

DOROTHY DAINTY AT GLENMORE

AMY BROOKS*

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR.

[Illustration: "A letter from Vera!" answered Dorothy.]

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ILLUSTRATIONS

"A letter from Vera!" answered Dorothy *Frontispiece*.

She wished that she might know what they were saying

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"Oh, what a fright!" she cried

"This necklace is mine!" returned the accused girl excitedly

At the end of the wall Betty and Valerie waited

Drawing closer, Nancy whispered a rare bit of news

CHAPTER I

OFF TO GLENMORE

The Stone House looked as fine, and its gardens as gay with flowers, as when the members of the household were to be at home for a season, for it always seemed at those times as if the blossoming plants did their best, because sure of loving admiration.

But something entirely new was about to happen; something that made Dorothy Dainty catch her breath, while her dearest friend, Nancy Ferris, declared that she was wildly happy, except that the whole thing seemed so like a dream that she could hardly believe it.

"That's just it, Nancy," said Dorothy. "It surely does seem like a dream."

Yet it was true, and not a dream that Mr. Dainty was to be away from home for some months, that Mrs. Dainty was to accompany him, and that Aunt Charlotte would be with them, and that Dorothy and Nancy were to spend those months at a fine school for girls, and Vera Vane, merry, mischief-loving Vera, would be eagerly looking for them on the day of their arrival. One would almost wonder that the thought of being away at school should appeal to Dorothy and Nancy, but it was the novelty that charmed them.

It was always delightful at the Stone House, and there had been summer seasons at shore and country that they had greatly enjoyed, but here was a new experience, and the "newness" was delightful.

A letter from Vera had just arrived, and Dorothy, out in the garden when the postman had handed it to her, stood reading it.

"Her letters are just like herself," she whispered.

She looked up. Nancy was calling to her.

"A letter from Vera!" answered Dorothy.

"We shall have to hurry a bit," Nancy said, "James is strapping the two trunks, the suit-cases are out in the hall, and we must be ready in twenty minutes."

"All right!" cried Dorothy. "Give me your hand and we'll run to the house."

She tucked the letter into the front of her blouse, and then promptly forgot all about it.

The "twenty minutes" sped on wings, and when at last Dorothy and Nancy sat side by side in the car, their trunks checked, their suit-cases, and umbrellas on the seat that had been turned over for them, they turned, each to look into the other's eyes.

Dorothy's lip quivered, but she spoke bravely.

"It is hard, this first trip away from home without mother or Aunt Charlotte with us," she said. Then quickly she added:

"But it will be fine when we get used to being away from home."

"Oh, yes, it will be fine!" Nancy said in a firm voice, but she looked down, lest her eyes show a suspicious moisture.

As the journey progressed, their spirits rose. After all, it was not really "good-by," yet.

Mrs. Dainty had postponed the actual "good-by" until a week after Dorothy and Nancy should have begun the school year at Glenmore.

She knew that Vera Vane was a host in herself, her friend and chum, Elfreda was nearly her equal in active wit, and high spirits, and at least a few of the other pupils would have already formed a speaking acquaintance with the two new girls.

The girls would have been assigned places in the classes for which they were fitted, and thus the school work would be planned, and their time closely occupied.

Mrs. Dainty and Aunt Charlotte were also eager to know if the two who were so dear to them were comfortable, satisfied with their surroundings, and looking forward to a pleasant school year. Until thus assured, they could not set out on the journey, for the trip had been planned as a means of rest and recuperation for Mrs. Dainty. How could she rest, or enjoy the trip unless she were sure that Dorothy was absolutely content and happy? If Dorothy were happy, Nancy was sure to be, because the two were inseparable, and their tastes

nearly identical.

The two girls were a bit tired of looking from the window at the flying scenery, and Nancy expressed the wish that they had brought something with them to read.

"I did," Dorothy said, with a laugh, and she drew Vera's letter from her blouse.

She read it aloud, while Nancy leaned against her shoulder, enjoying it with her.

"I wish you had come the first day that school opened, but I'll be on the lookout for you and Nancy. My! But we'll have fun and a plenty of it this year at Glenmore," she concluded, signed her name, and then added a postscript.

"Patricia, and Arabella are here, both—no, each—oh, which should I say? Anyway, they're acting just outrageous, and already they've earned the name that the girls have given them. They call them 'The Freaks,' and truly the name fits. They speak of Patricia as 'the one with the queer clothes,' and of Arabella as 'the medicine-chest.'

"She's taking more pills, I do believe, than she ever did at home, and she wants folks to notice that.

"The idea! I'm glad there are two nice girls coming from Merrivale, although you'd never think Patricia ever saw the place, for she talks of nothing but 'N'York.' My brother Bob always laughs about my long postscripts. It's lucky he can't see this one!

"Lovingly,

"VERA."

Dorothy folded the letter, again placing it in her blouse, and then for a time they watched the passengers.

Opposite them was a big woman, who possessed three bird-cages, two holding birds, and the third imprisoning a kitten.

There was a lean man with a fat little girl beside him, who ate countless lunches, which were packed in a big basket, that seemed a veritable horn of plenty.

Yet a bit farther up the aisle was a small boy with a large cage that he watched closely.

A thick cloth covered it, but once, when the boy was not looking, a long brown furry arm reached out, and snatched mischievously at

his sleeve.

"It's a monkey," whispered Nancy, and the boy turned and grinned.

"If he knew there was a monkey in that cage he'd make me put it in the baggage car," he said.

Dorothy was tired with the long ride, and just as she was thinking that she could not bear much more of it, the brakeman shouted, "Glenmore! Glenmore!" and the two girls were glad enough to get out upon the platform.

Glenmore, the village, was a lovely little country place, quiet, and evidently content with itself.

Glenmore, the school, was a rambling, picturesque home for the pupils who came there.

Once it had been a private mansion, but its interior had been remodeled to meet the requirements of a small, and select school for girls.

A bit old-fashioned in that it was more genuinely homelike than other private schools, it held itself proudly aloof from neighboring buildings.

It claimed that its home atmosphere was the only old-fashioned thing about it, and that was not an idle boast, for the old house had been equipped with every modern convenience. Its instructors were the best that a generous salary could tempt to Glenmore, and Mrs. Marvin, owner, promoter, and manager of the school, was an exceedingly clever woman for the position.

As assistant, Miss Fenler, small, and wiry, did all that was required of her, and more. She had never been appointed as a monitor, but she chose to do considerable spying, so that the pupils had come to speak of her as the "detective."

One of her many duties was to see that the carryall was at the station when new pupils were to arrive.

Accordingly when Dorothy and Nancy left the train, and found themselves on the platform, Miss Fenler was looking for them, and she stowed them away in the carryall much as if they had been only ordinary baggage.

Then, seating herself beside the driver, she ordered him to return.

"Home," she said, and "home" they were driven, for "home" meant Glenmore to the colored man, who considered himself a prominent

official of the school.

Classes were in session when they reached Glenmore, so Miss Fenler went with them to the pretty room that was to be theirs, a maid following with suit-cases, the colored man bringing up the rear with one trunk, and a promise to return on the next trip with the other.

A class-room door, half open, allowed a glimpse of the new arrivals.

"See the procession with the 'Fender' ahead," whispered a saucy miss.

"Her name's 'Fenler,'" corrected her chum.

"I know that, but I choose to call her 'Fender,' because she's like those they have on engines to scoop up any one who is on the tracks. She's just been down to the station to 'scoop' two new pupils, and I guess—"

A tap of a ruler left the sentence unfinished.

Arabella Correyville, without an idea as to what was whispered, had seen the broad smile, and had heard the giggle.

"Who was out there?" she wrote on a bit of paper, and cautiously passed it to Patricia Levine.

"I don't know. I didn't see them, but they must be _swell_. They had ever so much luggage." That was just like Patricia. She judged every one thus.

That a girl could be every inch a lady, and at the same time, possess a small, well chosen wardrobe was past understanding; but any girl, however coarse in appearance and manner, could, with a display of many gaudy costumes, convince Patricia that she was a young person of great importance.

Miss Fenler talked with them for a few moments, and then left them to unpack their belongings, saying that later, when they felt rested, they might come down to the reception hall and meet some of the girls who would be their classmates during the year.

It was the custom, she said, for the pupils to meet for a social half-hour before dinner, to talk over the happenings of the day, their triumphs or failures in class-room, or at sports, or to tell what had interested those who had been out for a tramp.

There had been an afternoon session that day for the purpose of choosing from the list of non-compulsory studies.

"Usually," Miss Fenler explained, "the classes meet for recitations in the forenoon only, the afternoons being reserved for study, and when lessons were prepared, for recreation."

Miss Fenler left them, closing the door softly behind her.

Dorothy turned to look at Nancy.

"What do you think of her?" Nancy said, asking the question that she knew was puzzling Dorothy.

After a second's thought Dorothy said:

"We shall get on with her, I believe, but I can't think Arabella or Patricia would be very comfortable here. Really, they will be obliged to study here, and Arabella won't want to, and I don't think Patricia could. If they don't study, how can they remain?"

Nancy laughed outright.

"Don't worry about those two funny girls," she said, "for if they won't study, or can't study, and so are not allowed to remain, you'll be just as happy, Dorothy dear, and for that matter, so will they."

Later, when together they descended the quaint stairway, they found the ever-present Miss Fenler, waiting to present them.

Vera Vane, and Elfreda Carleton, each with an arm about the other's waist, hastened forward to greet them.

"Oh, we're so glad you and Nancy have--"

"Just a moment Miss Vane, until you have been properly presented," Miss Fenler said, in a cold, precise manner.

"But I've always known Dorothy--"

"That makes no difference," the assistant said, and she presented them in formal manner.

Vera raised her eyebrows, presented the tips of her fingers, and told Dorothy in a high, squeaky voice that she was very glad to know her. Elf did the same in an exact copy of Vera's manner.

Several of the pupils giggled, but to their credit, Dorothy and Nancy managed not to laugh.

When a half-dozen girls had been presented, some one told Miss Fenler that Mrs. Marvin wished to see her, and what had begun in a stilted

manner, became a genuine girl's social.

When the clock in the hall chimed six, and they turned toward the long dining-room, the two new pupils had already made the acquaintance of several girls, who sat beside, and opposite them at the table.

From a distant table Patricia and Arabella were turning to attract their attention.

It had happened that Arabella had chosen to remain in her room during the half-hour reunion.

"I don't feel like talking to a crowd of girls to-night," she had said.

"My! If you don't care to talk to girls, it must be you'd rather talk to boys!" Patricia said, laughing.

"I would _not_!" Arabella remarked, with a flash in her eyes that one rarely saw.

"Oh, _do_ excuse me!" Patricia said, "but that's all right, for I'll stay right here and talk to you."

Arabella was not in much of a mood for listening, either, but she thought it best not to say so. At any other time, Arabella would have listened for hours to whatever Patricia might care to say, but to-night she was in a contrary mood.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST SOCIAL

Two weeks at Glenmore, and Dorothy and Nancy were content. Letters from Mrs. Dainty and Aunt Charlotte assured them that the dear travelers were well, and that already Mrs. Dainty was feeling the benefit of the change of scene.

Mrs. Dainty had engaged a large, front room at Glenmore for the two girls to enjoy as a sitting-room and study, from which led a tastefully furnished chamber, and already they called it their "school home."

Patricia and Arabella had a fair-sized room farther down the corridor. Vera Vane and Elfreda Carleton were snugly settled in cozy quarters a few doors beyond the one that bore Dorothy's and Nancy's names.

Patricia Levine had ordered a large card, elaborately lettered in red and green, announcing that:

THIS SUITE IS OCCUPIED
BY
MISS P. LEVINE
AND
MISS A. CORREYVILLE

A small card was all that was necessary, indeed only a small card was permitted, but Patricia did not know that. After her usual manner of doing things, she had ordered a veritable placard of the village sign painter, and when she had tacked it upon the door, it fairly shouted, in red and green ink.

"There!" she exclaimed, "I guess when the other girls see that, they'll think the two who have this room are pretty swell."

"Isn't it,--rather--loud?" ventured Arabella timidly.

Patricia's eyes blazed.

"Loud?" she cried. "Well, what do you want? A card that will whisper?"

"Maybe it's all right," Arabella said quickly, to which Patricia responded:

"Of course it's all right. It's more than all right! It's very elegant!"

Arabella was no match for her room-mate, and whenever a question arose regarding any matter of mutual interest, it was always Patricia who settled it, and Arabella who meekly agreed that she was probably right.

Arabella was not gentle, indeed she possessed a decidedly contrary streak, but she always feared offending Patricia, because Patricia could be very disagreeable when opposed.

Patricia was still admiring the gaudy lettering when a door at the far end of the corridor opened.

She sprang back into her room, closed the door and standing close to it waited to hear if the big card provoked admiring comment.

Nearer came the footsteps.

Could they pass without seeing it? They paused—then:

”Well, just look at that!”

”A regular sign-board!”

A few moments the two outside the door stood whispering, then one giggled, and together they walked to the stairway and descended, laughing all the way.

Patricia opened the door and peeped out. ”It was that red-haired girl, and the black-haired one that are always together,” she reported to Arabella.

”Now, what in the world were they laughing at?”

”Laughing at the big card, I suppose,” Arabella said.

”Well, there’s nothing funny about that,” Patricia said, hotly. ”It cost ever so much more than the _teenty_ little cards on the other doors did.” Patricia rated everything by its cost.

”They knew that big card looked fine, and they certainly could see that the lettering was showy,” she continued; ”so why did they stand outside the door giggling?”

”How do I know?” Arabella said.

”Open the door, and we’ll look at it again, and see if—”

A smart tap upon the door caused Arabella to stop in the middle of the sentence.

”S’pose it’s those same girls?” whispered Patricia. ”If I thought it was I wouldn’t stir a step.”

A second rap, louder, and more insistent than the first brought both girls to their feet, and Patricia flew to open the door.

Miss Fenler glared at them through her glasses.

”Why did you not answer my first rap?” she asked.

”We didn’t know it was you,” said Patricia.

Ignoring the excuse, Miss Fenler continued: ”I called to tell you to remove that great card, and put a small one in its place with only your names upon it, and in regard to your efforts to obtain work, you can not have any such notice upon your door. Instead you must leave your names at the office and I will see if any of the pupils

will patronize you.”

”I don’t know what you mean!” cried Patricia, flushed and angry.

For answer Miss Fenler pointed to a line penciled on the lower edge of the placard which read:

 _Patching and mending done
at reasonable prices._

”We never wrote that!” cried Arabella, ”and we don’t want to be patronized.”

”The red-haired girl, and the black-haired girl that are always together, stopped at the door and did something, and then went down stairs laughing all the way,” screamed Patricia. ”’Twas one of those two who wrote that.”

”I must ask you to talk quietly,” Miss Fenler said, ”and as to the writing, I’ll look into that. In the meantime I’ll get a small card for you to put in place of that large one.”

She left the room, and as soon as she was well out of hearing, Patricia vowed vengeance upon the two girls who had written the provoking legend.

”I’ll get even with them!” she said.

”How will you?” Arabella asked.

”I don’t know yet, but you’d better believe I’ll watch for a chance!”

”I’ll watch, too!” cried Arabella.

It was the custom at Glenmore to hold a little informal reception on an evening of the third week after the school had opened.

Its purpose was to have pupils of all the classes present so that those who never met in the recitation-rooms might become acquainted.

When the announcement appeared upon the bulletin board it caused a flurry of excitement.

Dorothy and Nancy had already found new friends, and were eager to meet others whose agreeable ways had interested them.

”It’s such a pleasant place,” Dorothy said one morning as she stood brushing her hair, ”and so many pleasant faces in the big class-room. I saw at least a dozen I’d like to know, when we were having the morning exercises, and there’s ever so many more that we have yet

to meet.”

”And Tuesday evening is sure to be jolly. There’ll be a crowd to talk with, and one of the girls told me to-day that there’s almost sure to be some music, either vocal or instrumental, and she said that last year they often had fine readers at the receptions,” Nancy concluded.

They were on their way to the class-room, when Patricia and Arabella joined them.

”Is the social to be a dressy affair?” Patricia asked, adding: ”I hope it is, because I shall be dressy, whether any one else is or not.”

They had reached the class-room door so that there was no time for either Dorothy or Nancy to reply to the silly remark if they had cared to do so.

At eight o’clock nearly all the pupils had assembled in the big reception-room, and the hum of voices told that each was doing her best to outdo her neighbor. Near the center of the room a group of girls stood talking. It was evident that the theme of their conversation was not engrossing, for twice their leader, Betty Chase, had replied at random while her eyes roved toward the door, and Valerie Dare remarked that her chum had been reading such a romantic story, that she was eagerly looking for a knight in full armor to appear.

”Be still!” cried Betty. ”You know very well what I’m looking for.”

”I do indeed,” Valerie admitted. ”Say, girls! You all know the two that are always together, the one with goggles that we’ve dubbed the ’medicine chest,’ and her chum who wears all the rainbow colors whenever and wherever she appears?”

”Surely, but what are their names?” inquired a pale, sickly-looking girl who had joined the group.

”Don’t know their names,” said Betty, ”but I heard Miss Rainbow telling her friend that she intended to wear ’something very dressy’ to-night, so I’m eager to see her. My! Here she comes now.”

”Good gracious!” gasped Valerie, under her breath.

With head very high, Patricia rushed, rather than walked across the room, until she reached the center, when she stopped as if to permit every one to obtain a good view of her costume. Her bold manner made

her more absurd even than her dress which was, as Betty Chase declared, "surprising-!"

Turning slowly around to the right, then deliberately to the left, she appeared to feel herself a paragon of fashion, a model dressed to give the pupils of Glenmore a chance to observe something a bit finer than they had ever seen before.

As Patricia slowly turned, Arabella, like a satellite, as slowly revolved about her.

Who could wonder that a wave of soft laughter swept over the room. It was evident that vanity equalling that of the peacock moved Patricia to turn about that every one might see both front and back of her dress, but no one could have guessed why Arabella in a plain brown woolen dress kept pace with her silly friend.

It was not vanity that kept droll little Arabella moving. No, indeed.

Thus far, Arabella had made no new acquaintances.

As she entered the reception-room with Patricia she saw only a sea of strange faces, and with a wild determination at least to have Patricia to speak to, she trotted around her, that she might not, at any moment, find herself talking to Patricia's back.

That surely would be awkward, she thought.

Patricia's dress was a light gray silk, tastefully made, and had she been content to wear it as it had been sent to her from New York, she would have looked well-dressed, and no one would have made comments upon her appearance.

The soft red girdle gave a touch of color, but not nearly enough to please Patricia.

At the village store she had purchased ribbons of many colors, from which she had made bows or rosettes of every hue, and these she had tacked upon her slippers. Her hair was tied with a bright blue ribbon, and over the shoulders of her blouse she had sewed pink and yellow ribbons. Narrow green edged her red girdle.

Blue and buff, rose and orange, straw-color and lavender, surely not a tint was missing, and the result was absolutely comical! One would have thought that a lunatic had designed the costume.

And when she believed that her dress had been seen from all angles, Patricia left the reception-room, passing to a larger room beyond, where she seated herself, and at once assumed a bored expression. Not the least interest in other pupils had she. She had come to the

little social to be gazed at, and as soon as she believed that all must have seen her, the party held no further interest for her.

She heard the buzz of whispered conversation in the room that she had left, and she wished that she might know what they were saying. It was well that she could not.

"What an unpleasant-looking girl!" said one.

"Wasn't that dress a regular rainbow?" whispered another.

"Oh, but she was funny, turning around for us to see her, just like a wax dummy in a store window," said a third.

[Illustration: She wished that she might know what they were saying.]

"She's queer to go off by herself!" remarked the first one who had spoken.

"We're not very nice," said Betty Chase, who thus far had not spoken, "that is not very kind, to be so busily talking about her."

"Well, I declare, Betty, who'd ever dream that you, who are always getting into scrapes would boldly give us a lecture."

Betty's black eyes flashed.

"I know I get into funny scrapes," she snapped, "but whatever I do, I don't talk about people, Ida Mayo."

"You don't have time to," exclaimed her chum, Valerie Dare. "It takes all your spare time to plan mischief."

In the laugh that followed, Betty forgot that she was vexed.

Patricia began to find it rather dull sitting alone in a room back of the reception-hall.

She felt that she had entered the hall in a burst of glory; had fairly dazzled all beholders!

She had believed that the girls would be so entranced with her appearance that they would follow her that they might again inspect her costume.

She was amazed that she had been permitted to sit alone if she chose.

The other pupils thought it strange that she should choose to remain alone instead of becoming acquainted with those who were to be her schoolmates for the year, but believing that she was determined to

be unsocial, they made no effort to disturb her.

Arabella, who had followed her, became curious as to what was going on in the hall, and from time to time, crept to the wide doorway, peeped out to get a better view, then returned to report what she had seen.

"Everybody is talking to Dorothy and Nancy," she said in a stage whisper, then:

"Vera Vane seems to know almost every one already, and Elf Carleton is telling a funny story, and making all the girls around her laugh.

"And, Patricia, you ought to come here and see Betty Chase. She has a long straw, and she's tickling Valerie's neck with it. Valerie doesn't dream what it is, and while she's talking, keeps trying to brush off the tickly thing. Come and see her!"

Patricia did not stir. She longed to see the fun, but she felt rather abashed to come out from her corner.

The sound of a violin being tuned proved too tempting, however, and she joined Arabella in the doorway.

One of the youngest pupils stood, violin in hand, while, at the piano, Betty Chase was playing the prelude. Lina Danford handled the bow cleverly, and played her little solo with evident ease.

Her audience was delighted, and gayly their hands clapped their approval. The two in the doorway stood quite still, and gave no evidence of pleasure. Arabella was too spunkless to applaud; Patricia was too jealous.

Arabella, after her own dull fashion, had enjoyed the music.

Patricia surely had not.

Patricia never could bear to see or hear any one do anything!

"Let's go up to our room," she whispered.

"P'rhaps some of the others will play or sing," ventured Arabella, who wished to remain.

"Let 'em!" Patricia said, even her whisper showing that she was vexed.

"Let 'em?" Arabella drawled. "Why I'll have to let 'em. I couldn't stop them, and I don't want to. I'd like to hear them."

"Then stay and hear them!" snapped Patricia, and she rushed out into the midst of the groups of listeners, and dashed up the stairway before Miss Fenler could stop her.

What could have been more rude and ill-bred than to leave in such haste, thereby disturbing those who were enjoying the music?

Arabella's first thought was to follow Patricia lest she be angry, but she saw Miss Fenler's effort to stay Patricia, and she dared not leave the room.

Arabella felt as if she were between two desperate people.

She feared Miss Fenler, as did every pupil at Glenmore, and by remaining where she was, she certainly was not offending her, but she could not forget Patricia. What a temper she would be in when, after the concert was over, Arabella, cautiously, would turn the latch, and enter their chamber!

Patricia was wide awake, and listening, when at last Arabella reached their door. Softly she tried to open it so carefully that if Patricia were asleep she might remain so.

Patricia had turned the key in the lock, and she fully enjoyed lying comfortably on the bed, and listening while on the other side of the door her chum was turning the knob first one way and then the other.

There's no knowing how long she would have permitted Arabella to stand out in the hall, but suddenly she remembered that Miss Fenler strode down the corridors every night after lights were supposed to be out, just to learn if any one of the girls were defying the rule.

With a rather loud "O _dear_!" Patricia flounced out of bed, went to the door, pretended to be so sleepy that she could not at once find the key, and then, as the door opened, gave an exaggerated yawn.

For once Arabella was quick-witted.

"Miss Fenler is just coming up the stairs," she said.

Patricia forgot the scolding that she had been preparing for Arabella, and instead she said:

"Hurry! Put out the light. You can undress in the dark, but for goodness' sake, don't stumble over anything!"

CHAPTER III

MISCHIEF

A few days later, Dorothy stood at the window looking out upon a windswept road, where not even so much as a dry leaf remained to tell of the vanished Autumn.

The sky was cloud-covered, and the gaunt trees bent and swayed as if a giant arm were shaking them.

"We missed our afternoon trip down to the village," she said, "but no one would care to walk in this gale, and even—why, who—? Nancy, come here! Isn't that Patricia?"

Nancy ran to the window.

"Why, no—yes,—Well, it certainly is Patricia," she said.

"And just look at the parcel she's carrying!"

"Whatever it is, she must have wanted it, to go out such day as this," said Nancy, "and look! Miss Fenler is out on the porch,—why, she's actually feeling of it to see what's in the parcel. Really, I don't see why it's all right for her to do that."

"It does seem queer," agreed Dorothy, "but you know it is the rule that the girls must not bring large parcels into this house, unless they're willing to show what is in them."

"There! The paper has burst open, and,—Well, did you see that?"

Miss Fenler was actually thrusting a long bony finger into the opening with the hope of learning if anything that had been forbidden, was being smuggled into the house inside the folds of gayly flowered goods that Patricia had declared was a tea-gown. After a moment, Miss Fenler nodded as if dismissing the matter, and Patricia, her chin very high, passed into the hall. Miss Fenler turned to look after her, as if not sure if she had done wisely in permitting Patricia to enter with so large a bundle, without first compelling her to open it, and spread its contents for inspection.

Patricia's eyes had flashed when questioned about her parcel, but once inside the hall, her anger increased, and she mounted the stairs, tramping along the upper hall so noisily that several pupils looked out to learn who had arrived. Farther down the hall a door opened, and Betty Chase's laughing face looked out. She, too, had seen Patricia and Miss Fenler on the porch and, while she did not like

Patricia, she detested the woman who seemed to enjoy spying, so her sympathy was, of course, with the pupil.

"Had a scrap with the 'Fender'? I'd half a mind to say 'cow-catcher,'" she said.

"Well, what if I did?" Patricia said, rudely, and walked on toward her room.

Betty looked after her.

"Well, of all things!" she whispered, then said, "The next time you need sympathy, try to buy some at the grocer's. Don't look to me!"

Patricia had done a rude, and foolish thing. Betty Chase was a favorite, and Patricia had longed to be one of her friends, but thus far Betty had been surrounded by her classmates, who hovered about her so persistently that the pupils from Merrivale had not yet become acquainted with her. Betty had hailed Patricia pleasantly, and she really might have paused for a little chat, but she was one of those unpleasant persons who, when some one person has annoyed her, is vexed with the whole world. She took little heed as to where she was going, and stamped along, muttering some of the many wrathful thoughts that filled her mind.

Reaching a door that stood ajar, she pushed it open, and rushed in exclaiming:

"The horrid old thing tried to pick open my parcel, but I wouldn't let her. I guess Miss Sharp-eyes won't try again to—Why, where are you, Arabella?"

A tall, thin girl with a pale face and colorless hair emerged from the closet where she had been hanging some garments.

"Do you rush into people's rooms, and call them names?" she asked in a peculiar drawl.

Patricia for once, was too surprised to speak.

"My name is not Arabella, nor Miss Sharp-eyes," concluded the girl.

"I—I beg your pardon. I thought this was my own room," gasped Patricia, and rushing from the room, opened the next door on which her own name and Arabella's appeared. She flew in, banging the door behind her.

Arabella sprang to her feet, dropped her glasses, picked them up, and setting them upon her nose, stared through them at Patricia.

"Don't you speak a single word!" commanded Patricia, "for I'm 'bout as mad as I can be now, and if I get any madder—"

She stopped in sheer amazement, for Arabella had put on her hat, and was now getting into her coat.

"Where are you going?" demanded Patricia, but Arabella put her left hand over her lips, while with her right she slipped another button into its buttonhole, and sidled toward the door.

Patricia sprang forward, locked the door, took Arabella by the shoulder, and pushed her toward a chair. Surprised, and calmed by Arabella's silence, and her attempt to leave the room, Patricia now spoke in an injured tone.

"I'd never believe you'd start to go out, when I'd just come in so vexed, and with loads of things to tell you. For goodness' sake, can't you answer?"

"You told me not to say a word," said Arabella, "and you looked so cross that I just didn't dare to, and I was going out so I'd be sure not to."

Patricia was flattered to learn that Arabella had actually been afraid of her. "Goosie!" she cried, "when will you learn that I don't always mean all that I say! Old Sharp-eyes didn't really open my bundle. Come over here and see what was hidden in it."

She opened the parcel of gaily-flowered cotton, and began to unfold the goods.

"There!" she cried when the last fold was loosed, and six packages were proudly displayed.

"Good gracious!" cried Arabella, "I don't see how you got inside the door with all those things, for I saw her pinching your bundle, and you'd think that she must have felt those little parcels even if they were wrapped inside that cloth."

"Well, you may be very sure she didn't feel them, for if she had, I'd never had them to show you."

It was, indeed, a fixed rule at Glenmore that pupils, except by special permission, should bring no food into the building, the reason being that plenty of good food was provided at meal times, and eating between meals was forbidden.

Patricia's idea of a "treat" was a variety of all sorts, but never a thought had she as to whether the articles that she chose would

combine well.

Arabella, often annoyed with indigestion, gazed at the "treat" that Patricia had placed upon the little table, and wondered how she would feel when she had eaten her share.

And eat it she must, for Patricia never would forgive her if she did not. More than that, she must not refuse anything, because Patricia would consider that a sure sign that her "treat" had failed to please, and for a week at least, would talk of Arabella as ungrateful.

In a room farther up the corridor, Vera and Elf were laughing and chuckling over much the same trick as that which Patricia had played, only that Vera and Elf had brought a huge parcel into the house, and had not been questioned regarding it.

It was late afternoon when Vera had returned from the village. Dorothy saw her far up the road, and wondered why she walked so slowly, but as she neared the gateway, it was evident that she carried a heavy parcel. Her storm-coat had a deep cape, but it only partly hid the bundle.

She looked up toward the window where Dorothy stood, laughed, and made a gesture to indicate that she was going around to the rear of the house.

"Nancy, what do you suppose the girls are up to?"

"Vera has just come from the village with a bundle twice as big as the one Miss Fenler found Patricia bringing in, and she has gone around toward the back door with it."

"She's trying to dodge Miss Fenler," Nancy said.

"But, Nancy, she can't get to her room from the back way. The back door leads into the kitchen. There's no back stairway."

"I know that," Nancy said, "but Vera isn't going around the house for the sake of a walk. She's intending to get in the back way I do believe. I wonder if she has coaxed one of the maids to help her. Come on, down the hall to the big window that has a balcony under it. We'll see if she really gets in."

Dorothy clasped Nancy's outstretched hand and they ran softly along the hall, reaching the window just in time to see a bulky-looking bundle swinging from a rope, and occasionally bumping against the house as it made its way slowly upward.

On the ground stood Vera eagerly looking up, while, from the window of their room Elf reached out, desperately struggling to draw the heavy bundle up to the window sill.

"Don't stand there looking up at me!" she said in a voice hardly above a whisper. "Come up here before somebody sees you." Vera lost no time in doing as Elf said, while Dorothy and Nancy wasted not a moment, but sped down the hall, and once safely in their room, sat down, laughing at what they had seen.

Meanwhile, Vera raced along the hall, and into her room, flew to the window and soon the precious bundle lay on the floor, the two girls bending over it.

"Oo-oo! Cream-cakes! A box of fudge, frosted cake!" cried Elf, then. "What's in this tin can?"

"Oysters," said Vera, "and we'll have a hot stew to-night after every one is in bed!"

"My! But how can we cook it?" Elf asked.

"In the can," said Vera. "That's easy 'nough. There's a pint of oysters, and three pints of milk all shaken up together in that two-quart can. We can heat it over the gas jet. I'm sure they'll cook all right."

"Why, Vera Vane! It will take hours to make it boil over that gas jet. I guess we'll enjoy taking turns holding it, while we wait for it to cook!"

"Pooh! It'll taste so good we'll forget our arms ache when we get the very first spoonful!"

Elf was not sure about that, but Vera had a way of speaking as if what she said settled the matter, so although not convinced, Elf made no reply. "Come! Help me put these things away," cried Vera. "We don't want any one to know about our fine little after-bedtime party, and we ought to hide our treat before some one comes to our door."

So the cakes and fudge were placed on the shelf in the closet, where with the big can full of oysters and milk they became close neighbors with the hat-boxes.

Then Vera and Elf sat down to prepare their lessons for the next day.

They had invited Betty Chase and her chum, Valerie Dare, to spend the evening with them, and enjoy the treat.

They were to go to bed at the usual time, have their light out at nine o'clock, and as soon as they heard Miss Fenler pass down the hall, and then descend the stairs, they were to open their door softly, close it behind them, and then, with greatest caution, make their way along the hall to Vera's room.

Night came, their lessons were prepared for the morrow, their lights were out, when they heard Miss Fenler pass their door, then,—why did she return and pass the door a second time?

Was it imagination, or did she pause before going on?

Their hearts beat faster, and Valerie laid her hand over hers, she afterward said, to hush it so that the dreaded Miss Fenler might not hear it.

"Has she gone?" whispered Betty, to which Valerie, who was nearest the door, replied with a low, "Sh—!"

Farther up the corridor two others listened. Not a sound was heard in the hall, and Betty Chase cautiously opened the door a few inches. A board in the floor creaked, and she shut the door so quickly that she forgot to be careful, and one might have heard it the length of the hall.

"Oo-oo!" whispered Valerie. "You let me manage that door, please, the next time it's opened."

"When'll the next time be?" whispered Betty with a chuckle.

"Now!" whispered Valerie, and stepping out into the hall, they carefully closed the door, then ran softly along to Vera's door, and tapped upon the panel with a hat-pin for a knocker. The door opened and they were only too glad to have it close behind them. Yet a bit longer they waited before lighting up, and while they waited, they sat upon the bed and talked in whispers.

The street lamp threw a band of light across the room.

Five minutes later, the blankets were taken from the bed and hung over the door, that no ray of light from the room might be visible in the hall, through either crack or keyhole.

A second blanket was pinned to the curtains, that neither coachman nor maid returning from the town might catch a glimpse of light.

Then the fun began.

They had become bolder, and forgetting to whisper, talked in undertones. Vera, mounted on a cushioned stool, was holding the can

over the gas jet, and watching eagerly for some sign of boiling.

"The milk is steaming," she announced. "S'pose it's done?"

"Not yet, goosie!" Elf replied, "and I know," she continued, "'cause I remember hearing our cook say that the stew was ready when the oysters looked all puckered around their edges."

"O gracious! If that's true, somebody'll have to come and hold this old can a while. My arm is about broken!"

Betty seized the can, and mounted the stool, and Vera, thus relieved, ran to the closet, returning with the cream-cakes and the fudge.

The white counterpane stripped from the bed, and spread upon the floor, served as a lunch-cloth, and when the "goodies" were set upon it, the big can in the center, steaming, if not boiling, the four sat cross-legged around the feast, and prepared to enjoy it.

Salt and pepper in abundance had been thrown into the can, so that while it lacked sufficient cooking, it surely did not lack seasoning.

Bravely each tried to eat her share, but so salt was it, that it almost brought the tears.

The cream-cakes were fine, and the girls were laughing softly over Betty's remark that no one knew of their little "party," when a knock upon the door caused Valerie to drop her cream-cake. In an instant she had rolled over, crawled under the bed, Betty following, while Vera and Elf sprang into bed, drawing the coverings to their chins to hide that they were fully dressed. It was one of Miss Fenler's rules that pupils should never lock their doors.

Now in a harsh voice she called: "Open this door at once!"

Vera sprang to the floor, shut off the gas, softly turned the key in the lock, and was back in bed and covered up to her eyes, in a second.

Upon opening the door, Miss Fenler stumbled into the blanket that hung from the door-frame. Crossing the room to light the gas, she put her right foot directly upon a cream-cake, while with her left she upset the can of stew.

An angry exclamation, properly stifled, caused the two under the bed to nudge each other, while struggling not to laugh.

Vera and Elf lay quite still, the puff drawn up to their closely shut eyes.

Miss Fenler lit the gas, and it was just as well that the culprits dared not open their eyes, for the face that she turned toward them was not pleasant to see.

She was desperately angry.

"What does this mean?" she cried shrilly.

Vera and Elf breathed heavily, as if soundly sleeping.

"You're not asleep!" she declared, "and I insist that you answer me. Again I ask, what does this mean?"

Vera and Elf breathed harder than before, Vera adding a soft little snore.

"Oh, very well!" cried Miss Fenler. "If you are determined not to reply to-night, I will report you to Mrs. Marvin, and you may make your explanations to her to-morrow."

She left the room, her anger increased by their obstinate pretense of slumber.

CHAPTER IV

A WONDERFUL TONIC

Vera awoke long before daylight, and lay thinking.

"That's just the way I do things," she said in a voice barely above a whisper.

"I plan the fun, and always have a good time, that is 'most' always, but it's sure to wind up in a scrape. I plan how to get into mischief. Why don't I ever plan how to get out?"

Elf stirred uneasily, and Vera gave her shoulder a vigorous shake.

"Wake up!" she commanded. "Wake up, and help me plan what we'd better say when we have to face Mrs. Marvin."

"Oh, I'm sleepy," drawled Elf. "We're smart enough to say something when she stares at us over her spectacles. We'll say we—"

A wee snore finished the sentence, and Vera turned over with a lurch that shook the bed.

She thought it very hard that she must lie awake and worry, while Elf could sleep; in short, she wanted some one to worry with her.

"It's like the way I climb trees when we're away in the summer," she muttered.

"It's fine climbing up, but I'm always afraid to climb down. If Bob is near, I can always make him get me down, but Bob isn't here to get me out of this mess, and Elf won't even try to keep awake to help me think."

She concluded that it was very unfeeling for Elf to be so sleepy. Her cheeks were flushed, and her head ached.

"O dear!" she whispered, softly, "Dorothy Dainty and Nancy Ferris are full of fun, but they never get into a regular fix such as I'm in now. I don't see how they manage to have such good times without ever getting mixed up in something that's hard to explain. And Betty and Valerie will get off Scot free, for 'The Fender' couldn't see them under the bed, and of course we'll not tell that they were there."

She did not know that when Betty and Valerie had reached their own room they found that in their haste to arrive at the "feast" they had left the light burning in their room!

Oh, indeed Miss Fenler had seen that, and she had opened the door. She had found no one there. She had seen that four had been enjoying the feast, because at each of the four sides of the spread were fragments of partly eaten cream-cakes, or bits of fruitcakes. Her sharp eyes had seen enough to assure her that two other girls were in hiding somewhere in the room, doubtless the two whose light had been left burning. She thought it clever to let them think that they had escaped notice. Their surprise would be greater when she sent them to Mrs. Marvin the next morning. Daylight found Vera tossing and turning, while Elf was dreaming. It was not that Vera could not bear reproof. She could listen for a half-hour to a description of her faults, and look like a cheerful flaxen-haired sprite all the while. That which now worried her was the thought that Mrs. Marvin might send her home.

It was the fifth time during the month that she had been reprimanded, and even gentle Mrs. Marvin might reach the limit of her patience.

Her father, she knew, would speak reprovingly, and then laugh at her. Her mother, always weak-willed, would say: "Vera, dear, I wonder if you were really naughty, or if it was that they didn't quite understand you."

Oh, there was nothing to fear about being sent home, but the fact that thus she would lose a deal of fun that she could so enjoy with a lot of lively girls of her own age.

She resolved to appear as off-hand as usual, unless Mrs. Marvin should say that she must not remain at Glenmore, when she would throw pride to the winds, and plead, yes, even beg to continue as a pupil of the school. She turned and looked at Elf, still soundly sleeping.

"O dear! I'm the only girl in school who has anything to fret over," she whispered.

It happened, however, that at the far end of the building, another girl was quite as worried as Vera, but it was a very different matter that had caused her to wake, as Vera had, before daybreak.

She had entered Glenmore a few weeks after school had opened, and was rather a quiet girl, as yet acquainted with but few of the pupils.

Some one circulated the story that she was being educated by an uncle who was a very rich man. Patricia Levine had added that as he lived in "N'York," and as her mother also lived there, she, of course, knew him, and she had told Patricia that old Mr. Mayo was more than rich, that he was many, many times a millionaire.

"Ida Mayo is to be an heiress, and have all that money. Just think of that!" Patricia had said, and immediately began to be very friendly with her.

Betty Chase boldly asked Patricia why it followed that because Mrs. Levine and old Mr. Mayo lived in New York they must, of course, be acquainted, to which Patricia snapped.

"I didn't say they must be acquainted. I said 'they are!'"

Ida Mayo seemed not to notice that Patricia sought to be friendly, nor did she make any effort to become acquainted with any of the other pupils.

She seemed content to stand apart and watch the others in their games. It was Dorothy Dainty who seemed to hold her attention, and once Betty Chase asked boldly: "I wonder why you watch Dorothy so much."

"I don't know," Ida had said, then added, "I guess it's because she's worth looking at?"

Secretly she envied Dorothy's lovely color, and wished that her own cheeks were as fresh and fair. That evening in her little room, she looked in disgust at her reflection in the mirror. A pale face

returned her gaze, and she made a grimace.

"It's bad enough to be pale without having a few of last summer's freckles left to make it worse," she cried.

There were lessons to be prepared for the morrow, but the reflection in the mirror had so disturbed her that she cast lessons aside and commenced reading a story in a new magazine. The heroine was described as having a wonderful complexion, as fair, as pink and white, as perfect in coloring as a sea-shell.

"Of course!" said Ida, "and that's the sort I wish I had."

Her eyes strayed from the story of the beautiful heroine to the advertising column.

"Raise mushrooms," read one advertisement, next: "Try our patent collar-button," then: "Write poems for us."

"How stupid!" she said. "Who'd want to raise mushrooms, I'd like to know? Who wants their old collar-buttons? And for mercy's sake, how many people who read those advertising columns can write poetry?"

She was about to toss the magazine upon the couch, when two words in large print caught her attention.

"Banish freckles—"

"What's that?" she whispered.

"Banish freckles and have a perfect complexion," she read. "Send fifty cents to us, or obtain our tonic at any drug-store. Directions inside package."

It must have been the best of good luck that had prompted her to neglect her lessons, and spend the evening hours with the magazine, she thought.

She was far too impatient to wait to receive the tonic by mail.

She had never been to the local drug-store, so the clerks would not know her, but if any of the Glenmore girls were there, she would buy some candy, and wait until another day to obtain the tonic.

She drew a long breath when she saw, upon entering, that she was the only customer.

The clerk thought it odd that a little girl should be buying a complexion-beautifier, but concluded that she, doubtless, was doing

the errand for some older person.

Night came, and at the hour when Vera and Elf with Betty and Valerie were tasting their goodies, and listening to every sound that might be approaching footsteps, Ida Mayo, not a whit less excited, was breathlessly reading the directions for applying the tonic.

"Spread the tonic over the face, rubbing it thoroughly into the skin. Let it remain all night. You will be astonished at the result."

A dozen times during the night she had been awakened with the scalding, burning of her face. The directions had said that the skin would probably burn, but the result in the morning would fully repay the user, by the extreme loveliness of the radiant complexion!

Ida bore the burning bravely, but when the first faint light appeared she sat up in bed, pressing her hands to her smarting cheeks.

"If the freckles are gone, and my skin is fair, I won't say a word about this burning," she said. "But how," she continued, "can my face look even half-way decent, when it is smarting so furiously?"

At last, she could bear it no longer, and springing out of bed, she ran to the dresser, and gasped as she looked at her reflection. Even in the dim light of the dawn of a cloudy day, she saw that her cheeks, her forehead, her chin, were all very red.

Were they spotty as well?

"O dear! If it was only light enough for me to really see!" she whispered.

She looked at the tiny clock. At that early hour no one was stirring at Glenmore.

No one would see her if she went down to the door, and it would be lighter there. A gable shaded the window, and made her room less light.

Thrusting her tangled locks up under the elastic of her muslin cap, and throwing on a loose sack, she snatched the hand-mirror from her dresser, and softly yet swiftly went out into the hall and down the stairs.

She paused in the lower hall, there thinking that she heard some one coming, she rushed out on the piazza, down the steps, and across the lawn to an open space where nothing could obscure the light. Already it was growing lighter, and she lifted the hand mirror. A look of horror swept over her little face.

"Oh, what a fright!" she cried, as she stood staring at the reflection.

Her face was scarlet, and if the freckles had disappeared, it was because they had taken the skin with them when they went!

For a moment she stood as if rooted to the spot, then realizing that some restless pupil might be up and chance to see her from the window, she turned and ran at top speed toward the house. The big door stood open as she had left it, and she raced across the hall and up the stairway, entering her room just as footsteps echoed along the hall.

She closed the door and sat down.

"Why did I see that horrid old advertisement?" she exclaimed. Her smarting, burning cheeks were enough to bear, but worse than that was the thought that she would be compelled to appear in the classroom.

How the girls would stare at her! What would they say among themselves?

[Illustration: "O, what a fright!" she cried.]

Vera believed herself to be the only girl at Glenmore who had even the slightest reason for worrying. Ida Mayo possessed the same idea.

Mrs. Marvin listened to all that Miss Fenler had to say about the feast, the two who had planned it, and the other two who beyond a doubt had been invited guests.

"And I should send them home, and at the same time mail a tart letter to their parents telling them that their room was better than their company."

Mrs. Marvin looked up at the thin, harsh face of her assistant.

"Mercy is sometimes as valuable in a case like this, as extreme severity," she said.

"They have broken a well-known rule here, and must be dealt with accordingly. They must be made clearly to understand that a repetition would not be overlooked."

"I am only an assistant," Miss Fenler said, "but I have my opinions, and I can't help thinking that you are too gentle with them."

"They have been mischievous, surely, but had their mischief been such as would harm, or annoy their classmates, I should have been more severe.

"You may send them to me. I will see them before the school opens for the morning session."

"There is another pupil that I must speak of, and that is the Mayo girl. It has been her habit to keep apart from the other girls. She seems to prefer to spend much of her leisure time not only indoors, but in her room.

"Lina Danford, the little girl whose room is next hers told me that Ida Mayo had been crying ever since daybreak. Lina thought that she must be ill, and she knocked at the door, but while for a moment the crying ceased, there was no answer, even when the knock was several times repeated."

"Have you tried to rouse her?" Mrs. Marvin said, her fine face showing genuine alarm.

"I knocked three times, but received no reply, and the door is locked."

"I will go to her," Mrs. Marvin said. "You may open school for me. Say nothing to the other girls. I will talk with them at the noon recess."

Mrs. Marvin hurried up the stairway, and along the upper hall to the corner room. She paused before tapping. If Ida Mayo had been crying, she was not crying now.

She knocked and waited. Knocked again, and again she waited.

"Ida, you must open your door for me. This is Mrs. Marvin."

The morning session had opened, and fresh young voices could be plainly heard. They were singing Ida's favorite, an old song, "All hail, pleasant morning."

Mrs. Marvin heard a faint sob.

"Ida, I am your friend. Let me in, and tell me what troubles you." No response.

"Open the door quickly, or I shall call Marcus to force it open."

Ida opened the door with a jerk.

"There!" she cried, angrily. "I don't see why I could not stay alone in my room until I looked fit to be seen!"

Mrs. Marvin thought the raw, scarlet face denoted some desperate illness, but chancing to look toward the dresser, she caught sight of the bottle, uncorked, and with its showy label bearing the legend:

"Tonic. Twelve-Hour Beautifier."

Mrs. Marvin sat down upon a low seat, and drew Ida down beside her, and patiently she listened to the story of the longing for beauty, the reading of the advertisement.

"I s'pose I put on too much," Ida concluded. "They said, 'Just a bit on the tip of the fingers rubbed into the skin each night for two weeks would work wonders.'

"They said used generously you'd be surprised at the result! I guess I was.

"I thought if a little would do so much, a lot of it would do more, so I put it on thick, and went to bed.

"O dear! It has been a comfort to tell you, but I can't face those girls while I look like this!"

"I shall not ask you to," Mrs. Marvin said. "I will bring you some cooling ointment to heal your face, and I'll send old Judy up with your meals.

"I will tell her to say to any pupils who may question her, 'Miss Mayo feels so miserable that she'll not come down to her meals for a few days.' Judy is absolutely trustworthy."

Judy proved herself quick-witted, for when an inquisitive pupil tried to peep into the room as she entered with the tray, Judy turned sharply, remarking:

"Ah don' s'pose yo wants ter ketch anythin' what's 'tagious, does ya?"

The pupil backed away from the door, when at a distance she said: "You don't seem to be much afraid."

"Ah isn't 'fraid, 'cause I's had dis same ting."

She had indeed suffered in the same way. True it was not freckles that annoyed her. It was a longing to rid herself of her black skin that had tempted her to purchase a bottle of a so-called beautifier,

warranted to produce a new skin.

That was some years before, but Judy remembered it.

CHAPTER V

A SLEIGHING PARTY

Dorothy was never inclined toward mischief, and now, when her mother was away traveling for change of scene, and much-needed rest, she felt very eager to send each month, a fine report of her progress. Dorothy was full of life, and loved a good time, if Nancy, her dearest friend might enjoy it with her.

When the news was circulated that the great sleigh at the livery stable had been chartered by Mrs. Marvin, and that sleigh-rides would be in order as long as the snow lasted, none was more eager for the pleasure than Dorothy.

To be sure, she had always enjoyed plenty of sleigh-rides when at home at the Stone House, but here was a novelty! The big sleigh at Glenmore would hold twenty girls, while the beautiful Russian sleigh at the Stone House held four, and the pony sleigh two. Mrs. Marvin, in making out the list for each party, was careful to place those already acquainted together. Thus, the list that was headed with Dorothy's name included Nancy Ferris, of course, then Vera, Elf, Patricia, Arabella, Betty, Valerie, and twelve others, who were at least slightly acquainted with those already named.

They were about evenly divided in another way. Ten were exceedingly lively, while the other half of the list were pleasant girls of quieter type.

Mrs. Marvin well knew that twenty lively girls would be likely to be a bit too gay for the steady-going inhabitants of the town of Glenmore, while the school must keep up its reputation for being cheerful, but surely not noisy nor flighty!

The day for the first sleigh-ride dawned clear and cold, and Marcus informed Judy that it was cold enough "ter freeze de bronze statoo down in de square."

They were to start at three, and promptly at that hour Marcus drew up at the door.

Eager to start, the girls were all waiting in the hall, when Arabella

drawled:

"Every one wait while I go and get my shawls."

She darted up the stairs, Patricia calling after her: "Your shawls, goosie! Why you're wearing two coats and a sweater now."

"What did Arabella say?" asked Betty Chase.

"I thought she said she wanted the shawl to put over her ears!"

"She did say that," declared Patricia, "and won't she look fine; besides, how could she get them on when twenty of us are packed into that sleigh?"

"Oh, I'll help her with them," cried Betty Chase, with a laugh.

"So will I," chimed in Valerie.

"Here she comes now. Well, as I live, she has brought two shawls," said Betty.

"One for each ear," said Valerie.

Laughing and chattering they ran down the path, and soon were comfortably seated, very close to be sure, but very warm.

Arabella said that the two shawls were to wear later if it became colder, whereat, Betty begged her to sit upon them.

"You take up room enough for three with a big shawl under each arm," said Betty.

"Stand up and I'll fold them so you can sit on them."

Arabella meekly did as she was told. If any other girl had done the same thing, she would have obstinately rebelled, but Betty had a way that was compelling, and Arabella, after she was seated, wondered why she had been so meek.

Patricia Levine had brought a big box of fudge, and she now passed it around. Arabella said she knew it would make her sick, but she took two pieces instead of one, lest the box might not come around again.

The route took them over a long roadway that had been cut through a forest, and on either side the great trees towered above them, their branches heaped with snow. The underbrush was beautified with what looked like patches of swan's-down, and a tiny, ice-bound brook wound its way in among the giant trees, disappearing behind a clump of

evergreens.

It had been possible to see all these things because the road had been so rough that Marcus had been obliged to drive rather slowly.

Now, as they emerged from the wood-road, he touched the whip to the flank of one of his horses, and with one accord they sprang forward, giving the chattering occupants of the sleigh a decided "bounce," and stopping Elf Carleton in the middle of the story that she was telling.

"O dear! Where was I when that jolt came?" she asked.

"I don't know what you were telling," said Vera, "but it's my turn now, and I'm going to tell how awfully you acted this morning.

"Girls, Mrs. Marvin was perfectly lovely. She just talked and talked about how good I ought to be, but I didn't mind that, so long as she didn't say she was going to send me home. She never said a single word about that, but I didn't know she was going to be such a perfect dear. I woke before daylight, and much comfort Elf was to me! I tell you truly, girls, I poked her, I called to her, I shook her, but couldn't get her enough awake to say a word.

"Well, we're about even, for one morning last week when I kept telling her my tooth was aching, she paid no attention until I gave her an outrageous poke, and shouted into her ear, 'My tooth aches!'

"She didn't open her eyes, but what she said was a great comfort."

"What did she say?" questioned Betty.

"She said it might stop aching if I kept my mouth closed," said Vera, "and it took me five minutes to realize that her advice was more for her benefit than mine. She wanted another nap, and closing my mouth to shield my aching tooth would also prevent my talking. Trust Elf for making sure—Oh, look, girls!"

Every head turned.

A big red pung was coming toward them at top speed. It was crowded with more boys than could be seated, and those who stood carried long poles. From the top of each pole a broad, gayly colored streamer waved. As the pung passed a big boy in the center shouted: "Three cheers for the Glenmore girls!" and they were given with a will.

"How do they know that we are Glenmore girls?" said Elf.

"Three cheers for the 'What-you-call 'em' boys!" screamed Betty, and even Arabella added a faint "Hurrah!" to the general clamor.

Two of the boys produced a pair of cymbals, but while they were clashing Betty brought forth a huge gong and nearly stunned those near her with the noise that she made as with all her might she smote it.

"Hoo-ray!" shouted a small boy.

"Hoo-raw!" howled Valerie Dare, and no one could have decided which laughed the harder, the pung-load of boys, or the lively girls in the Glenmore sleigh.

"Yo'-all behave like tomboys," commented Marcus. "Lor', but Mis' Marvin would 'a' been some s'prised ef she'd been here ter hear ye carry on."

"Well, if Miss Fenler had been here she'd have had forty fits," cried Vera Vane, "but, Marcus, what they don't know won't worry them, and you needn't tell them."

"And Marcus, you can forget all about the racket before you get home," said Elf.

"Shore, Miss, I's got a powerful short mem'ry. Gid 'ap!"

"Dorothy Dainty cheered as loud as any of us," said Arabella Correyville.

"Well, why shouldn't she?" Patricia asked.

"Oh, she's always so-oh, I don't know,-correct, I guess is what I meant to say," responded Arabella.

"I like fun as well as any one does," said Dorothy who had overheard the remark.

"Oh, but Dorothy, you aren't even the least bit rude," declared Valerie.

"It's not rude to cheer," Dorothy said with a laugh. "I think we were very polite to return their salute."

"Nancy Ferris cheered, too," said a girl who had been very quiet during the hubbub.

Nancy laughed.

"I cheered because Dorothy did," she said, "but, Betty, how did you get that gong in here without any one noticing it?"

"It was under this long coat," said Betty, "and I'll tell you all how I happened to bring it.

"Monday, when I was down in the village, I met a boy that I know, and he told me that over at the boys' private school in the next town they'd heard about our sleigh-rides, and he told me that one of the boys, Bob Chandler, had bought a pair of old cymbals at an antique shop. They were planning their first sleigh-ride for the same day as ours, and they thought we'd have no noise-maker with us. I meant to get even with them, so I brought the big gong that hung in my room, and I guess we made as much noise as they did. I've a number of curios that my uncle brought home from abroad. Why didn't I think to bring along that funny little horn? You could have tooted on that, Valerie."

"Oh, I'm satisfied. We had noise enough," said Hilda Fenton.

At that moment there was a commotion on the rear seat.

Some one was twisting around so persistently that many were made quite uncomfortable.

Dorothy turned to see what it was all about. She laughed softly, and touched Nancy's arm.

"It's Arabella," whispered Dorothy.

"Yes, and she's trying to put both shawls on at once," said Nancy.

"Oh, quick! See what Patricia is doing."

Completely out of patience with Arabella's wriggling, Patricia was taking a vigorous hand.

In a manner anything but gentle she was pulling the heavy shawls up around Arabella's head and shoulders.

Betty Chase said that she was "yanking" them, and the word, if not elegant, was truthfully descriptive.

"_Don't_ knock my hat off!" whimpered Arabella.

"I don't care what I do if only I get those old shawls onto you so you'll sit still!" declared Patricia.

When Arabella settled herself in her place she took a third more room than before, and looked like a little old woman rolled up in many blankets.

Arabella sat firm and immovable, staring through her spectacles. She did not turn to the right or the left, and one would say that she

did not know that the girls were laughing at her.

"Don't you wish you had just one more shawl?" said Patricia.

"Not if I had to have you put it on," drawled Arabella. "You shoved my hat on one side of my head, and it's felt queer ever since."

"How do you know that the hat has felt queer?" Valerie asked, smothering a laugh.

"I guess you'd feel queer if Patricia Levine had once taken hold of you," was the quick response, and Valerie ceased teasing.

"Dorothy knows a jolly sleighing song," said Nancy.

"Sing it! Sing it!"

"Oh, please sing it, Dorothy," clamored eager voices.

"Sing it with me, Nancy," Dorothy said. "Your alto makes it fine."

Their voices blended sweetly, and the melody floated out on the crisp air, so that a tall, dark man left a wood road, and stood listening as the sleigh sped past.

"Over the ice and snow we fly,
Oh, but our steeds have wings!
And their hoofs keep time
With the glad bells chime,
For sleigh bells are merry things,
Never a thought or care have we,
Lessons are laid aside,
And we laugh and sing,
Adding mirth and din
To the joy of a winter's ride."

"Oh, don't stop!" cried an eager voice. "Isn't there another verse?"

"There are two other verses," said Dorothy, "but—I've forgotten them."

"Then sing the one you do know. It's worth hearing again!"

Again she sang it, as gayly as before, but for some reason, Nancy's voice trembled, and Dorothy turned to glance at her.

She saw that Nancy's cheeks were white, and her eyes wide as if with fear. A moment before her cheeks had been rosy red where the sharp wind had kissed them.

"What is it, Nancy?" Dorothy whispered.

Nancy shook her head, but the hand that held Dorothy's tightened with a nervous grip.

When the girls were once more chattering together, Nancy, leaning toward Dorothy, whispered softly: "That dark man that stood near the woods watching us as we passed,—did you see him?"

"Why, yes," whispered Dorothy, "but—" then she understood Nancy's fear. "Why, Nancy dear, your old Uncle Steve, who stole you from us once, is not living. Don't you remember that, and besides, that man didn't look the least bit like him."

"That man looked just like Bonfanti!"

"Oh,—oo," burst softly from Dorothy's lips, then she tried to comfort Nancy. "But why should he be wandering through the woods here? You've always said that he was a busy man, and once you heard him say that he had never been out of New York City."

"I know I did," Nancy said, "but I s'pose he could go somewhere else, and oh, Dorothy that man looked just like him!"

CHAPTER VI

THE LOST NECKLACE

Nancy strove to be as gay as before. She told herself that the man certainly looked just like the old ballet-master, Bonfanti, but that he might have been a very different person. She did not wish the other girls to know that she had been uneasy or frightened, and so busy had they been in watching people whom they passed, laughing and talking, that Nancy's fright had passed unnoticed by all save one, and that one was Patricia Levine, Patricia, who seemed to see everything. She delighted in seeing something not intended for her eyes, and then how she would run to tell some one all about it!

Patricia had noticed Nancy's cheeks when they suddenly went white, she had seen the look of fear in her eyes, and she was wild with curiosity to know what it meant.

When they had started out Nancy had thought that the ride could not last too long, but the sight of the tall, dark man at the edge of the forest had changed all that, and when Marcus drove in at the gateway of Glenmore, and drew up at the steps, Nancy was the first

to spring out. Without stopping in the hall to talk over the ride with the others who had enjoyed it, she bounded up the stairs, and soon was in her room.

Vera stopped Dorothy to ask if Nancy was ill.

"No, oh, no!" Dorothy answered, as she followed Nancy up the stairway.

Vera's question, and Dorothy's hasty reply reached Patricia's ears.

"I'd like to know what it's all about," she whispered, "and I mean to find out, no matter how long it takes me."

It was strange how eagerly interested Patricia always was in anything that did not concern her. She did not know that a news monger is never respected, nor did she know that no girl whose nature was refined would care to know other people's business. Nothing so delighted Patricia, as a bit of news that she could, by hook or crook obtain, and the added joy of running off to repeat it, especially if she knew it should not be repeated, was greater than she could have described.

Dorothy, when she reached their room, found Nancy sitting upon a low stool, her hands loosely clasped, her eyes downcast as if studying the pattern of the rug.

Dorothy closed the door, and then, tossing her wraps upon the couch, sat down, Turkish fashion, on the rug beside her.

"Now, Nancy," she said, "you're not to let that man you saw this afternoon make you so uneasy. It couldn't have been Professor Bonfanti who taught you to dance, and was so harsh with you. Why should he be out here, walking through the woods at Glenmore? And even if really it had been Bonfanti, why would you be so frightened? It was your old uncle who stole you from us, and made you dance at the theaters to earn money for him. Bonfanti just taught you because your old Uncle Steve hired him to."

"But Dorothy, you don't know how often he said, while he was training me: 'Oh, if I had you in my hands, I could make you earn twice as much as Ferris does!'"

"When he said that he would look as eager as if he really saw the heaps of money that he thought he could make me earn for him.

"I don't know which would be the worse to work for, Professor Bonfanti or my old Uncle Steve, but this I do know: I hope no one will ever take me away from you, Dorothy!"

"And no one shall!" cried Dorothy, throwing her arms around Nancy, and holding her fast.

"I wouldn't have been so frightened if it was just what I saw to-day, but don't you know that just before we left the Stone House, I had a dream of being stolen. I'd not thought of it for weeks, but—well, that man did look like the ballet-master."

Patricia Levine had enjoyed the sleigh-ride. She had liked the clear, bracing air; she had liked being included in the list made out by Mrs. Marvin for the first ride of the season, but she had been annoyed by Arabella.

She stood drumming on the window-pane, and wondering how to begin the lecture that she intended to give Arabella, that is, if Arabella would ever get her wraps off, and sit down. She turned from the window.

"Well, I never saw such a slowpoke!" she cried.

Arabella blinked. Patricia thought she might as well begin, if she wished to say all that was in her mind before dinner.

"I certainly was provoked with you, Arabella, this afternoon. You looked just umbrageous with all those coats and shawls on," said Patricia.

"I looked what?" Arabella asked with a dull stare.

"I said um-bra-geous!" cried Patricia.

"I don't know what that word means," drawled Arabella.

"Neither do I," said Patricia, "but I know that's the way you looked."

"I can't unbutton this top button of my coat," remarked Arabella.

Patricia jerked the button from the buttonhole, and continued:

"How do you s'pose I like to have you act so queer, and then have the girls call you my 'chum'?"

Arabella instead of replying to the question remarked:

"And the fringe on this shawl has caught on a hook on my dress so I can't get it off."

Patricia's eyes were blazing. She was so angry that she hardly knew what she was saying.

"The idea! You had on two coats and a sweater, and as if that wasn't enough for any one girl to wear you went after two shawls. When you got all those duds on you looked as big as an _elegant_!"

"A _what_!" gasped Arabella.

"I'm too tired to say it over again," said Patricia, who now knew that she had made a funny error.

"But," persisted Arabella, "you said I looked as—"

It was no use to talk to the walls, and Patricia had rushed from the room, banging the door behind her.

There were weeks at Glenmore when everything went smoothly. Then there would come a week when it certainly seemed as if every one were doing her best to cause disturbance.

Usually the fault might easily be traced to the pupils, but there were times when Miss Fenler seemed as contrary as the most perverse pupil. On those days no one could please her.

Dorothy had little difficulty, but Vera, Elf, Betty, and Valerie were forever vexing her, and Patricia was never able to win her full approval. As for Arabella Correyville, Miss Fenler did not understand her, and Betty Chase said that "The Fender" fixed her sharp eyes upon Arabella, and appeared to be studying her as if she were a very small, but very peculiar bug that she was unable to classify.

There was yet another pupil who puzzled her, and, for that matter, puzzled the other pupils.

She was an old-fashioned little girl, who was letter-perfect in all her studies, but never brilliant, more quiet than any other girl at Glenmore, and so silent that one marveled that a little girl could be so still. Always neatly, but very plainly dressed, she looked like a little Puritan, and acted like one, as well.

And what a name the child possessed! Patience Little, and she lived up to it.

"Do you think she'd jump if a fire-cracker went off behind her?" questioned Valerie, one day.

"No, indeed, she would not," said Elf, who stood near. "I don't believe she would so much as turn around to look at it. She's spunkless."

But they were mistaken.

Among themselves they spoke of her as "Little Patience."

Once Betty Chase told her that she knew a girl whose name was "Patience," who was always called "Patty."

"My family does not like nicknames," was the reply in a low voice, as she turned away.

The day after the sleigh-ride, Lina Danford, one of the youngest pupils, came rushing down the stairway in great excitement.

"My amber necklace has been stolen! Girls! Do you hear? My amber beads are gone! Some one has been in my room and stolen them! Somebody ought to catch the burglar!"

Dorothy, standing near, put an arm around her, and tried to comfort her.

"Don't say it is gone, Lina, dear! It may be just mislaid. If you like, Nancy and I will go up with you, and help you hunt," but Lina was not easily to be comforted.

She insisted that the beads had been stolen, and that, therefore, it was idle to search.

Patience Little, for the first time, showed a bit of interest. She was crossing the hall when Lina raced down the stairs, and she actually paused to listen to what the little girl had to say. She said nothing, and after a moment, she went up-stairs.

She forgot to close her door, and going over to her dresser, opened its upper drawer. From a velvet case she drew forth a smaller velvet case, which, when she touched a clasp, sprang open, displaying a handsome string of amber beads. She held them up so that the light might play through them.

"I never wear them," she said softly, "but I've liked looking at them. Aunt Millicent gave them to me, and maybe I'd like to wear them sometime, but," she continued, "I'll not be selfish and keep them for _some time_. I'll give them to Lina, in place of those that she has lost."

Hurrying along the upper hall, Lina was surprised to see that the next door that she would pass, stood open. She was about to pass it, when on glancing toward it, she saw Patience standing before the glass, turning this way and that so as to get a better light on the amber necklace that she wore.

With a little cry, Lina sprang into the room. Patience turned, and was about to speak, but before she could say a word, Lina shouted:

"That's my necklace! I knew somebody had taken it, but I never dreamed it was a Glenmore girl who did it. I thought it was a burglar. Give it to me this minute!"

"This necklace is mine!" returned the accused girl excitedly.

Her eyes flashed, she quivered with anger. No one would have believed that the girl who always appeared calm, and rarely spoke, unless spoken to, could show such fire. One could not guess how the scene would have ended, but just at that moment a slight sound made both girls turn.

There in the doorway stood Mrs. Marvin.

"I am very sorry to see anything so rude, so unkind, and so unjust," she said.

"You were hopelessly rude to rush into another girl's room and accuse her, even if she were at fault.

"You were unkind, because you spoke as harshly as possible, and you were unjust, because here in my hand I have your own amber beads that one of the maids has just found.

"You must apologize at once, ask Patience if she will forgive you, and in your own room, try to think of some kind way to make amends."

Lina was crying now.

[Illustration: "This necklace is mine!" returned the accused girl excitedly.]

"Oh, I'm so sorry. Why do I never think before I say horrid things? Forgive me, Patience, if you can. I'll gladly do anything for you."

Then the surprise came.

Patience, the silent, shy girl, threw her arms about the younger girl, and held her close.

"The necklace that I have on was given to me by Aunt Millicent. I've never worn it. It is beautiful, but I like quiet colors. The showy things are prettier for other girls, I think. I heard Lina say that she had lost hers, and I was just thinking that I would give mine to her, when she rushed in, and—I hadn't a chance to tell her. That's all," she said simply.

"Oh, I was worse even than I thought," cried Lina, "and to think, Mrs. Marvin, that she was planning to give her necklace to me!"

"Promise me, Lina, that after this you will be less quick to accuse."

"Indeed I will, and Patience, if you'll let me, I'd like to be your friend."

"I'm sometimes lonely. I need you, Lina," Patience said, gently.

Lina never did anything by halves. She told her classmates how just at the time that Patience had been planning to give her own necklace to make up for Lina's loss, she had been harshly accused. She told how sweetly forgiving Patience had been, and wound up by stating that hereafter they were to be chums.

Mrs. Marvin, on the way to her own apartment, vaguely wondered what the next happening would be.

"I wonder if the entire week is to be a series of disturbances," she thought. "To be sure, there are but two days more, Friday and Saturday, but I should not be surprised if some one started something, so as to make the week complete."

It certainly had been a record week for petty annoyances, and to cap the climax on Friday, after lunch, Miss Fenler waited in the hall, near the door that led from the dining-room. She felt that she must speak to Patricia.

As a rule pupils were, of course, permitted to dress as they chose, but it seemed as if Patricia was actually trying to see how strange a rig she could wear and yet go unrebuked.

On this day, she had done the oddest thing of all. She had tied her hair on the crown of her head with a yellow ribbon. The ribbon was very wide, and the bow was enormous. As if that were not enough she had taken equally wide ribbon, of pink, and of blue, had tied a large bow of each and then had pinned the pink bow to the right loop of the yellow bow, the blue bow to the left loop, and when she entered the dining-room the effect was, to say the least, _amazing-!

The bows were about eight inches wide. Really, Patricia was a droll sight!

Unless she were spoken to she would wear her freakish ribbons at the afternoon session.

When lunch was over, and the pupils came trooping out into the hall, Miss Fenler spoke to Patricia. When they at last stood alone in one corner of the hall, Miss Fenler mentioned the gaudy colors, and said

that while the girls were permitted to wear as bright ribbons as they chose, they would certainly not be allowed to wear three huge bows at a time.

"The idea!" said Patricia. "Well, I guess I'll not agree to wear little stingy-looking bows for any one."

"You would obstruct the view of the large blackboard," said Miss Fenler. "No one could see around your head."

"I shall wear these bows I have on or none at all!" said Patricia.

"Don't be obstinate," said Miss Fenler. "Mrs. Marvin told me to speak to you."

"Did she say I couldn't wear these big bows?" Patricia asked, her eyes black with anger.

"She certainly did," declared Miss Fenler.

"Well, you can tell her I wear these or none at all," Patricia said, stoutly.

"None at all!" repeated Miss Fenler.

"Don't attempt to come into the classroom with your long hair untidy. Without a ribbon it would look slovenly."

Patricia's smile was broad, and her eyes actually impish as she left the hall.

"She's equal to pinning on a half-dozen extra bows if she chooses," Miss Fenler said, under her breath.

Glenmore, once a private estate, looked like an old castle, and the dwellings that were its nearest neighbors were owned by old and wealthy residents. No stores had ever broken the charm of the locality, and the sleepy old town had supposed that they never would, yet around the corner of a little back street, an enterprising Italian had purchased a wee cottage. After three days a sign appeared in his front window. It stunned the residents. It read:

Antonio Carana,
Barber and Hairdresser.

Already small boys and girls might be seen, in charge of maids, trotting up his steps with long curls, and after a few minutes, appearing with a "Dutch cut."

Patricia, buttoning her coat as she ran, appeared at his door breathless, but eager.

"I want my hair bobbed, and I must have it done right off, or I'll be late to school," she cried, rushing past the astonished Tony, and mounting his big chair.

"_Dutch cut!_" she demanded, thinking that he had not understood her.

"Cutta da long hair?" he asked, lifting the strands.

"Sure," cried Patricia, "What else would I want cut off? Certainly not my _nose_."

"Alla right," said Tony, but he thought it strange, and wondered if the little girl's mother would appear at any moment, angry, and vengeful.

Patricia's temper had been gradually cooling, and now, as she saw the long locks that Tony had clipped, she was desperately sorry that she had come. It was half done, however, so she could not "back out." One does not care to appear with the right side of one's head with short hair, and the left side with hair half-way toward one's girdle!

Patricia sighed, and allowed him to continue. What else could she do? She had been proud of her hair, but when she saw herself in the mirror, her vanity came to her aid.

She had given up her fine head of hair, but look! Here was another chance to make a sensation. Not a girl at school had her hair "bobbed."

"Probably they'll tell me that only very little girls have their hair like this, but I don't care. They'll be surprised, and it's the only way I can go without ribbons, and I said I'd wear big bows or nothing."

Of course the pupils stared when Patricia appeared in the class-room, and that delighted her.

"I guess my Dutch cut made more show than my ribbons would have," she whispered.

Making a show was about all that Patricia cared for, the only other thing that she appeared to think worth while was meddling in other people's affairs.

CHAPTER VII

WHEN NANCY DANCED

Mrs. Marvin decided to make the weekly socials very different from what they had been.

It had been her custom to hire musicians from the city to give a little recital, and then serve light refreshments, and allow the latter part of the evening to be spent in indoor games, or dancing.

The social part of the evening was always enjoyed, but many of the musicians, both vocal and instrumental, had given selections of so strictly classical character that some of the pupils complained that they did not care for it.

She determined to ask three pupils to arrange a program for each evening, each of the three being expected to take part in the entertainment.

One Monday morning she unfolded her plan, and announced that on Friday of that week would occur the first social having a pupils' program.

"I have asked Dorothy Dainty to take charge of the little recital, and I believe we shall enjoy it."

When the eager applause had subsided, Mrs. Marvin continued:

"The girl in charge of the entertainment must not be annoyed with questions as to the program because I wish the entertainment each week to be a surprise.

"Dorothy, herself must contribute one or two numbers, and I have appointed Nancy Ferris, and Patricia Levine to help her."

The pupils were wild with curiosity as to what the numbers were to be, but while a few hinted that they were eager to know just what they were to hear and see, they did not ask Dorothy to tell them. They thought it would be more fun to be surprised.

Dorothy found herself in an awkward place.

She had decided to sing a pretty waltz song, for which Nancy played the accompaniment. Nancy had at first thought of playing a piano duet with Dorothy, but Dorothy pointed out that a number of the girls, when it came their turn to entertain, would surely play, and she urged Nancy to do a fine solo dance.

"It will be more of a treat," she urged, and Nancy agreed.

Patricia declared that she had studied with a fine vocal instructor since they had heard her, and she also stated that she would sing a solo, or nothing.

Patricia, when at Merrivale private school with Dorothy and Nancy, had done some very funny singing, and Dorothy felt a bit nervous as to what she would do now, but Patricia insisted that she had rapidly improved, and there seemed to be no choice but to let her sing.

"Do make her tell you what she's going to sing," Nancy said, one morning, "because if she has chosen something you wouldn't like to have her sing, you might be able to coax her to change it."

Dorothy promised to question Patricia, but she laughed at the idea of being able to make Patricia change her mind after she had decided what she should do.

"What am I to sing?" said Patricia, when at recess Dorothy questioned her. "I'm going to sing something from grand opera. It's called:

'I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls,'

and my teacher coached me on it, and he said I sang it just as it should be sung."

"If her teacher said that she sang it well, perhaps it will be all right," Dorothy said, but even as she said it she wondered just what Patricia would do. Patricia might do anything.

Dorothy took the time to practice when all of the pupils were out of doors at recess. She did not wish them to hear her song until she should sing it for them at the social.

Nancy practiced her solo at early morning. Mrs. Marvin had given her permission to practice in their reception hall when she learned at what an early hour Nancy was willing to rise in order to do it.

Patricia declared it entirely needless for her to practice, thus making Dorothy still more uneasy as to her performance.

At last the evening arrived.

Dorothy had told herself that if, after all, Patricia did anything as "queer" as she had been known to do, worrying beforehand would not mend matters. She knew if she became nervous regarding Patricia, she could not do her own solo well. Patricia had asked that her number might be the last on the program, and Dorothy had agreed.

As Patricia usually wished to be first in anything, and was offended if not given precedence, it certainly looked as if she were planning to have her solo the crowning event of the evening.

Soon after seven a buzz of voices told Dorothy that the pupils had assembled early, and she would have joined them, but Mrs. Marvin had said that each of the soloists must be announced, and must come onto the stage, and greet her audience as if she were a professional.

All had been carefully arranged, and Vera Vane was to announce each performer.

Dorothy had chosen a light-blue dress, her pumps and hose of the same shade. The dress was charming, because of its lovely coloring, and its graceful lines.

Very clearly Vera announced:

"The first number to-night will be a waltz song by Dorothy Dainty."

Dorothy's voice had been carefully trained, and very sweetly she sang, one especial charm being that every word could be clearly heard, which is more than can be said of many singers who have studied for years.

She had chosen "Asphodel's Song."

How sweet was the voice, how happy her smile as she sang:

"Oh, how lovely are my flowers
In the morning wet with dew,
Ah, they courtesy to the morning
Off'ring gifts of fragrance new.
Then the sound of bird wings whirring
Wake again the drowsy trees,
And the tiny brooks are stirring,
Running onward to the sea.
Oh, how lovely are my flowers
When the twilight shadows creep,
Hosts of fairy folks come trooping,
Where my flowers lie asleep."

Surely no singer was ever more graciously received.

There were to be no encores because of limited time.

Lights were usually out at nine-thirty, but the socials were from eight to ten. The concert must be brief to allow sufficient time afterward for games.

"The next number will be a dance by Nancy Ferris."

Nancy had stood in the upper hall, ready, when she heard her name called to enter. Here and there a tiny spangle caught the light, and the soft pink of her dress was repeated in her cheeks. She was happy. She was going to give pleasure.

As she heard her name called, she bounded down the stairway, across the hall, and up on the stage, looking far smaller than in her usual school dress. The pupils were spellbound.

Nancy had said nothing of her dancing nor had she spoken of having been a tiny performer at the theaters.

Now as they saw her whirling on the tips of her toes, dipping, swaying, doing steps of wondrous grace, they marveled at the skill with which she did it. At home, at the Stone House, Dorothy had often played for her, but to-night she seemed to out-do herself.

Nancy swung forward, then with cunning steps retreated, crossed her feet and did the pretty rocking-step, whirled again, and yet again, did the pirouette to left, then to right, made a very low courtesy, and ran off the stage, followed by tremendous clapping.

How they wished that she might have repeated the lovely dance!

Mrs. Marvin closely watched the nimble feet and determined to know something more about the charming little dancer. And now—Dorothy wondered _just what_ the next number would be. She took a long breath when, as Vera announced her, Patricia entered simply attired, wearing a pretty white dress, with a pale yellow sash, no other color.

It was remarkable to see Patricia without at least six colors.

"Perhaps she'll sing well," Dorothy said to herself, "for the lovely song that she chose for her number _couldn't_ be twisted into anything funny."

Was that really so, or was Dorothy trying to think so? Was there anything that Patricia could not "twist" if she chose?

The charming old song is very sweet when properly sung, and the words fit the melody.

"I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls,
With vassals and serfs at my side,
And of all who assembled within those walls,
That I was the joy and the pride.
I had riches too great to count, could boast
Of a high ancestral name,

But I also dreamt, and that charmed me most,
That you loved me just the same.”

So runs the first verse, but Patricia had never seen the music. She had heard the song a number of times, and felt competent to sing it.

Dorothy had asked her to practice it, then had offered to loan her the music, but Patricia declared that she needed neither practice, nor the use of the music.

”Are you sure you know the words?” Nancy had asked.

”Of course!” Patricia had said sharply.

Nancy played the prelude, and Patricia sang. Sang with all her might, one might say, but oh, the words as she sang them!

She had caught them as they sounded, giving never a thought as to whether they made sense.

”I dre-eampt that I dwe-e-lt in mar-ar-ble halls
With _vessels_ and _safes_ at my side.
And of all who had stumbled within those walls
That I was the _joke_, and the _bride_,
I had _witches_ to _mate_ and count, could boast
Of a high and central name
But I also dreamt, and that jarred me most,
That Jew loved me just the same.”

Was it strange that roars of laughter greeted the song? Even Mrs. Marvin, a model of all that was well-bred, covered her eyes for a moment with her handkerchief, but when she removed it, the eyes were twinkling and it was evident that only her self-control kept her from laughing aloud.

Dorothy’s first thought was for Patricia. She knew it must be dreadful to be laughed at, and she was hoping that Patricia might not be too badly hurt. She would draw her into the games later in the evening, and thus cheer her.

It happened that Patricia needed no cheering. She was disgusted, but not hurt. She believed herself to be a very fine singer, and thought that the only reason for laughter was that her audience was dull, so dull indeed that her romantic selection had been mistaken for a comic song.

”The idea of thinking that song funny enough to laugh at! Why it is not a comic song at all. There’s nothing funny about it!” she declared. ”It really doesn’t pay to sing for folks here. They can’t understand what you are doing! The next time I sing, I’ll sing for

my friends in N'York."

Dorothy was puzzled for a second, then, as she saw that Patricia really meant what she said, she was thankful that the laughter had not been understood by the silly little singer.

Patricia had actually thought that they were foolishly amused by the song.

It had been quite another thing that annoyed Patricia, and that was the evident pleasure that Nancy's dancing had given, and on the day after the social, she was vexed to have to hear the other girls talking about it.

"I'd think you never saw any one dance before," she said, when Betty Chase said that Nancy's dancing was "simply lovely."

"Well, I never did see a girl dance like that," said Betty.

"Well, she ought to dance. She's had enough training, besides she used to dance on the stage. Who couldn't dance if they had a chance like that?"

"A whole lot of people couldn't," said Betty, sharply. "I couldn't for one, and I guess there are a few others."

"Do you mean me?" Patricia asked, sharply, her eyes flashing.

"I mean any one silly enough to say that Nancy's dancing was anything but wonderful," Betty said, and she turned to Valerie, leaving Patricia to talk to herself, or to no one, if she chose.

Patricia had hoped to lessen interest in Nancy, but what she had said had had an opposite effect.

It had increased their already lively interest to such an extent that many who had not yet met her were wild to know her, and those who already were her friends were eager to question her as to her career. They longed to hear all about her training, her first appearance at the theater, and countless questions they wanted to ask her. Patricia had made Nancy more popular than before.

CHAPTER VIII

A BIT OF SPITE

For several days Patricia was so busy thinking, that Arabella felt rather lonely. Arabella had been writing a letter to her Aunt Matilda, and endeavoring to answer all the questions that that peculiar woman had asked. It had occupied her spare time for two days, and was not yet ready to mail.

"O dear!" sighed Arabella, "I don't like to write letters."

"Don't write them," Patricia advised.

"Why, Patricia Levine! You know if I didn't answer Aunt Matilda's letter she'd pack her suit-case, and come right here!"

"Good gracious! Hurry up and finish it," cried Patricia. "I wouldn't want her coming here."

"I've got a cold, so I couldn't go out to mail it," drawled Arabella.

"Don't let that stop you," cried Patricia, "for I'll gladly go out to mail it for you, if it'll keep your Aunt Matilda away."

Later, when Patricia went down the hall on the way to post the letter, she saw that Dorothy's door was slightly ajar. Of course Patricia's sharp eyes saw it, and, because she never could resist the temptation to listen, where she might hear something not intended for her ears, she paused.

Nancy was speaking of the man that she had seen standing at the edge of the forest, on the day of the sleigh-ride. Again she told Dorothy how it had frightened her, adding:

"He looked just like Bonfanti, the ballet-teacher, and I believe if I should look from our window and see him out there, looking toward this house, I'd not dare to go out for days."

Dorothy tried to comfort her, by saying:

"But, Nancy dear, we've not seen him since that day, and he's miles away from here by this time, as likely as not."

Patricia needed to hear no more. She could not make Nancy less popular, but here was a fine chance for annoying her.

It was strange what pleasure it afforded Patricia to make others unhappy! She never seemed to know that in striving to annoy others, she was constantly proving that she herself was disagreeable.

She hastened out to the nearest mail box with the letter, and then returning to her room, sat down to think.

"I wish you'd talk," said Arabella. "It's awful dull this cloudy afternoon."

Patricia was in no mood for talking, and Arabella dared not insist.

It was after dinner when the pupils met in the cheery reception-hall for a little chat before going to their rooms, that Patricia saw her chance, and took it.

Some one asked Nancy if she and Dorothy had been out for their usual walk.

"It seemed a bit raw," she replied, "so we remained in."

Patricia, who had been moving nearer, now stood at Nancy's elbow.

"Did you notice a big, dark man, this morning looking up toward your window?" she asked: "Do you know who he is? We saw him the day of the sleigh-ride, and that was weeks ago. I believe he is always right around here, for I don't know how many times I have seen him. He always simply stares toward your windows. I thought perhaps you knew him."

Nancy turned pale, and Mrs. Marvin, who was near them, saw Dorothy draw Nancy closer as if to protect her.

"Is Nancy ill?" she asked kindly.

Patricia had left the hall when she saw Mrs. Marvin speaking to Dorothy.

Dorothy explained how frightened Nancy had been ever since the sleigh-ride, a few weeks before.

"Come into my apartment and tell me all about this. I am greatly interested," she said.

They were only too glad to escape the curious eyes that now were watching them, and together they told Mrs. Marvin the story of Nancy's career. When they reached the point where Patricia had told them of the man who had stood looking up at their windows that afternoon, a look of relief passed over her face, and she actually laughed.

"You two dear little friends may rest easy to-night," she said, "for the man whom you saw at the edge of the woods, and the man who was here to-day, looking up at your windows, as Patricia said, are one and the same person. He is a man who has made a study of all plant life, and especially wise is he in regard to vines and trees.

"To-day he was trying to decide just what sort of vine would thrive best on this sunny side of the house. His name is not nearly so picturesque as Bonfanti. It is Jonathan Scroggs. Not a fine name, surely, but his name has never hindered him in his profession. He is one of the best florists in the country, he knows all about beautiful vines and trees, and he is also a landscape gardener. He can take a plain little cottage, with a small piece of land, and plant just the right kind of trees on the place, train vines over the porch so as to render it charming, and make the bit of land into a tiny park, so dainty, so altogether lovely that people will come from far and near to see the 'beauty spot.' Now do you care in the least what his name is?"

"Indeed I do not," Dorothy said, firmly.

"And oh, how glad I am that he is not Professor Bonfanti!" Nancy said. "It was silly to be so frightened, but if only you knew how hard those months were when he was training me, and old Uncle Steve was threatening all sorts of things if I did not dance well! You see, I was really ill with fear, and homesickness, and Uncle Steve did not seem to see that the more he threatened, the more ill I became. Oh, if I should talk all day, I could not tell you half the misery of those days. Only yesterday one of the girls said that she would not have minded any of the harsh things if only she could have danced on the stage. That is what she thinks, but she doesn't know!"

"Well, Nancy, to-day you are nervous and tired, but I have quieted all your fears, and assured you that you are safe here at Glenmore. Some day when we can arrange it, I would enjoy hearing more of your little career."

"And I'd be willing to tell you, Mrs. Marvin; you've been so kind, and you've comforted me. I shall sleep to-night without any horrid dreams."

Mrs. Marvin felt that Patricia had really intended to frighten Nancy, and she decided to have a quiet little talk with her, and if possible, learn what had prompted her to do so unkind a thing.

It was an odd combination that "Glenmore," one of the best of schools for girls in the country, modern in every respect, and absolutely "up-to-date," should be situated in a town that was quaint, and picturesque, with inhabitants as fanciful, and superstitious as one would find if he had traveled back a century.

True, there were residents who had recently come to the place for a summer home, but the old people of the place clung to their old time superstitions, their firm belief in "signs," their legends handed

down from one generation to another, and the newcomers humored them, listened to their "yarns," and asked to hear more. Many of these stories were quite as interesting as any folk tales, and none could tell them with finer effect than old Cornelia Derby.

It was Marcus who had pointed her out to several of the girls who, one morning, chanced to be standing near the gate as the old woman came up the street.

"Oh, Marcus, do you really mean that she can tell all sorts of quaint stories about this old town?" cried Betty Chase.

"I sure does," said Marcus, "and 'nuffin' pleases her like gittin' a chance ter tell 'em ter folks as is willin' ter listen."

"Now, Valerie," said Betty, turning to her chum, "let's get her to tell us some of the stories she knows about the fine old houses, and the people that once lived in them."

"Fine!" cried Valerie, "but where would we find her?"

"She lives in a little old hut, 'round behin' the hill over there!" said Marcus, "an' all yo' has ter do is ter go up dis street, an' yo'll sure spot it, long 'fore yo' reach it, 'cause the top half er dat hut is red, an' the bottom half is whitewash. It sure looks mighty quare!"

"Let's take a walk over there to-morrow, when our lessons are prepared," said Valerie, "but," she added, "I hope we find it."

"Yo' couldn't miss it," said Marcus, "for all yo' has ter do is ter go up dis street, an' turn ter yo' left, den go a piece, an' turn ter yo' right, an' walk 'til yo' come ter a big yaller house, an' dat's 'bout half-way. Nex' yo' cross a field, skip over de place where de brook is in summer an' come ter a piece er wall, stone wall, 'tis, an' it don't seem ter b'long ter no place 'tall, an' de hut is jes' a little ways beyond."

The sound of a bell sent them hurrying toward the house.

"Do you expect to remember all that?" Valerie asked on the way to the class-room.

"If you do you'll be a wonder. I've forgotten it now."

Betty nodded confidently.

"We'll go over there to-morrow," she said.

The next afternoon, Betty helped Valerie with some puzzling problems that must be solved before starting out.

Then with confidence on Betty's part, and much doubt in Valerie's mind as to their ability to find the hut, they set off on the long walk. After twice enquiring of people whom they met, of taking a long walk in the wrong direction, and retracing their steps, they finally espied the piece of stone wall that seemed to belong to "no place at all," as Marcus had said.

Glad to rest, they paused there to look about them, and to wait for Vera and Elf, who had promised to meet them. Neither was in sight, although they had said that they would be prompt. Snow and ice had fled, and now everywhere were signs of spring. Vera had declared that the long walk was what she needed, and Elf had said that she would endure the walk for the sake of hearing the quaint stories of the town and its people that old Cornelia would tell.

At the end of the wall Betty and Valerie waited.

"I'd not wait much longer," Valerie said.

"I surely will _not_!" Betty replied, "for if they are coming, they'll be here in a few minutes."

It was evident that the two girls had, for some reason, been detained, and Betty determined to wait no longer.

[Illustration: At the end of the wall Betty and Valerie waited.]

"Come!" she cried. "We'll go on now to the little hut, and if Vera and Elf come poking along a half-hour later, they can just sit on this wall, and see if they enjoy waiting as well as we did."

It was but a short distance, and they ran part of the way to make up for lost time, but when they reached the gate they found, as Valerie glanced at her tiny watch, that it was later than they thought, and was already about time for them to turn toward Glenmore, if they did not wish to be late.

Hours were strictly kept at the school, and all pupils must return from recreation in time to give themselves personal care, and be in the lower hall at five-thirty for a friendly chat before going to the dining-room at six.

Mrs. Marvin insisted that every pupil look her best at all times.

It was now four o'clock. It would take a half-hour to reach Glenmore. That meant that not more than a half-hour could be spent at the hut.

There was no answer to their repeated knocking, but as they turned to go they saw old Cornelia coming toward them along the road, a big basket on her arm.

"Well, well, two fine little callers I find waiting for me," she said. "And what can I do for you?"

"We wanted you to tell us all about some of the old buildings and the interesting stories about the people who lived in them," said Betty, "but it's so late now that I don't believe there's time. We have to be back at Glenmore at five."

"Then sit right down here on my garden-seat and I'll tell you the shortest tale I know, and some other day if you come when you have more time I'll tell you more."

"Oh, that will be fine!" they cried, as with one voice.

"How would you like to hear about the wishing-well?"

"That sounds _great_!" declared Betty and then: "Could you begin it with 'Once upon a time?'"

"Surely," was the quick response, "and now I think of it, I'm sure you must have passed the old wishing-well on your way here. The old well was supposed to have magic power, and long ago when the old Paxton House was standing, people came, for miles around, to be near the old well in the garden, and wish for their heart's desire, feeling sure that their wish would be granted.

"Of course the idea was absurd, but the townspeople of those days were superstitious, so that if those things that they wished for beside the well never came to them, they thought that they must have forgotten to ask for them in the right way, and later they would try again.

"If they obtained the thing that they had wished for, they laid their good fortune entirely to the fact that the old well must have approved of them."

"And where is it?" Valerie asked. "You said that we must have passed it."

"The old well has a flat wooden cover over it now, with an iron bar to keep it in place, lest some one be careless and fall in, though now the wild blackberry vines have nearly hidden it from sight. Even now when only young leaves are on the brambles, the thorny stems make a network over the cover. The old Paxton House was gone before my time," Mrs. Derby said, "but a part of its fine wall remains. It was

upon that wall that the wishers sat.

"Did you happen to notice a fine piece of wall that seemed to belong to no one at all, and ended in a broad field?"

"The idea!" cried Betty. "Why we sat on that piece of wall, and could have 'wished' just as well as not, if only we'd known it."

"And it's almost half-past four now," said Valerie. "S'pose we run along toward Glenmore, and stop just long enough to sit on the wall and wish. We can be on time at five, if we do that. Then we could come over some day when we've more time, and hear all about the well, and other stories, too."

It was a good idea, because it was already so late that they could remain but a few moments longer, so with an urgent invitation to come again, and a promise to do so, they ran back to the old wall, looking back to wave their hands to the little woman who waved in return.

CHAPTER IX

THE WISHING-WELL

"Isn't it funny to think that we stopped at the very place to wish, and never knew it?" said Valerie, as they ran along the foot path that would take them back, the shortest way to the wall, and the wishing-well.

"Not so 'funny' as that we'd take so much time and trouble to wish when we get there," said Betty.

"Why is it odd?" Valerie asked, stopping squarely in front of Betty, and looking at her with round eyes.

"Oh, because we're acting exactly as if we believed in the old well," Betty said, looking a bit annoyed, yet keeping straight on toward the wall.

"Well, of course we're not so silly as to really and truly believe it could grant our wishes, but it's no harm to try," responded Valerie.

Betty laughed.

"Oh, we don't believe it all,
Yet we must believe a little

We _b'lieve_ the water boils
When the steam comes from the _kittle_.

"It's dark inside the drum,
Yet we hear the drumming well,
But that we wished beside the wall
We'll never, never tell."

"Where did you hear those verses?" Valerie asked.

"That's a funny song my brother sings. I made the second verse to fit to-day."

"Why, Betty Chase! Who'd think you could make poetry?" cried Valerie, looking Betty over, as if it were the first time she had ever seen her.

Betty laughed gayly.

"I guess Mrs. Marvin would tell you it wasn't poetry. Don't you remember she told us the other day that many people could write verses, but that verses were not always _poetry_?"

"Well, all the same, I like the funny verses," Valerie said, "and here we are at the wall again."

"And here's luck to us, and our wishing!" cried Betty.

She sprang up on the wall beside Valerie, and for a moment the two sat thinking.

It was Valerie who first spoke.

"I've been trying to think what to wish for," she said, "and now all at once I know. Mother told me to work hard this year, so as to stand high in my class, and Aunt Phyllis said if I could finish in June with ninety per cent. average she'd give me a beautiful ring. Yes, that's what I'll wish for by the old well, and after I've wished it, I'll work harder than ever so that my wish will come true. Well, why do you laugh?" she asked, looking not only amazed, but rather vexed at Betty, who could not stop laughing even when she saw that Valerie was far from thinking it a joke.

"Well, what have I said that is so awfully funny?" she asked sharply.

"Don't be provoked, Valerie," Betty said, but her shoulders shook although she tried to check her laughter.

"I was only thinking," she continued, "how generous you were to help the old well out so nicely. Just as soon as you've wished, you'll

start right out to work hard enough to just make the wish come true, well or no well, and I do believe, if your aunt gives you the ring, you'll forget how hard you worked, and you'll be saying: 'I do more than half believe in the wishing-well!'"

Valerie was never long angry, and she laughed as she answered:

"Well, Miss Wise-one, are you going to wish, and then sit back and wait to see if it 'comes true'?"

"I'll wish just for fun, but I don't believe what she said about the old well any more than you do, Valerie Dare. We'd be silly to even think that an old well had any power to grant wishes," Betty said, but Valerie laughed again.

"Then why did we bother to sit on this wall and wish?" she said.

"We might just as well wish while we're walking along the road."

"Come on!" cried Betty. "You wished on the wall beside the well, and I'll wish as we walk along, and we'll see which gets what she wished for."

"All right," agreed Valerie, "but I do hope you'll get yours, Betty."

"I'm as likely to, as if I'd kept sitting by the well," Betty said, "for I wish for what just couldn't happen."

"Why Betty Chase! Why don't you wish for something that you've a chance of getting," said Valerie, stopping squarely in front of Betty.

"Because I have everything I want but one thing," was the quiet reply.

"And that one thing is—what?" queried Valerie.

"I love Dorothy Dainty, and I don't want to say 'good-by' to her when school closes. I'd like to be where she is this summer, but that couldn't be. You see our summer home is lovely, and we go there every year. Father and mother like the country better than the shore, but I like the beach, and the water best. Dorothy and Nancy will go home to Merrivale, but whether they spend the summer there, or go away to some other place, it won't make much difference to me. It's not likely to happen that they'll come to the quiet little town where we are to spend the summer."

Betty's merry face now wore such a sober expression that Valerie said:

"Well, I still say I wish you'd wanted something that really could happen."

At that moment some one appeared just around a bend of the road, some one wearing the gayest of colors, and with her a little old-fashioned figure in a dark brown dress.

"Look! Patricia and Arabella are coming this way, and they look as if they were planning something great. Just see how close together their heads are! I don't know Arabella very well, but when Patricia is 'up to' anything, it's pretty sure to be mischief."

"Oh, I don't know," Valerie. "It's just as likely to be some way she's planning for a chance to show off."

Betty laughed.

"Did you hear Vera Vane telling about the afternoon that Patricia knocked at her door, and said that she had come to 'make a call'?"

"I didn't hear that," said Valerie. "What did she do?"

"She was wearing all the rings and bangles that she owned, and in her hand was a card-case, just as if she were grown up. She sat on the tip edge of her chair, and she kept taking out her handkerchief, and shaking it because it was drenched with perfumery, and when she went, she emptied the card case on the table, and Vera counted the cards. Say, Patricia had left .fifty.. Wasn't that funny?"

"Hush-sh!" breathed Valerie, "she might hear you."

Patricia rushed forward, while Arabella, as usual, hung back, preferring to stare at Betty and Valerie through her spectacles, rather than have a little chat.

She wanted to watch their faces, and see if they were greatly surprised with the news that Patricia had to tell.

"Guess where we're going!" Patricia cried, "but you couldn't guess, so I'll tell you. We're going over to the well, the one that's called the wishing-well," she explained, "and we mustn't tell what we mean to wish for, 'cause if you tell, you wouldn't get your wish. Did you know that?"

Betty said that she had not heard that.

"I'll tell you to-morrow just how to find it, but we can't stop now. There isn't time."

"Late!" cried Valerie. "I guess you two are late. We think we have to hurry to get to Glenmore on time, and you are going away from school every minute. Why don't you go to the well, if you want to, tomorrow."

Arabella thought that they ought to turn back, but Patricia seized her hand, and the two commenced to run.

"They'll be a half-hour late," said Valerie, looking after the flying figures.

"And 'The Fender' will be waiting for a chance to scold them when they come in," said Betty.

As they pushed the gate open, they saw a little figure disappearing around the corner of the house.

"That was Ida Mayo," said Valerie.

"I didn't see her face. Are you sure it was Ida?" Betty asked.

"Oh, it was Ida," Valerie answered, "and I do wonder why she stays in her room all the time. If she happens to come down when the girls are out, she runs, the moment she sees any of us coming."

"It's a long time ago that she was sick," Betty replied, "but she must be all right by this time. I wonder why she ran when she saw us? We don't know her well enough to stop her to talk. She's bigger than we are, and she's three classes above us."

"Who told you she stayed in her own room all the time?" continued Betty.

"Patricia Levine said so," Valerie said.

"Why, Valerie Dare, you know Patricia tells—well—things that aren't really true," said Betty.

"Well, we don't see Ida, now, as we used to," Valerie said.

"That might just happen," said Betty.

It happened that what Patricia had said was true.

The so-called "beautifier" had injured the skin so severely that it required time to heal it.

Mrs. Marvin had said that Ida was feeling far from well, which was true.

Her vanity had prompted her to do a foolish thing, and she had suffered for it, both because of her painful face, and because in her nervousness, she had cried until completely tired out.

Mrs. Marvin had talked with her kindly and wisely, she had let old Judy take her meals up to her room, and she had personally given her private instruction, for she pitied the silly girl, and sought to keep curious ones from annoying her.

Ida had hastened away when she had seen the two younger girls coming because there still were traces on her cheeks of the burning caused by the patent "beautifier," and she seemed more afraid of the comments of the younger girls, than of her own classmates.

As the two girls entered the hall they saw that the tall clock marked the time as quarter-past five.

"Fifteen minutes to fix up just a bit," said Betty. "Come on!"

They raced up the stairs and soon reached their room.

Valerie was ready first, because Betty had found a letter waiting for her, and promptly sat down to read it.

"You'd better not stop to read it," cautioned Valerie, "for when we came in we had only fifteen minutes to—"

But just then Betty gave a little cry of delight.

"Oh-oo! Just listen to this!" she cried. "Father says we are to go to the shore this summer just for a change, and already he has rented the summer place." She clapped her hands, and laughed with sheer happiness.

"Oh, I'm so glad to hear that to-night. I do believe I'll dream about it," she said.

The half-hour for social chat was over, and dinner was half through when Patricia and Arabella entered the dining-room.

All eyes were turned upon them.

Patricia held her chin very high, and looked as if she were thinking: "I know I'm late, but what of that?" She was assuming a boldness that she did not feel, whereas Arabella was absolutely natural. She felt frightened, and looked—just as she felt.

"Wouldn't you like to know what they wished?" whispered Valerie, to which Betty whispered in reply:

"I'd like to know, but they wouldn't tell us."

It was a fixed rule at Glenmore that the pupils must be present at the social half-hour, and then be sure of being prompt at six, the dinner hour. Patricia and Arabella were the first to break that rule.

There was to be a week's vacation, and all but four of the pupils were to spend it at home.

They were Patricia and Arabella, Dorothy, and Nancy.

Mrs. Dainty and Aunt Charlotte were still traveling, and Mrs. Vane had asked Vera to bring Dorothy and Nancy home with her for the week. Already they had planned enough pleasure to last a month, and Vera was still racking her busy brain to think of other things that they might do.

The pupils were welcome to remain at Glenmore if they wished, and Patricia had decided that that was just what she would do.

Arabella had hesitated. She was fond of her father, and she had intended to go home for the week, but Patricia had declared that they would stay at Glenmore, and Arabella was no match for Patricia, so it was settled that they would remain at the school.

The week at Vera's home opened charmingly.

Mrs. Vane had given the week over to Vera and her three little guests.

"It isn't quite a week," she said when she greeted them, "for you have arrived Monday afternoon, and you must leave Saturday morning. That gives us Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, and we must make each day delightful."

"It always is delightful here," said Dorothy, "and it seemed so good to come to you when mother was away."

Mrs. Vane drew Dorothy closer. She knew that at heart, sweet Dorothy was a bit homesick.

"We'll have a pleasant little home evening with music and games," she said, "and you'll all feel rested by to-morrow. I'll not tell what I've in store for to-morrow. That is a secret," she said.

Of course Vera coaxed, and the others tried to guess, but Mrs. Vane remained firm, only laughing as their guessing grew wilder.

"Mother truly can keep a secret, but I can't," said Vera. "I mean to keep it but first thing I know, I'm telling it."

"We all know that," said Elf, and Vera joined in the laughter of the others.

Tuesday was fair, and Mrs. Vane, at lunch looked at the four bright faces before her, Vera, a small copy of herself; Elf, whose mischievous face was truly elfish; Nancy, whose gypsy beauty always pleased, and Dorothy, blue-eyed, fair-haired, whose lovable disposition shone from her eyes, and made her sweet to look upon.

"We shall take a trip to Fairy-land this afternoon," she said, "and must start directly after lunch."

That was all that she would tell, and as they motored up one busy street, and down another, she enjoyed watching their eager faces, and listening to their chatter.

Fairy-land proved to be a wonderful play, depicting Elf-land with fairies, water nymphs, elves and witches, goblins, and gnomes, with exquisite scenery, beautiful costumes, and graceful dancing that held them entranced, from the time that the curtain went up until the grand march of the fairies at the finale.

The "grown-ups" in the audience were delighted, so it was not strange that Mrs. Vane's party was spellbound.

Of them all, Nancy best understood the perfect art of the dancing. She had been drilled in those dainty steps, and she saw how cleverly each did her part.

It was an afternoon of enchantment, and when the play was over, the gay little party bowled along the broad thoroughfare toward home and they talked of the beautiful fairy play, and the graceful girls who had danced as nymphs.

The four days passed so quickly that when Saturday dawned, it seemed hardly possible that it was time to return to Glenmore.

There had been a wonderful exhibition of paintings for Wednesday, a huge fair for Thursday at which Mrs. Vane bought a lovely gift for each as a souvenir.

Thursday they had motored out beyond the city where willows were showing their misty green, and gay little crocus beds were in bloom. They had stopped for lunch at a pretty restaurant that looked for all the world like a rustic cottage, and then had returned to find Rob Vane waiting to greet them, as they drew up to the house.

"Hello!" he called to them before they had alighted.

"How is this, that a fellow gets a week's vacation, and comes home from school to find only servants to greet him?"

"Why, Robert, I am glad enough to have you home for a week. I thought you were to stay at school for extra coaching?"

"That's what I wrote in my last letter," said Rob, "but I passed exams, with flying colors. I was nervous, and feared I wasn't prepared, but say! I was needlessly scared, for I not only 'passed,' but snatched the prize for mathematics."

"I am proud of you, Robert, and your father will be pleased," Mrs. Vane said, her fine eyes shining.

"And I'm proud of you, Rob," cried Vera, rushing at him, and clasping her arms about him.

"Hi, Pussy Weather-vane, it's good to have a little sister," said Rob, swinging her around until she was dizzy.

"Are you glad to see me, too?" he asked, laughing at her flushed cheeks, and tousled, flaxen hair.

"Oh, Rob! _So_ glad, even if you do shake me up until I look wild," Vera said, clinging to his arm, and dragging him toward the little guests.

"I dare to say he's the best brother in the world because neither one of you has a brother, so you won't be offended."

"Spare my blushes, Vera," cried Rob. "Say, girls, I'm mighty glad to see you. How long are you to stay? A week?"

"We are going back to Glenmore Saturday," Dorothy said, "and we start at nine in the morning. There is no one at the Stone House but the servants, and it was so lovely to come home with Vera."

"It surely was the best thing that you could do," Rob replied earnestly, for he knew by a slight quiver in her voice that Dorothy was a bit homesick.

Nancy heard the odd little quiver when Dorothy was speaking, and she hastened to speak of cheery things.

"We've had just the dearest visit, and we've been to the theater, to a big fair, to see a hall hung with beautiful pictures, and how we have enjoyed it all!" she said.

"I'll do the entertaining to-morrow," said Bob. "I'll take you all to see something that will be no end of fun."

"What will it be, Rob?" Vera asked, but Rob tweaked her curls, and laughed.

"That's my secret," he said, and they had to be satisfied with that.

CHAPTER X

A LIVELY WEEK

Dorothy woke very early the next morning, and turned to look at Nancy, to find that Nancy was looking straight at her. They both laughed.

"I was wondering if you were awake," Nancy said.

"I turned to look at you, Nancy, to see if your eyes were open," Dorothy said. "I was going to ask you if you knew that Patricia and Arabella were spending the week at Glenmore."

"I knew it, because when I told Patricia that we were to spend the week at Vera's home, she looked, for just a second, as if she were provoked because she had not been invited, too. Then she hurried to say that she'd rather stay at Glenmore. That Arabella was to stay, too, and that she thought they would have a finer time than we."

"I wonder how they amused themselves," Dorothy said. "Glenmore would be so quiet with all the girls away."

"And Miss Fenler would have all the time to watch them, with none of the other pupils to care for," responded Nancy.

"Dorothy, Nancy! Come down so I can tell you something!" called Vera.

They heard Mrs. Vane say gently:

"Don't hurry them, Vera."

They were half-way down the stairs, however, and in the lower hall they saw Elf, already up, because she had shared Vera's room, and Vera had awakened her.

"Rob has told me! Rob has told me!" Vera said, dancing around Dorothy and Nancy. "Rob has told me, and I couldn't wait to tell you. He's going to take us out into the country to our summer place, and there

we'll go to a little country circus! Won't that be great? He came home just in time."

"That will be great fun," said Dorothy, "and after we've seen it, we can talk it over, all the way back."

"Let's get ready now!" cried Vera.

"Why, Vera! It is only eight o'clock, and the circus begins at two, so Rob said," Elf remarked, with the thought of calming Vera, but that was not so easily done.

"But it's a two-hour ride out there. Come up to my room, Elf, and help me choose a dress," Vera replied, as she caught Elf by the hand and rushed up the stairway. How they laughed.

The morning sped on wings, and lunch was served early.

Just as they were leaving the house, the postman brought a letter for Dorothy that had been remailed from Glenmore, and she took it with her to read, if there was an opportunity.

The ride out from the city over fine roads, and along beautiful avenues, was delightful, and the jolly little party reached "Vane Villa," earlier than they had thought possible.

"Dorothy is aching to read her letter," Vera said, "so sit out here and read it, Dorothy dear," she continued, "and Rob will take Elf around to see the kennels, and I'll tag along with them, for if I stay here, I'll talk and talk so you won't know what is in your letter after all."

It was a kind thought, and a bit of tact that careless, flighty Vera often showed.

Dorothy opened her letter, and commenced reading. After a few lines she looked up, her eyes shining.

"Nancy, come here, and listen to this.

"They are already on the homeward trip, and the first of May Mother and Aunt Charlotte will be at the Stone House, and we are to join them a week later. Already Mother has written to Mrs. Marvin, and we are to be excused for the last two weeks at Glenmore, and away we'll speed toward Merrivale and home."

"Oh, I am so glad!" Nancy cried as she pressed Dorothy closer.

"And that isn't all," said Dorothy, "for hear this:

"I'm sure, dear, that you and Nancy will be delighted to know that, after a short stay at the Stone House, we shall go to Foam Ridge for the summer. You are both so fond of the shore, and the salt air."

Nancy's eyes were bright, and there was a droll twinkle in them.

Drawing closer, Nancy whispered a rare bit of news.

"Do you mean that?" Dorothy asked. "Are you sure-?"

Nancy laughed and nodded.

"Perfectly sure," she said, "for only the day before vacation Betty told me that her mother had just written to say that for a change they were to spend the summer at the shore, and she said: 'Isn't "Foam Ridge" a pretty name.' I didn't think to tell you, because I never dreamed that we would be going to the same place. I knew you'd be pleased, for you like Betty Chase as well as I do."

[Illustration: Drawing closer, Nancy whispered a rare bit of news.]

"Oh, I am truly glad that we shall see Betty at the shore."

"Hello!" shouted Rob. "Anybody thinking of going to the circus!"

"Yes! Yes!" they cried, and ran to join Rob and Vera and Elf.

For a small circus it proved to be quite a show. There were trained dogs that were really clever, there were trained elephants, but best of all there were some handsome horses, whose riders did wonderful vaulting, tumbling, and riding, springing over hurdles, and through covered hoops.

When they left the tent the girls were delighted with the show, and Rob said it made him think of his early ambition to be a circus performer.

"Why wouldn't you like to now?" asked Vera. "If I had ever wanted to, I'd want to now. I wouldn't change my mind. Well, I don't see why you all laugh!" she cried, looking in surprise from one to the other.

It was small wonder that they laughed. Vera rarely held one opinion for more than half a day, and had been known to have a half-dozen minds inside of an hour!

It was a jolly party that took the train for Glenmore on Saturday morning. Rob had taken them to the station, bought a box of candy for each, and waited until the last moment to leave the train.

"If Miss Fenler has been watching Patricia this week she has been busy," said Elf, when they had settled themselves for the long ride.

"She could easily watch Arabella, she is so slow," Dorothy said.

It happened that Mrs. Marvin had told Miss Fenler to closely watch both girls who had chosen to spend the week's vacation at the school.

School without lessons would be fine, they thought.

"I think Arabella Correyville, if she were here alone, would be very little care, but Patricia Levine is as full of queer notions as any girl could be, and she plans the oddest mischief, and then drags slow little Arabella into it. Patricia never tries to help her out, and she invariably laughs if Arabella is caught.

"Arabella is so slow that she really doesn't know that Patricia rules her, while Patricia rules, and laughs at Arabella for obeying.

"I promise to watch them, and I am likely to be more closely employed than during a regular school session," Miss Fenler said in reply.

The first day passed without any especial happening, but the next day the two set out for a walk, soon after breakfast, and did not return until just before six.

"You were not here at one o'clock for lunch," Miss Fenler said. "Where were you?"

"I lunched with a friend," said Patricia, and Arabella drawled, "So did I."

"I did not know that you had friends here in town," Miss Fenler said, in surprise. They were, of course friends, and they had lunched together. What they had said had been true, but surely not honest.

Arabella stared stupidly at Miss Fenler, and Patricia imitated her stolid friend, too. It was easier to look dull than to answer more questions.

On the third day Mrs. Marvin was absolutely amazed to glance toward her window just in time to see Patricia entering the house with a cat in her arms.

Questioned as to where she obtained the cat she said that a boy gave it to her, that she didn't know his name, or where he lived.

"Where do you expect to keep it?" asked Miss Fenler, who had been sent to meet her.

"I thought I could keep her in the little shed that's next to the kitchen, and then Judy could feed her," was the answer, given as confidently as if the whole matter were settled.

Mrs. Marvin came out into the hall in time to hear what Patricia said.

"I think we can arrange to let puss remain if she is to be under Judy's care," she said, "for only yesterday she told me that the mice are becoming very bold, and they are too wise to go into the traps that she sets."

A sound of falling pans, flat-irons, and other kitchen utensils made them start. Patricia clung to the cat, although it was making desperate efforts to get away.

"Ow-oo-o! O massy sakes! Yow-hoo!" shouted Judy as she burst the door open, and tore out into the hall.

"Dem mices'll kill me yit, I do b'liebe!" she yelled. "De windows, an' do's is shet, an' dey's prancin' on de kitchen' flo. Oh-oo!"

"Hush, Judy, hush!" Mrs. Marvin said. "We've a cat with us, and she is just in time."

"I sho' won't go nigh dat kitchen wid no cat, nor nuffin' else," Judy said, her eyes rolling in terror.

"Pooh!" cried Patricia, "I'd be glad to put her out there before I get any more scratches," and going to the end of the hall, she opened the door, and dropped puss on the floor.

In less time than it takes to tell it the cat had caught the two tiny mice, that had been far more afraid of the big colored woman, than she had been of them, and that is saying a great deal.

Patricia was never inclined to be in any way obliging. She was one of those unpleasant girls who find no joy in being kind or helpful.

Whatever she did, was done wholly for her own sake, and Judy eyed her with suspicion when she saw how promptly she took the big cat to the kitchen.

Having given the cat over to the care of Judy, Patricia raced up the stairway to her room.

Judy rolled her eyes to look after her.

"Wha' fo' she done dat?" she asked of Miss Fenler, who stood near her.

"Wha' fo'? I axes. Dat ar young miss done bring dat cat home ter hab in her room fo' a pet. How happen her to gib it up ter Judy?"

"Nonsense, Judy. She knows, as all the pupils know, that it is a fixed rule at Glenmore, that no pupil can have a pet in her room."

"All de same, Miss Patruchy _meant_ dat cat ter be up in her room, long o' dat ar _Carbale_ gal."

Judy never could get Arabella's name correctly. Sometimes it was "Carbale," then it was "_Corbille_," but never once had she managed to call it Correyville.

"Well, the cat is in the kitchen now, and you must look out for her. Keep her in for a few days until she feels that this is home, and then she will stay," Miss Fenler said, and returned to her account-books.

Thursday the two girls were in their room all day, reading, and devouring a "treat" that Patricia had smuggled in. It was much the same menu that Patricia usually chose, without a thought as to how the different things would combine.

Who but Patricia Levine would ever think of eating ice-cream, and big green pickles at the same time?

The reason that she would have given for eating them at the same time would have been that she liked both.

They ate the papers of ice-cream first before it could melt, and then, each took a huge green pickle, and a favorite book, and settled down to read.

When the lunch hour arrived, Patricia felt a bit "queer," while Arabella felt decidedly "queerer."

Neither cared to eat, but they dared not stay away from the dining-room, so both went down to the table, but they made only a pretense of eating.

Early in the afternoon both felt hungry. Patricia rushed to the closet, and returned with some chocolate eclaires, and a bottle of olives.

"I'll eat an eclair," said Arabella, "but maybe I'd better not eat olives with it."

"Well, of all things!" cried Patricia. "Let me tell you what you don't know. Eclaires and olives just _b'long_ together. Don't act funny, Arabella."

Arabella, always afraid of being laughed at, ate not only one eclair, but two, and a dozen olives, as well.

During the afternoon, they ate four crullers, two pickled limes, two ham sandwiches, and a pound of fudge.

Patricia could eat anything, and any amount of food without any ill effect, but Arabella was really sick when the hour for dinner arrived.

When Mrs. Marvin questioned Patricia, she said that Arabella had a headache, and that she had said that she was not hungry.

Mrs. Marvin sent a waitress up to their room with some toast and tea for Arabella. Arabella barely tasted it, and the girl returned to report that Miss Arabella looked sick, and really could not eat.

The next day found her much like her usual self, and Patricia proposed a walk.

"I'll go with you in a minute," said Arabella.

"What _are_ you waiting for?" snapped Patricia. She turned, and saw that Arabella was shaking some green pills from a bottle.

"It's hard work trying to mind two people who say different things," complained Arabella. "Aunt Matilda told me to take these green pills every hour, wherever I happen to be, and Mrs. Marvin says I must not be continually taking medicine in the class-room. How can I do both?"

"Don't take it at all!" cried Patricia.

"But my health—"

"Oh, bother your health," said Patricia. "I should think you'd be sick of hearing about it."

"I am," confessed Arabella.

"Then pitch every one of those bottles out, and see what happens! No wonder the girls here call you the 'medicine-chest.' The doses you take make me sick just to see them."

Arabella looked sulky, and when Patricia started for a walk, Arabella refused to go. She was usually afraid of Patricia, and did as she directed, but when she became sulky, not even Patricia could move her, try as she might.

Arabella was standing near the window when Patricia returned, and what she saw was anything but pleasing.

At the end of a leash was a small, shaggy, yellow dog, of no especial breed!

Arabella detested dogs, and was desperately afraid of them as well.

She told herself that the dog would also be in Judy's care, and was wondering how he would get on with the cat, when she heard a loud whisper outside the door.

"Let me in, quick!" it said, and when Arabella opened the door, Patricia stumbled over the dog who had run between her feet, and the two landed on the middle of the rug in a heap.

"There! Isn't he a beauty?" Patricia asked and without waiting for an answer continued, "A man told me he was a valuable dog that ought to bring fifty dollars, but because he was going to leave town, he let me have him, for two dollars, and threw in the leash. Wasn't that a bargain?"

"What are you going to do with him?" Arabella asked. "Oh, take him away! I don't want him sniffing at me!"

Patricia made an outrageous face, and tugged at the leash.

"Keep him in this room until I go home, and then take him with me," she said.

"I'll not sleep in this room if that dog is kept in here!" declared Arabella.

"Where will you sleep?" Patricia asked, coolly. "They wouldn't let you sleep out in the hall, and if I put the dog out there, 'The Fender' will take him."

By extreme care, Patricia managed not to do anything that would make him bark.

CHAPTER XI

AN INNOCENT SNEAK-THIEF

The little dog had slept all night, but when morning came he wanted to go out for a romp. Patricia tied him to the leg of the bed, gave him some breakfast and sat on the floor beside him to stop him if he began to bark.

Thus far he had been very quiet, only softly growling, and stopping that when Patricia held up her finger and told him he must "keep still."

"Why do we have to review?" Patricia said as Arabella took up a book.

"The idea of looking into my history to see when Virginia was settled at Jamestown when any one knows it was in fourteen ninety-two!"

"O my, Patricia! That's wrong," Arabella said, "That's when Columbus discovered America."

"Well, for goodness' sake! Couldn't he have landed in Virginia, and settled it at the same time?" demanded Patricia. She was desperately angry, but Arabella persisted.

"Don't you know, Patricia, it couldn't have been settled in fourteen ninety-two?"

"Oh, don't bother me about that!" said Patricia, and Arabella, peering at her through her goggles decided that it would be wise to do no more correcting.

"I don't think Miss Fenler is fair," said Patricia, "for she marked my history paper only forty-two, and I just know it ought to have been higher than that. And my spelling she marked only thirty-eight last month, and all because I put an r in water, spelling it 'warter,' and I'm sure that's not bad."

"You put two t's in it, too," said Arabella.

"I will again if I want to," snapped Patricia.

"There's the breakfast-bell. He's sure to bark while we're down-stairs," Arabella said. She hoped that he would, so that he might be given other quarters. He looked up as the door closed, and was about to bark when he saw one of Arabella's slippers, and grabbing it, retired under the bed to chew it.

It was a rule that the maids should make the beds, and put the rooms in order while the pupils were at breakfast, and on that morning it fell to Maggie's share of the work to care for the only room now occupied.

She was a good-natured Irish girl, and she entered the room singing:

"'Now, Rory, be aisy, don't tase me no more,
'Tis the—"

"Och, murther! Murther! There's a man under the bed, an' he grabbed me by me shoe,—oh! oh!"

Down-stairs she ran, screaming all the way, declaring that there was a man upstairs, and calling for some one brave enough to "dhrive him out."

Her terror was very real, and Marcus was called in to oust the intruder.

"It must be a sneak-thief," said Miss Fenler.

"It am a sneak-thief," said Marcus, appearing with the small dog in his arms.

"He stole a slipper, an den sneaked under der bed ter chew on it. Sure, he am a sneak-thief, but I knows a cullud gemman what wants a dog, an' I guess he's 'bout the right size. Dey has a pow'ful small house, an' him an' his wife, an' seben chilluns lib in dem two rooms, so he couldn't want no bigger dog dan dis yar."

"Why nobody can give that dog away!" shrieked Patricia. "I bought him yesterday, and paid the man two dollars for him. He's mine!"

"Do you mean to tell me, Patricia, that you bought that dog and deliberately brought him here, when you knew that it was against the rules of the school?" Mrs. Marvin asked.

"You kept the cat," said Patricia.

"Because I let the cat remain, you decided that it would be safe to do practically the same thing again, did you?" Mrs. Marvin's usually kind voice sounded very cold now.

"He isn't a cat, so 't isn't the same," Patricia said with a pout.

"We must find an owner for him, Marcus," Mrs. Marvin said.

"I won't let him go!" screamed Patricia.

"You cannot keep him here."

"Then I'll go back to my aunt's house at Merrivale, and take him with me," said Patricia.

"Do as you like about that," Mrs. Marvin said quietly, "but you must choose."

"I've _choosed_, I mean 'chosen,'" said Patricia. "I'll go right straight off, and take the dog with me."

It looked like haste and anger, but for weeks Patricia had been so far behind the others of her class, that she believed that any day Mrs. Marvin would send her home with a letter stating that she had been neglecting study, and must give up her place to some ambitious pupil. Patricia preferred to go of her own choice, so she rushed to her room, and began to pack her belongings.

Arabella stood watching her as if not fully realizing that she was losing her chum.

She was not quite so dull as she appeared. She was sorry to have Patricia go, and she was not at all sure that she would like her room all to herself. At the same time she was comforting herself with the thought that there would be no one to make her eat things that she ate for the sake of peace and that nearly always made her ill, or to drag her into mischief that she, herself would never have thought of. When Patricia's trunk was strapped to the back of the carriage, and she stood on the porch, her suitcase in one hand, her other hand holding the dog's leash, she turned to Arabella.

"Well, aren't you going to say something, now I'm ready to start" she asked.

"Do'no' what to say," drawled Arabella.

Arabella had spoken the truth, which, however, was not complimentary, and Patricia was offended.

Arabella, looking after her tried to decide just how she felt. She would miss Patricia, because at times she was a lively chum, but she was quick to take offense, and Arabella was always doing something that displeased her.

Then, too, Arabella had a very small allowance, while Patricia spent money with a free hand, and always "shared" with Arabella. But what joy was there in eating the oddly chosen "treats"?

Arabella decided that as there was but a short time before the closing of school, it was, perhaps, the best thing that could have happened,

that Patricia had decided to go back to Merrivale. It seemed strange that she should prefer to be with her aunt in Merrivale, rather than with her mother, at their home in New York, but those who knew were not surprised.

Mrs. Levine was as strange in some respects, as her little daughter was in others. If Patricia enjoyed being away from home, Mrs. Levine, flighty, and weak-willed, was glad to be free from the care of Patricia.

The aunt was very glad of the money paid for Patricia's board, so every one concerned seemed satisfied.

Surely Patricia was having but little training, but who was there to complain?

Being away from home had one decided advantage, Patricia thought.

She could ask for money when she needed clothing, and when she received it she could make her own choice of hats, coats, or dresses, and what a lively choice it was!

She had rightly earned the title of the "Human Rainbow."

She had heard the name, and she liked it. She thought that it implied that her costumes were gay, rather than dull colored.

Mrs. Marvin breathed a sigh of relief when Patricia had actually left Glenmore, and Miss Fenler remarked that Arabella was really too slow to get into mischief, now that she had no one to assist her.

The ride had been a long one, and the car had been hot after the early morning. Vera complained that she was fairly roasted, while Elf declared that she had breathed smoke from the open windows until she believed that she would smell smoke for a week. Dorothy and Nancy made little fuss about either smoke or heat, bearing the discomforts of the trip patiently, and laughing when Vera fumed.

"Well, I know, if I were a man," said Vera, "I could make some kind of an engine that would go like lightning, and have neither smoke nor cinders. I told Rob that, and he said, 'Oh, don't let it stop you because you're not a man. Just go ahead, Pussy Weather-vane, and plan it. The companies won't refuse to use it because it wasn't invented by a man!'"

"Now, isn't that just like a boy? What time do I have to do things like that? Doesn't he know that I have lessons, and all sorts of

things that hinder me?

"Why do you girls laugh at everything I say, just as Rob does?" she concluded, looking in surprise, from one merry face to the other.

"Oh, but Vera, you are funny when you sputter," said Elf.

"I s'pose I am," agreed Vera, "and I don't much care. I'm sure I'd rather make you laugh, than make you look sober."

"Look! Look!" cried Dorothy.

"We're almost to Glenmore!"

"Not yet," said Vera.

"Oh, but Dorothy is right," said Nancy, "for look there where the river glistens in the sun."

"And see that big Club House right over there," Dorothy said, pointing toward a handsome building of which the town of Glenmore was justly proud.

"But it doesn't seem quite like—"

Vera's remark was interrupted by the trainman, who opened the door and shouted, "Glenmore! Glenmore!"

"I guess it did look like it," Vera said, as she sprang out on the platform, followed by her three laughing companions. Marcus was waiting for them.

"Yo'-all git in, an' we'll git dar as quick as we kin. Mis' Marvin, she say all the other pupils is arriv, an' she hopes you fo' will be some prompt."

"We came as soon as the train would bring us," said Elf.

"But dat train am an hour later dan de time-table say."

"Do you believe that?" Elf asked of the others, as they rode along.

"They must have changed the time-table," Nancy said.

Marcus turned his head to shout:

"No, miss, no. Nobody doesn't neber chane nuffin' in Glenmore!"

Mrs. Marvin was on the porch, as the carriage turned in at the gateway, and she stepped forward to greet them as they sprang out

on the walk.

"I was beginning to wonder what had detained you, when I was delighted to see the carriage coming around the bend of the road. You are just in time to go to your rooms and 'freshen up' a bit before dinner, and—Why, Arabella Correyville! What does this mean?"

A drenched and bedraggled figure was mounting the steps. Her hair, and garments were dripping, she had lost her goggles, and without them her eyes had a frightened stare.

"I didn't mean to look like this," she said, "but I lost the key to my room. I'd locked the door when I went out, and I wanted to study some before dinner. I climbed up onto the edge of that hogshead that the workmen had left right beside the trellis that runs up by my window. I meant to get in at my window, but I fell and got into a hogshead of dirty water. 'Twasn't very pleasant," she drawled.

One might have thought, from the manner in which she said it that most people would have enjoyed the "ducking"!

Mrs. Marvin looked discouraged. This was the girl that could not get into a scrape, now that she had no one to drag her in!

"Miss Fenler, will you assist Arabella in making herself presentable before six? It is after five-thirty now."

Miss Fenler looked anything but pleased, but she dared not refuse. Arabella seemed quieter than ever when she came down the stairway, her wet garments exchanged for dry ones, and her straight hair primly braided, thanks to Miss Fenler.

Doubtless she had not recovered from her surprise when she found herself in the hogshead. It always required time for Arabella to recover from any new idea, or unusual happening.

The other girls were giving the four who had just returned a gay welcome, and Dorothy slipped her arm around Betty Chase, and told her the fine news that during the summer they were both to be at Foam Ridge.

"Oh, Dorothy!" cried Betty, her dark eyes shining, "I was delighted when mother wrote that we were going there, just because I so love to be at the shore, and now to think that you and Nancy are to spend the summer there,—oh, it is such a dear surprise."

"But listen, every one!" cried Valerie Dare. "That's all very fine for Betty, but the other bit of news isn't quite so nice. Dorothy Dainty and Nancy Ferris are to leave Glenmore two weeks earlier than

the rest of us. Say! Do you think we'll miss them?"

"Oh, Dorothy Dainty! Why do you go so soon?"

"And take Nancy with you, too! Say, do you have to?"

"Can't you stay longer?"

These and many more were the queries called forth by Valerie's statement.

It was small comfort for them to listen when Dorothy explained.

The fact remained, that they did not want to have her leave before school closed. She had endeared herself to her classmates, and to many others whom she met at socials, and after school sessions. Nancy shared her popularity, and both prized the loving friendship that had made their stay at Glenmore so pleasant.

CHAPTER XII

A GLAD RETURN

"We're glad to think that to-night we shall be at home at the Stone House, and that we'll be with Mother and Aunt Charlotte again, and we're really sorry to say 'good-by' to Glenmore and the pleasant friends that we have found here," Dorothy said, as she stood on the porch with Nancy, waiting for Marcus, who was to take them to the station.

"That's just the way we feel," said Nancy. "Glad and sorry at the same time."

"Well, let me tell you, I don't feel two ways at once," cried Vera. "I feel just one way. I'm just fearfully sorry!"

Mrs. Marvin had bidden them "good-by," after having expressed her approval of their work as pupils, and her regret that they must leave too early to have a part in the program at the final exhibition. On the train that they were to take, there was no stop long enough to obtain anything to eat, so Judy had put up a tempting lunch of sandwiches, cake, and fruit.

Betty and Valerie had a box of chocolates for each, and Ida Mayo, now wholly recovered, came in at the gate just in time to offer each a lovely rose from a cluster that she carried.

Arabella came slowly out to join the group on the porch, and seeing Ida Mayo offering her roses, she decided not to be outdone.

"Here, wait 'til I find something," she said, thrusting her hand deep into her pocket. After a moment's search she produced two bottles of pills, one pink and the other green.

"Take 'em with you," she said, offering one to Dorothy, and the other to Nancy. "One is for a 'tired feeling,' and the other is for feeling too good. I've forgotten which is which, but if you take them both, you're sure to feel all right during the long car-ride."

There were stifled giggles, for surely bottles of medicine were curious gifts to offer, and the group of girls thought it the drollest thing that Arabella had yet done.

For only a second did Dorothy hesitate. She did not, of course, want to accept the funny gift, but she saw Arabella's cheek flush, as little Lina Danford laughed softly, and she did the kindest thing that she could have done.

"Thank you," she said, gently, then to the others she added: "Arabella is eager to have us both feel fine when we reach Merrivale."

The soft laughter ceased, and Ida Mayo said to a girl who stood near her: "Isn't that just like Dorothy Dainty! She doesn't want those pills any more than you or I would, but she won't let Arabella feel hurt."

"She is dear, and sweet," was the whispered reply, "and so is Nancy."

At last Marcus arrived, and as they rode along the avenue, they waved their handkerchiefs to the group on the porch until they turned the corner, and were out of sight.

The long car-ride was much like any all-day ride. Rather pleasant at first, a bit tedious on the last hour, but oh, the joy of the home-coming!

Mrs. Dainty had felt the first separation from Dorothy keenly, and she could not school herself to be calm when for the first time in months she would see her sweet face again, so she sent the limousine over to the station, and with a desperate effort at patience, waited at home for the sound of its return.

Aunt Charlotte was more calm, but so long had Nancy been under her care that she seemed like a little daughter, and now, with Mrs. Dainty she sat waiting, and each smiled when she caught the other watching

the clock.

Of course the train was late in arriving at Merrivale, and Mrs. Dainty was just beginning to be anxious when the limousine whirled up the driveway, and stopped. John opened the door, and in an instant Dorothy found herself held close in loving arms.

"Dorothy, my darling, I can never be parted from you again. If it is a question of travel, I will not go unless you go with me, and if it is education, then you must have private tutors at home."

"Oh, yes, yes!" agreed Dorothy.

"At first the newness amused me, but the last half of the time grew harder and harder to bear. I knew you needed the rest and change and I did my best. When I found that you had come home two weeks earlier, I could hardly wait till this morning to start."

"We've tried to be cheerful for each other," Nancy said, looking out from her shelter in Aunt Charlotte's arms, "but oh, how good it is to be at home!"

Mollie Merton, and Flossie Barnet had waved to them as they turned in at the great gate, and Uncle Harry had swung his cap gayly, and looked the genuine pleasure that he felt at seeing them again.

"Let's go over to see Dorothy and Nancy," Flossie said, but Uncle Harry laid his hand gently on her arm.

"Not just now, Flossie dear," he said. "My little niece is truly glad to see them, but I think there will be things to talk over, and they have been apart for months, so they should have this evening uninterrupted by any friends."

"I guess that's so," said Flossie, "but it's hard to wait until to-morrow to tell them how glad we are to see them,"

"I love dat Dorothy girl, _myself_,," said Uncle Harry's small daughter, "and I love dat Nancy girl, too. Dat Dorothy girl always has candy for me, and dat Nancy girl makes hats for my dolly."

Uncle Harry swung the tiny girl up to a seat on his shoulder, and his blue eyes twinkled as he looked into the little, eager face.

"Don't you love them when they aren't giving you something?" he asked.

"Oh, yes!" said the little maid, "but I love them _harder_ when they do."

"Then you'll love me 'harder' than you do now if I give you a ride up to the house?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, yes!" she cried, and she laughed gayly as she rode in triumph up the driveway, and into the house.

The evening was spent in the big living-room, with a small fire blazing in the fireplace. It had been warm and sunny all day, but when evening came, an east wind had risen, and the happy little party was glad to sit cosily in doors. Dorothy and Nancy listened entranced while Mrs. Dainty and Aunt Charlotte told of their travels. They had been south, they had been west, and they had brought home beautiful souvenirs of every place at which they had stayed.

Then Dorothy and Nancy told of the life at Glenmore, of the new friends that they had met, and of Arabella and Patricia.

It was a happy evening.

Mr. Dainty had found it impossible to reach home until a week later, but he had written a longer letter than usual, and had sent one especially to Dorothy, and it seemed almost as if he were really talking to her as she read it.

Bright and early next morning Mollie and Flossie raced over to the Stone House, and the four chattered so fast, that the old gardener at work near the fountain, took off his hat, and for a moment stood listening. He was not near enough to know what they were saying, but he heard their happy voices, now talking, now laughing, and he spoke his thoughts.

"Hear that now, hear that! An' will any man tell me that a garding is a reel garding widout the sound o' merry voices? Sure, it's been so still here the past few weeks that I begun ter talk ter meself, just ter break the stillness, but it didn't do the trick, fer me voice ain't what yo calls 'moosicle.' Oh, hear them now! It does me good, so it does."

There was news, and a plenty of it to tell, and when Dorothy and Nancy had told the happenings at Glenmore, Mollie and Flossie took their turn, and related all the Merrivale news.

"You know Sidney Merrington used to be so lazy last winter that he didn't get on at all at school," said Flossie. "Arithmetic was all that really vexed him, but because he had low marking for that, he wouldn't try hard to do anything else.

"Well, Molly promised to help him, (you needn't bother to poke me, Mollie, for I _will_ tell) and she did help him every day, and after a while he began to help himself, and last week his average on the

exam, was ninety-three. Wasn't that fine? He never would have got that if Molly hadn't helped him."

"Molly, you were dear," said Dorothy.

"And Tess Haughton is ever so much nicer than she was," Molly said, "for she doesn't do anything now that seems,—why not quite true. That doesn't sound just as I mean it. I know how to say it now. I mean that she isn't sly. She is a good playmate, and a good friend."

"Oh, that's fine!" Dorothy and Nancy cried, as if with one voice.

"There's another fine thing to tell," said Flossie. "Reginald Dean, with the help of his big dog saved a little boy from drowning. Reginald saw him fall from the bridge, and he never stopped to think that he isn't very big himself, but jumped right in, and was doing his best to save him, when all at once his strength gave out, and he called for help. He never dreamed that his dog had followed him, until with a splash he jumped into the water close beside him, grabbed his clothes, and dragged the two boys out."

"Wasn't that great?" said Dorothy, her hands tightly clasped, her eyes shining. "Reginald has the new bicycle that he so wanted. His father gave it to him, because he had been brave enough to forget danger, and rush to aid the other boy," said Mollie, "and the dog is wearing a new collar with a brass plate on it, engraved, 'I'm a Life-Saver.'"

"Katie Dean said she was almost sure that she saw Patricia Levine yesterday," said Flossie, "but I said I thought she must still be away at school. Do you know where she is now?"

"She might have seen her, for she left Glenmore before we did," Dorothy said, and she was just in the midst of telling how Patricia had brought the big cat home, and next had appeared with a little dog, when Mollie said:

"Here she comes now. Why, she has a dog with her!"

"That's the one," said Nancy, "and she has him on a leash now, just as she did at Glenmore. I wonder if her aunt likes him. He tears and chews everything he can get hold of."

"Hello!" called Patricia, as soon as she saw them, then, "My! What did you and Nancy get sent home for?"

"We weren't sent home," Nancy said, indignantly.

"Now, Nancy Ferris, Glenmore doesn't close until next week, and here are you two at home."

"That is no sign that we were sent," said Dorothy. "Mother sent for us."

"Oh, was that it?" Patricia said saucily, and then turning to Molly she asked:

"How do you like my dog? He isn't a pretty dog, but he knows everything, and he always minds. My friends think it is just wonderful the way he minds me. I taught him to. Stop!" she cried. "Stop, I tell you. I won't let you chew the edge of my skirt. Will you stop? Oh, well I don't care if you do chew it. It's an old dress, anyway."

She saw that he would not stop.

"I've named him Diogenes. I don't know who Diogenes was, but I liked the name and he's such a hand to dodge, I thought I'd call him 'Dodgy' for short. Well, I'm sure I don't see why you look so amused. I think I've chosen a grand name for him. Come on, Dodgy!" but the small dog lay down.

"Well, well, how you do act! Come on! Up the street! Come!"

The dog got up, yawned, and then, taking a good hold on the leash, he snatched it from Patricia's hand, and made off with it, as fast as he could scamper, Patricia after him at top speed.

"He minded me that time," she turned to say, then resumed her chase.

The next few days were filled with preparation for the trip to Foam Ridge, and Dorothy and Nancy could think of little else.

Both had felt the constraint at Glenmore which was really necessary at so large a school.

The freedom from study, with its fixed hours would be refreshing.

There would be fine surf at Foam Ridge, and the two had "tried on" their new bathing-suits at least a dozen times. They had studied the elaborate booklet that showed in colors, the beauty-spots of the place, and Dorothy had received a letter from Betty Chase, saying that in a short time she would be there to join them in their sports.

They were wondering what new friends they would make during the summer. Betty, they knew, would be a lively companion.

Of the gay summer at the shore, of the fun and frolic, of the unexpected things that happened, one may read in

”Dorothy Dainty at Foam Ridge.”