overwhelmed the city, though not, perhaps, quite as awfully as the old story said.

‘It’s been a full term,’ said Jo, when they at last turned away from the pram and strolled on to the chalet. ‘What with one thing and another, I think it’s been the fullest we’ve ever had.’

‘We’ve managed to crowd a good deal in,’ agreed Grizel. ‘I say! There’s the bell for *Mittagessen*! Come on!’

They hurried in to take their places at table, for there was to be a garden-party that afternoon, and no one had much time to spare. Grizel took her place as head of the junior table for the last time, and Jo went off to her own seat, where her beloved friend the little Crown Princess of Belsornia was waiting for her. Princess Elisaveta had gone to Vienna for Wanda's wedding, and then had come back to the school for the last week of the term, to wait for her dear Jo, who was to spend the summer holidays with her. She had come in to lessons, and had lived with the girls, just as she had done two terms ago when she had been one of themselves, and had delighted them all by vowing that it was a relief to be at school again. 'Hurry up, Joey!' she said now. 'We've got to dress yet, you know.'

'I should think so,' retorted Jo, with a glance at the crumpled pink frock the princess was wearing. 'You look as if you had been to bed in that cotton thing you've got on just now!'

'Well, you look as if you'd been washing the floors in yours!' returned the princess.

'More potatoes, please, Simone.'

Mrs Russell, in her old place at the head of the staff table, glanced down the room with a smile. 'How excited they all are! Just listen to Evadne screeching!'

'A good many of the others are doing their best to rival her,' laughed Miss Maynard. 'It must sound like a parrot-house to anyone passing!'

'Oh well, it's the end of term,' said Miss Carthew tolerantly. 'You've got to allow for that.'

'Oh, *I* don't mind,' Miss Maynard assured her. 'I'm so thrilled about going home once more that I don't really mind what they do to-day.'

'I also,' put in Mademoiselle. 'I know that our girls will never forget that they are of the Chalet School, and must do nothing to disgrace it, so I do not trouble if they are excited.'

'Yes; even Cornelia seems to have learned that lesson,' agreed Miss Maynard, with a glance to where that young person was sitting, much thinner than she had been, and still rather pale, but evidently very happy, and thoroughly one of them.

'I think we've all finished,' said Miss Wilson at that moment.

Madge Russell nodded, and said grace. Then the girls were dismissed to their rooms to change into their prettiest frocks and make themselves as dainty as possible. There was a great deal of chatter as they changed, for many of them would be going home with parents at the end of the afternoon, and all had much to say about holidays.

'Be sure you let us have your Florence address, Grizel,' said Gertrud upstairs in the prefects' dormitory. 'You must write to us every week, and let us know what you are doing.'

'And you must all write to *me*,' said the head-girl as she rapidly put a gloss on her short curls. 'I shall be coming to Innsbruck for Bernhilda's wedding in December, you know, so I shall hope to see most of you then.'

'And we will all come here for Madame's birthday next year,' added Rosalie, who was going home to England, where her father had obtained a living in Kent. 'We couldn't miss *that*!'

'Rather not!'

'Even Miss Carthew is coming for that, if she possibly can,' put in Mary, who was looking forward to being head-girl next term, and was wondering if she would ever be so good as any one of the four who had preceded her.

Grizel threw down her brushes and proceeded to wriggle into her frock. 'Hurry up, you people,' she said, as she emerged and began shaking its folds into place. 'We mustn't be late.'

They made haste, and presently they were all out in the flower-garden, where most of the middles were already. Madge Russell, looking at them as they wandered about, sighed to

herself. This term's outgoings would be large, and many of her own girls would have left them. The school would go on flourishing, she felt sure. They were firmly established, and she knew that the vacant places were already more than filled, for the fame of the school was spreading. But after this it would not be *her* school, as it had been. Perhaps it was as well, for her hands were full as it was, and would probably grow fuller as the years went on. Joey would have only another year at the school, for she was to go to Belsornia when she was seventeen, as lady-in-waiting to the princess. Her education would be continued there by masters and governesses with Elisaveta, but she would cease to be a schoolgirl. After that, no one knew what the future held for her. Madge hoped that her writing gifts would bring her something. That was all she would think of at present. She finished her dressing, and went down to join her girls, looking scarcely older than they did, in her dainty white frock and big shady hat. The first guests began to arrive shortly after this, and the afternoon was full and very busy.

Dick and his wife and babies were there, of course, and so were Gisela and her husband. Wanda and Friedel had come from Partenkirchen for two days, so as not to miss this event; and all the old friends were there, as well as some new ones, among whom were Herr von der Witt, highly delighted with everything and everybody; and, of all people, 'the Stuffer' and 'Maria.' They had appeared at the Tiern See two nights before, and had been invited to come to this festival day of the school's. 'The Stuffer' actually forgot to sniff once at 'foreigners,' and 'Maria' was as amiably agreeable as possible.

The girls gave a concert in the garden, and sang some of the lovely old madrigals that Mr Denny revelled in. Margia and Grizel both played, and Frieda enchanted everyone by her lovely harp solo. Joey sang two folk-songs, and, of course, they showed some of the folk-dances.

'The Stuffer' sat well to the front, and beamed benignly on them all, and Herr von der Witt was actually heard to say that it was a very pretty sight. As his two ideas in life were fresh air and geology, they all felt that this was a great compliment.

Then *Kaffee* was served, the girls acting as waitresses, and after that people began to make a move homewards. In the playing-fields, whither they had wandered, the girls clustered together for a last speech from their head-girl.

Grizel looked round them all. 'You are dears,' she began uncertainly. Then she stopped. She felt that if she went on she would break down.

Joey guessed what she was feeling, and sprang into the breech. 'Three cheers for Grizel, one of the best head-girls the school has ever had!' she yelled at the top of her voice. They were given with a vim that made those of the guests who still remained literally jump, and sent Grizel flying to a place of refuge before she should disgrace herself in front of them all by crying.

Jo found her later, looking rather red about the eyes, but very happy. 'Good for you, old thing!' she said.

Grizel looked round at the lovely lake with the huge mountains towering all round it; the flower-garden, quiet now that all the guests were gone; the chalet, where she had spent four happy years; finally at the girl who had stood by her through so much. 'It's been a good time, Joey,' she said. 'All my life I shall remember how much I owe you, and Madame, and the Chalet School.'

[The end of *The Head Girl of the Chalet School* by Elinor Mary Brent-Dyer]