

JUDY, THE GUIDE

ELINOR M. BRENT-DYER



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Title: Judy, the Guide

Date of first publication: 1928

Author: Elinor Mary Brent-Dyer (1894-1969)

Illustrator: Lilian A. Govey (1886-1974)

Date first posted: July 5, 2023

Date last updated: July 5, 2023

Faded Page eBook #20230708

This eBook was produced by: Alex White, Ruth & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <https://www.pgdpCanada.net>

JUDY, *the* GUIDE

By
ELINOR M. BRENT-DYER

Illustrated by Lilian A. Govey (1886-1974). However, illustrations have been omitted, as they are not yet in the public domain.

First published by Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd. in 1928.

To
MOLLIE COOMBS
(FOLK DANCER)

This, as a small return for all she has given me in enjoyment and the Folk spirit

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CHAPTER I

MR. BOLLAND'S PROPOSAL

"Judy! Judy! Where are you? Your godfather is come, and mother wants you indoors at once! Are you here, Judy? Do hurry up!" And Mollie Carey nearly danced in her frantic excitement.

"There's no need to hurry, that I can see," replied a voice from the loft beneath which she was standing. "He won't run away for a while yet."

As these last words were spoken, a pair of long brown legs appeared through the opening, followed by a very dilapidated blue cotton frock and an untidy black head. A moment later, and Judy had slid down the ladder, and was standing beside her sister.

A greater contrast than the two could hardly have been imagined. Mollie was a small, slender girl of sixteen, with golden hair curling round a face as sweet and fresh as a pink rosebud. With such hair and colouring one might have expected blue eyes. But the long black lashes curled up to show dark grey ones—the true Irish eyes, "put in with a smutty finger." She had dimples in her cheeks, and one in her chin. Her dress, like Judy's, was of faded blue cotton; but it was daintily put on. Her curls were well brushed, and tied back with a much-ironed piece of black ribbon; and though she wore the thick woollen stockings and stoutly-made shoes of the prairie child, the whole effect was charming and trim.

Judy, on the other hand, looked rather as though she had been dragged through a hedge backwards. She was a thin slip of a girl, all arms and legs, with a mane of wild elf locks that never looked tidy. She was burnt a deep brown with the sun, and her frocks were always getting too short, for Judy had lately taken to growing at a tremendous rate. Yet a close observer would have noticed that though her face with its tilted chin was thin, with hollow cheeks, yet the drawing of it was admirable; the wide mouth had finely-cut lips; and the deep grey eyes, at present almost too large, were lovely as Mollie's. There were possibilities in Judy of loveliness later on, though at present she was as plain as she well could be.

"How tidy you are, Mollie," she said as she reached her sister. "It's a good thing one of us looks decent! Guess you'll have to dress for us both!"

"Flum-diddle!" retorted Mollie. "Come on, and let me fix your hair. Your shoes and stockings are in our bed-chamber too."

"Guess I shan't bother," replied Judy. "God-papa can just see me as I am. There's no reason for dressing up to please him, is there?"

"Judy, you just can't go and see him like that!"

"Why not? What's the matter with me?" demanded Judy "I'm clean, amn't I?"

"Yes, fairly clean. But oh, Judy, your hair's all on end, and you're barefoot, and the hem of your frock's coming down! Do come and put on your pink one," coaxed Mollie. "It's all fresh—I ironed it yesterday."

Judy heaved a deep sigh. "I s'pose I'll have to," she said; "but I do hate shoes and stockings, Moll."

"Poor old Judy, I guess you do. Here, slip in quietly so that they don't hear us."

The two girls mounted the carpetless wooden stairs, and entered a long, narrow room which, while it was as clean as hands and soap and water could make it, had very few of the daintinesses to be seen in an English girl's bedroom. A big black iron bedstead nearly filled up

one end of the room. At the other, stood a chest of drawers with a mirror hanging over it, and an enamelled bowl and jug standing on it. A rickety table by the window held a jam jar in which some one had placed a handful of prairie grasses. The same hand had neatly hemmed the pieces of gaily coloured chintz which covered the table and the top of the drawers, and hung at the long, narrow window. There were a couple of broken-down wicker chairs; and facing the bedstead was a set of shelves, literally crammed with books of all kinds and in all conditions. One picture, a faded copy of Sir Joshua Reynolds's "Cherub Choir," hung over the bed.

When the sisters entered the room, Mollie made a dive for the bottom drawer, from which she took a much-washed pink gingham frock, while Judy wriggled out of the forlorn blue garment and washed her hands and face.

"Let me brush your hair straight," pleaded the elder girl; "and I guess I've got a ribbon to fix it. I'll just braid it to your shoulders—so—and then tie it. There, that's a mite better. Now the frock, Judy. Here are your shoes and stockings, and I'll lend you my black belt. That's a lot nicer, isn't it, little old Ju?"

Judy cast an indifferent glance at her reflection in the mirror. "Oh, it's all right," she said. "I do hate shoes and stockings, Moll. Let's hope they don't keep us long, and then I can change again. I've got a glorious book in the loft—Sadie Wilson loaned to me *The Last Days of Pompeii*—and I want to get on with it. You'd love it, Moll. You could get heaps of pictures from it."

"Mollie! Judy!" a voice called up the stairs. "Aren't you coming down at all?"

"There's mother calling," said Mollie. "Come on, Judy."

Together they came down the stairs and into the big living-room, where Mrs. Carey, an older and faded edition of lovely Mollie, sat talking to a tall, grey man who rose as the girls came in, eyeing them keenly.

"This is Judy," said her mother as the girl came over to her. "You haven't seen her since she was three, I think. Judy, this is your godfather."

Judy lifted big scared eyes to her godfather's face as she reluctantly took the slender hand he held out to her.

"How do you do, Judith?" he said in clear, beautifully-modulated tones. "You have grown very much since I saw you last. How old are you, child?"

"I am fourteen," replied Judy. "I was fourteen three weeks ago."

"Fourteen? Dear me!" he said. "Quite a big girl! I had forgotten you were as old! Well, and how do you spend your days?"

"It's vacation," said Judy shyly, as she twisted her fingers together. "I ride on Puck, my pony, and help at milking time, and read."

"So you like reading? What books do you like?"

"Judy likes most anything with a tale to it," put in Mollie, seeing that her sister was shy. "She reads more than any of us—except Denis."

"Denis? That is the boy at Oxford, is it not?" asked Mr. Bolland of Mrs. Carey.

"Yes," she said. "He won the James Murchison Scholarship, and went over last Fall. His first year is nearly ended now. I'm afraid he and Judy are the only ones who care for study," she went on. "Mollie is happiest doing housework, and Terry and Honey hate anything to do with books."

"I see," the guest nodded. "Well, god-daughter, I have brought you a gift of some books. I didn't know what you would like, so I just told the girl in the store to pick me half a dozen

good ones for a schoolgirl. They're in my grip outside at this moment."

Half a dozen new books! The slow colour flooded Judy's face, and her eyes shone like stars.

"O-o-oh!" she breathed, clasping her hands tightly together. "O-o-oh! godpapa! How kind of you!"

Mr. Bolland looked pleased at her evident delight. "Let's get 'em," he said, rising. "I guess you'll want to begin on 'em straight away, don't you? I brought a few things for the others," he went on, turning to Mrs. Carey. "There's a doll for the little girl, and some paints for the boy, and a work-basket for Mollie. I got my sister who lives with me in Toronto to pick those for me."

"It is very good of you," replied Mrs. Carey. "They will be delighted."

By this time he had brought his bag into the room, and was opening it and producing the precious parcels. A thin, flat one and a long, narrow one were put on one side; they were the paint-box and the doll. Then came a square one for Mollie, and after that, one which held the precious books. Judy could scarcely find words with which to thank him as she took them. In the Carey household there were never any spare pennies for books. The farm barely made a living for them all, and they had to do without any luxuries. What books they did own had been brought from England thirteen years before, when Mr. and Mrs. Carey had come to the golden land of Canada with their three children, Denis, Mollie, and Judy, then a baby of eleven months old, hoping to fare better than they had fared in old Ireland. But the War had come, and Mr. Carey had gone with other Canadians to fight for the Motherland; and then things hadn't gone very well since the War, and so they all went without everything but necessities. It had been a great joy to the family when Denis had won his scholarship, but it had meant plainer living than ever for the others to make it possible for him to use it. Mollie and the little ones had not troubled much, but to book-loving Judy it had been positive anguish to have only the old friends to fall back on. She could scarcely find words to thank her godfather as she opened that delightful parcel.

There were two school tales, *Winona of the Campfire*, *Anne of Green Gables*, *Rob Roy*, and *Treasure Island*. All of them were quite fresh to her, and in her rapture she caught them up in her arms and hugged them ecstatically, scarcely giving a glance to Mollie's delightful little work-basket with its dainty fittings.

Mr. Bolland watched their joy, well pleased. Then he turned to Mrs. Carey. "Can't we leave them now, and go somewhere else to discuss what I wrote you about in my last letter?" he suggested. "Can't we go and find Mr. Carey?"

"Why, certainly," replied his hostess. "He will be in the stockyard, I guess. Shall we go?"

For reply he held open the door for her, and they passed out, leaving the two girls alone. There was silence in the room after they had left, for Judy was fathoms deep in *Rob Roy*, and Mollie was fingering the little scissors, thimble, bodkin, tape-measure, and other dainty appointments of her new treasure. Presently, however, she raised her head.

"Judy," she said; but no answer came. Judy was lost to the world.

Mollie got up from her chair, and came over to her and shook her.

"Well, what do you want?" demanded the younger girl, looking up from her book impatiently.

"Judy, what do you think Mr. Bolland can want to discuss with father and mother?" asked Mollie, a little anxiously.

“I don’t know. Something about the ranch, maybe!” and Judy’s dark head went down over her book again.

Mollie left it at that; but something told her that Mr. Bolland’s business had little to do with the ranch. It was something that affected her far more closely than that. The chiming of the clock reminded her that it was time to get supper ready, since it was nearing sundown. Without disturbing her sister, she proceeded to lay the table, and prepare the corned beef and canned peaches, and to make a Johnny-cake. The sound of voices drawing near just as she had finished everything warned her that her father and mother and their guest were close at hand, so she made the strong tea without which the meal would not have been complete, and then went out to call the two little ones.

They came running to her: Terry, a handsome little lad of seven, and five-year-old Honor—or Honey, as she was more often called—golden haired, blue eyed, and rosy cheeked. Molly had just time to send them to wash their hands and faces and extract a promise from Honey that she would change her frock, and then the grown-ups were in the living-room, and her father was demanding supper.

Presently they all sat down. Terry and Honey, shy as young fawns in the presence of a stranger, scarcely spoke. These prairie children rarely saw a fresh face. They were thirty-six miles from the nearest railway; six miles from the little village where stood the school they attended in the winter months, going there on horseback as long as they could, and then driving in the sleigh when the snow came. This man from Toronto was something quite new in their experience. Mr. Bolland, who knew little about children, scarcely spoke to them after he had presented them with their parcels; but during the meal Mollie noted that he kept looking at Judy with deep interest. Her mother seemed rather paler than usual, she thought, and her father’s jokes were obviously forced.

It was not, however, till after the supper things were cleared away, and the little ones had gone outside for a last game before bed-time, that the reason of all this was told them. Then Mr. Carey called Judy to him.

“Judy, come here,” he said.

Judy came at once and stood beside him, scanning his face with bright, interested eyes.

“Judy,” he said quietly, “how would you like to go to school in England?”

Go to school in England! Judy’s face flushed and her eyes were dark with excitement, but she said nothing.

“How would you like it?” repeated her father slowly; “because your godfather is very anxious to send you, and your mother and I have agreed to let you go.”

CHAPTER II

JUDY SETS SAIL

It was early September, and already there was a sharp tang in the air. A fresh wind blew in from the sea, bringing with it the promise of a glorious day. The quay was crowded with people who had come to say good-bye to those going to Old England. On the boat there were more people. Some were chattering gaily; others stood almost silent; others, again, clung together, crying bitterly. Of these groups one was particularly noticeable. It consisted of four people—a man, obviously “city,” who looked supremely uncomfortable; another, tall and bronzed, clad in loosely-fitting grey flannels, and with eyes which looked as though they were accustomed to gazing across long distances; a pretty fair-haired girl, who wept bitterly most of the time; and a slighter, younger one, with short, curly hair and white set face. It was plain that this last was the traveller. Her attaché case, steamer rug, and long blue coat with tammy to match were signs of that. She stood, patiently enduring the tearfully affectionate hugs of the other girl, and speaking seldom.

“You *will* write often, Judy, won’t you?” gulped Mollie, for it was the day of Judy’s sailing for that new, strange life in England, and she was being seen off by her father, Mollie, and her godfather. “Oh, you *will* write every week?”

“Yes, I’ll write,” replied Judy.

“Be a good colleen,” said her father. “Don’t forget, acushla, ’tis a grand chance you are having.”

“You’ll remember to give Denis our love,” went on Mollie with a hiccup. “Oh, Judy, what are we going to do without you?”

Before any more could be said a bell sounded loudly.

“That’s a warning to us to clear,” said Mr. Bolland. “Good-bye, Judy. Remember, you’ve no need to go short of anything. My sister will meet you at Southampton, and she’ll see to your school uniform and so on. I’ve told you about your pocket-money; but remember, if you want anything extra, you are to have it. Just let me know.”

“Yes, thank you, godpapa,” replied Judy. “It’s—you’re very kind. I’ll do my best to work hard and do well. Good-bye!”

Now Mollie took possession of her. “G-g-good-bye, J-Judy d-dear,” she sobbed. “Do-on’t forget us! And d-do write!”

“Good-bye, Mollie,” replied Judy. “I’ll never forget you, and I’ll write every week. I promise it on my honour.”

Then it was her father’s turn. Gathering her into his arms, “Good-bye, Judy girl,” he murmured. “Be happy over there—that’s all we want.”

Then indeed Judy broke down.

“Daddy—Daddy!” she sobbed, clinging to him with an almost desperate grip. “Oh, Daddy!”

But just then the siren gave the final warning, and he was forced to tear himself away and follow Mr. Bolland, who was leading the sobbing Mollie down the gangway. On the quay they all three stood and watched the hawsers cast off. There was a throb and a stir throughout the great liner, almost as though she were giving herself a shake, and then she began, very slowly, to glide away to the harbour mouth. At once a great gust of melody rose as those left behind

joined in singing “Auld Lang Syne.” Gradually the boat quickened her speed, and the sound was carried away by the wind till it died. Judy Carey stood by the ship side, staring at the land till finally it too faded away, and there was nothing left but sea and sky—or so it seemed to her.

Presently she felt a touch on her arm, and turning round she saw the lady who had agreed to take charge of her during the passage.

“Yes?” she said. “Do you want me for anything?”

“Don’t you think it would be nice to come and see where the deck-steward has put our chairs?” said her guardian persuasively. “The bugle will be going for luncheon presently, and you might like to look round a bit first.”

“Thank you,” said Judy listlessly. “You’re very kind.”

She obediently turned, and walked down the deck by her companion’s side.

Mrs. Corrie looked at her charge with approval. Great changes had taken place in Judy since that summer evening at the end of June when her father had told her that she was to go to school in England. At first she had refused to believe it; and when at length they had succeeded in getting her to grasp the fact she had cried stormily. However, her parents had made up their minds that this offer of a first-rate education in England for Judy was too good to be refused, so all her tears and pleading availed her nothing. When finally she realized that go to England she must, she stopped crying, and accepted what lay before her in almost sullen silence. Mrs. Carey and Mollie had settled down to making her dainty underlinen, resolved that she should go as well provided as possible; but Judy herself could only roam about the farm, or go off for long wild gallops on Puck, her prairie pony. Then, when August was three weeks old, the big old-fashioned wooden box was packed, and Mr. Carey and Mollie took her to Toronto, where they were met by Mr. Bolland and the married sister who lived with him.

Judy had never been in a city before, and if she had not been so miserable she would have enjoyed the new experience tremendously. Even as it was, there was a certain amount of pleasure in going for rides in the street cars, and in gazing in at the windows of huge stores, such as she had never even imagined. One of the first things that had been done was the cropping of her unmanageable curls.

“She’ll never be able to keep all that hair fixed herself!” Mrs. Raymond had declared. “Besides, such a mop of hair is bad for any growing girl. Far better have it cut at once!”

So cut it was, and the Judy who now walked demurely along the deck by Mrs. Corrie’s side had a thick crop of black curls all over her head, but the long mane was gone. Her little blue velvet tam-o’-shanter, smartly-cut, shapely shoes and stockings, and new fur-lined gloves were all of Mrs. Raymond’s choosing; and so was the dainty blue serge frock with its finishing touches of muslin collar and cuffs and scarlet stitchery which she wore beneath the coat. In the suitcase marked “stateroom,” was a smart little navy serge skirt with two middy jumpers, also a finely embroidered white muslin frock which was for evening wear. Never in all her life had Judy had so many new things at once. The poor child was almost overwhelmed, and she could scarcely feel that it was Judy Carey who was walking along the deck of the liner with the fresh sea breezes ruffling the curls round her face, and stinging the healthy colour to her cheeks.

“It’s a beautiful day,” said Mrs. Corrie, who was a talkative soul. “A perfect day for your first at sea. You’ve seen our stateroom, haven’t you? Now come and look over the side. We’re making for the Grand Banks, where such a tremendous lot of the cod fishing goes on. It’s to be hoped we don’t run into a fog there! They get awful ones sometimes. It tells you all about it in *Captains Courageous*. You’ve read it, haven’t you?”

Yes, Judy had read it. Denis had sent it to her at Christmas, and she nearly knew it by heart now.

“Isn’t it a lovely book?” gushed Mrs. Corrie. “But, then, all Kipling writes is lovely!”

Judy looked at her wonderingly. The expression “lovely” had not struck her as being particularly applicable to Kipling. Mercifully, her guardian paid no attention to her, but went on prattling gaily until the bugle sounded for luncheon.

“Come along,” she said. “I expect you’re hungry, aren’t you, dear?”

“No, thank you; not very,” replied Judy politely.

How could she tell this stranger, kind though she might be, that the very thought of food was choking her. She clenched her hands fiercely in her pockets as she meekly followed Mrs. Corrie into their stateroom, where she submitted to being brushed and turned and twisted as though she were no older than Honey. As a matter of fact her halo of curls made her look barely twelve, and Mrs. Corrie was a fussy being who delighted in attending to her as a little girl delights in attending to her doll’s wants.

Lunch was, after all, very jolly. She was the youngest of the first-class passengers, and her big scared eyes and childish appearance brought her more attention in half an hour than she had hitherto received in the whole of her life. There were no other children, and people were rather inclined to make much of her in consequence. The captain, a good-hearted Scotsman, was especially drawn to the “bit bairn” as he called her. He had little daughters of his own, and the voyage was barely a day old before Judy had heard of Jeanie and Elspeth, who were thirteen and fourteen, and lived in Wallasey, and attended a big High School in Liverpool.

Mrs. Corrie, seeing that her charge was not likely to get into much mischief, settled herself comfortably with a chair and rugs, for the wind had a decided “nip” in it. Towards the evening it began to freshen, and when dinner-time came Judy found that there were several vacant places at the table.

“Not necessary to have the fiddles yet,” laughed Mrs. Corrie, as they took their places, “but I shouldn’t be surprised if we didn’t have to have them before long. You’re sure you feel quite well, Judy?”

“Yes, thank you,” replied Judy, and proceeded to make a meal which was an excellent proof of her statement. Towards the end, she suddenly remarked, “I say, why should we have fiddles ’cos it’s rough? Whatever good can they do?”

Mrs. Corrie laughed amusedly. “I forgot it wasn’t likely you would understand. They are supports which keep the dishes and plates steady on the table in bad weather. They use them if there’s a gale blowing.”

“Are we going to have a gale?” queried Judy eagerly.

“Oh, I don’t know. You must ask the captain.”

But the captain was not present at dinner, and Judy had not seen him when Mrs. Corrie came to tuck her into her berth and kiss her good-night. The strong sea air had made her drowsy, so that she fell asleep almost at once, not even waking when the stewardess came and fixed a kind of movable barrier on the side of the berth.

“That will be all right,” said Mrs. Corrie, who had followed the woman into the cabin. “Poor little thing! Let’s hope she sleeps through it. I’ll stay with her in case she wakes up and is frightened.”

“Yes, ma’am,” replied the stewardess, and then she left the cabin, while Mrs. Corrie settled herself comfortably with her book, prepared to spend the next few hours where she was.

Gradually the storm increased in violence, till Judy suddenly awoke with a cry and sat up.

“Oh, whatever is the matter? What is happening?”

“All right, dear,” said her guardian quickly. “We’re only running into the tail of a gale. We’ll soon be through it. You aren’t afraid, are you?”

“Oh no,” replied Judy with truth; for, as a matter of fact, she was more excited than anything else.

At Mrs. Corrie’s suggestion she lay down again, and watched the walls of the stateroom slant up—up—up, till it seemed as though the ship must turn upside down. But just before they reached that point she tilted the other way, and went down—down—down. Overhead, the wind shrieked like a thousand furies let loose, while heavy crashes on the deck told of seas shipped every now and then. From the next-door stateroom Judy could occasionally hear cries of terror, but she herself was far too thrilled to be frightened.

“It must be awfully wet for the sailors,” she said once.

“Oh, they’re used to it,” said Mrs. Corrie comfortably. “Besides, we’re through the worst of it now. We’ll be leaving it behind in a few hours now. You’re a splendid sailor, Judy! No trouble about your sea-legs!”

“I’ve often wondered if I should be sea-sick,” replied Judy. “I don’t remember anything about coming from Ireland—I was only a baby, you see.”

“Well, I’m very glad for your sake you are all right,” said her guardian heartily. “It would have been so wretched for you if you had been ill. As it is, you’ll be able to have a good time right through—not like those poor creatures next door!” she added, as a fresh moaning arose. “Now, it’s nearly three o’clock, and you ought to be asleep. I’m going to come to bed—or berth—myself, and we’ll have the light out.”

“I’m sure I shan’t sleep,” said Judy.

“Never mind. You can try,” replied Mrs. Corrie firmly.

Half an hour later the stewardess looked in and found them both fast asleep. She went back to the next stateroom to her patient there, thinking that it was as well some of the passengers were good sailors.

Judy slept till nearly two in the afternoon; and by that time the storm had passed, leaving behind it great grey waves which still swung the liner up and down in a way that affected several people very badly. By degrees, however, it calmed down, and when they passed Cape Clear on the fifth day out all the places at the table were once more occupied.

“You were lucky,” said one young lady enviously to Judy. “I thought I should die, I felt so ill.”

“I’m sorry,” said Judy simply. “I loved it all.”

“You’re a wonder, then,” laughed her new friend. “I shall tell my young cousin about you.”

The next day they arrived at Southampton, and Judy stepped off the ship on to English ground for the first time in her life.

CHAPTER III

NANCY—AND OTHERS

“Good-bye, Judith child. I hope you will have a good time and be very happy. Don’t forget to write and let me know how you are getting on; and send me word of the date of the first Parents’ Day when you know it, and if I can I’ll come. There—good-bye!”

Judy, abruptly kissed by a tall, grey-haired lady who reminded her very much of her godfather, gasped out a bewildered, “Yes, Aunt Sylvia!” and collapsed into the nearest seat of the carriage which had been pointed out to her by the tall, merry-faced mistress in whose charge she had just been put, and whose name she contrived to remember was Miss Carthew. She sat there while “Aunt Sylvia,” as Mrs. Burton had told her to call her, shook hands with Miss Carthew; and even when the young mistress entered the compartment, and the doors were slammed shut as the train steamed out of the station, she scarcely stirred.

She had been a week in England now, and during that week it seemed to her as though she had lived a hundred years more or less—and rather more than less.

She had been met at Southampton docks by Mrs. Burton, who had brusquely said, “I am your godfather’s sister—you may call me ‘Aunt Sylvia.’ Now, who looked after you? And then we’ll see about your luggage.”

Judy had shyly introduced Mrs. Corrie to this abrupt lady’s notice; and then, after a few minutes, she had been whisked away. From that time onwards it seemed to her that she was being whisked about the whole time. They spent the night in Southampton, and then the next day they had boarded one of the toylike trains of which Denis had written, and after various changes had arrived at Folkestone. Mrs. Burton lived in a pretty, ivy-covered house on the outskirts, and thither they were whirled in a taxi.

By this time, prairie-bred Judy had been so bewildered and worn out with all the novelties she had encountered that she was more fit for bed than anything else; and there Mrs. Burton sent her as soon as she had had a hot bath and a bowl of bread and milk. What happened after that she had no idea, for she fell asleep almost before her head touched the pillow, and slept the clock round. She woke up next morning to find herself in a small but very dainty bedroom, with the sun shining in at the open window, and the sound of the sea beating on a shingly beach not far off.

Only a week remained before she went to St. Ronan’s, the school where Mrs. Burton’s own girl had been, and there was quite a lot to do. A good dressmaker in Folkestone made the two white evening frocks, the brown velvet and the deep violet stockinet which were for ordinary evening wear, as well as the half-dozen tussore tops to be worn with the school tunic. But the tunic itself, and the school hat and the big coat, came from a London firm, so a couple of days were spent in London, and as many visits as possible to famous places were squeezed in.

“Not that it matters if you don’t see much now,” said Mrs. Burton. “I’ll bring you up in the Christmas holidays. But still you might as well see something. Now finish your cake, and then, if you don’t want anything else, we’ll see about a theatre for to-night. Ever been to a theatre?”

“I went to the Cinema in Toronto,” said Judy doubtfully. “And I’ve read lots of Shakespeare’s plays, and *Comus*, and Sheridan, and one Denis sent Daddy called *Mary Rose*.”

“Then you’ve never seen *Peter Pan*? Ah, well, that will be a joy to come.” Mrs. Burton mused for a moment, then her face cleared. “Of course, the opera! Now what are they doing to-night? *Lohengrin*. The very thing! We’ll see *Lohengrin* to-night.”

So for a blissful three hours or so Judy was swept away to Brabant of the Middle Ages on Wagner’s wonderful music.

In between all this had come walks along the Leas, glimpses of the coast of “the pleasant land of France,” shopping in Rendezvous Street, and a visit to the Pavilion. On Sunday morning they had motored in to service at the parish church, and Mrs. Burton had pointed out the frescoes which had been discovered under the whitewash on the walls. Monday had been devoted to packing and doing odds and ends; and now, here was Tuesday, and Judy had been torn once more from her moorings, and was journeying forth to the unknown waters of school.

She had got thus far in her thoughts when she suddenly woke up to the fact that some one was addressing her. “I say, d’you mind if we have that window down a bit? It’s rather stuffy in here.”

She looked at the speaker, a girl of about her own age, with a jolly face and twinkling blue eyes.

“I don’t mind at all,” she said. “Shall I fix it for you?”

The girl shook her head as she got up and proceeded to wrestle with the window. “No; it’s all right. I’ll manage, thanks awfully.”

She finally jerked it down, and dropped back into her seat. Then she turned her attention to Judy. “I say, you’re new! I saw your initials on your case—J. M. C. Do tell me! You’re not *another* Joan, are you?”

Judy opened her eyes in surprise at the agonized tones. She saw with wonder that every one was listening eagerly—Miss Carthew had vanished down the corridor into the next compartment—and with what seemed to her quite unnecessary attention.

“Oh no,” she said quietly. “My name is Judith.”

A sigh of heartfelt relief rose from her fellow-travellers.

“What a mercy!” remarked one of them—a tall, very pretty girl, rather marred by a supercilious expression. “I quite trembled when Nancy said your first initial was a J. We haven’t a Judith at all, however; you are the first.”

“You see, we’ve seven Joans already,” explained Nancy, her blue eyes twinkling more than ever. “We rather seem to run on certain names at St. Ronan’s. We’ve three Dorotheys, four Bettys, and five Peggys. We’d have had four Dorotheys, but Madge Selwyn told us that her sister’s proper name is Dorothea. We were jolly thankful, I can tell you. You’re American, aren’t you?”

“No; Canadian,” stammered Judy, who was feeling rather overwhelmed by this remarkable harangue on Christian names.

“How jolly! I hope you’ll like England. After Canada, I expect you’ll find it on the small side,” laughed Nancy, who had taken a fancy to this very shy new girl.

Judy looked at her in rather a terrified way. It was not that she was not accustomed to a big number. There had been between twenty and thirty at the little prairie school which she had attended. But these girls were so different. They were so trig and smart with their well-cut, simple clothes, silky hair, and well-kept hands; their clear, clipping speech was so different from the careless drawl to which she was accustomed; and they were all looking at her. She took refuge in silence.

The supercilious-looking girl smiled a little contemptuously. "Don't look so scared, kid," she said. "We shan't eat you!"

Then and there Judy vowed dislike for her; but she still made no answer.

"Muriel, don't be such a pig!" exclaimed Nancy, rushing to the rescue in a headlong fashion which Judy was to learn was Nancy all over. "Joyce, swop places with me, there's a gem! I want to sit next to Judith and explain things."

Joyce, a small girl with grey eyes and an attractive smile, obligingly changed seats, and Nancy sat down beside the new girl, while Muriel, with a murmured "Cheeky babe!" took up a conversation with another big girl who sat opposite to her.

"I'll just tell you who every one is," said Nancy, as she settled down; "then you won't feel quite so strange. Most of us here are Fourth Form, but Muriel is Fifth, and so is Phillis English, that big girl she's talking to. I'm Nancy Redmond, and I'm Fourth. So is Joyce Kelly. The individual with the dozen or so magazines is Joan White. That one next to Phillis is Nanciebel Trevithen, and this dumpling next to me is her sister, Fenella."

The "dumpling" uttered a howl of rage. "Nancy Redmond, I'm not a dumpling!"

"Oh, all right," said Nancy amiably. "Fat girl of Peckham, then!"

Fenella, whose plumpness was a great grief to her, glared at her tormentor.

"I'm not, Nancy Redmond! An' I'd sooner be fat than skinny, anyway!"

Involuntarily Judy laughed aloud. It was so like Honey. Nancy joined in.

"One up to you," she remarked to Fenella. "I say, Nanciebel, where have you been these hols? Fenella's got quite sharp!"

"Only at home," replied Nanciebel. "Of course, the boys were there."

"Oh, then, that accounts for it," said Nancy gravely. "Make the most of your time, Fenella! Once we get back to school you won't be able to cheek us like that, you know!"

But Fenella had already subsided; and just then, Joyce, who had been looking out of the window, announced, "Chalfont and Latimer! Here we are!"

Instantly there was a bustle as every one began to grab her belongings. Then the train stopped, and they all tumbled out. They were met by a tall, rather serious-looking young lady, who was greeted on all sides as "Miss Matthews," and whom Judy discovered later to be the games mistress. She had no time for discoveries then, however, for Nancy was pulling her towards the entrance, where Miss Carthew was waiting for them and counting them as they came.

"Fifteen—sixteen," she said cheerily. "Now where's every one else? There ought to be twenty-two of you. Joan, come along! That's seventeen. Nanciebel and Fenella, nineteen—oh, and the three Ashleys. That's right—twenty-two of you. Come along now. The wagonettes are outside, and we're late."

She swept them all out of the station and into the two big motor wagonettes which were awaiting them. Nancy grabbed Judy by the arm and hauled her into one of them, plumping her down into a seat between herself and Joan White.

"We've a three miles' drive," she announced cheerfully, "so I hope you're not as ravenous as I am. Hallo, Marjorie! Where were you? Didn't see you on the train?"

"Three doors away from you," replied Marjorie, a very pretty girl with a long brown pigtail. "I saw you and made a dive for you, but Rex was there, and he banged me in with Betty; so there I was with all the babies, worse luck!"

"How disgusting!" observed Nancy.

“Yes, it was,” agreed Marjorie fervently. “Grown-up brothers are a fearful nuisance at times! Now Rex is twenty-two he behaves as though he were his own grandfather.”

As she finished she cast a gently inquiring glance in Judy’s direction, and Nancy was quick to take the hint.

“This is a new girl from Canada. Judith—what’s the rest of your handle?” she went, on turning to Judy.

“Carey,” replied Judy shyly.

“Oh, thanks! Judith Carey, then. And this is Marjorie Jackson, the bright and particular star of the Fourth. She walks off with all the form prizes—no one else has a chance! By the way, I wonder what form you will be in?”

“How old are you?” demanded Marjorie.

“Fourteen,” faltered Judy.

“Fourteen? You don’t look it!” was Marjorie’s comment. “Well, if you’re that, you’ll probably be with us.”

“Jolly!” said Nancy ecstatically. “One more for the Fourth, so we’ll still be the biggest form!”

“Where d’you come from in Canada?” queried Marjorie in interested tones. “I’ve a cousin in British Columbia—in New Westminster. Is that anywhere near your home?”

Judy shook her head. “We live in Saskatchewan,” she said.

Marjorie cast a curious glance at her, but said no more, and the subject dropped. The others were all talking of past events and prophesying for the coming term; and Judy sat in silence, watching the beechen hedges, which were already taking on the warmer tints of autumn.

The white road stretched away to a curve in the distance, and occasionally they passed little cottages with thatched roofs and creeper-covered walls. Pleasant, smiling women stood at the doors, often with babies in their arms, and many children played in the gardens, where late roses still lingered. Once they passed some big gates of twisted ironwork, with a red-roofed lodge; and in the distance, through the trees, the little Canadian caught sight of a long grey house. Nancy, who had been carrying on an animated conversation with the others, glanced at her self-assumed charge. “That’s Wyngates,” she said. “Alice and Mary Bently live there. They come up to school every morning for lessons—Alice is Sixth Form and Mary is Fourth—and we generally go there once every term for a ‘do’ of some kind.”

Then she turned back to the others, and Judy sat silently for the last half-mile of the road. At last they came to a very high red-brick wall, and murmurs rose from the girls.

“Here we are at last, thank goodness!”

“Ouf! I’m stiff! Been travelling ever since nine o’clock this morning!”

“There’s Mrs. Sly looking out at the gates!”

“Hallo, Mrs. Sly! Here we are again, you see!”

Mrs. Sly, a buxom, capable-looking woman, waved her hand as the two wagonettes full of laughing girls turned in at the gates.

“Welcome back, young ladies!” she called. “We ’ave missed you!”

Then they left her behind, and three minutes later they stopped before a big red-brick house, built in the shape of an E. Judy learned later that St. Ronan’s was an Elizabethan manor house which Miss Wetherel, the headmistress, had bought fourteen years before and converted into a school. She had previously had a school near Hexham in Northumberland; but finding the North did not agree with her, had moved to Buckinghamshire, bringing with her thirty-six

girls of Brackenthwaite House, as it had been called. During the fourteen years she had been at St. Ronan's the school had gradually grown, till now it held more than sixty pupils. Miss Wetherel might have taken more, but she had decided that sixty-five must be her utmost limit, as she did not wish to overcrowd, neither did she want to build on to the beautiful old house, for she realized that, as it stood, it was a very gem of architecture.

She was waiting on the steps to welcome the girls, a small, stately figure, clad in soft, lustreless black silk, with a fichu of fine lace. Her snowy hair was drawn back off her face, which held a delicate suggestion of the patches and powder period. To Judy, accustomed to the youthful, somewhat dictatorial girls who taught in the prairie school, she came as an absolute revelation. It would not have surprised the little stranger if the girls had curtsied to their Head instead of giving her a handshake as she welcomed them gaily.

"Marjorie—and where is Betty? Is Sybil well, dear? And the babies? Well, Fenella, you look as though you had had a splendid holiday! Oh, Peggy, you bad child! How *could* you have your hair cut?"

"But it's so much jollier, Miss Wetherel!" expostulated the culprit. "It's a tremendous saving of time in the mornings; really it is!"

Miss Wetherel laughed, and went on with her greetings till finally she came to her new pupil.

"And this is Judy Carey," she said, in her soft, clear voice. "I'm afraid you find us all rather noisy just now. Come with me into the drawing-room for a few minutes; and—let me see—Marjorie, will you come in ten minutes' time and fetch Judy?"

"Yes, Miss Wetherel," replied Marjorie.

The headmistress took Judy's arm and drew her across the wide hall and into a big room, where a log fire burned on the open hearth and the scent of roses and lavender seemed to be everywhere. She sat down on a couch which stood near the fire and drew the girl down beside her.

"Well, little girl," she began, "I won't ask you how you like England yet. It's too soon, isn't it? But I hope you will be very happy with us. I think you will when once you have settled down. It will be very different from anything you have known, Judy; but it ought to be all the more interesting on that account."

"Yes," said Judy, as Miss Wetherel paused.

"About your form—I have had several letters from Mrs. Burton and your father; and for the present you are to be in the Fourth Form. Whether you stay there or not depends a good deal on yourself. I hope you will stay. Marjorie Jackson is head of your form, and she will give you a helping hand when you need it. By the way, who looked after you on the journey from Marylebone?"

"Nancy Redmond did," replied Judy. "She was real good to me."

Miss Wetherel nodded. "That's splendid! If you have Nancy for a friend you will be all right. Don't let her lead you into mischief, though. Now, Judy, if things get too difficult, you can always come to me; but remember, it's always best to stand upon your own feet when you can. Now here comes Marjorie. Come in, Marjorie!"

Marjorie entered, ready for tea in her blouse and skirt, with her pigtail freshly plaited.

"I have put Judy in your dormitory this term," said the headmistress. "She knows Nancy, so I expect she will be all right. You must explain dormitory rules to her, Marjorie."

"Yes, Miss Wetherel," said Marjorie.

“Now run away to tea, both of you. I expect you want it badly. I shall see you again later on, Judy.”

“Thank you, Miss Wetherel. Come, Judy!” And, Judy following, Marjorie led the way out of the room.

CHAPTER IV

THE BIRD ROOM

Once they were in the big, square entrance hall Marjorie paused and looked at her charge consideringly.

"P'raps we'd better go upstairs," she said. "You'll want to brush your hair and wash your hands and face, won't you? We'll have to buck up, though; the tea-bell will be going in three minutes!"

As she said this she caught hold of Judy's hand and pulled her across the hall, through a narrow passage, up a steep winding staircase, and so into a wide corridor, along which girls of various sizes were passing. Marjorie seemed to be a tremendous favourite. She was hailed on all sides, but she paid little attention, and drew Judy along till they stood before a door over which was a panel with the words "Bird Room" illuminated in gold on it. This door Marjory opened with a cheery "Here we are! Come in!" and they went in.

It was an exceedingly pretty room which they entered, and one quite unlike any Judy had ever seen. The walls were papered with white paper, let into black oak panels. Above these panels was a frieze with a pattern of tree branches, on which perched birds of all kinds and colours. The window curtains were of bird-patterned chintz, and the rugs on the oak floor had birds on them too. Iron rods were run across the room, dividing it into five little cubicles, and on these rods were slung white curtains, all with the same bird pattern. A bed stood in each cubicle, and by the bed was a little marble-topped bureau with a mirror hung above it. There was also a chair, and above each bed was a broad shelf of oak. The china on the bureaus and the counterpanes all bore the bird pattern, and altogether Judy thought it the prettiest room she had ever seen. Four of the cubicles were already occupied. Nancy Redmond was standing in one, brushing out her thick, honey-coloured hair; Nancibel Trevithen, in another, was arranging a vase and some photographs on her shelf; the big one near one of the windows was already neatly set in order; and a very fair slim girl sat on the fourth bed chattering eagerly to Nancy. The talk ceased as Marjory came into the room with Judy, and then Nancy darted across the floor, hairbrush in hand, long hair flying wildly round her.

"You're sleeping here?" she said. "How jolly!"

"That cubey in the corner will be yours," said Marjorie, pointing out the only unoccupied one. "No time for anything now; but after tea we'll arrange it. Give me your hat and coat, and wash your hands and brush your hair. No, Nancy, you're not nearly ready yet! I'll put Judy's things away for her. See, Judy, this is your hat-box under the bed—we all have them. Your coat hangs up in the armoire here. There are three pegs for your frocks and big coat," and she showed Judy a huge Breton armoire of carved oak. There was no time for more, for just then the tea-bell rang, and the girls all hurried from the room, leaving Marjorie to bring down the new girl. There were comparatively few rules at St. Ronan's, but punctuality was one which was insisted on. Thanks to Marjorie's kindness Judy was able to be in time at the table, where they put her between Nancy and the fair girl she had noticed in the bedroom. Marjorie took the head of the table. Almost immediately after, a tall, graceful girl, who sat at the head of a small table at the top of the room, said grace, and then they all sat down. The fair girl passed

Judy the bread-and-butter, saying with a quick smile, "I'm Swanhild^[1] Anderssen, in the Bird Room, you know. Do have some 'door-step,' won't you?"

[1] Pronounced "Svarnheel."

Judy took a piece of the thick bread-and-butter with a murmured "Thank you." Then Nancy engaged her attention with the honey.

"Have some honey? It's topping! We always have it first night, because, of course, most of us haven't unpacked any jam."

After that they allowed her to subside into silence, which was very grateful to poor, shy Judy. She was roused from her wondering as to how Swanhild could possibly spell her name by Marjorie's voice.

"Will you have some more tea, Judy? And you haven't anything to eat. Christine, pass Judy the scones, please."

Christine, a person with straight thick hair, cut like a mediæval page's, passed up the scones, and then Nancy, swallowing a mouthful of bread-and-butter, said, "What form are you in? Did the Head tell you?"

"In the Fourth, she said," replied Judy.

"With us, then," said Christine. "That makes us seventeen."

"I say, you aren't English, are you?" asked another girl, so like Christine as to be unmistakably her sister. "Where d'you come from?"

"From Canada," said Judy.

"Canada? I say, when did you come?" queried a third person whom the others addressed as Dorothy.

"The week before last. We reached Liverpool on Sunday," replied Judy.

"I say!" Dorothy was visibly excited. "Then weren't you caught in that awful storm?"

"The captain said we got the tail of it."

"But, I say, how thrilling!" gasped Nancy excitedly. "Will you tell us about it in bed?"

"Yes; but there wasn't much to tell," began Judy, when she was interrupted by Christine.

"I say, are you in the Bird Room? You lucky beggar!"

"Yes, isn't she just?" said Dorothy.

"Where are you this term, Dot?" asked Marjorie.

"The Tree Room. It's awfully jolly, of course; but the Bird Room is the prettiest of the Middle School rooms."

"They're all jolly," put in Peggy. "I'm in the Butterfly Room."

At this point the girl who had said grace before got up, and every one scrambled to her feet and stood behind her chair while the final grace was said. Then they filed out of the room in silence, which was broken as soon as they reached the hall.

"Come on upstairs and unpack your case," said Nancy, catching Judy's hand. "Matron will be too busy with the seniors to look after us yet, so it's no good going to the trunk-room."

They went upstairs, followed by Marjorie and Swanhild, who were busily discussing some plan for the new term. Occasionally Judy caught such mysterious phrases as, "Peggy Ashley for goal defence," "Must teach Maud to pass decently." But they were soon in the Bird Room, where Nancy helped her to remove and fold up her counterpane, lifting her case on to the bed.

To Judy, unaccustomed to this sort of thing, the way in which her new friend rapidly arranged the things in the little cubicle was nothing short of marvellous.

“Here’s your nighty-case and nighty in it. We’ll leave that there. Dressing-gown will go on that hook on the pole; bedroom slippers under your chair. Here are your photos. Put them on the shelf and you can arrange them afterwards. Your sponge-bag hangs here. Stick your tunic in that cupboard—that’s where we keep them,” pointing out a narrow cupboard in the wall where already four other tunics hung neatly on coat-hangers. “Put your hankies in the top drawer with your gloves and purse. That’s it! Miss Carthew will have to see these books. If they’re all right they’ll go downstairs into your locker.”

At this moment there came a tap on the door, and Nancy ceased her labours to call, “Come in!”

There entered two girls, one slim and dainty, and giving an impression of prettiness which was surprising when one came to examine her in detail, and the other, a big, rather lumpish girl, who wore glasses and a wide grin.

“Hullo, Nancy,” said this last. “We’ve come to see you. How d’you like being in the Bird Room?”

“Very much, thank you,” replied Nancy. “This is Judy Carey from Canada. Judy, these are Peggy Green and Betty Selwyn, both in our form.”

“Hallo!” said Peggy, clumping forward. “How’d you like England?”

“It is real elegant,” replied Judy.

Peggy stared, while Betty opened big, babyish blue eyes.

“She hasn’t had a chance to see much of it yet,” put in Nancy. “She only came last week. Where are you two this term?”

“In the Tree Room,” said Betty; and Judy literally jumped, for the voice that came from her would certainly have been much more suitable to Peggy.

Nancy, who noticed her, laughed.

“Did Betty startle you? Every one is surprised when they hear her speak. It seems to come from her boots, doesn’t it?”

“I want to sing when I’m grown up,” said Betty in that extraordinary voice of hers. “I don’t mind, Judy. Every one laughs when I talk.”

“Oh, we all know that you intend to be a second Clara Butt,” laughed Nancy. “You wait, Judy. She started singing lessons last term, and she practised all over the place! It was simply awful; wasn’t it, Peggy?”

Peggy nodded. “I should think it was,” she said. “Are these your photos, Judy? May we look?”

“Yes, if you like,” replied Judy shyly.

Peggy picked up the handful of precious snaps which had been taken the week before Judy left the farm.

“Is this where you live?” she asked, holding out one of the house. “It looks awfully jolly!”

“Oh! look at this!” cried Nancy. “How lovely!”

“That’s Mollie, my sister,” explained Judy shyly. “These are the two little ones, Terry and Honey.”

“What pretty names,” commented Betty as she looked at the photographs. “Are there any more?”

“Denis, my brother. He’s at Oxford, so I haven’t his photo,” replied Judy.

“Are you Irish?” queried Peggy.

“Yes. I have cousins in Ireland, I think,” replied Judy; “but father left there long ago—just after I was born. Why are you staring at me so?” she broke off, turning to Betty.

"I didn't know Americans ever said father and mother," replied Betty. "I thought they always said mamma and poppa!"

"I'm not American," returned Judy brusquely. "I'm Canadian! *That's* not American!"

She turned away as she spoke, and the others stared at her in undisguised amazement. Betty was the first to speak.

"I say, have I offended you?" she asked. "Because I honestly didn't mean to."

"Oh, it's all right," murmured Judy. But she had retired into the shell from which their interest in her belongings had drawn her for a few minutes. Presently they withdrew, leaving her alone with Nancy, who closed the now empty case in silence, and then suggested that they should go to the trunk-room and see if Matron was ready to unpack them.

The trunk-room was a small glass-roofed room behind the dining-room, and here they found Matron busily unpacking one trunk, while half a dozen girls, amongst whom Judy recognized Muriel Wilcox and her friend, Phillis English, loaded themselves with various garments from the trunk, the owner of which stood with a printed sheet of paper in her hands, reading out a list from it. "Four pairs of shoes," she read.

"And that's one pair too many, Moyra," replied Matron. "You never know where they are as it is! I hope you'll try to be a little tidier this term."

Moyra grimaced across Matron's bent head at the others before she meekly read out, "One pair of boots."

"Right! Actually everything marked this time! Now off with you all upstairs, and then I'll unpack you, Muriel, and get on with the Fourth!" and Matron waved them away as she stood up. Then she saw Nancy and Judy.

"Well, Nancy," she said, "did you have jolly holidays? And who is this?"

"Topping hols," replied Nancy. "This is Judy Carey."

"Oh yes! The new girl from Canada! Well, Judy, I hope you are a tidy person. You're Irish, too, from your name, and if you're anything like Moyra and Doreen and Bridget, I shall be in my grave before the term's over! It's well seeing they're sisters!"

Nancy laughed before she said coaxingly, "Matron darling, won't you unpack us next?"

"No, Nancy; and it's no use your trying to wheedle me into doing it, for I'm going to finish the Fifth before I touch the Fourth," replied Matron firmly. "You and Judy can stay and help to carry Muriel's things upstairs if you like. Then I may see what I can do for you."

"All right; we'll stay. You don't mind, do you, Judy?" said Nancy cheerfully.

Judy was about to say that she minded very much, but Nancy had been so kind to her she did not like to refuse, so she simply said, "Right."

A minute later Muriel came in accompanied by Phillis and two other Fifth Formers.

"These two will help to carry your things," said Matron, indicating Nancy and Judy with a sweep of her hand. "Have you got your inventory, Muriel? Begin to read it out, then."

Muriel began, and soon the three Fifth Form girls were laden with clothes.

"Two china vases. Here, Judy, take these for Muriel," ordered Matron. "You shouldn't have put them in your trunk, Muriel. It would have served you right if they had been broken."

"I'm sorry, Matron; but I thought they'd be quite safe if I packed them with my jumpers," explained Muriel.

"Well, don't do it again. Ornaments and pictures are to be brought in your cases. Now hurry up and let me finish. There are two more forms to be got through yet."

Muriel quickly finished, and then Matron ordered them off.

“Hurry up, Judy! I’ll do your trunk next,” she said. “Nancy, if you meet any more of your form, send them down to me.”

“All right, Matron,” replied Nancy. “Come on, Judy, Muriel is in the Charles II. Room.”

Judy meekly followed, bearing Muriel’s precious vases. The seniors slept on the corridor above theirs, and the Charles II. Room was at the very end of it.

“Come along, child! Hurry up!” said Muriel impatiently, as they came in. “Put those vases on the bed carefully, please.”

What happened Judy never could tell, but the vase in her left hand slipped. It missed the bed, and, before any one could catch it, crashed on the oak floor, and broke into a hundred pieces. For a moment there was silence, then Muriel, with a cry, went down on her knees and began to pick up the fragments with trembling fingers.

“My old Sèvres! I can never mend it again!”

“Oh, I am so sorry!” stammered Judy. “I don’t know how it happened—it just slipped through my fingers!”

“Careless little idiot,” said Phillis, going to her friend’s help, while one of the others took from Judy the intact vase which she had been too horrified to put down.

“I—I’m sorry,” faltered Judy again.

“Sorry?” snapped Muriel, her supercilious manner forgotten. “‘Sorry’ won’t mend it! Oh, go away, for goodness’ sake, before you break anything else!”

“Come on, Judy,” said Nancy, tugging at her sleeve. “It was an accident, and you couldn’t help it,” she went on, as they went downstairs. “Muriel’s a bit upset, of course, but she’ll be all right in a day or so. But still I can’t think how you did it,” she added.

“It slipped through my fingers!” said Judy piteously. “Oh, Nancy, what shall I do?”

“Well, don’t howl over it, anyhow!” advised Nancy. “Come on, Matey’s waiting!”

She was very kind to poor Judy; but in spite of it all—or perhaps because of it—Judy cried herself to sleep that night, with her head buried under the bedclothes so that the others should not hear.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST DAY

It was the afternoon of the next day, and Judy, with Marjorie, Nanciebel, and Nancy, was in the dormitory changing for the walk. During the morning it had rained steadily until twelve o'clock. Even though it cleared up then, the ground was so wet that it was quite obvious that there could be no netball; and after lunch Miss Wetherel had announced that the usual afternoon games would be supplanted by a walk.

Judy thought it was as well. For her the morning had been one long whirl of lessons, books, and rooms! She had got up with the others at seven, and after she was arrayed in tussore blouse and brown tunic, had been shown by Marjorie how to strip her bed and throw back her cubicle curtains. Then there had been a scurry downstairs to morning prayers, followed by breakfast, when she had sat between Muriel Wilcox and a small Third Former, Leslie Stewart by name. Muriel had been distinctly chilly in her manner, and it was a trial to learn that there would be a fortnight of this for all meals but tea unless the senior managed to be forgiving in the meanwhile. Judging by her present behaviour that was unlikely. Leslie Stewart wasn't much help either. She was a fair-haired, pretty child, with barely two ideas in her head, and a tongue that wagged unceasingly unless she was severely snubbed. What made her conversation hopelessly boring was her trick of giving irrelevant and unnecessary details about her subject.

That morning she had been full of a climbing expedition the whole family had made during the holidays, and she prattled on to no one in particular until her other next-door neighbour, Madge Selwyn, a sister of Betty, and a member of the Sixth, had brusquely told her to hold her tongue and let other people have a chance.

Deeply offended, Leslie promptly dried up, and devoted her attention to bread and honey with all her might.

When breakfast was over, there was a rush upstairs to make beds and tidy up, and Judy promptly seized upon Marjorie.

"Marjorie, can I change places at table? I—I'm next to Muriel Wilcox," she said nervously.

"Well, what's wrong with that?" demanded Marjorie, as she beat up her pillow. "Get on with your bed while you talk, child! There's never any time first thing in the morning!"

"Next to Muriel?" called Nancy from her corner. "Oh, I say, what rotten luck!"

"But why is it rotten luck?" demanded Marjorie. But as soon as Judy faltered the word "vases," she laughed. "Is *that* all? Oh, my dear, she'll have forgotten by to-morrow! Don't worry about that! And, anyway, you can't change. The Head moves us round once a fortnight, and you have to stay put till the time for changing." Then, as she saw Judy's face flush, she added, "You silly kid! you surely don't think she's going to carry it on? It was only an accident! Muriel may be an idiot, but she's not such an idiot as all that! Who's on your other side?"

"Leslie Stewart, little ass!" Nanciebel answered for her.

"She's a weird specimen to be sister to Marjorie and Jean," acknowledged the head of the dormitory. "It's to be hoped she'll get a little more sense as she gets older. She hasn't one whole idea of her own at present."

“Yes, she has,” laughed Nancy, who had finished her own cubicle and now came to help Judy with hers. “Ever seen her before a mirror?”

“No; and I don’t want to, either,” returned Marjorie disgustedly. “Finished, you people? Then let’s go down to the gym.”

In the gym they found dancing in full swing; but not the sort of dancing Judy had expected. The girls stood in two long lines down the room. The lines took hands and ran to meet each other in time to the music; then ran back. The second time they crossed over, and repeated that over again. Then they ran together in fours, joining right hands across and running round eight steps. They changed hands, running round the other way, then partners took hands and swung out till they had changed places with the next couple.

“Galopede!” exclaimed Marjorie. “Come along, Judy!” And to her own amazement Judy presently found herself dancing with the others. That she presently encountered Muriel Wilcox as she went down the line with Marjorie in no way spoilt her pleasure. She had never known anything like this, and her cheeks were flushed and her eyes shining when the music came to a stop and they all sat down, laughing and panting.

The little Canadian swung round on to Marjorie. “Marjorie! what is it? Oh, *what* is it?”

“Country dancing,” said Marjorie matter-of-factly. “Never done any before? Oh, we do heaps of it here. We’re all keen. Look! they’re going to do ‘Old Mole.’ Stay here and watch them.”

Judy watched with deep interest as the girls formed into sets of six, facing up the room instead of facing their partners. Then the dance began with such a gay, swinging tune, she longed to join in the dance. At the crossing over and “arches,” her eyes widened, and the heys brought her to her feet.

“Oh, lovely!—*lovely!*—LOVELY!” she cried. “Oh, Marjorie! Oh, it is lovely!”

Marjorie smiled as she looked at her. “I knew you’d like it. Bother!”—she broke off—“there’s the bell! Come on, we’ve got to go!”

They hurried out of the gym through the covered way, and into the hall, for school prayers. After prayers, they went to their form rooms, where Judy found herself gradually accumulating a surprisingly large pile of books, and wondering however she was going to keep up with the work. She found that in history and literature she had a far better general knowledge than the others; her geography was up to standard, and she possessed the gift of writing down her ideas in an interesting manner. But—and it was a big “but”—her French was poor; her arithmetic weak; her botany worse; and in algebra, geometry, and Latin she was far below the others. By the end of the morning she was not very sure whether to cry or not. One thing she was certain of—she would be put down in form. It was therefore a tremendous surprise when Miss Carthew said as she left the room, “Not at all bad, Judy. We shall keep you here.”

After dinner, which was slightly better than breakfast, since Madge Selwyn, who had noticed her during the morning dancing, addressed a few gracious remarks to her over Leslie’s head, they all got cushions, and lay down on the floor of the hall for three-quarters of an hour—which brings us to half-past two and the walk.

“I loathe walks,” grumbled Swanhild as she changed her shoes. “Horrid prim things in croc! Judy, have you got a partner?”

“No! Why should I?” queried Judy.

“’Cos we all have them. Be mine, will you? I know the others are engaged, so come with me this afternoon.”

"Thank you, Swanhild," said Judy gratefully. "It's real good of you."

"Oh, for that, it is nothing," replied the Norwegian girl with a slight shrug.

"Any one know who's taking us?" asked Nancy at this point.

"Yes—Carty," said Marjorie.

"That's a mercy! It might have been Mademoiselle!"

"Or Milestones," suggested Nanciebel. "I always imagine her reckoning that so many steps go to the minute."

"Tosh!" laughed Marjorie. "Are you ready, you people? Come along!"

They raced wildly down the corridor, meeting Muriel and Phillis on the way. With characteristic ill-luck, Judy cannoned right into the former, nearly upsetting the pair of them. Muriel had not yet recovered from her loss. The vases had been special treasures, left to her by a godmother, and she had brought them to school against her mother's wish.

"Leave them at home, dear," Mrs. Wilcox had urged. "I am afraid they will get broken if you take them away."

But wilful Muriel had insisted, with the result that now one of them was in pieces and the pair was spoilt. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the jerk with which she set Judy back on her feet was anything but gentle.

"Can't you even walk properly?" she flashed. "Or don't they teach you in Canada?"

Judy glared at her, too angry to think of a proper reply at the moment, and the seniors had gone by the time she had got one.

Miss Carthew was waiting for them when they reached the door; but it was the first day, so she simply said, "Lazy people! Hurry up; we've been waiting for you!"

They slipped to their places in the ranks, and then they set off down the drive and into the red road up which they had driven the afternoon before. Swanhild chattered excitedly all the way about various things until they came to a stile, over which they climbed. Then the sedate crocodile "broke," and Marjorie, Nancy, Nanciebel, and Betty Selwyn joined them.

"Are you quite dead yet with listening to Swanhild?" demanded Nancy. "Doesn't she talk?"

"I don't talk more than you do!" retorted Swanhild.

"Oh yes, you do," said Nancy cheerfully. "Well, have you said anything about Guides yet?"

"No; there hasn't been time. We've been talking about school."

"Well, Guides is school," declared Nancy ungrammatically. "Are you one, Judy? No; I s'pose you're not, or you'd be wearing your trefoil!"

Judy looked bewildered. "I don't know what you're talking about," she said.

Nanciebel came to the rescue. "We have a Girl Guide Company in the school, Judy. Most of us belong. If you aren't one already we hope you will, for it's a splendid thing. The trefoil is our badge—see!" and she unfastened the little Guide badge she wore pinning her tie and handed it to Judy.

"What does it mean?" queried Judy, as she looked wonderingly at the metal trefoil with its G.G. and motto on the scroll beneath.

"The badge, d'you mean? It means the three promises—three leaves, d'you see?"

"What are the promises?"

Nanciebel stood still. "Do you really want to know?"

"Yes; of course I do. I never heard of the Guides before!"

“But they have them in Canada,” put in Marjorie. “I know they do, because one of my sisters is married and living in Montreal, and she is a captain there.”

“We didn’t live near towns,” said Judy briefly.

“Go on! Say the promises!”

The three Guides looked at each other. Then together they said, “‘On my honour, I promise that I will do my best to do my duty to God and the King; to help other people at all times; to obey the Guide law.’”

There followed a little silence while Judy thought things over.

“What is the Guide law?” she asked finally.

“Too long to explain now,” said Marjorie; “but come after tea to our form room and we’ll tell you. I hope you’ll join, Judy. It’s a splendid thing for every one! Every girl in the United Kingdom should be a Guide!”

“There’s Carty calling,” interrupted Betty Selwyn, who, so far, had said nothing. “We’d better hurry!”

They set off at their best pace, and presently came up with the others.

“I don’t mind your pausing occasionally,” said Miss Carthew as they reached her, “but you really must not fall behind like this.”

“I’m sorry, Miss Carthew,” murmured Marjorie.

The young mistress nodded with a smile, and they went on.

“Isn’t it gorgeous?” said Nancy, with a sudden sigh of satisfaction as she looked down from the top of the rise they had just climbed on to the valley below.

“It is wonderful,” said Judy earnestly.

She was right; it was. Down in the valley itself a little stream rushed along over a stony bed. Beyond this the country rose in wood-clad hills, where the leaves were all turning colour, and the sunlight, gleaming on the reds and yellows, made them glow with mellow warmth. Here and there, from among the trees, faint blue smoke, curling up lazily to the sky, told of cottages and farmsteads. Judy looked at it, and thought of Canada’s great rolling plains, where you could see all round for miles and never a hint of man’s being there. She was very silent as they turned and came back towards school once more. The others, chattering gaily about games, left her more or less to her own thoughts. Even at tea-time, when she sat happily with the other members of the Bird Room and two or three more choice spirits, she had little to say. Nancy looked at her impatiently once or twice, but Marjorie signed to her to let the new girl alone. Only once Judy showed that she was listening to their conversation. This was when Nanciebel happened to mention first Parents’ Day.

“It’s three weeks on Saturday,” chattered the Cornish girl gaily. “Geoff is coming over from Oxford to take Fenella and me out. Didn’t you say your brother was up at Oxford, Judy? P’raps he’ll come too.”

“O-o-oh! I wonder if Denis would?” breathed Judy. “I—I guess I’ll write him to come. When did you say, Nanciebel?”

“Saturday three weeks,” replied Nanciebel. “Do ask him, Judy! Hallo! grace already.”

“Yes! Buck up and come along to the Fourth,” said Marjorie. “We’ve only twenty minutes before prep, and we must tell Judy all we can about Guides before then.”

They bucked up!

CHAPTER VI

FURTHER EXPERIENCES

In the window-seat of their form room, Marjorie, Nancy, Nanciebel, and Judy settled themselves comfortably. Then Marjorie, with a glance at her little wristlet watch, said, "Now then, Judy, you've got to pay all the attention you can, because we've barely a quarter of an hour, and there's lots to say."

"Rather! You could talk all night about Guides!" agreed Nancy. "Where'll you begin?"

"At the beginning, of course! You've heard of Boy Scouts, Judy?"

Judy nodded. "Rather! General Baden Powell began them."

"Well, Guides is the same thing—for girls. Any girl can join provided she makes the three promises and really keeps them. You don't want the first two explained—any infant could understand those! But the Guide law has ten points, and if you're a Guide you try to keep every single one of those points."

"What are they?" asked Judy.

"They're all easy," put in Nanciebel suddenly. "They're just the ordinary everyday things. Only, if you're a Guide, it helps somehow to do them."

"The first one is, 'A Guide's honour is to be trusted.' You know all about that. If you're a Guide you've simply got to play the game. If you don't, you're letting down the whole thing, and I shouldn't think any one was rotter enough to do that! Then the second is, 'A Guide is loyal.'"

"That means you haven't to be a Bolshie!" interrupted Nancy.

"It means more than that, though," added Marjorie thoughtfully. "Do you remember what Carty said about it last term?"

They nodded. "Yes; there's heaps more in it than that. But get on! We can explain it more later on," replied Nanciebel. "The next one is, 'A Guide's duty is to help others and be useful'—I mean, it's the other way about! Still, that is the law. You've got the rule, an' that's the main thing at present! I always think the next one is practically the same—'A Guide is a friend to all, and a sister to all other Guides'—like Kim, you know."

"Oh," murmured Judy uncertainly. She had not met "Kim" as yet.

"'A Guide is courteous,'" went on Marjorie; "'A Guide is a friend to animals'; 'A Guide obeys orders'; 'A Guide smiles and sings under all difficulties'—"

"Even at the dentist's!" put in Nancy the irrepressible.

"Nancy, be quiet! There isn't any time for ragging. There are only two more, Judy. 'A Guide is thrifty'; and 'A Guide is pure in thought, in word, and in deed.' That's the lot. We've a big company at St. Ronan's, for nearly every one belongs. The little ones—those under eleven—belong to the Brownies, which are the first thing of the Guides you can join—for age, I mean. Our company is forty-one. If you join we shall be forty-two, and our seven patrols will be full. Miss Carthew is captain, and Lilius Carfrae and Jean Stewart are the lieutenants. The Wise Brown Owl is Miss Somers, who looks after the babes. There's the bell for prep. You can think over what we've told you. I hope you will join. But don't do it unless you're absolutely prepared to keep the law."

With this she got up and went to her locker to collect her books for that evening's prep. The others followed her example, Nancy pulling Judy to her feet with a little shake to rouse

her from the dream into which she had fallen.

“Come on! Liliás will be here in a minute, and we’re supposed to be settled down and working when she arrives.”

Thus urged, Judy followed her to the lockers, and fished out her French grammar, geography and atlas, and the terrible blue-covered algebra.

“Your exercise books and scribbler,” Nancy jogged her memory, as she was going to her seat without them; “an’ what are you going to write with?”

Thus reminded, Judy pulled herself together and then piled up her things on the floor in imitation of the others. The vigilant Nancy kept an eye on her. It would never do for her to daydream through prep! However, before the prefect on duty that night had taken her place, Miss Davies, the music mistress, came in.

“Is Judith Carey here?” she asked, glancing round the room in search of her. “Oh yes, there you are! Get your music and come along. I want to see what you can do.”

Judy’s heart went down into her boots with a thump. At home they had had a very old and dilapidated piano on which Mrs. Carey had managed to teach her girls the notes; but little else. There was always so much to be done on the ranch. Mollie had struggled on bravely by herself; but Judy was too impatient for that. Thus, though she could sing like a lark, she could barely get through the scale of C major. Miss Davies, on discovering this, kept her for nearly an hour before she let her go, and reduced the small girl to further despair by putting her down for a short lesson every school day for the next few weeks.

“Fifteen minutes every day until Half Term ought to pull you up tremendously,” she said cheerily; “and you must do three-quarters of an hour’s practice as well. Don’t look so upset, child. You’ll find you can manage it quite easily, and you’ll soon be able to play nicely if you really work while you are at the piano. It’s no use playing scales with your fingers while your thoughts are centred on netball or the last story-book you read!”

“No, Miss Davies,” said Judy shyly; and then she was dismissed to her preparation. She put her music away in the music-locker she had been given that morning, and then went her way to the Fourth Form room once more.

She felt a little curiosity about the head girl. Chatter among the rest of the Middle School had awakened that in her. With the exception of Madge Selwyn, Judy had never seen any of the Sixth very near at hand. They had tea in their own studies, and might go for walks by themselves so long as not less than three were together. During school hours they worked for the most part in a room in the centre wing of the building, the other form rooms all being in the south wing. It was rather the fashion at St. Ronan’s to admire the prefects, and each had her own following. Especially was this the case with Liliás Carfrae and her greatest friend, Jean Stewart. Liliás had been described to Judy as “awfully clever, and splendid at running things! She’ll make a topping head girl!” Jean was the school beauty. Nancy and Marjorie were loyal followers of Liliás; Nanciebel and Swanhild declared Jean to be “absolutely It!”

“She’s so lovely!” said Nanciebel; “just like a fairy-tale princess!”

“Liliás is lovely too!” declared Nancy warmly. “She mayn’t hit you in the eye like Jean; but the more you see her the more you love her face.”

“And she’s so fine!” added Marjorie. “Jean is a howling beauty—no one in her senses would deny that—but she hasn’t one fifth as much in her as Liliás has!”

“Liliás is a dear; but Jean is sweet!” said Swanhild. “She’s so sympathetic and so gentle.”

“Liliás is sympathetic too!” protested Nancy. “She doesn’t gush over you, but she looks at you instead. I loathe being fussed over!”

“Jean doesn’t gush!” Nanciebel looked quite fierce.

Luckily Marjorie put a stop to the argument by saying, “What’s the use of talking? Let Judy alone, and let her decide it for herself!”

This exceedingly sensible view was finally agreed to, and they all settled down to discussion of something else. Judy was naturally anxious, therefore, to meet these two paragons, and she entered the form room full of pleasurable excitement.

Lilias sat at the mistress’s desk, her fair head bent over her book; but as the new girl appeared she lifted it with a smile, and Judy wondered no more at the devotion of Nancy and Marjorie.

The head girl was not lovely by any means—scarcely even pretty. With her fair hair, she possessed a pale, clear skin of the kind that never burns or freckles. She had the high cheekbones of her Highland ancestry; her nose was delicately shaped, but long; and her mouth was wide, but her eyes were wonderful. They were very dark hazel, fringed with long black lashes, and they talked far more than ever her tongue did. Of course Judy did not realize all this at once. At the time she merely thought them wonderful; but she realized it later.

Lilias listened to the little Canadian’s stammered out excuse, and then nodded.

“All right. Go and get on with your prep now,” she said; and once more buried herself in her *Wilhelm Meister*.

Judy went with her brain whirling with new ideas. It was little preparation she did that night. Nancy nudged her at intervals when she sat too long doing nothing, but the results of that night’s work were little short of deplorable. Next day Mademoiselle nearly tore her hair over the French; and Miss Henry’s remarks on the subject of algebra were worth hearing, as Swanhild observed.

Before preparation ended, the door opened and another Sixth Form girl came in. It did not need any telling that this was Jean Stewart. As Nanciebel had said, she was just like a fairy-tale princess with her flood of golden curls, violet eyes, and rose-petal skin. Judy gazed at her spellbound as she conferred gravely with Lilias. Nancy noticed it, and dug her with a sharp forefinger.

“Don’t gape with your mouth open!” she said in an agitated whisper, “and *do* get on with your prep! You’ve done simply nothing!”

Thus reminded, Judy reluctantly turned her attention to her French exercise, and for “His brother’s friend has no books” startlingly evolved “Son frère ami a non livres.” That was the last bit of French she did that night, which was, perhaps, as well. Just as she finished writing the last word the clock chimed seven, and there was an immediate stampede to put the books away and tidy up generally, while the two prefects sauntered out of the room together, chatting amiably about their German translation.

Judy was at once surrounded by her four friends.

“Well, isn’t Lilias just wonderful?” demanded Nancy, while at the same time Nanciebel said, “Don’t you think Jean’s exquisite?”

Judy wrinkled her brows in anxious thought. “You can’t compare them,” she said finally. “They are so different! I—I never saw any one like Jean before—not so lovely, I mean.”

Marjorie laughed. “I should think not! She’s unique that way, of course! But—well—Lilias grows on one!”

“Do you five intend to come to supper at all?” demanded Lilias’s voice from the doorway. “What are you thinking about? Come at once!”

They came at full speed, and once they were in the dining-room there was no chance for further conversation. Indeed, they had no chance for private talk till they were in their dormitory, and then Nancy could talk of nothing but Guides.

CHAPTER VII

THE GUIDES

Saturdays at St. Ronan's were, as Judy speedily learnt, very full days. They began with practice, letter-writing, and mending, which lasted until a quarter to eleven. Then came cocoa and biscuits, and at eleven o'clock a bell rang which sent all the Guides into the hall, while three or four unfortunates who were non-Guides, owing to either delicacy or a parent's objection, were expected to wrap up and go for a walk with Violet Williamson, a Sixth Form girl whose uncle-guardian was old-fashioned, and declared that Guides were just an excuse for hoydenish behaviour in girls.

Poor Violet had raged against this dictum, but all in vain. The rules are strict, and since her guardian refused his consent, she could not join as long as she was under age. She consoled herself by learning all she could of the work, and by vowing that as soon as she was twenty-one she would be a Guide, come what might.

The others were Joan Whittaker, a very delicate child who needed constant care, and was debarred from most things in consequence; May Harris and Edith Kynaston, whose parents refused permission till they were a little older; and two First Form people, one of whom was given to running temperatures on the smallest provocation, while the other was May Harris's little sister, Isabel.

The two new girls, Judy and a child in the Third Form, Nance Verdeley, were both anxious to join. Nance had come armed with her parents' permission; and Judy had already written to Mrs. Burton, who was to act as her guardian while she was in England, and was waiting anxiously for the reply. In the meantime she was to be allowed to look on; and Miss Carthew, who was the captain, had said that she hoped that next week would find Judy working for her Tenderfoot.

She came swinging into the hall now, very trim and workman-like in her uniform, followed by Liliás Carfrae and Jean Stewart, who acted as her lieutenants. The Brownies had vanished with Miss Somers, their Brown Owl, and Madge Selwyn, who was training for Tawny Owl.

The girls had been scrambling about, pulling each other's jumpers down, making sure that their badges were straight, their belts "in the middle," their plaits—those who had long hair—quite neat. Nancy Redmond was agitatedly retying the bow which adorned her pigtail, and pathetically inquiring if she had hidden the split in the ribbon. Then there came a long blast on the whistle; and at once every girl ceased what she was doing and stood at attention, eyes fixed on the captain. She blew a series of short, sharp blasts, and the girls promptly fell into lines in their patrols.

Judy had been at school for five days now, so she recognized in the leaders of the seven patrols five of the Fifth and two of the Fourth—Marjorie Jackson and a very quiet girl, Dorothy Thompson, who, so far, had made very little impression on the small Canadian.

Miss Carthew stepped back and appeared to be conferring with her lieutenants, while the patrol leaders marked the members of their patrols "present" and collected company funds.

Judy watched with big, interested eyes. At the upper end of the hall, in stands set before the dais where the Head stood for prayers, were the two flagstaves with their flags—the King's Colours to the right, Company Colours to the left. Somehow these made the Guides seem a

much more solemn affair to Judy. Before, it had seemed to her a kind of school club. Now, she realized how very much more it was.

Then the patrol leaders came quickly to their places in front of their patrols, and each leader in turn handed in her register and her money, saluting smartly as she did so.

As soon as this was over the patrols faced up to the colours, and while Liliias checked the money and put it away, Miss Carthew, followed by Jean Stewart, held inspection. Now Judy saw why every one had been so particular to have her uniform “just so,” her hair tidy, her badge clean.

“Guides make you keep neat,” she thought dreamily. “Mollie would make a good Guide.”

Nance nudged her at this point. “Aren’t you *aching* to be a Guide?” she whispered. “I am. I’m going to work ever so hard at my knots, and signs, and how the Union Jack is made!”

Judy nodded. “Yes, I want to join,” she replied.

This little conversation had caused her to miss what came next, and she was fully awakened to her surroundings only when she heard a march thumped out on the piano by Jean, who laid no claims to being a musical genius, but who could keep time and played rhythmically so long as she was required to do nothing complicated in the matter of reading music.

The Guides marched with a swing and a precision that did credit to Miss Matthews’ training in gym. They divided and came up the centre in twos—fours—eights. They gradually returned to their single file, and proceeded to perform some mysterious winding evolutions. Finally, they marched to fresh positions and stood at attention.

Drill followed, brisk and smart. Then came dismissal, and they broke up and went to various corners of the room in their patrols, where they soon became busy putting up various decorations. Marjorie Jackson, glancing up, caught Judy’s longing glance, and came over to her—Nance had slipped away to the other end of the room.

“Care to come and see?” suggested the patrol leader. “You can.”

Judy nodded breathlessly, and followed Marjorie over to the corner where the Daffodil Patrol were busily arranging their treasures.

In the middle of the triangle formed by the joining of the two walls was hung a large photograph of Princess Mary in her uniform. Beneath that was a beautifully illuminated scroll, bearing Shakespeare’s words:

“Daffodils,
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty.”

On either wall was hung a long, narrow panel with daffodils painted on them—Marjorie was artistic, and had ideas of becoming an artist—and beneath, on a little dark green stand, was a tall vase with artificial daffodils in it.

“We have real flowers as long as they last,” explained Nanciebel, who was Marjorie’s second, “but you can’t get them in September, so we have to manage with these instead. Look at these snaps—Jean Stewart took them last term when we were camping. Aren’t they jolly? That’s Nancy making Irish stew. That other is us ready for swimming in the river.”

“This is our patrol collection of pressed flowers,” put in Ingrid^[2] Anderssen, Swanhild’s younger sister. “Aren’t they decent? We each got twenty, so there’s a hundred. We want to get some more if we can. It would be topping to have *two* hundred!”

[2] Ingree.

“Fancy knowing two hundred wild flowers! It would be one up to us!” added Nancy.

“Awfully useful, too, for we could pass them round among the others.”

“Here’s Madam!” exclaimed Marjorie suddenly, and the Guides came smartly to attention on the word.

Miss Carthew smiled at Judy as she examined the corner, and gave the leader a word of commendation on the scroll which was new this term.

“It was Nanciebel’s idea,” said Marjorie, “and I loved doing it.”

“I’m sure you did! It looks very well. Full marks, I think,” as she turned to Jean, who was entering the marks.

Then she went on to see what the Skylarks had done, and the patrol devoted itself to showing the prized flower sheets to Judy.

She was still gazing at them when the whistle called them together again, and they were marched out to the playing field, where team races took place for fifteen minutes. After that, they marched back, and squatted on the floor while Miss Carthew spoke about badge-work for the term, and found out who wanted to do what. The very names of the badges fascinated Judy.

Basket-worker’s! Nancy Redmond wanted to take Basket-worker’s, and so did several other people. Then Marjorie Stewart, sister of Jean and Aileen, wanted Interpreter’s; and Thekla^[3] Anderssen thought she would like her Boatswain’s.

[3] Tekla.

“You can’t work for Boatswain’s this term, Thekla,” objected Miss Carthew. “At least, you certainly can’t so far as actual boat-work and swimming are concerned. You can do your knots and the Turk’s head, and learn to box the compass and name the flags of the nations—but that’s all theoretical. Your practical work can’t be touched until the summer. I should work at something else this term, I think.”

“Yes, Madam,” agreed Thekla meekly.

Most of the others were not nearly so ambitious. Several people plumped for Needlewoman’s badge, and a good many wanted Athlete’s. Two people mentioned Artist’s; and Betty Selwyn asked permission to try for Chorister’s—at which naughty Nancy pretended to swoon.

The quiet Dorothy Thompson said she would like to try for Cook’s; but she was the only girl who seemed to have any ambitions in this line. The Primroses asked if they might try for Hostess’s badge.

“Very well,” said the captain. “And I should like some of you to try for Entertainer’s. Now, is that all?”

Nobody seemed to have any further suggestions to make.

“Good! Then——” She blew the blast on the whistle and gave the command to fall in.

The short, impressive dismissal seemed to Judy a most fitting ending to the whole affair. Then they were all sent off upstairs to change into their afternoon frocks before dinner.

“Well, what d’you think of it?” demanded Nancy, as they reached the sanctuary of the Bird Room.

Judy paused a moment before answering. The other four waited eagerly to hear what she had to say.

“I like it,” she said at length, with great deliberation. “It’s—it’s so big.”

“Good!” said Marjorie. “That just exactly describes it, Judy! I’m glad you feel that way about it. It *is* big!”

“I wonder who’ll train you,” mused Nancy, as she shook out her hair preparatory to brushing it and tying it loosely back in two tails.

“Goodness knows!” replied Nanciebel. “Anyway, I hope you’re in our patrol. The Wrens have a vacancy too!”

“The Wrens? Isn’t that——”

“Phillis English is patrol leader,” said Marjorie. “I don’t think you need worry, Judy. Phillis has mainly very young Guides, and Madam never makes wild experiments. She sees a lot of what’s going on, too,” she added, as she finished adjusting her collar.

“And there’s the first gong! Come on, *mes amies*! We’re all going to be late, and the Bird Room will be one down if we are!”

And with this Nancy fled helter-skelter from the room, followed by the others.

CHAPTER VIII

PARENTS' DAY

Monday morning brought the longed-for permission from Mrs. Burton, and Judy was installed as a worker for her Tenderfoot.

Marjorie Jackson, who was working for her First Class badge, was given the training of her, and she declared that she couldn't have had any one easier. Judy was so keen, that she spent all her free time on Guide work, and by the end of the week she could tie seven knots, knew the signs and the signals, and was word perfect in the Guide law.

"She's going to make a jolly good Guide," declared Marjorie to the rest of her patrol. "I do hope we get her finally."

"So do I," agreed Nanciebel. "I don't think we need worry much either. Carty doesn't go round with her eyes shut, and the way Muriel Wilcox and her set are treating Judy is utterly disgusting."

"I can't understand it," said Marjorie, knitting her brows perplexedly. "*Why* is Muriel behaving so idiotically?"

"Goodness knows! She can't be sulking yet about that vase. After all, it was an accident! Judy didn't do it on purpose!"

"Well, it beats me completely!"

They left the subject after that. But Nancy had got nearer the mark than she imagined. It *was* the broken vase which was at the bottom of Muriel's dislike. She had written home about it, and had received from her father a letter which pointed out that the breakage was her own fault in the first place, as it could not have occurred if she had left the things at home.

Mr. Wilcox had not minced matters. He considered that his only child was spoilt and wilful; but he seldom interfered with his wife's training. When he did, however, he did so to some purpose.

Muriel was indignant about this letter, and Judy came in for a good deal of her indignation. It was very unfair, and the elder girl knew it, and felt secretly ashamed of herself; but her anger was still alive, and she gave rein to it. Judy, on her side, made no attempt to be conciliatory. As a matter of fact she showed herself distinctly hostile, and things were rather at an impasse between them. Marjorie said nothing, though she intended to scold Judy about it later if she didn't change her attitude. At the same time she admitted that Muriel was the most to blame, since she was the elder; and her behaviour was most un-Guidelike. Things were in this state when the first Saturday in October brought round Parents' Day.

Parents' Day was always a great day at St. Ronan's. The lucky people who had relatives to come and take them out for the afternoon used to count the days until the Saturday, and then there were thrills all round. Most of the girls were fortunate that way—even Lilius Carfrae and the Stewarts, whose homes were in the Highlands. Lilius had a great-aunt of whom she was frankly nervous, for she was a countess, and had great ideas as to the behaviour proper to young ladies. But even Lady St. German's pronouncements were considered worth enduring when it was a question of a day in Harrow, with lunch at the best hotel, and tea at the tuckshop, and unlimited chocolates, besides a large tip.

The Stewarts' second brother was at Oxford, and he generally managed to come along and take them out. He was in his fourth year at Magdalen, and was expected to do brilliant things.

Judy wondered, rather wistfully, if people expected Denis to do brilliant things. She had heard Leslie Stewart talking about Jock with bated breath, and even Marjorie, who was a very important person in the Fifth, seemed to stand in a wholesome awe of him.

In the Bird Room every one was expecting a visitor except Swanhild Anderssen. She sat on her bed in direct defiance of one of Matron's most stringent rules, and bitterly bewailed her hard fate.

"It's rotten luck!" she said vindictively. "I do think father might send Trygve^[4] to Oxford instead of Copenhagen!"

[4] Trigva.

"It is hard luck!" agreed Nancy sympathetically "I wish you could come with us!"

"No use! Miss Wetherel's an old dear, but she does stick to that rule," said Nanciebel, as she put an extra gloss on to her hair. "Otherwise, you could have come with us. Geoff wouldn't have minded a bit."

"Your brother's coming too, isn't he, Judy?" asked Marjorie.

Judy nodded happily. "Yes. It—it's bully, isn't it?"

"Topping!" agreed Nancy. "Are you all ready? Come on, then! Judy, I'll race you to the hall!"

Off they went at full speed, and nearly fell over Mademoiselle half-way down the stairs. Judy missed her by what looked like a miracle, and they both had to pull up to apologize. Luckily she was a kindly little woman, and she laughed their apologies away, and sent them off with a smiling admonition to look where they were going.

In the hall they were joined by Madge Selwyn and big Thekla Anderssen, to whom Swanhild at once unburdened herself of her grievance over their brother's university. Thekla listened and laughed.

"It *is* hard lines!" she admitted. "Why not suggest that father sends Trygve over here next year when he has finished at Copenhagen? You might mention it in your next letter."

"I wish he would," sighed Swanhild.

Just then Muriel came in, looking prettier than usual in her red silky frock. "Oh, Madge, your mother has come," she said. "Betty and Dorothea are with her in the drawing-room, and the Head asked me to tell you to hurry up."

"Thanks very much," replied Madge, getting up from her seat by the fire and swinging out of the hall with the strong, very-sure-of-herself swing that was characteristic of all the elder girls at St. Ronan's. She turned at the door to say, "Miss Carthew is calling people with no visitors, Thekla."

"Thank you for nothing!" laughed Thekla. "Come, Swanhild, I expect it's time to get ready for the walk."

The two Norwegian girls left the room, and Marjorie and Nanciebel strolled over to one of the windows, where they stood looking out, while Nancy wandered restlessly from place to place.

"Don't you want to watch for your brother, Judy?" she queried at length of her friend, who was standing gazing dreamily into the fire.

Muriel, who had been rearranging the chrysanthemums which stood in a big jar in one corner of the room, looked up.

"Oh yes!" she said. "I *had* heard that St. Ronan's was to be honoured by a visit from a cowboy to-day. Will he come by train? Or will he come galloping up on his untamed

mustang? We'd better put all the china out of the way first!"

Nancy, Marjorie, and Nanciebel all stared at her with open mouths, and Judy swung round with flaming cheeks.

"I guess my brother's as good as the next!" she cried breathlessly. "He's better than yours, anyway, Muriel Wilcox!"

Muriel raised her eyebrows, and gave an aggravating little laugh. "What charming manners Canadians appear to cultivate!" she drawled.

"Well, they're about on a par with your English ones!" said Marjorie crisply, before Judy could speak. "Don't answer her, Judy! 'Tisn't worth it!"

"Here they are!" shrieked Nanciebel at this juncture. "There's Geoff! And that must be *your* brother, Judy! Come on!"

Muriel was forgotten at once. The pair raced madly to the door, almost jamming each other in their haste, and were out on the steps almost before the others could draw breath.

Nanciebel flung her arms round the neck of a tall young man, very like herself in appearance, and hugged him ecstatically, exclaiming, "Hallo, Geoff! You are a gem to come!"

"Hallo, kid!" he responded. "Steady the Buffs! Where's the kidlet?"

"Coming," replied Nanciebel, relaxing her grip. "She'll be here in a minute."

Meanwhile the two Canadians greeted each other much more soberly. To tell the truth, both were a little shy. Judy could scarcely believe that this elegant creature with the smooth hair, and the latest thing in tweeds, and the "Oxford" voice was hobbledehoy Denis of eighteen months before. Denis, on his side, could not connect Judy of the elf locks and torn dresses with the dainty schoolgirl who stood looking up at him in a half-scared manner. He kissed her gravely, and asked if she were well.

"Quite well, thank you," replied Judy sedately.

"I was sorry not to get over to see you before," he went on, "but I had a tutoring job and couldn't leave it."

"Never mind," said his sister quickly; "you've come to-day."

There was a little pause, during which they continued to inspect each other. It was broken by Fenella, who suddenly appeared on the scene, and welcomed her brother vociferously.

"Geoff, you look *awf'ly* decent! Where will you take us?"

Before he could reply, Nanciebel pulled him round. "Geoff, this is my Canadian friend, Judy Carey."

"Welcome to England," remarked Geoff, bowing ceremoniously. "I've heard of you, of course."

"Thank you," said Judy shyly. She knew that she ought to introduce Denis to Nanciebel and Fenella, but she felt too frightened. Luckily Geoff Trevithen came to the rescue.

"These are my sisters, Carey—Nanciebel, and Fenella, better known as Stodge!"

"Pig you are, Geoff!" pouted Fenella.

"Merely truthful, my babe. Now dash along and get leave from your Beak to depart."

"Come on, Judy," said Nanciebel.

They hurried off to find Miss Carthew, who was on duty, and readily received permission. Then they tore back, and soon the five were walking decorously down the drive. At the gates they parted, for the Trevithens were going into Rickmansworth to walk through Moor Park, once the property of the Duke of Monmouth, and have tea at the Red Spider. The Careys were bound for Chalfont St. Giles and Milton's cottage, Judy having begged Denis in her last letter to take her there.

It was five miles away from St. Ronan's, and they had never been there yet. Judy, who had read *Paradise Lost* during the previous winter, was aching to see the famous little building—now the only one of Milton's houses left standing. Both the Careys were good walkers, and they set off at a brisk, swinging pace along the red road with its bordering beechen hedges, now showing all the glorious scarlet and gold of autumn's livery.

"Where can we get tea?" asked Denis presently, when he had heard all the home news.

"At Jordan's," replied Judy. "It's the dearest wee place—Jordan's. The Friends' Meeting House where William Penn—Pennsylvania Penn—used to go is there. There's a hostel, and they give you tea and cakes and scones. Nancy Redmond told me all about it and showed me the photos."

"Sounds decent," commented her brother. "Is it near Chalfont St. Giles?"

"'Bout two miles farther on."

"Two *miles*! My dear kid, we can't do it! It'll get dark fairly early these days, and it's cold too. Isn't there some sort of teashop in the village?"

"Oh, I guess so," said Judy easily. "Denis, can I come to Oxford for Half Term?"

Denis shook his head. "'Fraid not, kiddy! I couldn't be responsible for you, and you couldn't room anywhere on your own."

"I thought you'd say 'no,'" sighed his sister.

"Then why ask?"

"Well, you might! Oh, look! there's the village!"

Chalfont St. Giles is not ideal. It straggles along on either side of the road, and much of it has been rebuilt in the modern style. Behind it stands the church, where they still show holes in the masonry which are relics of the Civil War. Just out of the village stands the little old house where John Milton, in the lean years which fell on him after the Restoration, conceived and wrote the greater part of *Paradise Regained*.

A long, low house it is, with diamond-paned windows and deep-thatched roof. In front lies the garden where the blind poet spent much of his time during those days of 1665 when England was ravaged by the Plague. In the summer time it is filled with the sweet, old-fashioned flowers he must have loved—roses, lilies, larkspurs, phloxes, pinks, pansies, love-in-a-mist, and many others; but at this season of the year it was bare and brown.

Denis opened the little wicket gate, and Judy ran in. She had a breathless, awed feeling as she did so. Milton's feet must often have trodden the little narrow path. She could picture him in his high-crowned hat, his snuff-coloured breeches and black cloak, his stout, buckled shoon, and his stern, beautiful face with the white hair falling on either side of it. One of his pretty daughters was with him, gay in her scarlet hood and cloak, worn fearlessly since he could not see them. She was leading him from the door——

"Judy, wake up! Do you want to go in? That's the second time I've asked you! What on earth are you dreaming over?"

Judy came back to the twentieth century with a start, and realized that Denis was wanting to know if she wished to see only the outside of the little house.

"S-sorry!" she said half-ashamedly. "I—I——"

"Was centuries back, I should think," retorted Denis. "Come on if you're coming."

They knocked at the door, and received a cordial welcome from the caretaker, who took them into the living-room with its wide-open hearth, arranged just as it must have been three hundred and sixty years ago—its heavy table at which Milton is supposed to have sat; his

chairs; the old ornaments; and, best of all, the cases where the earliest editions of his works are kept.

How Judy revelled in it all. Denis had literally to drag her away from the place. He squandered half a crown on post cards and photographs for her; and since she was so interested in the copy of the blind poet's lease, he bought one for her.

They tea-ed in the village, and then had a peep at the church before they set off on the homeward road. By this time Judy had wakened up once more, and she was eagerly explaining to her brother about the Guides when they turned into the long, winding road which led to St. Ronan's. Half-way along it they came up with Muriel and a dark, pretty woman, who was obviously her mother.

Seeing Judy's glance at Muriel, Denis raised his cap and they passed on. But not before Judy had heard Mrs. Wilcox ask, "Who is that, dear? One of the new girls?" and Muriel's reply, "Yes; these are the Canadian aborigines seeing life."

The child's face flamed; but Denis, who had also overheard her, laughed.

"Is that one of your girls, Judy? What a little ass!"

"It's a shame!" burst out Judy. "She's a pig!"

"Oh, pooh! Keep your hair on!" he replied easily.

Judy left it at that; but when they were saying good-bye she suddenly hugged him fiercely.

"You're a lot nicer than any horrid English boy!" she said. "I'm glad we're Canadians!"

CHAPTER IX

JUDY IS ENROLLED

The days passed very quickly during the next week. Miss Wetherel had rather wondered whether seeing Denis would make Judy very homesick. She had guessed that, at times, the little Canadian wanted her home people very badly. She said nothing, of course; she knew better. But she kept watch as far as a Head may, and she was glad to see that Judy seemed to be fairly happy at St. Ronan's.

As a matter of fact Judy was in such a whirl of happenings from morning till night there was very little time for her to fret. She had to work hard at French and maths in order to keep up with her form—and she had no idea of being left behind! Miss Davies had kept her word about the music lessons, and insisted on the three-quarters of an hour's practice being done with the utmost regularity. In between times was Guide work, which was pretty strenuous. Any other spare time was filled in with country dancing, to which Judy took like a duck to water.

Naturally light and well-balanced, she quickly learnt to poise herself easily and well. The swinging rhythm of the dances appealed to her tremendously, and she had a good memory and grasped the steps quickly. She was very eager to begin Morris; but for this term Miss Matthews insisted that she should stick to country.

As the days flew past, and Saturday came nearer, she found herself looking forward to it with a quivering impatience. She had passed her Tenderfoot with flying colours, and Marjorie was very proud of her. When Friday night came, she found that the hymn list had been altered, and instead of "Round me falls the night," the hymn set for that evening, they sang "Fight the good fight."

"Why?" she asked Nancy a propos of this.

"'Cos it's one of the soldier hymns," explained Nancy. "There are just a few we always have for enrolments and before confirmation. 'Fight the good fight' is one, and a topping one, I think. Look! in the morning we're going to have 'God of our fathers.' Miss Wetherel says that it's what we ought always to have on occasions like these." She finished with an unusual gravity in her voice.

Judy nodded slowly. "I see. It's really good of Miss Wetherel to do it, isn't it? She's not a Guide herself."

"No; but it's part of the school," replied Nancy. "She's bound to take an interest in it that way, you see."

Judy's thoughts went back to the only other school she had known so far—that prairie school which she had so hated. The young, somewhat self-satisfied girls who had taught in it, "living round" among the people in the district, had taken no interest in anything outside of school work. She was too young to realize that after struggling all day with thirty or forty children whose ages ranged from four to sixteen, and attempting to teach a little of most subjects, the teachers were generally too weary for anything but rest and relaxation at nights. The Canadian system saves in expenditure, but it is a tremendous strain on the teacher. Nancy, having no idea what Judy was considering so deeply, grew impatient at her silence, and tugged her arm.

“Come on, Carty will be coming to the Common Room in a minute to talk. She always does before enrolment. Let’s dash along and bag seats.”

Judy followed her friend to the Common Room, where a big fire burned on the open hearth. October had turned very chilly, and Miss Wetherel, herself quick to feel the cold, had ordered the fires to be lighted, early in the term as it was.

Most of the Fourth and the Third were crowded round the hearth, sitting on the long chintz-covered mattresses the Head had provided for the purpose. One or two of the elder ones were seated in wicker chairs, as became the dignity of people who were fifteen years or more in age, and the best chair of all was placed in the middle of the semicircle, ready for Miss Carthew.

“Shove up, there!” remarked Nancy to Fenella Trevithen and Celia Dacre, who were planted immediately in front of Marjorie. “Come on, Judy; here you are! Mind if we use you as a prop, Marjorie?”

“Not so long as you don’t lean too heavily against me,” said Marjorie cautiously. “I’ll kick you if I’m getting cramp or anything, though.”

“Jolly kind and thoughtful of you! Fenella, I hope I’m not crowding you?”

“Why?” demanded Fenella suspiciously.

“Well, you see, when a person takes up the room of *two* people it’s rather bad luck on her when some one else crowds in,” explained Nancy with a grin.

Poor Fenella crimsoned at this jibe. “You *do* think you’re funny, Nancy Redmond!” she flung at her tormentor. “You’re a perfect scrag yourself!”

Nancy chuckled. “Yes; aren’t I? Shriek if my joints stick into you.”

Fenella gave it up as a bad job, and shuffled nearer Celia Dacre and farther away from Nancy, who smiled seraphically and resettled herself. There was a sound of quick, light footsteps, and then the door opened, and Miss Carthew in her pretty blue evening frock came in.

“Come and talk to us, Miss Carthew,” said Marjorie, getting to her feet with some difficulty, since she was rather hemmed in by Judy and Nancy. “We’ve got your chair here for you.”

Miss Carthew smiled as she came forward. “Sit down, Marjorie. I can see that you will be tripping up over Judy and Nancy if you don’t. Sure you want me, girls?”

“Rather!” came a quick chorus.

The Guide captain came forward and took her seat. “What shall we talk about?” she asked.

“Guides, please,” was the quick answer.

“Tell us a yarn, Miss Carthew,” begged Nancy.

“Yes, I think I will.” The mistress paused and looked round the circle of fresh English faces. “You’ve all heard of Sir Walter Raleigh, I know,” she went on. “If I asked you who he was you would all tell me about the act of gallantry which gained him a place at the Court of Elizabeth; of his bringing tobacco to England; his imprisonment under the first James—‘the wisest fool in Christendom’; and his death. But I wonder how many of you realize that it was his labours which helped very largely to lay the foundation stone of our Empire?”

“He founded Virginia,” said Nanciebel doubtfully.

“Yes, he did that. And what I want to talk about now is the founding of Virginia. It was not done easily; no great work is! And it cost its founders life and liberty. But it still stands; as Raleigh stands an adventurer for loyalty’s sake. And *what* an adventurer he was, this dark-faced man, with jewels in his ears and a pearl band round his hat, and the spirit of a dreamer

who was yet a doer shining in his sea-blue eyes! Drake was a sailor, pure and simple—a gallant sea captain who loved nothing better than roving. Grenville, Frobisher, Hawkins, Gilbert, Howard of Effingham—all the names which have come down to us from ‘the spacious days of great Elizabeth’—they are, with that one exception, the names of seamen patriots. But Raleigh was greater than that. He was a seaman who was a statesman, an historian, a poet, in addition to being a soldier and an explorer, as all the others were.

“Spain, in her arrogance, claimed the waters of the Southern Atlantic as hers. France claimed what is now Canada.” She flashed a quick smile at Judy, sitting absorbed in her story. “Englishmen hated to think of little England being left out of the count. So Frobisher and Gilbert and Hawkins tried to discover the north-west passage to India, not knowing that there could be no such thing, since the seas are icebound almost continuously. Drake and Grenville roved the so-called ‘Spanish Main,’ and played the pirate with much grace and much profit to Elizabeth. Raleigh, forbidden by the imperious queen to follow their example, had to content himself at home for the time being, and could only send ships and men to the chase—he might not go himself.

“In 1584 he got the queen to give him a Royal Charter—the very first of the kind ever issued—and, armed with this, he sent an expedition to found a colony on the eastern shores of North America. This colony, which was to be named Virginia in honour of the Virgin Queen, was begun by a very small number, but on the following year Grenville sailed for it with more men; so that the colony of Virginia was finally established by nearly a hundred of all classes under Ralph Lane. There were gentlemen clad in buff skin boots and jerkins, with rings on their hands and jewels in their ears; there were one or two soldier adventurers, ‘quick in quarrel, and full of strange oaths’; there were sturdy yeomen farmers, slow-thinking, obstinate peasants. No one was allowed to join who was not prepared for hard work, and in this new land, with its good climate, rich soil, and enormous areas of country, they found that work would repay them.

“Then some petty trouble stirred up the Indians against them; the harvest was left ungathered, or was fired by the revengeful Red men; the food ran short, and the colony was faced with starvation.

“Then, one day, one of the look-outs by the shore gave a shout. Three ships flying the lion flag of England had been sighted on the horizon, and before very long Frankie Drake had landed. He took off the colonists and sailed away with them for England, and three days later Grenville arrived with ships and stores, to find the Englishmen gone.

“However, they had no idea of giving up the colony so tamely, and fifteen men volunteered to remain. They were landed on Roanoke, a tiny island off the coast of Virginia, and there was England’s first foreign territory held secure. These fifteen lonely men stood for the outposts of the British Empire.

“We can imagine them, day after day, tilling the ground, harvesting their crops, fishing in the near waters. And always with one of them to act as sentry against the anger of the Red men.

“What happened—what was the end of that noble little group of pioneers—we don’t know. When, in the following year, Raleigh sent out a fresh expedition they had vanished. Their wooden huts stood empty, their fields were untended, their matchlocks had vanished, and there was nothing to tell the leaders of the new expedition what had been their fate. We can only think that the Indians had somehow surprised them and slain them—perhaps with tortures to see if the hated Palefaces would show themselves men, to endure pain without

crying out. Whatever it was, these fifteen unknown heroes laid down their lives for their country's work.

"Raleigh sent other expeditions, and finally had the triumph of knowing that his work had not been in vain, and that Virginia was indeed an English colony. But the tragic expedition to Roanoke island did its work.

"Now, Guides, those men have a message for us! It is this: 'Hold on in difficulties, and don't whine.' *They didn't!* Now it is nearly time for supper, and I must go and finish some work. Don't scorch yourselves over that fire."

She got up amidst a chorus of, "Thanks most awfully, Miss Carthew," and left the room. As soon as she had gone, the girls clustered together to discuss her story. They had been deeply interested in it. Miss Carthew possessed the magic gift of story-telling, and while she had been speaking she had given them wonderful, vivid pictures of those first pioneers. Judy in particular had been thrilled by it, and she thought about it continually all that evening and during the next morning, until she heard the bell ring which meant that the great moment had come, and after roll-call and inspection she would be formally received into the great company of Guides.

With the others she entered the hall, and stood to one side while roll-call and inspection took place. A stranger stood watching—a tall woman with a quiet, strong face, who, Nancy had told her, was the Commissioner. Judy looked at her with her distinguishing silver badge and cords and cockade, and wondered how she had made good—it was very certain that she had. Something in the resolute eyes under the navy brim of her hat seemed to tell one that.

Then she saw that the Guides were already in the horse-shoe formation. Marjorie came and touched her on the shoulder, leading her into her place just inside the horse shoe, and she knew that the great moment had come.

The Commissioner was standing facing the Guides; beside her, the captain; and the colours were at the right and left of the girls. A quick command brought them forward, and facing the Commissioner. Judy looked up nervously, and found courage in the steady gaze which met hers as the Commissioner spoke.

"Do you know what your honour is?"

"Yes. It means that I can be trusted to be truthful and honest."

"Do you know the Guide law?"

"Yes."

"Can I trust you, on your honour, to do your duty to God and the King, to help other people at all times, to obey the Guide law?"

Judy raised her right hand in the half salute as she replied, "I promise, on my honour, to do my best to be loyal to God and the King, to help other people at all times, to obey the Guide law."

Then came the command, "Invest!" and Marjorie was buckling on her belt and fixing the shoulder knot. Then she stepped back, and the Commissioner bent forward, in her hand the little metal trefoil which means so much.

"I trust you, on your honour, to keep this promise." The badge was fastened in her tie. "You are now one of the great sisterhood of Guides." Judy's left hand was taken firmly and held. "Salute the colours!"

She turned and saluted the colours. Then she faced about as the command rang out, "Company, salute!"

For the first time she made the full Guide salute to the others; the company presented staves.

Then the final order: "To your patrol, quick march!"

She turned and marched back to the patrol, a Guide at last.

Then it was Nance's turn, and this time, when the command, "Company, salute!" came, she presented her staff with the rest.

It was over—the actual investiture; but now the Guides, obeying Miss Carthew's command, "Sit easy," were squatting on the floor, and the Commissioner stood looking at them.

"I am not going to say much," she said, in a low, clear voice that seemed to ring through the hall. "I am going to tell you a short story about something that happened during the War. It didn't happen in France, but in South Africa, in Wynberg. There were rebels there, and they tore down our flag and trampled on it. They had rifles, and they were men who seemed likely to stick at nothing. The flag was lying in the dust where they had flung it—England's flag! Suddenly a woman darted forward. Snatching it from the ground, she fastened it round her waist, and then, turning, dared the astounded men to abuse it again. She knew that in so doing she risked her life; but she valued loyalty to an ideal better than life: and what she did so shamed them that they let her alone. That is what we Guides have always to remember—to be loyal to an ideal. And ours is a high ideal, for it is the ideal of perfect faith, perfect loyalty, perfect *love*. Let us see to it that we, who have thousands of Guide sisters to help us towards that ideal, do not fall short of what that lonely unguarded woman performed. That is all."

She stepped back. Miss Carthew came forward.

"Company, 'shun!" They sprang to their feet. "The highest appreciation we can show of our Commissioner's speech is by living up to it. But we should all like to say 'Thank you' to her now for what she has said. Three cheers for our Commissioner!"

Miss Carthew led them, and the Guides made the hall ring as they cheered at the full pitch of their lungs.

The Commissioner smiled at them. "Thank you, Guides," she said.

Then all came to the full salute while they sang the National Anthem before they were dismissed. The enrolment was over.

CHAPTER X

FRESH TROUBLE

It seemed rather a pity that, after such an inspiring enrolment as they had had, trouble broke out in the school almost immediately.

It began with Celia Dacre and Judy Carey in the Middle School. Celia, besides being very delicate, was also intensely sentimental. She had conceived what the others described as a "pash" for Muriel Wilcox, whose gipsy prettiness and princess airs were peculiarly attractive to such a child. Muriel had been kind to Celia on more than one occasion, although it must be said that she gave her no encouragement.

Celia, coming into the Fourth Form room one day, overheard Judy airing her views of Muriel, who had just managed to upset her again. The antagonism between these two never lay very deeply hidden at any time. One day Judy, racing down a corridor, managed to bump into Muriel just as the latter was recapping her fountain pen. The cap flew in one direction, the pen in another, and Judy, staggering backwards, stood heavily on the nib.

All this was annoying, to say the least of it. But Miss Carthew, coming down the corridor at that moment, just in time to catch Muriel shaking Judy soundly, declared that none of it made the Fifth Former's behaviour in the least excusable. Judy was made to apologize to Muriel for roughness, and Muriel was punished—in private—for losing her temper childishly. The pair hated each other cordially, and Judy, in the bosom of her own form, expressed her opinion of Muriel with much terseness. Celia heard her, and rushed to the defence of her idol.

It was rather an unfair contest, since Judy possessed a wealth of language and metaphor that was startling on occasion, while Celia could only cry, "She isn't—she *isn't!* She's an angel, and you are a pig!"

The others separated them—not before Judy had called Celia "a sponging, rubber-necked, little toad!"—and Celia was marched back to her own form room by Marjorie, who told her that if she wanted to make an exhibition of herself, the Fourth would thank her to keep out of *their* room.

Celia was crushed for the time being; but she quickly made up her mind to get even with Judy somehow. Not being particularly clever, she had to think a long time. What she finally evolved was startling, to say the least of it, and provided plenty of trouble all round.

Meanwhile in the Fifth matters were no better than they were among the younger girls. Trouble for those young ladies began on the Thursday morning when they were getting ready for their geography lesson with Miss Hannah, who came twice a week to St. Ronan's to teach the three top forms. Her lessons were delightful in themselves, but Miss Hannah, as a mistress, was a martinet. Everything had to be ready, and all the girls in place, waiting for her when she came. The luckless being who appeared without any of her geography apparatus was shown no mercy. Consequently there was point in Muriel's agitated question five minutes or so before the lesson began.

"Marjorie, have you seen my atlas? I left it here last night, and now I can't find it!"

"Seen your atlas? No; I'm sure I haven't," replied Marjorie Stewart, form prefect for the Fifth, and sister of Jean and Leslie and small Aileen in the First Form. "Are you sure you left it in your locker?"

“Yes; because I remember I had to put it under everything else, and that meant taking half the things out.”

Marjorie closed the First Aid book she had been studying, and got up and came across to the locker at which Muriel Wilcox was standing, a puzzled frown on her face.

“Let me look, Muriel,” she said. “No; it isn’t there. How *weird!*”

Moyra O’Hara, a harum-scarum person whose possessions were usually missing, looked up from the geography notes she was wildly skimming through with a view to getting *something* into her head.

“If it had been me,” she remarked, with a complete lack of grammar, “you would all have vowed that it *wasn’t* put away, and you’d be right most of the time. But Muriel’s a tidy soul.”

“So she is,” agreed Marjorie, who was helping to hunt through the other lockers. “It doesn’t seem to be here, however. Can’t you borrow for this morning, old thing?”

“No use,” cut in Phillis English. “Our atlases are student’s, and the kids use school.”

“Try the Sixth,” suggested Moyra, giving up her notes in sheer despair and joining the group by the lockers.

“N.G.! The Sixth have geography after us. I shall have to trust to luck that she’s in a good temper and will excuse me this once. I don’t suppose it’s likely! Still, she *might!* It’s no use standing here, anyhow. She’ll be furious if we’re not in our places when she comes!” and Muriel stalked back to her seat, a martyred expression on her face.

The others followed her example, Moyra only just getting to her place as the door opened and the mistress came in.

“Good-morning, girls,” she said briskly. “Marjorie, give out these maps, please. I want you to put in the July isotherms and isobars from memory. Isotherms in red ink, please; isobars in green.”

Muriel cast a look at her friend, Phillis English, which meant, “Saved,” and the Fifth set to work to put in the curves, taking as long as they dared over the work. Up to the present they had been a united form, and they were prepared to do what they could to save Muriel from “a rowing.”

A sudden idea came to Marjorie, who was finished first. With a wary eye on Miss Hannah, who was engaged in roughing in a sketch map of South America on the board, she softly tapped with her pencil on the desk, “Do you think it’s in L.P.?”

Muriel easily read the message, since, like every other Guide, she knew the Morse code, and was, indeed, working up for Signaller’s badge this term.

Before she could reply, however, Miss Hannah had swung round from the blackboard.

“And what may L.P. stand for?” she inquired.

Marjorie completely lost her head, for they had, none of them, any idea that the mistress understood Morse. “Lost property cupboard,” she blurted out.

“Really? And what is it that is of such importance that you have to send underhand messages about it?”

Marjorie’s face burned at the remark. It hadn’t struck her before that signalling like that in lessons *was* underhand. The others cast indignant looks at Miss Hannah, who was in no way disturbed by them.

“Well?” she said. “I’m waiting. What was it?”

“My atlas,” said Muriel, secretly furious with Marjorie.

“Your atlas? Have you not got it?”

“No, Miss Hannah. I can’t find it.”

“Can’t find it? Nonsense! Go and look properly, please.”

“I have looked; it isn’t anywhere!” protested Muriel, rather too quickly perhaps.

Miss Hannah’s face froze. She got the impression that Muriel meant to be impertinent, although nothing was further from the girl’s mind. “That will do, Muriel! Leave impertinence and childish excuses to the juniors. I suppose the truth of the matter is that you left it lying about, and it has been put into Lost Property. No,” as Muriel attempted to speak, “I don’t want to hear anything more about it. You have wasted quite enough of the lesson as it is. Go to Miss Ellison and ask her if you may look for it in Lost Property.”

There was nothing for it but to go, which Muriel did with an ill grace. Miss Ellison, who was giving a literature lesson to the Sixth, was very much annoyed at being disturbed, and said so. However, she got the key and went with Muriel to the cupboard where the monitresses put everything they found lying about the rooms when they went round at eight o’clock in the evening.

Miss Ellison unlocked the door and switched on the light. Lying on top of the medley of pencil-boxes, work-bags, odd slippers, and handkerchiefs was a student’s atlas. Without a word, she opened it. On the fly-leaf was written, in the decorative handwriting Muriel affected, the name “Muriel Janet Wilcox.”

Muriel was dumbfounded. She knew that she had put her atlas into her locker on the previous evening, and yet here it was!

Miss Ellison locked the door in a silence which said volumes, and returned to her class, leaving Muriel to go back to hers. Miss Hannah was icily sarcastic when the girl entered with the lost book, and Muriel went to her place thoroughly resentful and angry. Naturally, her work suffered, and before the end of the lesson she was ready to quarrel with every one and any one.

Miss Hannah finished late, and Miss Ellison, who came to them next for English, was kept waiting, which did not sweeten her temper. Before the lesson was over, Muriel, Marjorie, Phillis, and Dorothy Howell, a great friend of theirs, were all boiling with rage; and even the happy-go-lucky Moyra was upset.

“You *are* an ass, Marjorie!” flared out Muriel, when at length they were released for “break.” “What possessed you to start tapping like that?”

“I only wanted to help you,” retorted Marjorie. “How was I to know the General”—Miss Hannah’s nickname—“would know Morse? You can’t say it’s a usual accomplishment!”

“Trust the General to know anything you didn’t want her to!” groaned Phillis. “All the same, Marjorie, it was a kiddish thing to do.”

“It was worse! It was underhand, as she said, but I simply didn’t think!” wailed Marjorie. “Muriel, I’m sorry I got you into a row. But *I* got the worst of it! I could *see* ‘Guide honour’ written all over her face, though she never said a word about that!”

“Oh, don’t be so silly!” said Dorothy Howell. “It’s only yourself who thinks that. I don’t, for one instant, suppose the General even remembered you are a Guide. And about the atlas, it was safe to have come out sooner or later. It’s no use trying to hide things from her!”

This being the general opinion, Muriel gave up that point and went off on another tack. “Look here! who was monitress last night?”

“Don’t know. Why?”

“Judy Carey was,” put in Moyra, who was nearest to the list.

“I *thought* so,” replied Muriel.

“What d’you mean?” demanded Phillis.

Muriel, however, refused to say; but that night she made the others all bear witness to the fact that every one of her possessions was neatly put away. It was therefore a shock next morning to find that her Bible and pencil-case were both missing. The monitress, Maud Sedley, was sent for and questioned. Maud was very much on her dignity.

“Yes, I found your Bible and pencil-case lying on the window-seat,” she said, “so I put them in Lost Property.”

“But I put them away!” gasped Muriel. “Marjorie! Phillis! Every one! You all saw me put them away.”

They corroborated her statement.

“Well, they were on the window-seat when I found them,” replied Maud. “I’m sorry, Muriel; but if I find things lying about when I’m monitress I can’t do anything else! It’s weird, though,” she added. “Two nights ago, when Judy Carey was monitress, she said you were the only girl among the seniors who had anything left about.”

“Funny thing!” muttered Muriel, whilst Phillis politely intimated to the Fourth Former that she might go.

“How d’you mean?” asked Marjorie, as the door closed on Maud.

“Never mind,” replied Muriel.

“I suppose you think it’s that unfortunate kid playing tricks on you; but that’s quite idiotic, you know! Of course you hate each other—a babe could see that! But I don’t believe Judy Carey would do such a thing any more than *you* would!”

“Don’t you?” said Muriel in a disbelieving voice.

“No, I don’t.” Marjorie was eminently fair. “I know she smashed your vase; but, after all, it was an accident. You’ve had a fearful down on her ever since, and I think it’s rather unsporting of you.”

“Thank you so much! I’m unsporting, am I? I wonder you don’t say I’m un-Guidelike!” retorted Muriel furiously.

“Well, if you want the candid truth, I think you are!”

Both girls were getting worked up over the affair, and it was at this inauspicious moment that Judy entered to put fresh blackboard chalk on the desk.

“Judy!” cried Marjorie, before any one could stop her, “what do you know about Muriel’s missing things?”

Judy dropped the chalk in her surprise. “What under the canopy are you talking about?” she demanded. “Of course I don’t know anything about them—how should I?”

There was a queer little breathless pause. Nobody quite knew what to do next. Muriel was furious with Marjorie for having forced her into such a position, since it is one thing to hint at things, and quite another to make a direct accusation when you have no definite proof; Phillis was angry on Muriel’s account; Marjorie was beginning to wish she had not rushed in so heedlessly; and Judy, as the full meaning of Marjorie’s words dawned on her, was angriest of all. She was the first to find her voice.

“How dare you say such things!” she gasped, in low, furious tones. “How dare you even *think* them! I haven’t seen your old things. But Canadians wouldn’t do such a thing! I don’t know what English girls might do!” Stamp! “I wouldn’t touch them with the other end of a barge pole!” Stamp! Stamp! “You’ve been real mean to me always, Muriel Wilcox; and I’ve hated you for it. But if I wanted to serve you out, I wouldn’t do it that way, you—you low—mean—*skunk!*”

With a final stamp, which ground the chalk well into the floor, she whirled round and fled from the room before any of the gaping seniors could say anything.

Finally Muriel found her voice, and turned on Marjorie furiously. “Now you see what you’ve done, Marjorie Stewart!” she cried. “A nice friend *you* are! Well, I don’t want any more of your friendship! You can give it to your precious Judy! I hope her manners and temper appeal to you! Come on, Phillis, I’ve been here quite long enough!” and seizing the still breathless Phillis by the arm, she dragged her off, leaving Marjorie standing stockstill in the middle of the room.

CHAPTER XI

THE MIDDLES ARRANGE A CONCERT

Needless to state, the whole school was soon talking about the split in the Fifth. It was particularly marked in a form as united as they had always been. With one exception, Peggy Murray, a pretty Scottish girl from St. Andrews, they had gone up the school together, from Second Form to their present place. The leaders of the form had always been Marjorie Stewart and Muriel Wilcox, with Phillis and Dorothy as seconds. The rest had simply followed blindly in their steps. Of the two leaders, Marjorie was the cleverer in every way. Not as pretty as either Jean or Leslie, with more brains than either of them, she had managed to make it the fashion in her form to keep up a good standard of work. It was an understood thing that she got two-thirds of the form prizes; but the others always did well, and were held up to their immediate juniors—the Fourth—as an example of what a form ought to be. The staff recognized how much Marjorie had to do with this, and one or two of the more thoughtful girls realized it too. The rest simply grasped the fact that they liked to think that the form average was a high one, and they chose to keep it so. There they left it.

Muriel, on the other hand, was far more popular with most of the girls, especially the younger ones. She was very pretty, to begin with. In most schools she would have reigned as school beauty. St. Ronan's, however, possessed Jean Stewart, and Leslie in the Third, both of whom were exceptionally lovely. All the same, Muriel had her following. Phillis English, in particular, backed her up. Phillis was a nice but very ordinary girl with only average abilities. Muriel's more showy qualities appealed to her, and she thought that her idol could do no wrong. Dorothy Howell, the last member of the quartette, was nice-looking, in a thoroughly English way—she was like her mother's family—but the Welsh strain in her had made her very artistic and very quick of intellect. The quartette had rarely if ever quarrelled up to the present. When they did disagree, Dorothy sided with Marjorie as a general rule.

During the four years they had been at the school they had been very happy together. Now the split had come, it had come with a vengeance.

Muriel and Marjorie were at daggers drawn. It is true that Marjorie had swallowed her pride sufficiently to apologize to Muriel for interfering. But Muriel was riding a very high horse indeed, and refused to listen to anything, till finally Marjorie's feeling of responsibility for the trouble vanished into a most un-Guidelike feeling of resentment, and she publicly announced that she "wasn't going to attempt to make it up with any one so ridiculously self-conceited as Muriel Wilcox."

The others naturally took sides, some declaring that Marjorie had been an idiot all round in this affair; while the others vowed that it was high time *somebody* squelched Muriel Wilcox thoroughly. She was getting too uppish to live with! As a result Marjorie and Muriel behaved as though they were blind, deaf, and dumb when they encountered each other; and two or three other people quarrelled violently; and the atmosphere of the form was icy in the extreme.

This state of affairs was no secret to the rest of the school, and while the staff worried over it, and the Sixth stigmatized the Fifth as "a set of silly idiots," the members of the Fourth and Third Forms determined to make hay while the sun shone and have what they mutually termed "a rag."

The trouble was that they wanted to be original; and, so far, nobody had risen above apple-pie beds or booby-traps. Any one could think of those, however, so the “rag” hung fire. Swanhild Anderssen made the wicked suggestion that they should beeswax the chairs of the Fifth, but was promptly squashed by the others, who requested her to think of something a little less hooliganic—the description was Nancy’s—and were generally unpleasant about it.

Then Judy had a brilliant idea. “Let’s beeswax the locker doors in the Fifth,” she suggested. “If we warm it and sort of paint it on, I guess it’ll keep them busy for a while trying to get them open.”

“I vote we switch off the light at the main when the seniors are having their history lecture to-night.” This was Nanciebel’s proposition—they were holding a meeting on the subject.

“Let’s lock the prefects into prefects’ room before prayers to-morrow,” said Nancy.

“It would be good fun—but not worth the row,” decided Marjorie Jackson, who, at fifteen, might have been supposed to be beyond this sort of thing. “Let’s put guys in Lilius’s and Jean’s beds.”

“The last people on this earth for a rag of that kind! You know what they are—both Highlanders. They’d think it was their wraiths and go into fits on the spot!” declared Nanciebel.

“Well, I can’t think of *anything*, then.”

“I vote we do the locker doors as Judy suggests. It would be a scream!”

“Where are you going to get the beeswax?” demanded Marjorie, severely matter-of-fact.

Nanciebel’s face fell. “I hadn’t thought of that! Well, what *shall* we do? I’m bored with life as it is! We just go mugging along from day to day, and there’s no fun anywhere!”

“I know!” Judy interrupted what looked like a lengthy speech with a wild shriek. “Let’s give a concert!”

“A concert?”

“Um! With songs and things. And finish up with picture-things—*you* know! Sort of tableaux!”

The melancholy faces round the table brightened up. “That’s an idea! When could we do it?”

“Now—to-night!”

“Go and fetch the Third, Nancy,” commanded Marjorie. “We’ll begin at once. Paper and pencil, some one, and I’ll scribble down our programme.”

“Country dancing, of course,” said Swanhild. “What shall we do?”

“Let’s see! ‘Lady in the Dark,’ I think—oh, and ‘Nonesuch.’ What about some Morris? Nanciebel, could you do ‘Bacca Pipes’?”

Nanciebel nodded. “Yes, I think so. And let’s have ‘Pickadilla’ for Judy. It’s awfully jolly, you know.”

“Right-o! What an age those kids are! I wish they would hurry.” She drummed on the table near which she was standing with impatient fingertips.

“Here they are,” said Swanhild, as a clatter of feet was heard coming along the corridor. “Let us hope they will agree to our plans!”

“If they don’t, they can do something off their own bat,” declared Marjorie decisively, “and we’ll manage the concert ourselves!”

At this moment the door opened, and the Third, headed by the youngest of the three Anderssens, Ingrid, tumbled into the room, demanding loudly to know what was going to happen.

“Sit down and stop talking,” said Marjorie firmly. “You won’t hear a thing until you do, so buck up about it.”

Under the influence of this, the Third settled themselves more or less—principally less—quietly, and then waited to hear what the head of the Fourth had to say to them.

They were charmed with the idea of an impromptu concert, and immediately, and all together, started offering suggestions till the Fourth covered their ears with their hands and yelled, “Shut UP!” in unison.

“If you screech like that again,” said Marjorie, when finally order was restored, “we’ll leave you out of it, and you can go and do something on your own.”

“What about a few animal imitations as an item?” suggested Nancy. “Apes, and parroquets, and so on?”

Marjorie’s eye was on them, so the Third dared not give vent to their feelings, much as they wished to do. They set their teeth and endured in silence, while Marjorie frowned on the joker.

“If you can’t make sensible suggestions, Nancy, please be quiet, and give other people a chance to do so!”

Nancy collapsed under this crushing rebuke, and the meeting turned to serious business.

“The first part will be music and country dancing,” said Marjorie. “We’ll finish off with tableaux. The dances are ‘Nonesuch,’ ‘Lady in the Dark,’ ‘The New Bopeep,’ and ‘Bacca Pipes,’ danced by Nanciebel. Now, what else?”

“We ought to have a chorus or part song,” suggested Fenella.

“Yes, we might, I think. What shall we do?”

“‘Pilgrim’s Song’—no, let’s do ‘England!’”

“Been done to death, my child! What about ‘There is a Garden in her Face’—the John Ireland thing?”

“Much too stiff. We don’t know it properly.”

“‘Flower Chorus,’ then?”

“Don’t be idiotic! That’s a spring song! At present we’re in October.”

“Stop scrapping!” Nanciebel put in her word. “Look here, I vote we stick to folk stuff if we can. What about ‘The Lark in the Morn’? We all know that.”

“It’s so short!” objected some one.

“Well, give ‘My Boy Billy’ as well, then.”

“Not at all a bad idea!” Thus Marjorie, condescendingly. “Shall we agree to that?”

“Yes”—“Oh, rather!”—“Any old thing you like,” came from all sides of the room.

Marjorie scribbled it down, and then turned to Christine Ashley. “Chris, play ‘Noel’ for us, will you?”

Christine nodded. She was saving with words.

“Swanhild and Ingrid can give us a duet. Nanciebel will recite. Betty, I suppose you’ll sing? Fenella can sing too. Any one else got anything to suggest? Then we had better get on to the tableaux.”

“You don’t give us *time* to think of anything,” complained Fenella.

“Oh—sorry! Didn’t know I was rushing you. What is it you want to propose?”

Fenella naturally enough promptly became devoid of ideas, so she said lamely, “Well, you do rush it. But go on now.”

Marjorie arched supercilious eyebrows at her “*Sure* you’ve nothing to say? We’re perfectly willing to listen to your suggestions. In fact, we’re anxious to have them if they are

any use.”

Fenella, however, remained speechless; so, after a slight pause, the Fourth Form prefect turned to the question of the tableaux.

“Shall we do a set, or just odd ones?” she asked.

“Oh, a set, of course! Much more fun!”

“All right. What shall we have?”

“Scenes from *As You Like It*,” suggested Swanchild—the Fourth were doing it for literature this term—but she was literally howled down.

“No fear! I’m sick of the wretched thing!” declared Nancy. “What about scenes from history—like Alfred and the cakes, you know?”

“Too dull! Besides, *that* isn’t history. It didn’t matter to any one but the neatherd wife whether the cakes were burnt to cinders or half raw!” argued Nanciebel.

“What about scenes from general literature?” proposed Celia Dacre.

“Um—ye-es! That’s not a bad idea. What about dresses, though?”

“Oh, use dressing-gowns, and cubey curtains, and so on.”

“Yes! And can’t you *see* Matron letting us use cubey curtains!”

Betty Selwyn, whose brilliant idea this had been, retired, squashed.

“Dressing-gowns we *can* use,” said Marjorie. “Also, there are those yards and yards of art muslin we had last year for the cantata. There’s our eurhythmic dresses too.”

“Good! Buck up, some one, and suggest some scenes we can do—decent ones, mind; no rot!”

At the end of half an hour’s furious arguing, they eventually fixed on nine tableaux, and decided to wind up with the British Empire as a grand finale. Marjorie was to be Britannia, and the others were to represent various portions of the Empire. Leslie Stewart, whose fair prettiness was a distinct asset in this kind of thing, was to be poised somehow above them all as the Angel of Peace. When all this had been decided, they scattered to acquire—no other word will adequately describe their methods—such properties as they might, in readiness for the evening.

CHAPTER XII

THE CONCERT

“What energy those children have shown!” exclaimed Thekla Anderssen as she took her seat beside Jean Stewart.

“It’s a mercy it’s broken out in this way!” replied Jean. “Really, there’s so much trouble with the Fifth nowadays, one is positively in dread of anything else happening.”

As she spoke, she glanced across the room, where her own sister, Marjorie, was sitting with Dorothy Howell beside her. Just behind the Sixth, Phillis English and Muriel Wilcox were talking with their heads close together. It was not possible for the four to be farther apart, and the ostentatious way in which the two pairs ignored each other showed that the split was far from being healed. Most of the girls were gathered in the hall, the little ones of the First sitting on the floor in front of the staff, who had been accommodated with basket-chairs. The Second were at the back, where they could climb up on window-sills if they felt so disposed.

There had been no time for programmes, so Nanciebel and Marjorie had printed their items on two blackboards which stood one at each side of the velvet curtains that hid the dais. The entertainers had decked the hall with bowls and jars of chrysanthemums and autumn leaves, so that it had quite a gala effect; and it was to this that Thekla had referred when she spoke of the energy of the girls.

The audience had just time to admire the arrangements, and then Dorothy Thompson, the patrol leader of the Wrens, came forward and took her seat at the piano. The curtains were drawn back to show the others, all very fresh and dainty in their white frocks, and they sang “My Boy Billy” and “The Lark in the Morn” with gaiety and a good swing, which well merited the applause of the audience.

This was followed by Christine Ashley’s piano solo. Christine played musically, and her rendering of Balfour Gardiner’s “Noel” well deserved the encore she got.

“What will you play, Chris?” asked Marjorie.

“Oh, quite a short thing,” declared the pianist.

And she went back to the piano and performed that fantasia on the black notes well known as “My father died a month ago.”

The others were stricken dumb. Christine was a quiet, rather unnoticeable girl, who might usually be reckoned as likely to swim with the tide. For her to do such a thing argued a state of lawlessness among her own kind which startled the seniors.

Luckily Betty’s song came next. There had been a good deal of argument about that song. Betty wanted to sing “Dido’s Lament,” which some misguided person had introduced to her notice during the holidays. Marjorie, after hearing it through, flatly refused to have it.

“You might just as well get up and warble the ‘Dead March from *Saul*!’” she informed the indignant soloist. “Why on earth can’t you sing ‘Big Lady Moon,’ or something like that?”

“I don’t see why I shouldn’t sing what I like!” grumbled Betty aggrievedly.

“You can, so long as it isn’t anything mad like that!”

After much wrangling, they finally compromised on a setting of an old fifteenth-century song, “Western Wind,” and any folk song Betty liked to sing as an encore. She came forward, looking very charming in her white muslin frock, with her long, silky hair waving loosely over her shoulders, and sang the “Western Wind” in a very sweet contralto. Her encore, “The

Streams of Lovely Nancy,” was well known to the girls, but it was a tremendous favourite, and Betty was always certain of a good reception. Marjorie’s harassed look faded as she listened to the sweet notes, making naughty Nancy whisper to Judy, “Music hath charms to soothe the troubled *beast*.”

Judy promptly spluttered loudly, much to Nancy’s alarm. Luckily Betty’s song had finished just then, and the applause diverted Marjorie’s attention from the pair. She patted Betty on the back, and then fled to see that the music-stands for Swanhild and Ingrid were in position.

The two Norwegians were musical girls, Swanhild playing the ‘cello, while Ingrid had a three-quarter size violin, which she managed uncommonly well for a child of eleven. They played several duets together, but only two in which the strings opened. One of these was “A Dirge”; the other was “An Elegie.” The Elegie had been decided on for the concert, but Ingrid, who was thoroughly careless, had picked up the Dirge.

The players settled themselves with the air of world-famous artistes, and then they began. Swanhild played *her* music, and Ingrid played hers, and the result can be better imagined than described. The Elegie was in C minor; the Dirge in E flat minor. What made matters worse was the fact that Swanhild imagined Ingrid had been attacked with stage fright, and went on valiantly in the fond hope that her sister might recover her nerve; while Ingrid was under precisely the same impression with regard to Swanhild.

The audience rapidly lost all control. Even Miss Wetherel was laughing, and mopping her eyes in between whiles; while Miss Davies kept gasping feebly, “Oh, stop—stop!”

Nothing deterred, the pair played on to the bitter end. Then, as they drew their bows across the strings in a final chord, Swanhild looked across at her sister.

“I say,” she remarked, “what *were* you playing?”

“The Dirge,” replied Ingrid.

“St. Anne! I was playing the Elegie!”

“I *thought* there was something wrong,” observed Ingrid cheerfully.

It was impossible for any one to laugh any more. But Marjorie Stewart collapsed on to Dorothy Howell with a groan, and Aileen Stewart, the school baby, rolled over on the floor, on the verge of hysterics, while the performers, imperturbable to the last, removed themselves and their instruments from the platform to the “wings,” where the others were literally holding each other up.

“Next thing—dances,” choked Marjorie, as she wiped her streaming eyes. “Ow! I’m aching!”

“Which is it—first?” gasped Nanciebel.

“‘New Bopeep!’ Oh dear, I’m sore with laughing! Get your partners.”

They pulled themselves together, but the way in which they danced would have drawn stern strictures from the folk dancers on their devoted heads, could any members of that body have seen it. By the time they had reached “Lady in the Dark,” however, they were themselves once more, and the slow, graceful movements were a joy to behold. “Nonesuch,” a longways dance for eight, was like a fairy dance with its springing motion and exquisite pipe music.

The dances were followed by Nanciebel’s recitation. For a girl of fifteen she recited remarkably well, and the tragic story of “The High Tides on the Coast of Lincolnshire” brought her a well-deserved encore.

Marjorie afterwards declared that Chris’s behaviour must have demoralized the others, for Nanciebel, instead of giving “Wander-thirst,” or “I Don’t Like Beetles”—a tremendous

favourite with the others—went before the curtains and solemnly repeated:

JULIA: A TRAGEDY.

Julia went near dynamite
With a lighted fuse.
Father and mother felt peculiar
Just at first without their Julia.

Then, amidst a storm of laughter and applause, she solemnly backed through the curtains and stood firmly on Marjorie's foot. That young lady's wild yell as the elocutionist's full weight landed was an appropriate wind-up to the tragedy.

There remained only Fenella's song, and then the first part of the concert would be over. Fenella tripped before the curtains, looking very self-conscious, and Dorothy Thompson went once more to the piano. Fenella had a very sweet little voice; not very strong, but absolutely true, and she sang her song, "If No One Ever Marries Me," charmingly, until she came to the last line, "And I don't see why they should."

Then, alas, Aileen Stewart was moved to murmur audibly to her next-door neighbour, "Well, they won't if she's as fat when she's grown-up!"

Fenella, nearly choking with rage, made an effort to reach her top note on "they," soared nearly three semitones too high, and came out with an agonized squawk as though some one had run pins into her.

The effect was funny, to put it very mildly, and the audience was convulsed with laughter. Poor Fenella retired behind the scenes with scarlet cheeks, and was promptly seized on by an indignant Marjorie, who demanded in a stage whisper why she had "made such an ape of herself?"

This was the last straw; and Fenella, boiling with rage, exploded.

"Because that little *beast* of an Aileen Stewart said I was f-fat!" she said in furious tones.

She might have said more, but Marjorie clapped a firm hand over her mouth, and ordered her, *sotto voce*, to shut up, since the audience could hear every word she was saying.

Mercifully for all of them, they had to set to work to prepare for the first tableau. There came near to being another explosion when Marjorie looked round for the characters in the first tableau—"The Knighting of Esmond"—and found that Nanciebel, who was impersonating the hero, had vanished.

Celia Dacre, who was Beatrix Esmond, wore Judy Carey's dressing-gown—a crimson one—looped up over her own blue one, which she had put on back to front. The wide lace collar and cuffs had been detached from Marjorie's velvet frock, and were fastened on with safety-pins. The sword in her hand was a genuine Cavalier rapier taken from the collection which adorned the wall over the fireplace in the entrance hall.

She was just ready, and Marjorie was on the point of sending some one to find Esmond and drag him back by his hair if necessary, when he appeared, ready dressed, and with a wicked smile in his eyes.

"Where on earth have you been?" demanded the agitated stage manager. "Never mind about telling us now! Have you got that scabbard fixed safely? Then come on, for goodness' sake!"

Esmond, a gallant figure in his dark blue dressing-jacket and gym knickers, with lace-edged handkerchiefs to provide frills at throat and wrists, knelt down hurriedly in the required

position, while Beatrix laid the sword on his shoulder and stood on one leg.

Marjorie hastily pulled her into position, whispered a horrid threat as to happenings if either moved, and then slipped behind the screens which formed the wings, and signalled to the two people in charge of the curtains to draw them.

The audience applauded loudly, though the little ones looked puzzled. Marjorie gave them as long as she dared, and then the curtains were pulled into place once more.

The next was "The Lady of Shalot weaving in her Magic Bower." Christine Ashley, the lucky possessor of a mane of red-gold hair, was the Lady, clad in two dark-green brocade curtains, safety-pinned to her shoulders, and girdled at the waist with a magnificent scarlet and gold girdle—an old bell-pull. The loom was a clothes-horse, over which hung another curtain—a blue one; while a huge Venetian mirror was so placed as to reflect "a curly shepherd lad" and "two young lovers, lately wed"—Vere Concannon, and Judy and Nancy. It was rather unfortunate that it also reflected—accidentally, of course—Fenella as herself, having a violent pantomimic argument with some one unseen. Nevertheless, this tableau was much appreciated.

The next one was "The Coming of the Prince to the Sleeping Beauty." Marjorie was the heroine, reclining on a couch which was draped with part of the robes of the Lady of Shalot. She had braved Matron's wrath, and was attired in her cubicle curtains, her long dark hair falling loosely round her face from beneath a fillet of artificial briar roses. Dorothy Thompson as the King was gorgeous in Liliás Carfrae's dressing-gown, borrowed without the owner's knowledge, and a crown from last year's cantata; while Swanhild, draped in her counterpane—Matron's face was a study!—made a charming Queen.

Judy, as Prince Charming, wore a tunic composed of a red tablecloth, Vere's blue evening cloak hung jauntily over one shoulder, and her own dark red tam-o'-shanter, with a pink feather borrowed from Matron trailing over one ear. Various members of the Third were grouped artistically round them, and it made a delightful picture.

Unfortunately the Princess's nose was being tickled by a hair, and all at once she gave a violent "A—tish—oo!" which so startled the Prince that he overbalanced and fell on a waiting-maid, who yelled lustily at the shock. The two curtain attendants closed the curtains at once, but the audience had seen and heard it all, and were convulsed with laughter.

"Why on earth couldn't you stay steady?" demanded Marjorie irately of the Prince as she got off the couch.

"Well, I like that!" cried Judy. "It was your fault I upset."

"Oh, shut up ragging," put in Nancy before Marjorie could answer. "It was an accident. Buck up and get ready for 'Sidney Carton and the Little Seamstress—What's-her-name.'"

Marjorie yielded to force of circumstances, but she promised herself a lecture for Judy, even as she helped to clear the stage.

Mercifully, "The Passing of Sidney Carton" was a huge success, and so were the "Age of Innocence" and "Cherry Ripe," with Leslie Stewart as Cherry Ripe. The next, "Lady Clara Vere de Vere turning up her Nose at the Country Clown," would have been delightful too, had not Lady Clara—Betty Selwyn—tilted her nose so much that her hat fell off, rather marring the dignity of her pose.

"Only one more before the last," sighed Marjorie. "Chris, you're not in it. Be a gem, and go and play something. This wants such a lot of doing."

Christine nodded, and vanished, while the others helped to prepare the stage for "Titania's Court." Plants formed a background, and trails of ivy lay everywhere. The dark-green curtains

were piled up in a sloping heap over some cushions, and against this Nancy Redmond reclined, her long honey-coloured curls filleted with the Sleeping Beauty's roses. She wore her own white silk petticoat with an upper draping supplied by Jean Stewart's shawl—Jean had spent the best part of an hour earlier in the evening hunting for that shawl—and she was wreathed about with trails of artificial flowers.

Marjorie Jackson as Nick Bottom was a veritable triumph. Her donkey's head was made of brown paper, and her tunic was three casement curtains which Matron had missed shortly after tea. Her casual attitude was a delightful contrast to Nancy's affectionate one. Fenella was the little Indian boy in a gorgeous dressing-gown belonging to some one else, and her face and arms were well browned with a sticky but efficacious mixture of cocoa and cold-cream. The rest of them were fairies in petticoats and paper wings and wreaths of ivy. A murmur of admiration went up when the curtains were drawn to disclose this charming picture, and the audience felt well rewarded for their long wait. Then the curtains were jerked together once more, "Titania's Court" was rapidly dismantled, and the "Empire" tableau got ready.

With the exception of two large Union Jacks, which were held behind the actors, there was little setting.

Britannia—Marjorie—sat on a chair which had been placed on a table, and round her clustered most of the other people in the affair, each representing a part of the Empire. England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales stood at her feet; Canada and Australia were one on either side of her; beneath were British South Africa, India, Hong-kong, New Zealand, and British Guiana; kneeling in front of them were the Straits Settlements, British East Africa, Sierra Leone, Jamaica, Nigeria, and the British East Indies. In front of them again, sprawling disgracefully, as Marjorie said, were the smallest members of the cast as various groups from the South Seas. Over all, perched on the ladder which was hidden by the flags held by Canada and Australia, was Leslie Stewart, the Angel of Peace, with her arms outspread in blessing.

At the piano Dorothy played "Rule Britannia," and followed it up with "God Save the King."

The final catastrophe occurred just as they were about to move. Leslie, balanced rather precariously on the ladder, moved incautiously, and promptly went head first on the top of Britannia. The entertainment ended up with wild shrieks from the performers, while Miss Wetherel rushed forward to assure herself that nobody was hurt. Finding that every one was quite whole, she congratulated the girls on their performance, and then suggested that they had better clear up as quickly as possible and get to bed, as it was growing late.

"And please put up your cubicle curtains properly, Marjorie," added Matron, joining them at this moment. "Also let me have my casement curtains at once. I only hope you haven't creased them hopelessly! Mercy for goodness! don't say *those* dishcloths are my clean casement curtains!"

The actors looked guiltily at them, and the Head laughed.

"You must forgive them this time, Matron," she said. "But remember, girls, you are never again to take things without asking permission first."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Jean aside to Lilias. "The cheek of those infants in bagging other people's property is the absolute edge!"

"It's only once in a way," replied Lilias. "Oh, I'm not excusing them; but I think we'd better overlook it this time. Is that milk and biscuits I see before my eyes?"

"It is indeed! What a sport Matron is!"

They joined the throng round the trays, and accepted their share of the impromptu meal with gratitude. Then the last of the clearing-up was done, and they had prayers before they trotted off to bed.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SECOND VASE

“Enterprising people our girls are,” said Miss Carthew as she sat down in the drawing-room where Miss Wetherel had invited her staff to coffee after the girls had gone off to bed. “Those tableaux were really very good.”

“Very good indeed,” agreed the Head. “I thought the last one particularly happy—especially for Guides. I think our young people don’t always realize that the British Empire consists of more than the British Isles, with Canada, India, Australia, and New Zealand thrown in. Don’t you think, Miss Carthew, that we are apt to encourage them to think far too smally?”

Miss Carthew nodded. “Yes; it’s quite true,” she said. “As a matter of fact, it’s worse than that. I have heard of girls in this very school speaking of Canadians as ‘foreigners,’ and that is a horribly little way of looking at matters.”

“As bad as the Cornish idea of any one who comes even from Devon, which is just next door, as belonging to a totally different people,” added Miss Miles. “Still, I must admit that Guides seem to make the girls think imperially.”

“Thanks so much! Why not join yourself, since you are so much impressed?” suggested Miss Carthew.

There was a general laugh at this, as Miss Miles hastily replied, “Oh no, thank you! I have quite enough to do without taking on anything extra!” Then she changed the subject by saying, “I liked ‘Titania’s Court’ the best. It really was pretty.”

Miss Ellison laughed. “It certainly was. Well, I’ve been expecting some sort of outbreak from these young monkeys for the last forty-eight hours. I’m thankful it’s been such a mild affair! Now, I suppose we can lean back and draw a few breaths of relief. Perhaps your charming Fifth,” she turned to Miss Henry, “will settle down now.”

“What’s wrong with my Fifth?” demanded Miss Henry, bristling up.

“Oh, my dear, if *you* don’t know, no one else does!”

“What *is* wrong with the Fifth?” asked Miss Somers. “I don’t take them for any subjects, thank goodness! Still, even I can see there’s something up with them!”

Miss Henry hesitated before she replied. “It’s some wretched feud over Judy Carey, I believe. Marjorie Stewart and Muriel Wilcox seem to be the leaders, and the rest are just following them like the sheep they are. Phillis English seems to be very bitter, for some silly reason; and the atmosphere is—well, sultry.”

“Silly little idiots,” said Miss Carthew forcibly. “Whose fault is it?”

Miss Henry waved her hands despairingly. “Goodness knows. I should say it was six of one and half a dozen of the other. Muriel is the type of girl who gets ideas into her head, and wild horses wouldn’t drag them out; Marjorie has a temper to match her hair, and is hopelessly outspoken sometimes—and, well, there you are! They simply hate each other—or it looks like it. Luckily, it’s only a girls’ squabble, and will fizzle out sooner or later.”

“I hope so,” said Miss Carthew soberly.

The Head, who had been sitting silently while this had been going on, looked up.

“What do you mean, my dear?” she asked.

Miss Carthew shook her head. "They are both queer girls in some ways. Marjorie is real Highland, you know. Muriel never forgets a grudge—or so it seems."

Miss Wetherel opened her mouth to reply to this, but whatever she meant to say was fated never to be known. Just as she was beginning, the door burst open, and Muriel Wilcox literally whirled into the room in a towering rage in her dressing-gown.

At the sight of this apparition the Head sprang to her feet.

"My dear child," she exclaimed, "whatever is the matter?"

Muriel choked inarticulately. She seemed to be incapable of speech.

"Muriel, why don't you answer?" demanded her form mistress, going over to the distraught girl and taking her arm with a little shake to bring her to her senses.

Then Muriel contrived to answer. "My vase!" she gasped. "Broken to atoms! Look!"

They all stared at the handful of Sèvres china she held out for their inspection.

"My dear girl," said the Head in distress, "how did you do it? Did you knock it against anything?"

"I didn't do it," said Muriel, a little more calmly. "I found it in a heap when I went upstairs. It wasn't there when I came down to supper. I know that! And it hasn't been an accident, either! Some one has done it on purpose!"

"Nonsense!" replied Miss Wetherel sharply "That is rubbish! You must keep more control of yourself, and not say such wild things. You can have no reason for thinking that!"

"But I have!" panted Muriel. "I know it wasn't an accident, because the things were all tidy on the table—only that, in a heap of pieces! Whoever did it didn't mean to tell me."

"But who could have done it, even in carelessness?" asked Miss Wetherel. "Do the girls who share your room know nothing about it? Who are they, by the way?"

"Phyllis, and Dorothy Howell, and Moyra O'Hara," replied Muriel. "I asked them, Miss Wetherel, and they know nothing about it. But some one had been in our room, because we all have apple-pie beds."

Miss Wetherel frowned. She did not make any objection to such a harmless joke as an apple-pie bed. But this matter of the broken vase was a very different thing. However, it was too late that night to do anything, as it was after ten o'clock, so she simply said, "Well, go to bed now, and I will see about it in the morning. I am very sorry your pretty vase is broken, but we can do nothing to-night. Leave the pieces here with me; and, Miss Henry, perhaps you will see Muriel into bed, will you?"

"Certainly, Miss Wetherel," replied Miss Henry promptly. "Come, Muriel."

Laying the pieces down on the table, Muriel followed the mistress out of the room after saying "good-night." Once in the hall, however, she turned on Miss Henry.

"Miss Henry!"

Miss Henry looked at her attentively. She saw that the girl was in a state of the utmost excitement. She would never have allowed that tone to herself, had she not realized that Muriel was scarcely responsible for either her actions or her words.

"Yes?" she said.

"Judy Carey did it! I know she did! She hates me—she would do anything to get back at me. She doesn't understand about playing the game——"

"And do you consider that you *do*?" Miss Henry's accents came like a douche of cold water after the girl's excited statements. "Because, if so, I beg to differ with you. I think you are very far from playing the game at this moment. No!"—for Muriel tried to interrupt her—"you are to say nothing more to-night. You have said quite enough, and I will not listen to

you. Come upstairs at once, and go to bed as Miss Wetherel told you. Remember that you are not to make such statements. If you have no proofs of your facts, then you are talking libellously. That is a criminal offence, Muriel. Also, it is most un-Guidelike.”

Muriel said no more, but her mouth set in a heavy, sullen line, and she frowned.

Miss Henry felt the tenseness of the atmosphere when she entered the Charles II. Room—so-called because the Merry Monarch was reputed to have slept there once—but she made no remark on it. She saw Muriel into bed, and then switched off the lights with the information that it was late, and she hoped they would all go to sleep at once.

When she got downstairs once more, she found Miss Wetherel alone, the rest of the staff having gone off to their rooms.

“Well,” said the headmistress, “is she safely in bed?”

“Yes,” replied Miss Henry. “I switched off the light before I left them.”

“Muriel Wilcox is an extraordinary child in some ways,” observed Miss Wetherel musingly. “I don’t believe any other girl in the school would have burst in upon us in that way. I’m afraid her parents are not very judicious with her.”

“Muriel Wilcox is a thoroughly spoilt child,” replied Miss Henry. “She is not doing credit to our training. She has shown herself to-night to be entirely lacking in self-control; and she is far too careless in her statements. Without rhyme or reason, as far as I can see, she has accused Judy Carey of breaking her vase.”

Miss Wetherel raised her eyebrows at this.

“Really? I know she and Judy are not—sympathetic, and do not get on well together. But if she really said that, I must speak to her about it. Can you give me any reason for their dislike for each other?”

“Well—there was that vase Judy broke,” responded Miss Henry. “It was a pure accident, of course; but I’m sorry to say Muriel has shown herself very unforgiving over the whole affair. As nearly as I can gather, she has lost no opportunity of being unpleasant to Judy.”

“But, my dear girl, why didn’t you tell me before?” asked Miss Wetherel.

“I should have done so if I had found Judy was unhappy over it,” replied Miss Henry. “But Muriel is not in the same form, you know, and Judy’s friends are in the Fourth; and as it has meant nothing much until just now, I thought it wasn’t worth while worrying you about it. Besides, as it is, the Fifth have had a split of some sort over Judy Carey, so Muriel will certainly not have it all her own way.”

“I see,” said Miss Wetherel thoughtfully. “Well, we certainly can’t do anything to-night, so we will leave it till the morning.”

The next morning at prayers she spoke to the school. “Last night,” she began, “some one was silly enough to go upstairs to one of the senior rooms and make apple-pie beds.”

A smile ran round the assembled school at this, but they sobered quickly enough as Miss Wetherel continued: “Such a thing is silly, but not wrong. If it had stayed there, I should have said nothing; but unfortunately it has not stayed there. Whoever went into the Charles II. Room was careless enough to break a valuable vase belonging to one of the girls there. I feel sure it was an accident, and I ask whoever did it to own up at once. Be assured that if you do so you will have no further punishment than paying, as far as possible, for the damage.”

She paused, and there was a silence. Every one felt that whoever the culprit was she would be very foolish if she did not own up at once. But nobody stirred, and after waiting a few minutes Miss Wetherel’s face hardened.

“It seems to me that there is a coward in the school,” she said coldly. “Once more I ask the girl who broke the vase to confess.”

Still there was no movement. Miss Wetherel spoke again.

“Very well,” she said. “Will the girls who were responsible for making apple-pie beds please stand up!”

At once there was a little stir, and Nancy, Nanciebel, and Judy rose to their feet with scarlet cheeks.

Miss Wetherel looked at them with a stern look. “Come forward, please,” she said coldly.

The three came forward till they were standing before the whole school. Nanciebel looked somewhat ashamed of herself; Nancy had a slightly defiant expression; but Judy, with drooping head and crimson face, wore so guilty an air that the girls stared at her. Muriel’s pretty face took on a scornful look, which was imitated by her faithful friend, Phillis English. Liliias and Jean regarded her with distressed faces; the Fourth were thoroughly startled.

Then Miss Wetherel’s voice broke across the silence. “Nanciebel, did you go into the Charles II. Room?” she asked.

Nanciebel shook her head. “No, Miss Wetherel. I did the Queen Anne, and half the George III. Room,” she replied.

“Which rooms did you do, Nancy?” asked the headmistress, turning to Nancy, who was looking at Judy miserably.

“The—the Queen Elizabeth and the Henry VIII. Rooms,” she faltered.

“And what about you, Judith?”

Judy raised scared eyes to Miss Wetherel’s face. “I—I did the Charles II. Room,” she replied in low tones.

A gasp sounded through the room at this, but Miss Wetherel wisely ignored it, and went on questioning Judy.

“When were you in the Charles II. Room?” she asked.

“Towards the end of the music half of the concert,” replied Judy.

“How long were you there?”

“I—don’t know.”

“Did you see Muriel’s vase when you were there?”

“No, Miss Wetherel. There are four beds, and—and I hurried with them. I never noticed anything.”

“You know nothing about the vase then?”

“No,” replied Judy, more firmly than she had spoken before.

At this, Phillis English, in her intense sympathy with Muriel, forgot where she was, and emitted a low hiss. It was checked at once by a freezing look from the headmistress.

“You may leave the room, Phillis,” she said icily.

With cheeks rivalling Judy’s in colour, Phillis got up and stumbled from the room. When the door had closed behind her, Miss Wetherel turned to the younger girl again.

“Judy,” she said gently, “are you positive you saw nothing of the vase while you were there? You are sure you did not swing it on to the floor when you were—er—making the bed? If you did, dear, tell us now. We shall all understand it was an accident.”

But Judy stood firmly by her statement. “I never saw the vase,” she said.

Miss Wetherel waited a moment, then she turned to the rest of the school. “Did any other girl visit the room before supper and bed-time?” she asked.

There was a general shaking of heads. No one else had been near it. Further questioning had no effect. Judy acknowledged that she had been in the room and had made the apple-pie beds, but she firmly denied having ever seen the vase; and after a few minutes more, Miss Wetherel dismissed the school, merely saying that, of course, she accepted Judy Carey's word that she had had nothing to do with the accident.

But if Judy Carey thought that the rest of the school were going to believe her she was speedily undeceived. It is true that Marjorie, Nanciebel, and Nancy rallied round her valiantly, but the Fifth were for the most part openly contemptuous.

"Little coward," said Phillis English virtuously. "Why can't she own up instead of telling lies about it?"

"Of course she must have done it," put in Joan Ashley. "Who else was there? I think it's so silly of her not to own up at once, and get it over!"

"She did say she had been in the room," said Marjorie Stewart thoughtfully. "Surely she could own up to having smashed the thing if she's done it!"

"If she's done it!" cried Muriel. "I like that! It's practically certain that she did. She broke the other; she was the only person in the room between supper and bed-time; and she hates me!"

"Well, you haven't been specially nice to her," said Marjorie bluntly. "And after Miss Wetherel has said she believes her, I don't see that we can disbelieve her. After all, it isn't proved that she did it!"

"You always are so good, aren't you?" sneered Muriel. "*Saint* Marjorie! It's a pity we can't canonize you."

"It's a pity you can't have some common sense knocked into your head!" retorted Marjorie. "You stand in great need of it!"

"Marjorie, do you really think that she didn't do it?" asked Joan curiously.

"I don't know one way or the other," replied Marjorie; "but in Scotland we don't condemn a man before his guilt is absolutely proved!"

"And in England we do! Thanks, so much!" returned Phillis furiously. "Come along, Muriel, don't let's stay here; we might contaminate her!"

The two chums marched off, leaving Marjorie and Joan by themselves. The latter, with a murmured excuse, left the room, and Marjorie, filled with a curiosity to see how the others were taking this latest excitement, strolled into the Fourth Form room, where she found the seventeen members of the form obviously divided into two camps. Joyce Webley and Peggy Ashley appeared to be the leaders of the opposition, which numbered considerably more than half the form; while, at the other side of the room, was Judy Carey surrounded by the faithful trio, now reinforced by Swanhild Anderssen and the two Selwyns, Betty and Dorothea. The entrance of the Fifth Form girl caused a slight sensation, since it was quite plain to them that Marjorie had come for a definite purpose. The rival camps watched her intently as she sauntered over to Marjorie Jackson, who received her half suspiciously.

"I want your list of new books for the library," she said, remembering suddenly that, as librarian, she had not yet collected the list of books voted for by the girls. "Can you let me have it?"

"Yes; it's in my desk," said Marjorie briefly. She turned to get it, and the Fifth Former turned to Judy.

"Any Canadian books you can suggest?" she asked carelessly.

The ready colour rose to Judy's face as she replied enthusiastically, "Oh, have you got the 'Anne' books?"

"The 'Anne' books?" queried Marjorie. "What are they?"

"They're about a girl called Anne Shirley," explained Judy. "She's an orphan, and she's adopted by a brother and sister called Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert. It tells all about her—how she makes friends, and goes to school, and high school and college. Then she marries, and it goes on about her children, and finishes—so far!—with the engagement of her youngest daughter Rilla. That's all that is written so far, but I do hope there'll be another one soon!"

"It sounds rather like the 'Elsie' books," commented Marjorie. "I always thought *them* awful rot!"

"These aren't a bit like the 'Elsie' books," Judy assured her earnestly. "They're not a bit preachy."

"H'm! Well, I'll put them down on the list, anyhow. I must be going. Let me have the list as soon as possible, will you?" And with a nod she strolled out of the room, leaving the majority of the girls positively breathless with astonishment.

By break that morning it was all over the school that Marjorie Stewart was quite firmly on Judy Carey's side, and had turned against her former friend, Muriel Wilcox.

CHAPTER XIV

A FURTHER MYSTERY

By the end of the week the whole school was in a ferment. Even the lordly Sixthites were disturbed, and in the Fourth and Fifth there was open war. In her own form Judy might have fared worse. All the members of the Bird Room stood by her, and Betty Selwyn and Josephine Ruffin joined them. Privately, Betty was doubtful as to what had really occurred in the Charles II. Room that night; but she stood by Judy for all that. As for Josephine, *she* argued that Judy had owned up at once to having been in the room, and if she *had* smashed the vase she would have owned up to that.

“Rats!” said Peggy Green. “She simply had to ’fess about the apple-pie beds, ’cos the others knew she had been there!”

“Rats yourself!” retorted Josephine. “They wouldn’t have said—— Telling tales isn’t in their line! Anyway, Judy’s in our patrol, and I don’t believe she’d be so rottenly un-Guidy! Why, she’s almost *hopelessly* truthful!”

“Yes—when it doesn’t matter!”

“Oh, you’re an ape!”

“Ditto!”

“Copycat!”

“Girls!” Miss Carthew’s horrified voice broke in on this unseemly wrangle. “What are you thinking about?”

The combatants stopped dead, and turned a pair of scarlet faces to her. In spite of her horror at their behaviour, the mistress nearly burst out laughing. They were a most comical contrast, for Peggy Green was the biggest girl in the Fourth, and was clumsily built, with broad shoulders, and a round red face; while Josephine was a slender, dainty little thing with delicate features and a wild-rose skin. They really looked very funny standing side by side.

Miss Carthew bit her tongue, and managed to control herself.

“An order-mark, both of you,” she said. “And please remember that such language is *not* permitted in school.”

Then she passed on, leaving the pair looking rather silly.

“I hope you’ll contrive to hold your tongues for the future,” said Marjorie Jackson, who had come in for the tail-end of this scene. “I’m ashamed of you both! You’ve let us down nicely between you! The Fourth is *proud* to own you!” She stalked off, swinging her long brown pigtail with a haughty air.

Josephine, who had come to her senses by this time, ran after her. “Marjorie, don’t be mean! I’m sorry I said what I did, but Peggy is being perfectly *beastly* about Judy!”

“That’s no earthly reason for you to use such language.”

“You’d have used worse yourself if you’d heard her!”

“No, I shouldn’t. Honestly, Josephine, you *must* not talk like that. Carty will be mad, and it’s letting us down so.”

Josephine nodded. “Yes, I s’pose so. But——”

“But—what?” demanded Marjorie, as she stopped.

“I don’t know. Things are horrid this term!”

“So they are, in some ways. But ragging like that won’t improve them.”

The little colloquy was interrupted by Jean Stewart, who had come to summon them to country dancing; so they went off to the gym, where the members of the four upper forms were standing about in cliques and the air was hostile.

Miss Matthews took no notice of the atmosphere. She was very matter-of-fact, and also rather mischievous. She considered these school feuds to be idiotic in the extreme, and had vowed in the staff-room that she should take no notice of any one's loves or hates.

"Here you are at last!" she greeted the late-comers. "What have you been doing? I thought you all knew that there was to be country dancing this afternoon? I wish you girls would try to listen when notices are given out after prayers! It is very tiresome of you! Marjorie and Muriel, please take first couple in this set for 'Newcastle.' Josephine, you can be third man with Celia Dacre. *Now*, are you all ready?"

Miss Davies at the piano promptly began to play, but stopped as Miss Matthews clapped her hands.

"Muriel Wilcox, I thought I told you to be first couple with Marjorie Jackson. Why are you not in your place?"

Muriel flushed. "May I please sit this out, Miss Matthews?"

"Why? Aren't you well?"

Muriel thought her head ached a little.

"Very well. You had better go and lie down. Go to Matron first, please, and ask her to give you something for the headache—I expect you are bilious!"

Matron's doses were famed for being nasty, so Muriel's face fell. She wished she hadn't pleaded headache. However, Miss Matthews had already turned away and was routing out some one else to dance with Marjorie, so there was nothing for it but to go.

Marjorie, watching her leave the gym, muttered something under her breath.

"What are you saying?" queried Judy, who had been pressed into service since no one else was available.

"Nothing!" Marjorie coloured and looked rather ashamed of herself.

"When you've *quite* finished," observed Miss Matthews sarcastically at this point, "we'll get on! We'll walk it once for the benefit of the people who aren't sure of it. And *do* try to remember whether you are a man or a woman!"

They meekly joined hands and walked through the first figure, while the mistress "did sheep-dog"—the expression is Nancy's—and kept them all straight. Judy had watched "Newcastle" often enough to be able to get through it with only a few reminders from Marjorie. When it came to dancing it, however, it wasn't nearly such an easy matter. None of them managed the skipping round the square in time. The "women" were the worst. Celia Dacre invariably forgot to start off until the first half bar of the music had been played. The result was an unseemly scramble to reach their partners in time for "arm with the left."

Judy, on the other hand, generally got off on her beat; but when it was the "men's" turn to skip round the set while the "women" did "hands four in the centre," her hand was never there, and she was generally running round after the others in an agitated fashion.

Three times they went back to "arm with the right, men to the centre, women skip round," and *still* they were wrong. Miss Matthews set her jaw firmly.

"We will do this until it *is* right," she told them. "Go back to the beginning."

They went back to the beginning, and were promptly stopped by a sharp command to "raise your arms gracefully. Don't *swing* them up like that!"

By the time they had got through that first figure to Miss Matthews' satisfaction Judy felt as if she would never be able to forget it.

The second figure went better, although two or three people were ordered to "get off on their beat for going under arches." The third and last figure, with its puzzling "lines," drove them all nearly to distraction. Even when they had finally discovered where they ought to be, they failed to keep them straight, and Judy covered herself with disgrace by trying to "set" before "turning single."

Miss Matthews looked at her in an eloquent silence. Then she sent them all back to the beginning again, and made them go right through it. After that they were allowed three minutes' grace, and welcomed it.

"Anything wrong with Matt?" murmured Marjorie to Dorothy Howell, who was sitting next to her, fanning herself with her handkerchief.

Dorothy shook her head. "Haven't an idea. She's jolly baity about something."

"Partners for 'Winifred's Knot'! People who don't know it please sit out and pay *great* attention!" said Miss Matthews, who certainly looked and sounded as though something was badly wrong.

They sprang to their feet and got to their places as quickly as might be. No one wanted to call attention to herself at this moment. Miss Matthews was usually a very serene person; but this afternoon she was anything but serene. She gave them a thorough drilling in "Winifred's Knot," and when she declared herself to be fairly satisfied with it, sent them back to their seats and proceeded to instruct the nine people who did not know it.

Then she finished up with "Row Well, Ye Mariners," in which nearly every one came to grief over the clapping. The people who remembered it were out of time; the people who were in time began with the wrong hands or missed out part of it. The truth was that they were all so nervous by this time, and so afraid of being wrong, that they found it impossible to be right.

As Nanciebel said afterwards, it was such an unusual thing to see the gym mistress looking like a dozen thunderclouds rolled into one, that it was no wonder that they lost their balance. When at long length the lesson ended, every one heaved a sigh of relief. But Miss Matthews had not finished with them yet.

"Wait a minute, girls," she said imperatively. "I want to speak to you."

They all stood still, staring at her in amazement. They were still more amazed at her next words.

"I want to know if any of you have, by any chance, been in my room to-day?"

A chorus of, "No, Miss Matthews!" answered her startling question.

"Are you quite sure?" she said, and her tones were almost pleading. "If any one isn't quite sure, will she come to me in the staff-room during preparation? I shall be there from half-past five onwards. And, girls, remember that I—that it—— Well, anyhow, I hope you will come if you were! Dismiss!" She finished her incoherent remarks with a sharp command that they knew better than to disobey, and they trooped out in startled silence.

"What on earth has happened?" demanded Nancy of Marjorie, as they ran upstairs to change before tea.

"You know as much as I do," replied Marjorie "And please do *not* talk on the stairs, Nancy. You know it's against the rules."

Nancy obligingly held her tongue till they had reached the Bird Room. Then she swung round on the form prefect.

"Look here, Marj, it's all very well, but what *is* the matter?"

“With Matt, d’you mean?” put in Nanciebel, who was already there. “Wasn’t she *weird* this afternoon?”

“P’raps she’s in love,” suggested Swanhild, who was sentimentally inclined.

“In love? Matt? What utter rot!” declared Nancy, who was *not*. “Even if she was, that’s got nothing to do with some one going into her room. Do talk sense!”

“I believe Matt *is* engaged,” put in Marjorie. “She doesn’t wear a ring in school, of course; but Sybil, my eldest sister, said something about it in the hols. She and Matt were at Chelsea together, you know; only Syb went and got married after teaching three years. Still, that’s nothing to do with us until she gets married.”

“Here’s Judy! I say, Judy, what have you done to put the great Matt into such a temper?” teased Nancy as her friend came into the room.

“Me? Nothing! Why?” returned Judy, startled.

“Oh, nothing! Only some one’s evidently managed to do the deed, and why not you?”

“Or you?” chimed in Marjorie, who was replaiting her hair rapidly. “Hurry up, Judy, my lamb, or you’ll be late for tea!”

Thus adjured, Judy began to wriggle out of her tunic, while Swanhild and Nanciebel, who were now ready, sat on their beds making various suggestions as to the cause of Miss Matthews’ sudden loss of temper, and her extraordinary remarks at the end of the lesson.

They came no nearer it, however, and they sallied down to tea, still mystified. At the end of the meal the mystery was partly solved, for Lilius rose to her feet and announced that between the end of dinner and the beginning of the country dancing class some one had gone into Miss Matthews’ room and smashed a much-prized miniature of hers.

“If any one knows anything about it,” finished the head girl, “will she please go to Miss Matthews during prep and tell her. It really is serious, because it seems such a wickedly unnecessary thing to do. It can have been no accident, for the pieces were neatly piled up on the dressing-table.”

Then she said grace, and the girls streamed out to prep and practice amidst a buzz of excited chatter.

CHAPTER XV

THE OSTRACIZING OF JUDY

In spite of Liliás and Miss Matthews, no information about the broken miniature was forthcoming. No one went near the staff-room that night; and no one appeared to know anything about the affair.

Muriel tried to fix it on to Judy; but, luckily, that young lady was able to prove a complete alibi, since she had been lying down with the others for the usual half-hour immediately after dinner, and then had been with Miss Matthews herself for remedial exercises until the mistress had gone up to her room, just before dancing, to discover her loss.

“So, whoever it is, it isn’t Judy!” announced Nancy loudly in hall, where she had chanced to overhear Muriel’s insinuations.

“It’s just as likely to have been yourself,” added Nanciebel. “More likely, in fact, for you *were* upstairs between rest-hour and dancing!”

“Yes—with Phillis English and the other people in my room!” replied Muriel triumphantly. “Besides, *I’m* not in the habit of smashing up other people’s possessions and then lying about it!”

“Neither is any one in the Bird Room!” retorted Nancy viciously.

“Muriel doesn’t think most of you are,” said Phillis, with some vague idea of coming to the rescue.

“But some of us are, evidently. What nasty, suspicious minds you Fifth Form people must have!” remarked Swanhild. “I wouldn’t be you for worlds!”

“Oh, who cares what a kid thinks!”

“You do, evidently, or you wouldn’t be so mad!”

“Be quiet, all of you!” This was Jean Stewart. “Your behaviour is disgraceful, and I’m ashamed of you. Phillis and Muriel, will you please go to your own friends; and you juniors, please don’t be so impertinent to the Fifth. It’s neither funny nor clever—simply bad manners.”

At this crushing rebuke, the members of the Bird Room melted away into a distant corner, and Jean returned to her own friends with a satisfied feeling of having accomplished something.

“What’s all the fuss about?” asked Liliás as she sat down.

“I didn’t inquire,” replied Jean. “I suppose it’s that stupid old quarrel between Muriel and Judy. I’m getting sick and tired of that feud! Judy’s a bairn, and probably hasn’t any more sense. But Muriel ought to be ashamed of herself! I’d like to give her a good shaking!”

“Shaking wouldn’t accomplish much,” replied Liliás. “Oh dear, I’d like to find out who really *is* at the bottom of all this!”

“Do you think that Judy smashed the other vase?” queried Thekla Anderssen anxiously.

“I don’t know what to think,” declared the head girl.

Jean shook her pretty head. “I’m afraid she did—and then was too scared to own up. She’s only a wee thing, after all.”

This was the general opinion of the school, though some people went even farther, and declared that Judy was simply trying to brazen it out. The Faithful Six, as Liliás called them, of course vowed that she was telling the truth, and supported her through thick and thin. Even

so, she was having a hard time of it. Various members of the school considered it to be their duty to teach a new girl that lying and cowardice were not faults permitted to the members of St. Ronan's, and talked "at" her on every occasion. Finding that she did not seem to mind this, they then left her severely alone.

"People who are Guides and can't keep the Guide law ought to be ostracized," declared Phillis English.

"What does 'ostriched' mean?" asked Celia Dacre, who had overheard.

"*Ostracized*, child! Don't try to use words you can't pronounce. It means having nothing to do with her—cutting her dead."

Celia went back to her friends with the new word.

"She means 'sending to Coventry,' I suppose," commented Ingrid. "Swanny says Judy didn't do it."

"Then she's talking through her hat!" returned Celia promptly. "Who else *did* do it if she didn't?"

"I don't know." Ingrid spoke as she felt, uncomfortably.

"There you are, you see! Of course she did it. We ought to ostrich her, and I'm going to!"

The result was that all the Third, who were generally led by the nose by Celia Dacre, "ostriched"—the word took the fancy of every one who heard it—Judy. Muriel's set in the Fifth, of course, simply looked through her when they met her.

Judy tried hard not to mind, but sometimes it was a little difficult. Muriel's conduct did not trouble her in the least, as she had never liked the tall, dark senior; and giggling, empty-headed Phillis English was another girl about whom she didn't worry. But when easy-going Irish Moyra turned a deaf ear to her remarks, or Celia Dacre wriggled a plump shoulder at her and giggled, it hurt horribly.

"Don't bother about the little freaks," was Nancy's counsel. "*We'll* stick to you; and Third Form kids don't count, anyway!"

"You're all fine to me," responded Judy gratefully.

"Oh, rats!" retorted Nancy inelegantly. "Come on, and Morse a bit."

In the struggle to remember the Morse code, to read Nancy's signalling and to manage her own flag, Judy forgot her troubles for a while. She was very anxious to get her Second Class badge as soon as possible, because then she could start working for proficiency badges. The Morse, however, was proving rather a stumbling block. She was struggling to decipher a wild tangle of dots and dashes, when one of the Second Form people came trotting up to summon her to the Head's study.

"Oh, bother!" exclaimed Nancy. "Buck up, old thing, and get it over, and then we can do a little more signalling before Latin."

Judy rolled up her flag soberly and went slowly away to find out why Miss Wetherel wanted her. At her timid rap, the Head's voice said, "Come in!" and Judy entered.

Miss Wetherel was sitting at her desk, reading a letter over which she was frowning. As the little girl advanced, she looked up.

"Oh, there you are, Judy. Come and sit down here beside me." She pointed to a low chair near her own, and Judy sat down.

The Head seemed in no hurry to begin, but at length she faced the child. "Well, how are things going?" she asked kindly.

"All right, thank you," replied Judy, who had assimilated *one* point of the Guide law at any rate, and did her best to "smile and sing under all difficulties."

"I am glad of that," said Miss Wetherel quietly. "You are happy with us?"

Judy considered. She was *not* happy but she wasn't going to whine. Neither could she tell a lie.

"I—I miss Canada sometimes," she said at length.

Miss Wetherel did not press the question. She knew pretty well how things were going with Judy. She had accepted the child's word that she had not broken the second vase, though she was very sure that a great part of the school had not. She sincerely hoped that the truth would come out soon; meanwhile, she respected Judy's pluck.

"When things get really bad—outside one, I mean," she said in a detached sort of way, "it's something to have at least *one* friend who will believe in one. And it's good to *be* that kind of friend too. But the best of all, Judy, is to know, quite certainly inside oneself, that one is right. That is what gives one courage to endure unkindness, and mockery, and even unhappiness."

She paused, and Judy, wondering what all this meant, said, "Yes, Miss Wetherel."

"I have heard from Mrs. Burton," went on the Head. "She tells me that she cannot have you at home for Half Term, so you must stay here. That is all I want to say—now. I hope you will have a happy week-end when it comes. Now run away."

Judy went slowly from the room. She felt rather dazed. She had not before realized how much she had been looking forward to going away. It is true that Mrs. Burton was no relation; but she had been very kind in her way, and, added to that, Judy was beginning to be dreadfully homesick. At first the novelty of everything had helped her, and there had been so much going on that she had had no time for what Nancy described succinctly as "sob-stuff." But the unkindness of most of the others during the past week had turned her thoughts longingly to her prairie home and the dear people there. They had had frequent breezes, it is true, for Denis possessed a hot temper, and even Mollie the amiable could snap with the best on occasion. But there had never been anything like this consistent ignoring and cold unkindness.

With the Careys, it was a short tempest, and then things settled down again, and no one felt any the worse for it. But her present treatment was dreadful to her. What was worst of all, some of the younger Guides were saying that she ought to be suspended until she *did* confess, and this hurt most of all.

She wandered down the corridor which led to the Middle School Common Room, and stood gazing hopelessly out of the window, trying to face the coming holiday. Most of the others were going, she knew. The Scottish girls had friends or relatives to visit; and besides herself, there would be left only Phillis English, whose home was in Lincoln; Celia Dacre, whose people were in Switzerland; and two First Formers, Peggy Cavendish and Joan Hardy, whose parents thought the week-end at home might unsettle them. With a little gasp, Judy realized that she would be left alone with enemies, since the two babes couldn't count.

The prospect appalled her. She nearly broke down there and then.

Luckily Nancy came out of the Common Room just then, and saw her.

"I say!" she exclaimed, "what are you looking so blue about? Have you had bad news?"

"No; only that I've to spend Half Term here," answered Judy mechanically.

Nancy whistled in complete defiance to rules. "I *say*! that's jolly hard luck."

Judy nodded silently. She still felt too much upset to talk about it.

"I wish you could come to us," went on Nancy reflectively. "I wonder if we *could* fix it? Trouble is we don't live in a mansion, and I know my cousins are coming, so we shall have to double up as it is."

"Oh, never mind," said Judy, with a forlorn attempt at a laugh. "I guess I'll be O.K. It's only for three or four days, anyhow."

Nancy cast a troubled look at her. "Who else is stopping? D'you know?"

"Phyllis, and Celia, and Peggy Cavendish, and Joan Hardy," replied Judy.

"Jolly hard luck," said Nancy again. "Isn't there *any* one you can go to? What about your brother?"

Judy shook her head. "He's coming on Saturday; but I don't think he can spare a whole week-end."

Nanciebel and Marjorie, when the story was put to them by Nancy, were equally sorry—and equally unable to help.

The two Trevithens were going to spend the exeat with an aunt who lived in a tiny flat in Hampstead, and there was a long family of the Jacksons, and they never had room for visitors.

"There's one thing," said Marjorie comfortingly, "you won't have Muriel. She's going home, I know, and Phyllis may be all right for Half Term. I don't believe she'd be half such an idiot if it weren't for Muriel! Honestly, I don't!"

It was poor comfort, however, and that night Nanciebel was awakened by the sound of smothered sobs. She sat up, vigorously clearing the sleep-mists out of her eyes. At the sound of her movements the sobs ceased abruptly, but Nanciebel was not to be deceived. Leaning out of bed, she fished for her bedroom slippers and dressing-gown, and, huddling them on, she tiptoed cautiously across the room to the corner whence the noise had come.

All was still now, but there was a suspicious look about the hump under the bedclothes. With a firm hand, Nanciebel pulled them back, and disclosed to view a flushed and tear-stained Judy, who was swallowing heroically.

"What's up, old thing?" demanded Nanciebel plumping herself down on to the bed.

"N-nothing!" choked Judy. "L-let me alone."

"Is it Half Term?"

A sideways movement of the ruffled head on the pillow answered her. Nanciebel leaned forward and put her arms round the hunched-up figure.

"Poor old Judy! I wish you could come with us, only Auntie's flat is so tiny! Look here, though. She always takes us somewhere on Monday. I'll get her to send for you, and you shall come there, anyhow. I'll send you postcards every day, and it *isn't* as if Muriel was going to be here. Marjorie's right *there!* Don't cry, Judy lamb."

Judy made a big effort, and pulled herself together. "You *are* decent!" she said, with a catch of her breath. "I—I'll be plucky—I really will! I didn't mean to howl like a kid! Only—only——"

"Let me put your bed straight." Nanciebel began pulling the sheets and blankets into some kind of order, and shaking up the pillow.

Presently she crept back to her own bed, leaving a consoled Judy to forget her troubles in slumber.

However, Fate had not yet finished with the small Canadian.

On the very morning of the Half Term Friday, word came from Mrs. Wilcox that her kitchenmaid had developed scarlet fever on the previous day, so Muriel must not come home for Half Term. Judy was in the big hall when Miss Wetherel broke the news to Muriel, and her

hair nearly stood up on end when she got this information. It had been quite bad enough before, but this was the very worst thing that could have happened.

The faithful ones had no comfort to offer either in this case, and there was a gloomy silence when she told them, broken only by the ringing of the bell for the end of break.

As they were going to their form room, Nancy spoke. "There's one thing," she said, "Carty'll be there. She's doing Half Term."

"But she can't be there *all* the time," wailed Judy.

This was so true that they had nothing to say; and it is to be feared that neither Nancy nor Judy did much during the next lesson, which was French. Judy was too miserable, and Nancy was too busy concocting all sorts of mad schemes for the assistance of her friend.

When the twelve-o'clock bell sent them all streaming upstairs to prepare for the half-past twelve dinner, Mademoiselle heaved a deep sigh of thankfulness. She, at any rate, was glad of the Half Term release from lessons and "Ces filles si inattentives!"

CHAPTER XVI

HALF TERM BEGINS

“Good-bye, Phillis! Good-bye, Muriel! Cheer up, old thing! We’ll all be back on Monday!”

“Good-bye, you people! Enjoy yourselves!”

“Good-bye, Judy! Buck up, old thing!”

Nancy’s voice rose high above the others as the motor wagonettes carried them all down the drive and bore them rapidly out of sight. When they had gone, Miss Carthew turned to the stay-behinds with a cheerful air.

“Now, you people, what are you going to do this afternoon?” she said. “It’s go-as-you-please till tea-time, you know.”

“I think we’ll write our home letters, Miss Carthew,” replied Phillis. “Then, if it keeps fine, might we go into the garden?”

“Certainly, if you like,” replied Miss Carthew. “I shall leave you to yourselves till tea-time, at four o’clock. If you want me, I shall be in the drawing-room. The Senior Common Room is ready for you, and you are to look on it as your private sitting-room, you know.”

“Yes, thank you, Miss Carthew,” replied Phillis. And then the mistress withdrew, leaving them to themselves.

“Come along, Muriel. We may as well go and get our letters written,” observed Phillis at length. She slipped her arm through her friend’s, and drew her towards the Senior Common Room. Celia and the two little ones ran to fetch their writing-cases, and then followed the two Fifth Formers, and Judy, not knowing what else to do, followed their example. When she entered the room, Phillis raised her eyebrows, and Muriel looked straight through her. The little ones, quick to imitate, nudged each other and giggled. The hot colour rose to Judy’s face. She would have given worlds, at that moment, to run away and hide herself. Then the old fighting spirit which had led the Careys to many battlefields during the centuries boiled up in her veins, and she threw up her head and marched across to the table and took her seat with as much nonchalance as she could assume.

“Cheeky brat!” murmured Phillis; and it must be confessed that there was that in Judy’s manner which rather warranted the remark. She heard, but except that she flushed a little more, she gave no sign, but calmly set to work on her letter to Canada. It was difficult to write, however, for Muriel and Phillis kept on giggling and whispering together, and the First Form people copied them as sedulously as monkeys, while Celia Dacre was openly rude, spreading her elbows and her possessions all over the table, and continually drawing the inkpot out of reach. Finally Judy got up and fetched another, and then she did get a little peace.

Somehow or other, the dreary afternoon passed, and at a quarter to four, Simpson, the schoolroom maid, appeared to lay the tea. She was greeted by a sigh of relief from Phillis.

“Oh, Simpson, I’m so hungry,” she remarked. “I do hope tea will be ready soon.”

“At four o’clock, Miss Phillis,” replied Simpson, a pretty country girl, and a great favourite with them all. “And please, young ladies, Cook’s made you a Guernsey gâche.”

As she said this, she withdrew, leaving Muriel and Phillis exclaiming with delight.

“Gâche! Oh, how decent of Cook! She is an old dear!”

Judy wondered much what it was. Was it a scone, or a cake, or some kind of pudding? She would have liked to ask, but in the face of the present difficulties she could hardly do that. Luckily Peggy had no such consideration, and she was already inquiring curiously, “What is gâche? I never heard of it before.”

“I don’t suppose you did,” responded Muriel. “They make it in Guernsey, you know. It’s a kind of currant cake, and simply delicious. You’ll love it!”

“What is Guernsey?” demanded Peggy.

“You funny kiddy! Don’t you know that? Guernsey is an island in the English Channel. The people are a sort of French, you know, and they aren’t a bit like English people. Their language is French, and they have their own laws, and believe in fairies, and all sorts of things like that. Cook comes from a little place called Torteval in the island, and she can tell lovely stories sometimes. I’ve been there once. We spent a holiday in Jersey two years ago, and we went to Guernsey for a week after that. It was awfully jolly, with a gorgeous coast, and such a pretty little town—St. Peterport. You can buy gâche in every cake shop, and we took a lot home because Dad liked it so much.”

Muriel could be very charming when she chose, and Peggy and Joan were deeply interested in her story. They leaned up against her knee, questioning her eagerly about the little island, and she told them one of the fairy tales which are so firmly believed by the inhabitants. Celia dropped her pen, too, and listened, and Judy, sitting on the outer edge of the circle, was all attention. Miss Carthew found them like this ten minutes later when she came into the room, bearing a cake on a plate.

The two seniors made her welcome at once, Phillis pulling up a basket-chair to the fire and piling in the cushions, while Muriel took the cake which the mistress held out with a laughing, “Here! Here’s my contribution to the feast!”

“Oh, Miss Carthew, how decent of you!” said Phillis. “And Cook has made us a Guernsey gâche.”

“Splendid!” said Miss Carthew as she sat down. “Well, what have you all been doing this afternoon? Aren’t you cold out there, Judy? Come nearer the fire.”

Phillis at once drew back as Judy obediently came nearer the blaze, while Muriel said, “We’ve been writing our letters, Miss Carthew.”

“Sensible people! That means that you can have the rest of the week-end absolutely clear. We must have some fun, and I am going to take you all to the theatre on Monday. We must do an expedition to-morrow, if it is fine. Any ideas as to where you would like to go?”

“Oh, lots of places, of course!” answered Muriel, as Simpson came in with the tea, which seemed literally sumptuous after the thick bread and butter and rhubarb jam which was their usual portion during the week.

When she had gone, and they were all sitting round the table, Miss Carthew reverted to her question.

“Now, what *would* you like to do?” she asked. “We have carte blanche—within bounds, of course. I want your ideas, so come along and air them for me.”

There was silence for a minute or two then Phillis said slowly, “We-ell, there’s so much we’d like to do it’s rather hard to choose.”

“Well, tell me some of the things,” suggested Miss Carthew sensibly.

“There’s Harrow, of course,” said Muriel. “We could go and see the old Fourth Form room, and the Chapel, and hear Bill in the Yard, and have tea at the tuckshop. That would be a very jolly expedition.”

“Or what about going to Burnham Beeches?” proposed Phillis. “The trees will be lovely now; couldn’t we go in the morning, quite early—about nine, and take lunch, and then go on to Beaconsfield for tea?”

“Yes; that’s quite a good idea,” said Miss Carthew thoughtfully. “Miss Wetherel is going up to town for the day, so she says we may have the car. We could motor there. It would be a lovely drive if only it was fine.”

“Yes; it would be charming,” agreed Muriel.

“What do you say, Judy?” asked the mistress, flashing a sudden smile at the small Canadian who sat so quietly at the other side of the table. “You are very silent, child. Is there anywhere particular that you would like to see?”

“Thank you, Miss Carthew,” replied Judy, “but my brother is coming over from Oxford to take me out, I know. He said he was writing Miss Wetherel about it.”

“Oh, that will be very jolly for you!” said Miss Carthew heartily. “You will like that.”

“Yes, thank you,” said Judy demurely.

“Well, then, Celia, have you any suggestions? No? Peggy and Joan, what about you? None? Then I think we will decide on Phillis’s plan, and take lunch with us and go to Burnham Beeches and Beaconsfield. Every one concerned agrees to that? In the evening we can play at round games—perhaps Judy can show us some new ones from Canada.”

“I—I don’t think so, Miss Carthew,” stammered Judy.

“Oh, I expect you can when we begin. Any one have some more tea, or cake, or gâche? Then ring the bell for Simpson, Peggy, will you? Then I’m going to leave you alone until six o’clock. Then we can change for supper, and after supper I vote we have a sing-song. Supper will be at seven, so we can have a game of tip-it first. There are just seven of us, so one side will have to have four, but it won’t matter for once.”

“Topping!” said Muriel. “I love tip-it!”

“So do I!” chimed in Phillis. “Peggy, can you play?”

Peggy shook her head. “No; I haven’t even heard of it.”

“Oh, well, you can see what it’s like when we play,” laughed Miss Carthew, as she turned to the door. “Oh, Simpson, please thank Cook from us all for her gâche. We all enjoyed it. And some of us had never tasted it before. You hadn’t, had you, Judy?”

“No, Miss Carthew,” replied Judy listlessly.

The mistress shot a quick glance at her. “Tired?” she asked.

“No, thank you, Miss Carthew.”

Miss Carthew said no more, thinking that probably the new girl was feeling homesick, and presently she left them with a final admonition not to be late in going upstairs to change. Simpson had cleared the table and left the room some minutes previously, and once more the girls were left to themselves. Phillis cast a glance at the alien.

“It will be top-hole to-morrow!” she said, turning to Muriel. “Just Carty and ourselves!”

“Yes, ripping!” agreed Muriel fervently. “It will be a mercy to be spared Colonial raptures over the woods, won’t it?”

The hot colour flamed in Judy’s cheeks, but she said nothing. She had resolved that nothing would induce her to let these girls see how she minded their unkind behaviour.

Celia chimed in. “Six is a gorgeous number for anything,” she said. “I think seven is one too many, always.”

“Oh, not always,” said Muriel, with a condescension simply amazing from a Fifth Form girl to one in the Third. “It all depends on who the seventh is, of course!”

During tea, Judy had almost made up her mind to go and read in her cubicle until changing time, but this treatment decided her against that. Her temper was beginning to get the better of her misery. No one at St. Ronan's had had much experience of Judy's temper. The home people always dreaded an outbreak, as nobody knew quite what form it might take. On the whole, she controlled it fairly well, but the repeated irritations to which she was being subjected were likely to break down all bounds.

She got up, went over to the bookcases, and chose a book. Phillis looked up and saw her. She interfered at once.

"If you are going to read one of our books," she said, "I'll thank you to go and wash your hands first. Hasn't any one taught you that books are things to be valued and treated with respect?"

Judy went out of the room quietly and washed her hands at the Splasherics. Her silent obedience was ominous, had they but known it. When she came back, they were playing an uproarious game of Blindman's Buff, with the furniture all pushed back. No one asked her to join in, and she made no attempt to do so. She sat down in a chair by the fire, and was soon lost in Mowgli's adventures.

She was awakened to the present by Phillis English bumping heavily against her chair in an attempt to escape Celia, who was blindman.

"Oh—sorry!" said Phillis, in a tone which indicated that she was nothing of the kind.

Judy said nothing, but she pulled her chair closer to the fire, and returned to her book. Two minutes later the same thing occurred again. The first time had been an accident, but it was quite obvious that the second was not. This time there was no apology, and two minutes later Phillis pushed Celia Dacre against Judy once more, and the Canadian's temper rose to boiling point.

The climax came when Peggy Cavendish tripped upon the hearthrug and fell headlong into Judy's lap. Almost blind with passion, Judy pushed her roughly from her, so that she fell, striking her head against the tiled curb of the hearth as she did so.

There was an instant hubbub. Peggy roared like a miniature bull of Bashan, while Muriel picked her up and tried to console her, and Phillis turned furiously on Judy.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" she stormed. "You coward! to treat a child like that! A nice Guide *you* are! I wonder what Miss Carthew would say?"

"Disgraceful!" agreed Muriel, before Judy could answer Phillis. "There, Peggy dear, stop crying, and come with me, and I'll put something on your head to take the smart away."

She turned and left the room, with Peggy clinging to her hand and sobbing that it had been an accident. She hadn't *meant* to disturb Judy.

"I know that, pet," said Muriel. "Come along. We won't let her hurt you again."

They left the room, and Phillis ordered the others to put the place in order. "It's not safe to play with wild Indians about," she said. "You'd better get books and read." She looked contemptuously at Judy. "Can't you even say you're sorry?" she demanded. "Or haven't you that much decency in you?"

Judy looked at her. "You're a judge of decency, aren't you?" she said. "Your behaviour is always so grand, isn't it? *You* ought to apologize to *me*! It was your fault from the beginning! If you had been decent Peggy would never have got hurt! It is you who should take the blame! No, I'm not going to say I'm sorry to you! I've done nothing to you. But I will, some day, and then you'll be sorry! I'll make you pay for being such a beast to me for no reason!"

She spoke in a low, tense tone, which was twice as effective as a scolding one would have been.

Phillis laughed, but she felt uneasy as she faced the hatred in the gleaming grey eyes. Besides, she knew well enough that a good deal of what Judy had said was true. If she had not begun by bumping into the chair, the chances were that Judy would not have lost her temper.

She said nothing more, rather to the surprise of the other two, and when Muriel came downstairs, bringing a comforted Peggy with her, she found them all sitting reading.

It was a wretched evening to Judy. Even though Miss Carthew's presence prevented any definite unkindness, the others managed to make her feel that she was an outsider. When she went to bed she cried herself to sleep, feeling that she could never get through this dreadful week-end.

CHAPTER XVII

JUDY MAKES A NEW FRIEND

Judy's first thought on opening her eyes the next morning was, "Saturday! I shall see Denis to-day!"

That had been the chief consolation of the night before, and through her confused dreams had flitted her brother's face, bringing reassurance. Once she had been sure that he stroked the short, thick curls back from her face, with a murmured, "Poor kiddy," as he did so.

As a matter of fact Miss Carthew had heard her call out in her sleep, and had gone in to her to see if anything was the matter. Finding Judy tossing about restlessly, and talking rapidly in her sleep, she had straightened the bedclothes and smoothed the black mop of curls from her face before she left her.

The night's rest had done Judy good, and the anticipation of seeing her adored elder brother in a few hours' time cheered her up tremendously. She jumped out of bed and ran to the window in her bare feet.

It was a glorious day outside—a day of St. Martin's Summer, with a cloud-free sky, a bright sun, and just enough frost in the air to make it pleasant for walking. With a feeling that this was going to be a happy day, anyhow, Judy flopped down on the floor and raked under the bed for her bedroom slippers, which had a disobliging trick of getting to the most inaccessible spot possible. She enjoyed her bath, and dressed with unusual gaiety, whistling one of the folk songs as she dressed. When Miss Carthew, who had felt rather worried about her the previous night, looked in, she found her pupil standing by the window, knotting her tie, and producing trills and cadences that a blackbird might have envied. She turned round at the mistress's knock.

"Good-morning, Miss Carthew. I'm not late, am I?"

Miss Carthew laughed. "No. I only looked in to be sure that you were up. How well you whistle, Judy. It's like a bird's song."

"My brother taught me," explained Judy, as she followed Miss Carthew from the room. "He can do it far better than I can. He can bring the birds to him, and sometimes he carries on whole conversations with them."

"What a delightful gift," said the mistress. "Is that the brother who is taking you out to-day?"

"Yes," said Judy. "That is Denis."

"He is at Oxford, isn't he?" went on the mistress. "But you have another brother, Judy, haven't you?"

"Yes," said Judy again. "There's Terry—Terence, you know. He's only a wee boy, though."

"And are you the only girl?"

"Oh no; I've two sisters. Mollie is sixteen, and tremendously pretty, and Honey—her real name is Honor—is six. She's our baby."

"Two sisters and two brothers! You are a lucky girl, Judy."

Judy laughed. "I know I am. And they are dears, Miss Carthew. I wish you could see Mollie. She's as pretty as Jean Stewart."

By this time they had reached the dining-room, where Miss Wetherel was reading her letters, and ten minutes later the others hurried in, so there was no further chance of conversation about her home people. Yet that little bit of kindly interest had helped to brighten things enormously for Judy. She soon lost herself in a happy dream of home, and was only aroused from it by Miss Wetherel's voice.

"Come, Judy, wake up, child! I want to know when your brother is coming for you?"

"I beg your pardon," said Judy hastily. "I think he is coming about half-past ten."

"Ah, then I shall not see him," replied the Head. "And, Miss Carthew, you want to get off early too, don't you?"

"Yes, please," responded Miss Carthew. "We shall have to be back by six, so I think we had better start about ten. I told Sly to bring the car round about then."

"And it's half-past nine now," remarked Miss Wetherel, "so I must hurry off to catch my train. Every one is to wrap up well. There is a sharp nip in the air, and when the sun goes in it will be cold. No one is to wear silk stockings, and you are all to take scarves. Judy, I shall trust you to remember that for yourself, as neither Miss Carthew nor I will be here to look after you."

"Yes, Miss Wetherel," said Judy.

Then the Head hurried off to get her train, and Miss Carthew dismissed them upstairs to make their beds and get ready for the expedition. It was a wild scramble for the Burnham Beeches people, for Sly was early with the car, and Muriel, who had been silly enough to put on silk stockings when she got up, had to change them. Judy finished what she had to do, and then went downstairs to the hall, ready dressed in walking shoes, big brown coat and hat, and carrying her gloves and woolly scarf. Miss Carthew was busy superintending the packing in of the luncheon baskets and rugs, but the two little ones were in the hall, flattening their noses against the window as they watched the pretty mistress arrange things.

Judy went up to Peggy. "I say," she said shyly, "I'm sorry about last night. I didn't mean to hurt you."

"It's all right now," said Peggy, who was a gentle little soul, and never bore malice. "Muriel put some stuff on it, and it doesn't hurt a bit this morning; only when I press it."

Joan, who was a sturdy, matter-of-fact child, turned round and faced Judy. "Why did you push Peggy last night?" she said. "If you wanted to push any one, I think it should have been Muriel or Phillis, 'cos it was them joggled you. Peggy only fell on you."

Luckily Miss Carthew came back to the hall before Judy had any time to try to answer this embarrassing question; and, as she heard the others coming, she went to another window. All the same, she was startled at Joan's question. It had never dawned on her that the babies would see as much.

Miss Carthew gave no one any time to say anything. She bundled her party into the car, and then climbed in herself, after reminding Judy that she must try to be back by six o'clock. Judy waved good-bye to Peggy and Joan, and then returned to the window, where she sat watching for Denis.

At about twenty past ten there was the hooting of a motor horn heard, and then a small runabout car appeared, and in it was Denis. With a shout of joy, Judy flew to the door, and darted down the steps.

"Oh, Denis!" she cried. "Oh, Denis! I am so glad to see you."

Denis stopped the car and leaned out with an amused smile. Judy hugged him vehemently. It was so delightful to see one of her own people again.

"There, that'll do!" he grunted presently. "Leave my head on. Now then, are you ready? Dash off, then, and ask that schoolma'am of yours if you can go."

"There's nobody to ask," replied Judy, as she climbed in beside him. "They've all gone already. Where are we going, Denny? And where did you get the car?"

"A man I know lent it to me. As for where we are going—where do you want to go?"

Judy thought deeply as she let him settle the rug round her.

"I think I'd like to see Windsor," she said finally. "I've always wanted to see it since I read *Windsor Castle*. Is it too far, Denny? We could go to see Eton, you know, as well. The Stewarts have a brother there, and Leslie says it's a lovely place."

"Good scheme," said her brother. "Look here, kid, how's this for a programme? We'll go to Windsor, see the Castle, and have lunch there. Then we'll go to Eton, look up a lad I know there, and get him to take us over. Tea about four; then home by Stoke Poges, Gray's churchyard, and you can go and have a look at the church and his monument. Then we'll come back."

"Bully!" said Judy enthusiastically.

"Right-o, then! Sure you've got enough wraps? Then right away!"

He turned the little car carefully, and then they were flying down the drive, past the lodge, where Mrs. Sly was busily cleaning the windows, and out into the smooth highroad.

It was a charming drive, down beech-lined lanes, where the hedges were all glorious with the October sun gleaming on the scarlet and gold leaves; past little thatched cottages with whitewashed walls, through Chalfont and Harefield, and then on down a road which had woods on either side. Denis was a good driver, and he did not go so quickly that Judy could not see the countryside. Between the trees they sometimes caught glimpses of stately houses, with tall twisted chimneys, and gables, and the Elizabethan wings.

Presently they left these beauties, and were going swiftly down a road flanked by fields on either side, while in the dim distance they could see houses, and so came to Slough. Slough is not a beauty spot, but on this bright October morning, with the fresh sunlight on it, it looked its best. Denis turned out of the High Street into a narrow lane, and then Judy gave vent to a sudden cry as Windsor in all its grey majesty appeared, with the red-brick houses of Eton College glowing beneath it.

"Oh, Denis!" she cried, and then was silent.

Denis glanced down at her with a smile. "I'm going to dig up a garage," he said, "and then we'll have a walk through the place. It isn't a bad little show, is it?"

His sister flashed a look, half amusement, half anger, at him. Denis had learned the lesson of self-repression well. The idea of calling that mellow beauty "not a bad little show!"

They turned the corner, where the road curves to a wider way outside the Chapel, and here Denis stopped his car and leant over the side, calling to a big self-possessed lad of sixteen.

"Hallo! I forgot this was your shop! Can you show me a garage?"

The boy came forward with a smile, raising his hat as he noticed the girl in the car.

"Hallo!" he said. "Is my brother with you?"

"No," replied Denis. "He just lent me Mephistopheles to bring my sister out. It's the Half Term Exeat at her school. Judy, this is Peter Carfax, brother of the man who lent me the bus."

Young Carfax held out a big brown hand which Judy took shyly. He was so utterly unlike any boy she had ever known.

"How do you do?" she said, in her pretty voice, with its oddly un-English accent.

"Quite well, thanks," he replied. "Isn't this a jolly day? Ever seen Eton before?"

“No, never,” she said. “It is very beautiful.”

The boy looked round. “It’s not a bad old shop,” he said, in the same casual way that Denis had done. Then he turned to the young man. “You said you wanted a garage, didn’t you? There’s one not far from here. Go down that street, and it’s on your right hand, half-way along.”

“Thanks,” said Denis. “I say, Peter, what are you doing to-day? Care to come and have lunch with us?”

Peter Carfax shook his head. “I’d like to, awfully, but I’m afraid I can’t. Tell you what I *can* do, though! Meet me here about three, and I’ll show you over. That do?”

“Rather! Thanks awfully!” replied Denis. “Judy will want to know everything, and I never can get any dates. Well, we’ll park the car, and then we’ll do the Castle, and have lunch. See you at three, then, Peter.” And with a nod to the boy he started the car again and they were threading their way through the narrow street. They found the garage quite easily, put up the car, and then went over the bridge and found themselves in Windsor.

I am not going to describe all that Judy saw. People who don’t know the Castle and want to learn about it can read it up in a guide book, which will be very much more correct than I should be. I am concerned with Judy and what pleased her most, and this was the great hall, hung with the banners of all the Knights of the Garter. The guide actually had to come back to fetch her away as she stood dreaming over the crests painted in the panels. He took a great interest in her after that, and told her many interesting little details; and when Denis tried to tip him on going out he shook his head, but said, “Bring the young lady again, sir. It’s a pleasure to talk to any one so interested.”

They had lunch in an old hotel, where Denis ordered a lordly meal composed of some of Judy’s favourite dishes, and after it was over he took her to a stationer’s and bought her postcards and a new copy of Harrison Ainsworth’s *Windsor Castle*. By this time it was nearly a quarter to three, so they descended the hill, crossed the bridge once more, and reached the door of the Chapel just as Peter Carfax appeared on the scene ready to take them over.

The Etonian soon found that though he had taken a good many people over his school, yet he had never had one who showed the interest that Judy showed. He took them to the Chapel first and showed them its beauties, pointing out the names of famous Etonians on the tablets round the walls; the Watts “Sir Galahad” in the Sanctuary, and the new window, put in to the memory of all those who fell in the Great European War.

Judy looked at them with awe. Denis, accustomed to the mediæval beauty of Oxford, was far less impressed, for Eton is a mere baby in buildings when compared with the “City of Dreaming Spires.” After they had seen the Chapel, they visited the Quad, and Peter pointed out the lists of all those who had served their country during the War. Then there was the Fourth Form room, with its rough heavy desks and benches, black with age, and carved with the initials of boys long since dead; the whipping-block and the birches were also exhibited, and besides these, many other things of interest. Young Carfax was keen on history, and very keen on his school. He told Judy many things of old times which he had read up, and she listened to him with wonder in her eyes, and every feeling shown in her face.

When they had seen all he could show them, and had heard a good deal of what he could tell them, Denis discovered that they must go and have tea at once, or Judy would be late in getting back to school.

“It gets dusk so early now,” he said, “and I don’t know these roads. Sorry, kid, but I’m afraid Stoke Poges will have to be off this time. I’ll take you there another day. We’d better go

and have some tea. Can you come, Peter?"

Peter was graciously pleased to accept the invitation, and obligingly pointed out the best place to go to for it. During the meal he kept them entertained by accounts of the doings of his friends and himself, so that Judy forgot to be shy, and it was quite regretfully that she bade him good-bye when they were once more in the car.

"Good-bye," said Peter. "Come over again soon, and remember you've promised to come with your brother after Christmas."

The Carfaxes were giving a dance in the first week of the New Year, and Denis had already been invited to go. Peter, who had taken a great liking to Judy, had extended the invitation to her on his own account. A week later there came to St. Ronan's a letter from Lady Carfax telling Judy that she must be sure to come with Denis, as they all wanted to see her, and would promise to look after her and give her a good time.

It was thus that Judy made one of her firmest friends during that Half Term she had so dreaded.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE REST OF THE WEEK-END

It was a long drive through the dark lanes and roads, where a thin, chilling mist was beginning to gather. Denis tucked Judy up in the big fur-lined rug, and made her take off her hat and tie her scarf over her head. Her excitement over the day's pleasure had brought the old Judy to the surface again, and he had no idea of his little sister's unhappiness.

As for Judy, she had practically forgotten school troubles, and had been wildly happy. Now, as she snuggled down under the rug, the rush of fresh air and her weariness, both mental and physical, soon overpowered her, and she gradually grew drowsy. Presently she heard Denis's voice asking if she was tired.

"Not very," she said, blinking hard to keep herself awake. "I guess it's the air making me sleepy."

She dozed off after that, and the next thing she knew the car had stopped, and Denis was pulling the rug off her and telling her to wake up because they were at St. Ronan's. Judy stumbled sleepily to her feet just as Miss Carthew flung open the great door, and the light streamed out on to her white face with inky shadows of tiredness under her eyes.

Denis exclaimed at it; but the young mistress, who had run down the steps, reassured him.

"It's all right, Mr. Carey. Judy is only tired. She'll be all right after a good night's rest."

"I say, I hope I haven't overdone her!" said her brother in some alarm.

"Oh, I shouldn't think so. She gets peaked when she's tired—I've noticed that. Won't you come in and have some coffee, Mr. Carey?"

Denis refused, however. He wanted to get back to Oxford that night, and it was a longish run. He saw Judy safely into the house, and then set off on his journey.

Meanwhile Miss Carthew pulled Judy, blinking like a startled owlet, into the house, exclaiming in horror at her wet hair.

"It was the mist," explained Judy, waking up at last. "I'm all right, Miss Carthew—honour bright, I am!"

"Well, get your damp things off quickly," replied the mistress, "and run upstairs and rub your hair dry. We are in the Senior Common Room, playing games, and supper will be arriving shortly, so hurry up!"

Judy went off to the Bird Room quite happily. The spell of her outing was still on her, and for the time being she was still oblivious of school affairs. She came downstairs presently, her hair a perfect tangle of curls, and her eyes bright, despite the dark stains under them. Miss Carthew looked up as she entered the room, and beckoned her to a chair at her side.

"Come along, Judy! There's a seat for you here. We're just going to play Adverbs, and Joan is going out first. Run along, Joan!"

Joan pattered out of the room, and the others hastily chose their adverb. Judy entered into the game with great glee. It was one they had often played at home, and her quickness drew a nod of approval from Miss Carthew. The little ones rolled about with laughter, and even Phillis English so far forgot herself as to speak quite civilly to her. So the day was entirely happy, and Judy went up to bed worn out but serene. She fell asleep almost before her head touched the pillow, and Miss Carthew, when she peeped in to see that she was all right, was relieved to find her sleeping peacefully.

The Guide captain undressed thoughtfully, all the same. The present state of school affairs was worrying her rather. From the Guide point of view, matters were most unsatisfactory. No one could say that the two divisions in the school were at all sisterly in their behaviour.

"I must hold a Court of Honour on the subject," thought Miss Carthew as she switched out the light. "Some of the Guide laws are being disobeyed right and left; and the feeling among them is simply appalling—silly little idiots!"

She jumped into bed and snuggled down, but she could not sleep; she was too much troubled over what Miss Matthews briefly described as "the smashing mania." If the affair had stopped with the vases, she would have felt inclined to think that Judy *must* have been the culprit. But the breaking of the miniature was literally "wrop in mystery." Finally, the mistress drowsed off, with the puzzle still unsolved.

The next day broke wet and stormy. A fierce north wind howled through the leafless branches of the trees, and the rain beat against the windows in a steady torrent.

"A wet day, girls," said Miss Wetherel at breakfast. "I am sorry, for I had intended taking you over to Harrow to church. However, it's impossible in this. I don't think we will even go to Chalfont. You can amuse yourselves quietly till half-past ten, and then we will have a little service of our own in the hall. This afternoon I shall expect you all to tea at four o'clock in the drawing-room, and then I will read to you afterwards. We are going to let Miss Carthew have the day to herself,"—she smiled at her mistress—"so I shall put Muriel in charge of you; and I hope she will see that you are all—*all* of you, very happy."

Muriel flushed slightly, but she only said, "I will try, Miss Wetherel."

After breakfast, however, she dragged Phillis off into a corner.

"Isn't it *sickening*?" she burst out. "I do think that when a mistress is supposed to be on duty, she ought to *be* on duty! Did you notice the Head's hint?"

"It wasn't bad to notice! It's rotten luck, old thing, but I don't quite see how *you* are to be responsible for the kids being happy or miserable. All you've got to do is to see that they don't get into mischief. The Common Room's big enough for us all. You needn't have anything to do with any one who bores you. I should just let her alone."

"Well, I think it's the limit! As though it wasn't bad enough having my exeat messed up by that wretched Annie without having to look after little liars! The Head is absolutely and utterly inconsiderate!"

Muriel flung off in a temper, which was not improved by her running into Judy in the doorway.

"Why can't you look where you are going?" she snapped, and Judy shrank to one side. She looked so little, that the elder girl suddenly felt ashamed of herself, which made her more furious than ever. However, she contrived to hold her tongue, and went off to her cubicle to fetch some things she wanted, while Judy slipped into a window-seat with *The Second Jungle Book*, resolved to keep out of the way if it were at all possible. That was the beginning of a miserable day. Nobody spoke to her or took any notice of her. Muriel kept the little ones with herself and Phillis, and saw to it that they never came near Judy. During the little service she sat next Phillis, who looked straight ahead and paid no attention to her. Afterwards, and during the afternoon until tea-time, the two elder girls made jigsaw puzzles with Celia and the babies; helped with a scrapbook Peggy and Joan were making for one of the children's hospitals; and played with them, keeping them happily amused all day.

When they all went to the drawing-room at four o'clock, Miss Wetherel asked if they had enjoyed Sunday, and there was a chorus of, "Oh yes!" Joan, who was a chatterbox, told all

they had done, and how kind Muriel and Phillis had been to them.

"I am glad of that," said Miss Wetherel, as she poured out tea and saw the babies happily settled on the hearthrug with sandwiches and milk. "It is good to feel that a girl so much older than you younger ones is setting you such a good example in keeping the Guide law."

Muriel went red. She wondered if there was any sarcasm in the Head's speech. But already Miss Wetherel had turned to Judy and was asking her pleasantly if she liked jigsaws.

"I've been reading," replied Judy. "It's the *Second Jungle Book*, and I think it's wonderful!"

"Ah! if you fell under Kipling's spell, I am not surprised that you didn't join in the jigsaws," commented Miss Wetherel. "Have you read *Kim* and *Captains Courageous*? You would like them; wouldn't she, Phillis?"

Phillis, with the Head looking straight at her, could do nothing else but answer, "Yes, Miss Wetherel."

"Muriel, you have nothing to eat. Judy, take the cakes to Muriel, will you, dear?"

And Muriel was not only forced to accept a cake from the hands of the girl she most disliked, but also had to say "Thank you" as pleasantly as she could. The same thing went on all through the meal. Miss Wetherel made it a sheer impossibility for any one to ignore Judy. It was done so well that it was hard to say how much the Head knew, but Muriel grew more and more angry. She had no enjoyment from the book that was read aloud afterwards—*The House of Prayer*—and she was longing to get away to her own room.

When she had finished reading, Miss Wetherel gathered them round the piano and played hymns and carols for them to sing; and when half-past seven brought supper-time, she had the meal with them.

Judy hoped that she meant to spend the rest of the evening with them, but just as they finished Simpson came to say that Mrs. Bently, mother of the only two day-girls St. Ronan's possessed, had called to see her, and the Head was obliged to go.

Peggy and Joan trotted off to bed, and the two big girls and Celia went back to the Common Room. Judy thought a minute. Then she decided that she would go to bed too. She went slowly along the corridor, and had just reached the foot of the stairs when the Common Room door opened and Muriel appeared.

"Come here!" she said in a hard voice.

"You aren't my boss!" retorted Judy.

Muriel's answer was to walk swiftly to her, and, seizing her by the shoulder, drag her into the Common Room.

Judy fought and struggled the whole way, but she was no match for Muriel, who finally picked her up in her arms, and carried her, kicking like a baby, into the Common Room, dropping her down into a near-by chair.

"Why didn't you come here?" she demanded.

"Because I've had enough of you!" said Judy defiantly.

"Stop speaking so impertinently! Your business is to come here till nine o'clock. *That's* your bed-time to-night, and I'm jolly well not going to have you sneaking off to bed so that every one can think we've been unkind to you! You can sit here and read till nine, and don't let me catch you trying to slip off before!"

"And if you've had enough of us," added Phillis, "just remember that *we've* had more than enough of you. It's quite bad enough to have to sit in the same room with a girl who's a coward and a liar!"

Smack!

Judy had sprung from the chair to Phillis and slapped her face with every atom of strength she possessed.

“You low, mean *skunk!*” she panted, her grey eyes blazing with fury. “You low, mean skunk! I hate you! I hate you!”

“Judy.”

Muriel and Phillis jumped as though they had been shot, and Celia gave a little scream at the sound of that quiet voice. No one had seen or heard Miss Carthew as she came along the corridor. As for Judy, she stood, her chest heaving with passionate sobs, her hands clenched, and her face deathly white.

“I *hate* you!” she repeated to Phillis.

Miss Carthew moved swiftly across the room to her, and laid a hand on her shoulder. “Judy,” she said gently, “come with me.”

Judy made no effort to move. “I hate her!” she panted. “I—I’d like to *kill* her. She’s a skunk—a *skunk*, I tell you!”

The young mistress made no attempt to rebuke the overwrought child for her unparliamentary language. She simply moved so that she stood between her and the seniors, and then she said quietly, “Phillis, Muriel, and Celia, go to bed. Muriel, will you please switch off Celia’s light in twenty minutes’ time? I will come to you two in half an hour. Go at once, please.”

They went. Miss Carthew, in her present mood, was not to be trifled with. When they had gone, the mistress sat down and pulled Judy to her side.

“Judy,” she said, “did you know what you were saying?”

There was a little pause. Then Judy answered.

“Yes, I knew! I hate Phillis and Muriel! I—oh! I wish I was dead.”

The reaction from her passion had come, and she burst into tears. Miss Carthew held her till the storm had spent itself, then she lifted the child on to her feet.

“We won’t talk any more to-night,” she said. “You are far too tired to think what you are saying. Come, I’m going to put you to bed.”

She led the tired little girl upstairs and helped her to undress. When Judy was safely in bed with her face sponged and her hair brushed out, Miss Carthew brought her some hot milk, and finally tucked her in.

“Go to sleep,” she said. “Try not to think about what has happened. We’ll talk about it in the morning. Good-night, Judy!”

“Good-night,” replied Judy, too exhausted even to think.

Miss Carthew switched off the light, and then went upstairs to the Charles II. Room, where Muriel and Phillis were waiting for her.

“What was the cause of it all?” she asked, sitting down.

There was no answer. Both girls knew what the mistress would think of *their* side of the story, and both were rather ashamed of it.

“I want an answer,” said Miss Carthew.

“Judy wouldn’t come in to the Common Room after supper,” said Muriel sulkily. “I—fetched her, and she cheeked us, and said she’d had enough of us. Phillis said *we’d* had enough of *her*—and so we had!—and then she went for her like—like a little demon.”

“What exactly did you say, Phillis?” inquired Miss Carthew.

“I—I said she was a coward and a liar,” mumbled Phillis.

“I see! Only one other question. How did you ‘fetch’ her, Muriel?”

“Carried her,” replied Muriel briefly.

Miss Carthew said nothing for a minute—and said it most eloquently. Then she got up.

“This seems to me to be a matter for the Guides. I cannot congratulate any one of you on your conduct. You, of course, realize that you have broken the first, the fourth, and the fifth Guide laws. Judy lost her temper very badly, and I shall, of course, deal with that. But you two are far more to blame. I am thoroughly disappointed in you both. Now will you please lie down, and remember that there is to be no more talking to-night. We will settle this to-morrow. Good-night.”

Two very subdued “good-nights” answered her, and she left them to arrange the matter with their own consciences, while she went to peep in on Celia, who was asleep, before she joined the Head in the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XIX

“LADY MACBETH”

On further consideration, Miss Carthew decided to leave the matter over until she could call a Court of Honour. It seemed to her the only thing she could do. She also felt that she could deal better with it as Guider than mistress. Judy was packed off for the day to Hampstead, to Nancy Redmond's, and she herself was to take the others to town, where they were going to a matinée.

The day passed, and six o'clock brought them all back except Nanciebel and Fenella, whose small cousin had developed measles during the week-end. Consequently the two Cornish girls were in durance vile until the infection period was over. This was tiresome, as it meant that Nanciebel, Marjorie Jackson's second, could not attend the Court of Honour. Miss Carthew decided to delay matters for a time. In the meanwhile she resolved to keep her eyes open for any further developments.

Judy, on her side, came back from the jolly day spent with Nancy and her aunt at the Zoo, determined to try to control herself. She hunted out Phillis, and apologized for slapping her face. It was rather hard lines that Phillis did not meet the apology in the spirit in which it was offered.

After listening to Judy's faltering remarks, she said, "Please don't trouble yourself. It certainly hasn't worried me—or surprised me!"

Judy would have given much to have slapped that sneering face again, but she put her hands behind her back and clenched them together tightly while she replied, "All right! I've *said* I'm sorry." Then she turned round and marched off, leaving Phillis beginning to wonder why she felt ashamed of herself.

As a result of it all there was a kind of armed neutrality between the Fifth Formers and Judy; but all Marjorie's efforts could not keep the hostile members of her own form from tormenting the Canadian child about the vase affair.

Big Peggy Green cornered her one day, and begged her to own up.

"You're getting the form an awful name, Judy," she pleaded. "Why, any least thing that gets smashed is put down to us, and it *isn't* fair! Do own up and get it over!"

"I'm not going to say I've done something I haven't," replied Judy stoutly.

"I think you're the limit!" retorted Peggy. "I'd like to shake you well!"

"If you shook me for hours on end, I *still* wouldn't tell a lie like that!"

"What rot!—when you're doing nothing *but* tell lies!"

Peggy flounced off indignantly. She honestly believed that Judy had done it and then funk'd owning up. Also, the others *were* beginning to remark "Birds of a feather" and other sundry little pleasantries which were very trying to the Fourth.

As for the Third, they were, by tradition, the foes of the form immediately above them, and they did not scruple to let Judy know what they thought of her. Led by Celia Dacre, who was not lacking in ideas, they gave her a bad time between them. She found slips of paper in her desk with various inscriptions, as "A Guide's honour is to be trusted," "Be truthful," "A lie is a most hateful thing," and once, "He that breaks what isn't his'n, when he's catch'd will go to prison." Whatever she said in their hearing was received with sniffs of disbelief. In prep,

if she sat near any of them, the small person would generally build up a rampart of books round her work, and sit with one shoulder ostentatiously turned towards her.

“People who tell lies will cheat as soon as look at you,” observed Celia.

It must be said for the Third Form leader that much of this petty persecution was carried on with some idea of avenging Muriel, whom she adored. Also, she was far too childish to realize how horribly cruel it was.

Marjorie Jackson, who might have given a helping hand, had suddenly been bitten with the desire to get her remove into the Fifth after Christmas, and was working at top speed. Nancy was far too much of a harum-scarum to notice what was not brought directly under her eyes, and Judy was too proud to complain. So it went on till it culminated in an adventure which was long remembered by the school.

At St. Ronan’s the head girl always had a little study of her own. It was a great privilege, and one extended to the head girl only. The school supplied two chairs, a table, and some shelves. The rest had to be done by the lucky owner herself, and it always interested those in authority to see the tremendous difference between the girls.

In the previous year the head girl had been Elsie Jackson, sister of Marjorie and Betty, and a typical sporting girl. Under her régime the room had been severely plain in type. The shelves had been littered with foils, fencing mask, cricketing gloves, golf balls, and sporting periodicals. Her private books were Wisden, some of the Badminton series, and the Jorrocks books. Her pictures were reproductions of the portraits of well-known sporting men and women, and the room was never tidy, since she shared the Jackson failing for leaving her possessions about.

Lilias Carfrae was a completely different type of girl, and the room had quite changed its character. One or two comfortable chairs stood about; a vase of bronze chrysanthemums was on the table; the shelves held standard poets and novels, with a sprinkling of good modern novels, and on the walls were one or two good prints, reproductions of famous pictures. A little plaster Joan of Arc occupied the centre of the mantelpiece, and was flanked on either side by a tall brass candlestick. The whole was daintily neat, and very fresh and restful.

Late one evening the four prefects were sitting preparing some of the scenes from *Macbeth* for the next day. At least this is what they were supposed to be doing. Actually, they were talking school politics. Most of the conversation was carried on by Lilias and Jean. Thekla had little to say, and Madge Selwyn was a very quiet girl whose voice was seldom heard.

“Personally, I think it serves Muriel right,” observed Jean as she played with the leaves of her book. “She knows we are not expected to bring valuables of any kind to school, but she always *has* to be different from any one else, so she asked for trouble, and she’s got it!”

“You uncharitable creature!” cried Lilias.

“It’s quite true!” retorted Jean. “Muriel likes to be first everywhere, and this time she’s been too much first. I can’t say I’m sorry for her.”

“Oh, she’s a perfect idiot!” said Thekla impatiently. “Sometimes I feel as if I could shake her!”

“All very well,” replied Jean. “*That’s* not going to solve the problem. The big question, so far as I can see, is, how are we going to keep certain people from making asses of themselves?”

“You can’t do it,” said Madge unexpectedly.

Jean fairly jumped. “My dear Madge, I’d almost forgotten you were there!”

“Because I don’t chatter all the time,” laughed Madge. “Sorry I made you jump.”

“Well, apply your mighty brains to the problem. What are we to do?”

“Get on with our work, I should say,” suggested Thekla. “Do you know that it’s nearly half-past nine?”

The others looked at the little clock on the top of the bookshelves.

“Good gracious!” cried Liliias; “and we’ve scarcely touched that *Macbeth* yet! This looks well for the term-end exams! I’ve got some work to do for my Artist badge too.”

“You won’t get any Guide work done to-night,” declared Jean. “As for the *Macbeth*, I don’t feel as if I *could* settle to it. Now don’t say anything preachy about lack of self-control, because I’m going to do it. Come on; the sleep-walking scene. Thekla, you are the doctor; Madge, you can be the gentlewoman; and, Lil, you read *Lady Macbeth*. I’ll act Greek Chorus.”

“There isn’t one,” Madge pointed out.

“Never mind, I’ll listen and criticize. Come on; let’s get on with it!”

They set to work, reading their parts with care and thought. When they had been once through it, they did it again with the notes, Liliias falling out of the reading, while Jean read *Lady Macbeth*. When, finally, they thought they knew it, they shut up their books and prepared to go to bed. Liliias looked at the clock.

“Half-past ten!” she exclaimed. “What will the Head say?”

“She won’t mind for once,” said Jean, collecting her possessions. “Do you suppose we shall dare to go upstairs after reading that weird affair? I feel as if the lady might appear at any moment!”

“There speaks the superstitious Highlander!” laughed Madge.

“It’s not canny, that scene! Lil, shall you dare to go to bed by yourself? Shan’t you see *Lady Macbeth* come stealing out round the head of the stairs, wringing her hands, and——”

“Shut up! You’re enough to make one’s hair stand on end,” protested Liliias. “Luckily we’re in England. I don’t think she will haunt us here, whatever she may do in Scotland.”

She glanced round to see that all was as it ought to be before she turned off the light, and followed them out into the passage.

“I’ll go and tell the Head,” she said, “and you had better get off to bed.”

“Sure you wouldn’t like us to wait for you?” mocked Thekla.

“Quite sure, thanks awfully. But you can switch on my light as you pass if you like. It’s awfully dark coming up that last bit of stair.”

“There’s a full moon to-night,” Madge reminded her.

“I know; still, you might as well. Good-night. Pleasant dreams to you all!”

“Good-night, Liliias! Don’t dream about *Lady Macbeth*!”

“Just what I was going to say to you,” laughed Liliias as she parted from them at the foot of the stairs.

They ran off together, and she went on to the drawing-room to report them all to the Head. She found Miss Wetherel so busy that she scarcely took in what her head girl had to say to her, and then went off after the others.

The Sixth Form slept on the top corridor. Liliias, as head girl, had a tiny room to herself—the Oriel Room, so-called from its window. Jean, Thekla, and Madge slept next door in the Gable Room, and the others in a much larger one known as the Balcony Room, because it had a small balcony outside its windows.

The seven Sixth Form girls had this corridor to themselves, for the staff slept in another part of the house, where the staff-room was; and Matron slept on the next floor with the middles, and Nurse on the one below with the juniors.

It was just a wee bit ghostly to Liliás as she ran up the long flights of stairs, her sandals making no noise. The light of the full moon came in at the staircase windows, and threw strange shadows on the walls. There was a wind which howled mournfully outside, making a strange eerie noise; and the tap-tap of the ivy against the window-panes sounded like the tapping of ghostly fingers imploring admittance.

Like the Stewarts, Liliás came from the Highlands, and she had her full share of the Highlander's superstitions. She came from an old house that was rich in legend and stories of witchcraft, and her people were thoroughly imbued with the old Highland beliefs. The village folk firmly believed in black magic, and none would have shot a black hare for fear it should be a neighbour who was taking the air in this form. In addition, she came of a family who had lived for generations in this atmosphere, and it was inbred in her.

The staircase was cheery enough by day; but at night—and that time of night! Liliás felt that she would not be sorry when her room was reached. The streaming light put all eeriness to flight, and she felt inclined to laugh at her own fears as she undressed quickly. She got into bed and settled down, determined to go to sleep as soon as possible. But sleep refused to come. Normally, she laid her head on the pillow and never wakened until the rising gong. Tonight, she lay wide awake; and what was worse, she began to feel a horrid sense of loneliness creeping over her.

"This will never do," she thought to herself. "There's nothing to be so silly over. This is England. I am head girl of the school, and a Guide. I ought to have more sense."

In spite of all this, however, she could not get over her fears, and longed to put her head under the bedclothes as little Aileen Stewart might have done. Then she suddenly remembered that the next day was All-Hallows Eve. Memories of the stories her old Highland nurse had told her of what could happen on that night came over her in a flood, and, for the first time that term, she wished that she was not the head girl—or, at any rate, that she was not sleeping alone. With a strong effort she pulled herself together, and summoned all her common sense to her aid.

The wailing voice outside was only the wind; the pleading tappings on the window-pane were only caused by the ivy. This was England, and there was no such thing as witchcraft—certainly there was no Lady Macbeth here to come weeping to her and wringing her hands.

Presently she fell into an uneasy slumber, and dreamed that Lady Macbeth appeared to her in real earnest, and implored her to get some Sunlight soap to wash out the bloodstains. She woke up at this point, just in time to hear the grandfather clock in the hall chime one.

"What an absurd dream," she said to herself, sitting up in bed and turning over her pillow. "Lady Macbeth and Sunlight soap! How the others will howl when I tell them in the morning!"

She was about to lie down again, when she heard a sound that made her hair crisp, and her hands go cold and wet with sweat. It was the noise of bare feet pattering along on the uncarpeted boards outside.

In vain she told herself that it was only her imagination; that nobody would be wandering about at that time of night. It was no use, and the feet came closer and closer. Presently there was the sound of fumbling hands at her door: then the handle turned, and it opened!

Choking, with the beating of her heart thudding in her ears, Liliias watched it with a species of horrid fascination. A white-clad figure entered her room, with hands outstretched gropingly, as though it were feeling its way, and glassy, wide-open eyes. It came straight up to the bed, and then stood there, rubbing its fingers slowly together.

Liliias could not bear to touch it, though by this time she had recognized that her unwelcome visitor was only Judy Carey who was walking in her sleep.

Slowly and stealthily the elder girl crept to the foot of the bed and got out; then she contrived to slip past that ghostly figure. Just as she reached the door Judy started to moan—low, heartrending moans.

It was too much for Liliias in her strung-up condition. With a little gasp she flung caution to the winds, and literally pitched herself down the stairs. She was met on the first corridor by Nurse, who had heard the noise of her coming, and was out of her room in an instant, and had caught the panic-stricken girl by the arm.

“Liliias!” she exclaimed. “My dear girl, what has frightened you?”

At the same time Matron’s voice was heard from the floor above, demanding to know what was the matter.

“Judy! Judy Carey in my room!” gasped poor Liliias, who was really rather too frightened to know what she was saying. “Lady Macbeth by my bed! All-Hallows Eve!”

“You look after her, Nurse,” said Matron, who had reached Nurse’s room by this time. “I’ll go upstairs and see what has scared her.”

There was, however, no need for that, for the gliding footsteps again were heard on the stairs, and Matron ran up to the second corridor, just in time to meet Judy Carey coming down in that really frightening way. Matron never hesitated a moment. Very quietly she took one of Judy’s hands, and led her to her room. Judy submitted, and got into bed without any trouble. Matron covered her up and sat beside her for a while, but the little girl remained quite still, and was evidently sleeping peacefully. After a while Matron got up and left her. She wanted to know that Liliias was all right. She found the girl in Nurse’s room, drinking the milk Nurse had heated for her, and inclined to be very much ashamed of her panic.

The rest of the house was in perfect quiet, so evidently no one had been disturbed by the head girl’s break-neck flight downstairs.

“Say nothing about it to any one, Liliias,” she said. “Judy, of course, won’t know anything about it, and I shall say nothing to her. But I think she must see the doctor when he comes tomorrow; and, of course, Miss Wetherel must know. I’m going to the Bird Room till six o’clock, so you had better go to my room and spend the rest of the night there—you won’t want to go back upstairs again to-night, do you?”

Liliias agreed that she did not; so she spent the rest of the night in Matron’s bed, where she fell asleep after a while, and this time did *not* dream about Lady Macbeth.

CHAPTER XX

FRESH MYSTERY—AND A FEW LESSONS

The upshot of that night's disturbances was that Judy was sent to the San for two or three days. The doctor said that there was nothing much wrong with her. "Nothing that rest won't set right," he said. "She's a very highly-strung child—feels everything far too much, and she seems to be very much overwrought about this vase affair you tell me of. Keep her quiet for a few days, warn the others to let the subject drop, and I think you'll find she'll be all right. By the way, don't let this sleep-walking business be talked about either. I'll send her a tonic, and she ought to have plenty of milk and eggs, and so on. She'll do very nicely on that."

Accordingly Judy was isolated for a few days, with Matron in attendance, and kept very quiet. In a few days she came back into school, looking much better, to find every one strung up to a tremendous pitch of excitement over the Head's birthday, which occurred towards the end of November.

"We always join and give her a present!" babbled Nancy excitedly. "No one may give more than half a crown, and we put the money in a locked box in the hall, so that nobody knows how much anybody gives unless they tell them. Then some of the staff and the head girl, and a representative from each form, go up to town to buy it on the Saturday before. We give it to her in the afternoon, and in the evening we have a dance and a *topping* supper! It begins at seven because of the juniors, and finishes about eleven. Some of the old girls always come for it. They come in the morning, in time for lunch, and stay all night, and we have a hockey match next day—School versus Old Girls, and it's a holiday."

"It's gorgeous!" Marjorie took up the tale. "My third sister, Elsie, is coming—she was head girl here last year, you know. Sybil, my eldest sister, wants to come, but I don't think she can leave the babies. Oh, and, Nancy, Deirdre O'Farrell is coming too!"

"How simply gorgeous," sighed Nancy. Then, with a sudden change of tone, "I say, Marjorie, do you think Nanciebel will be back by then?"

"Sure to. The incubation period is over on Saturday. I expect she'll come on Monday."

"That's a mercy. She'll be too late, of course, to go to help choose the present. It's jolly hard luck, 'cos I'm pretty sure she'd have been chosen as our rep. We shall have to have some one else now. I wish she was back. We *do* need her."

"You're right there," sighed Marjorie, who was missing her patrol second. "I'm sure things are just awful just now. Swanhild is a lazy little slacker, and Betty Selwyn is just playing round, and won't work at anything but her singing. I wish she'd never started. I'm sure sixteen is too young to learn singing."

"Is Betty sixteen?" gasped Judy.

"Yes; didn't you know? All the brains in *that* family have gone to Madge! She's only a year older than the twins, and two forms higher. Betty thinks of nothing but music, and Dorothea always was a dear old idiot in lessons."

"Maud Sedley is behaving like a perfect pig over the flowers," put in Swanhild, who had heard Marjorie's strictures on her laziness quite unmoved. "She actually wanted to do them over again the other day!"

"Why?" The others were interested in this.

“Said they weren’t satisfying or something. She’s quite mad! Asked me the other day if I didn’t think the purple shadows in that green jar thing on our window-sill weren’t lovely. I said I didn’t see any purple shadows—the thing was green, and she must be going colour blind!”

A burst of laughter greeted this. Maud had suddenly decided to be artistic, and saw purple in everything as a result. Naughty Swanhild knew perfectly well what had been meant, but she did not choose to say so.

“Cheek, I call it,” she went on, referring again to the flowers question. “*I’m* flower monitress—not she!”

“There goes the bell!” said Marjorie suddenly, “and here come the others.”

She was wrong, however, in her last statement, for the person who irrupted violently into the room was no other than Muriel Wilcox.

“Who was Fifth Form monitress last night?” she demanded.

“Can’t you read the list?” asked Nancy sweetly.

“Don’t be cheeky, child. It’s Judy Carey on the list. She was in San, so who took her place?”

“I did, if you really want to know,” was the reply from the irrepressible one.

“Then what have you done with my Bible?”

“Nothing.”

“Nonsense! You must have done something with it because I put it into my locker last night before I left the room, and it isn’t there now. Come, hurry up and tell me! I want it, and I haven’t time to waste!”

“Neither have I; and I haven’t touched your Bible—or anything else of yours!”

“But you must have put it somewhere! I tell you it isn’t there!”

“And I tell you I haven’t touched it! I wouldn’t touch your things with the other end of a barge pole!” retorted Nancy, who was getting angry. “There was nothing to clear up in your room last night—for a wonder!”

“How dare you say such a thing?”

“It’s true! It’s mostly Moyra’s things, I know. But your room never is tidy.”

This was so true that Muriel could not contradict it.

“That’s nothing to do with me,” she said, hastily changing the subject. “And I have no interest in your opinion of the Fifth! What a small Fourth thinks of us doesn’t worry us, I can assure you! All I want at the moment is my Bible.”

“I tell you I don’t know where it is!” cried Nancy, now fully aroused. “But if I did, I jolly well wouldn’t tell you after that! If you want your Bible you can just look for it!”

What would have happened no one ever knew. Muriel was white with rage, and Nancy’s eyes were flashing ominously. Luckily the bell rang just then, and as her lesson was with the Head, Muriel dared not be late. She left the room, flinging an angry, “I’ll see you after about this!” at her opponent as she went.

The rest of the Fourth, who had come in during the encounter, and had been listening with suppressed giggles, scurried to their places, for Miss Ellison, who took them for English, was a lady of whom they stood in considerable awe. She entered the room just as Nancy, who was still boiling with rage, put her books on the desk, and took her place on the little mistress’s platform after a look round to assure herself that they all had notebooks and pencils. They had; but in what way they were otherwise prepared for her it would have been hard to say.

Judy, who had only just returned to school, had a good excuse, but that was more than any one else had.

The lesson dealt with the various cases. Miss Ellison had taken it thoroughly with them during the past fortnight, and this morning she had decided to see how much they had taken in. It was very little indeed, to judge by their replies. Marjorie Jackson knew something about it, it is true; and Christine Ashley had a little idea of the dative case; but the others showed a state of blank ignorance. As the questions went round, and girl after girl either stumbled over a very bald explanation, or looked cheerfully stupid, the disgusted mistress pulled a longer and longer face. Finally, Swanhild and Nancy put the finishing touch to her wrath by playing a game of Naughts and Crosses.

How they dared do it was something that was never explained. Miss Ellison was furious. She scolded them roundly, and finished up by condemning them to spend their Saturday afternoon playing Naughts and Crosses in her study. Most of them had to learn the lesson, and do three exercises on it. Then she left them, and the entire form combined to tell the two what they thought of them.

“You might be two wretched kids in the First!” declared Marjorie. “Naughts and Crosses! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves for letting us down like that!”

Swanhild giggled unrepentantly. “It was worth it just to see Ellie’s face!”

“Oh, you think so, do you?” said her prefect icily. “Well, you can keep on thinking. Nobody here is going to speak to either of you for the rest of the day!”

“If it had been any one else but Ellie!” sighed Josephine Ruffin. “But she reports for the least thing. We don’t want any more reports this term than we can help.”

“You are a goop, Nancy!” declared Judy unexpectedly.

“Goop yourself!” retorted Nancy.

“Mais qu’avez-vous? Qu’est-ce que c’est, ça?”

With one accord they all swung round to the door. It was an embarrassing moment. They had all been so engrossed in their squabble that they had never heard Mademoiselle come in, and now she stood, eyeing them awfully. Marjorie began some stammering apology, but she was not allowed to finish.

“Ça suffit!” declared Mademoiselle. “Asseyez-vous, tout de suite.”

They sat down at once. With Mademoiselle looking at them like that, there was nothing else to do. The Fourth had reason to remember that lesson for some time to come. Mademoiselle was justly annoyed because they had not been ready for her—some of them hadn’t even got their books out—therefore she was less inclined than usual to overlook their shortcomings in her language.

Marjorie afterwards declared that *she* had no time to recover from the shock of finding Mademoiselle with them. Certainly, she seemed totally unable to construct the simplest sentence in French, and crowned all her former iniquities by insisting that the subjunctif imparfait of avoir was “j’avois.”

Mademoiselle became more and more excited, and Marjorie grew more and more stupid. Finally, the latter took refuge in a stolid silence which lasted till the bell rang, and Mademoiselle took her departure, vowing that of all “ces demoiselles bêtes” it had ever been her misfortune to teach in England, the Fourth Form at St. Ronan’s were the worst, and Marjorie Jackson was the very worst of them! But the cup of their sins was not yet full. The next lesson was general knowledge with Miss Miles, who was Second Form mistress, Miss Carthew’s great friend, and who took them once a week.

She was a young, athletic mistress, and a great favourite with every one. She considered that the girls of the present day were lacking in a good general information which they ought to have. This had made her beg the Head to allow her one general knowledge lesson a week in all the forms. Miss Wetherel had granted it, and once a week she explained the meaning of such mystic symbols as C.S.I., K.C.B., R.N., and others. Also she expected them to be able to give the contexts of well-known sayings; to know the chief works of well-known authors, composers, artists, scientists, and mechanics; and sundry other pieces of useful information. Usually, the girls liked this lesson, and looked forward to it, for Miss Miles made a point of varying her work as much as possible, and most subjects got a turn.

This morning, however, the majority seemed to be wool-gathering. Dorothy Thompson assigned the date of the Spanish Armada to 1825; Joan White, asked to name five of Sir Walter Scott's most famous works, looked puzzled, and then submitted the following remarkable list: *David Copperfield*, *The Roadmender*, *Ivanhoe*, *The Master of Ballantrae*, and—er—*The Cottar's Saturday Night*.

Miss Miles raised her eyebrows. "Are you trying to be funny?" she asked coldly. "If so, I advise you to give up the attempt. It is not successful."

Joan subsided, completely crushed, and the mistress went on to the next girl, who, fortunately, was able to give a more accurate reply.

Worse was yet to come, however. We may pass over the fact that Christine Ashley was under the impression that "Play up! Play up, and play the game," came from *Barrack Room Ballads*; that Judy Carey, asked what she should do in the case of a child suffering from cold in the head, said, "I should keep her on lime-water, and sponge with cold water to reduce the temperature." Even Josephine Ruffin's definition of a volcano as "A mountain that throws gas, and rock, and—er—other rubbish into the airs," may be regarded as comparatively unimportant. It was Nancy who, to quote Marjorie, put the lid on everything.

Having exhausted a good many subjects and found them all fall flat, Miss Miles turned, in desperation, to general history, and invited her to stand up and say what she knew about Martin Luther.

At the moment it would have been a great deal easier for Nancy to say what she did *not* know about him. Every idea she had ever had seemed to have taken wings to themselves and flown. However, for the credit of the form, she must do *something*, so she got slowly to her feet, wondering what on earth she could say. A hiss of "Reformation" from Marjorie in the desk behind gave her some foggy notion, so she pulled herself together, and made a shot at it.

"Martin Luther was a great reformer. He reformed the Church—and the Prayer Book—and—er—the Bible—and the King—and—and—the Pope. He did not die a natural death. He was excommunicated by a Papal Bull."

Having displayed this remarkable bit of knowledge, she sat down, and heaved a sigh of relief.

There was a moment's deathly silence while an almost petrified Miss Miles tried to make up her mind whether this was impertinence or sheer idiocy. Having come to the conclusion that Nancy couldn't help it, she read them all such a lecture as left them breathless, told them if ever they behaved like this again she should report them to the Head, and wound up by giving them forty contexts to look up for next week. The bell rang just as she finished a stirring address to them, and she departed, leaving them still breathless.

CHAPTER XXI

AN EXTRAORDINARY AFFAIR

The whereabouts of Muriel Wilcox's Bible remained a mystery for two days. It had been missing on the Friday. On the Sunday night it was discovered on the top of her pile of books in her locker. How it got there nobody knew, least of all its puzzled owner. Nancy Redmond could have had nothing to do with its return, whatever she knew about its loss, for she had been with the others all day, and had never been near the Fifth Form room. It seemed likely to remain unsolved when Nanciebel Trevithen returned on the Monday, thoroughly bored with life. Neither she nor Fenella had taken the infection, and she had been longing for school and the others with a deep intensity.

She returned just in time for the first lesson. She tore into the cloakroom, hung up her outdoor things anyhow, and then rushed to the form room, where she began anxiously hunting for her books while she answered the questions of the others.

"Had a ripping time? My goodness! have you ever been in quarantine?" she demanded, in answer to Maud Sedley's remarks. "Life's too feeding for words. I'd rather have had measles and be done with it at once! Look here! who's cabbaged my Borchardt's Arithmetic?"

"Nobody has. We've got our own," replied Judy.

"Well, it isn't here, anyway."

"Rubbish! It must be there! Who's going to take it?"

"It isn't, I tell you! Look for yourself and see!"

"Well, move out of the way then."

Nanciebel obligingly moved to one side, while Judy rummaged in the desk for the missing book. The others watched her with interest.

"Well, that's weird!" she said, as her efforts proved unavailing.

"It's more than weird—it's positively uncanny!" put in Betty Selwyn.

"What on earth do you mean?" demanded Nanciebel.

"Why, I've been using your desk to keep my music in, and I'll swear I saw your Borchardt on Saturday when I put it away!" was the startling reply.

"Well, I like that! What cheek!" gasped Nanciebel.

"Well, I had to put it somewhere," explained Betty apologetically.

"But why my desk? And oh! *where* is my beastly Borchardt? Hen will be mad if I turn up without it!"

"Hssh! she's coming!" hissed Nancy warningly.

There was an instant scuttle to places as the mathematics mistress entered and glanced round.

"Good-morning, girls," she said pleasantly. "Well, Nanciebel, so you didn't get measles after all?"

"No, Miss Henry," replied Nanciebel.

"Well, I hope you've come back ready to work and make up for what you've lost. Marjorie, just give out these papers, please. I am going to give you a test this morning instead of a lesson."

"Saved again!" breathed Nanciebel, as Marjorie rose and distributed the papers.

Every one was not so pleased, however. Miss Henry's tests were rather apt to be terrific affairs. This morning's was no exception to the rule, and various people groaned inwardly as they scanned the questions she had set. Among them was Judy Carey, whose subject was *not* arithmetic. As she went down that long sheet, her own face matched it in length. Square root, area, fractions, both vulgar and decimal, practice, and a bill! Well, Miss Henry could only scold her! But *what* a paper!

Apparently two or three other people thought the same. As for Nancy Redmond, she looked ready to burst into tears.

"Seven questions set," said Miss Henry as Marjorie went back to her place. "Any five to be attempted, but you must show all your working Now begin."

She sat down and started to correct the exercises she had brought with her, while her pupils set to work in characteristic fashion. One or two people, such as Nanciebel, Marjorie, and Josephine Ruffin, went straight at it, while others headed their papers with a care that spoke of no great anxiety to begin the questions.

After reading and re-reading them, Judy decided to tackle the square root, but her interest in it soon languished, and she fell to fingering the letters in her pocket. There were four of them. One, the thickest, came from home; one was from her godfather; one from Denis, who had been playing Rigger for his college fifteen on the previous Saturday, and who was hoping to get his Blue before he went down; and one from Mrs. Burton—the only one she had not yet read. She wondered what was in it; but at this point a nudge from Nanciebel, who was sitting next her, recalled her to the present and that appalling test. With a sigh she turned back to it, and had another shot at the square root. To her amazement, it came out easily. Encouraged by this, she went on to the practice sum, and got quite a possible answer to that. After that, she worked away steadily until the bell rang, when she found that she had finished her five sums. Hurriedly she scribbled down her answers on a scrap of paper for comparison with the others before she collected her sheets and gave them in.

There was no chance of discussing the paper until the half-past ten break, for Miss Hannah was already in the room and beginning the geography lesson, so Judy opened her atlas at the map of South America and settled down for another three-quarters of an hour of steady work. Miss Hannah, as we have said before, was a martinet, and demanded the full attention of every girl in the class she was taking. This was not so hard as it sounds, for she was an interesting teacher, and the girls always enjoyed her lessons. This morning was no exception to the rule, and the form was astonished when the bell rang and they were obliged to bring their wanderings through Brazil to a close for that morning.

As soon as she had taken her departure, the girls instantly clustered together to discuss the test.

"Wasn't that an awful square root?" said Nancy. "I tried it three times, and got a remainder every time. It *wouldn't* come out!"

"Oh, I got it out," said Judy, surprised. "Quite a decent answer too."

"Did you?" remarked Swanchild. "Then how *did* you manage it? I couldn't make head or tail of it."

"Neither could I," said Marjorie. "I got it to five seven four four, and seven over."

"So did I!" Josephine took up the tale. "Any one else get anything different?"

"Yes, I got it out," replied Nanciebel. "Five seven four four was my answer."

"Oh, that's what I got!" said Judy excitedly.

“Do you people know that it’s break?” asked Jean Stewart’s voice at this juncture. “Go out at once.”

They went, and soon all were drinking milk and munching biscuits in the hall. They were still comparing notes as to answers, and suddenly Nancy cheered.

“Hurrah! I’ve got three answers like other people’s, so they must be right! But it’s funny about that square root,” she added. “I simply couldn’t get it to come to anything else! Judy, how many have you got?”

“All of them!” replied Judy joyfully. “At least, I’ve got them all to the same answer as Nanciebel, and she’s generally right.”

“How topping! It’ll be the first time you’ve done that! I should think Hen will expire from shock.”

“I was lucky to-day,” explained Judy. “I thought they were beasts when I first saw them; but when I began I found they weren’t half bad, really.”

“Jolly good!” said generous Nancy. “I only wish I’d liked them!”

“Um!” Judy had just remembered her unopened letter, and was reading it.

“THE MOORINGS,
“FOLKESTONE, *November 26.*”

“MY DEAR JUDY,

“I am sorry to hear you have been spending a few days in the San. Why was that? You shouldn’t have been ill so soon after your Half Term Exeat. I was sorry that I could not have you, dear. Never mind, we will make up for it at Christmas. You must make out a list of things you would like to do, and we’ll do as many of them as we can.

“I have had a letter from your brother, in which he tells me that you have both been invited to spend the New Year week with his friends the Carfaxes, and that Lady Carfax is going to write to me. I expect you will have a very good time there, as I know they are very jolly people.

“But I think what I am going to tell you now will make up for everything else. I am going to Paris for Easter, and am going to take you with me. My brother has written to me about it. He thinks, and I agree with him, that it will be the best thing in the world for your French. Also, you will love seeing the city, and I will try to take you about to other places. Doesn’t this make up?

“I had a letter from my girl Sylvia to-day, and she tells me she is on her way home from India. The mail must have been delayed somehow, as I should have got it some time ago. She wrote from Brindisi, and the boat is due to arrive to-morrow. She sends her love to you, and asks me to tell you that she hopes to be able to get to St. Ronan’s for Miss Wetherel’s birthday. She is looking forward to seeing you, and says she has some surprises for you from India.”

Thus far had Judy got, when she felt a hand on her arm, and turning round, she saw Nanciebel beside her.

“Judy, Miss Henry wants us both in the staff-room at once.”

“All right,” said Judy, folding up her letter and putting it into her pocket. “Do you know why she wants us?”

“Haven’t the foggiest,” replied Nanciebel. “Have you had a nice letter?”

“Yes—bully. And, Nanciebel, Sylvia Burton is coming home from India, and will be here on Thursday if she can.”

“Oh, *cheers!* Sylvia’s a dear. How topping to see her again. She was awfully popular, you know. I can just remember her. She was head girl my first term here, and jolly decent.”

By that time they had reached the staff-room door, which was open, and Miss Henry was there, obviously awaiting them with impatience.

“Come in,” she said, “and please shut the door.”

They did as they were told, much wondering, for her grave tone and severe expression told them that there was something seriously the matter.

“I want to speak about your test papers,” she said. “Nanciebel, you did five sums, and got four right. The one you got wrong was the square root in which you made an absurd slip which spoilt your working. Judith, you did the same five sums, and got precisely the same results. Four right, and the square root wrong—owing to the same slip as Nanciebel made. When I tell you that you two were the only girls to make that slip, you will see that it is—well—a strange coincidence. Wait, Nanciebel!”—for that young lady had opened her lips to speak—“I have not yet finished. If it had been any other sum, I should have thought nothing of it. The first slip of all, however, was made by me in that sum. I put a six instead of a nine as the final figure of the square root. Every one else has worked the sum quite correctly as it stood, getting a remainder. Only you two brought it out. Now, can you explain how it was that you both made precisely the same mistake in working it out? It is such a silly slip, too. If either of you had thought for a moment, you would have known you were wrong.”

They stood looking at her in a dumbfounded silence. Nanciebel was the first to speak.

“Miss Henry, do you mean that you think we *copied?*” she asked.

“I don’t want to think so, Nanciebel,” replied the mistress. “At the same time, it looks very strange on the face of it.”

“It does,” agreed Nanciebel. “But we didn’t copy; did we, Judy?”

Judy lifted scared grey eyes to Miss Henry’s face. “Oh no!” she said.

“Then how do you account for it?” asked Miss Henry. “It is not like you, Nanciebel, to make such a silly mistake. On the other hand, it is most unlike Judith to get all her work correct. What am I to think? Will you both give me your word of honour that you did not copy?”

“Oh yes!” said Nanciebel. “On my honour as a Guide, I did not copy.”

“And you, Judith?”

“On my Guide honour I didn’t.”

“Very well,” said the mistress, “we will say no more about it. I can trust that promise, I know. You may go now.”

They left her in silence, which lasted till they reached the head of the stairs. Then Judy faced round on Nanciebel.

“Nanciebel!” she cried imploringly, “you do believe I didn’t copy, don’t you?”

“Idiot! Of course I believe you!” replied Nanciebel tersely. “It was just a fluke—that’s all! I think Hen’s gone clean *balmy!* As if a *Guide* would stoop to do such things! She must be off her head! Don’t you worry about it, old thing!”

Judy dropped the hand she had laid on Nanciebel’s arm. Her face wore a frightened expression.

“Here, come in here!” said Nanciebel, pulling her into a room which was used for storing things. “You silly kid, what’s the matter?”

Judy suddenly broke down. "Oh, Nanciebel," she sobbed, "I'm so frightened! Such horrid things have happened to me since I came to England, and people won't believe me when I say I didn't do them! And I didn't—oh, I didn't!"

Nanciebel hugged her. "You poor baby. It's all right, Judy honey. I know you didn't copy, and so does Hen if she's got any sense—which I greatly doubt! Don't cry so, kiddy. It's all right. I won't say anything about it, and I'm sure Hen won't."

She comforted Judy in downright fashion, and presently the younger girl was persuaded to stop crying, and they both went down to their history lesson very late. Luckily, Miss Carthew knew when to turn a blind eye, so she merely said, "You have been with Miss Henry, haven't you? Hurry up and sit down."

There the matter might have ended, for certainly Nanciebel would never have mentioned it again. Unfortunately, Celia Dacre had been passing at the time, and had heard Judy's appeal to Nanciebel after the interview with Miss Henry. She lost no time in spreading it, and by tea-time it had almost assumed the proportions of a penny dreadful, and Nanciebel was electrified when she was sent for by Liliias, who wished to know how much truth there was in the statement that she, Nanciebel, allowed Judy Carey to copy from her systematically, and that Judy paid her in kind for doing all her homework for her!

"I must say, Nanciebel," added Liliias, "that I don't believe there's a word of truth in it. Still, does Judy copy at all?"

For one moment Nanciebel was too choked with rage to answer. Then she got out, "It's a beastly lie! Who says she does? She *never* does! If all kids in this school were as honourable as she is, it would be a jolly sight better!"

"My dear girl, it's all over the school," replied Liliias quietly. "Don't use such language, Nanciebel."

"It's all that cat Muriel's doing, I know!" declared Nanciebel, who was far too angry to give any heed to her language.

"No; it is Celia Dacre, so far as I can trace it, who started it. She says that Miss Henry caught Judy copying from you this morning, and she overheard Judy begging you not to tell any one about it. I'm afraid that Peggy Green has not improved matters by saying that it's a funny thing that Judy got all her arithmetic right when she never does."

"That's true enough," admitted Nanciebel, who was beginning to cool down a little. "Look here, Liliias, this is the true story."

Then she told Liliias what had happened. The head girl nodded her head when it was ended. "I see. Well, we must put a stop to it, of course. I will see Celia, and forbid her to repeat it any more, and you and Marjorie must do your best to stop it in your form." She paused. Then she made up her mind, and told the younger girl what she had not heard before, the story of Judy's sleep-walking. "So you see," she concluded, "it matters very much if Judy is worried like that again. She might hurt herself in her sleep."

"Don't you worry, Liliias," said Nanciebel grimly. "Marjorie and I can settle the Fourth—and the other juniors too. You deal with the Fifth, and it ought to be all right."

She left the room then, and went to interview Miss Henry, with the result that the mistress informed a startled Fourth the next day that there was no question of copying for any one, and that she was going to set the test over again, and cancel the other marks. Also that any one who spread scandal abroad would be dealt with by herself. She left the "dealings" to their imaginations.

The fresh test was set, and Judy got four out of her five sums right, only coming down on a compound interest over which every one came to grief. So the story died down.

CHAPTER XXII

THE COURT OF HONOUR

“There will be a Court of Honour on Saturday at 12.30 p.m. All officers, patrol leaders, and seconds will attend. M. V. CARTHEW, Captain.”

This was the notice on the Guide notice board that attracted the attention of everybody on the Friday after that arithmetic test.

“A Court of Honour? I wonder what for?” mused Nancy.

“Goodness knows. P’raps to decide about tests,” suggested Swanhild.

“Tests fixed! Madam told me so last night when I took my basket to show her.”

“Well, then, I can’t tell you! Come on to French, or M’selle will be raving.”

Nancy reluctantly allowed herself to be dragged off to the form room, where Mademoiselle was already piling up her books on the desk, and keeping a stern eye on the clock. It was a grievance with all her pupils that, no matter whether the bell rang on time or not, she insisted on beginning at the exact minute she was supposed to begin. It was something of a comfort that she also finished at the exact minute, and, as Jean Stewart had once said, you couldn’t expect to have it both ways.

Another grievance which the juniors had against her was the fact that she wasn’t in the least like the Mademoiselle of school stories. She had a strain of English blood in her, and she kept order as thoroughly as Miss Ellison, the much-dreaded senior mistress. No ragging went on in her lessons; and work for her was prepared with a thoroughness that was surprising. Nancy was obliged to pull herself together and forget about the notice she had just read.

It troubled other people too. Phillis English, on reading it, went very red; Muriel Wilcox, who was with her as usual, turned rather white; and Judy Carey, hearing of it later, looked so horribly guilty, that all her friends instantly asked what she had been doing, while her foes jumped to the conclusion that the matter of the vase and the miniature was to be taken up by the Guides, and said so—loudly.

Naturally there was an immediate squabble between Celia, Nancy, Peggy Green, and Josephine. These four were at daggers drawn just at present, and the unpleasant things that they said to each other showed anything but a sisterly spirit. Lilias came along five minutes after Peggy had thrown down the gauntlet by saying that she hoped the Court of Honour would have Judy Carey up, and suspend her from the Guides until she *did* own up.

There was some excuse for her friends’ partisanship, but none at all for Nancy’s language, Lilias coming up in time to overhear her pleasing remark, “You goat-hearted, pie-faced *owl!*”

“Nancy!” gasped Lilias, scarcely able to believe her ears.

Nancy turned scarlet, and Peggy generously rushed into the breach.

“It was my fault, Lilias,” she said. “I—er—annoyed Nancy.”

“It doesn’t matter how much you annoyed Nancy,” replied Lilias icily. “I will not allow such language. It’s simply disgraceful! Learn the first two paragraphs of *Sesame and Lilies*, Nancy, and repeat them to me at half-past five. And the rest of you can all have order marks for talking in the corridors during school hours.”

Then she marched off to the Sixth Form room, where she demanded that her colleagues should pull up the members of the lower forms whenever they heard them using slang.

As for the middles, they retired to their own form room, and for once made common cause over Liliás's punishment. Nancy was commiserated on all sides, and received far more attention than was good for her. She learned the paragraphs because she knew she must, and she was not altogether devoid of common sense, but she went to the head girl's room in a thoroughly unrepentant mood, which was not improved by Liliás's short lecture on the evils of improper language.

"I suppose they'll drag *that* up at the court," she grumbled in an undertone to Nanciebel as she came back to her seat for prep.

"Rot! They can't! It's nothing to do with the Guides," replied Nanciebel.

"If you two want order marks, you're going the right way to get them," observed Thekla, who was taking preparation. "Sit down at once, Nancy, and go on with your work, both of you."

Two order marks in one day was rather more than Nancy cared for, even in her present frame of mind, so she did as she was told with a scowl that startled even the Third. Thekla very sensibly took no notice of it, but went on with her history as soon as she had seen them all settled down again.

Preparation went on in a rather stormy silence, and a good deal of the work was scamped. Judy had been seized with a sudden fit of versification, and, instead of learning the indicative tenses of "moneo," was struggling with rhymes and scansion. Celia Dacre was devoting *her* time to a sketch of the forthcoming Court of Honour, with Judy—labelled, which was as well!—grovelling on the ground before some one obviously intended for Miss Carthew, while Muriel and Phillis stood in triumphant attitudes in the foreground. Nanciebel was writing out her notes of "Oaken Leaves," "The Maid peeped in at the Window," and "Put on thy Smock on a Monday," which Miss Matthews had demanded from their division.

It was, by the way, a tremendous grievance with them that "Matt" had suddenly taken it into her head to insist that they must show her notes of the new dances they learned. They had only themselves to thank for it. They had been so careless about their dancing this past week, that she had felt this was the only way to impress it on their memories. Also, she strongly disapproved of their bringing their private feuds into class with them.

The others were feeling like anything but work, and prep dragged.

Thekla was too busy with her analysis of the causes for Wyatt's Rebellion to pay much heed to them so long as they were quiet. She went on steadily with her work, only ceasing when the bell rang for the end of prep. Then she gathered up her books and left them to see to the tidying, merely remarking as she went out that she should come in after supper to see that they had left the room in order. The stormy silence continued without a break. Even the Third were impressed, and collected their belongings and went off to their own room with less noise than usual.

At supper the people who sat beside members of the Fourth were agreeably surprised at being permitted to talk without being interrupted every minute or so. As for the Fourth, they were thankful when bed-time came and they could trot off to their various rooms. The members of the Tree and the Butterfly Rooms talked hard enough then; but in the Bird Room the gloomy silence was unabated.

Nancy made one remark before she got into bed. "I'm sick of everything!" she said fiercely. "And I hope Liliás turns *green* during the night!"

With this charitable wish she curled up between the sheets.

Swanhild snuggled down. "The Sixth are pigs!" she observed.

“Oh, be quiet if you can’t say anything decent!” snapped Marjorie.

“Good-night,” remarked Nanciebel. “A better temper to you all in the morning!”

Judy completed it. “Go and bake your faces!” she said, as she too retired.

Marjorie switched off the light with such vim that it was a wonder she didn’t smash something, and Matron, looking in ten minutes later, found them lying in darkness and a profound silence.

“Good-night,” she said cheerfully. “I’m going to inspect your drawers in the morning.”

Nobody answered her, so she withdrew, wondering what on earth had happened.

Luckily a night’s sleep improved matters, and they all rose in a fairly amiable mood. Things went on as usual, except that Guide meeting was half an hour earlier, and they were dismissed at twelve instead of half-past. The leaders and seconds stayed for the court, while the others went to their practice and prep. Miss Carthew waited till the last Guide had vanished; then she took her seat in the centre of the circle. Standing with hands at the salute, they all solemnly repeated the pledge.

“I promise on my honour that nothing which is reported here shall be repeated by me outside this Court of Honour.”

The captain gravely spoke her reply. “I trust you on your honour to keep this promise.”

Then they sat down, and Thekla, the secretary, read aloud the minutes from the last court. They were approved and signed, and one or two notices were then given out. Tests were discussed, and the Saturday fortnight hence was decided on for the examinations. When this was over, there was a momentary silence. Every one knew that now the real business of the meeting was at hand, and every one mentally braced herself to meet it.

Then Miss Carthew spoke. “I want to talk about the lack of the true Guide spirit that I have noticed this term in our company,” she said slowly. “I am sorry to have to say it, but it seems to me that every day it gets worse. There is no feeling of being ‘a sister to every other Guide.’ It seems to me that many of us are in danger of completely forgetting the fourth law. We talk of ‘the great sisterhood of Guides.’ I can’t think that our company has been anything of a sisterhood this term. What makes it worse is that some of the people who are showing this lack of the Guide spirit are Guides who, in the normal course of events, will become cadets next term.”

She stopped, and there was a little silence.

Marjorie Jackson broke it. “I know what you mean, madam,” she said soberly. “Unfortunately, we can’t get at the bottom of the mystery of Muriel Wilcox’s broken vase, and I’m afraid till that’s settled it is going to be difficult for some of us—to feel sisterly.”

“Then what becomes of your enrolment promise?” asked the captain.

Two or three people went scarlet. Then Thekla spoke.

“Madam, may we have Judy Carey here, as she is the one who is supposed to have broken it, and ask her on her honour as a Guide to tell us whether or not she did it?”

Miss Carthew looked worried. “I should like to do so—I have Miss Wetherel’s permission to do so. The point is, will you all believe what Judy says?”

Phillis rose. “I am sorry, madam, but if Guide Judy Carey still says—here, and on her Guide honour—that she did *not* break the second vase, I can’t believe her because I am sure that she did!”

“I agree with that!” Muriel spoke.

The captain looked stern. “What proof have you of that?”

“It seems to me to be obvious,” replied Phillis.

“Have you any other evidence than that of which we already know?”

Phillis shook her head. “No, madam. But—what could be plainer? I mean, who else could have done it?”

Then Muriel spoke under a sudden impulse. “If Guide Judy Carey will own up to it before the court, I will undertake that the matter shall end.”

Marjorie Jackson sprang to her feet. “Madam, will you please send for Judy?” she said. “I think she ought to be given a chance to defend herself. She is in my patrol, and I am certain that she will only tell the truth. I know her, you see.”

Miss Carthew nodded. “Thekla, will you bring Guide Judy Carey here,” she said briefly.

Thekla got up and went out of the room at once, returning a few minutes later with a scared-looking Judy. The captain indicated the place where she was to stand.

“Guide Judy Carey,” she said, “you are accused of breaking the first law, ‘A Guide’s honour is to be trusted.’ What have you to say?”

Judy opened her grey eyes widely. “I don’t understand, madam.”

“You are charged with breaking a vase belonging to Guide Muriel Wilcox and denying having done so.”

“I didn’t break the vase, and I did say I hadn’t done it. It’s the truth!”

“Will you repeat that statement on your honour as a Guide?”

“Of course! On my honour as a Guide, I did *not* break Muriel Wilcox’s second vase—I *did* let the first drop!—and I know absolutely nothing about it!”

The captain looked round at the others. “Will you please withdraw to the other end of the hall and decide whether or not you will accept Guide Judy Carey’s word.”

They withdrew, and while they discussed it in undertones, Miss Carthew glanced through her notes, Thekla elaborated some of her capitals, and Marjorie Stewart, the other lieutenant, watched her. Presently Madge Selwyn, patrol leader of the cadets, came back.

“I am sorry, madam, but we cannot agree as to our verdict,” she said quietly.

The captain looked dismayed. “You cannot agree? How is that?”

Madge’s tones became indignant. “Some of them say, madam, that Judy isn’t English, and hasn’t been long enough in the Guides to realize what Guide honour means—the silly asses!” she added, forgetting for the moment where she was.

Miss Carthew passed it over. “How does the majority stand?”

“The majority is in favour of accepting Judy’s word.”

“Then we must leave it at that. Call the others.”

Madge called them, and they came back, Muriel looking defiant, and Phillis triumphant.

Miss Carthew made little comment on what had occurred, and as quickly as possible she closed the court.

As they were going, she called Muriel back to her. “Muriel,” she said, “I have nothing to say just at present, but I should like you to remember that in England no man is considered guilty until he has been proved so.”

She released the girl and went out of the hall.

Muriel stood staring after her. Somehow, that last little speech of the captain’s had shaken her sureness of Judy’s guilt.

CHAPTER XXIII

MISS WETHEREL'S BIRTHDAY

"Quis for a letter?" Thus Betty Selwyn in that extraordinary voice of hers as she danced into the Bird Room at twelve o'clock on the Thursday morning following the events narrated in the last chapter.

Eager cries of "Ego! Ego!" answered her. With a laugh she tossed it over to Judy.

"There you are, Judy my lamb! Good luck go with it!"

Judy, who was getting into her brown velvet frock, preparatory to running down to the lodge gates to await Sylvia Burton—or, to give her her proper title, Sylvia Collins—stopped with her arm in one sleeve, and caught at it eagerly.

"Put on your frock properly, child," said Marjorie reprovingly; and as her junior had by this time discovered that the missive was only from her godfather, she consented to finish dressing. Then, while Nanciebel hung away her school uniform, she opened her letter.

Mr. Bolland was not much of a correspondent, and as a rule his fortnightly epistles to his god-daughter were brief in the extreme. On this occasion, however, he seemed to have rather more than usual to say.

"MY DEAR JUDITH," the letter began, "I am writing to inform you that I have instructed my sister to take you to Paris for your spring holiday. I have many reasons for so doing. The chief is that I believe that you will acquire a better French accent there than anywhere else. I should wish you to talk in French as much as possible while you are there. Three weeks will make a great difference to you if you give your mind to it.

"Your sister Mollie is spending the winter here in Toronto, staying with my other sister, Mrs. Raymond, who seems to like her very well. Mollie will stay here for quite a while. She is going to the Art School, as my sister thinks she shows talent for such work.

"Do not forget to cable me if you should find that you have need of anything. I am enclosing a circular note for a hundred dollars for you. You will want to go shopping for Christmas. Don't forget to send off your letters and parcels in good time.

"Your affectionate godfather,
"WILFRED P. BOLLAND."

Judy read this through very carefully, and when she came to the end she sighed. The money was very acceptable, but what she most wanted from Canada was the dear home people. Not even a hundred dollars, the largest sum she had ever handled in her life, could compensate for their miss.

Nancy looked up at the sigh.

"Anything the matter?" she queried.

But Judy had discovered a postscript on the other side of the paper and was reading it.

“P.S.—I expect I shall come over early in the New Year. I shall trust to see you then.”

As Nancy somewhat impatiently repeated her question, she looked up.

“No-o-o. Only my godpapa is crossing soon.”

“Crossing—what?” inquired Swanhild, who was adorning her golden plaits with enormous brown bows.

“The Herring Pond, of course,” laughed Nancy. “You’ll be able to hear all about your home folks at first hand when you see him, Judy.”

Judy swung round from the window where she had been gazing somewhat forlornly down the drive.

“I wonder,” she said deliberately, “why it is that English people always seem to think of Canada as though it was a little two-by-four shanty! My home is hundreds of miles from Toronto. It takes thirty-two hours by rail to get there. Even *then* we’re miles away from the nearest track. I guess my godpapa won’t have seen any of them since the Fall. At least, Mollie’s in Toronto, so he’ll have seen *her*.”

The five stared at her as she turned back to the window. There was a little awkward pause before any one spoke. Then Betty, who had plumped herself down on the nearest bed—shades of Matron and her clean counterpanes!—glanced at her watch.

“Nearly half-past,” she announced. “Aren’t you going to meet Sylvia Burton, Judy? You’d better buck!”

“Yes,” said Judy. She left the window and crossed the room. As she reached the door she stopped and once more faced them all.

“You’re jolly decent,” she said, with a little choke, “but you don’t understand, any of you.”

Then she vanished, leaving them looking uncertainly at each other. Nanciebel was the first to speak. “Homesick,” she said. “For goodness’ sake, don’t any of you take any notice, or she’ll be howling herself sick. She’s on the verge of it as it is.”

“We aren’t idiots!” returned Nancy indignantly.

“Who said you were? I’m only warning you.”

“But she oughtn’t to be homesick now!” said Marjorie in worried tones. “She’s been here nearly three months now!”

“Well,” said Nanciebel, “if you had been crabbed by any girl as Judy has been crabbed by Muriel and Phillis and Celia, and if you had been hauled up before a mistress and practically accused of cheating just the day after you’d come from the San, I should think *you’d* feel pretty cheap! Are you all ready now? Because, if so, I think we’d better go down. I expect some of the old girls have arrived.”

Accordingly, they all left the room, and proceeded to the entrance hall, where, as Nanciebel had thought, some of the old girls were already gathered together chattering eagerly, among them Elsie Jackson, who pounced upon Marjorie immediately, demanding to know the reason of her delay, and in the general confusion the question of Judy’s homesickness was forgotten.

Meanwhile Judy, with her school blazer as a compromise for not wearing her big coat, was standing at the lodge gates, watching the arrival of one of the motor wagonettes from the station. As it drew near it slowed down, and stopped long enough to let a pretty, frail-looking girl of about twenty-three get down. Judy guessed this to be Sylvia Collins, and a sudden rush of shyness overcame her. Luckily Sylvia was not shy, and she came languidly across the drive.

“Are you Judy Carey?” she asked. “Yes; I thought so. I’m Sylvia. Sweet of you to meet me.”

“How do you do?” said Judy very shyly.

Sylvia laughed, a sweet, clear laugh, and at once her languid airs vanished.

“Come along round the garden,” she said, slipping an arm round Judy’s shoulders. “You’re quite warm enough in your blazer, aren’t you? I want to hear all about everything, you know!—how you like St. Ronan’s, and who are your chums, and everything. You know, it’s partly owing to me that Uncle Wilfred chose St. Ronan’s for you. Mother had told him how happy I was here, and he believed that you would be happy too. Are you?”

“I have some bully pals,” replied Judy, evading a direct answer to the last question.

“Who are they?” asked Sylvia. “I expect I know them.”

“Marjorie Jackson is one,” said Judy. “And Nancy Redmond, and Nanciebel Trevithen, and Swanhild Anderssen.”

“I know Marjorie, of course,” returned Sylvia. “She was a First Form baby when I was here, and so were Nancy and Nanciebel. I expect Swanhild is a sister of Thekla Anderssen—she was Fourth Form in my time. And aren’t there some young Selwyns about your age? Anne Selwyn, who left when I did, used to tell me about the twins at home, I remember. There was a Fourth Form sister too, Madge. I suppose she’s Sixth now.”

“Yes, Betty and Dorothea,” replied Judy. “And Madge Selwyn *is* in the Sixth.”

“I suppose Deirdre O’Farrell has left? Yes; she would, of course. She was a chum of Elsie Jackson’s, and Elsie left this summer, I know.”

“A Deirdre O’Farrell is coming to-day,” said Judy “Marjorie Jackson said so last week.”

“Ah, well, Marjorie would know. Elsie and Deirdre used to be inseparables—we christened them David and Jonathan, I remember. Are there any more of the Jacksons?”

“Yes, a little one, Betty.”

“She would be the one they called ‘Baby,’ I suppose,” commented Sylvia. Then she laughed again as she looked at her companion. “You don’t know how quaint it is to come back after four years! Everything has changed so. People who were babies when I was Sixth Form have left or are Sixth Form themselves, and baby sisters at home are now in the Third and Fourth Forms at school! Why, in six years time I shall be thinking of sending Mary here!”

“Mary?” queried Judy interestedly.

“Yes; my small daughter. Didn’t mother tell you I had a baby girl? She’s at Folkestone just now—you’ll see her at Christmas, I expect. Well, now, I suppose we ought to be going in. But don’t run away and leave me, Judy. We’ve heaps to talk about yet. Keep a place beside you in Hall this afternoon. By the way, what are you people giving the Head?”

“I—I don’t know if I ought to say,” said Judy hesitatingly. “Lilias said we were to keep it a secret.”

“Lilias? Is that Lilias Carfrae? Is she head girl now?”

“Yes,” nodded Judy. “D’you know her, Sylvia?”

“I can just remember her,” replied Sylvia; “a little pale thing, with masses of fair hair and wonderful eyes.”

To Judy, who worshipped Lilias, this seemed a most inadequate description. She decided that Sylvia couldn’t really remember the head girl at all.

But just at this point they reached the house, encountering Lilias herself. Sylvia instantly stopped, and held out her hands.

“Hallo, Lilias!” she said. “Do you remember me?”

“Of course!” replied Liliás, with a sudden lighting of her golden hazel eyes. “You were the head girl here my first two terms.”

“And now you are head girl yourself?”

Liliás laughingly assented, and Judy, seeing that Sylvia was likely to be thoroughly occupied for the rest of the time before luncheon, slipped away, to be hailed gaily by her own friends.

Then Marjorie proceeded to introduce her. “This is my sister Elsie,” she said. “She was head girl here last year, you know.”

“Why should she know?” demanded Elsie Jackson, as she shook hands. “I’m awfully glad to know you at last, Judy. I’ve heard reams about you from Marjorie.”

Judy, looking at her, decided that she was very nice, though not pretty like Marjorie and Betty. She had a jolly, tanned face, and her eyes had the same dancing lights as the others had. She was Liliás’s extreme opposite, but somehow Judy realized how it was she had been one of the most popular head girls St. Ronan’s had ever had. There was not time for any more conversation, for just then the gong sounded for luncheon, and the old girls had to go and sit at the tables specially prepared for them, while the school squeezed itself round three instead of the usual five. Luncheon was a most hilarious meal. From the two centre tables could be heard a continual “Do you remember?” and “Oh, what about that time when——?” as the old girls recalled their schooldays. Judy was seated between Jean Stewart and Nancy Redmond, and Nancy spent most of the time in pointing out to her friend various notabilities. That one with the bobbed fair hair was Frances Hutchinson, who played hockey for her county; the girl with the blue frock and wavy black locks was Deirdre O’Farrell, who had been noted at St. Ronan’s for the numberless “rows” she had contrived to get into. Did Judy see that awfully pretty one with the amber earrings? That was Vernie Stocks, who wrote such lovely fairy plays for children; and so on, and so on, till Judy’s head fairly spun round with the effort of trying to remember each one distinctly.

When luncheon was over, there was a dash made for the hall, where the presentation was to take place, and people “rushed” chairs for various old girls. Judy remembered, just in time, that Sylvia had asked her to keep a place for her, so she grabbed the two empty chairs next to the three that Marjorie had taken, and, as the best means of keeping them, sat across them. She had just settled herself when Muriel Wilcox and Phillis English came in. They looked round, but by that time all the seats available had been taken.

“Have to stand, I suppose,” grumbled Phillis. But Muriel’s eye had lighted upon Judy.

“Certainly not,” she said, and made a bee-line towards the younger girl. “What are you doing with two chairs?” she demanded. “Please give me them.”

“I want one for Sylvia Burton,” explained Judy.

“Well, you can keep one for her, but you must stand.”

“What under the canopy for? Is it another old girl?”

Muriel was truthful, if she was hasty and resentful, so she admitted that the chair was for herself and Phillis.

“Fourth Form can’t very well sit when the Fifth are standing,” she said, making it a point of etiquette—and the etiquette of precedence was very strict at St. Ronan’s.

If she had left it at that, Judy would have given up the chair, but unfortunately she was in a hurry, and she gave it a little shake to quicken the younger girl. At once Judy’s back was up.

“Fetch a chair from somewhere else if you want one!” she retorted, clinging tightly to both as she spoke.

The ready temper flamed Muriel's cheeks at once. "Give me the chair at once," she commanded.

"Pooh! Get off your foot; you're standing on it!" replied her adversary.

The senior did not understand the Americanism, but she understood the tone, and what might have happened it is hard to say, but luckily the visitors came in at that moment, and among them Sylvia and the Jackson sisters, who came straight to the little group. Muriel was obliged to give up the struggle, and retired worsted to the back of the room, where she joined Phillis and stood silently vowing vengeance.

As for Judy, she was so elated by her little victory that she forgot to be shy, and chattered away as gaily as Marjorie was doing till Miss Wetherel appeared, and there was a hush as she took her place on the little raised dais at the end of the hall. Then Liliás and Jean Stewart came forward bearing between them a huge tray on which was set a dainty little coffee service in Crown Derby china.

"This is from the present staff and girls of St. Ronan's, Miss Wetherel," the head girl said in her clear tones which reached to the back of the hall. "We give it with much love and our best wishes to you for a happy birthday."

Miss Wetherel smiled at them, and then she turned to the waiting school. "I cannot tell you, staff and girls, how much I thank you all from the bottom of my heart, not only for it, but for your good wishes." She touched one of the dainty cups with caressing fingers, while the girls clapped thunderously.

Then it was the turn of the old girls, and they were represented by Deirdre O'Farrell, who begged the headmistress's acceptance of a charming brooch, set with amethysts and pearls. Finally, Peggy Cavendish, the chosen baby of the school, presented her with an exquisite bouquet of bronze and gold chrysanthemums; and when Miss Wetherel had kissed Peggy and again thanked them, they all took hands and sang the St. Ronan's school song, with its inspiring chorus:

"Forward, and onward, and upward we journey,
Proud to the last of our school and its name
Though the world part us, still we remember
Ronan's, St. Ronan's, and bring it fair fame!"

After that, Liliás called for three cheers for Miss Wetherel, and then three more for the school, and the little ceremony was over, and they were free to do what they would till tea-time.

Many of the old girls crowded into the drawing-room, and told Miss Wetherel all their news and their ambitions, for she took a very real interest in the doings of all her girls, past as well as present. Others annexed various members of the staff, and chattered to them. Others, again, sought out friends among the present girls, and with them wandered about the house and grounds. Among these last was Sylvia Collins, who kept Judy firmly at her side all the while, and amidst the many greetings she gave and answered, found time, now and then, to smile down at the little girl. Altogether, Judy's afternoon was a very happy one, and when, after tea, she went upstairs to the Bird Room to change into her white georgette frock, Swanhild whispered to Nanciebel, "Goodness! Judy Carey is pretty! I never noticed it before!"

The whole evening was a pleasant one for her. She danced nearly every dance, including two with Elsie Jackson and one with Sylvia, and, actually, one with Liliás, during which she

was so overcome that she remained completely tongue-tied.

Nancy and she went in to supper together, and they contrived to have a very good time of it. Not a thing happened to spoil the evening's pleasure; and when, at eleven o'clock, Judy tumbled into bed, it was to fall asleep and dream happily that Mollie was in England with her, which made a fitting wind-up to the events of the day.

CHAPTER XXIV

LESLIE ENTERS FOR A COMPETITION

As was only to be expected, there was a general feeling of flatness on the Friday and Saturday following the birthday celebrations. The juniors were tired as a result of sitting up two hours beyond their usual bed-time, and were cross and snappish with each other. Betty Jackson and Peggy Cavendish fought a regular pitched battle when they were dressing on the Friday morning, because Betty accused Peggy of putting on frills because she had been chosen to present the bouquet. Aileen, the youngest of the Stewart girls, flew to fetch Nurse to separate the combatants, and was later charged with telling tales by those indignant young persons, who were put into silence until break, and further deprived of their breakfast marmalade. Aileen declared that she hadn't told tales, and as half the First supported her, saying that if she hadn't fetched Nurse, *some one* would have come, anyhow, for the two had made such a noise, and the other half sided with Betty and Peggy, who were in the unique position of being allies and yet not speaking to each other, things were rather strained among them.

In the Second Form, Winnie Cavendish quarrelled with Dorothy Ashley because Elsie Jackson had danced with Dorothy and not with Winnie; while in the Third, Fenella Trevithen brooded by herself in a corner because Celia Dacre had said to Leslie Stewart and Nance Verdeley, "Fenella looks like a balloon in her new white frock!" and the other two had agreed with her. Fenella felt that life was very hard for fat people.

The Fourth and Fifth Forms were in no better case. The feud between Judy Carey and Muriel Wilcox, which had lately shown signs of dying a natural death, flared up more fiercely than ever after the chair episode. Peggy Green, more from a desire to have things comfortably cleared up than anything else, begged Judy to own up about the vase and the other things, and Judy's ready temper had flashed out at once.

"I suppose you're not accustomed to people who tell the truth!" she snapped. "It looks like it, anyway!"

"I was, until you came to St. Ronan's," retorted Peggy. "I think it's quite time we sent some missionaries to Canada to teach them to speak the truth."

Judy was so angry that she could scarcely speak. At length, "Learn to tell the truth yourself," she spluttered.

"And leave Judy Carey alone!" put in Nancy Redmond. "It's no business of yours! Look after your own affairs!"

"Oh, let them alone!" said Marjorie Jackson impatiently. "People who have such horrid minds that they go round suspecting everybody aren't worth bothering about. Come on, Judy, and never mind her!"

And the trio marched off with their arms round each other.

In the Fifth Form, Marjorie Stewart and Muriel Wilcox cut each other most studiously as a result of some unguarded words from Marjorie on the advisability of letting the subject drop. "I'm sick of it!" she concluded. "You're behaving like a spoilt, petted child, Muriel."

Naturally, Phillis English and two or three of the others joined in, and before nine o'clock that morning there was a grand split in the Fifth. Only, since people of sixteen and seventeen cannot use their tongues as freely as their juniors without loss of dignity, this expressed itself

in very icy politeness towards the contending parties. The Sixth were the only people to remain unaffected.

“And just as well,” observed Liliás, when Jean Stewart pointed this out to her. “Most other folk are like bears with sore heads. I’m going to ask the Head if we can have a Seniors versus Middles match this afternoon. We must do something!”

“I quite agree,” said Jean thoughtfully. “But that’s only settling them for this afternoon, Lil. What about this evening after prep?”

“Well, the juniors up to the Third are all going to bed at half-past seven to make up for what they missed the night before last,” replied Liliás, “and it’s Mission night for the others, so they will be well occupied.”

This “Mission” night to which she referred meant the night on which the girls spent two hours or so in making children’s garments to be sent up to the North London Mission. At this mention, Jean screwed up her face.

“I shouldn’t have said they were exactly in the mood for making flannel petticoats and knitting vests,” she said. “Who’s in charge to-night?”

“Miss Somers,” said Liliás, suddenly looking thoughtful.

There was reason for it. Miss Somers was a pretty, graceful girl who could manage her own form—the First—and Second Form people quite well, but who seemed incapable of enforcing any order in the middle forms.

The little ones adored her, and she was a delightful teacher; but, as she herself said, she was never intended to have charge of elder girls. She had no duties, therefore, in the Middle and Upper Schools except this evening twice a term, and occasional church duty. As it was, she dreaded Mission evening; and, considering the condition of most of the girls, it looked rather as though there was a lively evening before her.

The prefects looked at each other.

“Perhaps Miss Wetherel will take it for her,” suggested Jean. “She’s done that once or twice before.”

“Not to-night,” replied Liliás. “She is going to a conference of some kind at Harrow, and Miss Ellison and Miss Henry are going with her.”

“Are you sure?”

“Quite. She told me this morning after breakfast, just as the visitors were going.”

Jean whistled expressively. “I say!”

There was a little silence. Then Thekla spoke “I suppose one of us couldn’t do it for her?” she queried.

“What reason could we possibly give?”

The Norwegian girl slowly nodded her head. What reason *could* they give? Prefects can’t very well offer to do the duty of a mistress in quite that haphazard style.

“Carty won’t offer to do it, I suppose?” said Jean.

“It’s her free day. She isn’t going anywhere, I know; but you can’t expect her to take on extra duty on her free day.”

“Well, perhaps they’ll behave themselves after all,” said Thekla. “Let’s hope so, anyway.”

Nevertheless it seemed a forlorn hope. How could they know that by the time the evening came the whole school would have something to talk about which would put all ideas of bad behaviour out of every one’s head?

“I suppose we couldn’t go and sew with them?” suggested Jean.

"My dear girl, have you got the time? Because I haven't," replied Liliás. "I'm all behind with my work this week."

Jean subsided. She most certainly had *not* the time. Like Liliás, she was all behind with prep.

"We must just hope for the best," said the head girl at length. "There's the bell. Come along, you people."

They left Liliás's study, where they had been having their discussion, and crossed the entrance hall in the direction of the form room. Just as they reached the door they met Muriel and Phillis. Muriel's pretty face was disfigured by a scowl, and Phillis looked sulky. Immediately behind them came Dorothy Howell, and she looked flushed and tearful. Liliás cast a quick glance at the little group as she opened the door of the Sixth Form room and went in, followed by the other two. It was evident that the whole Fifth was splitting up into fresh cliques. However, what occurred later put everything out of their heads.

It began when Moyra O'Hara, meeting Jean Stewart on the stairs, asked her if she had had her letter.

"Letter?" repeated Jean. "What letter? There's none to come that I know of."

"Well, there's one for you on the table, anyhow," replied Moyra.

Jean ran downstairs and found the letter, which was addressed simply to "Miss Stewart, St. Ronan's School, near Chalfont, Bucks."

"Don't know the writing," she thought to herself. "I wonder what on earth it is?"

A sudden recollection of a request for raffia samples which she had sent off during the previous week decided her that this was the reply. Up in her bedroom she turned the letter over. On the back flap of the envelope was stamped the name of *The Morning Clarion*, a newspaper, as Jean knew, which was in the habit of advertising itself by means of beauty competitions and the like. Such a competition had been held recently, she knew, for she had seen it advertised; and, indeed, some of the others had chaffed her about it, and suggested that she should send in her photo.

"What on earth can *The Morning Clarion* have to say to me?" she queried of Thekla and Liliás, who came in at that moment.

"*The Morning Clarion*? How should we know?" demanded Liliás. "Have you sent them your photo after all?"

"It's so probable," retorted Jean, as she slit open the envelope. "And if I *did*, I shouldn't choose St. Ronan's to——"

She stopped suddenly, for from the envelope she had drawn a cheque! And for twenty-five pounds!

"What on earth is this?" she gasped.

"It's a mistake of some sort," replied Thekla soothingly. "See, there's a letter. You'd better read it."

"But—the cheque's made out to Miss Leslie Stewart!" gasped Jean in horrified accents. Nevertheless she did as Thekla advised, and read the letter that accompanied the cheque.

"DEAR MADAM," it began, "we have much pleasure in sending you a cheque for £25, the fifth prize in our recent 'Beautiful Children' Competition, and beg to congratulate you on having won it.

"One of our representatives will shortly be calling round at your school to see you, as we feel sure our readers will like to know something about you, and what

you intend to do with the prize money.

“With compliments,
“We are, yours faithfully,
“J. V. ANDREWS, Editor.”

The letter was superscribed to “Miss Leslie Stewart.”

The three seniors read in almost speechless astonishment, which, in Jean’s case, changed to furious anger as she realized what her sister had done.

“*Oh!*” she choked. “I feel too ashamed—too disgraced! How dared she do such a thing? And to give St. Ronan’s address as well! It would have been bad enough if she had given our home address! But this puts the lid on it!”

It was Liliias who came to the rescue with her usual good sense.

“Look here, Jean,” she said, “it’s done, and can’t be undone. It’s no good raving either. What we’ve got to do is to decide how we can best settle it quietly. I know it’s very hard luck on you, but let’s think what we are going to do about it. First of all, what photo could she send?”

Jean glared. “It’s easy enough for you to talk,” she declared. “It isn’t *your* sister who has made such an ape of herself. Whatever will the Head say? And Carty? To think that a Stewart could make such an ass of herself!”

“Poor old Jean! It *is* hard lines on you, old girl. I quite see that. But no amount of raving will alter it, worse luck! I’m awfully sorry, but we’ve got to see how we can hush it up.”

“Well, you can’t. If that’s all you want to know, I can tell you now!” replied Jean, who was squirming inwardly at the thought of what every one would say. “The thing’s sure to be in today’s paper, and every one will see it. I don’t see what you can do to hush up a thing like that!”

“Well, just tell us which photo she is likely to have sent,” pleaded Liliias.

“Oh, it must have been that long sheet with three different poses that Uncle Archie took of her in the summer. He printed them off that way, and they *did* look pretty. One of her side face; one in her Guide uniform—Carty will never forgive that, I’m perfectly sure!—and one full face, cuddling the dog.”

Liliias nodded. “I see. I wish she’d sent any but the Guide one if she had to send. I agree with you that she’s a little ass.”

“What’s the use of that? And oh! what on *earth* will the Head say?”

“I’m not worrying about that,” replied Liliias drily. “That will be Leslie’s affair entirely. And I don’t think the *Clarion* man or any one else will be allowed to get much information from her. I’m awfully sorry for you—and Marjorie too. It’s sickening to think she’s done it, but no one is going to blame you. And, Jean, don’t be too hard on her. She’s only a kid. I don’t suppose she meant anything when she sent that photo up. Probably did it as a joke, and then forgot all about it.”

“*A joke!* I’m sorry for her sense of humour if that’s what she considers a *joke!*” returned Jean stormily.

“Well, let her alone at present. Anyway, you can bet the others will give her a rotten time when they hear about it.”

“I hope they do! She’s let the school down, and I hope every one makes her pay. What mother will say I don’t know. Kenneth will be furious too.”

"Then I should leave it at that," remarked Thekla. "After all, she's only a kid; and she's out-of-the-way pretty. I expect, as Lil says, she did it without thinking. I know it's hateful. If Swanhild or Ingrid had done it I should feel like wringing their necks! But we can't make any better of it now."

"I wish to goodness' sake Uncle Archie had never taken those photographs!" mourned Jean. "It's always a mistake with a kid like Leslie. Well, she won't get her money—that's *one* consolation! I shall send it straight back."

"Better wait and see what the Head says," counselled Liliás. "And in the meantime I suppose we had better see Leslie herself. We'll have her in my room after dinner and see what she has to say. Don't look so frightfully upset, Jeannie."

Jean made a heroic effort, and contrived to pull herself together sufficiently to get through lunch. She made a poor meal, and Judy, who was sitting next to her, got thoroughly snubbed. Poor Judy had no idea of what had happened, as the morning papers had not yet reached the Common Room. By way of making conversation she observed that in the photos which Betty Selwyn had taken of the tableau group Leslie had come out splendidly, and looked "awfully jolly."

She was distinctly startled when she was curtly ordered to hold her tongue about photographs *and* Leslie.

Well, Judy devoted herself to her pudding in offended silence, which lasted till just at the end of the meal, when Jean suddenly said in an undertone of apology, "Sorry I snapped you up so just now. It isn't *your* fault."

Which somewhat cryptic saying puzzled her junior considerably. However, she had no means of finding out what the prefect was driving at, and even a request that she would send Leslie up to the head girl's study the minute the meal was over didn't help to make things any clearer to her.

Leslie, who had no idea of what was before her, opened her blue eyes widely when she heard the summons.

"Why? Do you know, Judy?" she asked.

"No; of course not. All Jean said was that you were to go at once," Judy assured her.

"I wonder what for?" mused Leslie.

"Well, I guess you'll find out when you get there."

"Yes, I s'pose so. Well, thanks awfully." And Leslie trotted off, never dreaming what was going to come.

She was a little startled when, in answer to Liliás's "Come in," she entered, and found the three prefects waiting for her—Madge Selwyn had been told by Liliás. Worse than this, Jean was very angry. There could be no doubt of that. Her eyes were like pieces of steel, and her pretty mouth was set like a ramrod. Liliás, too, looked annoyed, and the other two were wearing a gravely judicial air. Leslie racked her brains for an explanation of the mystery, but she could find none. For once, her conscience was fairly clear.

Liliás's first words enlightened her. Producing the cheque, the head girl held it out to her, saying, "This is your property, I believe."

Leslie stared at the slip of paper, wondering if Liliás was going out of her mind. "Oh no," she said. "I never had a cheque in my life. You've made a mistake, Liliás."

"But it *is* yours," replied Liliás. "It is your prize for the Beauty Competition."

Leslie gasped. "F-for *what*?" she said.

“The Beauty Competition. Did you forget that you had entered? And given the name of your school—St. Ronan’s—as your address? Did you *really* forget that, Leslie?”

Leslie had no answer to make. It was no more than the truth that she had forgotten. She had, as Liliias had suggested, done it as a joke, and had never thought of it again.

The head girl suddenly leaned forward. “Why did you do it, Leslie?” she asked gently. “And why on earth did you give the name of the school?”

No answer. Leslie stood dumb before them.

“Do you realize how badly you have let St. Ronan’s down?”

A gulp. “I—I didn’t think.”

“Didn’t think!” exploded Jean. “Didn’t *think*! Good gracious! I should have thought it didn’t require any thinking about! To do a vulgar, self-advertising thing like that! You, a Stewart! You must have been completely off your head!”

And then it came to Leslie just what she had done.

“Oh!” she said faintly, and burst into tears.

“Yes! you *may* cry!” stormed Jean. “What do you think mother and Kenneth will say? Do you imagine they will be proud of you?—think a lot of your prize?”

“Hush, Jean,” said Liliias. “You’re doing no good, and only making her hysterical.”

Jean subsided, for there was a certain quality in the head girl’s voice that subdued even her anger. As for Leslie, she sobbed on piteously. Jean’s words had fully opened her eyes to what she had done. Her reference to their mother, and the brother who, since the death of their gallant soldier father just three days before the Armistice had been signed, had been the head of their family, brought to the child a full realization of all that her silly escapade meant. Kenneth would be terribly angry. He was so proud of their old family—with its long list of fine men and gracious women; proud of the fact that they were members of the Royal House of Stewart. Leslie herself had a certain pride in it; and how she had disgraced them all! And mother would be so grieved! That seemed worst of all. But Liliias was speaking again.

“I think we had better take this to Miss Wetherel,” she was saying, waving the fatal cheque at the child. “You see, she must know sometime, Leslie. Better go and get it over at once.”

Poor Leslie! Somehow she managed to follow Liliias down the passage to the study where the Head was sitting reading, and, with a little help from the senior, she told the whole absurd story.

Miss Wetherel’s first feeling was one of annoyance that any St. Ronan’s girl could be so silly and empty-headed. But it was impossible for any one to remain angry long with such a figure of woe as Leslie presented. She sent Liliias away, and when they were alone she talked very seriously to the little girl about the vulgarity of such behaviour as hers. When at length she had finished and pronounced sentence she rang for Nurse, for by this time the child was worn out with crying. Leslie was sent to bed for the rest of the day—a most necessary thing, when one considers the blinding headache she had given herself—and then the Head sent for Jean, and Marjorie, who was so thunderstruck at the news that she hadn’t a word to say for herself.

She begged them to say nothing further to their sister, as she was to be very sufficiently punished. The money was to be returned—if possible. If not, it was to be sent to St. Dunstan’s. Leslie was to write home and tell them what she had done; she was to lose the visiting day exeat which came in a fortnight’s time; and she was to post no letters which some one in authority had not seen first. Of course, by tea-time, the whole school knew what she had done,

and to the last day she was at St. Ronan's she was not allowed to forget that once she had been misguided enough to enter for a beauty competition.

But far worse to her than all the ragging with which she had to put up were the letters from home. Kenneth was, as Jean had prophesied, furiously angry; and gentle Lady Stewart wrote how deeply grieved she was to think that one of her girls could have so forgotten herself.

"What Daddy would have said I do not know," she said. "I can only be thankful to think that he does not know."

This sentence cut Leslie to the heart, for, like all of them, she worshipped the memory of the gallant soldier father who had given his life in No Man's Land trying to save one of his men. She learnt that term a lesson which made her a much nicer girl for the future.

CHAPTER XXV

TESTS SATURDAY

“Miss Miles! Miss Miles!”

Miss Miles, the junior mathematics mistress at St. Ronan’s, swung round in the corridor down which she had been racing towards the staff-room.

“Oh—you!” she said, as she waited for Miss Carthew, who had called her so urgently. “What is it? Do hurry up, because I’ve got fifty things to do before prayers, and about ten minutes to do them in!”

Miss Carthew laughed. “Poor old thing! And I’m afraid I shall have to grab that ten minutes! I want the paper for the tests, please. You were in bed last night, or I’d have asked for it then. I hope your head is better, by-the-bye?”

“Practically all right, thank you,” replied Miss Miles. “Wait a minute till I get the key of the stationery cupboard. You know,” she went on confidentially as they went to the staff-room together, “I’ve a good mind to ask the Head if she will remove her embargo—so far as I am concerned—and run up to town this afternoon and get my hair shingled.”

“Every place will be closed,” objected Miss Carthew.

“No; the place in Finchley Road where my sister goes will be open. The last time I saw the doctor about my headaches, he said I had far too much hair, and it ought to be cropped. But the Head objects so to it that I’ve just let matters slide. I don’t think I can go on like this, however. I was really ill yesterday.”

Miss Carthew glanced at her colleague, whose pale cheeks and heavily-shadowed eyes bore out the truth of her statement. The masses of silky black hair which covered her head certainly looked too heavy.

“Couldn’t you have it thinned out?” she asked sympathetically as they stopped before the stationery cupboard.

“My dear, I had it done in August, but it only seems to make it grow thicker. How much paper are you likely to need? Will one packet be sufficient? If not, I must order some more, or we may run short for the exams.”

“I’d better have two, I think,” said Miss Carthew absently. “May I have some blotchy too? Thanks awfully!”

“There you are! *Don’t* use more than you can help, will you? Warn the girls about wasting it. They seem to think they can use any amount, just as they like.”

“Very well,” said Miss Carthew. “Now, where’s some one—oh, Judy Carey and Nancy Redmond! Just take this into the hall, will you, and put it on the side-table. Thank you.”

The two Guides went off with it, and the captain turned to her friend. “Look here, my child, if I were you I really think I’d go to the Head *now*. There’s a train to town at half-past nine, and if she’ll let you cut prayers you can catch it easily. Duty morning! Rubbish! There won’t be any duty! The girls will all be doing tests, and Violet can look after the non-Guides. Give me the stationery key and I’ll put it away, and you trot off to the study and see the Head. Buck up!”

Miss Miles laughed. “You *are* decent, Mollie!—*really* Guidey! Well, you can count this as your good turn for the day, and I will go as you suggest.”

“That’s right. Hurry up, or it’ll be prayer-time. Did you lock the cupboard?”

“Yes; I expect I did,” called Miss Miles as she hastened away.

Miss Wetherel was sitting at her desk answering letters when the young mistress entered the study. She looked up with a smile.

“Good-morning, Miss Miles! My dear girl, you don’t look fit to be up! Are you sure your head is better?”

“Yes, thank you,” replied Miss Miles.

“Well, you had better spend the day resting. Can’t you do something for these headaches? Have you had your eyes tested?”

“Two or three times, Miss Wetherel,” replied Miss Miles. “No; it’s not from my eyes, but my hair.”

“Your hair?”

“Yes. I have such quantities, you know, and thinning it and keeping it even fairly short only seems to make it grow thicker. The doctor I saw in the summer told me that I ought to wear it cropped.”

Miss Wetherel nodded. “Then, my dear, why not *have* it cut? Not an Eton crop if you can manage without; but have it shingled. I don’t care for the fashion, and I suppose you will be sorry to lose all that beautiful hair. But health must come first. So I advise you to sacrifice your vanity, and go up to town this morning and get it done at once.”

Miss Miles nearly gasped in her surprise, and the Head mistook her expression for one of horror.

“I’m sorry about your hair, but it will really be wiser. If you hurry you can catch the nine-thirty to town. Run along at once, and go and get it over.”

“Yes; and thank you very much,” murmured Miss Miles as she left the room.

She ran upstairs to her bedroom to get ready, and encountered Miss Carthew on the way.

“Well,” queried the Guide captain, “is it all right?”

“All *right*? My dear, I’ve been practically *ordered* to have it done! I’m off now to catch the train. Oh, while I remember, I don’t believe I *did* lock the cupboard door. You might just try it and see, will you?”

“Very well,” said Miss Carthew. “Goodness! there’s the bell! Good-bye! Have a good time, and don’t worry about this morning; I’ll be responsible.”

She went off, and Miss Miles hurried to get ready, and neither thought any more about the stationery cupboard.

As soon as prayers were over the girls rushed to set up desks and get chairs ready for their written tests. By half-past nine most of them were sitting, waiting for their first papers, while Violet Williamson collected the non-Guides into the Third Form room and settled them down to their Saturday morning tasks. Liliias was with the Brownies, who were also having tests, and the whole school seemed peaceful.

Throughout the morning the testing went on; and well into the afternoon too. The hockey team were playing an away match against a school near Northwood, a residential place two or three stations away from Harrow, and Miss Henry, who was on afternoon duty, took all the people who had finished for a long walk. The only girls who were left behind were Betty Selwyn, whose test for Chorister’s badge took place at three o’clock; Nancy Redmond, who had twisted her ankle in netball practice the day before; and Judy Carey, who looked like a cold, so was not allowed to cross the doors.

The pain in Nancy’s ankle had prevented her from sleeping much the previous night, so Matron decreed that she was to lie down after dinner, and herself saw to it that she did so.

Judy, who was in the room changing out of her Guide uniform, was chased forth as soon as she was in her velvet frock and woollen jersey.

“Now you run downstairs and keep warm,” ordered Matron. “You are *not* to wander about the corridors, remember! You’ve been coughing more than once to-day, and I’m not going to have you ill with exams so near, and all my end-of-term work to get through.”

“Yes, Matron,” said Judy meekly.

“Get a nice book and don’t sit on top of the fire. Now, trot.”

There was never any gainsaying Matron’s edicts, so Judy “trotted,” after a sympathetic look at Nancy.

She spent a peaceful afternoon curled up on the settee reading *The Phoenix and the Magic Carpet* and sucking the black currant lozenges with which Matron had provided her. At four o’clock Nancy and Betty joined her, and she reluctantly closed the book, shutting away Anthea and Cyril, Robert and Jane, the Phoenix and the Carpet, with a deep sigh.

“What are you reading?” asked Nancy, who certainly looked better for her long rest. “Oh, the *Phoenix*! Isn’t it gorgeous?”

“Bully,” replied Judy. “I only wish *we* had a magic carpet!”

“So do I. Fancy being able to tool off to France or the South Seas just when you felt like it!”

“Only there isn’t such a thing as magic nowadays, whatever there may have been in King Arthur’s time,” added Betty.

She was fated to change her views on the subject before she went to bed that night, but she didn’t know as yet.

Half-past four brought most of the others back to the Common Room, and then they went to tea, where the conversation mainly centred round the tests and their probable results.

Half-past six saw the return of the hockey team, very pleased with itself, since it had beaten its opponents by three goals to two, and that only after a hard struggle—Lilias at centre shooting the winning goal two minutes before time was called.

“Who shot the others?” queried Betty at supper.

“Muriel shot the first—a jolly good shot too! I don’t know myself how she managed it,” replied Marjorie Jackson, who played left wing for the team. “And Madge Selwyn got the second.”

“Good old Madge!” chuckled her younger sister. “I’m glad she did it. I say, Doro”—she turned round in her chair to poke her twin in the back—“Madge has done the deed!”

“So I hear. And I wish you wouldn’t dig me just when I’m drinking!” complained Dorothea. “You’ve nearly made me choke!”

“Sorry, old thing! I didn’t mean to.”

“Betty, turn round and get on with your supper!” ordered Miss Carthew, who was taking their table.

Betty turned round and did as she was bidden. Three minutes later the door opened and Miss Miles walked in.

A series of gasps went round the room as the girls saw her. She had taken the Head’s advice, and all her lovely hair was gone, showing a well-shingled head. She blushed furiously as she went to her seat at the staff table, where she had to put up with a good deal of teasing from the other mistresses.

Miss Wetherel looked at her with a smile. “It looks very nice, and suits you,” she said. “I do hope it means the end of those dreadful headaches.”

“What did you do this afternoon?” asked Miss Henry presently.

“Went to a concert,” replied Miss Miles. “Albert Sammons played. You know,” she went on, “I admire his playing far more than Kreisler’s or Heifetz’.”

“Lucky you!” sighed Miss Davies. “I wish I had been with you! What did he play?”

“I’m afraid I can’t remember,” said Miss Miles apologetically. “I’ll give you the programme after supper.”

“And that reminds me,” observed Miss Wetherel. “After supper, I want you to give me the H.M.V and Columbia catalogues. We must have some more records, I think. You keep them in the stationery cupboard, don’t you?”

“Yes; I’ll get them as soon as supper is over,” replied the mistress.

As soon as the meal was over she ran upstairs to get the key of the cupboard from her table drawer in the staff-room. It was not there, and then she remembered that she had given it to Miss Carthew that morning. She went down to the Common Room, where the girls and most of the mistresses were dancing, and caught hold of her friend as she one-stepped round the room with Nanciebel.

“May I have the key of the stationery cupboard?” she said. “The Head wants the gram catalogues.”

“Rather! I’ll go and fetch it for you,” replied Miss Carthew. “I meant to put it in your drawer, but I forgot all about it. Can you get another partner, Nanciebel? I’m afraid I must go for a few minutes.”

“Oh yes, Miss Carthew,” replied Nanciebel.

She went over to little Peggy Cavendish, who was sitting out, and whirled her off quite cheerfully, while the two mistresses went upstairs to Miss Carthew’s bedroom, where she got the key from the pocket of her uniform.

“I’m afraid I forgot to go back to see if the cupboard was properly locked or not,” she apologized, as she gave it back to its keeper. “I hope everything will be all right.”

“Better come with me and see,” suggested Miss Miles. “If it isn’t, I’ll blame *you*, so you know what to expect!”

Laughing, they ran downstairs and went along the corridor to the cupboard. Miss Carthew switched on the light.

“Hurry up and let us know the worst!” she said.

Miss Miles inserted the key into the lock. Then she gave a little exclamation. “It’s open! I *hadn’t* locked it after all!”

She opened the door as she spoke, throwing it back so that the light could fall in. Both mistresses gasped.

“Good heavens!” cried Miss Carthew. “Who on earth has done this?”

Miss Miles was speechless, and at that moment the Head came along to seek her catalogues.

“You have been such a long time,” she observed to Miss Miles.

The next moment she saw what they saw, and stood stockstill from sheer amazement. As Miss Carthew graphically said later on, the cupboard looked as though every member from the monkey-house at the Zoo had been playing in it. Exercise books were torn in shreds; pieces of paper were littered about; a new box full of pen-nibs had been torn to pieces, and the nibs were lying all over the floor; ink was spilt; blackboard chalk had been broken and scattered in all directions. In fact, anything less like the neat cupboard Miss Miles had left in the morning would have been hard to find.

As to who had done it, *that* was a complete mystery. Even Muriel and Phillis never thought of blaming Judy, though they knew that she had been alone all the afternoon. It was obviously impossible to suspect any sane human being of such wanton destruction.

Cook, who was a Guernsey woman, and thoroughly superstitious, declared that it must be a ghost. Down in the kitchen she related ghost stories of Guernsey to a gasping and horrified audience, until Jenny Sly, the little kitchenmaid, refused to sleep by herself, and Simpson, the schoolroom maid, was thankful to take her in.

Nobody knew anything about it. Muriel's vase, Miss Matthews' miniature, the question of the arithmetic test, Leslie's beauty competition—even the shock of finding that Miss Miles had had her hair shingled—all paled to a mere nothingness before this latest mystery.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MATCH WITH HEYWORTH

The mystery of the stationery cupboard remained unsolved. The entire school bent its brains to the question, but got no nearer any explanation at the end than they had at the beginning.

"It's such a mad thing to have done!" complained Muriel to a temporarily united Fifth. "Only any one who was *badly* touched would do it!"

"Are you hinting that there's some one here who's badly touched?" asked Marjorie Stewart.

"No, I'm not. I don't think we've any one mad enough!"

"Cook's right, I expect," said Irish Moyra "There's spirits in it."

"Don't be idiotic," Phillis said kindly. "Spirits—not even the spookiest—would never do such a stupid thing."

"A baby might," suggested Dorothy Howell hopefully.

"And where would a baby be likely to come from at St. Ronan's?"

"Goodness knows! After this, I simply don't know what to believe or not believe!"

They had to leave it at that, as their elders and betters were doing, and, since exam week would begin on the following Tuesday, they left the subject alone, and devoted themselves to revision.

In the Middle School very much the same thing went on. No one had any explanation to offer, Swanchild's suggestion that Peter, the school cat, might have done it not being received with anything but contempt.

As for the little ones, they didn't bother their heads over the matter, for they were far too busy counting the days left in the term. So the week passed, and Saturday morning came, and with it the results of the badge tests.

They were good. Ninety-five per cent. of the girls had passed on the whole results, and a high standard was maintained all round. The captain was very pleased. She also had the joy of announcing that Dorothy Howell, Marjorie Jackson, Marjorie Stewart, and Muriel Wilcox had attained to the coveted "all-round" card, while six new First Class badges would be awarded.

"The badge work has been very good this term," she announced, "but I am afraid our company spirit has been poor. Remember, Guides, that it is better to have few badges and the real Guide feeling than many badges and no Guide feeling at all." She paused. Then she went on, "I congratulate all the winners of the badges, and especially Judy Carey and Nance Verdeley, who have both worked splendidly. I hope the good beginning they have made in the Guide life may be continued, and that they may be splendid Guides, now and always."

"Hurrah!" shouted impetuous Nancy.

She was promptly suppressed by her patrol leader, who hissed, "Shut up!" in as crushing a whisper as she could manage.

The captain passed over the interruption, and after a few more general remarks, started them at country dancing. "Scotch Cap," she announced. "Make up your sets quickly." "Scotch Cap" was a great favourite with the girls, and they danced it with vigour. Miss Matthews would have been delighted could she have seen them do it. Their poise and rhythm were good, and no one forgot her steps or made a muddle of it. They followed it up with "The

Old Mole,” “Boatman,” and “Hit and Miss.” Then, while the younger girls rested, the six cadets danced “Maid in the Moon” with its graceful figures and stately honouring. Judy had never seen it done before, and when the music began she turned to Nancy with a startled query on her lips.

“Do they do it to ‘Gathering Peascods’?”

Even as she spoke, the well-known music altered.

“‘Peascods’ gone mad!” chuckled Nancy. “Isn’t it a glorious tune?”

But Judy was paying no attention to her. Her eyes were glued to the figure forming in the centre of the floor as the various couples joined hands and then went half round in slow running-step. When the dance was ended she heaved a deep sigh.

“*How gorgeous! Oh, how gorgeous!*”

“‘Christchurch Bells,’ ” called the captain.

There was a flurry to get partners and form into line. Every one was “revved up,” as Nanciebel said, and people tumbled into position, laughing and talking gaily. Judy, dragged in by Josephine, found herself next to Muriel and Phillis on one side and Liliias and Jean on the other. She was dancing second woman, so Muriel would have to turn her, and she wondered secretly if that young lady would do it without a fuss.

“Wish to goodness we were farther down the line,” she thought, as she held out her hand for the senior to take.

But whether the recent shocks had obliterated past troubles from her mind, or whether Miss Carthew’s remarks on the Guide spirit had taken effect, Muriel danced with her junior just as she would have danced with any other member of the Middle School. Judy enjoyed that dance.

When she spoke of it to Marjorie Jackson later on, that young woman nodded her head.

“It’s probably both these; and also the folk spirit as well,” she said. “Oh, I can’t explain it, but it *is* so! You should hear my sister Elsie on the subject. She’s mad on everything folk. So will you when you’ve had some more of it!”

“Are you two mutts going to stay put, or are you coming to watch the match?” came Nancy’s voice from the doorway.

“Watch the match, of course,” replied Marjorie. “Come on, Judy! Collect your coat and gum-boots and hurry up!”

They sprinted down the field together, and arrived just in time for the “bully-off.”

St. Ronan’s was playing Heyworth College, a big girls’ school from near Watford. The Heyworthians had a terrific reputation on the hockey field. Old Heyworthians played in their county teams almost as a matter of course. The last year’s hockey captain from the college was a reserve for the Southern Counties team, and the present one was fully expected to play for Scotland in two years’ time. Judy liked the look of them. They were nearly all big, well-set up girls, very fresh and trim in their navy blue skirts, white sweaters, and orange and navy blue ties.

Their captain, a tall, sturdy girl of about eighteen, was playing at centre half. Nancy pointed her out with the information that she was from Scotland.

“Somewhere near the Stewarts,” said Nancy vaguely. “Her name’s Daura Colquhoun, and she’s just *it!*”

She looked it, and she played like it. As Miss Matthews said later on, she was a magnificent centre half, working hard all the time, feeding her centre—a slender, pretty girl

whom Judy heard the others address as Norah—shooting splendidly, and playing a most unselfish game.

Lilias at centre, with Moyra for her half, played up all she knew; but it seemed impossible to get past Daura. The other Heyworth halves were excellent too; and the backs put up a brilliant defence.

Before very long the St. Ronan's girls found themselves forced to play a defensive game. Marjorie Jackson, with a badly cut hand, was out of the match to-day, and Joan Ashley, a member of the Fifth, who was her substitute, was obviously nervous. Lilias groaned to herself more than once as Joan passed badly, or kept the ball too long, and was tackled by the Heyworth wing.

Jean Stewart, playing inner to Joan's wing, murmured once as they walked to the twenty-five line for a bully, "Wish Marjorie was here!"

"Can't be helped," replied Lilias in the same undertone. "Just play up for all you're worth, and back her up as hard as you can."

Then they were off again.

By half-time every one was thankful for a rest, and neither side had scored, thanks to Phillis English, who was in goal, and the backs, Peggy Green and Violet Williamson, who had played like Trojans.

"If they can only keep it up," breathed Marjorie Jackson. "But it's killing work."

"Shall we lose?" queried Judy anxiously.

"Well, I don't think we've a chance of winning. They're a magnificent team, and they play wonderfully together. Their passing is a joy to behold, and the way that centre of theirs tackles is simply topping."

"Matt's going to call time," remarked Nancy. "Play up, school!"

"You girls must keep farther back," said Miss Carthew, coming up to them at this moment. "You're far too near the line."

They retired four paces away, but very soon forgot her command in the interest of the game. It was even faster than it had been before, but it was quite obvious that the girls were beginning to tire. Twice Joan muffed a pass, and the Heyworth right wing lost her head once and gave the other side a free shot for "sticks." Daura alone seemed to be unruffled. For all the speed of the game, she had never turned a hair. Her passing was as sure, her tackling as good, as it had been in the beginning.

"She's a wonder!" said Nancy enthusiastically.

"How much longer to go?" asked Swanhild, who had joined them.

Marjorie glanced at her watch. "Seventeen minutes," she said. "They'll never keep it up at this pace till then!—Oh! played, Muriel! Jolly well played!" as Muriel stopped a hot one with her stick, and then, almost simultaneously, passed it back to Moyra, who was practically unmarked at the moment.

Moyra took it up the field as far as she could, but the Heyworth centre was on her almost at once. Luckily, she fumbled her tackle, and Muriel, rushing to the rescue again, got the ball out, and drove it cleanly and well across to Jean, who managed to rise to the occasion. They were almost up to the Heyworth ring when the left back stopped them, and shot up the field to Daura, who was ready.

St. Ronan's watched anxiously. Lilias tackled her, but Daura passed smartly to the left wing, who dribbled the ball up the field, swerving cleverly as Madge Selwyn tried to tackle

her, and then passing to Daura again. The Heyworth captain, being well marked by the St. Ronan's backs, sent the ball out to the right inner, who passed to the centre forward.

Lilias gallantly tackled the opposing centre, but she passed back to right half, who carried the ball almost up to the St. Ronan's circle, passing neatly to Daura once more, so that she might take the shot.

The Heyworth centre half rose to the opportunity, and sent the ball smartly to the goal. It was a particularly swift shot, and given with every ounce of Daura's weight behind it.

"Done!" gasped Marjorie from the side line.

Even as she spoke, Muriel Wilcox leapt forward, caught the ball on her stick, and sent it hard out to the side. A positive roar of "Saved! Saved!" arose; then died away into silence so sudden that it was positively uncanny.

Nancy Redmond, leaning forward to watch, had taken it full on the side of the head, and had gone down as if she had been pole-axed.

At the same time, Miss Matthews' whistle blew for time, and the match was over.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE TRUE GUIDE SPIRIT

What happened next brought great credit to the Guides.

While Marjorie and Madge Selwyn, who had been standing near, and had actually ducked as the ball whizzed past her, kept the crowd away, Judy dropped to her knees and gently rolled Nancy over on to her back. Miss Carthew hurried up to help, while Jean Stewart dropped her hockey stick and dashed to the house to fetch Matron, water, and smelling salts. Her sister Marjorie followed her to ring up the doctor, and Liliás fled to break the news gently to the Head.

There was no flurry about them; every one went about her business quietly and rapidly, and without fussing.

By the time Jean Stewart got back to the field with a calm Matron, Thekla Anderssen and Dorothy Howell had got the gate off its hinges, and the girls were laying their coats on it ready for Nancy.

The visiting games mistress was hurriedly collecting her team together, for she had found out that by quick work they could just manage to catch a train home almost immediately.

There was a sigh of relief as Matron appeared with water and sal volatile. She knelt down beside Nancy, and there was a little silence. Presently she looked up. "All right," she said curtly. "We'll get her on to that stretcher affair and get her to the San. I expect the doctor will be here soon. I left Marjorie Stewart ringing him up. Now then, Miss Carthew, if you will help me. And, Jean, just take her feet, will you? Now, gently! Lift! That's it!"

Very carefully they lifted Nancy on to the stretcher, and Miss Carthew and Miss Matthews raised it slowly, and, aided by the older Guides, carried it carefully towards the house. As they were leaving the field fairly heavily laden, Marjorie looked casually back.

"Hallo! Some one's left a big coat behind the goal—or it looks like it," she said. "Give me those sticks, Judy, and you hop along and fetch it. It looks like rain, and anything left out will be ruined. I'll shove the sticks into the games shed, and cart the jerseys to the cloakroom. You might come there and help me sort them out."

"Right-o," said Judy, handing over the three sticks she carried. Then she went back to the far goal, where a dark patch behind the net had attracted Marjorie's attention. As she got nearer, she discovered that it wasn't a coat at all, but some one in a gym tunic who was lying on the ground, and for a moment she checked her steps. Surely some one else hadn't been hurt!

She looked across the field, but Marjorie had vanished into the games shed, and there was no one in sight. Judy dropped the jerseys she was carrying, set her teeth, and marched up to the recumbent figure. To her intense surprise and horror, she recognized Muriel Wilcox, who was lying on the ground sobbing bitterly. At the sight of the girl who had shown such bitter enmity towards her, Judy drew back for a moment. Then, as she heard the choking sounds, she ran forward.

"Muriel," she said, dropping on the ground beside her senior. "Muriel, don't cry! She'll be all right soon, and it was only an accident."

Muriel checked her sobs and sat up, pushing the heavy hair out of her eyes impatiently.

"You, Judy Carey?" she said. "What are you doing here?"

“We thought you were a coat,” explained Judy. “I came to pick you up. I say! Nancy will be all right soon. I heard Matron say she didn’t think it was anything more than just she was badly stunned.”

Muriel gulped hard. “Are you s-sure?” she asked.

“Certain! Come on back to the house, and—and change. I bet she’s all right now.”

At this moment there came a long hail, and then Phillis English was racing towards them.

“She’s better!” she called reassuringly. “She’s not awake yet, but the colour’s coming back to her lips. Matron doesn’t even think she’ll be very bad to-morrow!”

She had reached them by that time, and was squatting down beside them on the grass, her arms round her friend.

“Do buck up,” she entreated. Then, with a hostile glance at Judy, “Come along, Muriel. You poor old thing, you must have felt awful!”

Judy wasn’t going to stay where she wasn’t wanted. She scrambled to her feet with great decision.

“I’m going,” she said. “So-long!”

She marched off, gathered up the jerseys on her way in, and went to the cloakroom, where a very cross Marjorie was awaiting her.

“Oh, come along! What an age you’ve been! And where’s the coat?”

“It wasn’t a coat,” said Judy. “It was—somebody.”

“Muriel, I suppose! What was up? Was she howling?”

“Well, she thought she’d done Nancy in,” said Judy.

“And you tried to buck her up! Oh, don’t deny it! I know you!”

There was a little pause, during which Marjorie industriously sorted out jerseys and hung them on their owners’ pegs, while Judy balanced on one leg, like a meditative young stork.

Finally the head of the Fourth finished her task.

“You’re a real Guide, Judy,” she said, drawing the younger girl out of the cloakroom. “I believe you’ve a lot more of Guidiness in you than most of us!”

Judy flushed scarlet. “I—I couldn’t leave her like that,” she muttered.

“No. But some people wouldn’t have felt inclined to do anything for her after the way she’s treated you—if they were you, I mean,” persisted Marjorie, getting herself into a muddle with her pronouns.

“Oh, flum-diddle! Here’s Nanciebel! How’s Nancy?”

“Coming round. The doctor’s just come, and I heard Matron tell him that her cap and her hair saved her.”

“Oh, good! I’m real glad of that!”

Later on the Head announced that she was sure they would all be glad to know that Nancy Redmond was not badly hurt. The force of the blow had stunned her; but her woollen cap, and the fact that her very long, thick hair had been plaited into shells over her ears to keep it tidy, had saved her from anything worse than a violent headache. She would be in San all the next day, but would most likely go back to her own room on Monday night, and might even be well enough to take the term-end exams. They would see.

Every one sighed with relief, and the school atmosphere returned to normal. On Monday night every one was very busy putting up the light movable desks in the hall. Swanchild Anderssen and Celia Dacre were set to tear up sheets of blotting paper in readiness, while Dorothy Howell and Phillis English saw that all the inkwells were filled. Only the Fifth, Fourth, Third, and Second were to be there. The Sixth Form would use the Fourth Form room,

and the First had no written examinations until the end of the year, so they would be in their own room as usual.

Judy looked forward to the next day with apprehension. She was not accustomed to regular written examinations of this kind, and she felt rather scared. She hadn't minded her Child Nurse test; but school exams somehow seemed different. Nancy, who had returned to her own room that night looking rather white, but otherwise all right, soon found this out. She herself was well out of it, for the doctor had said she had better have a rest for a couple of days. Even if she hadn't been, exams would have bothered her not at all. Years of custom had hardened her to them; and, in any case, she had never yet troubled herself about school work. The blow on her head, and her two days in San, seemed to have doubled her teasing powers, and she drove Judy nearly crazy with her ragging.

"Have you got your Bible under your pillow?" she asked. "I should if I were you! Then, if you can't sleep during the night, you can always spend the time in looking up the things you are wonky on! There's a full moon to-night, so you ought to be able to see *beautifully!*"

"You idiot!" laughed Marjorie from behind her curtains. "Don't listen to her, Judy! She's only ragging you!"

"I think you ought to be jolly thankful you're not taking exams yourself," declared Nanciebel. "I don't believe you know a thing about St. Matthew! And as for the Acts——"

"Words fail me when I think of those awful missionary journeys," sighed Swanhild. "I wish St. Paul had been content to try to convert the heathen in his own city without wandering about Europe and the Mediterranean as he did!"

"I never know one journey from another either," agreed Nanciebel. "If we're given a map to fill one of them in, I'm done!"

"It's contexts that bother *me*," declared Marjorie, coming out from the seclusion of her cubicle in order to brush her hair. "It isn't that I don't know them. It's simply that the silly things all muddle themselves up as soon as ever I have a sheet of exam paper in front of me! Don't get the wind up, Judy. We're all in the same boat."

"Let me hear your tables," suggested Nancy wickedly. "Or what about French? Give me the French for 'I have the pen of her uncle's gardener.' Go on, Judy then we'll see if you understand the genitive construction."

"Oh, dry up!" said Marjorie. "You are a little goat, Nancy!"

"I don't know a thing!" declared Swanhild, as she sat up in bed hugging her knees. "I don't care either! Trygve's going to be here all the Christmas hols—did I tell you?—and probably till the spring. He may even stay till the summer. Isn't it gorgeous?"

"Yes! And that's the thousandth time you've told us," replied Marjorie resignedly. "I hope to goodness no more of your family want to come over, or we'll all be talked to death."

"Well, my godfather's coming over," put in Judy as she climbed into bed. "I got a letter this morning, and he says so. He says he's bringing me something I'll like awfully, and I'm dying to know what it is!"

"What do you think it is?" queried Nancy with interest.

"I don't know."

"Are you all ready for me to put the light out?" demanded Marjorie, as she finished off her long plait and tossed it back over her shoulder.

"Goodness me—*no!*"

Nanciebel finished her undressing in a scrimmage, and tumbled into bed just as Marjorie switched off the light.

“Good-night, every one,” said the head of the dormitory as she snuggled down between the sheets.

“Pleasant dreams—of the exams!” said Nancy with a chuckle.

A chorus of groans answered her. Then the silence bell rang, and they all settled down to sleep.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE ARITHMETIC EXAM PAPERS

The first thing every one thought of on waking the next morning was that exams started to-day. Nancy was the first in the Bird Room to voice the thought.

“Exams! How perfectly appalling!” she said, sitting up in bed and yawning.

“I thought you said last night that you never worried,” observed Marjorie from the depths of her blankets.

“I don’t really,” returned Nancy, snuggling down again; “but I do loathe trying to write for two hours on end when I never have anything to say.”

“Two hours! Have we to write for two hours?” Judy sat bolt upright in horror.

“Oh, you can generally find sufficient to keep on for an hour and a half,” yawned Nanciebel. “Do lie down, child, and keep warm till the rising bell goes.”

“That’s only another minute,” said Marjorie. “Isn’t Swanhild awake yet? Swanhild!”

“Hai-yah!” came very drowsily from the cubicle opposite to Judy’s.

“Get up, you lazy object! It’s to-morrow!” said Marjorie, and emphasized her remarks by flinging a bedroom slipper in the same direction.

That she did not miss her aim was proved by the muffled howl that promptly came. There was a miniature earthquake in the bed, and then Swanhild sat up, pink and protesting, her pretty fair hair scattered wildly over her shoulders.

“Marjorie, you pig! And I was having such a lovely dream! I dreamed that——”

“Oh, stop her, quick, somebody!” cried Nanciebel, wringing her hands in pretended horror. “Once she starts describing her dreams, it’s hopeless! Swanhild, you’re to dry up! The weather’s ghastly; we start exams in two and a half hours’ time; and I can’t stand any more!”

“Poor old thing,” laughed Marjorie. “Do you really feel as bad as all that? Come on, Judy! Artificial respiration needed!”

They were out of bed and standing over her before she could struggle into a sitting position, and then, in spite of all her efforts, they solemnly worked her arms up and down in the approved method.

“Horrors! Rotters! Get off!” she gasped. “Ow! Swanhild! Rescue!”

“Play up!” laughed Nancy from her corner, where she lay watching the fun.

Seeing no help for it, Nanciebel lay still for a minute. Then, just as the rising bell went, she gave a sudden, violent heave, completely upsetting Marjorie, who was sitting on her. The noise of the bump brought Matron, who was passing, into the room. She found Nanciebel standing on her bed, gesticulating madly as Judy tried to pull her on to the floor, while Marjorie was sitting by her bed, rubbing her head where she had banged it against the side.

“Nice behaviour,” said Matron with mock severity. “Nancy and Swanhild, why are you still in bed? I hope you don’t feel poorly, Nancy?”

“It’s so cold, Matron,” said Nancy, who was sitting up in bed with the clothes pulled up to her chin.

“Cold? Nonsense! It’s going to be a beautiful day,” replied Matron unsympathetically. “Come, tumble out!”

“I wish I was a dormouse,” sighed Swanhild as she raked under her bed for her bedroom slippers. “Then I could sleep right through the winter instead of having to get up. I’m sure it’s

very bad for us to be hauled out as early as this! My aunt says that growing girls need a great deal of sleep.”

“I daresay.” Nanciebel had by this time drawn her curtains preparatory to having her sponge down. “Sleeping all the winter would just about suit you! I suppose you’d wake up occasionally to have a meal or so? Eating and sleeping! Dearie me! wouldn’t you be fat by the time the spring came!”

Swanhild uttered a muffled howl of rage. “Nanciebel, you are horrid this morning!”

“And you are idiotic,” put in Nancy amiably. “Buck up and get dressed. If you waste any more time in ragging, you’ll be late as usual, and then Carty’ll have something to say on the subject.”

Realizing that it would be best to take Nancy’s advice, Swanhild pulled her curtains together, and presently the sound of splashing told that she was hurrying up with her toilet. In a few minutes the curtains were drawn back once more as they got into skirts and tunics, and then stripped their beds.

By this time the grey daylight was beginning to show, and Nanciebel turned off the light.

“Guess it’ll snow before the day’s out,” remarked Judy from her post at the window. “The sky’s heavy with it. Shall I open the window at the bottom?”

“Yes, you might as well,” replied Marjorie. “Hurry up, Swanhild! There’s the gong. Never mind your bed; I’ll strip it for you. Got your girdle?”

“Thanks awfully!” gasped Swanhild, who was finishing her dressing at railroad speed. “There! I’m ready after all.”

“You ought to be up first, really,” observed Marjorie. “You always take such ages to dress.”

At this point the gong rang, and that was always the signal for silence till grace had been said. Swanhild was unable to reply to Marjorie’s accusation, and since they were not sitting together, she had to put it aside, to be taken up later.

Judy, who was sitting between Madge Selwyn and Moyra O’Hara’s little sister Bridget, had very little to say during breakfast, for Madge was anxiously going over the chief events in the Seven Years’ War with Thekla Anderssen, who was sitting opposite her, and Bridget gave herself up to a solid consumption of her porridge. In any case, she, like the rest of the juniors, was led by the nose by Celia Dacre, and belonged to the faction who declared that Judy knew all about the breaking of that wretched second vase, and was unlikely to say anything to her.

Judy cared not at all. She sat, exams forgotten, in a dream of the timbered frame house at home in Canada. She was going over in her own mind what they would be doing now. Breakfast would be over, and mother would be busy about the house. Honey and Terry would be grumbly getting ready for their ride to school——

“Judy! Wake up, child!”

Judy awoke to an energetic nudge from Madge, and found every one else but herself standing ready for grace. Colouring furiously, she scrambled to her feet, while Miss Wetherel waited patiently for her, and Celia Dacre, who had begun the day in an aggravating mood, pointedly “dug” the girl next her, and then stared unwinkingly at Judy, who by this time was the colour of beetroot.

“What on earth were you dreaming about?” demanded Nancy as they went upstairs to make their beds. “You were miles away, I know.”

“Canada, was it?” chimed in Marjorie. “Don’t go dreaming in the exams, or you’ll never get anything done.”

“Hurry up, you people! You’re blocking the stairs,” said Marjorie Stewart’s voice behind them at this moment.

They crushed to one side to let her pass with obliging readiness. Marjorie was a popular prefect, and they knew the penalty for keeping one of those great personages waiting in any case. The senior dashed past them at a great rate. She was going to snatch a few more precious moments at revision.

“Got the wind up badly, hasn’t she?” remarked Nancy, shaking up her pillow vigorously. “It’s no good pitching the things on anyhow, Judy. Matron will only come and haul you out of exams to do it again properly. It’s best to do it right first time and have done with it. Hallo!”—she stopped in her task to stare in the direction of the door—“Muriel Wilcox! To what do we owe *this* honour?”

“I want Judy Carey,” replied Muriel briefly.

“What for?” demanded Judy.

“You are to go to the Head at once.”

“Did the Head say so?” Judy’s voice sounded sceptical.

“Of course she said so. She’s in the study waiting for you.” Muriel turned on her heel and left the room, every line of her figure showing her indignation at the junior’s obvious disbelief in her message.

“I wonder what she wants?” mused Judy, as she hastily straightened her girdle and gave her hair a few pats with the brush. “Do I look all right, some one?”

“Perfectly,” responded Nancy. “You’d better cut along quick.”

“All right; I’m going!” And Judy suited her action to the words.

In the study she found Miss Wetherel with an open paper beside her, and at her side stood Miss Henry. Both were plainly disturbed, and Judy had a feeling that something was going to happen. As she entered the room in answer to the Head’s “Come in!” she felt Miss Henry’s eyes on her.

“Judy, come here,” said Miss Wetherel. “Were you in the Fifth Form room after preparation last night?”

“Yes,” said Judy, wondering what this was leading up to. “I went there to do the monitress work at eight o’clock.”

“Were you on duty yesterday? I thought it was Swanhild Anderssen?”

“And Betty Selwyn,” put in Miss Henry.

“Oh yes. But Swanhild did the lower form rooms, and Betty had bad earache, so I offered to do the seniors’ for her.”

“Yes; that is quite true about Betty,” agreed the mathematics mistress. “I sent her to bed myself, she looked so poorly.”

“I see. What time was it when you left the room?”

“About a quarter past eight,” replied Judy. “There wasn’t very much to do.”

“Did any one come into the room while you were there?”

“No, Miss Wetherel.”

“Or any one going to it when you left it?”

“No. And, anyway, it wouldn’t have been any use to them if they had, ’cos I’d locked the door.”

“What did you have to do in the room?”

“I only fastened the window-catches, and tried to fasten the big ventilator. The wind kept blowing it open, and I pushed it shut, but it wouldn’t stay, so I just left it.”

“And that is all you did? You are sure, Judy?”

“Yes, Miss Wetherel.” Judy looked her surprise.

The next thing the headmistress said startled her even more. “Did you know that Miss Henry had put the question papers—arithmetic for the Fourth—in her desk, so that they should be ready?”

“No, Miss Wetherel.” Judy looked thoroughly puzzled.

Then Miss Wetherel explained. “When Miss Henry went to her form room this morning she unlocked the door as usual, and she found that some one had been to her desk and opened it. All her papers were upset, and some were badly torn. The red ink had lost its cork, and was all over the inside of the desk, and the Fourth Form arithmetic papers were missing. That is the worst part of it. She came to tell me what had happened, and while we were talking about it Sly came to bring me a paper which he had rescued from the branches of the oak tree under the window of the Bird Room. He had looked at it to see if it was important, and had guessed what it was. Judy, that paper was the second half of the Fourth Form arithmetic paper. Here it is.” And she held it out.

Judy took it, still looking bewildered. As yet she could not see what it had to do with her. The Head’s next words were sufficiently enlightening.

“Judy dear, can you explain it to us?”

The sensitive colour flooded the child’s face as she realized what was being asked of her.

Miss Wetherel went on gently. “I don’t want to accuse you wrongly, Judy. If you tell me you know nothing about it, I will believe your word implicitly. But if you do know anything about it, then tell us, dear. Miss Henry and I will quite understand. We shall know that the reason why you did such a wrong thing was that you were afraid of the exams, and you lost your head for a while. We shall not be angry, Judy, if you will only tell us the truth.”

Then Judy knew definitely, and she threw up her head, and faced the two mistresses—almost with defiance.

“I didn’t touch the papers,” she said. “I’m a Carey! We don’t do such things in our family! Even Honey wouldn’t do it!”

“Then who can have done it?” said Miss Henry. “You see, Judy, you gave up the form room key to Miss Ellison, and so no one could get in after that unless they had gone through the windows, and you say you latched those. That leaves only the ventilator, and no one in the school could get through that. Then—I hate going back to it—but there’s the question of the square root that was never cleared up. You were last in the room, and you were alone. All the evidence seems to point to you. The papers couldn’t get out of my desk, for it was locked, though I had been careless enough to leave the key in the lock. Some one must have opened it and taken the papers out. What are we to believe?”

“I didn’t do it,” said Judy doggedly. Her mouth had set firmly, and there was a hard, sullen look on her face. The home people would have recognized that she was trying not to cry; but the two mistresses had not sufficient knowledge of her to realize it. To them it simply looked as if she had turned sullen.

“If only we could think of some other explanation,” sighed Miss Henry. “Judy, can you say *nothing*?”

“I didn’t do it,” said Judy again. She was so near to tears that it was all she could do to get the words out; but she had determined that, come what might, she would never cry before them, since they could believe that she, Judy Carey, and a Guide, could do such a mean, un-Guidelike thing.

The Head looked at her worriedly. Standing there with that expression on her face, Judy looked anything but innocent. It was at this moment, when things were at a complete deadlock, that something happened which put everything else that had happened that term in the shade.

There was a scurry of footsteps outside. The door suddenly burst open, as if a whirlwind had driven it in, and Muriel Wilcox tore across the room to Judy and flung her arms round her.

“Judy!” she cried, while the petrified mistresses gasped for breath. “Oh, Judy! I *have* been a beast, and you didn’t deserve it one little bit! It wasn’t you at all, and I shall never forgive myself for being such a pig all this term! *Please* say you forgive me and be friends!”

With an effort Miss Wetherel recovered herself. “Muriel!” she exclaimed sternly, “what does this mean? Have you taken leave of your senses?”

“May I come in?” said a new voice from the doorway. “I think I can explain.”

CHAPTER XXIX LUCIFER'S SINS

Miss Henry, discussing the affair later on in the staff-room, declared that she didn't understand the present generation of schoolgirls in the least.

"We never did anything like it," she declared. "I should never have dreamed of bursting into the Head's study and having a reconciliation scene with another girl while the Head and a mistress looked on. I should as soon have thought of going in to prayers on my hands!"

"Oh, you can't judge girls by Muriel Wilcox," said Miss Ellison tolerantly. "The curate at the parish church at home, who was with the rector of their village before he came to us, said that if ever a girl was ruinously spoilt at home that girl was Muriel Wilcox."

"Then her parents ought to be ashamed of themselves," retorted Miss Henry heatedly. "It's utterly absurd! The girl has no more self-control than a long-clothes baby!"

But to return to the study a couple of hours previous to this. We left Miss Wetherel, Miss Henry, and Judy all staring with varying degrees of amazement at the new-comer in the doorway—or, rather, new-comers, for on one shoulder the lady carried a very small monkey, who gibbered and grimaced, and was evidently both annoyed and frightened.

His mistress had not waited for an invitation to enter. She simply marched straight into the room. The Head recognized in her a maiden lady who owned the house nearest to St. Ronan's, having come there in the early spring. During the few months she had been in the vicinity she had made for herself a reputation for eccentricity which her present behaviour certainly bore out. She held her pet by a chain attached to one wrist, and in the other hand she carried a bag, from which she produced some papers, and then turned upside down on the Head's desk, dumping out a perfect magpie's collection of oddments. There were a string of coral beads, an old Prayer Book, some pieces of broken china which the maths mistress recognized with a gasp as being part of a Breton jug of her own that she had broken some days ago and had set on one side to be mended in her spare time, a bit of bicycle chain, a fountain pen, and a box of coloured lights.

"I suppose I'd better explain," said the visitor. "I'm Miss Radnor, sister of Hugh Radnor, the explorer. Last time my brother came home he brought with him this little beast, Lucifer. He found the poor little beggar howling beside his dead mother in the grass—Indian jungle, you know. I can't say I was particularly pleased to see the creature. I don't care much for monkeys. But Hugh is a baby where all animals are concerned, so he brought the thing to me. He's off again, you know—trying to get into China through far Tibet. He couldn't take Lucifer with him, so I said I'd have it just to satisfy him. He's mischievous, like all monkeys," she went on, gently stroking the little animal's head, "but I had no idea till this morning that any one's property but my own was suffering. Of course, if I'd known, he'd have been kept chained up. As it is, I'm afraid he's been rather too free. I'm sorry, for it seems that he's been making trouble of sorts for various people. I beg you to believe that I knew nothing about it until this morning, when he came into my room waving these sheets of paper at me. You recognize them?" She held them out to the two mistresses.

"Yes," said Miss Henry. "It's the missing portion of the Fourth Form arithmetic paper."

Miss Radnor nodded. "Good. Well, you won't know, but I'm arranging my brother's notes and diaries for him—he's going to write a book about life in those parts, and he asked me to

see to the preliminary part for him, and have these things in order before he came home—so I was afraid he had got hold of something of that kind. I coaxed these papers from him, and as soon as I saw them I knew what they were. Thought they might be valuable to you”—her tone said that they meant nothing to any one else—“so I decided to fetch ’em back. Then it struck me that if he’d been over to your place once, he’d probably been before, so I went to a hidey hole of his I know of, and raked out all this as well as a lot more rubbish which I recognized. There were some bits of old china—old Sèvres. I’m a bit of a connoisseur, and I know stuff like that. Knew it wasn’t mine, and thought it might be some of yours. So I collected him, and brought it all round. Well, I got here, and met this kid in the hall”—she waved her hand towards Muriel, who was still embracing a bewildered Judy. “I showed ’em to her, and she jumped as if I had bitten her, snatched them from me, and raced off. I followed her in here, and landed on a cinema scene of reconciliation. And that’s why I’ve come, and brought Lucifer.”

Here she sat down abruptly on the nearest chair, and waited for Miss Wetherel to speak.

“But—I don’t understand,” began the headmistress. “To begin with, all the lower windows are latched every night, and the form room doors are locked, so how did he get in?”

“Any ventilators?” queried Miss Radnor.

“Yes—one,” replied Miss Henry. “It’s a very big one, and he could get in by it easily, I should say—he’s only a small monkey.”

“But why your desk?” asked Miss Wetherel. “Why not the girls’ lockers, which are more or less open?”

“Goodness knows!” replied Miss Radnor. “I can’t fathom a monkey’s mind—I don’t know who can! Did he make hay inside your desk?”

“He did a little damage,” admitted Miss Henry.

“Hope you’ll let me make it good, then?”

“Oh, he hasn’t spoilt anything very valuable. Only spilt the ink over some notes of lessons, and time-tables, and so on.”

“Well, I’m sorry. What about that china?”

“The jug was mine. I broke it myself last week,” explained Miss Henry. “I was going to get it mended later on. I didn’t count the pieces, and I only left them loose on my dressing-table at first. I suppose the Sèvres is part of that vase you made such a fuss about, Muriel. But you said the broken pieces were piled together, I thought?”

“Oh, Lucifer would do that,” replied his mistress. “It’s rather a trick of his. I don’t know how he learned it; but he always does it.”

“How weird!” said Judy, who was standing, an interested spectator of all this.

“Oh, he’s clever. I hope, young woman—Muriel, is it?—you’ll let me get the thing mended for you. I know a little Frenchman who does these things rather well.”

Then, before Muriel could answer, she turned to Judy. “From what I’ve seen and heard, I rather gather that Lucifer’s sins have been getting you into trouble. I’m sorry. Hope you’ll forgive him. He’s only a brute beast, you know—got no real idea of right and wrong. Knows he gets whipped for doing some things, but that’s all he’s got to go on.”

“Oh, it’s all right,” replied Judy shyly. “He’s a dear. May I stroke him?”

The monkey’s mistress nodded, and then turned to the business in hand. “Now, if you, Muriel, will go and fetch the rest of that china of yours, I’ll send it to little Henriot to-day, and you’ll get it back in a week. What’s the rest of your handle? Wilcox? Very well, I’ll tell him to send it to you here. Oh, and Miss—don’t know your name either. Still, get your jug, and it can

go too. Yes; my brute seems to have done a good deal of mischief, and I'm responsible for him, and I prefer to meet my responsibilities. Go and fetch it, please."

Her tone added, "And let's have no more fuss about it." The masterful Miss Henry meekly did as she was told, much to Judy's secret glee.

When she had gone, Miss Radnor turned to Judy. "What was the fuss?"

Judy looked speechlessly at the Head. As she said afterwards, "What with Muriel doing the long-lost brother act in the Head's study, and Miss Henry being bossed all over the place like a First Form babe, I didn't know if it was me or some one else!"

Miss Wetherel came to the rescue, and gave the eccentric lady the bare outlines of the story. Miss Radnor listened, stroking Lucifer's head all the time.

"I see," she said, when she was in possession of all the facts. "Well, I can't say more than that I'm sorry. I'm sending Lucifer to a friend's for the rest of the winter. He's delicate, like all monkeys, and I can't keep my barn of a place warm enough for him. That the china? All right! I'll send it to Henriot, as I said. He'll put it right for you—clever little chap!"

She swept the pieces into her bag, picked it up, and rose to her feet.

"I'm going. No, don't trouble to come. You'll want to finish what you were doing when I butted in. I can find my way all right, thanks."

She marched out, leaving the four people in the study gazing helplessly at each other. A minute later she reappeared to say, "Got some interesting things at my place. Bring your girls over to see them to-morrow or sometime. Ring me up."

Then she vanished, and they saw her going down the drive with Lucifer snuggled in her arms.

Miss Wetherel was the first to break the silence. "Go outside and wait for Judy, Muriel."

Muriel went.

When she had closed the door behind her the Head turned to Judy, her hand held out. "Judy, I am so sorry I misjudged you. Can you forgive me?"

Judy went plum-colour, and wriggled uncomfortably.

"It's all right," she said. "Honour bright, it is."

"I am sorry too," said Miss Henry. "And I am so glad it has been proved you had nothing to do with any of it."

"Thanks," mumbled Judy.

The Head took pity on her embarrassment. "Run along now, dear," she said. "I'm sure you want to tell the others all about Lucifer."

Judy shot out of the room as though she had been catapulted forth, and nearly upset Muriel, who was waiting for her on the mat.

"Come on," she said gruffly.

They went together into the exam-room, where Liliias, as head girl, was in charge. Muriel went straight up to her.

"Liliias, I want to speak to the others," she said.

"Speak, then! I'm not stopping you!" snapped Liliias, who was rather upset by the discovery that she was not to do the ordinary exam papers, but would have special ones.

Muriel jumped up on to the dais. She was feeling rather quivery, but, like the immortal Tom Brown, she was a whole-loaf-or-no-bread person. Having decided to right Judy, she was going to do it thoroughly.

"I say," she began tremulously, "I want to say something to you all."

Everybody turned and stared at her, while Judy tried to hide behind the head girl.

“I’ve found out who broke my vase,” began Muriel. There was a tremendous sensation. “It—it was a monkey who lived next door. His name is Lucifer, and his mistress found out that he had been taking things from here, so she rooted round and found some of my vase and lots of other things. It never was Judy at all. He did it all!”

“Matt’s miniature too?” queried Nancy, wide-eyed.

“I suppose so.”

“Did he do *everything*?”

“Looks like it.”

“Then Judy’s cleared! Hurrah!”

There was an instant clamour of people wanting to know everything. As Liliias said later, it was a marvel that the staff did not come to put a stop to it. The staff, however, was being told the story by the Head and Miss Henry—all, with the exception of Miss Miles, who had gone down to the lodge on a message.

Presently, above the noise, Nanciebel’s voice could be heard inquiring, “I say, did he sneak the books that were missing from the Fifth and put them in L.P.C.?”

“Talk sense!” retorted Marjorie Stewart. “A monkey couldn’t do *that*!”

A howl rose from the ranks of the Third. “Boo-hoo! It—it was me!”

With one accord they all turned and faced the howler. It was Celia Dacre.

“Celia!” gasped every one.

“Yes! It was me! I—I did it to—to make you th-think it w-was Judy, to get her into a row with the F-Fifth!”

“*What?*”

The entire school stared disbelievingly at her.

“Quite mad!” murmured Nancy.

“Celia, you can’t be well!” declared Liliias. “Come along to Matron, dear.”

She tried to lead the weeping Celia away from the hall, but that young lady stoutly resisted all her attempts.

“I h-hated Judy! She was so beastly about Muriel, and I l-lo-o-ove her! I thought it w-would *please* Muriel!”

“You thought—*what?*” Muriel went over to the distraught child. “You thought it would *please* me?”

“Y-yes. You *said* it would serve her right if she got into a row, and you wouldn’t be s-sorry! I *h-heard* you!”

“Yes. I did say it.” Muriel was scarlet. “It’s all my fault. Oh, Judy, I am so sorry!”

“Flum-diddle!” retorted Judy. “Make that silly kid be quiet, some one. Shut up crying, Celia! It’s all right! Honour bright, it is. Oh, *do* stop howling!”

But Celia was determined to own up fully. They finally got the whole story. How she had wanted to please Muriel, whom she adored. She had hit on this remarkably silly plan, hoping to get Judy into trouble. That it would be far more likely to get the victims of her passion for Muriel into trouble had never struck her. After all, as Jean said later, she was only a baby, and you could expect little better from her.

By the time they had succeeded in quieting her she had cried herself nearly sick, and it seemed best to Liliias to take her to Matron, who put her to bed at once. As most of the other prefects went to see about it, the school, left to itself, held high carnival. Miss Miles, coming into the hall to prepare for prayers, was dumbfounded to find them all talking and arguing at

the tops of their voices. She was actually compelled to climb up on to the dais and thump the table with her fist before any of them heard her command for silence.

“I am ashamed of you all!” she said, when at length she could hear herself speak. “How dare you break the rules like this? I shall report you all to Miss Wetherel! Get ready for prayers at once; and in silence!”

They did as they were told, and Miss Wetherel came in a minute later. After prayers she gave them a brief and connected account of what had happened, and then bade them go to their examinations.

This, naturally, seemed impossible to them. A good many people gave in papers containing the weirdest information—notably, Nanciebel. One of the general divinity questions had to do with contexts; among them, “And she had no more spirit left in her.” According to Nanciebel, this was what Jehu said after he had trampled on Jezebel when the *Enochs* flung her out of the window!

Aileen Stewart contrived to give the staff a hearty laugh when Miss Carthew read to them that evening, “Adam was the first sin, and Eve was the punishment.” However, as Miss Allison pointed out, these were the compensations of examination corrections, and more might be expected. That she was quite right was proved three days later when she was correcting the Fourth Form English papers, and was informed by Nancy that “Shakespeare wrote tragedies, comedies, and *errors*!”

“Well, thank goodness the vase mystery is cleared up!” said Marjorie, as the members of the Bird Room were preparing for bed that night “And a week on Wednesday we break up—Glory be!”

“Yes. Let’s hope next term will be quieter than this one,” laughed Nanciebel. “I never remember so many excitements all at once before. It must be having a Canadian amongst us.”

“Flum-diddle!” retorted Judy. “You’d have had the monkey whether I was here or not.”

“I suppose so,” agreed her form prefect. “All the same, it’s been exciting—more so than usual.”

“Well, it’s nearly over now. There can’t happen anything more,” declared Nancy, with a lack of good English that would have wrung Miss Ellison’s heart if she could have heard it.

“Unless there’s a fire,” suggested Swanhild. “We haven’t had that yet, you know.”

“Oh, stop talking rubbish!” said Marjorie. “I’m going to put out the light. Ready, every one?”

There was a rush to get into bed, and then silence settled on the room, and its members were soon sleeping the sleep of the just and weary.

CHAPTER XXX

THE GUIDES SHOW UP WELL

The last Saturday of term, and the last Guide meeting. It was an important one, for it was an "open" meeting, and most of the people who lived round about had been invited to come to see the work the Guides did.

There was to be an enrolment too. Violet Williamson's uncle had suddenly lost all objection to the Guides since a patrol had come along and helped him to get his car out of a deep ditch where it had been for an hour and a half. The ditch was right up on the moors, miles from anywhere, and he had an important meeting in the nearest town. He had been unable to walk, as he suffered badly from gout, and had been getting nearly frantic by the time the girls arrived on the scene. The result was that Violet's heart was rejoiced by a letter which gave her full permission to become a Guide. Luckily it had arrived in time for her to put in the four weekly attendances at Guide meetings, and she was already perfect in her Tenderfoot work.

Judy, standing on parade as trig and smart as she could be, felt happily that she was very much a Guide now. The Commissioner, with her steadfast face, was standing between the colours as the company marched round the room into horse-shoe formation. Violet was just outside the formation, with Phillis English, her patrol leader, standing beside her, ready to bring her up to be enrolled.

Phillis looked nicer somehow. The old sneer had faded from her face, and she had a fresh look. Muriel, too, second of the Wrens, was losing her supercilious air, and was improved by it.

Then there came the short word of command, and Violet was standing before the Commissioner, making the great promise. She saluted the colours—King's first, then the Company Colours.

"Company—salute!"

They presented staves as Violet faced them. Then she marched back to her patrol, and they were dismissed to their patrol corners, which were ready for the Commissioner's inspection.

She smiled as she saw Judy when she came up to the Daffodils.

"Well? Getting on?" she asked.

"Yes, thank you, madam," replied Judy shyly.

"You have an excellently arranged corner here." The Commissioner turned to Marjorie. "Most artistic and original too! What is that book, eh?"

She pointed to an exercise-book with a gay cretonne cover which was propped up against the flower stand.

"It is Guide Judy Carey's idea, madam," explained Marjorie, opening it and giving it to her. "It is to be a collection of quotations and stories about the daffodil. See."

She pointed to the pages with their neat script. The Commissioner nodded as she glanced through it, pausing at one or two.

“It isn’t raining rain to me.
It’s raining daffodils.
In every dimpled drop I see
Wild flowers on the hills.”

“That’s a very favourite verse of mine, Guide Judy. You have Wordsworth’s ‘To Daffodils’ too. Do you know Herrick’s poem?”

Judy shook her head. “No, madam!” A sudden daring seized her. “Oh, could you—would you——” She paused.

“You mean you would like me to write it in for you?” The Commissioner smiled. “I shall be honoured if you will allow me.”

She produced her fountain pen, and sitting down, hastily wrote in Herrick’s lovely poem, and initialed it, as the others were.

The girls had to go to physical drill while she was finishing, and she sat there, smiling sometimes over their choice.

Nancy Redmond had subscribed the first four lines of Austin Dobson’s “Song of Four Seasons”; Nanciebel was responsible for two lines from John Masefield’s “Beauty”:

“I have seen the Lady April bringing the daffodils,
Bringing the springing grass and the soft, warm April rain;”

Marjorie, the reader, had printed in, in black letter script, Fredegond Shove’s exquisite “Dream in Early Spring.”

The Commissioner nodded her head to herself in deep satisfaction. This was a good idea, for, obviously, it made the girls read. She glanced across the room to where Judy, divested of hat and belt, was drilling smartly with the others.

“The right kind of girl to be a Guide,” she thought, as she closed the book and replaced it. “Keen; and with ideas. She ought to do well.”

Then the drilling was finished, and the girls were dismissed to their corners to rest for a minute or two before they went on to ambulance drill, and then signalling.

Country dancing followed, the cadets doing “Heartsease” and “Upon a Summer’s Day,” while the older Guides showed “Confess,” and the younger ones “Picking up Sticks.” They all joined in “Pop goes the Weasel” and “Sellenger’s Round,” without which St. Ronan’s never finished country dancing.

“Don’t you do Morris?” asked the Commissioner, as the girls sat down, flushed and panting with their exertions.

“Not in Guides,” replied Miss Carthew. “Miss Matthews has a Morris class for the seniors and another for the juniors; but she isn’t a Guide, and I don’t know Morris. I believe we are to do some next term, though. My lieutenants are very keen. This is their first term as officers, however; and I didn’t want to burden them too much.”

“I think that was wise,” said the Commissioner. “What are they going to do now?”

“Songs; and then one or two old English singing games. We’re quite keen on them.”

The Commissioner looked interested. “How you all love *folk* things here!” she said.

“Yes; we do rather. It’s Miss Matthews who started us, of course. She is a member of the English Folk Dance Society, and she declares that she’s going to interest every one she meets in it, so that the folk dances and songs shall never fall into oblivion, as they nearly did before Cecil Sharp came along.”

Then the girls sang some of the folk songs—"My Boy Billy," "Green Broom," "The Streams of Lovely Nancy," and "Brennan on the Moor."

After that they did "There came Three Dukes a-Riding" and "Walking Up the Hillside." The hall rang with their voices as they danced gaily round, singing, for the last time:

"The naughty Miss she won't come out,
She won't come out, she won't come out,
The naughty Miss she won't come out,
Easty, aisty, asty."

It did more than ring—it shook. Forty-three girls skipping round rather wildly—they were all excited—were not too light, and the hall was the oldest part of the old house.

Every one was smiling with enjoyment in the girls' pleasure, and no one was thinking of anything but the game.

Suddenly the wild circle swung into a tall standard lamp of twisted ironwork, one of four which had been brought in from the drawing-room and the study to give a more festive touch to the scene. This particular lamp had not been too carefully placed—there was an unevenness here on the floor. It tilted, and was about to crash over on to the dancing circle, when Judy broke away and flung her whole weight against it, sending it slightly in the opposite direction. The standard rocked for a second, and in that second three of the bigger girls caught it and were able to steady it, even as Miss Carthew, rushing from the other end of the room, swept the girls out of harm's way.

It ended the evening, of course. Most people felt shaky. The lamp was a heavy one, and if it had fallen might have done serious injury to some of the Brownies who had been in its direct path.

Judy had strained her wrist and bruised herself, and was rather unnerved by the accident. Matron, who had promptly had her taken to the San, decreed that she must not go back.

So Miss Carthew dismissed the others, and the audience went home—all but the Commissioner. She stayed to see Judy after Matron had bandaged her wrist and anointed her bruises with arnica, and tucked her up in bed.

Then the captain brought this great lady up to the San, and Judy, lying with a white face and over-bright eyes, stared in amazement at them.

The Commissioner sat down beside her. "Feeling better?" she said.

"I'm all right, thank you," replied Judy with an effort at a grin.

"Good," said the Commissioner. "I had to come to see you, you know. You showed both pluck and common sense in the way you behaved. That might have been a nasty accident but for you! Well done!"

Judy could scarcely believe her ears.

"I—I—it seemed the only thing to do," she faltered. "It wasn't anything, really."

The Commissioner smiled. "I shan't argue with you. But before I say good-night I should like to tell you that I think you have proved yourself a very worthy member of the Guides. Go on and prosper!"

She patted the unbandaged hand, and then went off with a cheery "Good-night."

"And now," said Matron, as the door closed on her and Miss Carthew, "you'll kindly eat this bread and milk, and then you'll settle down and go to sleep. You've had quite as much excitement as is good for you, young woman!"

Judy obediently swallowed the bread and milk, and then lay down while Matron tucked her in.

“Matron, wasn’t it *bully* of her?” she said.

“You deserved it,” replied Matron calmly. “Now I’m going to switch off the light. I shall be in the next room if you want anything. You’ve only got to call. Good-night.”

“Good-night,” said Judy.

Matron switched off the light and left the room.

Judy turned on her side and snuggled down. She was too excited to go to sleep yet, so she lay watching the moonlight streaming through the windows, and thinking of all that had happened. Gradually she quieted down and grew drowsy, and when Matron came in a little later she was fast asleep.

Judy spent the next day in the San, but on Monday Matron said she might get up for dinner. As soon as she was dressed she went downstairs and into the Common Room, where the others were gathered waiting for the bell.

As soon as she appeared there was a chorus of “Here she is! Here she is!”

Lilias came to her, and taking her left hand, gave her the Guide’s handclasp. Then she turned to the others. “Three cheers for Guide Judy Carey!” she called.

“Hip, hip, hip——”

“Hurrah!”

“Hurrah!”

“Hurrah!”

The cheers thundered out.

Then the girls thronged round, all chattering eagerly. At length there was a little pause.

“Speech! Speech!” called mischievous Nancy.

Judy looked at them all for a moment.

Then, “You’re dears! I love you all! And I *am* so glad I’m a Guide!” cried Judy of the Guides.

THE END

[End of Judy, the Guide by Elinor Mary Brent-Dyer]