



THE STORY OF BETTY

CAROLYN WELLS

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“BETTY CONVERTED THE RIBBONS INTO A VERY BECOMING COLLAR AND BELT.”

THE STORY OF BETTY



BY
CAROLYN WELLS

ILLUSTRATED BY
REGINALD B. BIRCH



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TO
LILIAN WILLIAMS

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CHAPTER I

“AN IMP OF WICKEDNESS”

It was seven o'clock on a shining spring morning, and Warren Street was receiving its daily bath. All up and down its elm-shaded length, men and women and girls and boys were splashing and dashing and scrubbing and rubbing; and even the sun seemed willing to help, for he peered through the branches and winked and blinked as if to say, “You wash the steps and the pavements, and I'll dry them.”

In front of No. 27 stood a personage whom the owner of the house No. 27 variously characterized as a “Looby,” a “Good-for-nothing,” a “Hobbledehoy,” and an “Imp of Wickedness.” She is the heroine of this story. Betty McGuire was a lanky girl in her fourteenth year. Her thin face was sprinkled with freckles, and her little nose was neither Greek nor Roman; but her merry deep-blue eyes and her glossy black curls suggested the best type of Irish beauty. For Betty was of Irish descent, though American by birth and by several years of knocking about in American boarding-houses.

Not that Miss Betty boarded—oh, dear, no! She had been waitress, scullery-maid, and maid of all work; and once, for three blessed weeks, she had been a lady's-maid; and those weeks were the one bright chapter in her poor little career. For Miss Christabel had been so beautiful, and so sweet

and gentle; more than all, she had been kind to Betty, and that had been the child's only experience with that virtue.

But Miss Christabel was only as a dream now, and Betty's life in Mrs. Tucker's boarding-house was a hard and cold reality.

It wasn't the work only,—she could have stood that,—but it was the injustice. It did seem that, no matter how hard she tried, she never could convince the irascible landlady of her good intentions. For Betty was a conscientious little girl, and truly tried to do right; only, the right bobbed about so, she was never sure just where to find it. Indeed, from Mrs. Tucker's point of view, the right seemed to be always the thing Betty left undone. As she stood in front of No. 27, she presented a comical picture.

Dressed in a shirt-waist which had seen brighter days, and a short and skimpy old black skirt, she wore at her belt a huge bunch of daisies, and her battered and torn straw hat was loaded with the same inexpensive blossoms. Around her neck and tied under her chin in a great bow was a strip of Turkey-red calico, which Ellen the cook had given her.

Betty's love of bright colors amounted almost to a passion; and as, in consequence, Mrs. Tucker prescribed only dull and dark clothes, the child was obliged to choose with great caution the times and seasons when she might fling her colors to the breeze, and this strip of Turkey red was among her most cherished possessions. It had been originally intended to enliven Ellen's collection of carpet-rags; but Betty had shown such an overwhelming desire for its possession that the good-natured cook had presented it to her; and ever since it had been a necktie, a sash, or a hat-band, as occasion required, but was always so adjusted that it could be instantly whisked off when the voice of Mrs. Tucker was heard in the land.

So this morning it was a necktie, and imparted an air of great dignity to its wearer, while she grasped firmly in her bony hands the nozzle of a garden hose, which rested its slimy, snaky black length across the pavement.

A spray of water sparkled through the air, and bit the dust in the middle of the road.

Then Pete, the ashman, came along, and with a grin surveyed the red-bowed maiden.

"Hi, Betty, what yer doin'?"

"I should think you could see. I'm playin' the pianny in me boodore."

"Funny, ain't yer? Where's Mike?"

“Sick. Have you got anything for me?”

“No, Betty; the ash-barrel business ain’t what it was. I don’t pick up no satin sashes, nor yet no spangled over-skirts—in fact, nothin’ as ladies like yerself would care for.”

“All right, Pete; but keep a good watch out, all the same. I’d like a new feather most exceedin’, me red one havin’ been croolly put in the fire by me friend Mrs. Tucker.”

“Now, that’s a real shame, Betty, and I’ll thry fer to hunt ye another, sure I will.”

Pete departed, whistling, and Betty moved along and began on a fresh section of dust. Her next interlocutor was Jack, the lame newsboy, who hailed her from across the street:

“Hello, Imp! what are you up to now? Out for dust?”

“Oh, only amusin’ meself. Come on over.”

“’Fraid you’ll shrink my new clo’es for me.”

“No, I won’t, honor bright! Come on.”

“Gutter seats all engaged?”

“No; take one. Now see me hit the bird on that hydrant.”

“Smarty! Let me try it. There! he’s gone. Let’s try it on a dog; here’s Bumps.”

“No; you sha’n’t tease Bumps. Give me the hose; I must get the dust laid before Mrs. Tucker comes, or she’ll blow me sky-high.”

“Yes; I’ll give it to you in a minute; but here comes Van Court’s trap, with all the swell dudes in it. Must be a picnic as brings ’em out so early. I’m going to see how near I can come to ’em and miss ’em.”

“Oh, Jack, don’t! It’ll spoil the young ladies’ dresses if a drop of water touches ’em. Give me that hose!” And Betty snatched at it; but, with the proverbial viciousness of inanimate things, the hose gave a squirm, and a great stream of water was divided impartially among the surprised occupants of the carriage. The young man who was driving reined up his horses with a jerk, threw the lines to his companion, and sprang to the ground, confronting the two terrified children. He glared at them both, and then deciding that the inoffensive-looking cripple could not be the culprit, he turned to the more daring-looking Betty.

“What did you do that for, you minx? How dare you play your disgraceful pranks on a party of ladies and gentlemen? Who are you?”

“Please, sir,” broke in Lame Jack, “the Imp didn’t do it; it was my fault.”

“The ‘Imp’! A fine name, truly! Don’t attempt to shield her, boy; her guilt speaks for itself in her face.”

For, naturally, poor Betty was blushing scarlet, and although she tried to speak, the irate gentleman gave her no chance.

“Be off, lad, and sell your papers. I’ll attend to this. Now, Imp, where do you belong?”

“Go on, Jack, do,” implored Betty; for the lame boy’s face showed an eagerness to do battle for his friend, and she feared that if the gentleman’s wrath should be transferred to Jack it would go hard with him. So, feeling more than ever his uselessness, Jack hobbled away.

Then Betty turned to her accuser.

“It was an accident, sir; I was trying not to hit the carriage, but the horse twisted about so, I couldn’t handle it.”

Betty’s earnest face might have convinced even a more skeptical judge; but the daisies nodding above it, and the audacious red bow below it, gave the child an air of frivolity that argued ill for her cause.

“A likely story! Popinjay! Where do you live? Who is your father?”

“Oh, sir, I haven’t any father, or mother, neither. I’m Mrs. Tucker’s kitchen girl; and please, *please* don’t tell *her* about it. She couldn’t help you any, and she’d ’most kill *me*.”

This was philosophy; but the enraged Mr. Van Court wasn’t asking for philosophy. He strode up the steps and rang Mrs. Tucker’s door-bell with decision and energy.

Meantime the two besprinkled ladies had climbed down from the trap and presented themselves also at the door; and when Mrs. Tucker came, she beheld three of “the quality” apparently very anxious to enter her house.

Now, Mrs. Tucker was cut out for a successful boarding-house keeper by every implication of her being. Her features, her person, and her dress all gave the impression of economy and even of a scant table. And, although an early hour for such an errand, her businesslike intuitions told her that these people had heard of the justly famed excellence of her house and table, and were seeking accommodations.



“THE HOSE GAVE A SQUIRM, AND A GREAT STREAM OF WATER WAS DIVIDED IMPARTIALLY AMONG THE OCCUPANTS OF THE CARRIAGE.”

So it was with a beaming smile of hope that she invited them in—a smile, however, which turned to a stare of amazement as she saw the ladies’ wet dresses, and changed again to a thunder-cloud frown as the terrified Betty was pushed into prominence by Mr. Van Court.

“I ask, madam,” he said, “why this overdressed factotum of yours should be allowed to drench innocent passers-by?”

His satire had expended itself, and he stood glaring at Betty, too angry for further words.

Miss Van Court took up the thread of the complaint, saying in a drawling voice, “My new barège is spoiled.” In truth it was, and her bonnet also. The other lady interrupted her, saying concisely: “What we want is to come in and dry our clothing by your fire, if we may. Richard, you will lose your train if you tarry longer. Go to the station, and Thomas may call for us on his return. You see, madam, we were taking my brother to the cars, when we were suddenly deluged by a stream of water from the garden hose. We cannot go farther in this state, so we ask assistance—though I fear my parasol is beyond all help.”

She looked regretfully at the soaking mass of white chiffon and silk, and the utter ruin of the lovely sunshade went straight to Betty’s beauty-loving

heart.

“Oh, miss,” she exclaimed, clasping her hands, “the purty parrysol!” And her big blue eyes filled with tears at the bedraggled wreck.

Mrs. Tucker urged the ladies to come in, at the same time snatching at Betty’s arm with such a vicious jerk that Mr. Van Court felt he had secured for the “Popinjay” a punishment to fit her crime, as he hurried away to his train.

“You imp of wickedness, what have you been doing now?” murmured Mrs. Tucker, in a tone no less menacing because of its low pitch; “and what do you mean by wearing this disgusting trumpery? You are a disgrace to my house!”

She twitched off poor Betty’s red necktie, which the child had forgotten, and, pushing her, added:

“Go at once to the cellar and split wood. Stay there until I call you, and mind you are not idle a moment!”

Then Mrs. Tucker turned to the ladies a countenance meant to show respectful regret and sympathy.

“I am so sorry that you should have suffered through the vile pranks of that imp of wickedness,” she said, as she lighted a wood fire which was laid ready in the drawing-room; “she makes my life a torment.”

“Ah, well,” said the younger Miss Van Court, who had been impressed by Betty’s tearful eyes, “perhaps it was an accident; don’t be too hard on her.”

Mrs. Tucker took the cue. “Yes, ma’am; as you say, an accident; but what a pity, ma’am! Pray let me help dry your feathers.”

The blazing fire did quick and efficacious work, and when the trap returned, the damaged clothing was almost entirely restored, only the parasol being permanently injured.

With renewed apologies and regrets, Mrs. Tucker bowed her guests out, and then went down-stairs in search of the luckless Imp.

CHAPTER II

IN THE CELLAR

In obedience to Mrs. Tucker's order, Betty started for the cellar, and as she went down the stairs she felt that her cup of woe was full indeed. To be brought in from her beloved fresh air and sunshine, and set to work in the dark, damp cellar, was bad enough, but far worse was the loss of her beautiful Turkey-red calico. And, too, Betty had had no breakfast that morning, and hunger does not add to the bravery of a little girl fourteen years old.

As she passed the kitchen door a goodly smell came out invitingly; but she dared not stop there, for Mrs. Tucker would expect the pile of split sticks to measure fairly with the time which might elapse before her appearance.

So Betty went on down-cellar, picked up the ax, and attacked a log of wood. She knew that Mrs. Tucker, in the parlor above, could hear her strokes, and that consequently they must occur in rapid succession.

"It's starvin' I am!" she said to herself. "Neither bite nor sup this blessed mornin', an' likely nothin' till noon—an' me a-tryin' most especial this week to be good. But the more I tries, the more things happens from outside to pervent. I s'pose it's just my luck. Some folks is born to bad luck, and what luck comes we has to take. But I wish I had a home. Seems to me I wouldn't mind havin' bad luck if I had a pretty home to have it in. Hallo, Jack! come on down."

The crippled newsboy had appeared at the cellar window, and, in response to Betty's invitation, Jack swung himself and his crutch inside, with an agility that would have done credit to a boy who had full use of his legs.

"What's up, Betty? Where's the old lady?"

"In the parlor, passin' the time of day wid the Miss Van Courts. Say, Jack, did you ever have a home?"

"A home? Naw—nothin' but the hospital, and I runned away from that."

"Don't you wish you did have a home?"

"Yep; but I'd ruther have money. If yer have money, yer can buy a home."

"Oh, I *never* had any money. I've just worked for clo'es and board. Of course, while you're wishin', you might as well wish for money. But I'd rather have schoolin'. I'd just *love* to go to school, an' learn 'I am, thou art, he is.' That's what Ethel Green learns; and she learns beautiful map-questions and figgers, too."

"Stop yer choppin' a minute, Betty; I can't hear what yer say."

"I *can't* stop. She's up above, listenin'."

"What a nipper she is! Will yer ketch it fer the hosin' performance, Bet?"

"S'pose so."

"It's a shame, 'cos that was my fault. Say, Betty, I'm awful sorry I got yer in trouble."

"Oh, it doesn't make any difference. If she wasn't ragin' about this, it'd be somethin' else. She's gen'rally mad at somethin'. Oh, jiminy, Jack, she's comin'! You won't have time to get out. Hide behind the ice-box."

Jack scrambled behind the big refrigerator, the noise of his clattering crutch drowned by the vigorous blows of Betty's ax.

"You good-for-nothing looby!" began the landlady. "You have brought disgrace and reproach upon my house; you have spoiled the ladies' fine gowns, and you deserve to be turned into the street. After all I've done for you, you have no sense of gratitude! After all I've taught you, you have no sense of decorum, but stand out in front of my house, tricked out like an organ-grinder's monkey, and insult passers-by. Lay down that ax and look at me! What can you say for yourself?"

Betty dropped the ax and looked at Mrs. Tucker. Impressed by the lady's extreme rage, the thought struck her that she had nothing to lose and everything to gain, and she resolved on a bold stroke.

"I'm sorry," she said,— "awful sorry; but truly, ma'am, it was an accident. But please, ma'am, if you'll give me back me red necktie, I'll not wear it out o' doors again."

"Give it back to you!" fairly screamed Mrs. Tucker. "I'll throw it in the fire; indeed you *won't* wear it out of doors again. Now, as part of your punishment, you may stay down here and split wood all the morning."

"But, Mrs. Tucker, I ain't had breakfast."

“And you don’t deserve any. But there’s some cold tea in the pantry; you may have that and a slice of bread. You’d better not dawdle over it, for all those sticks must be split and neatly piled up by the time Ellen calls you to pare the vegetables.”

“Yes, ma’am,” said Betty, meekly; and Mrs. Tucker walked away, feeling doubtful whether she had punished her prisoner enough, and resolving that the careless girl should pay for her fault in some other way.

Betty chopped away sullenly, and Jack came out of his hiding-place and offered sympathy.

“She’s a mean old thing; but ain’t yer goin’ to eat nothin’, Betty?”

“No; I don’t want her food. I hate her!”

“Say, Betty,”—and Jack’s kind voice was very comforting,—“I’ve got a nickel, and if yer say so, I’ll skip down to Gruber’s and buy you a hot muffin and a sausage, ’cos it was truly my fault that yer got trapped. Will yer eat ’em, hey?”

“Yes, indeedy! You’re awful good, Jack.”

The lame boy hobbled off on his errand, and Betty whacked away at her task until he returned. Then she dropped her ax, and sat down to enjoy the hot muffin and sausage.

“My, but it’s good, Jack! But aren’t you hungry yourself?”

“N-no—not to say *hungry*. I had some breakfast. But that’s tiptop, ain’t it?”

“It’s prime; but I won’t eat any more unless you take some, too. Here”; and Betty broke off a generous bit and gave it to him, and the two children sat nibbling away together.

“Let’s pretend, Jack,” said Betty; “that’ll make it last longer, and be more fun, besides. Let’s pretend we’re quality, and you’ve come to dine with me. I’m a grand lady with heaps of book-learnin’, and a red silk dress trimmed with blue bugles, and I live in a home. You’re a hero who was lamed in the battle of Waterloo—”

“But I *couldn’t* be, Betty. That battle was years ago.”

“Oh, was it? Well, never mind; any old battle will do. Now pretend. Good evenin’, Mr. Riley; it’s pleased to see you I am—thou art—he is.”

“Why do you say that?”

“Oh, that’s grammar, Jack. The quality always talks grammar. It’s all the grammar I know. But I know one bit of history. I heard Ethel Green studying it out of a book. She said it over and over, and I learned it while I was dusting her room.”

“What is it?”

“Well, if you’ll pretend with me, I’ll say it. The quality brings in history as they talks.”

“All right. Good evenin’, Miss McGuire. You’re lookin’ gorgeous to-night.”

“Yes; me new gown is a becomin’ color, though I say it as shouldn’t. Will you have some of this strawberry ice-cream? It’s the best I’ve ate since the crescent waved over the Church of St. Sophia and the Byzantine Empire fell forever.”

“Whew! Is that your history, Bet?”

“Yes; but don’t notice it. Just talk away. You’re no good at all at pretendin’. Why, I can pretend this cellar is a beautiful parlor, or a flower-garden, or a school-room. I like the school-room best, and I pretend there’s a kind, gentle teacher-lady, and lots of books and slates and things; and I learn away like fury; and when I say me lessons, the teacher says, ‘That’s excellent, my child.’ I heard Ethel Green’s teacher say that to her once. Now I must go back to me choppin’, or I won’t have sufficient of sticks to gratify me friend Mrs. Tucker. Clear out, Jack; I can’t work if you’re here to talk to”; and as the boy hobbled away, she added: “I’m awful thankful to you for the muffin. I’ll pay back your kindness when I come into me fortune.”

Betty’s fortune was a standing joke among her small circle of acquaintances. It was purely traditional, and no one but Betty had any faith in the authenticity of the tale.

The facts of Betty’s early history were these: A young Irishman had come over to this country as an agent for a firm of Belfast linen-dealers. He had wooed and won a fair Boston girl contrary to the counsels of her parents, who had objected to Martin McGuire with no very good reason. But the young couple ran away and were married. For several years the parents continued implacable; then they relented, and wrote for Mr. and Mrs. McGuire and their baby daughter to come home and be forgiven.



“IT’S THE BEST I’VE ATE SINCE THE CRESCENT
WAVED OVER THE CHURCH OF ST. SOPHIA.”

With great joy the party started; but during their journey a serious railroad accident occurred, and the train in which they were traveling was thrown from the track. The wounded passengers were taken to various hospitals, and it so chanced that Mrs. McGuire was separated from her husband and child, and afterward received the report that they had both perished.

Though the report was true of Martin McGuire, it had been a mistake about the child, for the baby Betty had been found very much alive, and had been taken to an orphan asylum.

In his dying moments Martin McGuire managed to write a few words on a paper, which he pinned to his child's frock. The paper read: "Elizabeth McGuire. Possible heiress to a large fortune." He did this because he hoped it would attract attention to his orphaned baby and insure kind treatment for her; and as to the fortune, he had always lived in expectation of an inheritance from his father, who had long ago gone to Australia in search of gold. No news had ever been received from him since he started away with pick and pack, but if he had amassed wealth, Martin McGuire was his only heir and must inherit it.

Even this paper, however, failed to disclose Betty's whereabouts to her sorrowing mother, for no attention was paid to the scrawled message, and the paper was soon lost. But it had served to fix the child's name, and the episode remained in the memory of the matron of the asylum, and was told to Betty in after years.

As she grew old enough, she was made to work, and the hardest and most menial labors fell to her share.

When she was ten years old she was put out to service, and had drifted from one employer to another ever since. Although she inherited her father's indomitable pluck and energy, his good nature and sense of humor, yet the girl was very like her mother in innate refinement of character, her winning ways, and her sensitiveness; and so the poor little starved heart and brain suffered even more than her ill-clothed and ill-fed little body. In spite of her enforced association with ignorant people she felt a desire and a capacity for education, and although she naturally adopted something of the careless language and rough-and-ready ways of her associates, yet the finer instincts were latent and ready to recognize and respond to true culture and gentleness wherever she might meet them.

Betty loved beautiful things, and, not possessing any, she tried to make up for the lack of substantial luxuries by furnishing her poor little air-castles with a lavishness which was limited only by her own ignorance.

But all her other trials and deprivations were as nothing to her longing for a home; or, rather, all the other sorrows were summed up in that. She wanted to feel that she belonged somewhere, that she would be welcomed somewhere; and her feelings of envy were roused only on seeing some manifestation of home happiness.

Betty had ambitions, and a dogged determination to achieve them, sooner or later; and she thought that, if she could ever get a place where, besides giving her board and clothes, they would pay even a small amount of money, she would save it all toward this future home of hers, which at present seemed as remote as the distant sun.

But the days went by, with no change for the better; in fact, Betty's hard life was made harder as the summer days grew warm and Mrs. Tucker became correspondingly more irritable and thoughtless.

And so it happened that one beautiful, bright morning, when Mrs. Tucker felt sure that Betty wanted to be out of doors, she sent her to the dining-room to kill flies.

Greenborough people, though living near the city of New York, were primitive and conservative; so in Mrs. Tucker's dining-room a pink mosquito-netting was spread over the always-laid table between meals. It chanced to be a new one, and of a very bright pink, and it suggested many possibilities to Betty's admiring eye.

She took it from the table, and tried it in various capacities—as a train, a shawl, a sash, and finally as a bridal veil.

This proved so satisfactory that she attacked the marauding flies with the pink gauze still fastened to the top of her head and floating behind her as she danced around.

So when Mrs. Tucker glanced in to see if the fly massacre was proceeding with sufficient rapidity, the waving pink cloud that met her eye failed to inspire her with mirth or admiration.

“You imp of wickedness!” she began; and then the situation seemed really beyond her range of epithets, and she paused and looked at Betty until the child shivered with dread.

She had done wrong, she knew; there was no excuse for her; but the temptation to see how the beautiful pink fabric would become her had proved too strong to resist.

“I'm sorry,” she began; but she shook in her shoes as Mrs. Tucker interrupted her and cried:

“Leave my house to-day! I've been tormented with you for two years, and I'll harbor such a minx no longer! Out you go this very day, you good-for-nothing, and seek some place where they will let you destroy their house-furnishings to gratify your jackanapes foolishness. Go at once, I tell

you; *I'm done with you*"; and Mrs. Tucker pushed the frightened and weeping child out into the hall.

Betty went on blindly through the hall and kitchen, and out on the little back porch, where she sat down and gave way to violent crying. Not that she loved Mrs. Tucker; not that she was sorry for her naughtiness; but the house from which she had been turned was the nearest approach to a home that she knew of, and where to go was a question with absolutely no answer.

Now, Mrs. Tucker had not really meant for Betty to go away—she was too useful a servant to lose; but the landlady thought that a lesson of this kind would do no harm, and might frighten Betty into more discreet behavior.

So Betty was left alone with her grief, and continued to sit sobbing on the back steps. Even Bumps, who poked his frowzy little head up within her arm, and blinked his sympathetic eyes at her, failed to show her a way out of her difficulties.



**“A HOBBLING STEP WAS HEARD COMING ROUND
THE CORNER OF THE HOUSE.”**

After a while a hobbling step was heard coming round the corner of the house, and Betty raised her head to see Lame Jack with an excited look on his face. He came up at a rapid pace, and did not wait for her to speak.

“Betty—I say, Bet, stop cryin’ while I tell yer some-thin’.”

“Don’t want to hear it,” she mumbled.

“Yes, you do. You’ll want to hear this. The postman brought a letter for you.”

“What?”

“He did, true as true. I was goin’ by, and he asked me, did Betty McGuire live here, and I said yes, and he give all the letters to Ellen at the door. I asked him afterward if there was one for you, and he said there was.”

Betty had stopped crying now, and her troubles were all crowded out of her mind by this new wonder.

“Jack! what can it be about? Where is the letter?”

“Dunno; s’pose old Tuck’s got it by this time. Like as not you’ll never see it,” replied the crippled boy.

“But I *must*, Jack; it’s *mine*.”

Just then Mrs. Tucker’s step was heard in the kitchen, and Mrs. Tucker’s voice—but such a different voice from the one she generally used—said, “Betty!”

CHAPTER III

BETTY'S LETTER

If Betty was amazed at hearing her name pronounced by Mrs. Tucker in such a gentle, almost deferential tone, she was still more astounded when that lady said pleasantly:

“Come into my room, my child. I have something important to tell you.”

The two went into the landlady's private sitting-room, and Betty nearly fainted when Mrs. Tucker offered her a chair with all the politeness she would have shown to her best boarder.

With her usual ready acceptance of a situation, Betty sat down with a vague feeling that Mrs. Tucker must have lost her mind, but that it was as well to enjoy the advantages of her mental weakness as they offered themselves.

“The postman brought a letter for you,” Mrs. Tucker began, “and as I am your best friend and only guardian, I opened it, and I will now read it to you.”

“You had no right to open a letter addressed to me,” said Betty, sharply, her sense of justice at once on the alert.

“Oh, yes, my dear,” said Mrs. Tucker, sweetly; “in the absence of a legal guardian, I will assume that relation toward you.”

Betty was silenced, though not convinced; and, not daring to ask for the wonderful letter, she sat waiting to hear it read. You see, she had never had one before, and she would have dearly loved the excitement of breaking the seal of her own letter.

“It is from Miss Van Court,” Mrs. Tucker continued, and then Betty was more puzzled than ever. What *could* Miss Van Court have to say, except in regard to the unfortunate sprinkling episode?—and why should any message about that make Mrs. Tucker so bland and dove-like?

The landlady went on:

“To Betty McGuire at Mrs. Tucker's:

"I may be mistaken, but if your name is as written above, I think a piece of good fortune is in store for you. If you were with your father in a railroad accident near Chicago, about ten years ago, and if you were afterward taken to an orphan asylum at Mapleville, and stayed there five or six years, then you are the Elizabeth McGuire that a friend of mine is looking for. My friend is a lawyer from New York, and is staying at my home for a few days; so, if you fulfil the above conditions, I would like you to let me know as soon as possible.

"Yours very truly,
"GRACE VAN COURT.

"P.S. Perhaps it would be best for you to come here this afternoon between three and five o'clock."

"It's me!" screamed Betty, excitedly. "It's me, and I'm going to see her right now!"

"Of course you're going, my dear, and I'll go with you," was Mrs. Tucker's reply.

Betty would have preferred to call on Miss Van Court alone; but she feared any opposition might break the charm and restore Mrs. Tucker to her normal state of temper; so the wise child decided to humor her.

"Yes, ma'am; we'll go together; and please, ma'am, could I have me red sash again to wear?"

"That ridiculous rag? No, indeed. Put on your best frock, and I'll lend you a neat collar and brooch."

Betty dared not disobey, and when three o'clock came she put on her skimpy and worn best frock, which Mrs. Tucker supplemented by a wide, stiff white collar, much too large, and fastened with a huge black rubber brooch. But while waiting for her companion to be ready, Betty found time to load her old straw hat with great bunches of the old-fashioned pink roses which grew all over the back fence.

This Mrs. Tucker viewed with dismay, and ordered the flowers thrown away at once. But the excitement of the occasion stimulated Betty's courage, and she refused to part with her flowers, adding: "You needn't go with me, if

you don't like my posies." This apparently brought Mrs. Tucker to terms, and the two started off to the Van Court mansion.



“BETTY NEARLY FAINTED WHEN MRS. TUCKER
OFFERED HER A CHAIR.”

It was characteristic of Betty that she gave not a thought as to what Miss Van Court might have to tell her, not a guess as to what the good news might be about. She gave all her attention to fully enjoying the happiness of the present moment. To be walking leisurely along, wearing a rose-trimmed hat, on her way to a great house, and assured of her welcome there—all this made little Betty so superlatively happy that even the unpleasant presence of Mrs. Tucker failed to annoy her. And, too, the Mrs. Tucker of to-day was so different from the Mrs. Tucker of all past days that it was almost a pleasure

to be with her. She chatted affably; and though Betty would rather have been alone, so that she could “pretend” more successfully, she met the lady’s overtures half-way, and they seemed the best of friends.

As they entered the Van Court gate, and went up the path under the great trees, and saw the beautiful landscape garden, Betty walked along like one in a dream. She had never seen such a place before, and it seemed to her like paradise. Even Mrs. Tucker’s chatter passed unnoticed, for Betty was pretending to herself that this was her home and she was returning after an absence of a few days. One thing bothered her, though. All the time she was getting ready for this visit she had been thinking how much she would like to take a small gift of some sort to Miss Van Court—not anything of intrinsic value, but something that would be an offering, and would show how sorry she was that she had spoiled the parasol that day. She had looked carefully over her small store of treasures, but none of them seemed suitable, except, perhaps, a tarnished gilt buckle that Pete had given her. She had put it in her pocket, uncertain whether to present it or not; but as she walked by the glowing flower-beds that adorned the Van Court grounds, she had a brilliant idea. Nothing could be more acceptable to Miss Van Court than a bunch of flowers, and she would be sure to like such beauties as these were. So Betty broke off half a dozen stalks of pink gladioli, while Mrs. Tucker looked on aghast. She remonstrated; but Betty, keyed up to a high pitch of daring, paid no attention.

She felt a little shy when an important-looking servant answered the knock at the door; but when she entered the drawing-room, Miss Van Court greeted her with such a cordial manner that she felt at ease at once.

“I’ve brought you some flowers,” she said simply. “They’re from your own garden; but I had nothing myself that you would like, and I wanted to give you some thing nice.”

Betty was so adaptable by nature, and so quickly responsive to the atmosphere of her surroundings, that she spoke quietly and with almost no trace of the Irish brogue that was so noticeable when she talked with Ellen, or the careless slang of her conversations with Jack.

“Thank you, dear,” said Miss Van Court, taking the flowers as graciously as if from a duchess; “I am very glad you thought of me.”

But if Betty felt at ease, it was not so with Mrs. Tucker. She could impress the waif with her sudden kindness toward her, but Miss Van Court was not likely to forget how the angry landlady had berated the poor little drudge the morning of the drenching performance. And Mrs. Tucker

trembled in her shoes as Miss Van Court said coldly: "I thank you for bringing Betty to me, but you need not wait; I will send her home after the interview."

Mrs. Tucker indistinctly murmured something about being very much attached to the child and her only friend and benefactor; but Miss Van Court said nothing, and was so evidently waiting for her to go that the disappointed landlady was forced to depart.

Then Miss Grace turned to Betty and looked at her critically. She smiled kindly at the earnest little face, crowned with the bunches of roses, so heavy that the old straw hat could scarcely support them; but she seemed to disapprove of the collar and brooch.

"Where's your red necktie?" she asked Betty abruptly.

"Mrs. Tucker took it and kept it, ma'am," Betty answered.

"Were you sorry?"

"Oh, yes, indeed; but,"—with an endeavor to look on the bright side,—"but I couldn't have worn it with these pink roses, ma'am; they wouldn't like each other."

Miss Grace seemed much amused, but only said, "Come with me, Betty, into the library."

"Yes, 'm," said Betty, slipping her hand into that of her friend with a loving little squeeze; and together they went into the next room.

A big man sat at a table, writing. He looked at Betty somewhat kindly and very curiously, and presently said:

"Well, Miss Van Court?"

"This is Elizabeth McGuire," said Miss Grace; "and, Betty, this is Mr. Brewster."

"Yes, 'm," said Betty.

Then Mr. Brewster asked Betty a long string of questions, until he had found out everything she knew about her parentage and early life. At last he seemed satisfied, and, turning from the puzzled Betty, he said to Miss Van Court:

"There can be no doubt about it; I believe you may tell her."

Miss Van Court's face beamed with delight, and she held out her hands, saying, "Come here, Betty."

Betty almost ran across the room, and Mr. Brewster rose and placed a low chair for her, so that she could look right up into Miss Van Court's face.

The lady took both Betty's little brown hands in her own, and said:

"My dear, I have a wonderful piece of news for you—so great and splendid that I scarcely know how to tell it. But the principal fact is that you are the only heir to a large fortune."

"Where is it?" said Betty, looking around with wondering eyes, as if she expected to see bank-notes fluttering through the air.

"It is safe in trust for you. But you are really mistress of it; you are absolutely free in regard to its use, and can do exactly what you please with it. It *doesn't* seem right, does it?" she added, turning to Mr. Brewster. For Betty's face expressed such blank amazement that it did seem as if there must be a mistake somewhere.

But the child was comprehending it, though slowly and with an effort.



“‘MY DEAR, I HAVE A WONDERFUL PIECE OF NEWS
FOR YOU—SO GREAT AND SPLENDID THAT I
SCARCELY KNOW HOW TO TELL IT.’”

"Tell me more about it," she said at last, still looking steadily at Miss Grace.

“Well, Betty, you know that long ago your grandfather went to Australia to seek his fortune in the gold-fields there. By years of hard work he succeeded in acquiring great wealth, and he sent for his son to come out and enjoy it with him. But word came back that his son had gone to America and married there, but further trace of him could not be found. Soon after this the old man died, and ever since his executors have been trying to find his son, Martin McGuire, or his heirs. It was through the accident of the garden hose that day that I learned your name was McGuire, and we have proved beyond a doubt that you are the rightful owner of old Dennis McGuire’s money.”

“Yes, ’m,” said Betty; and then she rose and walked over to where Mr. Brewster still sat by the writing-table.

“Now, will *you* please tell me about it?” she said.

The request was from no lack of confidence in Miss Van Court’s statements, but simply a desire to hear other particulars, and to have the added authority of the man’s advice.

So Mr. Brewster began impressively:

“Miss McGuire, I have the honor to inform you that you are heiress to a large sum of money, probably a million of dollars, and that, according to the provisions of your grandfather’s will, it is absolutely at your own disposal. For the will specially states that in the event of Martin McGuire’s death the money shall belong to his children, and shall be spent or used as they desire, even though a nominal guardian must needs be appointed to fulfil the letter of the law. Mr. Dennis McGuire’s lawyer came from Australia to New York some time ago to hunt up the heirs. His search seemed fruitless, and one day he told me about the case, in a casual conversation. I came down here on a few days’ visit to my friend Mr. Van Court, and I happened to tell him about it in his sister’s presence. She at once remembered that your name was McGuire; and though it seemed one chance out of a thousand, we investigated the case, and we feel convinced that the heir is found at last. I will write Mr. Morris, the Australian lawyer, and he will come to Greenborough at once. Meantime, Miss McGuire, you may be planning your future mode of life, which will, of course, be very different from your past.”

“Yes, sir. Will you please pinch me, sir?” and Betty held out her scrawny little arm toward the gentleman.

He seemed a bit astonished; but the vagaries of heiresses are easily forgiven, and he nipped the arm between his thumb and forefinger, saying:

“Oh, you are awake; there is no doubt of that! But you haven’t realized the case yet. Come, now; what do you think you will do with all this money?”

“First, I shall buy two things, sir—a white parasol and a home.”

“Indeed! and why do you buy the parasol first?”

“Because that is to give to Miss Van Court, to replace the one I spoiled.”

Miss Grace was too kind-hearted to oppose Betty’s plan, so she said: “I shall prize the new one highly as a gift from my little friend. And then next you’re to purchase a home, are you?”

“Yes,” said Betty, her eyes fairly dancing as she awoke to the possibilities. “Yes; I’ve never had a home, and oh, I’ve longed for one so! But I think I’d better go back to Mrs. Tucker’s now, ma’am. Ellen will be wanting me to pare the potatoes.”

Mr. Brewster looked inquiringly at Miss Grace.

“Yes,” said the lady; “she may as well go back there for to-night. It will be quieter and better for her than to stay here. And to-morrow morning, Betty, I will call for you, and we’ll go and buy you some new clothes, more appropriate to your changed fortunes.”

CHAPTER IV

MAKING PLANS

Betty went back to Warren Street, walking slowly and thinking hard. Occasionally she remembered Ellen and the potatoes, and quickened her steps; then other thoughts swarmed in her brain, and her pace slackened again.

She was not dazed by the sudden good fortune that had come to her; on the contrary, her mind was stirred to especial activity, and she was making plans with eager delight.

She would have a home, *that* was certain; with bright flowers and cows and a strawberry-bed. And then she would have a new feather—a long, curling one—and a red sash of real silk! And then, if there was any money left, she would buy books and learn things.

And she had generous thoughts, too. She decided to buy Lame Jack a new crutch, for he had really outgrown the one he was using. And she would buy something very nice for Ellen—a jewel-box, perhaps. And Pete should have a gift, and Mrs. Tucker, too. In her happiness, Betty quite forgot all Mrs. Tucker's harsh treatment of her, and studied seriously over an appropriate present for her tyrant. She remembered having heard her say she wished she could afford to have a dumb-waiter; and as Betty had firmly determined to have a home and live in it, of course a new servant would be needed in Betty's place.

Why Mrs. Tucker wanted a *dumb* one was a mystery to the child, but she shrewdly suspected it was so he could not answer back to his mistress's frequent tirades. And anyway, if that was the kind Mrs. Tucker wanted, that was the kind for her to have; and doubtless one could be procured at a deaf-and-dumb asylum, so Betty decided to hire one.

She had dawdled so, as she thought over all these things, that it was growing dusk when she neared the house.

In spite of her changed circumstances, she felt all her accustomed fear of Mrs. Tucker's wrath, and tremblingly hurried around to the back door.

Finding only Ellen in the kitchen, her spirits rose, and she announced grandly:

“Ellen, I’ve come into me fortune!”

“Bad luck to it, thin, for comin’ to ye of a Monday! Here I’m druv to death, and that botherin’ washerwoman clutterin’ about, and no one to help me a ha’p’orth. Come and hold this shtrainer, now, while I pour the soup through it—if yer forchin hasn’t turned ye clean daft!”

Good-natured Ellen was so seldom cross that Betty felt like a guilty wretch, and, taking the strainer, she showed such a repentant face that Ellen softened and said:

“Don’t moind me, Betty dear. I’m that worried wid me wurk, and wid the missus’s sharp tongue, that it riles me. Whisht! she’s comin’.”

Mrs. Tucker came into the kitchen, and seeing Betty, exclaimed:

“My dear child, what *are* you doing? Your place is not here any more. Go into my room, and sit down and rest yourself.”

Ellen nearly dropped the soup-kettle when she heard this surprising speech, and began to realize that something had happened indeed.

Betty smiled slyly at the amazed cook, and replied:

“No, ma’am; I ain’t tired,—no more than I was yesterday,—and I’ll be helpin’ me friend Ellen.”

Neither could Mrs. Tucker induce Betty to eat at the table with the boarders. She preferred to take her dinner in the kitchen with Ellen, as she was in the habit of doing; and as they sat eating, she told the wonderful news.

“What’s this about yer forchin, me dear?” inquired Ellen.

“Oh, Ellen, it’s just wonderful! I can’t believe it at all, no matter how hard I try, when I’m here in this house; but I went up to Miss Van Court’s to-day, an’ she says I’m to have all me grandfather’s money, him havin’ died in Australia, where the gold comes from.”

“An’ is it much money, sure?”

“Yes, heaps! A million dollars, the gentleman said; but Miss Grace explained that I’d only get a bit of it each year.”



“MY DEAR CHILD, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? YOUR PLACE IS NOT HERE ANY MORE.”

“She means interist, child; but if it’s r’ally the interist of a million dollars, which I can’t belave, you’re a rich lady, an’ the likes o’ me ain’t fit to associate wid yez. An’, by the same token, Mrs. Tucker ain’t fit, neither!”

“Ellen, you’re far more fit nor she is, for you’ve always been kind to me; and, Ellen, I’m going to give you a present when I get my money; and when I buy my home, you shall come and live with me and be my cook.”

“Indade an’ I will, if ye’ll have me; an’ it’ll be a happy day fer me whin I l’ave the ould lady an’ her shcoldin’!”

“Now, I must go and tell Mrs. Tucker about it, as she’ll be havin’ to replace my vallyble services with a substitute.”

When Betty opened the door, she nearly tumbled over Mrs. Tucker; and it may be that she was not above eavesdropping when such upheavals were taking place in her household, for she rightly suspected that Betty would confide in Ellen before she told the story to her mistress.

"I was just coming for you," said the lady, blandly, "and I suppose you were just looking for me. Come into my room and tell me all about it."

Betty obeyed from force of habit, and seated herself primly on the edge of a chair.

Although Mrs. Tucker was apparently able to change her demeanor toward her young drudge all at once, yet the child could not so easily alter her behavior to the tyrannical woman. And so she said, almost apologetically:

"I'm thinkin' I must be leavin', ma'am. They told me that I have come into my grandfather's fortune."

"Oh, don't talk of leaving, Betty! Of course you'll stay with me, though in a very different position. You can board here, and you may have the best room in the house, and I'll look after your clothes and things, and be your legal guardian. I always was fond of you, my dear," said the landlady.

Mrs. Tucker was a woman who believed in the worm-catching powers of the early bird, and she had already determined that she would force as strongly as possible her claim to control Betty's affairs.

This prospect dismayed the child, and so accustomed was she to accepting Mrs. Tucker's word as law that she seemed to see her anticipated home slipping from her grasp.

When Betty became excited her speech grew more Irish, both in accent and diction, and now she responded to Mrs. Tucker's last remark in a real brogue:

"It's a queer way you have of showin' it, then, ma'am, an' if that's fondness, I'll not be carin' for the likes of it from you."

"There, there, Betty, you don't realize what you're saying. You're nervous to-night, and no wonder. Tell me all about it, my dear."

"There isn't much to tell, ma'am. I don't understand it all myself. Only, a gentleman came from Australia to look for the heirs of Dennis McGuire, and somehow he found me. And so all the money will be mine; and to-morrow morning Miss Van Court is coming to take me out to buy a parasol to make up for the one I spoiled for her that day."

“Well, then, I will have a talk with Miss Van Court when she comes. And now do you go to bed, Betty, for you need rest after all this excitement. You may have the large blue room next to mine, for the room you have been occupying is not suited to your present position.”

She went with Betty to the blue room, and after she had left her for the night, the little girl crept into the pretty white bed, and felt that it at least was real, even if the fortune never came true.

She fell asleep in a moment, and dreamed that she had a hundred sashes, each of a different color, and a hundred long, curling feathers; that she was running to her new home with them, and Mrs. Tucker was running after her. And she thought she ran inside and locked the door. And then Mrs. Tucker seemed to set fire to the house, and just then, of course, Betty woke up, and found it was morning, and she was still in the blue room, and all kinds of beautiful things might happen before the day was over.

She hopped out of bed, and enjoyed, for the first time in her life, the luxury of making an unhurried toilet.

But her old faded frock seemed more distasteful to her than ever, and she looked longingly at the blue ribbons that held back the window-curtains. At last she decided to borrow them; for if the fortune-story was true, she could pay Mrs. Tucker for them, and if not, she could give them back.

So she converted them into a very becoming collar and belt, and stepped out into the hall feeling half afraid that she was still dreaming.

But she wasn't, and Mrs. Tucker at once took her in charge, and, leading her to the dining-room, gave her a breakfast such as she had seen, indeed, but never before eaten.

Soon after this Miss Van Court came, and, as she had planned, Mrs. Tucker received her and had an interview with her alone. But it could not have been very satisfactory to the landlady, for it was with a decidedly crestfallen air that she went to summon Betty.

When the child came in, Miss Van Court said only: “Good morning, Betty. Get your hat at once, and come with me for a drive.”

And then Betty McGuire went down the steps and out the gate of No. 27 Warren Street for the last time, and seating herself in Miss Van Court's carriage, she rolled away to begin her new life as a young heiress.

CHAPTER V

A SHOPPING TOUR

As they rode along, Miss Van Court talked to her companion kindly and with frankness.

“Betty,” she said, “you are now a rich girl, and your money is at your own disposal; but, as a friend, I want to advise you a little. You are too young to know what is best to do, and I do not think Mrs. Tucker is a fit person to have charge of you in any way. So I am going to take you home to stay with me until definite plans can be made for your future. Are you willing to trust my judgment and allow me to assist you as you assume your new responsibilities?”

“Indeed I am, Miss Van Court; you are only too good to me. I’m awful ignorant, and I’m not so good as I’d like to be, but truly, I do want to be good and do what is right.”

“Very well, Betty; we will hope that in time you can get the better of your ignorance and faults, and meanwhile we’ll go and buy you some dresses that will at least make you look wiser and better.”

And then the fun began. The poor little drudge, who had never had a really pretty dress since she could remember, was provided with a wardrobe she thought fit for a princess.

Several dresses were bought ready-made, and Miss Van Court decreed that Betty should at once put on a lovely pink-and-white gingham trimmed with dainty embroidery, and keep it on. To this was added a wide Leghorn flat with pink ribbons and a waving white feather; and Betty’s cheeks flushed and her eyes danced as the saleswoman put it on her curly head.

And then they bought shoes and gloves and linen, until Betty thought that Miss Van Court must think she was going to stay a little girl all her life, for surely she could never wear out all these things before she grew up! And then Betty insisted that the white parasol must be bought. So they selected it with great care, and Miss Van Court accepted the pretty gift as gracefully as if a great lady had given it to her.

Then she advised Betty to buy also a smaller one for herself. This was a crowning glory; and they found a white silk affair with little ruffles that Miss

Van Court thought suitable for a child; and Betty carried it away with her, feeling that now there was nothing more to wish for.

They reached Miss Van Court's home in time for luncheon, and after that Mr. Brewster proposed that they all adjourn to the library and talk over matters.

The elder Miss Van Court was there as well as Miss Grace, though the latter seemed to look upon Betty as her especial charge.



“BETTY’S CHEEKS FLUSHED AND HER EYES
DANCED AS THE SALESWOMAN PUT THE HAT ON
HER CURLY HEAD.”

Mr. Morris, the Australian lawyer, had arrived from New York, and Mr. Brewster and Mrs. Van Court completed the party.

Then they all began to talk at once, and offered various and conflicting suggestions.

Miss Grace proposed that they keep Betty with them,—for the present, at least,—as she had no relatives, and she must live somewhere. Mrs. Van Court said that without question a good boarding-school was the only place for the child for the next few years. Mr. Morris offered to take her back with him to Australia, and to adopt her as a member of his family.

Finally there was a pause, and Betty herself spoke. Her voice trembled a little, but she felt that this was a critical moment, and if she was to save her prospective home she must strike a telling blow.

“It’s kind and good you all are to me,” she said, “and I’m thinkin’ you’re wiser than I am myself; but Miss Grace says the fortune is my own, to do just as I like with; and I *can’t* go to a boarding-school, or to Australia, or live here, because I want to have a home of my own. I don’t know exactly what kind of a one I can buy, but it must be a *home*, and it must be all my own. I have never had a home, and I’m longin’ for one; and unless my money can buy it, I don’t want the money at all, at all.”

Mr. Morris looked disappointed, and Mr. Brewster looked amused. Mrs. Van Court sniffed a little, but Miss Grace said kindly: “I think you are right, Betty, and we will direct our plans toward gratifying your lifelong wish.”

“But it is absurd,” said Mrs. Van Court. “A child like that cannot take charge of a house. What she wants or doesn’t want is not the question. We who are older know what is best for her, and she should be guided by our advice. Now, a few years at Madame De Vincy’s school would make a lady of her, and fit her to use her money intelligently.”

“Madame De Vincy!” exclaimed Miss Grace. “She would spoil Betty entirely. I know the sort of young ladies she turns out: rattle-pated fashion-plates, with a smattering of French and music—of no earthly use to themselves or any one else.”

“I agree with you,” said Mr. Brewster.

However, as he usually agreed with Miss Grace, his remark carried very little weight.

Then the elder Miss Van Court spoke.

“I think,” she said, in her decided way, “you are all meddling with what does not concern you. What right have you to interfere with the dictates of a written will? If Mr. Dennis McGuire expressly decreed that his

granddaughter should have his money to do with as she chose, I think no one else has any authority in the matter.”

“That is true; that is true,” said Mr. Morris; “and though the terms of the will are unusual, most unusual, yet it is valid, perfectly valid, and Miss McGuire is accountable to no one, to no one at all, for the use she makes of her money.”

Mr. Morris was a thin, wiry little man, with sparse, wiry black hair that seemed trying to spring off his head as he talked, and restless black eyes that winked and blinked incessantly. Although a man of sound wisdom and good judgment, he had a nervous manner, and he emphasized his spoken opinions with continuous muscular activity.

“Therefore,” he went on, squaring his elbows, and tapping his left palm with his right forefinger—“therefore there is nothing for us to do, nothing, but to defer to the wishes of Miss McGuire. Now, wait a minute.” Though all present recognized his authority, and had no desire to question it, Mr. Morris seemed always in fear of interruption, and he raised his finger warningly to prevent such a possibility. “Now, wait a minute. I do not mean there can be no guardian, no financial guardian, to look after the investments, for such a person is recommended in the will; but his duties are defined, clearly defined, and he is to receive an adequate salary; and these duties in no wise include or permit dictation as to expenditures.”

Betty, in a large arm-chair by Miss Grace’s side, was grasping tightly the carved wolves’ heads that presented themselves to her little brown hands. She was looking straight at Mr. Morris and listening intently to every word he said, though she never really forgot her pink gingham dress and pretty shoes.

But when he finished his speech she let go the wolves’ heads, and springing to her feet, darted across the room and stood before him.

“Then I can buy my home!” she said, in a voice of rapture. “Oh, sir, will you help me?”

“Bless my soul!” exclaimed Mr. Morris, much disconcerted by this sudden attack. “But yes—yes, child,” he went on, pounding his knees with his clenched fists; “I *will* help you, of course I will.”

Indeed, only a hard-hearted tyrant could have resisted Betty’s pleading face and quenched the dawning hope in her blue eyes; and Mr. Morris was by no means a hard-hearted tyrant. His black hair seemed to bristle less

ferociously, and his black eyes snapped almost mildly, as he took Betty's outstretched hands in his, and said:

"My child, so far as I have any authority I will use it to help you establish your home—your own home."

"You're a brick, sir," said Betty, so fervently that nobody laughed; and then Mr. Morris, to prove his good will, shook her hands vigorously, though quite unconsciously, and Betty, being of a responsive nature, shook his hands in the same absent-minded manner; and they shook away, looking like some kind of new patent pump-handles, until Miss Grace broke the silence by saying:

"Then the home is a foregone conclusion; now let us make plans for it."

"Yes, 'm," said Betty, breaking off the hand-shaking, and returning to her seat by Miss Grace's side.



“‘THEN I CAN BUY MY HOME!’ SHE SAID”

"But," said Mr. Morris, fitting the finger-tips of his right hand carefully against those of his left, and then removing them one by one, "although I

have promised to do all in my power to further your projects, whatever they may be,—and I will do so, I will certainly do so,—yet I want you to understand, distinctly to understand, that a home is offered you under my Australian roof. My wife sent an urgent invitation for you to go back with me and become a member of our household—a valued member of our household. We have a son and a daughter who would welcome you, gladly welcome you, and you would have a comfortable and happy home, with no cares or responsibilities. Now, wait a minute. I do not urge this course, understand; I do not urge it, but I want you to be aware, fully aware, of its advantages.”

“It does seem as if it might be the best plan,” said Miss Grace, thoughtfully.

“I quite agree with you,” said Mr. Brewster.

“Of course it would be best,” exclaimed Mrs. Van Court; “it’s a chance to be thankful for; and I hope, Betty, you will appreciate the kindness of Mr. Morris and accept his offer.”

Betty’s happy smile had faded, and she began to think the battle was all to be fought over again, when, to her relief, Miss Margaret Van Court asserted herself once more:

“Mother, what is it to you what the child does? If she wishes to go with Mr. Morris, let her say so; but if not, why try to influence her?”

Betty gave her a grateful look, and said:

“I do appreciate the gentleman’s kindness, and his wife’s, too; but I want my own home, and I must have it.”

“Well, well,” said Mr. Morris, cheerfully, “that settles it—that settles it. And now, where shall your home be, and will you build it, or buy it already built?”

“Oh, I don’t want to build a house,” said Betty, seriously, “because it would take too long, and I am in a hurry to get settled. I would like to buy a house near here, but out in the country; and I did think I wanted it to be like Mrs. Carver’s house, but I don’t; I want it just like this one, or, at least, as near like this as I can get. But maybe I can’t afford such a big one, sir?”

Although unintentional, the compliment of this speech quite won Mrs. Van Court’s heart, and she smiled kindly on Betty.

“So you like my house, do you, you funny child?”

“Oh, yes, ma’am. I think it is beautiful; the walls are so big, and the windows so open. Do you want to sell it, ma’am?”

“No,” said Mrs. Van Court, laughing; “but I know of a house somewhat like it, out on the Marsden Road.”

“Oh,” said Miss Grace, clapping her hands, “the Stillford place. Just the thing! They say it is in the market at a great bargain. Let us drive over this afternoon and look at it.”

The carriage was ordered, and Miss Grace, Betty, Mr. Morris, and Mr. Brewster started off in high spirits to investigate the attractions of the Stillford house.

CHAPTER VI

THE STILLFORD HOUSE

They drove along and along the beautiful Marsden Road, past many fine houses sitting complacently in their well-kept grounds; and at last the carriage turned in at an entrance to a tree-shaded avenue that was really very much like the approach to the Van Court mansion.

“Here we are, Betty,” said Miss Grace. “Do you think you could be happy here?”

Betty said nothing, but smiled up into her friend’s eyes, for, despite their short acquaintance, there was much sympathy between them.

The driveway wound around and up a slope, encircled a great glassy plot, and then down and out to the gate again. At the top of the slope it passed the Stillford house, and here the carriage stopped. They all got out and went up the steps of a broad veranda that spread itself across the front of the house and disappeared around the corners. The house was by no means a modern one, but was built on the plan which boasts of two front doors, with large rooms between them, and wings on each side. Mr. Brewster rang the bell at one of the doors,—the western one,—and in a few moments the other door opened, and a voice said briskly:

“Want to see the house? Have to come in this way if you do.”

They crossed to the other door, and found a pleasant-faced woman, who announced herself as Mrs. Ryan, the caretaker of the place.

Mr. Brewster explained that they did want to see the house, with a view to a possible purchase of it; and Mrs. Ryan, producing a bunch of keys, piloted the party from one room to another, dilating as she went upon the advantages of the dwelling and upon the glory of the departed Stillfords.

“These is the parlures,” said she, ushering them into the two rooms that filled the central portion of the house. “Front one looks down to town, as you see. Back one commands a view of the river and mountings in the distance. My! The ball-dances Mrs. Stillford used to give in these here parlures! I tell you, them was the grand days of this house.”

The large, high-ceilinged rooms were utterly bare of furniture; but Betty's accommodating imagination ignored all beneath the level of her own eyes, and as she looked at the frescoed garlands on the walls and ceilings, the shining, flickering glass prisms on the chandeliers, and the carved scrolls of the tall mantels, she fancied she could hear the rustle of silks and the sounds of music and merriment that must have marked Mrs. Stillford's "ball-dances."

From the front parlor, double doors led into the west hall, and as Mrs. Ryan unlocked them a wail of anger greeted the party:

"Dit out o' here! I'm p'ayin' sojer!"

A glance at the "sojer's" surroundings explained at once why entrance to the house had to be made by the other door; for a fort built of bricks occupied the front of the hall.

This was surmounted by a fair-sized cannon, presided over by a warlike-looking individual of perhaps five years. He brandished a tin sword, and repeated:

"Dit out o' here, or I'll shoot you down dead!"

"Don't mind him," said Mrs. Ryan, apologetically; "he's gettin' well of the measles, and he didn't feel very scrumptious to-day, so I let him play in here. It makes things sort o' hoopsy-topsy, but he don't hurt nothin'. Keep still, Michael Edward; nobody's goin' to interfere with you. Don't raise such a hubbuble."

But the valiant warrior continued to yell until the invaders, after admiring the wide hall with its great door at each end, went on to further explorations.

West of the west hall was the dining-room, in the front of the house, and back of it the kitchen.

"This here dinin'-room is considered great," said Mrs. Ryan. "This handsome sideboard is built to the wall, you see, and the mantel has carvin' on it that spells a motto."

"Ah, yes," said Mr. Morris; "and the carving is beautiful—really beautiful! Brewster, this is a fine old house."

"It is, indeed," replied Mr. Brewster; "and if Miss McGuire doesn't buy it, I think I should like it myself." And he looked hopefully toward Miss Grace, who quickly looked another way.

To reach the second floor they must needs pass the fort again. They saluted the captain, but received in return only a few irate growls.

“You wouldn’t think it,” said Mrs. Ryan, as they all went up the broad staircase, “but Michael Edward is a real good boy gen’rally. Only, when he’s been sick, it seems to jest go through all his temper. Oh, well, some cake *does* bake that way!”

Then she paused on the landing to call her guests’ attention to the view of the river and “mountings” again.

Miss Grace admired the view, but seemed even more impressed with the possibilities of the landing. It was as large as a small room, and with the great window and the lovely outlook might be furnished so as to become a perfect nook of comfort.

“Yes, ’m,” said Betty, as her friend detailed these suggestions, “an’ a singin’ æolian harp in the window.”

“Why, that’s just the finishing touch,” cried Miss Grace. “What do you know about an æolian harp, Betty?”

“They had one at Miss Christabel’s, ma’am, an’ I used to listen to its music until my heart was in my throat. Oh, Miss Grace, *am* I going to live here?”

“If you like it, Betty. The choice rests with you. But this is only the first house you’ve looked at, you know. You ought to see some others before you decide upon this as satisfactory.”

“Yes, ’m,” said Betty.

Then they went on, through the rooms and halls of the second floor and the third floor, and finally they came down the other stairs into the east hall.

In the east wing were two rooms which, Mrs. Ryan informed them, the Stillfords had used for a library and a music-room.

“A music-room!” said Betty, her eyes dancing. “What is that?”

“Why, a room for music, for music only,” said Mr. Morris. “It should contain a piano,—a piano, you know,—and other instruments, and be devoted solely to the production and enjoyment of music.”

“What did you think it was?” asked Miss Grace, noticing the disappointment on Betty’s countenance.

"I thought," she answered, bravely confessing her ignorance, "that it was like a music-box, only as big as a room, an' if you wound it up it would play tunes."

"You can have a music-box in it if you like," said Mr. Brewster.

"Then I will buy the house," said Betty, with sudden decision.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Morris. "We must see—we must talk this over. It strikes me,—yes, it certainly strikes me,—it is a very large house for you."

They were in the music-room now. Mrs. Ryan had heard alarming sounds from the fort, and had gone to investigate, leaving the visitors to sum up their opinions of the house.

Miss Grace and Mr. Brewster were seated on the low seat which ran around the bay-window; Mr. Morris was pacing the room in his quick, nervous way; and Betty was standing leaning against one of the fluted pillars which divided the music-room from the library back of it.

"No," she said decidedly; "it's not too large for me an' my family. I've been makin' plans as I went through the rooms, an' I don't want to look at any other house. If the fortune is my own, an' if I am to have the spendin' of it, I will buy this house, I will, an' then I will buy my furniture an' my family."

There was an old wooden box in Mr. Morris's path; first he stumbled over it, then he sat down upon it, and blessed his soul with emphasis, while he drummed out strange measures on the sides of the box with his fingers.

"Buy a family?" he said, "a family? What do you mean?"

"I know of a market," said Mr. Brewster, recalling a very old joke, "where there is a sign which reads, 'Families Supplied.' Perhaps you could get one there."

Betty looked at Mr. Morris's amazed countenance, and then at Mr. Brewster's quizzical one, and she felt suddenly as if she was a very foolish little girl.

But Miss Grace smiled at her with loving sympathy, and in an instant she flew across the room and nestled at the lady's side.

Miss Grace put her arm round Betty, and said kindly: "Now, tell us, dear, about the family you want to buy."

“Well, you see, ma’am,” began Betty, feeling once more the courage of her own convictions, “it’s just this way. An’ maybe I’m plannin’ too fast; maybe it’s not for the likes of me to live in a beautiful house like this. But the gentleman said the money is my own, an’ by the same token that must be true, though I can’t quite believe it; an’ so I want to buy me a house to make my home in. An’ how can it be a home without a family? An’ where would I get a family but to buy one? So if I’ve money enough I’ll buy me a grandmother, an’ a baby sister, an’ a brother. But bein’ as I’ll take Lame Jack for my brother, I’m thinkin’ I’ll get him for nothin’.”

“And where will you buy your other relatives?” asked Mr. Brewster, trying hard not to laugh.

But Betty answered as seriously as if he had inquired which was the best place to buy white parasols:

“I’m thinkin’ I can get my grandmother at the Old Ladies’ Home, an’ my baby at the Orphan Asylum; an’ if Miss Grace would go with me to pick ’em out, I’m sure we’d get nice ones.”

“I’m sure you would,” said Mr. Brewster, heartily.

Mr. Morris rose from his soap-box and paced round in his track again.

“She’s all right,” said he, pounding one palm with the other fist. “The child’s all right. Betty, you shall have your home and your family. Yes, yes; you shall have your home and your family. And you must have a housekeeper and servants.”

“My grandmother will keep house for me, sir, until I can learn to do it myself. An’ I will have servants enough to keep the place tidy, an’ —an’ I will be very good to ’em.”

Betty’s thoughts suddenly flew back to her own servitude at Mrs. Tucker’s, and she resolved that her domestic rule should be just and kind.

“Well, well,” said Mr. Morris, “the way to do some things is to *do* them. Yes, yes; that is the way to do some things. This whole affair is unique, so far as I know, but we have to deal with it as it is. And, Miss McGuire, as you are my client, I shall obey orders, and with the help of these kind friends we’ll carry this through; yes, yes, we’ll carry it through.”

“Indeed, I’ll help all I can,” said Miss Grace. “I think it is lovely, and I’m glad to assist.”

“I quite agree with you,” said Mr. Brewster.

“Well, how do you like the house?” asked Mrs. Ryan, who had quelled the military uprising, and was beaming on them from the doorway.

“It is a very attractive place,” said Miss Van Court, pleasantly; “and we thank you for showing us about. We are going home now to talk it over, and I think it is likely we shall buy the house. In that case, what will become of you?”



“‘HALLO, POPINJAY! HOW WOULD YOU LIKE IT IF I TURNED THE HOSE ON YOUR FINE PINK FROCK?’”

“Oh, I’ll go back to where I used to live before I came to work for the Stillfords. And I’ll be glad to go, too. I was mighty fond of Mrs. Stillford, but now she’s gone I ain’t got no call to stay here. Good day, miss; good day, sirs.”

The party drove back to the Van Court home, and were met on the veranda by the other ladies of the family, and by Mr. Richard Van Court, who had returned from the city.

Betty's face turned scarlet at sight of him; for she remembered their last meeting, and wondered how he would treat her now.

But Mr. Richard, being a careless and easy-going young man, and being amused by the story of Betty's change of fortunes, was quite willing to make friends with the small heiress. So he greeted her with a smile, and said:

"Hallo, Popinjay! How would you like it if I turned the hose on your fine pink frock?"

Betty blushed harder than ever, and was at a loss for a reply.

But her tormentor would not let her off so easily.

"How would you like it, eh, Popinjay?"

Then Betty looked at him with her honest blue eyes, and answered bravely: "If you didn't *mean* to do it, sir, I'd thank you for your kind *intentions*."

The Irishness of this speech pleased the young man wonderfully, and he went off into a peal of laughter. "You would, would you?" said he. "Betty, we'll let bygones be bygones, and be friends. Would you like that?"

"Yes, sir," said Betty.

"Then shake hands on it. There! Now remember, whenever you want a friend, Dicky Van Court is it. And now tell me all about this happy home you're going to buy."

But Miss Grace interfered. "Not now," she said. "Come with me, Betty, and get ready for dinner, and you can talk to my brother afterward."

They went away together, and Mr. Dick called after them:

"Put on your red necktie, Popinjay. I shall never be really happy until I see that necktie exhibited in all its glory again!"

CHAPTER VII

MR. DICK PLANS A PICNIC

The law is a great blessing, and what we should do without it would be hard to tell. But it is also a complicated mechanism and very difficult to understand. So we won't go into legal details, but satisfy ourselves with some main facts. And, indeed, since Betty never knew, and couldn't have understood if she had known, the processes by which her fortune became legally hers, it is certainly unnecessary to trouble ourselves about them. By the regular proceedings, then, of this wise but mysterious "law," Betty's claims were duly established, and Mr. Morris was appointed guardian of her financial affairs. Since he lived in Australia, Mr. Brewster was appointed to be his representative in this country. Both these gentlemen received salaries for their labors, and Betty was therefore under no obligation to them—except that, being true and noble-hearted men, they managed affairs with a generous interest that money could not repay. Even inexperienced Betty appreciated this, and often thanked them with all the earnestness of her ardent Irish heart.

The Van Courts, one and all, were her firm friends and allies. Though Mr. Dick teased her, and Mrs. Van Court often seemed curt and chilling, and Miss Margaret was blunt and outspoken, yet on the whole they were very good to the little stranger within their gates; and Miss Grace was angelically kind.

So the plans for the future went on rapidly, for all were interested in the novel enterprise; and Mr. Morris, who was obliged to return to Australia soon, wanted matters to progress as far as possible before he left the country.

The Stillford house was bought, and as Betty, being a minor, could not hold property, the deed was made out in Mr. Brewster's name, who held it in trust for her until she should come of age.

The house being bought, the next thing, of course, was the furniture.

"You'll have to go to New York for it," said Mrs. Van Court. "There's nothing worth buying in Greenborough."

"Just the thing!" exclaimed Mr. Dick, who was present at this conclave. "We'll make a picnic to New York, and stay several days. I'll go with you,

and show you the sights. Hast been to New York, Popinjay?"

"No, sir," said Betty, shyly, for she always felt as if the young man was poking fun at her.

"Then I'll take you. Grace, you may go too, if you'll be good; and, Brewster, I suppose we'll have to have you along; Mr. Morris, of course; Margaret, if she likes; and will you go, mother?"

Mrs. Van Court said she felt it her duty to go, as she would be needed to look after such a frivolous party; but Miss Margaret declined, saying she would stay at home and keep house.

So the trip was arranged, and they were to start the next day.

"And now run to bed, Betty," said Mrs. Van Court; "it is already past the hour."

During the fortnight Betty had spent with them, Mrs. Van Court had undertaken to instruct her in at least the rudiments of good manners and social customs, and the child's ready adaptability and quick wit enabled her to do credit to her teacher.

Instead of her slangy, saucy ways, Betty had acquired a polite demeanor which, being modeled very carefully after Mrs. Van Court's, was perhaps over-dignified. This majestic air, when combined with Betty's queer grammar and occasional lapses into Irish idioms, amused Mr. Richard Van Court extremely, and he liked nothing better than to tease her until she lost her dignity and made sharp replies.

Then Mrs. Van Court would reprove them both, and send Richard away while she gave Betty a lesson in behavior. Her rules were very strict, too: Betty was not allowed at dinner when there were guests present, she was always sent to bed at eight o'clock, and in every way was treated as a well-brought-up little girl of fourteen ought to be.

She sometimes felt rebellious; but there were so many pleasures that they more than made up for the deprivations, and, too, Betty really wanted to learn the gentle and refined ways of those about her.

So, though she would have liked to stay up later, she said good night gracefully and went to her room.

There she found a good-sized box bearing the dressmaker's label, and she knew at once it was the traveling-suit she was to wear to New York, and which Miss Grace had feared might not arrive in time. Betty opened the box, and removing the tissue-paper, saw a skirt of bright-red silk. She was

delighted beyond measure, for the Van Court ladies rarely allowed her to have her dresses as bright as she liked. They preferred to wear neutral tints themselves, and tried to persuade Betty that pale or subdued tones were in every way preferable to the gorgeous colors in which her soul delighted.

So the red silk skirt was a surprise, and Betty tried it on at once. The hooks were on the wrong side of the belt. "But," thought Betty, "sure, that's the new-fangled way. Every one of my frocks has some queer belongings to it."

The jacket was folded with the red silk inside; but she quickly whisked it out, turned the sleeves, and tried it on with a smile of real satisfaction.

"Miss Grace'll say it doesn't fit me," she thought, for the collar seemed a bit humpy. The jacket fastenings, which were pretty loops of black braid, were a little difficult to manage, being on the inside, but she finally conquered them. Then she took it off, and folded it neatly again in its box, and went to bed to dream of the wonderful New York trip.

Next morning Miss Grace popped her head in at Betty's door.

"Wake up," she said. "It's a lovely day to start on our trip, and it is high time you were getting ready. Put on your new frock and hurry down-stairs so that I may see if it is all right."

"Yes, Miss Grace, dear; I'll be down in a jiffy!" And Betty hopped up and made her toilet, all the while wondering what New York would be like. She managed the red silk dress more easily this time, but still thought it queer why it felt so uncomfortable.

However, she knew Miss Grace would make it all right somehow, and she ran down to the breakfast-room, where the family was already assembled.

"Why, Betty!" exclaimed Miss Margaret, "what have you done? You'll spoil that dress!"

"Go up-stairs at once," said Mrs. Van Court, sternly, "and put it on properly."

Betty looked so amazed at these speeches, and then cast such a questioning glance at Miss Grace, that that lady burst into laughter, and was unable to speak for a moment.

"Popinjay," said Mr. Dick, gravely, "I don't know much about millinery; but as you seem to know even less, I will inform you that you have put on your frock inside out."

“I’m sure I haven’t!” exclaimed Betty, indignantly. “Have I, Miss Grace?”

“You certainly have, Betty. That red silk is the lining. Your suit is of blue cloth trimmed with black braid.”

Then Miss Grace took Betty’s hand, and they went up-stairs to right things.

Of course that explained the queer fastenings; but Betty was much disappointed to find herself wearing a dark-blue dress instead of a bright-red one, and in her secret heart she vowed to get a bright-red dress as soon as she had an opportunity.

In great good humor the party began their journey to New York.

Mr. Morris acted the part of courier, and flew around in his spasmodic way, buying tickets, checking luggage, and making himself generally useful. He took Betty under his special protection, while Mr. Van Court looked after his mother’s comfort, and Mr. Brewster devoted himself to Miss Grace.

Betty was a little bewildered by all the noise and bustle, but enjoyed the trip thoroughly and was almost sorry when it was ended and the train rolled into the great train-shed in Jersey City.

Then they crossed the ferry, and Betty learned that the noise and confusion she had thought so great were as nothing to the clattering uproar of New York City.

They walked through a long, covered bridge that spanned a street instead of a river, and then went down some steps into another street that appeared to be packed full of people.



**“BETTY CLASPED HER ARMS TIGHTLY AROUND A
LAMP-POST, THUS ANCHORING HERSELF.”**

Mr. Morris grasped Betty’s arm firmly, and together they plunged into the moving throng, and were almost carried along with it. “Bless my soul!” he said. “This won’t do, this won’t do. This is the day of the great parade, but I didn’t suppose there’d be such a crowd—such an immense crowd! I was aiming for the elevated road; but we can’t do it, we can’t do it. We must take cabs.”

However, there were no cabs to be had, the surface cars were crowded to their utmost capacity, and the steps of the elevated stations were thronged

with people unable to get up to the platforms. "Well, well!" said Mr. Morris, "I never saw such a crowd—never! I must consult with Brewster and Dick."

He turned back to seek them, and Betty turned, too; but somehow the crowd surged between them, and the child was fairly swept off her feet and carried away, and when she touched the ground again Mr. Morris was nowhere to be seen. Betty was frightened, but she was not bewildered. She pushed along to a lamp-post near by, and clasped her arms tightly around it, thus anchoring herself as near as possible to the spot where Mr. Morris last saw her. She stood there until her arms were numb, hoping he would come; but he did not, and the crowd seemed to increase.

Then Betty set her wits to work. She knew she was lost in New York City, but she had perfect confidence that she would find her friends again in some way.

She had no money with her, as Mr. Morris had taken her purse in his pocket for safe-keeping. But she knew that while in New York they were to stay at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and though she had no idea where that was located, she felt sure that she could succeed in getting there, and that was her best chance of being found.

She glanced at the people who stood nearest her, and decided upon a newsboy as the most promising aid.

"Say, young fellow, how do you get to the Fifth Av'noo Hotel?" she said, unconsciously lapsing into *Lame Jack's* vernacular in consideration of the type she was addressing.

Now, a New York newsboy is not easily surprised, but to hear such a well-dressed little girl using his own lingo was rather startling.

But, though totally unaware of it, Betty had assumed something of Mrs. Van Court's aristocratic pose and expression, and observing this, the boy refrained from chaffing.

"Take the Sixt' Av'noo L up to Twenty-third Street, an' then walk acrost," he said briefly; and Betty made up her mind she would do it.

"Where do you take the Sixt' Av'noo L?" she further demanded.

"Right up there," said the boy, grinning, as he pointed to the stairs, not ten feet away, but so packed with people that it seemed vain to attempt to reach them.

But just then the music of a brass band was heard, and a company of soldiers came marching along.

As if by magic the policemen cleared the stairs, and the captain of the company started up, leading his men.



“‘CAN’T I GO UP WITH YOU?’ BETTY ASKED. ‘I’M LOST AND I MUST FIND MY PEOPLE.’”

Like a flash Betty darted to the captain’s side.

“Oh, please, sir, can’t I go up with you?” she asked. “I’m lost, and I must find my people.”

“Can you be a soldier?” said the kind old captain, looking at her quizzically.

“I can keep step an’ obey orders, sir,” said she, quickly, “if that’s what it means.”

“That’s all there is to it,” said the captain, laughing; “walk by me.”

And marching at the captain’s side to the music of the band, Betty mounted the stairs and walked along the platform.

The train which was waiting seemed well filled already, but the company managed to get on somehow.

Unheeding the closed gates, they jumped over them and on to the platforms. Betty suddenly felt herself lifted into the air and swung over a gate, and the next moment the train had started, and she discovered she was on the front platform of the front car, with the captain and seven other soldiers.

The men were as deferential as if she had been the daughter of the regiment, and the ride up-town was exciting and splendid. She told her story, and the captain ordered a detachment of his troops to escort her from the station at Twenty-third Street to her hotel.

After learning at the office that none of the Greenborough party had arrived, the soldiers took Betty to the parlor.

Here she dismissed them politely, saying she was not afraid to stay alone, and she was sure her friends would soon arrive.

So with grave and respectful salutes the guard departed, and Betty sat contentedly on a huge red velvet sofa and waited.

CHAPTER VIII

DAYS IN NEW YORK

After Betty had waited about an hour her expectations were realized.

Mrs. Van Court and her daughter and son appeared in the doorway and said respectively:

“Betty! how *did* you get here?”

“My dear child, are you really safe?”

“I told ’em you’d land on your feet somehow, Popinjay!”

Explanations followed, and Betty told about her ride up-town with the soldiers; and then Richard Van Court went to telephone to Mr. Morris and Mr. Brewster, who were still down-town searching for the lost child.

“Betty,” said Mr. Dick, when he returned, “you’re a ‘man-of-infinite-resource-and-sagacity.’ But what would you have done if you hadn’t met your military friends?”

“I don’t know, sir, but I think I would have made my way up here somehow, for I knew it was the only chance of gettin’ myself found.”

“You showed good common sense,” said Miss Grace; “and now let us go to our rooms and rest a little before dinner.”

To Betty’s great satisfaction, she was allowed to go down to dinner. Mrs. Van Court disapproved of it, and said it would be much better for her to have supper in her room, and go at once to bed, that she might be refreshed for the excitements of the next day. But Miss Grace saw the child’s disappointed face, and begged that she might be permitted to dine with the rest and then go to bed directly after. So Mrs. Van Court consented, and told Betty she might wear her blue silk dress.

This dress was Betty’s pride and delight. It was of blue China silk, just the color of her eyes, and had a yoke and sleeves of white embroidered muslin. Black silk stockings and slippers with shining buckles completed the costume, and Miss Grace tied a blue ribbon through the dark hair that clustered in ringlets all over the little Irish head.

“There,” she said; “you look very nice, Betty, and if you behave as well as you look, no one will have any good reason to complain of you to-night. Now run to mama’s room and ask her if she’s ready.”

As Betty walked along the softly carpeted hall, she felt that in all her “pretendings” she had never imagined such good times as she was having now, and the thought that they were only a prelude to the best time of all, when she should have her own home, brought a radiant smile to her face.

So it was a very pretty little picture that greeted Mrs. Van Court’s eyes as she opened the door to Betty’s tap.

“Why, my child, how sweet you look!” said the lady, kissing her kindly.

And Betty replied seriously: “I do, ma’am; Miss Grace said so. But I’m afraid, ma’am, I won’t have my manners right, an’ I’ll do little credit to your teachin’.”

“Well, don’t bother about it,” said Mrs. Van Court, laughing. “Just do the best you can, and don’t talk much when we’re in the public halls or parlors.”

The party had a small dining-room to themselves; and though the formalities of a table were entirely new to the little Irish girl, yet her common sense and quick power of observation enabled her soon to master them.

“Now,” said Mr. Morris, after they were seated at the table, “we must lay our plans. Yes, we must arrange for the campaign. What shall we do to-morrow?”

“Let us be systematic,” said Mrs. Van Court. “Let us make lists of the furniture we have to buy, and attend to the various rooms on different days.”

“And,” said Miss Grace, “we ought not to march this whole crowd around together all the time. I propose that one or two of us accompany Betty each day, and so divide the responsibility.”

“I quite agree with you,” said Mr. Brewster.

“Capital!” cried Richard. “I’ll go with you, Popinjay, to get the things for your music-room. I know a place where they have the loveliest music-boxes you ever saw, and hand-organs, too.”

“Don’t tease, Dick,” said his sister. “You *may* look after the musical instruments, for you know all about such things. *I* will help you, Betty, to furnish the parlors and halls and that lovely little landing on the stairs.”

“I want Mrs. Van Court to pick out the furniture for my own room,” said Betty; “for she knows what’s best for a little girl like me to have.”

Mrs. Van Court smiled at her, and said she would be glad to select the furniture for all the sleeping-rooms in Betty’s new house.

“Bless my soul!” said Mr. Morris. “What’s left for me to do? Am I to be out of this thing—out of it entirely? No! I will provide for your dining-room and kitchen. Ah, yes; I will be of use there! Now, wait a minute. I have a house of my own, and I understand culinary mysteries that would floor these foolish young men—utterly floor them. With Mrs. Van Court’s assistance, I will fit up your kitchen to a state of perfection, a state of perfection, my dear.”

“I will select your library,” said Mr. Brewster. “A library you must have—not a very large one at first, but one that shall be a foundation for the future.”

So the plans were laid; and next morning all were filled with an eager interest to put them at once into execution.

Mrs. Van Court, Mr. Morris, and Betty started on their expedition as early as possible, saying they would be gone all day, and making an appointment to meet the others at dinner and report progress.

And such a day as it was! Betty began to think she had stepped into a fairy story, and pinched herself once in a while to make sure she was awake.

Every purchase was made subject to her authority; but this soon came to be merely nominal, for her kind friends had such superior knowledge and judgment that she was only too glad to agree with their decisions.

As Mr. Morris had said, he and Mrs. Van Court knew how to furnish a kitchen, and they bought a complete outfit of cooking-utensils and kitchen furniture in a very short space of time. A few patent labor-saving contrivances were purchased, but only those that the sagacious buyers had tested and found useful.

The dining-room furniture came next. As the house had a sideboard, they bought a dining-table and chairs, a pretty glass-cupboard, and a small side-table.

“Shall you sit at the head of your own table, Betty?” inquired Mrs. Van Court.

“No, ma’am; I think my gran’mother will sit there, an’ I’d like an arm-chair for her, an’ also a high chair for the baby.”

These were added to the order; and then they selected dishes and glassware and table-linen and silver. It was a difficult matter to know just what style of furnishing to adopt for such unusual domestic arrangements; but Mrs. Van Court decided on a general line that should be in keeping with the house, and with the state of Betty's finances, without being in any way extravagant.

The sleeping-rooms came next. In deference to Betty's wish, Mrs. Van Court selected all the furniture for Betty's own room. A brass bedstead was chosen; then a dear little dressing-table with a wide, low mirror; for this Mrs. Van Court found a dainty white cover, and then proceeded to buy a bewildering array of trays, brushes, combs, and toilet appliances of all kinds. Of some of these Betty knew neither the names nor the uses.

Then she chose a wide, soft couch upholstered in blue, and a dozen jolly big pillows to throw on it, a dear little rocking-chair, a lovely work-table of inlaid wood, and another table to hold a pretty shaded lamp. The carpet was blue and white, and the window-curtains were of dainty, ruffled white muslin.

Although the library was yet to be furnished, Mrs. Van Court said that a small writing-desk and a rack for favorite books were always pleasant to have in one's own room, and these were added.

There were other little things needed, but they decided to leave those for the present and look at furniture for the other rooms. So a room for the prospective grandmother was furnished next, and the tastes of an imaginary old lady were carefully consulted.

"But she won't be so *very* old," said Betty. "I want her so that she can take care of me in some ways, and in some ways I can take care of her."

So the old lady was imagined several years younger than before, and her comfort was arranged for accordingly.

Then the baby sister's nursery was furnished, Betty informing them that the sister would be about two years old when first introduced.

It was great fun buying a crib, a chiffonnier, a tiny bath-tub, and all the paraphernalia of a baby's toilet. Toys were suggested, but they were left to be bought some other day, for Lane Jack's room must be attended to.

Betty hadn't asked him yet to live in her home, but she felt no fear of a refusal, and furnished his room in a way which she knew would appeal to his tastes.

By this time it was growing late, and they returned to the hotel feeling that the first day's shopping had been a success.

It was a merry party at dinner that night, for each had something to tell of the day's experience, and there was much laughter and fun.

"Popinjay," said Mr. Richard, "I think I will take you shopping to-morrow, and see if we can't do as well as the committee who went to-day. We'll buy music-boxes of all kinds, and then if there's any time left we'll go sight-seeing."

"Yes, sir," said Betty, her eyes shining with delight; for Mr. Dick was very kind to her, and having grown used to his teasing, she didn't mind it so much as at first.

"All aboard, Popinjay," said the young man, soon after breakfast the next morning. "Get on your smartest hat and come along with me. We'll join the hilarious populace in search of pleasure and profit."

Betty ran to get ready, and soon appeared again, smiling and happy, though a little shy.

"It's good of you, sir, to take so much trouble for the likes of me," she said gratefully, as they started off.

"Now, Betty," said Mr. Richard, seriously, "I will give you a bit of sound advice which your other legal and spiritual advisers seem to have omitted. 'The likes of me' is an expression you must not use. In the first place, it is too Irish for an Americanized little girl; and secondly, the spirit of it is wrong. In this country we are all free and equal—that is, we are said to be, but in reality education and money often give their possessors a certain superiority over their less fortunate fellow-men. I don't say this is right, but I say it is true. Now, you have money, and soon, I hope, you will have a good education. The rest of your claim to respect lies entirely within yourself. If you are worthy of attention and consideration, you will get them, and if not, you won't. There's the whole case in a nutshell; and if you remember it, it will do you more good than a year of preaching. Now, as I have told you before, little girl, I am your friend; consequently it is a pleasure to me to aid you in any way I can; and so, Jocoseria, put away that troubled look and smile again, and we'll go and hunt that festive quadruped, the piano."

Betty felt grateful to Mr. Dick for his kind and straightforward talk, and resolved to remember and profit by it. She smiled brightly, and said:

"Is it a wild beast, sir?"

“So some folks would say; but we will track him to his lair and make him roar for us. Then, when we find one that growls in just the right tones, we’ll buy him.”

They went to piano warerooms, and Mr. Dick, who was a musician, played on a great many pianos, while Betty sat and listened with intense delight.

“Are you so fond of music, child?” asked Mr. Dick, noticing her absorbed expression.

“Oh, yes, sir; I could listen to it forever. Can you sing, too?”

“Indeed I can—I sing like a bird. But not here, not here, my child. I will wait until your music-room is in running order. Now, let us look for a banjo.”

Betty could scarcely keep her feet still when Mr. Van Court played snatches of rollicking dance-music on banjos or mandolins. Then, being a versatile musician, he took up a violin, and drew from it wailing strains that made Betty’s face grow solemn, and as the last note died away she caught her breath with almost a sob.

“Come, come, chick, this won’t do,” said Mr. Dick, gaily; “you promised to smile, you know. We will not buy this whole category of stringed things; we’ll take a violin and a banjo, and as it will be some time before you can learn to get the right noises out of them, I think we’ll invest in that fraudulent imitation, a music-box.”

“Isn’t it right to have a music-box?”

“Oh, yes; it’s just the thing for chickabiddies like you, and it will amuse the baby, too. By the way, Popinjay, when are you going to buy the infant orphan?”

“I don’t know, sir, but I do want her most awfully. I think it would be the makin’ of my home to have a cunning little baby sister to play with and to take care of.”

“But have you realized the care and responsibility she will be to you? She won’t stay an infant, you know; she’ll grow up; and you’ll have her to feed and clothe and educate, all her youth.”

“Yes, sir; but I’ve money enough for all, an’ she’ll be part of my home, an’ —an’ I’ll love her so!”

“All right, Popinjay; have your sister,” said Mr. Dick, laughing. “And now let’s get ahead of Grace and find an æolian harp for your staircase window.”

This instrument was not so easy to find, but Mr. Van Court finally succeeded in getting some materials, and full instructions for using them, and he decided he could construct the harp himself.

The next day Miss Grace claimed Betty, and Mr. Brewster said he would go with them, and then they could buy the library furniture, which was his especial province, at the same time.

So they bought lovely tables and chairs for the parlors, and pretty little taborets and cabinets; and they bought a desk for the library, and leather-covered chairs, and a revolving bookcase—only one, for there were other bookcases already in the room. The books, Mr. Brewster said, he would order later, as his lists were not yet completed. And then, having a little time yet on their hands, he proposed that they visit an orphan asylum.

They soon found one, and were cordially received by the matron, who was pleased when she learned their errand, and took them at once to the nursery.

There were so many babies to choose from that Betty gave up in despair, and began to play with them all.



“WITH A PARTING KISS BETTY RELUCTANTLY LEFT
HER.”

But after a talk with the matron, Miss Grace decided upon a chubby, brown-eyed midget named Polly. Her past history, though short, seemed satisfactory, and the baby herself was so merry and healthy that she seemed the best selection.

“We may as well decide now as any time,” said Mr. Brewster, and so they told the matron they would probably take the child away in the course of a few weeks.

Polly dimpled and smiled, and seemed quite to understand that she was the gem of the collection, and with a parting kiss Betty reluctantly left her.

That night at dinner Mrs. Van Court had a little story to tell: "I called on Mrs. Rogers this afternoon, and in the course of conversation she told me of a sad case that has recently come under her notice. A friend of hers who had been living in affluence became very much reduced in fortune—in fact, her husband lost all his money; and soon after he died, leaving his wife penniless, with an infant daughter to support. Being a delicate, fragile creature, the mother became ill and died, leaving the baby without a home. I believe there are no relatives, or, if there are, they won't take the child, and it is about to be sent to an institution.

"I told her about you, Betty, and feeling sure you would like the sweet little one, I told Mrs. Rogers you would take her. She is delighted, of course, and will keep the baby herself until you are settled and ready for it."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Morris, "what have I done? Oh, madam, what have I done?"

He alternately wrung his hands and drummed on the table; then he pounded his fists together, and indeed seemed unable to find any gesture vigorous enough to express his consternation.

"Why, I too have engaged a baby sister for Miss McGuire! Now, wait a minute. I haven't signed any papers, you know, not signed any papers; but I gave my word, yes, I certainly gave my word. I said I knew of a good home for the child, and in every way it was such a satisfactory infant that I thought there was no doubt, no doubt at all, of the acceptability. Bless my soul! what shall we do? She can't adopt two children. Now, wait a minute—"

"Wait a minute yourself," broke in Mr. Brewster. "Miss Grace and I went to an orphan asylum with Betty this afternoon, and *we* engaged the baby sister. She is a dear little child named Polly, and—"

"Bless my soul!" began Mr. Morris, again. "You engaged a child, too? Three infants! Why, what shall we do? This is awful—truly awful."

He sat back in his chair, appalled at the awfulness of it. Mrs. Van Court looked worried; Miss Grace laughed, so of course Mr. Brewster did too; and Betty sat wondering what would be expected of her, when Richard Van Court said in an apologetic tone:

"I don't know what you'll all say to me; but I ran across Barker this afternoon, and he told me of a perfect gem of a baby waiting to be adopted,

and—I didn't know this wholesale purchase was going on, so—I, too, thought I'd help along Betty's affairs—and—how many does this make?"

"Four!" exclaimed Mr. Morris. "Four! Bless my soul, what *can* we do? This is a serious matter—a very serious matter. But I think, I really think it would be best to keep the one I chose, and make arrangements to countermand the others."

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Van Court; "let us keep the one that Mrs. Rogers recommended, as that is a really superior child. I have seen it and—"

"We've seen Polly, too," said Miss Grace, "and she is a little darling; and besides, she is Betty's choice."

And then Mr. Dick spoke, with an air of settling the question, and said that after his agreement with Barker he thought it was really obligatory upon them to back him up.

CHAPTER IX

BUYING A GRANDMOTHER

Now, Mr. Dick was jesting: he hadn't engaged a baby sister at all, and he only made them think so for a joke. And as Betty had set her heart on the wee Polly, the state of affairs was easily explained to the guardians of the other two infants, and so the question was settled.

Mrs. Van Court went to the asylum to see the child, and approved of her appearance, after which she took great interest in buying the little one's wardrobe. Some toys were provided, too, and a baby-carriage with white rugs and cushions. A nurse had to be secured, but the question of servants had not yet been discussed.

"Popinjay," said Mr. Dick, one morning at breakfast, "I've found a grandmother for you."

Betty looked at him doubtfully, for she remembered the baby-sister joke.

"Yes, I have, honor bright—a beautiful grandmother. Apple-cheeked old lady with silvery hair, pleasant voice, and spectacles. Dost like the picture?"

"Yes, sir," said Betty, demurely; "is it for sale?"

"Well, it will be on exhibition this afternoon, and you can look at it and see if it suits you."

"What are you talking about, Dick?" said his sister.

"Why, I'm in dead earnest, Grace," replied the young man, "and if you'll listen I'll tell you all about it. I was up at the Sandersons' last night, and they were awfully interested in hearing about Betty; and when I inquired if they knew of any grandmother looking for a place, they told me of one at once. She's a lady they've known for years, and she's a bit eccentric and old-fashioned, I believe, but they all sang her praises at the top of their lungs. I think she must be delightful, but I didn't buy her at once, for I thought probably you'd engaged a lot of 'em in your wholesale way. She's old enough for gray hair and glasses, and yet young enough to keep house for the Popinjay, and look after her welfare mentally, morally, and physically."

"Well," said Mrs. Van Court, with an air of great relief, "it would make the whole thing seem more possible to have a woman like that at the head of

it. And any one the Sandersons recommend is sure to be all right. Is she eccentric in her dress, Dick?"

"They didn't say so. I imagine she's of the 'old woman clad in rusty black' variety. But Popinjay here will change all that, and deck her out in lo-and-behold gowns of all colors of the rainbow."

"Indeed I won't," said Betty, quickly; "she shall have a pretty brown dress for every day, and a gray silk for Sunday."

"Oho! going to keep all the bright colors for yourself and little Polly, are you?"

A quick answer rose to Betty's lips; but she was learning to control her temper, so she dropped her eyes and said nothing.

"Don't tease her so, Dick," said his mother. "Betty's love of bright colors is not a crime, and when she learns the appropriate times and occasions she can gratify it as much as she likes. Tell us more of this interesting lady. What is her name?"

"Her name is Mrs. Kinsey. She is a widow, and lives entirely alone now; but she has been accustomed to taking charge of a large house and family, and would like some such position again. But Mrs. Sanderson gives a tea this afternoon, and she sent invitations for you all to come; and as Mrs. Kinsey will be there, Betty can size her up and see if she is the 'not impossible she.'"

Miss Van Court and Mr. Brewster had an engagement for the afternoon, but the other four concluded to go and see what Mrs. Kinsey was like.

They went in a carriage; and Betty wore a soft white wool dress with cherry ribbons, and her beloved Leghorn hat with its many feathers.

She felt very grand and grown-up going to an afternoon tea, though she had no idea in what that ceremony consisted. As they went she asked Mrs. Van Court for special instructions as to her behavior; but that lady only told her to greet her hostess politely, and after that to look pleasant and say very little: for Betty when trying to be very correct always made her worst blunders in speech and accent.

"Watch mother," said Mr. Dick, "and do exactly as she does."

This was a bit of mischief, for he knew that when Betty tried to copy Mrs. Van Court's manner, she succeeded not wisely, but too well, and presented something of a caricature of the dignified lady.

"You stay by me, Betty," said Mr. Morris. "I'll look out for you and help you over the hard places."

The Sandersons' home was a very handsome one, and Betty was quite dazzled by its grandeur as she followed Mrs. Van Court through the lofty hall decorated with statues and tall palms, and came at last to the Turkish tea-room where their hostess waited to receive them.

Mrs. Van Court entered, and, her gown being very long, according to the prevailing fashion, she raised it a trifle with her left hand as she crossed the thick rugs. Still holding it, she lifted her right elbow and shook laterally Mrs. Sanderson's extended finger-tips.

"So glad to see you," murmured the hostess, and then Mrs. Van Court presented her young charge.

Unconsciously Betty had imitated Mrs. Van Court's every movement, and daintily holding up her short skirt, she crooked her elbow and offered her finger-tips in exact imitation of her model. This performance much amused Mr. Dick, who came next, and he resolved to warn Betty about it later. As soon as she could make an opportunity, Mrs. Sanderson came to Mrs. Van Court, and pointed out her candidate for the position of grandmother to the small heiress.

Although Mrs. Kinsey was in full view, she was sitting in the next room, with her face turned partly away from them, so the prospecting party could discuss her appearance without fear of being overheard.

"I think she looks charming," said Mrs. Van Court, who was a lady of quick decisions.

"So do I," said Betty, who was quicker yet, "and I'm going to ask her if she'll come."

The child darted away, and in a moment they saw her talking eagerly to Mrs. Kinsey.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Morris, excitedly, but in a low tone, "what an impulsive child she is! Whatever is to become of her I don't know—I don't know."

"Let her alone," said Mr. Van Court; "she'll come out all right. She *will* have her own way, and as her own way is often the best way, why interfere?"

"Yes, of course," said his mother; "but I can't get used to seeing a child of fourteen so independent and self-reliant."

“But she needs to be, my dear madam; she needs to be,” asserted Mr. Morris. “In her unusual position, what would become of her if she were of an incapable, undecided nature, and never knew her own mind?”

“That would be far better, for then she could be put in care of some responsible older person and looked after properly.”

“I’ve an idea Mrs. Kinsey will look after her properly,” said Mr. Dick.



“UNCONSCIOUSLY BETTY HAD IMITATED MRS. VAN COURT’S EVERY MOVEMENT.”

And truly it seemed so, for now Betty was sitting on a stool at that lady’s feet, and talking to her very earnestly.

When, with one of her sudden impulses, Betty had decided that this was the very grandmother she wanted, she had lost no time in trying to secure

her.

Mrs. Kinsey was sitting in a large arm-chair, and for the moment no one was talking to her.

Betty walked swiftly to her side, and taking the lady's hand in both her own, said: "I haven't father or mother. Will you be my grandmother?"

Mrs. Kinsey smiled kindly at the little girl, for she was an astute old lady, and saw that Betty was asking in all honesty, however absurd her question might sound.

"Are you looking for a grandmother?" she inquired.

"Yes, 'm, I am; but you're the first one I've asked, and I do hope you'll come, for you're just the very one I want."

"Bring that little ottoman, and sit down here and tell me all about it."

When Mrs. Kinsey spoke she didn't look old at all; indeed, her whole appearance was quaint and old-fashioned, rather than aged. She wore her silver-gray hair looped loosely round her ears and caught up at the back with a single comb, after the fashion of Mrs. Browning or George Eliot. Her face was thin and white, but with bright, dark eyes, and a firmly set chin that told of shrewdness and will-power. Her dress was of plain black silk made in the fashion of many years ago, and she wore a wide lace collar and a brooch of woven hair.

Betty brought the stool and sat down, feeling more and more that this was the right one, if she could only persuade her to come. Her anxiety made her very earnest, and she forgot to be careful of speech or manner.

"Well, ma'am, you see I was a poor girl workin' out at service in a boardin'-house; an' all of a sudden my gran'father died somewhere in Australia, an' left me all his fortune. An' it's a great deal of money, an' I'm takin' it to buy me a home an' a family. An' after that I'm goin' to buy me some education, for I want to learn all that's in the books. An' I chose for my family a gran'mother an' a baby sister an' a brother. My brother'll be Lame Jack, but I hope he can be cured of it; my little sister I have spoke for from the Orphan Asylum already; an' it's you I want for my gran'mother. Mr. Morris is my lawyer, ma'am, an' he says I mustn't try to *buy* a gran'mother, but to engage one an' then pay her a salary. But I'm thinkin' it's all the same; an' will you come, ma'am, dear?"

Betty's voice had grown wheedlesome, and she caressed softly the lady's delicate hand with her little brown ones.

“What would be your notion of the duties of a grandmother?”

“I thought she could keep house for me, ma’am, an’ at the same time be teachin’ me to keep it for myself once I’m older. An’ I thought she’d sit at the head of my table an’ pour tea an’ coffee, an’ I’d like her to give the orders to my servants, for I’m afraid they’d have disrespect of me. I’m Irish, you know, ma’am, on my father’s side; but my mother was an American lady, an’ I want to grow up like her. I can’t even tell you my own story as it should be told,—I’m too ignorant,—but I’ll let Mr. Morris tell it. The Van Courts, ma’am, are true friends, an’ you wouldn’t believe how kind they’ve been to me. Here they’re comin’ now.”

As she spoke, Mrs. Sanderson approached, bringing the Van Court party in her train. She introduced them to Mrs. Kinsey, and the grandmother project was discussed.

Mrs. Kinsey was straightforward and businesslike. She treated the position as that of an ordinary housekeeper, and stated definitely her qualifications for such service. At the same time she had taken a decided liking to the little Irish girl, and resolved in her heart to become a true “grandmother” to her in as loving a way as possible.

Mr. Morris stated clearly the advantages and disadvantages of the undertaking; for, though the actual work would be light, there was a great deal of responsibility to be assumed by some one, and this would devolve largely on the housekeeper; and in view of this he offered what seemed to Mrs. Kinsey a munificent salary.

She said, in reply, that she appreciated the responsibilities of the position, and if she decided to assume them would conscientiously do her best for Betty’s welfare in every way. She said she would consider the matter overnight, and would send them her answer the next day.

Then a hush fell on the whole company of guests, for a lady stood up and began to sing.

Betty could not understand the words, and knew nothing at all of music, but the beautiful sounds went straight to her ignorant little soul, and when they ceased her eyes were full of tears.

“I don’t know why I cry,” she said apologetically, as Mr. Dick looked at her, apparently ready to tease; “I am not sorry for anything, but I can’t help it.”

Mrs. Kinsey seemed to understand, and she patted Betty’s shoulder with a kindly touch.

"If you enjoy crying over music, Popinjay, I'll take you to a comic opera to-morrow afternoon. There's nothing so sad as a comic opera. May she go, mother? I'd like her to hear some really pathetic music."

"Yes, take her if you like, Richard, but don't tease her."

"No, ma'am; I won't. Popinjay, will you

Come, oh, come with me?
The mo-on is beaming—

it will be, really, you know. The scenic effects of a comic opera are far ahead of nature. Will you go?"

"Yes, sir," said Betty; "with pleasure."

The next day being Saturday, they went to a matinée of "The Mikado." Miss Grace and Mr. Brewster went too, and they all sat in a small curtained room that they called a "box," though Betty couldn't see why. It was much more like an elevator, only it didn't go up and down.

The performance on the stage pleased Betty beyond all power of speech. She soon discovered that the sadness of it was only one of Mr. Dick's jokes, and she laughed merrily at the songs and funny speeches and the grotesque antics of the Japanese characters.

She reveled, too, in the gorgeous colorings of the costumes and stage settings, and she listened to the music with a rapt, far-away expression.

When they went back to the hotel, Mrs. Van Court received them with the good news that Mrs. Kinsey had called, and said she would accept the position of grandmother-housekeeper, and could be ready to come in a week, if they desired her so soon.

She and Mr. Morris had had a long talk, and she had proved so clear-headed and kind-hearted that he felt convinced he could not leave his charge in better hands.

They were all glad of Mrs. Kinsey's decision, and as their errands were now accomplished, they began to think about returning to Greenborough.

They decided to go back on Monday; and Mr. Morris, who had only one more week before sailing for Australia, said he would go back with them and remain a few days. Betty felt sorry at the thought of parting from her good friend, but rejoiced that, instead of sailing with him to his far-distant home, she was soon to be installed in a home of her own, which promised in all respects to be what she had longed for.

CHAPTER X

“DENNISTON HALL”

They reached Greenborough Monday evening, and it took the rest of that week to get the house settled. Even after the carpets were laid and the heavy furniture put in place, there was much to do in the way of hanging pictures and arranging ornaments, and each of Betty's good friends continued to superintend the special apartments they had chosen.

Betty wandered about the house from room to room, wondering why her friends were so good to her.

She stopped in the music-room, where Richard Van Court was at work, and put the question to him.

The young man was sitting on top of a step-ladder, and held in his arms a marble bust of Franz Liszt.



“POPINJAY, YOU OUGHT TO KNOW BETTER THAN
TO ASK SUCH DIFFICULT CONUNDRUMS.”

He scowled at her, and said: “Popinjay, you ought to know better than to ask such difficult conundrums while I’m carefully placing Liszt in his niche. However, I’ll answer you, as I’m so good-natured. Hello! I’ve made a startling discovery. The late lamented Franz Liszt had a defective ear. Now who would have supposed that? Yes, it’s certainly chipped. Methinks ’twould be better to present the gentleman to the public gaze in profile. But to return to the subject in hand—why, child, we are not setting up your household gods out of pure charity. It is principally because we enjoy the

work ourselves. Brewster, in there, is just in his element arranging those books on their shelves; Grace is having a lovely time in the parlor; mother is happy pottering about up-stairs; and old Morris is doubtless all the happier because the kitchen range smokes. So you see, Jocoseria, it is not all disinterested affection, though we are all fond of you. See?"

"Yes, sir," said Betty; "and I'm glad you like it, for I could never repay you otherwise."

Even the stately Miss Margaret Van Court wanted a share in the goings on, and she offered to look after the great front veranda. This she transformed into a most inviting place, with awnings, rugs, palms, hammocks, and wicker settees and tables, and the whole party sat here one afternoon, resting from their labors.

"What are you going to call this place, Betty?" said Mr. Dick. "Your local habitation ought to have a name."

"Oh, yes; let us think of some appropriate name for it," said Miss Grace. "How would 'Brooklawn' do?"

"Too wishy-washy for such a unique home," said Mr. Dick. "Think of something expressive, like 'The Popinjay's Nest.'"

"No," said Miss Margaret; "choose a name that describes the house."

"The house is mostly hall," said Mrs. Van Court, laughing. "I never saw so many halls and stairs in one house before."

"Yes, that's a good name — 'Mostly Hall,'" said Dick, gravely. "How do you like that, Popinjay?"

"It's pretty," said she, unconscious of any joke; "but I'm thinkin' I'd like a name that would be remindful of my grandfather."

"That's right, that's right," said Mr. Morris. "Old Dennis McGuire's name ought to be honored by his granddaughter. Dennis — Denniston — 'Denniston Hall.' How's that?"

"I think just 'Denniston' is prettier," said Mrs. Van Court.

"Now, wait a minute," said Mr. Morris. "'Denniston' for the whole place, and 'Denniston Hall' for the house itself."

And so the name was settled. Of course the story of Betty's fortune had spread rapidly among the gossips of Greenborough, and she had become what Mr. Richard called a "local celebrity." Whenever she returned from a

trip to the village, he inquired if the spectators had thrown buns to her or poked her with their parasols.

Betty didn't mind this chaff, but her wealth subjected her to many petty annoyances. It seemed as if all the domestics in town wanted to enter her service. Applicants of all kinds, from butler to scullery-maid, fairly swarmed round the Denniston doors, and even attacked the Van Court house. But Mrs. Van Court finally arranged the corps of servants to her complete satisfaction, and Betty's modest establishment consisted of a cook, a kitchen-maid, a neat waitress, and a parlor-maid.

Ellen was the cook. She had been among the first applicants for the position, and reminded Betty of her promise. As she had already left Mrs. Tucker's house, Mrs. Van Court felt no hesitation in engaging her, and Betty was delighted to benefit her old friend.

Pete, the ashman, was employed as head gardener, for Betty remembered his kindness; and though he had little knowledge of gardening, he had great administrative ability, and was to act as overseer and general utility man about the place, and to let the under-gardeners do the work.

"Miss Betty," he said, falling at once into the attitude of respect called for by her changed position, "I'll wurk me finger-ends off fer ye, so I will; an' I'll niver shlope, night nor day, but pathrol the place ag'in' the burgulars."

However, this extreme watchfulness was not necessary, for Greenborough was a quiet place; and besides, Mr. Morris had presented the young housekeeper with an enormous St. Bernard dog, which, though gentle as a kitten to his friends, was yet a safeguard against intruders.

The dog was named "Sydney," in honor of Mr. Morris's Australian home; and the day the little lawyer left Greenborough, he told the dog that Betty was to be his especial charge, and he must let no harm come to her.

And now Denniston was rapidly nearing completion, and Betty was impatient to take possession.

Lame Jack had been adopted as a brother. There was no formal adoption, of course, for poor Jack had no guardian to dispute his possession. Betty simply asked him if he would come and live at Denniston for the rest of his life.

“Will I!” he exclaimed, his eyes wide with astonishment. “Well, I rather guess I *will*! Do yer *mean* it, Bet?”

“Yes, I do,” said she, as she grasped his outstretched hands, this being the only method either knew of ratifying a treaty. “I want you to come; an’ you mustn’t call me Bet. An’ we’ll both learn things, an’ be real nice people.”

“All right, Bet—Betty, I mean. I’ll do jest what yer want me to, an’ I’ll try an’ be a tiptop brother. Say, are yer goin’ ter be yer own boss?”

“Why, yes, Jack, or—no, not exactly. I’ve bought me a gran’mother, an’ she’ll tell me some what to do; an’ I’m goin’ to have a governess to teach me book-learnin’ an’ train me in good manners.”

“H’m!—who’s goin’ ter boss me?”

“Nobody will boss you, Jack, unless you want them to; but I know you’ll love the gran’mother.”

“Well, I’ll come; an’ if you’re too high-toned fer me I’ll light out, fer I can’t stand much fixin’s, an’ that’s sure.”

“All right, Jack; come and try it, an’ if it don’t suit, you can leave whenever you like.”



“‘MISS BETTY, I’LL WURRK ME FINGER-ENDS OFF
FER YE, SO I WILL!’”

Saturday afternoon was the time set for Betty to install herself in her home, and Saturday morning the Van Court ladies went over to Denniston to assure themselves that everything was in readiness.

The servants had arrived, and Mrs. Kinsey was expected on the four-o’clock train, and would bring the baby and nurse with her.

Betty could scarcely wait until luncheon was over; then she ran for her hat, and sat down on the Van Courts’ veranda to wait for the carriage which was to come for her—her own carriage, driven by her own coachman! She

couldn't realize it, but then she had long since given up trying to realize things. It all seemed like a fairy tale, and she often pinched herself to make sure she was not dreaming.

Presently the carriage came, and Betty said good-by to the friends who had been so kind.

"Oh, no, Betty, not good-by," said Miss Grace, "only good afternoon; for we shall come to see you often, and you must come here whenever you wish."

"Yes," said Mrs. Van Court; "if anything goes wrong in your household, —and sometimes things do,—come at once to me for help."

Betty thanked them again and again, and her eyes were moist as she stepped into her carriage. They let her go alone, for they knew her independent spirit, and felt sure it would not seem so much her own home if any one else had even a seeming authority there.

So Betty drove away in state, waving her hand to the ladies on the veranda, and feeling as if she had grown up very suddenly.

"To Denniston," she said to the coachman, with the same air and intonation that Mrs. Van Court used in giving orders; and the man, Barney, who had considered Betty's patronage as a joke, realized at once that she was mistress.

As they neared Denniston, Betty pinched her arm, saying to herself: "*I am* awake, an' I'm goin' in my own carriage to my own home. I'm Betty McGuire still, but at last I've got a home an' a family!"

Up the long avenue of trees, and then they stopped at the steps of the beautiful veranda. Betty got out, saying, "I'll want the carriage again, please, in time to go to meet the four-o'clock train," and smiling so pleasantly that Barney concluded his small mistress was as kind as she was dignified.

Betty went at once to her own lovely room, which Mrs. Van Court had further beautified with fresh flowers that morning, and taking off her hat, threw herself on the couch in a burst of happiness.

"It's true, it's true!" she exclaimed, "an' I'm here, an' my family is soon comin'; an' oh, how happy I am!"

Then she roamed about the house, peeped into some of her new books, struck a few keys of the piano, and finally paused before a door she had never noticed before. It was locked, but the key turned easily, and the door slid back, disclosing what seemed to be an elevator.



“ALMOST PETRIFIED WITH FRIGHT,
BETTY STOOD PERFECTLY STILL.”

“It is,” she thought. “I remember now that Mrs. Ryan said, ‘That’s the elevator to the tower,’ an’ I didn’t know then what she meant; but I know now: it’s like they have in the big New York stores an’ the hotel. But I don’t know how this one works.”

She stepped inside and pulled the rope, as she had seen the elevator-boys do.

Then the door slid softly shut, and the elevator began to rise. Betty laughed with glee, wondering if it would go to the tower without stopping. It did; and being automatic, when it reached the top, it stopped at a closed door, the sill of which was about a foot wide.

Betty stepped out on this ledge, and tried to open the door, which was evidently a sliding one; but it would not open, and, to her horror, she felt rather than saw the elevator going down again. She turned her head, only to discover that it was too late to jump into the descending car, and, almost petrified with fright, she stood perfectly still. Indeed, that was the only thing to do. With her face and outstretched hands against the smooth wood of the door, and her feet on the narrow sill, she knew that if she looked round again she must become dizzy and fall at once.

But what was the alternative?

Only to stand there until help came or—until she lost control of her senses.

Betty had never fainted, but she knew what it meant, and she knew the necessity for keeping calm. She set her teeth, and resolved to stand perfectly still and call for help. She had to turn her head a little to run any chance of making her voice heard, but she dared not turn it far enough to look down into that dreadful abyss. Then she called:

“El-len! El-len!” But no one replied.

“El-len!” she called again; then, more hopefully: “Pete! Pete!”

But no one down-stairs could hear the voice of the little girl away up in the tower, and at last Betty’s hands began to grow numb and all her joints seemed to stiffen. With a last despairing cry of “El-len!” her voice failed her, and she stood helpless.

CHAPTER XI

THE FAMILY ARRIVES

According to Betty's orders, Barney had the carriage at the door at half-past three, that they might reach the station in time for the train from New York at four.

But no Betty appeared.

After waiting a few minutes, Barney asked Pete, who came by, where he supposed Miss Betty might be.

Pete didn't know, but feeling that it devolved on him to attend to the matter, he went and asked Ellen. Ellen didn't know, and Norah the parlor-maid was questioned next. She could only say that she had seen Miss Betty dancing about the house a short time since, and perhaps she was in the garden.

No anxiety was felt for Betty's safety, but Barney became fearful that he would be late for the train, and felt uncertain what to do.

After a more careful but still unsuccessful search, Pete said resolutely:

"In the timporary absince av Miss Betty, I'll be afther asshumin' command. Do yees, Barney, go on to the thrain, an' meet the ould lady an' the kid, an' bring 'em up here. Fur if no one's there they'll not be knowin' what to do."

So Barney drove off, and the rest began to search for the little girl in earnest, for the situation was becoming alarming.

But no trace could be found, except the Leghorn hat and the gloves, which lay on the bed in Betty's room, apparently waiting to be worn when she went to meet the grandmother.

"Is she dhrowned in the brook?" said Ellen, with a white, scared face.

"No," said Pete; "it's not possible, for I'm afther lookin' there. Nor she wouldn't go over to Mis' Van Coort's without her purty hat on. I can't consaive what's come to the choild."

They were still searching when Barney returned, bringing Mrs. Kinsey, little Polly, and the nurse. The lady looked grave when Pete and Ellen told

their story.

“Let me think,” said she, clasping her black-mitted hands together. Then, turning to Pete, she said quickly:

“Is there a dog that knows the child?”

“Yis, mum; there’s Sydney; but he doesn’t know her overly much. He’s tied in the barn, to kape him from following the kerridge.”

“Bring him here, please, and show him something of Betty’s.”

Pete went for the dog, while Ellen brought Betty’s hat and gloves.

“Find her, find her, good fellow,” said Mrs. Kinsey, as Sydney sniffed at the gloves sagaciously.

The dog seemed to understand her, and went at once into the house. He trotted about from room to room, wagging his head, but holding his tail dejectedly down.

He sniffed a little at the elevator door; but as he had done the same at the other doors, it gave no clue to the anxious watchers. Then he went up-stairs, through Betty’s room and the nursery, and after that he whined uncertainly, and seemed to say that the problem was too much for him.

“Ye can’t find her, nayther, can ye, ould boy?” said Pete, patting the dog’s head. “Well, ye seem to be shure she’s in the house, so I’ll inshtitoot a s’arch mesilf, an’ I’ll go over ivery ha’p’orth o’ room, from garret to cellar.”

He started up-stairs, and the dog followed him—slowly at first; and then he suddenly pricked up his ears, and with a bound he flew past Pete and tore up the narrow staircase to the tower.

“Arrah, but he’s found her!” thought Pete; and he climbed the stairs, and reached the tower room just in time to hear Betty’s last faint call of “El-len!” Sydney was already scratching at a closed door, and Pete said:

“Is it locked in the cupboord ye are, Miss Betty, darlint? Wait a minute, an’ I’ll have ye out o’ that, or me name’s not Pete!”

The hope of rescue nerved Betty afresh; but she realized the danger if the big dog should bound at her in his joy at finding her.

“Wait, Pete,” she cried out. “Don’t let Sydney jump at me, fer it’s the elevator-place I’m standin’ in, just on the narrow step, an’ I’ve no room to step backward.”

“Marciful saints!” exclaimed Pete, “the ellyvator! Down, Sydney! Charge!” And as the well-trained dog crouched to the floor, Pete, with a “Stiddy, now!” slid the door carefully back, and Betty fell forward into his strong arms. She was not unconscious, but so cramped that she almost cried with pain as her knees and elbows bent. Pete carried her down to her own room and laid her on the bed, and Mrs. Kinsey leaned over her with true grandmotherly caresses.

Ellen bewailed the fact that they had no medicine-chest, and Pete offered to run for the doctor.

But the new grandmother, proving herself worthy of the name, drew a bottle of soothing lotion from her traveling-bag, where she had placed it, “in case the baby bumped her head.”

At mention of the baby Betty’s face brightened.

“I’m all right now,” she said, as they rubbed her little thin arms; “but I couldn’t have hild on much longer, with nothin’ at all to hold on to.”

“Indeed you couldn’t,” said Mrs. Kinsey, shuddering at the thought of what might have happened if rescue had been delayed.

“Miss Betty,” said Norah, appearing at the door, “there’s a lame boy below, askin’ to see you.” And then Betty jumped up, declaring again that she was all right, and quite able to go down-stairs.



**“AS THE ELEVATOR DOOR SLID BACK, BETTY FELL
INTO PETE’S STRONG ARMS.”**

“Run along, then,” said Mrs. Kinsey; “but lean on Norah, for you are still weak. I will come down also as soon as I have laid off my bonnet.”

Betty went down-stairs, but not with her usual hop and skip, and found Jack making friends with the baby.

“I’m awful glad you’ve come, Jack,” she said. “Now I’ve got my whole family at last!”

In the excitement of Betty's disappearance no one had paid any attention to Nurse Lisa and little Polly, and they had remained on the veranda and waited. Betty held out her hands to the baby, who crowed and laughed in most good-natured fashion.

"Come to me, Polly," she said, "and we'll let nurse go and find Ellen, and she'll show her where to put her things." Lisa went in search of the unknown Ellen, and Betty sat down in a rocking-chair, and caressed the baby with delight.

"Polly, you're my sister now—my own dear little sister; and this is our brother Jack."

"Yi, yi," said Polly, pulling at Jack's hair, as he lay in the hammock within reach of her little hands.

"An' here comes the grandmother," continued Betty. "Get up, Jack, an' make your respects to her."

Jack scrambled up, and, grasping his crutch, met Mrs. Kinsey half-way as she came toward the group.

"How do you do, my boy?" she said, so pleasantly that Jack felt reassured as to the danger of being "bossed."

"I'm well, thank yer, ma'am. Will yer sit in the hammick, ma'am?"

"No; I don't care for hammocks. I think that I'll take this comfortable rocker."

So Jack sat in the hammock again, and the family proceeded to make one another's acquaintance.

"Now, grandmother," said Betty, rocking back and forth with the baby, "what's your first name?"

"Jean," said Mrs. Kinsey, smiling. "Why?"

"Well, I was goin' to call you Gran'ma Kinsey; but I don't think Kinsey is as pretty a name, so if you don't mind, ma'am, we'll call you Grandma Jean."

"Very well, Betty; Grandma Jean it shall be to all my grandchildren—Betty, Jack, and Polly."

Jack beamed at being thus quickly taken into the charmed circle, and said honestly:

"I ain't much good—I'm so lame, an' I don't know nothin' how to behave; but Betty says maybe a doctor can straighten me on me pins, and I'll do whatusomever you tell me to, Grandma Jean."

"All right, my boy. I think we'll get on famously; and we'll try to be the happiest family in Greenborough."

Polly joined in the general conversation with unintelligible remarks and a laugh of bubbly glee, and then Betty tried to make her say "Grandma Jean."

"Bamma Dean," was the nearest the obedient infant could come to it; but that was considered highly satisfactory by her new relatives.

Then supper was announced, and all went gaily in to their first meal in Denniston Hall.

Mrs. Van Court had suggested that, since the majority of the family were children, a midday dinner should be the rule, and a six-o'clock supper.

So Ellen had arranged just the very nicest supper that could be imagined, and with affectionate pride Betty conducted Grandma Jean to her arm-chair at the head of the table; Jack, as the man of the house, was placed at the foot; Polly, in her new high chair, had a whole side to herself; and Betty sat opposite.

And then what a merry time they had; and how they chattered and laughed; and how good the broiled chicken was; and how fast Ellen's flaky hot rolls disappeared, and the little waitress had to fly to the kitchen for more! And Grandma Jean had to pour unlimited cups of weak tea for Betty and Jack, while Polly feasted on bread-and-milk, with a chicken-bone by way of dessert. And being no respecter of persons, the tiny mite babbled and chuckled all through the conversation of the others; and, indeed, quite often they all talked at once: but, as somebody has said, that is a good sign of a successful supper.

To be sure, the dictates of etiquette were not very strictly adhered to, for Jack's table manners were even worse than Polly's, and hers were not good; but though there may have been a better-behaved family, there never was a happier one. Under the cheering influence of the first "square" meal he had had since Christmas, Jack grew talkative and jolly; and, radiantly happy in the final attainment of her ideals, Betty made plans for the future which embraced everything desirable, from chocolate-creams to a captive balloon—the latter in response to a suggestion from Jack, who had read of such a thing in the last newspapers he had ever bought to sell.

Grandma Jean, being blessed with common sense and tact passing that of most women, chattered with them and entered heartily into all their plans and projects, and at that meal never said a word about forks or elbows.

But the festivities proved too lengthy for the youngest participant, and Polly's eyes refused to stay open; so Lisa took her away to her crib. Then the rest of the family had strawberries and cream and beautiful frosted cakes, some of which they really left on the plate, though Jack looked at them reflectively.

And there was more talk and more laughter; and if Grandma Jean hadn't proposed leaving the table, I fear they would all have been sitting there yet.

They went into the parlors, and sat in the beautiful brocaded chairs, for who was to forbid it? And they feasted their eyes on the wonderful glittering chandeliers.

"They're like icicles," commented Betty.

"Yes," said Jack; "or those things that grow in caves. Say, Betty, are we goin' to study out of books? I'm dyin' to learn things."

"So'm I; an' I guess we'll have a governess—or would you rather go out to a regular school, Jack?" she inquired.

"I dunno. Governess, I guess. The fellers'd laugh at me in a school, 'cause I don't know about books."

"Me too; so let's have a governess. I'll ask Miss Grace about it tomorrow. Or could you get one for us, Grandma Jean?"



“A TALK AFTER SUPPER”

“I’ll think about it, and we’ll talk it over to-morrow. Now I’m going to make my first rule, and I hope you’ll both be willing to keep it. I want you to go to bed every night promptly at eight o’clock.”

This didn’t suit Betty particularly, for she was a wide-awake little girl; but Grandma Jean had been so kind and indulgent in every other way, she didn’t want to refuse her first request.

“I ain’t kickin’,” said Jack, though he was secretly thinking that the “bossin’” had begun. To go to bed at eight o’clock struck him as ludicrous rather than otherwise; for, never having had a bed to go to, it made little difference when he went to it. But feeling that he ought to accept a little bitter with so much sweet, he promised to remember the rule and obey it.

After the children had left her, Mrs. Kinsey sat a long time, thinking it all over.

“It’s an experiment,” she said to herself, “a very interesting experiment, and I don’t see why it shouldn’t turn out successfully. At any rate, I shall do my best to help it along.”

Then she went to the kitchen, and calling all the servants together, gave them an outline of her domestic policy, and firmly gathered up the reins of government. They all seemed willing and respectful, and Pete assured Mrs. Kinsey, in a deferential tone but belligerent manner, that the women would be responsible to her for their behavior, but if any of the men in service gave any “impidence,” he’d “show ’em what’s what and who’s who!”

Then, with his air of general proprietorship of the whole place, he told her she might go fearlessly to rest as soon as she chose, for he would attend to locking doors and windows, and had innumerable precautions, patent and otherwise, against burglars.

So Mrs. Kinsey went up-stairs, and listening at Jack’s door, discovered that he was sleeping energetically and somewhat noisily. Then she visited the nursery, and found all serene there. But when she came to Betty’s bedside, that young person smiled up at her with wide-open eyes.

“Why, I supposed you’d be sound asleep,” said grandma, in surprise.

“No, I’m sound awake,” said Betty, cheerfully.

The full moon shone in and made the room almost as bright as day. Mrs. Kinsey offered to close the blinds, that Betty might go to sleep.

“No, don’t,” said the child; “I’m just lying here enjoyin’ it all, and after a while I’ll fall asleep.”

Then, lest she might have a fear of burglars, Mrs. Kinsey told her of Pete’s numerous precautions and safeguards.

But Betty only laughed. “I’m not afraid,” she said; “but if I hear a burglar trying to get in, I’ll run and jump into your bed for protection.”

“All right, dear; I’ll leave the door ajar. Now go to sleep, like a good child.”

Perhaps an hour later, Betty, still awake, heard a slight noise, and raising her head, saw clearly in the bright moonlight a fearful sight. She shook with terror, but suppressed the scream that rose to her lips, and watching her chance, sprang out of bed and half-way across the floor. She reached Mrs.

Kinsey's room, and with an agonized shriek of "Grandma, grandma, I'm comin'! Let me in," she flung open the door and stumbled her way across the room.

"Oh, where is he, Betty?" cried the old lady, shuddering with fright. "Come here, child, quick! Did you see him?"

"Yes, 'm," said Betty; "he's in my room"; and she jumped into bed beside Mrs. Kinsey, who was cold and trembling with fear, and whose teeth chattered as she whispered: "Oh, can't we call Pete? I forget which knob is the burglar-alarm."

"Why, grandma," cried Betty, suddenly enlightened, "*it wasn't a burglar; it was a mouse.*"

"A *mouse*! I've a good mind to shake you. Betty McGuire, are you crazy, to make such a fuss over a harmless little mouse? And oh, how you've frightened me!"

"I'm awful sorry," said Betty, contritely; "but please let me stay. I *can't* go back to my room while that mouse is there. I'd rather see a bear or a tiger!"

"Stay, of course, child, and go to sleep at once. Thank goodness it *was* only a mouse, and not a burglar." So Betty went to sleep, and peace settled down upon the house of Denniston.

Next morning Jack was immensely amused over the account of Betty's "burglar." But when Pete heard it, he started off at once for the village, and returned with mouse-traps of various patents, and a cat. "Tabby's" work was quickest and most efficacious, and no more burglar-mice invaded Betty's room.

CHAPTER XII

CHOOSING A BIRTHDAY

Life at Denniston soon settled down into a natural and ordinary course, except that Betty and Jack had rather better times than most children.

The Van Courts came over occasionally to advise and assist, when necessary; and Mr. Brewster came to Greenborough once a month, and went over the accounts with Mrs. Kinsey, to assure himself that everything was going on rightly, and that he might make a favorable report to Mr. Morris. Betty had concluded that she didn't want a governess who would live in the house, because it would spoil things to have some one in the family and yet not of it; but a tutor was engaged, who came every morning and taught the young ideas to shoot straight. The library was turned into a school-room, and Mr. Mixon found his two pupils very diligent and studious, since both were naturally bright and truly anxious to learn.

Although the days were growing warm, they decided not to take a summer vacation; for, as Betty said, all their life had been a vacation, and their school-term had just begun. So they pegged away at their books every morning, and spent the afternoons in sports and games.

Of intimate friends they had a small circle; but Jack and Betty were shrewd readers of character, and a boy or girl who looked down upon them because of their humble origin, or looked up to them only because of their wealth, was not often invited again to Denniston.

But perhaps a dozen young folks in the neighborhood proved to be what Jack called "true blue," and any or all of these were welcomed in the afternoons; and they were glad to come, too, for nowhere else could be found such good fun.

It was not only that Denniston had tennis-courts and bowling-alleys, and a pond with rowboats on it, or that Ellen's pantry could always provide a bountiful feast for a hungry throng, or that Pete was ever ready with service of any kind that might be required; but Betty and Jack were such a jolly, good-natured pair, always ready for any kind of fun, and never dictatorial or quarrelsome.

Of course Jack's lameness prevented his joining in some of the athletic sports; but he could bowl and row as well as any boy, and he had hopes of being able some day to run and jump with the best of them; for a great surgeon in New York had been written to, and had consented to come to Greenborough and undertake the cure of the lame boy.

One day in July Dr. Norton came, and said that Jack's case was curable, but that his leg would have to be broken and reset.

Though the operation would be painful, and the healing slow, Jack declared himself willing to undergo tortures, if need be; and so the deed was done.

And then poor Jack had to lie strapped to a board for nearly a month, and then walk with crutches for two or three weeks longer.

He bore it all bravely, and even while disabled studied his lessons so diligently that he threatened to get ahead of Betty.

But that ambitious young woman wouldn't allow such a thing, so she redoubled her energies; and the two made such progress that Mr. Mixon began to think he had a pair of prodigies in his charge.

The 1st of September was set for Jack to take his first unassisted steps; and one hot day about the middle of August Betty ran into his room, and slammed the door behind her.

Although improved in many ways by Grandma Jean's wise training and by her own sense of the fitness of things, Betty still had a decided breeziness of manner, and was given to abruptness both in words and deeds.

"Jack," she exclaimed, in an excited tone, "don't you tell if I tell you somethin'."

"No," said Jack, who was deep in an English history. "But I say, Betty, have you come to Mary, Queen of Scots, yet? They cut off her head! Just think of it—cut off her head!"

"What a pity," said Betty, with sympathy, but rather absent-mindedly; "but *promise*, Jack, *don't* tell what I'm going to tell you."

"I won't tell; what is it?" said Jack, solemnly.

"Well, I'm going to have a birthday party!"

"Pooh! You can't. You haven't got any birthday—or at least you don't know when it is."

“That’s just it. I’m going to *get* a birthday.”

“Ho! *buy* it, I s’pose. Do you think you can buy everything?”

“Now, listen, Jack. You don’t know when your birthday is, either; and we don’t know Polly’s exactly, only that it’s in September. So I’m going to choose one birthday, and let it do for the whole three of us.”

“All right; but there’s plenty of days—why not have one apiece?”

“No; it’ll be more fun to have ’em all on the same day. We’ll take September, ’cause we know that’s Polly’s month; and now let’s choose a day in the first week of it, and then you walk first on that day, and we’ll celebrate it by a party.”

“All right; I choose the 1st; that’ll come the quickest.”

“Well, if you’re sure your splint will be off by that time. We’ll ask Dr. Norton. And I’ve planned it all out. I want the celebration to be a parade—in honor of your being able to walk, you know.”

“Yes,” said Jack, who was interested enough now; “and we’ll have a band.”

“We’ll *be* the band ourselves. I’m going to get up a ‘pop-gun orchestra.’ Tillie Fenn told me about it. And you can ride when you get tired walking, and Polly will be in the parade in her baby-carriage, and it’ll be lovely!”

“What’s a pop-gun orchestra?”

“Oh, it’s lots of fun! Everybody plays on anything they want to. Tillie Fenn and I are going to town to-day to get the things to play on, and then we’ll all have to practise, you know.”

“I thought you said it was a secret.”

“Not the orchestra; only the birthday party and the parade. Now, while I’m gone, you make out a list of the boys and girls we want in the band. It doesn’t matter whether they can play on anything or not, for some have just clappers or paper and combs to play on.”

“I’ll play the bones,” said Jack; “I can do that in style, though I haven’t touched ’em since I came here. Bring me a set, will you, Betty?”

“All right; I will. Now, you make out a list of people—and think up a lot of tunes, too.”

Betty whisked out as suddenly as she had whisked in, and skipping down to the veranda, gave a long, shrill whistle which could be heard at the

barn, and in response to which her pony-cart was soon at the door.

“Thank you, Pete,” she said pleasantly; and in a moment she had jumped in and was flying down the avenue.

She stopped for Tillie Fenn, and then the two girls drove off to the village.

They easily found what they wanted, and returned laden with pop-guns, jew’s-harps, combs, watchmen’s rattles, drums, cymbals, bones, sand-brushes—in fact, anything that would make a noise.

Betty told her friend the great secret; for what fun is there in having a secret, unless you tell it? And Tillie thought the whole project grand, and promised to help all she could. “Be sure and come over to-morrow afternoon,” said Betty, as she left Tillie at her own home. “Come early, and stay to supper.”

“Yes, I’ll come; and shall I bring Tom?”

“Yes, indeed; the more the merrier.”

When Betty reached home, Jack had the list of performers made out, and a note written to each one. Pete was despatched at once to deliver the notes, and then Betty displayed her stock of musical instruments with pride.

Jack grasped eagerly at the bones, and made such a deafening clatteration with them that Betty ran away with her hands over her ears. At supper, that night, they told Grandma Jean all about it, and she was much amused at the idea of the triple birthday.

“And how old will you all be?” she asked, thinking up a small secret on her own account.

“Well,” said Betty, uncertainly, “I think I’ve been fourteen for about a year, so I’ll be fifteen. Jack doesn’t know how old he is, so we’re going to call him fifteen, too; and Polly, of course, will be three. We know her birthday comes in September, but we don’t know the day.” Then she added reflectively: “It’s just as likely to be the 1st as another day.”



“BETTY AND TILLIE RETURNED LADEN WITH POP-GUNS, JEW’S-HARPS, COMBS, WATCHMEN’S RATTLES, DRUMS, CYMBALS, BONES, AND SAND BRUSHES.”

“No,” said Jack, who had a head for mathematics; “it’s twenty-nine times as likely to be another day as the 1st.”

This was too deep reasoning for Betty, so she ignored it and went on telling about her plans:

“And you see, grandma, we’ll get the band in good working order, and then they can lead the parade, and we’ll march all about the grounds. And we’ll have you and the Van Courts and some more grown-up people to sit on the veranda for to be beholding of us.”

Betty’s grammar had greatly improved under Mr. Mixon’s teaching, but her sentences were often of imperfect construction.

Although anxious above all things to study music, Betty’s lessons in that art had not yet begun. The best music-teacher of Greenborough was away on his summer vacation, so Betty was obliged to wait until fall. But a naturally quick ear, and a positive talent for time, enabled her to lead her orchestra successfully.

Day after day the young people met in the Denniston music-room; and such a caterwauling was the result that Grandma Jean, who had become a favorite in Greenborough society, made many afternoon calls during that period.

After a while, though, when they became more proficient, the music was really not so bad—that is, if anybody liked that kind. It was strong, loud, and accurate; and what more *could* be desired in a pop-gun orchestra?

The number of performers had steadily grown larger, and now twenty answered to roll-call. Tillie Fenn played the piano to teach the tunes, and Betty's baton kept the time true.

Their selections were varied, and contained many street songs and patriotic airs. Marches were among their favorites. But their grandest accomplishment was the "Anvil Chorus." When this was played on fifes and paper-covered combs, and accompanied by bones and cymbals and rolling drums and watchmen's rattles, with pop-guns popping just at the right time, the effect was truly thrilling.

By the end of August Jack was improving so fast that the doctor said he might surely walk without his crutches on the first day of September, though not very far. So it was arranged that he should start out with the grand parade, and pass the reviewing-stand, after which the pony-cart would be in waiting, and the rest of the way Master Jack could ride.

Then preparations went on merrily, and invitations were sent out for the great affair.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

The 1st of September was the most beautiful day you ever saw. A sunny breeze kept it bright and cool, and the willing workers at Denniston did the rest. Early in the morning they were all astir, eager to begin preparations; and not much later the Van Court people came over, and the ladies held secret confabs with Mrs. Kinsey and Ellen, while Mr. Van Court and Mr. Brewster hobnobbed with Pete on what seemed to be very important business.

Betty and Jack were forbidden to peep into the kitchen, or to even look toward a certain part of the grounds, whence mysterious sounds of carpentering were heard.

However, Betty and Jack had secret schemes of their own, and found the morning hours all too short to attend to them.

Of course there were no lessons that day, but Mr. Mixon came just the same, and proved of assistance to everybody.

The party was to be from four to nine; but all the guests came before four and stayed until after nine, and indeed many of the children, especially those of the orchestra, were in and out all day long.

Dr. Norton came down for the day, and, taking off Jack's splints, pronounced that his bones had healed and that his leg was all right, and said he might walk a hundred steps in the parade, but after that he must ride.

"Hooray!" cried Jack, as the awkward splints came off at last, and he stood erect and straight, without crutches. "Hooray! Three cheers for Dr. Norton!"

They were given with a will by more than a dozen voices, for the family, guests, and servants were all gathered at the door or in the hall, waiting to hear the good news.

"Oh, thank you, sir," cried Betty, as she grasped Dr. Norton's hand in both her own. "Oh, thank you—thank you with all my heart! I'm so *glad* you cured my Jack. It's the best birthday present he could have."

“Bless the boy,” said grandma, “and he’s been so good and patient through it all.”

Then everybody rejoiced with him, and congratulated him, until Jack felt like a hero just returned from war or some other dreadful danger.

Pete ran up the big flag to the top of its pole; and Polly, who was lost sight of during the excitement, celebrated the occasion by finding a pair of scissors and cutting all the golden curls off of one side of her foolish little baby head.

A wail of woe went up from Lisa when she saw the mischief, and another from Betty when she flew to the scene of action.

“Oh, Polly,” she cried, “baby Polly, how *could* you cut off your pretty curls?”

“Me give kyurls to Betty,” said the baby, cheerfully, dumping a bunch of yellow floss in Betty’s lap.

Then, as there was nothing else to do, Betty cut the curls from the other side, leaving Polly in a state of great bewilderment as to why it was wrong for her, but right for Betty, to do the wicked deed.

Beauty-loving Betty was ready to cry at the sight of the little shorn head, for Polly was to have graced the parade in a wonderful new white frock, all frills and filmy lace, in which she looked like an angel; and now the angel’s halo was gone.

But Betty’s ingenuity did not desert her. Flinging on her hat, she whistled for her pony-cart, and in a few minutes was bowling merrily along on the road to town.

“Dixie,” Betty’s pony, was quite as much of a pet as Sydney, and was not much larger than the great dog.

He was a real “banker” pony, which is the kind raised in some of our Southern States on the “banks” of the ocean. These ponies are very small, but stout and strong. They are allowed to run wild when young, and their hair grows to the length of two inches or more. They forage for food, and when thirsty they dig holes in the sand and drink the water that filters into them.

When ready to be sold, they are caught with a lasso, like the wild horses in the West; then, after being sheared and branded, they settle down into the most gentle and docile little beasts imaginable.

They live long; indeed, Dixie was already twenty years old when Mr. Brewster bought him for Betty's use.

Betty being so much younger, Dixie was very considerate, and until she learned how to ride and drive he was patient, and careful of her safety. When she would jump on his back only to tumble off again, he would turn and look at her as much as to say, "I'm so sorry for you; just try it again." But Betty was fearless, and far from stupid, and she soon learned to be a correct and graceful little horsewoman.

Good little Dixie was ready and willing to go to town a dozen times a day, if need be; so on this occasion he kicked up his heels and flew over the ground, while Betty held on to her hat with one hand and drove with the other. She stopped in front of a hair-dresser's shop, and gave the reins a turn around the whip.

"Stay there, Dix, until I come back," said she; and jumping out, she ran into the shop; and nothing less than an explosion would have made Dixie move until his young mistress returned.

"Have you any golden curls for sale?" asked Betty of the wonderfully befrizzled young woman behind the counter.

"No, miss, we haven't; but we expect some in to-morrow."

"Oh, that won't do at all," said Betty. "I must have them to-day."

"We have some beautiful brown curls, miss; wouldn't they answer?"

Betty thought a minute. Polly had brown eyes, and anything was better than that poor little shorn scalp.

So she took two short ones and half a dozen long ones. And then she went to the milliner's and bought a hat, all fluffy white frills and lace, and asked the milliner to sew the curls in it. Then Betty took her clever invention home with her, and tried it on Polly.

The whole affair was very becoming; only, the baby was so changed in her appearance that even Betty scarcely knew her.

"Never mind; you look sweet in it, Pollypops," she said, kissing her, as she took the hat off; and Polly said, "Yi, yi."

At last four o'clock came, and everybody had arrived. A crowd of grown-ups sat on the veranda to see the great parade, which was in process of forming down in the orchard.

The children were to march across the lawn; and then, just as the head of the column neared the house, Jack would fall in and take his hundred steps, after which he would get into the cart, and drive Dixie the rest of the way.

Soon the music—noise, I mean—of the pop-gun orchestra was plainly heard; and after a few moments of uncertainty, the listeners decided they were playing at the “Star-Spangled Banner.” But it seemed to fizzle out, and a few final squeaks and shrieks were followed by silence on the part of the instruments, but an evident squabbling among the members of the orchestra.

“All right,” said Betty, at last; and they broke into a grand rendering of “The Mulligan Guards.” All kept time, and the fifes tooted, and the drums banged, and the pop-guns popped at just the right moments, and those who blew through the combs blew with all their might, so that it was a wonderful wave of sound that came around the corner.

And a wonderful sight, too. Betty led the line, walking backward, and waving a little baton with one hand, and holding in the other her papered comb, playing vigorously.

All of the orchestra were in uniform. Betty had had the suits made, and the children slipped them on over their other clothes. The girls wore red skirts and military-looking jackets made of red, shiny muslin, liberally banded with strips of gilt paper; the boys had trousers and jackets of the same brilliant materials; and all wore big peaked hats made of pasteboard covered with gilt paper, from the tops of which waved bunches of red feathers.

Betty had designed this costume herself, and it was really very effective, and the band received tumultuous applause as they marched by the reviewing-stand. Next came Polly. She was seated in her baby-carriage, but the little wicker coach was so covered with flowers that it looked like a moving floral mound. The seat had been built up higher, and Polly sat aloft, waving her little fat arms and shouting with glee.



“BETTY LED THE LINE WALKING BACKWARD.”

But such a Polly! With her sudden achievement of long dark curls no one recognized her at first, and only her well-known “Yi, yi,” would make Grandma Jean believe that it was really baby Polly. Lisa, who pushed the carriage, was marvelously garbed in red cheese-cloth and an ornamental hat; for Betty’s ideas of gaiety were limited to red coloring and effective head-gear.

And next came Jack, preceded by a sort of body-guard of Pete and Barney gorgeously attired in full military regalia, which had been hired for the occasion. Jack, in a red-and-gold suit, walked proudly erect. His face was pale with excitement, but his tread was firm and even; and Bill, the stable-boy, who had been detailed to follow him and count his steps, called out “One hundred!” just after Jack passed the veranda. Then, amid the applause and cheers of the audience, he climbed into the gaily decorated cart, and Dixie fell into line as naturally as if he always walked in a parade.

Sydney came next; a wreath of flowers round his neck, tied with a big red bow, was his only adornment, and quite enough he found it. He walked in the procession because he had been told to do so; but his dignity placed him above that sort of foolishness, and his air showed a benign patronage of the whole affair. Then came a double line of children, who had been invited, and requested to wear something red; and so red dresses, sashes, hats, and shoes were in evidence, and made a gay scene.

After the parade had all passed the veranda, Betty brought her orchestra back again, and nearly deafened the long-suffering audience by giving them the “Anvil Chorus,” with an accompaniment of real anvils.

After that she dismissed her musicians and announced that the party had begun. Then every one did what he or she wanted to. They played tennis or bowled, or rowed on the lake, or drove in the pony-cart, or swung.

And after that it was time for the feast.

This was spread out of doors on a great table, or, rather, two tables put together in the shape of a T. At the two ends of the cross-table sat Jack and Betty, and at the end of the other table sat little Polly in her high chair. Her hat had been laid aside, and of course the curls went with it; but the loss of either yellow or brown ringlets in no way interfered with Polly’s enjoyment, and she clamored for her supper and a cup of tea “wiv a much of sugar in it.”

Facing Polly, and at the point where the two tables joined, Grandma Jean sat; and from here she could have a watchful eye over all the guests, big and little, and make sure that their wants were all attended to—though Ellen and her skilful assistants left little to be done.

The feast consisted of everything that people usually have on such occasions, and more besides. Such a birthday supper had never before been seen in Greenborough. Orders had been sent to New York, and giant hampers had arrived that afternoon with the most wonderful fruits and confections and cakes, and a great big salmon that looked as if he could swim in the sea, but proved all ready to be eaten, and boned turkeys, and funny little sandwiches rolled up and tied with ribbons. And then there was ice-cream in queer shapes that made the children laugh: fat little Chinese mandarins, and soldiers carrying chocolate guns, and ducks and geese, and even a pig with a curly tail. Funny little cakes, too, that looked like all sorts of things, from dominoes to potatoes, and tasted delicious. And then—this was Grandma Jean’s secret—a great big birthday cake was placed in front of Betty, with fifteen candles burning around it, and “Betty” traced upon it in most marvelous frosting, with decorations of candies and crystallized fruits. And a similar cake was set before Jack, with his name blazoned on it, and fifteen candles burning. And then a wee cake with three candles, and bearing the name of “Polly,” was set in front of that hilarious damsel, who looked at it critically, and then puffed up her fat cheeks and tried to blow out the candles, saying: “Polly no byurn up her cake!”

The cakes were cut, and exhibited a most satisfactory plumpness; and then, as none of the little people could eat any more, Grandma Jean proposed that the birthday cakes be divided into generous portions, and each child receive a piece to take home. This met with general approval; and Ellen brought a tray of lovely silver-paper boxes, with three links of a chain embossed in gilt on each cover. The end links contained the names "Jack" and "Betty," and the tiny link that joined them encircled the name "Polly." Also, each child received beautiful bonbons in a satin bag. And then they snapped German cracker-mottos, and put on the grotesque paper caps that appeared.

And now it was getting dusk, and they all adjourned to the house.

When they entered the parlor they saw a strange figure sitting in a corner of the room. It seemed to be a young boy, but a very large one. He wore a white suit with a huge white ruff and a white beaver hat. He sat on a stool, and before him, on a low table, was an immense pie, that must have measured fully a yard across.

"Little Jack Horner!" cried a dozen voices at once.

"Why, so it is," said Mr. Brewster. "Put in your thumb, Jack, and pull us out a plum."

"Yessir," said Jack Horner; and he thrust his hand into the pie and drew out a white paper parcel.

"Who wants this plum?" said he.

"Me," said Polly, toddling up to get it.

"Wait, baby," said Mr. Brewster. "No, this isn't your plum; this has Agnes Graham's name on it."

So Agnes took it, and it proved to contain a lovely little work-box, with silver thimble, scissors, and furnishings, all complete.

Then Jack Horner found a plum for each of the rest, and every plum was a beautiful present.

After the pie-dish was empty, Jack Horner told the children to put their "plums" away in some safe place, and get their wraps, for the next performance would be out of doors.



“‘WHO WANTS THIS PLUM?’ SAID JACK HORNER.”

Then Jack Horner, whom the children had long ago discovered to be Mr. Dick Van Court, led the way to a new building, which was an explanation of the mysterious carpentry of the morning. It was a raised platform with graduated rows of seats; and when the whole party was comfortably seated, they were treated to a magnificent exhibition of fireworks. Brilliant rockets and bombs hissed through the air, and exploded into showers of shining stars of every possible color. Pinwheels whizzed around, throwing off sparks, and colored Greek fire made the whole place look like fairyland. Fire balloons were sent up and watched until they floated away out of sight; and at last the final illumination was announced.

This proved to be a repetition of the three links of chain on the cake-boxes, and stood out in letters of fire against the sky.

Loud applause followed this; and as it faded from sight, Tom Fenn proposed “three cheers for the McGuires,” and they were given with a will.

It was after nine now—yes, and after ten; so the guests departed, feeling sure they would always remember the McGuires’ birthday party.

CHAPTER XIV

PERPLEXITY AND ADVICE

“Now, children, run along to bed,” said Grandma Jean, as the door closed behind the last guests; “and don’t dawdle, for it’s late. Help Jack upstairs, Betty, and I’ll look in and see that he’s all right when I come up.”

“Good night, grandma,” said Betty, a little wistfully.

“Good night,” said Mrs. Kinsey. “Run on now; I’m going to count the silver.”

Though Jack was tired, he walked bravely through the hall; but when he reached the stairs he was glad to have Betty’s assistance.

“I’ll be all right soon,” he said; “but I’ll just take a grip on your shoulder this time, if you don’t mind.”

Betty laughed. “‘Lean on me, grandpapa; I’m ’most seven,’” said she, quoting from their favorite story-book, and offering a sturdy shoulder for Jack’s support.

They stopped on the landing to rest; and as they sat down on the cushioned seat, Jack said:



“‘LEAN ON ME, GRANDPAPA,’ SAID BETTY.”

“I’m glad of your help to-night, but in a few days I guess I won’t need it. I’ll get strong awful quick, Dr. Norton says; and then I’m going to exercise just right, and get myself up in shape, and I’m going in for the navy. Mr. Mixon knows a man who knows somebody who’s on a ship, and he says he’ll help me.”

“Oh, Jack, do you mean you’ll go away to sea, and stay?”

“You bet I will, if I get half a chance. But not for a long while yet. A fellow has to study awful hard to get in the navy. Hallo, there goes the wailer. Move, Betty; you’re sitting against it.”

They had dubbed the æolian harp the “wailer” because its music was usually a prolonged wail. It was sweet and tuneful, but always sad.

“Ugh!” said Jack, “it’s extra sad to-night. Sounds’s if it had swallowed a doughnut, or something heavy. I must go up-stairs, Betty; it’s bedtime.”

With Betty’s help, Jack climbed the rest of the stairs easily enough, and entered his own room.

“Good night, Jack,” said Betty, pausing at the door.

“Good night—and say, Betty, won’t you call down to grandma to bring up my tonic when she comes? She knows where it is.”

“I will,” said Betty; and she delivered the message, and then went to her room.

She entered and closed the door, and then stood with her hand still on the door-knob, looking round her.

Such a pretty room! During the months Betty had lived in it she had added so many lovely things that it was just overflowing with beauty and comfort.

A fine copy of the “Sistine Madonna” looked down on her from the wall, and a royal Bengal tiger rug gnashed its teeth at her from the floor. Electric lights had been recently introduced at Denniston, and in Betty’s room they were hidden among the cornice decorations, and so cast a lovely radiance without a glare of light.

And still Betty stood looking round her.

The room had been arranged for the night. The covers of the pretty white bed had been turned back and the little ruffled night-dress laid in readiness. A down coverlet of blue silk hung over the foot of the bed,—for the nights were growing chilly,—and a little blue dressing-gown of eider-flannel and a pair of blue woolly slippers lay on the couch. A shaded night-lamp burned low on a small bedside table.

Betty crossed the room and stood in front of a long pier-glass. She must have been pleased with the reflection she saw there, for the fluffy organdie dress, made over pink silk and bright with pink ribbons, was very becoming.

But it was a sober little face in the mirror that looked back at her, and she turned away with a sigh. Then she took off the pretty dress, and throwing on the little blue dressing-gown, she turned a key, and the electric light faded, leaving the room dark save for the tiny lamp. She sat down by

the low, open window, and crossing her arms on the sill, laid her head upon them and looked out at the stars. Then the tears came.

“It’s wicked and silly I am,” she said to herself, “and I’m glad no one knows it, for I’d be ashamed. I’ve got everything in the world, and still—still I’m wanting more. And I don’t even know what it is I’m wanting. Grandma Jean is as kind as she can be, and I oughtn’t to expect her to kiss me good night, if it is my birthday; and of course it *isn’t* my birthday really. And I’m so glad that Jack’s leg is all right; I don’t mind a bit that he never gave me any thanks for getting Dr. Norton to cure him. I took Jack for my brother; and I’ll give him all the money he wants, and all the education he wants; and then—and then he’ll go off to that navy place, and leave me, and never think of me again. Polly loves me in her baby way; but she’s so little, and she wouldn’t care if she never saw me again. My party was beautiful, and the orchestra was just splendid, and Jimmy Briggs *didn’t* spoil it all by drumming at the wrong time; but—it wasn’t a *real* birthday, after all, and I suppose that’s why there seems to be something missing.

“And nobody gave me any presents. Of course I know why; it’s ’cause I’ve got money enough to buy all the presents I want, myself. But that ain’t it. If Miss Grace had only made me even a bit of a pin-cushion, now, or if Jack had whittled something out of wood for me! But they think I don’t care for anything unless it costs a lot of money—and what costs money I can buy for myself.

“Oh, dear! I s’pose I’m awful wicked and ungrateful. Me, the richest girl in Greenborough, a-moping here, when I ought to be singing with joy. I’m all wrong. Mrs. Van Court said, when I came here to live, ‘Now, Betty, if you’re not happy, it’s your own fault’; and if it’s my own fault, I’ll strive—strive to cure it; and I’ll stop worrying about myself; but—I *wish* I had somebody to worry about me.”

With a sigh as sad as the wail of her æolian harp, the little girl rose and turned on the pretty lights again. The sight of her room full of treasures seemed to cheer her; and saying half aloud, “I *am* a silly—I’ll just quit it and behave myself,” she prepared for bed, and was soon fast asleep.

She slept late next morning, and when she awoke the sun was shining, and she was her own merry self once more. The sad thoughts seemed to have hidden themselves away, and soon a very spick-and-span Betty in a fresh blue gingham dress went dancing down-stairs.

She stopped to kiss Polly, who was “playing steamboat” in the hall, and then went on to the dining-room.

“‘At’s all water,” shouted Polly, “an’ you’s in it, an’ you’ll det wet.”

“Oh, dear, so I will!” cried Betty, always ready to “pretend.” “My feet are soaking wet now; what *shall* I do?”

She hopped up on a chair, and then jumped to a window-seat, and so made her way from one piece of furniture to another until she reached her own chair at the dining-table; and then, with her feet tucked up under her, she rang the bell for the waitress.

While Betty was still at her breakfast, she heard a familiar step in the hall, and looking up, she saw Mr. Richard Van Court smiling at her from the doorway.

“Oh, what a lazy popinjay-bird!” he cried. “You’ll never catch the early worm.”

Betty scorned to reply, and called out quickly: “Oh, be careful, Mr. Dick; the water’s six inches deep on this floor, and rising fast; you’ll be drowned if you don’t look out!”

“Good gracious, so I will!” exclaimed the young man, in great consternation. Then he turned up his trousers, and picked his way carefully around, to the delight of Polly, whose steamboat had drawn nearer and was steering straight for the Great Sideboard Dock.

“The waters are rising!” yelled Mr. Dick, frantically. “I shall be drowned! But no—I can swim.” And with the motions of a despairing swimmer, he reached Grandma Jean’s chair at the table, and climbing up into it, he sat on the arm, with his feet on the seat.

Polly screamed with glee; and Betty laughed heartily at the apparently exhausted refugee, and said: “Won’t you have a cup of coffee now, to keep you from taking cold?”

“I will take a cup of coffee,” said Mr. Dick, “but I’ve already taken the cold”; and he gave a series of such prodigious sneezes that Polly tumbled out of her steamboat, she laughed so hard.

Then the expert swimmer had to throw himself into the sea again to rescue the drowning sailor; and after this heroic deed he returned to his arm-chair island to drink the coffee Ellen brought to him.

“Popinjay,” he said, as he helped himself to cream, “I have to drive over to the Ridge this morning; and as it is Saturday, and you have no lessons, I stopped to see if you’d like to go with me.”

“Oh, I’d love to go,” said Betty; for a drive with Mr. Dick was always a pleasure.

“All right, then; skip up and don your bonnet gay; my steed waits at the door.”

Betty was soon ready, and they started off. It was a perfect morning, and the horses spun along so fast, and Mr. Dick was in a jolly humor and told such merry stories and funny jokes, that Betty began to wonder how anybody could ever be sad, herself least of all.

The loneliness of the night before seemed like a dream; but as they were discussing the birthday party in all its phases, Betty told Mr. Dick about it.

The young man took it more seriously than she had thought he would.

“Little one,” he said kindly, “you mustn’t allow yourself to have such thoughts.”

“I don’t often, sir,” said she. “I’m ’most always happy and glad—as indeed I ought to be, with my home and family all complete. But sometimes I feel the want of somebody else—somebody that I haven’t bought with my fortune.”

Mr. Dick didn’t tell her—what he feared was the case—that her poor little orphan heart was craving true affection and sympathy, which cannot be bought, though the imitation of them is always for sale.



“‘THE WATERS ARE RISING!’ YELLED MR. DICK, FRANTICALLY. ‘I SHALL BE DROWNED!’”

“Well, well, Popinjay,” he said cheerfully, “when those thoughts come after you, just turn round and drive them out of your head. You’re forming your character now, you know, and you’ve a strong will; so all such signs of morbidness or discontent you must fight against and destroy.”

“Yes, sir; I’ll do it. And when I think of all my beautiful home, and my new hat and all, I know I’m undeserving and I know I’m most ungrateful to be desiring anything else. But I think, sir, if I had a sister—I mean a big sister, as big as I am—she’d be a companion, like. Jack’s the best brother in the world; but he’s a boy, and he doesn’t understand half I say to him. And I think I’ll buy one more member to my family, and have some nice girl to be a sister of my own age.”

“Well, Betty, you may be right about this; I don’t say you’re not; but let me give you a little advice. Don’t buy this sister too suddenly. Be sure you’ve found the right one before you get her on your hands for life. Take her on trial first. Have you any one in view?”

“No, sir—unless it might be Tillie Fenn. She’s a nice girl, and she lives with her aunt. Mrs. Fenn doesn’t like Tillie very much, and she’s awful hard on her; so I guess I could buy her, if I wanted to.”

“But don’t do it, Popinjay, until you’ve given Miss Tillie a trial. Ask her to come and visit you for a week; and then, if you like her, extend the invitation to a month; but be sure she’s what you need before you adopt her.”

This seemed sensible, and Betty promised to follow her friend’s advice; and then the subject was dropped, and they devoted all their time and attention to enjoying their delightful ride.

“Don’t say anything about this matter,” said Mr. Van Court, as they drove into Denniston, on their return, “but invite your friend; and after you’ve made the experiment, tell me how it succeeded, and then we’ll talk it over with Brewster.”

Betty felt a little proud of having a secret with Mr. Dick, and readily promised to do as he said—though she felt sure that the acquiring of a new sister would be a success.

CHAPTER XV

“TRYING SISTERS”

When Tillie Fenn was invited to Denniston for a week, she accepted with delight, for she and Betty were great chums, and Denniston Hall was the loveliest place in the world to visit. So, one autumn afternoon, Betty, Polly, and Jack were on the veranda waiting for the visitor.

Soon she came bundling in with a bird-cage in one hand and a huge traveling-bag in the other. “I had to bring my canary-bird,” she explained, “for mother said she wouldn’t take care of him if I left him at home; you don’t mind, do you, Mrs. Kinsey?”

“Not at all, my dear,” said Grandma Jean, kindly; “we’ll have him in the dining-room, to make music for us while we’re at table.”

“My trunk is coming over soon,” continued Tillie. “I brought all my clothes, for I didn’t know what ones I’d want; and I brought a lot of my little traps in this satchel.”

“All right,” said Betty, feeling very sisterly; “come and let’s put them away.”

Betty had decided to have Tillie room with her; for half the fun of having a sister would be in the cozy chats night and morning, and the confidences that are only possible between sisters who share the same room.

She had emptied half the bureau drawers and half the pegs and shelves in her dressing-room, and was ready to help arrange Tillie’s belongings. But she was a little dismayed at the hodgepodge she saw when Tillie opened her bag. Brushes, combs, ribbons, handkerchiefs, were all in a grand jumble. But Tillie seemed to think they were all right, and dumped them into the places set apart for her, brushed her hair with Betty’s hair-brush, and said she was ready to go down-stairs.

Then they had a game of tennis and a drive with Dixie, and Tillie was so entertaining and good-natured that Betty began to think she had found a real sister. But she had promised Mr. Dick not to speak of that plan until she had tried it a week, and so she treated Tillie as a temporary guest.

Jack was pleased with the visitor, too, and they had a merry time at supper, and spent a jolly evening with music and games; and then the two girls went up-stairs with their arms round each other.

“Oh, there’s my trunk,” said Tillie, as they entered Betty’s pretty room. “I’ll have my things out in a jiffy.”

She did, too, and in a few minutes the floor was strewn with dresses, shoes, and hats.

“Tillie!” exclaimed Betty, in dismay, “*don’t* throw things around so; wait, I’ll help you fold them.”



“BETTY, POLLY, AND JACK WERE ON THE VERANDA
WAITING FOR THE VISITOR.”

“Oh, no, this will do,” said Tillie, and she jumbled some into the bureau drawers, and threw others on the shelves.

“Half of the top of the dressing-table is for you,” explained Betty, who was a very tidy little body, and loved to have things in order. “I laid this blue ribbon across it to divide it evenly. And you’ll keep your brushes and trays on your own side, won’t you?”

“Yes,” said Tillie; “I’ll try to. But I’m awful careless. Mother scolds me about it, but I tell her scolding makes me worse.”

Betty didn’t scold, but it *was* a trial to her to have brushes, belts, gloves, soiled collars or handkerchiefs, flung about everywhere. Tillie also appropriated such of Betty’s possessions as took her fancy, and when she returned them they were usually damaged in some way.

So that, when the week was half gone, Betty had come to the conclusion that, although Tillie was a merry, good-natured companion, and just the one for a chum, she was by no means the right kind of a sister.

But in many ways Tillie was a charming little guest, and the two girls had a royal good time all the week. They had picnics and tea-parties and entertainments of some kind or other every afternoon, though the mornings were spent in the school-room, as usual.

Altogether, as a candidate for the new position to be filled at Denniston Hall, Tillie was not a success; and as Betty could still have her for a chum and intimate friend, she was not sorry when the week was up, and Tillie jumbled her clothes into her trunk, took her bird-cage and satchel, and departed. She was so sorry to leave, and thanked Betty and Grandma Jean so sincerely for the pleasure they had given her, that Betty felt almost guilty when she thought of the secret with Mr. Dick. But she was truly glad that Tillie had enjoyed herself, and resolved to invite her again some time in the future.

Then she went to put her room in order, with a feeling of relief that it would not immediately be turned topsy-turvy again.

“Well, Popinjay,” said Mr. Dick, who came over to Denniston a day or two later, and found Betty alone on the veranda, “how did the experiment go?”

“Oh, it was a failure,” said Betty, “and I’m glad she didn’t stay with me all her life before she stayed a week.”

Mr. Dick laughed.

“Mr. Mixon hasn’t taught all the Irish out of your speech yet, has he? Walk down to the orchard with me, and tell me all about the experiment.”

Betty was soon ready, and they set out.

“Now what do you propose to do next?” asked Mr. Van Court, on the way.

“Well, sir, I hope you won’t laugh, but I’m going to ask a whole lot of girls to Denniston Hall—not for a week, maybe, but for three or four days, and see if any of them are the kind I’d like to have to be my true sister.”

“But these girls have homes of their own; they couldn’t come and live with you.”

“I know it, sir, but I just want to see if I’d want any of them. If not, then I’d be better satisfied, knowing I don’t want any sister. But if some of them are just the kind I mean, then I’ll keep on trying.”

“Betty, you ought to have been a general, your plans are so deep and so well laid. Go ahead, my child, and if you want help at any time, remember who’s your friend.”

So Betty invited ten girls to come all at once, and stay from Wednesday till Saturday; and they nearly turned Denniston Hall inside out and upside down. Jack threatened to take to the woods; but that was only a joke, for he really enjoyed the unusual commotion in the house.

Grandma Jean proved herself quite equal to the occasion. Extra leaves were put in the dining-table, and extra help engaged in the kitchen, and the house ran along as smoothly as ever. None of the guests had any idea they were being critically observed, and, indeed, very often Betty forgot it was more than an ordinary frolic.

And it was a jolly frolic. Such capers as those girls cut, such pranks they played on each other, and such laughing and giggling over nothing at all!

By utilizing the third story of Denniston Hall the girls were provided with sleeping-rooms without being crowded. Betty, however, slept on the couch in her own room, while Tillie Fenn and Agnes Miller occupied her bed.

One morning she was awakened by a shriek from Agnes, followed by a series of yells from Tillie. “Don’t get up,” they screamed, “but look over there on the floor.”

Betty looked, and there was a spider, the largest one she had ever seen. Now, Betty's fear of spiders was only exceeded by her dread of mice; but in her position of hostess she felt she must overcome her own feelings, and save her guests from annoyance.

So, reaching for her shoe, she threw it at the spider, but failed to hit him. Then she threw the other shoe, with no better success. And then Tillie and Agnes threw their shoes, and finally hit the spider so he lay motionless in a crumpled heap. Then Betty rose, and took a heavy bath-towel and threw it over the spider.

"Drown him!" cried Tillie; "he may not be dead yet"; and she turned water into the wash-bowl, and Betty grabbed up the towel and dropped the spider in.

Immediately the water was stained crimson, and the girls turned away from the horrid sight. Then there was a roar of laughter outside, and eight girls came bouncing in to crow over their victims.

"It was a paper spider!" cried May Fordham. "I did it; I knew you'd be scared. That red is the paint coming off!"

"You'll catch it for that!" exclaimed Tillie; and she clutched the luckless May, tumbled her on the couch, and piled blankets and pillows on her until she was nearly suffocated.



“BETTY LOOKED, AND THERE WAS A SPIDER.”

A grand pillow-fight and general scramble followed, and at last Betty had to “shoo” the girls to their rooms to get ready for breakfast.

This was Saturday, the last day of the house-party, and the girls were to go on a picnic to the “Panther’s Den,” a small natural cave about five miles away.

They all clambered into a big wagon, over which Pete presided. Bill followed with a wagon-load of provisions of Ellen’s best make, from sandwiches to ice-cream; and Jack was to bring Grandma Jean, Polly, and Lisa over in the surrey later.

The rollicking crowd of girls joked and sang as they rode along. After they had reached the mountain road, they passed a tree with a huge sign-board on it, which read: “Beware of Indians!”

“Pooh!” said Betty, “there aren’t any Indians around here.”

But as they went on many other trees bore rude pictures of tomahawks and splashes of red paint.

Some of the timid girls were for turning back; but the others laughed at them, and told them not to be “fraid-cats.”

They reached the Panther's Den in safety, and Pete lifted each one down from the high wagon. Just as the last girl was landed on the ground, a fearful war-whoop sounded from the Den, and a dozen wild Indians in war-paint and feathers rushed out, brandishing shining knives, and yelling like mad. Some of the girls screamed; but in a moment they discovered the warlike tribe to be composed of their own brothers and friends.

Jack had concocted the Indian scheme, and though the girls had planned for a real "girl picnic," they were not sorry to have their plans changed, and soon after that the Indians and their white captives sat down amicably together and ate the picnic feast. Then the "Indians" gave wonderful exhibitions of their prowess in wrestling and acrobatic feats.

Before sundown they all went back to Denniston, for that evening the girls were to go to their respective homes.

They said good-by with real regret, and each went away thinking that Betty McGuire was the most fortunate girl in the world.

Sunday afternoon Mr. Van Court drove over to Denniston to see Betty and have one of their confidential talks about the experiment. It was a lovely day, so they went for a row on the little pond, and after a few strokes Mr. Dick rested on his oars and said:

"How many sisters are you going to buy, Popinjay?"

Betty looked at him thoughtfully from under her shade-hat.

"Mr. Dick," she said, "it's no use; they're nice girls, and we had good fun, but I don't want any of them to live with me."

"That's right, Betty; I don't believe you do. Your family is large enough, and as you grow older and make more friends, and have more varied interests, you won't feel the loneliness that troubles you now."



**“A DOZEN WILD INDIANS IN WAR-PAINT AND
FEATHERS RUSHED OUT.”**

“No, Mr. Dick; it isn’t friends I want. I know what it is—it’s relations. I want somebody that’s my own kin, and has reason to care something about me. You take an interest in Miss Grace and Miss Margaret and your mother because they are your mother and sisters.”

“That’s so, by Jove! I never thought much about it before, but I believe you’re right; and I say, Betty, you are alone in the world as far as real relatives go, aren’t you?”

“Yes, I am; and I’m going to try to find some one of my father’s or my mother’s folks.”

“How are you going about it?”

“I don’t know exactly, but I’m thinking I’ll write to Mr. Morris, and see does he know anything about my people in Ireland, or, better yet, my mother’s family in this country.”

“Do it, Popinjay; that’s a good idea; and you may be descended from the illustrious O’Flannigans of county Galway, or you may be only a scion of the humble house of Stuyvesant or Knickerbocker over here. But it takes a long time to get a letter to Australia and back, and in the meantime I hope you’re not going to mope around like a lame duck, and be discontented and blue, when you’ve so much to make you happy.”

“No, sir, I won’t. For now I’ve decided that I don’t want any more in my family until I find a real cousin, or something of my own blood kin. And so I’ll bide my time and rest easy until I can find out about them.”

“Well, cheer up, chick, and romp with Polly, and study with Jack, and work hard at your music, and soon you’ll be able to accompany my violin, and we’ll play famous duets. And, Betty, do you like sailing?”

“I don’t know, sir; I never tried it.”

“Well, I’ve just bought a new cat-boat, and she’s a beauty. She’ll come home this week, and then you can go with us on her trial trip, and try a taste of a life on the ocean wave.”

CHAPTER XVI

THE “PIXIE’S” FIRST TRIP

According to her usual habit of striking while the iron was hot, Betty sat down to write to Mr. Morris as soon as Mr. Van Court had left Denniston. After several attempts, she composed and copied the following epistle:

DENNISTON HALL, September 26.

MY DEAR MR. MORRIS: I am very well and happy, and my Home is splendid. I wish you could see the beautiful autumn leaves. This is the only time of the year that is just the right color. My family are all well, and Sydney is a noble brute, without fear and without reproach. And now, Mr. Morris, dear sir, I would wish to ask you what you may know concerning my mother’s family, or my father’s. And if “concerning” isn’t spelt right, I will say “about.” But I want to know if I have any relatives in this country, and if I have I will search them out, or in Ireland. For I do want a real live relative besides what I have bought, though they are good and handsome. With best respects to your kind family. I pause for a reply.

Yours truly,
ELIZABETH MCGUIRE.

Under Mr. Mixon’s tuition, Betty read every day selections from the best authors, and many a high-sounding phrase which pleased her particularly she stowed away in her brain for future use; and she thought a letter to her Australian friend was the very place to show off these elegant speeches to advantage. She was, therefore, highly pleased with her letter, and sent it off at once on its long journey. Having done so, she tried to put the whole subject out of her mind for three months, for it required as long as that for a letter to go to Australia and the reply to come back.

On one of the last days of September Betty was invited to go on the trial trip of Mr. Van Court’s new boat, the *Pixie*.

It was a little cat-rigged affair, and bobbed about on the water like a cockle-shell; but Betty felt no fear, and this was partly because she was entirely ignorant of what tricks a little cat-boat can play.

The trip was to be only a four-mile run down to the Sound, and they were to return in time for lunch.

The party consisted of Mr. Van Court and Miss Grace, Mr. Brewster, Betty, and Jack. They had to start at nine o'clock, for the Greenborough River was small, and only when the tide was just right could the *Pixie* get in and out.

Mr. Van Court and Mr. Brewster were skilled sailors, and Jack had had a little experience with sail-boats, so they started off merrily enough.

Betty was fairly wild with joy. The sensation of flying over the water was entirely new to her, and she soon learned to jump from one side of the boat to the other at the call of "Hard alee!"

She wore a trim little yachting-suit of white flannel with broad collar and bands of navy blue, and a jaunty sailor-hat was perched on her black curls, which grew curlier than ever in the salt spray.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "this is the best fun I ever had! Mr. Dick, could I go and sit on that little point of deck in front of the big stick?"

"Yes," said Mr. Dick, after he had taught her to say "forward of the mast," instead of the unmeaning phrase she had used; "yes; I want you to learn to be a sensible, careful girl on a yacht, so go on, and get out there the best way you can. Remember, if you fall overboard you won't be drowned, for I'll jump in and save you; but it would make me an awful lot of trouble, and possibly we'd both get our clothes wet, and, worst of all, Grace would probably scream."

So, feeling very much like an acrobat, Betty cautiously went forward, holding on by the boom until she reached the mast. Then she stepped around in front of it, and, firmly grasping the halyards, sat like a cross-legged little figurehead, and rapturously watched the bow of the boat cut through the water.

The wind and tide were both favorable, and the *Pixie* skimmed along so fast that she was out of the river and into the Sound much sooner than her crew had expected.

"We can run down the Sound a few miles," said Mr. Brewster, "and still get home for lunch, though perhaps a bit late."

"All right; let's do it," said Mr. Van Court. "Come in now, Popinjay; you can fall into the river if you like, but I don't want you drowned in the Sound."

Betty came aft and sat down demurely beside Miss Grace.

“Oh,” said Betty, “isn’t it just perfect! Mr. Brewster, *I* want to buy a boat.”

“Do, Betty,” cried Jack; “I’ll learn to sail it for you.”

The boy had been watching and studying every movement of the two young men who had the boat in charge, and now he was doing the steering.

“I knew a little before,” he said modestly; “but Mr. Brewster and Mr. Van Court have showed me a lot, and I think I could learn to manage a boat alone.”

Then Betty tried to steer, and did pretty well at it; and suddenly they all discovered that they were hungry.

“I brought a basket of fruit,” said Miss Grace, “but I thought we wouldn’t stay out long enough to need a regular lunch.”

“I wish we had brought one,” said her brother, “for I’m ravenous. Well, let’s eat the fruit, and then start for home.”

But though this plan was all right, they were unable to carry it out; for after they had eaten all the fruit, and wished for more, they found it was impossible to start for home, because the breeze had entirely died away.

“Nothing to do,” said Mr. Van Court, cheerily, “but to sit and wait an hour or two. If we had something to eat I wouldn’t mind it so much.”

They waited an hour, and two hours, and three hours, and still no signs of a breeze.



“BETTY BOARDS THE ‘PIXIE.’”

Betty began to think that sailing had its drawbacks, like most other things. The sun was hot, and the salt air made them all dreadfully hungry, and by four o’clock even Betty’s spirits began to droop.

They tried every way known to amateur sailors to call up a breeze: they whistled for it, and they scratched the mast; and finally Mr. Dick declared that Betty was the “Jonah,” and threatened to throw her overboard.

Six o’clock, and no breeze yet. But soon the sun went down, and then it was cooler, and they had one less hardship to endure. About seven o’clock they felt a little puff of air.

“Hooray!” cried Jack, “here comes our breeze.”

And sure enough it did come—a good, strong breeze from the southwest; and the *Pixie* shrugged her sail and began to rouse herself.

Mr. Brewster sprang to the tiller, and Mr. Van Court began to trim in the sheet, and in a moment they were dancing along at a fine rate.

But it was dark, and rapidly growing darker. Betty could just see the faces of the two men, and instead of looking glad they expressed the deepest concern.

The little girl crept close to Miss Grace, and sat still, wondering what was the matter.

Mr. Van Court spoke first.

“Grace and Betty,” he said, “this isn’t only a breeze; it’s the beginning of a squall, and perhaps a storm. We can’t hope to get up the river; all we can do is to make a landing at the nearest point possible, which is Crossville, on the other side of the Sound. We can’t land on this side, for it is only salt meadows. Steer straight for those Crossville lights, Brewster. Look out! Hard alee!”

For just then the squall struck them, the boom swung over and stopped with a jerk that nearly capsized the boat, and Grace and Betty slid from the narrow seats to the floor.

“Stay down there, girls,” shouted Dick. “Jack, take the tiller and steer straight for that light on the point. Brewster, come here and help me reef!”

Mr. Van Court spoke in a low, tense voice that showed the gravity of the situation; but his tone of authority seemed to imply that he was master of it, and carried comfort to the quaking hearts of Grace and Betty.

These two frightened ones huddled together in the bottom of the boat, knowing that all they could do to help was to keep out of the way as much as possible, and to be still.

It was quite dark now, and the wind had become a gale. Even under a double reef the *Pixie* tore along over the black water like a mad thing.

Not a star was to be seen; the heavens were inky masses of clouds, and now and then a rumble of thunder was heard. Jack felt his responsibility, and guided the tiller with his eyes fixed intently on the distant light, when suddenly Dick wrenched it from his hand and pushed it hard down to starboard.

The *Pixie* gave a lurch, the sail flew over, and in a moment they were just grazing the side of a huge black hulk that seemed to have risen out of the water.

But for Dick's quickness the little craft would have been crashed into by the big steamboat, which the sail had hidden from Jack's view. The *Pixie* had no lights, and the danger of being run down in the darkness by larger vessels made it almost impossible to cross the Sound.

The thunder grew louder, and lightning-flashes began to dart across the sky. Dick held the tiller now, and Mr. Brewster managed the sail, while Jack was on the alert to obey orders from either.

The wind blew furiously, and drove the little boat before it like a paper toy. She careened to one side until the coaming was under water, and but for the reassurance of Mr. Dick's calm, quiet voice as he gave his orders, Betty felt she must have screamed.

And then the rain came—first a few great big splashing drops, and then a sudden torrent. What would have been a steady downpour was driven and twisted by the wind until it looked like great waterspouts. The thunder came in deafening crashes, and the lightning in sharp, blinding glares that seemed to scorch their very eyeballs. In five minutes they were all drenched to the skin.

Betty and Grace, one each side of the center-board, had crawled into the little hold as far as they could, and listened to the creaking of the mast, which sounded to them almost as loud as the thunder. Betty had given up all hope, and was wondering whether they would be struck by lightning, or only drowned, when she heard Mr. Dick call out:

“It's our last chance. We'll head for the shore, and land wherever we may.”

They put about and steered for the west shore, as there was no hope of crossing the Sound.

The brave little boat flew along, and though all the lights were obscured by the rain, Dick saw the shore by the lightning-flashes, and steered toward it.

Suddenly the boat bumped up against something solid, and Mr. Brewster, who was at the bow, grasped it and held on firmly, though it nearly pulled him off his feet. The next lightning-flash showed that they had reached some sort of a wharf.

Shouting the good news to the girls, Dick and Mr. Brewster pushed the boat along slowly from one pile to the next until they reached a flight of old broken-down steps which evidently led up to the pier. They quickly secured the boat with ropes, and called to Jack and the girls to come and land.

The storm had abated a little, but it was still raining hard, and the thunder and lightning were terrific, though not so frequent as at first.

By the light of the occasional flashes, the party set out to climb the dangerous stairs.

Mr. Van Court went first, and found, to his horror, that the steps were not only wet and slippery, but very old and rickety, and liable to break down beneath a heavy weight. After mounting them, he called to the others to come up one at a time; and then, when the five were all huddled on the little landing at the top, they waited for another lightning-flash, to proceed farther.

When it came it showed that the pier they had landed at was only a skeleton pier. The supports and crossbeams were there, but the flooring had evidently been burned away.

But Mr. Van Court's calmness did not desert him.

"We will go on and pick our way across these beams," he said; "but we must be very careful. I will take Betty's hand, and Brewster, you take Grace's. Jack, my boy, you must shift for yourself, and remember that a false step may be fatal. Now we will start; and don't try to talk, for we couldn't hear each other through this wind and rain and thunder. Wait for a flash of lightning, then go as far as possible, and then wait for another."

In silence they all obeyed his directions, and started on their dangerous way. Fortunately, Grace and Betty were sensible, rational girls, not given to screaming or hysterics; and realizing that their safety depended almost entirely on their self-control, they followed their guides, stepping carefully and surely along the narrow, slippery beams, and waiting quietly in the dark intervals. The pier was not very long, and they all reached the other end in safety, and stepped off on to the marshy salt meadow-land, with feelings of thankfulness almost too deep for words.

The whole party was drenched, weary, hungry and thirsty; the storm was still raging, and they knew of no shelter near; but they realized what other and greater dangers they had escaped, and their present discomforts seemed trifling in comparison.

They walked aimlessly along for a few minutes, when suddenly Jack spied a tiny, flickering light in the distance.

“That must be a house of some kind,” he said, and they all started eagerly toward it.

CHAPTER XVII

ANXIOUS HEARTS

When Betty and Jack didn't come home in time for dinner, Mrs. Kinsey was not much surprised. She knew the uncertainties that attend a sailing-party, and she told Ellen to be prepared for the arrival of the hungry young people at any hour.

"For," she said, "they may come early or they may come late, but they will certainly be hungry."

So all the afternoon Ellen waited in readiness to minister to the wants of two ravenous young savages, whom she momentarily expected to come bounding in and demanding food.

But they didn't come; and as supper-time drew near, she transferred her attentions to the concocting of a hot supper that should include the favorite dishes of both.

About five o'clock Mrs. Van Court and Miss Margaret drove over to Denniston to see if Betty and Jack had come home yet. They frankly acknowledged they were worried about the sailing-party, for it was the first trip of the new boat, and she might prove unseaworthy.

Mrs. Kinsey discussed the matter with her visitors, and, affected by their nervousness, she soon became frightened too.

Pete was sent for, and his opinion was asked.

"No, mum," he said; "they ain't capsized, mum; they're beca'med, that's fwat they are. I've been watchin' the wind all the afternoon, and there ain't none. That there boat is mosht likely settin' shtill in the wather an' refusin' to budge."

"Oh, *do* you think so?" said Mrs. Van Court, much relieved. "Do you think so?"

"I do, indade, mum; an' if a breeze comes up whin the sun goes down, they'll come shpinnin' up the river in great shape, fur the tide is comin' in."

Having cheered up the three ladies by his hopefulness, Pete departed; but an hour or so later he went in search of Ellen, and to her he confided his

fears.

“Ellen,” he said, “if I’m not mishtook, there’s a howlin’ shtorm comin’ up, an’ I’m fearin’ fer thim childher. But, fwatsoever happens, we musht pertind we’re thinkin’ they’re all safe, fur Mis’ Kinsey is shcared shtiff now, an’ if she gets woorse she’ll have high-strikes. She’d kape cool enough if it wasn’t fur ould Mis’ Van Coort, who’s a-weepin’ an’ wailin’ an’ wringin’ her hands till Mis’ Kinsey is all worrited up. Miss Margaret, now, she’s ca’m, but there’s no tellin’ how soon she’ll get a-goin’ too.”

“Are they shtayin’ here fur supper?” asked Ellen.



“‘WHEN MR. VAN COORT SEES THE SHTORM
COMIN’ HE’LL PUT INTO PORT.’”

“Belikes they’ll have to, unless they go home purty quick; fur the clouds is a-getherin, an’ the shtorm is comin’ up mighty suddint. Look over ferninst.”

Ellen looked, and sure enough masses of black clouds were rolling and tumbling over one another, each apparently in frantic haste to get to the zenith first.

Just then Norah came to the kitchen to say that the Van Court ladies would stay to supper.

"They're takin' on awful," she said. "Mis' Kinsey an' Mis' Van Court is a-cryin' like anything; an' Miss Margaret she jist walks up an' down, an' her face is as white! An', Pete, they want to see you."

Pete went to the parlor prepared to invent wondrous tales for the good of all concerned.

"A shtorm, is it?" he said, in answer to Mrs. Van Court's query. "Well, yes, 'm—a capful of wind, jist. But thim folks is all right. Whin Mr. Van Court sees the shtorm comin' he'll put into port an' wait till it's over, an' they'll go to some hotel an' have a foine supper. On the wather, ye know, mum, they can see the shtorm whin it's moiles away, an' they'll have plinty av toime to reach shelter."

Pete's assured manner and general air of certainty carried conviction to the hearts of the three frightened ladies, and they sat down to supper feeling quite sure that the absentees were comfortably sheltered in some one of the convenient hotels which they didn't know existed only in Pete's imagination.

The voluble Irishman returned to Ellen to unburden himself of his true fears.

"It's a turrible shtorm comin', Ellen, an' that little tay-cup av a boat c'u'd niver live through a shquall on the Sound. An' on the Sound they musht be, fur if they'd niver left the river they'd be home be now, fur they c'u'd have poled themselves up be the banks."

"The saints protect them!" muttered Ellen, as she took a pan of golden-brown biscuits from the oven; "an' I can't consaive why folks wants to go maunderin' around in a tipsy-topsy boat whin there's dhry ground to shtay on."

Notwithstanding Pete's comforting assurances, the three ladies couldn't help feeling that perhaps their loved ones were in danger, and they did but scant justice to Ellen's carefully prepared supper.

As they rose from the table, a low roll of thunder was heard; it was followed by a flash of lightning, and then suddenly the storm burst in all its fury. The wind blew a gale, and the rain came down in torrents. As crash after crash boomed over their heads, Mrs. Van Court and Miss Margaret became more and more frightened until finally they lost their self-control and cried like children.

Mrs. Kinsey was calmer, partly because she was of a more reserved nature, and partly because, although she was very fond of Betty and Jack,

they were not of her own kindred, and naturally she would not feel the same poignant grief as Mrs. Van Court and her daughter did.

So she cheered up her guests all she could, and as the rain continued to fall, she invited them to remain at Denniston overnight.

They accepted the invitation; but it was nearly midnight before the three ladies persuaded one another to retire, each feeling sure that she could not sleep a wink.

“Yez may rist in peace,” said Pete, who had been called to the parlor for a final consultation. “I’m convincing sure that thim childher an’ the other lady an’ gintlemin is shlapin’ this minit on fither-bids, an’ all as is dishturbin’ av their moinds is bec’us’ they can’t telly-graft yez from the hotel be rayson av the wires bein’ bruk be the shtorm.”

All this seemed reasonable, and Pete’s audience were greatly impressed with his apparent wisdom and common sense, and they went to bed feeling sure that morning would bring good news of some kind from the absent ones.

Having done what he considered his duty to the hysterical ladies, Pete returned to the kitchen.

“Ellen, me jool,” he said, “I’ve been oratin’ fairy-tales to the ladies ferninst, but me heart is talkin’ another way. I’m sick wid the fear that they’re all dhrowned, an’ I can’t shtay contint in the house. So I’m puttin’ on me rubber coat, an’ I’m goin’ down to the dock where the *Pixie*—bad cess to it!—sailed from. An’ I’ll take Sydney with me, an’ we’ll shtay there till marnin’. An’ do you shtay here an’ kape the fire blazin’, an’ hot wather an’ things all ready, fur they may be brought in anyway an’ anyhow.”

Ellen began to cry at this awful suggestion, and even sturdy Pete drew his sleeve across his eyes once or twice.

Then he put on his great boots and storm-cap and -coat, and, whistling for Sydney, he went out into the dark, wet night. He had no fixed plan, and scarcely a hope of learning anything about the *Pixie*’s fate, but he felt there were more opportunities out of doors than in. If he could but have seen the *Pixie*, tied to a skeleton dock, and bumping against it until her paint was sadly scratched and marred, he would have felt that, after all, there was some foundation for his fairy-stories, and that the party had really found shelter in one of those fine hotels which he had so vividly imagined.

But it was anything but a fine hotel in which the sailing-party found the light that Jack had first noticed glimmering through the darkness.

After a long walk across the wet and marshy meadows they reached an old and somewhat dismal-looking house. From one window came the flickering lamplight which had seemed like a will-o'-the-wisp during their long walk toward it.

"There must be somebody living there," exclaimed Mr. Van Court, "and we'll make them take us in."

He knocked loudly at the door, and a gruff voice inside the house responded: "Who's there?"

"Some shipwrecked people," replied Mr. Dick; "please open your door."

"Got any dorgs?"

"No; but we're very wet and cold, and the ladies are suffering. Please let us in."

"All right, I will, ef ye ain't got no dorgs. But my cat, 'Purty,' she's tar'ble 'fraid of dorgs, so I hev to make sure."

And then the door opened, and they saw an old man with a shock of grizzled gray hair and a skin like tanned leather. He peered at them through his great iron-bowed spectacles.

"Wal, wal, ye are in a plight, ain't ye? Come in—come right in. Oh, my! oh, my! Huldy—I say, Huldy! Here's some visitors. We'll hev to look arter 'em. Huldy!"

A pleasant-faced woman appeared from the next room.

"Well, ye be wet! I should say so. Es wet es drowned rats. Deary me! come right out to the kitchen. Ye'll spile this carpet—ye drip so."

They followed her to the kitchen, and gladly felt the warmth from the cook-stove there.

"It's lucky I kep' up that fire," said their hostess, bustling about. "Now, le' me see; what kin I give you ladies fur clo'es? Mine wouldn't be no good to you. Say, father, shall we give 'em some out o' the trunk?"

"Yes," said the old man; "let the ladies go right up in the kitchen bedroom, and I'll fetch the trunk there, and they can help themselves."

Miss Grace and Betty, feeling that they were about to be made comfortable at last, followed the old woman up-stairs and into a small

bedroom just over the kitchen, which was dry and warm.

In a few moments the old man came, dragging a fair-sized trunk, which he pulled into the room and then threw open the lid.

“Thar,” he said; “look arter ’em, mother; do all ye kin fur ’em; and I’ll go below and try and fit out the men with dry toggery. Wish we had a trunkful o’ duds fur them too. But we ain’t. Make yerselves at home, ladies; yer welcome to anything we kin give yer. Ross is my name,—Jim Ross,—and I’m jist a plain or’nary man; but Huldy, my wife thar, she’s an angel in disguise.”

The disguise was effectual, for no one could look less like an angel than Mrs. Ross did. But her beaming smile of welcome and her truly kind and hospitable manner made her much more attractive to her guests than a be-winged and be-trumpeted angel would have been.

“Now,” she said, after she had provided them with all the comforts at her command—“now jest pick out whatever clo’es ye like from that ’ere trunk, and when yer fixed come on down-stairs, and I’ll hev somethin’ fur ye to eat.”

She shuffled away, and they soon heard her clattering around in the kitchen below.

“Why, Miss Grace,” said Betty, presently, “just look at the clothes in this trunk. What lovely dresses! How do you suppose these old people would be having such pretty things?”

Sure enough, the trunk was filled with dainty and costly clothing of all kinds.

“They are lovely,” said Miss Grace, examining them; “and see, Betty, all of the dresses are white. How very odd! Here is a white cashmere; I think I’ll put this on.”

“Do, Miss Grace, dear; it’ll become you most beautiful. I guess I’ll wear this white China silk; but it’s too long for me.”

“Never mind, Betty; don’t try to shorten it. Wear it as it is, and I’ll do up your hair, and you can masquerade as a young lady, for one night only.”

Betty thought this great fun, and sat quite still while Miss Grace bunched the black curls into a graceful knot on top of her head and fastened them there with a high tortoise-shell comb which they found in the wonderful trunk.

And then, when Betty had put on the white silk dress, which fitted pretty well and was very becoming, she looked like a charming young lady all ready for her first ball. Miss Grace looked like another snow-drift in the white cashmere, which she somehow arranged to fit her; and then, though they found plenty of fine white stockings in the trunk, there were no shoes of any kind. Their own wet boots were out of the question, so there was nothing to do but go down-stairs in their white-stockinged feet, which they trusted the long dresses would hide from view. A shout of admiration greeted them as they entered the room, and Jack exclaimed:

“My eye, Betty! you’re a stunner in grown-up clothes.”

Mr. Van Court, too, looked at Betty as if he had never seen her before, and begged Grace for an introduction to her new friend.

But if the ladies looked well, the same could not be said of the men. Mr. Ross had done his best for them, but his wardrobe was scantily furnished.

He had given Mr. Brewster his best Sunday suit, and very odd that fine gentleman looked in the country-cut clothes. An old fisherman’s suit did very well for Jack; but this exhausted Mr. Ross’s stock entirely, save for a pair of overalls and a brilliantly flowered dressing-gown. However, Mr. Dick avowed himself well satisfied with these, and wore them with a jaunty air that greatly pleased his host, who declared that he “didn’t know that old gown did set so well.”

The room in which they were assembled was the one they had first entered, and seemed to be dining-room, parlor, and general living-room all in one.

Mrs. Ross came bustling in from the kitchen with a huge dish of poached eggs and a platter of hot biscuit.

“There,” she said; “I ’lowed them was the best things I could cook quick fur you; an’ now do all set down an’ eat, fur you must be holler. To think of nothin’ to eat sence breakfast! Land, who’s that?” She looked at Betty in blank amazement. “My, what a start you give me! I thought you was Lallowet.”



“‘MY EYE, BETTY! YOU’RE A STUNNER IN GROWN-UP CLOTHES.’”

“Lallowet!” shouted Mr. Ross. “That’s it. I’ve be’n tryin’ to think who it was the little gal looked like, all fixed up in them clo’es. It’s Lallowet fur sure.”

Betty felt a mild curiosity to know who or what Lallowet might be; but hunger was a far stronger sensation just then, and as she sat down at the table her only wonderment was whether there were any more eggs in the kitchen or not.

CHAPTER XVIII

A FRIENDLY SHELTER

“Eat away, eat away,” said old Mr. Ross, heartily; “it doos me good to see ye eat. Nothin’ sence mornin’! My! Wife, ain’t ye got some cake to set out?”

“Yes, I hev,” said Mrs. Ross, coming in at that moment with a large loaf of plum-cake; “an’ some canned peaches, too, thet ain’t be’n sealed up more ’n a week.” Betty clapped her hands in glee, for she was still hungry, and she loved plum-cake.

“Eat away, little gal,” said the old man, “though you seem to hev growed up to be a lady all of a suddint, with yer curls piled up into a waterfall. Mother—I say, mother, don’t she look like Lallowet now?”

“No, Jim, she don’t. It’s jest the dress an’ that comb as makes it seem so. Lallowet had ripply gold hair an’ blue eyes.”

“So she did, mother, so she did; but all the same, little miss reminds me of her. I s’pose it’s the dress—hey, Purty?”

The old man sat at the head of his table, and on the arm of his chair sat a huge white cat, whom he stroked and petted continually, and to whom he referred any puzzling questions.

The wise-looking animal responded by a prolonged purr.

“That’s a fine cat you have,” remarked Miss Grace, pleasantly.

“Purty? Yes, ma’am; she’s a great cat. We couldn’t keep house ’thout Purty. She’s allers lively an’ pleasant, an’ it makes it cheery fur us two lone old critters to have her round.”

“Do you live all alone, you and Mrs. Ross?”

“Wal, yes, ’m, we do now. But we’re goin’ out to Chicago soon, to live with my son’s folks. He says we’re too lonely here in the winter-time, an’ I guess we be. We useter have neighbors, but they all moved away or burnt down, an’ now we’re alone here, ’ceptin’ the cat. But you’re as good as folks, ain’t you, Purty?”

The cat purred, and the old man went on:

“We useter take summer boarders, an’ they was a heap of comp’ny. What with gettin’ ready fur ’em an’ clearin’ up after ’em, they lasted e’en a’most the hull year round. Purty liked them boarders—hey, Purty?”

“But she doesn’t like dogs?” asked Betty.

“No, miss; she was skeered by a dorg onct when she was a little kitten, an’ she ain’t never got over it. An’ so I try to keep dorgs away from her. It’s the least I can do fur her—an’ she so fond of me—ain’t you, Purty?”

The cat rubbed lovingly against her old master, and seemed to understand the whole conversation.

“Knowin’ est cat ever was,” said Mrs. Ross. “Lallowet useter say she was a real human bein’—a princess, like as not—laid under a spell an’ bewitched into a cat.”

“And who is this wonderful Lallowet?” inquired Mr. Van Court.

“Oh, she was one of our summer boarders,” replied Mr. Ross. “We never had but three, an’ they came every summer for six years. But they didn’t come last year, nor this, an’ I don’t know what’s gone with ’em. Lallowet she was a beautiful lady, an’ it’s her clo’es you two ladies is now appearin’ in. That trunkful of white clo’es is all hern; she left ’em here, sayin’ she’d send fur ’em, but she never did.”

“Didn’t she have any other name but Lallowet?” said Betty, quite interested in the owner of such beautiful dresses.

“Yes, miss, I s’pose she did, but I don’t know what it was. Her father an’ mother was always with her, but they called her jest ‘Lallowet.’ Their names was Irving,—Mr. an’ Mrs. Irving,—an’ they was the nicest people ever trod shoe-leather. Fur six years, reg’lar, they come down here an’ stayed all summer. Liked the quiet, they said, an’ land sakes! it was quiet enough. They liked Purty too, an’ she liked them. Useter tag round after ’em all the time. Thet trunk ain’t never be’n opened sence she left it—’cept now an’ then wife’s looked over the clo’es, fearin’ of moth or mildew.”

“Did Lallowet always wear white dresses?” asked Betty.

“In the house she did,” said Mrs. Ross, “but when she’d be comin’ or goin’ home she wore a black or black-an’-white dress. Hadn’t no taste for colors at all. An’ maybe she was in mournin’—I don’t know. I never asked her, fur she was a quiet little lady, not given to talkin’. But she could sing. My! how she *could* sing. Sometimes she’d snatch off her collar, as if it kep’ the songs back, an’ then she’d jest fairly yell.”

“Very interesting person,” remarked Mr. Van Court. “Remember, Popinjay, when you learn to sing you must take your collar off.”

“You’d better sing now, then,” said Betty, roguishly, “for you haven’t any collar on.”

“That only shows how adaptable to circumstances I am,” said Mr. Dick, calmly. “I had quite forgotten that my costume lacked a few finishing touches. But you’ll be ill if you adapt yourself to any more of Mrs. Ross’s plum-cake. Take it away, Mrs. Ross; she’s only a little girl, if she is wearing a trailing dress and a high-heeled comb.”

“Bless the lamb, let her have all she wants,” replied the kind-hearted hostess; “but I think she looks clean tuckered out, an’ she ought to be abed and asleep this minute.”

“No, I’m not sleepy,” said Betty, “but I’m wondering what Grandma Jean will think has became of us.”

“That’s worrying me, too,” said Miss Grace.

“There’s no use worrying about it,” said Richard Van Court, “for there’s no possible way to send them word to-night. Of course they’re anxious—I suppose mother and Margaret are just about wild. But I hope they’ll think we’ve landed somewhere to wait until the storm is over.”

“How far is it to Greenborough?” asked Jack, and Mr. Ross replied:

“It’s about six miles by the wagon-road, an’ to walk it across the medders it’s about four. But land sakes! of course you can’t do nothin’ to-night. To-morrow mornin’ I would hitch up my horse to the old carryall, an’ jog along up; but he’s gone lame, an’ I don’t see how I can. I couldn’t tote you all at onct, anyhow. But you can go back in your boat, can’t you?”

“I don’t want to go in the boat,” said Miss Van Court, with a little shudder. “I’ve had enough of the *Pixie* for one while.”

“The *Pixie*’s all right,” said her brother. “She behaved beautifully, and carried us safely through the storm.”

“Yes, I know it,” said Grace, “but I don’t want to go home in her; I’d rather ride on land.”

“I quite agree with you,” said Mr. Brewster.

Then Mrs. Ross brought candles, and escorted Grace and Betty up to the kitchen bedroom again.

"I'm sorry to put you ladies in here to sleep," she said; "it isn't the nicest place in the world, but it's warm an' dry, an' the best bedrooms ain't be'n opened, to speak of, in two years, an' I'm afraid they'd give you fever 'n' ager."

Miss Grace declared the room was cozy and pleasant, and quite large enough, and she was sure she and Betty were so tired they could sleep anywhere.

And soon the whole of the shipwrecked party had forgotten their day of discomfort in a night of pleasant dreams.

Very early in the morning, Jack, who had slept on the sofa in the living-room, opened his eyes.

At first he couldn't think where he was. Then suddenly he remembered, and then he lay there thinking. As a result of his thoughts he rose very softly and dressed himself in the old fisherman's suit that Mr. Ross had lent him.

The sun was just about to rise, and by its dawning light Jack hunted around for a pencil. Then, finding a bit of paper, he wrote rather hastily the following note:

DEAR BETTY: I am going to walk home so grandma and Mr. Dick's folks won't worry. I would have told you last night, only I knew you would think it too long a walk for me; but it isn't. I'll send the carriage back for the rest of you. Wait for it.

Yours truly, JACK.

Then he carefully and noiselessly opened a window and climbed out, and was soon trudging over the salt meadows toward Greenborough. And that's how it happened that just as Grandma Jean threw open her shutters she saw Jack slowly making his way toward the house.

"They're drowned!" she cried out. "Oh, I knew they would be!" And then she went down-stairs as fast as she could and opened the front door.

Jack came up the steps, and fell into the hammock.

"They're all right, grandma," he said, "and I'm all right; every one's safe, and so is the *Pixie*; only it was a long walk."

"Poor boy!" said grandma; and then, being a sensible lady, she asked no more questions until Jack had rested a few minutes. She went and told Ellen,

who was rejoiced at the good news, and delighted to have her ministrations of use at last.

They quickly prepared a hot bath and a hot breakfast for the shipwrecked mariner, and when Grandma Jean went back to him he was telling Pete all about it, and directing him to send the carriage after Betty. Almost, before Jack had finished speaking, Pete had whistled for Barney, who harnessed the horses in short order, and then Pete himself jumped to the box and took the reins.

Although tired from his long night watch, he would allow no one else to go for his beloved Miss Betty.

“Tell the Van Coort leddies as how I’ll bring back the whole party,” he said, as he drove away.

Meantime Betty and Grace had awakened, and were wondering if their storm-drenched garments had yet become wearable, when there was a gentle rap at their door, and Mrs. Ross entered the room.

“It doos seem,” she said, “as if them dresses of yourn wouldn’t never get dry. The cloth is so thick an’ the gethers is so full that they’re all damp through yet, an’ it would be flyin’ in the face of Providence fur you to put ’em on.”

Betty laughed with glee.

“I’m glad of it,” she said. “I’ll wear the pretty white silk dress home. There’s a lovely embroidered collar in the trunk that will make it high-necked.”

“Yes, do, my lamb,” said Mrs. Ross, smiling back into Betty’s bright eyes; “an’ you can have that frock to keep, seein’ ’s you like it so much. I don’t suppose poor Lallowet’ll ever claim it, an’ if she should, I’ll make it all right with her. I know she’d be glad to give it to you—she’s that kind-hearted.”

Betty was delighted, and jumped out of bed to array herself in the pretty grown-up gown.

Then she danced down-stairs to find Jack, and presently found his note instead.

“That dear old Jack!” she exclaimed. “He’s walked all the way to Denniston so that I can have a comfortable ride home.”

“Bless the boy!” cried Mrs. Ross; “an’ he hadn’t no breakfast, neither.”

“Oh, he’ll get along,” said Mr. Dick. “He tucked away supper enough for two, and when he gets to Denniston they’ll kill a whole drove of fatted calves for him. But it was jolly good of him to go. Now, Grace, you won’t have to go home in the boat.”

“No,” said Miss Grace, with a contented smile; “and I’m very glad. I suppose the carriage will be here soon.”

“Then come to breakfast right away,” sang out Mr. Ross. “My! I wish we had a big family like this all the time. It’s right-down gay—hey, Purty?”

The cat purred assentingly, and jumped up on the arm of the chair in which Mr. Ross had seated himself.

Soon after they had finished the homely, hearty meal, the Denniston carriage drove up to the house. Betty flew to the door and opened it.

“Hello, Pete!” she called out. “Did you come for us? Here we are.”

“The saints be praised, Miss Betty, darlint! An’ are ye all alive an’ well this blissid marnin’? I’m thot glad, I can’t tell ye. Shure ye look like a white angel. An’ will yez be afther goin’ home now?”

“Yes, Pete; we’ll be ready in a few minutes. Was grandma worried? What did Polly say? This is Mr. Ross, the gentleman who so kindly took us in for the night.”

The old farmer hobnobbed with Pete in a friendly manner while his guests prepared for their ride home.

Grandma Jean had sent a warm cloak for Betty, and she bundled herself into it, and so protected the pretty white dress from possible harm. Soon they were ready; and after expressing their heartfelt thanks to the old farmer and his wife, which Mr. Dick supplemented by a more substantial recognition, they drove back to Denniston.



“THERE IS NOTHING SO COMFORTING AS A
PILLOW.”

Then there was great rejoicing. The Van Court people all stayed to dinner, and everybody told the story of the storm, and everybody else listened and sympathized. And although Betty's thankful little heart was as glad as the others that they were all safe home again, yet she felt a certain sadness which she couldn't have explained if she had been asked to. It was a vague feeling of disappointment—the old longing for some one who belonged to her without being “bought.”

This sensation was only a fleeting one, for Betty was a merry little girl, and had a happy faculty for making the best of everything.

But that night, in her room, she talked longer than usual to her blue pillow.

You know, when we feel bad, either mentally or physically, there is nothing so comforting as a pillow; and Betty's favorite was one of her couch pillows—a particularly big, fluffy, downy one, covered with blue-and-white silk. She would often fling herself on the couch and bury her head in this pillow, and talk to it as to a confidential friend.

“Oh, Pillow,” she said, as she put her arms round it and laid her cheek against its softness, “are *you* glad I didn’t get drowned? I’m awful glad to get back to you, anyway. Suppose I had to always sleep in that kitchen bedroom of Mrs. Ross’s! I’m glad to be again in my own dear room so full of things of beauty and joys forever. Oh, I’ve everything to be thankful for, and yet—I seem to miss something. Do you hear, Pillow? Wake up, you stupid old thing, and listen to me. There’s just a little *something*—I don’t know what—that keeps my beautiful home from being a perfect success. But, as everything else is all right, the fault must be in me, and I’m going to overcome it. So there, now!”

She gave poor Pillow a vigorous thump, and then patted it gently to make up. “Only, Pillow, I’ll whisper to you just one thing: if Mr. Morris writes me anything about my really truly family, I’m going to hunt them up, if it takes all my money!”

Then she went to bed, and dreamed that Mr. Morris wrote her that she had a dozen sisters and a dozen brothers all coming to live with her at Denniston.

CHAPTER XIX

A DAWNING HOPE

The autumn had passed and winter had fairly set in, when one morning, as Betty was toasting her feet at the library fire, Polly came trotting in with her hands behind her.

“I dot somefin’ for oo,” she said. “Pete binged it.”

“What is it?” said Betty, smiling lovingly at her little sister.

“Dess,” answered Polly, demurely.

“Well, I guess it’s a letter,” said Betty, for this performance was gone through nearly every morning.

“It is, it is!” cried Polly, capering with glee; and she gave Betty the letter and then waited for the kiss which was always her fee on such occasions.

But Betty had caught sight of a foreign stamp and an Australian postmark, and even her beloved Polly was forgotten in a moment of such excitement.

It was from Mr. Morris, of course, and Betty eagerly tore it open and read this:

To Miss Elizabeth McGuire.

MY DEAR BETTY: Yours received duly, and I have done what I could in the matter. I have looked over your grandfather’s papers, —all your grandfather’s papers,—and I can find nothing, absolutely nothing, by which to trace the family connections of your mother, except one slight allusion. There is an unfinished letter, evidently begun by your grandfather to some friend, whom he addresses as “Dear Michael.” In this letter there is a statement to the effect that Martin McGuire married a Miss Irving, a daughter of William Irving of Boston. This information, though vague, very vague, may prove a clue to your parentage, and may aid you in finding your mother’s relatives. I hope, I sincerely hope, it will help you, and I will endeavor to find out more details, more definite data, concerning them.

With kind remembrances to the Van Court family, and best wishes for your own health and prosperity, I am

Your obedient servant,
JOHN MORRIS.

Betty read this letter over twice, and then she took the mystified Polly on her lap, and said decidedly: "Pollykins, we're going to have a grandfather."

"G'an'fader?" inquired Polly.

"Yes. There's one in the world for us—at least, perhaps there is; and we're going to find him and bring him here to live with us."

"Yi, yi!" said Polly, not specially elated at the prospect.

"And, baby," cried Betty, excitedly, "I've just thought of something—oh, something wonderful! Where's Jack?"

"Jack's studying" said the little one, confidently, "'cause when I speaked to him he just said, 'Clear out, Pollypops.'"

Betty gave a long, low whistle, which was their signal when either wanted the other, and in a moment Jack appeared at the door.

"What's up, Betty?" he said.

"Oh, Jack, I've had a letter from Mr. Morris, and he says my mother's father was a William Irving of Boston; and don't you know those people that spent the summer with Mr. Ross were named Irving, and they were from Boston, and maybe they're the ones!"

"And maybe they're not. Nonsense, Betty; there are plenty of Irvings in Boston."

"Yes, I know it—but these are the only Boston Irvings we've ever heard of, and I'm going to hunt them up first, and if they're not the ones, I'm going to keep on, if I have to go to every house in Boston to inquire; but first I'm going over to the Van Courts'. Tell Mr. Mixon I won't be at lessons to-day; I'm too excited to study."

Then Betty rang for Pete, and asked him to have Dixie put to the cart, and soon she was flying toward Mrs. Van Court's.

The three Van Court ladies were sitting by their cozy fireside when Betty came dancing in. She greeted the ladies cordially, and, flinging off her coat and hat, she picked up a small footstool, and, holding it in her arms, stood for a moment looking at her three friends. Then, prompted by an instinctive

feeling that Mrs. Van Court could do the best for her, she placed the stool beside that lady and sat upon it.

“I want you to help me, ma’am,” she said. “I’ve found out the name of my mother’s people, and I want to search them out, wherever they may be. Will you go with me?”

“Go where, Betty? What are you talking about?” said the lady, somewhat bewildered, but very kindly disposed toward the earnest child who was asking her assistance.

“Well, I’ve had a letter from Mr. Morris, ma’am, and he says my mother’s name was Irving, and my grandfather was William Irving of Boston; and you know, Miss Grace, it was Irvings of Boston who used to spend summers with Mr. Ross, and something in my heart tells me they were my people.”

“But that’s nonsense,” said Miss Margaret; “of course they *might* be your people, or connections of them, but there’s only about one chance in a thousand that they are.”

“I know it, ma’am, but that’s the chance I’m takin’. And so I want to go down to Mr. Ross’s house again and ask him the Boston address of his Irvings, and then I want to go to Boston and find them. And dear Mrs. Van Court, I want you to go with me.”

Betty’s voice was so wheedlesome, and her little face looked so sweet, that Mrs. Van Court would have felt inclined to go to Australia with her, if she had asked it; so she said:

“Well, we’ll see about it, child, and I’ll help you all I can. But first you must see if you can get the address from Mr. Ross.”

“Yes, ’m. I think I’ll drive down there right off.”

Miss Grace volunteered to go with her, and shortly after the Denniston carriage started on its trip to the old farm-house.

Betty’s hopes were high, and during the drive down she chatted gaily to her companion of her new grandparents, whom she had already begun to love.

“And who do you suppose ‘Lallowet’ can be, Miss Grace?”

“Why, if Mr. and Mrs. Irving are your grandparents, then, as Lallowet is their daughter, she must be your aunt.”

“Yes, ’m, I’m sure she is; and the reason I liked that white silk dress so much is because it belonged to my aunt. Aunt Lallowet—that’s a funny name, isn’t it?”

“Yes. I think it must be a nickname, and I doubt if they called it exactly right.”

But alas for the uncertainty of human hopes! When they reached the old house they found it locked and apparently deserted.

Betty was ready to cry with disappointment, but she bore it bravely, and said:

“Let’s inquire of the neighbors where Mr. Ross has gone.”

The nearest neighbor was half a mile away, and when they reached there they could only learn that Mr. and Mrs. Ross had gone to live with their son in Chicago. Poor little Betty’s fairy-castles crumbled away. But, as she said to Miss Grace on the way home:

“One disappointment isn’t much. I must expect lots of them. And I’m going to find my people in spite of everything.”

Both the Van Court and the Denniston households were much disappointed at the failure of Betty’s first plan for pursuing her search, but they all agreed that it was a plan so unlikely to lead to success that it made little difference. And then each began to think of some way by which William Irving could be found.

Jack was for going to Boston and hunting Irvings systematically by means of the directory. Mr. Van Court said that could be equally well accomplished by staying at home and writing letters. But Betty took no interest at all in “other Irvings”; she felt sure that the Ross Irvings were *her* Irvings, and that the white silk dress, which she now cherished more lovingly than ever, had once been worn by her own aunt.

One night, after she went to her room, she was looking at the dress, caressing it, and fancying how her aunt had looked in it, when something inside the bodice caught her eye. Then a thought flashed into her mind, and with an exclamation of delight she darted to the couch and grabbed her pillow confidant.

“Pillow,” she whispered to it, “what *do* you think? I know a way—a *sure* way to find my Irvings. In that white dress, Pillow, is a belt with the name of the dressmaker in gilt letters; and it’s Mlle. François, and it tells the street and number in Boston, and she can tell me all about Lallowet and her

parents. Oh, Pillow, I've found her at last! I believe I'll begin to pack now for my Boston trip."

And the impetuous child did. And early the next morning Betty announced to the family at Denniston her discovery of the dressmaker's address, and her determination to go at once to Boston; then she went over to lay her plans before Mrs. Van Court. Her impatience had made her start early, and she found her friends still at the breakfast-table. They were much interested in her news, and Mr. Dick declared she was downright clever and would make a detective yet; he said, too, that whenever Betty and his mother were ready to go to Boston, he would offer himself as their escort.

Mrs. Van Court thought it would be just as well to write to Mlle. François and see if she were still at the same place. But Betty felt sure she could learn more by going there than by writing, and as Mrs. Van Court was acting for Betty's good, she made no further objections, but said she would be ready to start the next day.

Mr. Dick went with them, and the three had a delightful trip. The great steamboat of the Fall River line seemed to Betty like a wonderful floating palace, and she began to think that even if her second attempt to find her grandparents should fail, the time would be well spent.

After an early breakfast on the boat, next morning, they took the train for Boston, and on their arrival went to a hotel.

Betty was wild with impatience, and wanted to run at once to the street and number she was so anxious to find; but she had learned to be a polite little girl and consider others' wishes before her own, and so she waited patiently until Mrs. Van Court, who was wearied with the journey and wanted to rest, proposed that they start out to find Mlle. François.

They found the place without difficulty; but though it was still a modiste's shop, the sign bore the name of Mme. Villeré instead of Mlle. François.

Betty's heart sank; but she still hoped to get information of some kind, so they went in.

Mme. Villeré proved to be a voluble little French lady, who answered Betty's rather incoherent questions with great kindness.

"Mlle. François? Perfectly, but she es gone. I am her—vat is it?—successor. And do I keep her customers? Oui, mademoiselle, almost all. But Irving? No; I do not know Mme. Irving. Yet stay—we will see ze books—ze old books of Mlle. François."

And sure enough, when they referred to the carefully indexed accounts left by Mlle. François, they found the name of Mrs. William Irving, 72 Rutherford Place.

“There!” cried Betty, triumphantly, “I knew we’d find it! Oh, can’t we go there right away?”

The little Frenchwoman didn’t quite understand what it was all about, but complimented the ladies in every possible way, and artfully referred to her own superior *modes* and latest fashions. Betty would willingly have given her an order for a new frock then and there, but she was so excited over the success of her scheme, so far, that it didn’t occur to her.

So, cutting short Mme. Villeré’s voluminous adieus, they started for Rutherford Place.

When they arrived they found that No. 72’s windows showed only dark-green shades, and its front door was boarded up.

“No one lives here, Popinjay,” said Mr. Dick, cheerily, “but don’t let that discourage you. We’re not going to allow Mr. William Irving to escape us so easily as that. We’ll ask the neighbors as to his whereabouts.”

But neither the residents of 70 nor 74 could tell him anything about the people who lived in 72.

“Well,” said Mr. Van Court, after thinking a minute, “we’ll go back to the hotel now, Betty, and then we can lay our further plans.”

So they went back, Betty a little downcast at the apparent difficulties in her path, but still hopeful, and much cheered by Mr. Van Court.

When they reached their hotel the young man announced that he was going on an errand, and would meet his mother and Betty again at dinner-time, and meanwhile they were to go to their rooms and rest. The beautiful appointments of the hotel reminded Betty of her visit to New York and her stay at the hotel there; and she thought how much she had learned since then. And indeed she had. From a bewildered, ignorant child she had changed into an intelligent, well-behaved one; and half instinctively, half by reason of her education, she conducted herself in every way as a little girl of her age should.

At six o’clock Betty and Mrs. Van Court went down to the parlor, and found Mr. Dick awaiting them with a smiling countenance.

“I know you’ve heard some important news,” said Betty, smiling too; “what is it?”

““The sky is falling; I must go and tell the king,”” said Mr. Dick, teasingly.

“Well, I am the king,” returned Betty; “tell me all about it.”

“Well, my child, I think we are once again on the trail of your elusive grandparent. I have been interviewing a man in the post-office, and he tells me that Mr. and Mrs. William Irving of 72 Rutherford Place are now sojourning at Lakewood, New Jersey, at a hotel called ‘Laurel-in-the-Pines.’”

“Oh,” said Betty, breathlessly, “when can we start?”

Mrs. Van Court smiled.

“Betty,” she said, “are you a grasshopper? Do you think you can spring across the country at a leap? I will go with you to Lakewood, but I must get my breath before we set off on another wild-goose chase.”

So the next day they let Mrs. Van Court rest while Betty and Mr. Dick went on a sight-seeing tour; and at night they started for New York and thence to Lakewood.

CHAPTER XX

HOME AT LAST

On reaching Lakewood the travelers drove to the beautiful hotel Laurel-in-the-Pines, which, as they entered, seemed to Betty to be all made of glass and gaslight. She was given a room adjoining Mrs. Van Court's, and she immediately began to make her toilet for dinner.

But Mrs. Van Court declared she could not go down to the dining-room that evening, she was so tired and exhausted from the long journey, and so she said she would have her dinner sent to her room, while Betty could go down to dinner with Richard.

"But," said Mrs. Van Court, "don't attempt to look up your Irvings to-night. Wait until to-morrow, and we will set about it properly."

"Yes, 'm," said Betty; and then she proceeded to put on her prettiest frock, a flowery organdie with rose-colored ribbons.

She presented herself to Mrs. Van Court, who said, "You look very sweet, my dear"; and then Mr. Richard came and with his charge went down the wide staircase and through the long gallery of great palms, and on through the marble hall to the dining-room. After dinner they sauntered around the rooms until they came to the music-room, at the entrance of which a small notice was posted up.

Mr. Van Court read it, and then turned to Betty with an exclamation: "Popinjay, we've found her!"

"Who?" said Betty, bewildered by his mysterious tone.

"Read that notice! But no—you don't understand French, do you? Well, it tells of a concert to be given here to-night, at which a lady will sing who is called L'Alouette. Now, L'Alouette is French for 'the lark,' and I have no doubt it is the lady whom Mr. Ross called Lallowet."

"Of course it is!" cried Betty, clasping her hands together to keep from clapping them, "and she is my aunt, William Irving's daughter!"

"Perhaps she is, but don't get so excited. You'll be doing the 'grasshopper act' next. Now listen. If you'll promise to sit quietly, and not

make a scene, we'll attend the concert; but if not, I'm going to show you to your room at once and put you in mother's care."

"Oh, I will be good! I'll sit as still as a mouse, and not say a word. Only let me see her and hear her. Do, please, Mr. Dick!"

Of course Mr. Dick consented; and as the audience chairs were rapidly filling with people, he led Betty to a seat near the back of the room, for he did not know what demonstrations the impulsive child might be guilty of.

The concert was a delightful one, and music-loving Betty enjoyed every number, and was so happy listening that she almost forgot to be impatient for L'Alouette's appearance. But when that lady at last came on the stage, Betty turned pale with excitement, and her hands grew cold. She said nothing, but her eyes shone like stars as she looked fixedly at the beautiful singer.

L'Alouette was well named. Her clear, bird-like notes rang out like the song of a lark, and though her voice had not great volume, it was full of sweetness and sympathy.

Mr. Van Court was almost as much agitated as Betty, for he could see—what the child could not—that there was a wonderful resemblance between the face of L'Alouette and that of the little Irish girl. It was not so much in feature as in expression, and the young man felt convinced that it was really a family likeness, and that Betty had at last found a relative. But though it would never have occurred to Betty that she could resemble that beautiful lady, yet she was equally certain that she was looking at her own aunt; for Betty saw—what Mr. Dick did not—that L'Alouette's white silk gown was very like the one Mlle. François had made, only of a more modern fashion. And, aside from any circumstantial evidence, Betty felt in her own heart a kinship with the lovely lady as unexplainable as it was certain.

After L'Alouette had finished her song, and had sung an encore, Betty said:

"Mr. Dick, that's my own aunt, and I know it. I like the concert, but I don't want to hear any more to-night, and I think, if you please, I'll go to my room now."

Mr. Van Court was surprised at her calmness, but felt so relieved that she was willing to wait before making herself known to her new-found relative that he only said:

"Very well, my child. Do you know where your room is?"

“Oh, yes; I have the key with me. I brought it that I might not disturb Mrs. Van Court if she should be asleep when I return.”

So Mr. Dick took her to the stairs and consigned her to the care of a passing maid, who showed her to her room.

Betty unlocked the door noiselessly, and then as carefully closed the door between her room and Mrs. Van Court's. Then she sat down and thought a long while.

She had no intention of waiting until morning to claim her own aunt—not she! And besides, the way was clear to speak to the lady that night without making any scene such as Mrs. Van Court dreaded.

As soon as L'Alouette appeared on the stage in the music-room, Betty had recognized her as the lady whom she had met coming out of a door just across the hall from her own. She had noticed the gown particularly, and she knew she was not mistaken. “And now,” she thought, “I will just go to that room across the hall, and see if it is really hers; and if it is, I will wait for her there until she comes up-stairs.”

It seemed a rash act, and Betty's heart beat fast at the thought of it; but something impelled her to do it, and she felt that she just *couldn't* wait until morning.

So she opened her own door softly, and seeing no one in the hall, she stepped across to the opposite door, and knocked.

A sleepy-looking maid opened the door and regarded Betty with some surprise.

“Is this L'Alouette's room?” said the little girl, timidly.

“Yes, miss,” answered the maid; “did she send you for anything?”

“No,” said Betty, with a dignity born of excitement; “I am a friend of hers, and I wish to wait here until she returns.”

“Yes, miss,” said the maid, pleasantly enough; and she offered Betty an easy-chair and a footstool.

Then Betty sat down and waited.

She did not mind waiting; she had made the plunge, and now she must accept the consequences, whatever they might be.

Her mind was full of fancies and anticipations; she planned a dozen different phrases with which to greet her aunt; and finally—she dropped

asleep and continued her castle-building in her dreams.

An hour or so later, L'Alouette came in. She looked at the sleeping child and then turned to her maid for an explanation.

"Who is this, Lisette?" said she.

"A little girl, madame, who tapped at the door this evening, and said she was a friend of madame's and would wait for her."

L'Alouette gazed earnestly at the stranger, and then caught her breath quickly, while a great wonder filled her eyes.

Then she said quietly: "You may go, Lisette; I will wait on myself to-night."

"Yes, madame," said the maid, and she went away.

Then L'Alouette came and knelt beside Betty, and looked at her a long time. Then she gently wakened her by kissing her on the cheek.

Betty opened her eyes, and was awake and alert in an instant.

"Who are you?" she cried. "Are you my aunt, my dear mother's sister? Oh, say you are!"

"I am L'Alouette," said the lady, smiling; "and now, who are you?"

"I am Betty McGuire," said Betty, speaking very fast; "and my mother was an Irving of Boston, and my grandfather was William Irving. But my mother was killed in a railroad accident when I was a baby, and oh—I *hope* you are her sister."

L'Alouette gave a little cry, her eyes closed, and Betty thought she was going to faint. But she did not; she recovered herself, and with a quick, tense gesture she grasped Betty's hands, and looking into the little girl's eyes, while her own fairly blazed, she said:

"And who was your father?"



“L’ALOUETTE CLASPED HER IN HER ARMS.”

“Martin McGuire,” answered Betty; “he too was killed when I was a baby—”

But she got no further, for L’Alouette clasped her in her arms, and showered kisses all over the wondering little face, as she said:

“Betty—my baby Betty, I am not your aunt; I am your mother!”

“My mother?” said Betty, almost solemnly. “Then do you *love* me?”

“Yes,” said L’Alouette, the beautiful light that had come into her eyes growing deeper and deeper; “I love you with all my hungry mother-heart, with a love that tells me you are really my own baby, though I was forced to believe that you had died years ago.”

“And I believed you were dead,” said Betty, clinging to L’Alouette as if afraid she might even yet disappear. “Weren’t you killed in the railroad accident?”

“No, darling; I was injured, and taken to a hospital in Chicago, where I lay ill for months. And after that I tried every possible way to search for my husband and child, only to be convinced at last that they must have perished.”

“My father was killed,” said Betty; “I know that—because I was taken to an orphan asylum, and they told me so afterward. And I know it, too, from

my Grandfather McGuire's papers. And you *are* the one Mr. Ross called Lallowet—and I have worn one of your white dresses!"

"And do you know Mr. Ross? How much we have to tell each other! But who is here at Lakewood with you? and with whom do you live, and where?"

And then, still clasped in her mother's embrace, Betty told the whole story of her eventful little life; and then L'Alouette told of her own sad years since last she had held her little girl in her arms.

After vainly using every effort to find her husband and child, either dead or alive, she had given up the quest and resigned herself to a life of loneliness and sorrow. Music was her only consolation; and as her voice developed under training, she was urged to sing on the stage; but this she refused to do, though she finally consented to sing at an occasional concert.

Her teacher had often called her L'Alouette, and as this name appeared to advantage on a program, she had used it.

They talked far into the night; and then—for L'Alouette could not give her up—Betty remained and slept beside her mother. But Betty's mother could not sleep, and all night she watched over her new-found child as if afraid the whole meeting might be only a repetition of an old and dear dream.

Next morning Betty awoke to find a happy face smiling at her. She flung herself into her mother's arms, crying: "It's true this morning, isn't it? I wasn't quite sure of it last night."

"Yes," said Mrs. McGuire, "it *is* true; and now you must go at once to Mrs. Van Court, for I fear she will miss you and be worried."

"Oh, she never wakes up early," said Betty, confidently; "but I'll go back to my own room and dress for breakfast, and as soon as I can see her I'll tell her all about it."

Mrs. Van Court was so surprised and delighted at Betty's wonderful news that she didn't reprimand her for "making a scene"; and, indeed, she felt now that Betty was no longer under her charge, and that her responsibility had ceased. Mr. Dick was sincerely glad of Betty's new happiness, and the Irvings and the Van Courts soon became fast friends. Mr. and Mrs. Irving proved to be ideal grandparents, and their affection for Betty was only second to that of Mrs. McGuire herself.

Betty wanted them to come and live at Denniston; but the old people were too fond of their own home for that. So they all decided to remain a few days at Lakewood, and then Betty was to take her mother home and install her as mistress of Denniston Hall.

Mrs. McGuire expressed herself as perfectly willing to adopt Betty's whole family as her own; indeed, she would have agreed to anything that insured her continued nearness to her idolized child.

"You'll like Grandma Jean," said Betty to her mother, "she's so kind and obliging; and you'll like Jack, I know; and you'll just adore baby Polly."

"Yes," said her mother, "I'm sure I shall; and I'm already fond of Ellen and Pete, because they were so good to my little Betty when she was poor and motherless."

When at last they went home to Denniston, Mrs. McGuire was warmly welcomed because she was Betty's mother; but it was not long before she was loved by the whole family because of her own goodness and gentleness.

Grandma Jean was in no way made to feel that she was meant to assume an inferior position. She was expected to be the same responsible housekeeper she had been before; and being a sensible old lady, she felt no jealousy of the charming young mistress who had usurped Betty's place rather than hers. Jack was shy at first, but his timidity soon melted away before the tact and kindness of the new-comer; and Polly fell in love with her at first sight.

As for Betty—she was happy now, truly happy; and she realized that all her life she had been starving for true human affection. This was the longing that had kept her hungry heart unsatisfied, and now that it had been fulfilled, her beautiful Denniston was perfect. At last mother-love had made for Betty a home.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *The Story of Betty* by Carolyn Wells]