



IN NEW YORK
with the
TUCKER TWINS
NELL SPEED

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Title: In New York with the Tucker Twins

Date of first publication: 1924

Author: Emma Speed Sampson (1868-1947)

Date first posted: April 7 2013

Date last updated: April 7 2013

Faded Page eBook #20130410

This eBook was produced by: Stephen Hutcheson, Brenda Lewis, Rod Crawford & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>



IN NEW YORK WITH THE TUCKER TWINS

BY NELL SPEED

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"The Molly Brown Series," "The Carter Girls Series," etc.



A. L. BURT COMPANY
Publishers New York
Printed in U. S. A.

THE TUCKER TWINS SERIES

A SERIES OF STORIES FOR GIRLS
BY NELL SPEED

At Boarding School with the Tucker Twins
Vacation with the Tucker Twins
Back at School with the Tucker Twins
Tripping with the Tucker Twins
A House Party with the Tucker Twins
In New York with the Tucker Twins

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IN NEW YORK WITH THE TUCKER TWINS



"Come in!" but the flickering flame of the candle lighted a pair of legs emerging from under the table.

(Page 131) (With the Tucker Twins in New York.)

IN NEW YORK WITH THE TUCKER TWINS

CHAPTER I. IN NEW YORK.

In New York! Thrills were running all up and down our back bones as we realized it. As our train puffed into the Pennsylvania Station our elation was as great as though ours had been the engineering feat of tunneling under the Hudson.

The Tucker Twins, Virginia and Caroline, known to their friends and even their enemies, as Dum and Dee, had launched with me on what we pleased to term "Our Great Adventure." Mr. Tucker used to say that at our age changing the way of wearing our hair was a great adventure, and so it can be if the change is becoming; but this going to New York all by our lonesomes was different and more exciting than anything the Tuckers and I had undertaken.

"Ain't it great, this landing all by ourselves?" exclaimed Dum.

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"Don't say ain't! It ain't proper in the Metropolis," admonished Dee. "I must say you change your mind pretty readily, considering you told poor Zebedee that all the pleasure of going to New York was taken away when he couldn't come with us."

"Well, I thought it was when I said so, but I find it isn't the case. I feel a kind of spunky elation filling my soul and I bet you and Page Allison feel the same way."

I confessed I did and Dee had to give in that although she missed her father and had been bitterly disappointed when business had detained him in Richmond, that it was rather fun and exciting to land in New York all by ourselves with no male creatures to attend to our trunks and see us safely to the boarding house.

I felt, in spite of my elation over my emancipation, a keen regret that my poor father could not get off either. A country doctor is as important as the pope and has no more freedom than the prisoner of the Vatican. Every time my father would plan to do something pleasant Sally Winn would go to bed and try to die, or Aunt Keziah, the neighborhood "tender," would send him word that all of her charges were coming down with measles or some other dire disease, and then Dr. Allison would have to give up his proposed trip. I suggested that he put

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a dash of something very bitter in Sally's pink pump water and give all of Aunt Keziah's little nigs a large dose of castor oil, whether they needed it or not, but father pinched my cheek and laughed, telling me that part of life was giving up pleasant plans which only made you make more and pleasanter ones. He declared he preferred New York later in the season when all the shows would be in full swing and he intended to come up with Jeff Tucker and perhaps surprise us.

While the twins and I are waiting in the restaurant at the Pennsylvania Station to have our very substantial order for breakfast filled, perhaps it would be just as well for me to explain to my reader something about these girls, who have been so informally introduced to her. I say to *her* because the hes who read books about girls are decidedly in the minority. I can't see why hes wouldn't like to read about the Tuckers—they certainly like to look at them and talk to them, that is hes with any sense or taste.

The Tucker Twins were one-fourth orphans. Most persons would call them half-orphans, as their little mother had died when they were born, but anyone who knows their father, Jeffrey Tucker, familiarly known as Zebedee, could hardly call them anything so forlorn as half-orphans. He had been father and mother, nurse and big brother to them and sometimes acted like their son. He had only twenty years the start of them and had been so busy raising them that he had forgotten to grow old and now when they were almost twenty, nobody could believe that he was almost forty.

Anyone who looked at those girls on that crisp morning in late September as they waited with scarcely concealed impatience for that far-from-light breakfast, would have come to the conclusion that Jeffrey Tucker had made a pretty successful job. It was hard to tell which was the handsomer of the two. They were alike and still so different. Dum's hazel eyes and red black hair, growing low in a widow's peak on her broad intellectual forehead, were most alluring. Her chin was square and determined, in contrast to the saucy, humorous expression of her pleasant mouth. Dee's eyes were grey, her hair blue black. Instead of a widow's peak on her forehead she had a dimple in her chin, which had evidently tried to be as square as her sister's, but the dimple had got in the way. Both sisters had slender, athletic figures with heads well set and an upstanding look. Dum was artistic and had come to New York to study modeling. Dee was not quite certain what she wanted to be, but she wanted to know chemistry and anatomy and then decide to what use she should put her knowledge. She might very well have stayed at home and got what she wanted from a nearby college but New York is New York and her father well knew that a winter there would give his girl many things besides chemistry and anatomy.

And me! What about me, Page Allison? But the breakfast is ready to serve. The waiter is coming, bearing a great tray of

smoking food, and there is no time to talk about myself. I couldn't describe myself very well anyhow and it is well to leave something to the imagination of one's readers.

"Ah! Think of it!" cried Dum. "Hashed brown potatoes and sausage, topped off with buckwheats and maple syrup!"

"This is the last breakfast of this sort we will get," sighed Dee. "French people have French breakfasts and Madame Gaston is sure to feed us on coffee and rolls."

"If we don't like it, you remember our bond with father and Zebedee," I remarked.

"Sure! Gee, Page, you were certainly slick to put it to them that way when we talked of coming," enthused Dee.

The bond was that we should try the French boarding house first and if we did not like it after an honest endeavor we could go to housekeeping in an apartment of our own. Mr. Tucker had got in touch with this Madame Gaston through the pastor of a French Protestant church. Board for one month had been engaged, which would give us ample time to decide whether or not we liked it.

Madame Gaston's boarding house was on West Fifty-third Street. Not a very stylish locality and certainly not in the least an attractive looking house. It was one of a row of red brick buildings, with long, narrow, bleak front yards. Evidently those homes had been built before New York real estate had become so valuable and now they were merely waiting for some speculator to take hold of them and utilize the waste space of those bare yards. We were thankful for this same space, as the Sixth Avenue Elevated turned at Fifty-third and went whizzing by. At least we would not have the passengers looking in our windows. We need not have concerned ourselves, however, about the elevated road, as the room consigned to us was on the third floor back. It looked out over back yards, where the system of clothes lines stretched from houses to fences was, I am sure, more complicated than the Western Union Telegraph.

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Madame Gaston had a big, hard, wrinkled face on top of a big, hard, unwrinkled body. Her black hair was arranged in puffs and coils and piled high on her head, looking, as Dum said, like upholstery. Her voice was as hard as the rest of her, even when she spoke French, which she did to her little daughter, a child of twelve, who seemed to be a kind of slavey in the establishment.

We looked curiously around the dark, unadorned parlor as madame received us in state. I can't remember seeing such an ugly room in all my life before or since. The paper was a mixture of brown and green; the pictures, huge chromos in plush and gilt frames; the furniture, shiny, varnished oak, upholstered in harsh green plush that rose up under you as you

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sat on it like some angry, bristling animal. The mantel-piece was covered with hideous bric-a-brac and there were what-nots and cabinets and shelves laden with treasured atrocities: colored plaster figures, shell boxes, vases of paper flowers, beaded mats and various cooking utensils, gilded, with ribbon bows tied on the handles.

“I did not understand that you were such large young ladies,” was the greeting of our hostess as we seated ourselves gingerly on the bristling plush chairs.

“Oh, yes, we are—ahem—grown-up,” said Dee, who always said something when it was expected of her.

“Your father did not mention that you were so large,” persisted madame.

“No! Perhaps he didn’t like to acknowledge it,” said Dum flippantly, her eyes glued to a mysterious foot-stool that she was trying to make out in the gloom of the room.

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“If I had known you were so large I should have been compelled to ask more board,” went on the landlady.

“But he told you our age, did he not?” asked Dee.

“Age has nothing to do with appetite!” snorted our boarding housekeeper. “But never mind I find that since I am a widow every one tries to get ahead of me.” This with a tone between a sniff and a whine.

“But, Madame Gaston, I am sure our father did not intend to conceal anything from you,” said Dee soothingly. “We are not so very large after all, not above the average height, and if we are, our friend here is a little below and that should even it up.”

Madame Gaston eyed me suspiciously.

“Little people often eat as much as big ones,” she remarked.

“They certainly do!” I exclaimed with a spunk that I felt it was up to me to produce to cope with this dragon. “And I have an excellent appetite that no doubt the change of air will whet.”

“Could we see our rooms?” asked Dee meekly, but with a twinkle in her eye and a gasping tone that presaged a fit of uncontrollable laughter.

“I have only one room for you,” was the stern reply as madame ushered us up the stairs.

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“But we understood—” faltered Dee.

“Yes, I know; but I understood you were children, and arranged one room for the three of you.”

Up we went, following Madame Gaston along narrow halls and past closed doors up steep stairways. She puffed and creaked as she climbed the steps. We kept a respectful distance behind her as we had a feeling she might go to pieces at any moment as the exercise seemed to put too much strain on her tight, shiny satin basque. I felt like the colored waiter who begged of the gentleman who was much puffed up with his own importance: "Please don' bus' on me, boss!"

Reaching the third floor, Madame Gaston opened the door of the back room with a flourish.

"Voila!"

It was a large room with two back windows which I am sure had not been opened for weeks. The light was carefully kept out by heavy dark valances with much chenille fringe. Olive green shades, also fringed, were drawn to within a foot of the sills. The paper was the favorite mixture of green and brown with terrifying wiggily figures that might have been birds and might have been beasts and were in reality only scrolls.

Dum raised one of the shades and I hoped she would raise a window too, but evidently fear of madame restrained her.

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"But it was a bedroom we wanted," faltered Dee.

"Certainment! This is a bedroom and a very handsome one at that, n'est ce pas?"

None of us had the hardihood to gainsay her.

"But the beds!" we exclaimed wonderingly. The room had three Morris chairs, all of them in bad state of repair. We had yet to learn that all the furniture that is discarded by other roomers always finds its way to the third floor back. We were rapidly catching on to the fact, though. A strange looking high book case was on one side of the room and a wardrobe filled the space between the windows. The mantel-piece was decorated by a large, yellow, snub-nosed bust of Schiller and at each end were vases made to represent old top boots. These were filled with artificial flowers of gay paper.

"Les lits! Ah, mademoiselle wishes to see the beds? Voila, un lit de duvet, de parade!" and with a swoop she pounced upon the wardrobe and with a mighty pull she jerked down the front, disclosing a folding bed. I thought for a moment that an accident was happening and that the massive wardrobe was going to mash our hostess. I sprang forward to snatch her from under the falling furniture but I realized my mistake in time to dissemble.

"Oh!" gasped Dee. "But three of us cannot sleep in that—that—wardrobe."

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"Ah, but regardez," with a twist of the wrist she worked her

witchcraft on the book case. “A lit de repos, a couch!”

“Lovely! Charming!” cried Dee, but there was a dangerous twist to her mouth and I was in momentary terror that the stored-up laugh was going to bubble out. As for Dum: she was turning purple with suppressed emotion.

How could we get rid of her so we could give vent to our feelings? A blessed ringing of the front door bell and shrill cries of “Mamma! Mamma!” from the little daughter, Claire, solved the problem. Madame hastened off, and with a sigh of relief I shut the door after her.

“Up with the windows!” gasped Dum.

“A bas with the shades!” cried Dee, giving them such yanks that they flew to the top of the windows with a snap, the fringe wrapping around and around the rollers.

“Isn’t this rich?” she laughed. “If Zebedee only knew what the pastor had got us up against!”

“It may not be so bad,” I said. “Everything is clean if it is so stuffy and we can keep the windows open on the sly. I feel in my bones she won’t allow it if she knows. What is a ‘lit de duvet’? We must learn French while we are here if we don’t do anything else.”

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“It must mean corn cobs and door knobs if this is it,” declared Dum, punching gingerly at the mattress of the fallen wardrobe. “‘Lit de parade’ means a bed of state I think.”

“‘Duvet’ means down,” laughed Dee. “I reckon she called it that because she let it down.”

“Isn’t it all funny, and aren’t we going to have the time of our lives?” cried Dum gleefully. “Did you see the foot-stool down in the parlor? It was a little saw-horse with a gilded rolling-pin laid across tied with a purple ribbon.”

“Yes, and the gilded frying-pan with a snow scene painted on it! That got me. I believe that was what gave me strength to sass her about my appetite,” I giggled.

“Did you see the big china dog and the dog house over in the corner? I bet Brindle could eat him up,” boasted Dee.

“And the lamp-post with a letter-box attached, what do you think the letter-box turns itself into? Of course the lamp-post proper is for a light. This is surely a place of surprises, camouflages. I do hope she won’t give us rubber oysters and papier mache steaks to eat.”

“Poor Page! I reckon she won’t give you much of anything to eat. Our first meal at the Maison Gaston will be this evening. She says she doesn’t serve luncheons. I am looking forward

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with the keenest interest to what next,” declared Dum, her hazel eyes snapping in anticipation. “Who do you think will emerge from behind all those mysterious doors?”

CHAPTER II. MAISON GASTON.

“Clang! Clang! Clang!” sounded the dinner gong at six thirty sharp.

It was welcome music to the sojourners in the third floor back. We had spent the day snooping around New York, picking up a snack at a dairy lunch, that was filling for the moment, but as Dum expressed it, did not stick to our ribs. We were filled with curiosity about the persons who were to come from behind the closed doors. Madame had hinted that celebrities were lodged under her roof and we were naturally anxious to meet them.

The dining room was in the basement. It was long and low and plenty of gas made it bright and cheerful, a much more attractive place than the parlor. A narrow table stretched from one end to the other with seats for at least twenty persons. I wondered that so many could have come from behind the closed doors but learned later that many of them were from outside, only taking their dinner at Maison Gaston. Madame had established a reputation for her table d'hôte and had no difficulty in filling the twenty seats with French people or those who had a taste for French food.

The hostess was seated in state as we entered. She bowed her bepluffed and upholstered head, motioning us to three places near the middle of the table. We were thankful to be seated so far from her although we instinctively felt that she had given us what she considered to be seats of dishonor, below the salt.

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Opposite her, at the foot of the table was a distinguished looking little man of about fifty, I should say. He was very French looking, with a clipped pointed beard and a bristling pompadour. He was engaged in conversation with a very good looking woman seated to his left. His French was so clear and pure, to my delight I found I could understand almost everything he said, but the handsome woman spoke rapidly and in a guttural tone that made it difficult for one not well versed in French to follow.

Next to the handsome woman was a quiet unassuming man with a modest, retiring manner. He was her husband and it turned out afterwards was one of the celebrities of whom madame had boasted. He was no less than one of the best and most noted baseball players in the world.

Our fellow boarders looked at us curiously, seemingly uncertain whether or not to admit us to the intimacy of the table d'hôte. Madame Gaston introduced us so rapidly that it took the combined wits of the three of us later on when we retired to our third floor back to sort out the persons to whom we had

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been introduced. We all agreed however that the bearded gentleman at the foot of the table was the cock of the walk and that his name was Monsieur Durand. When he spoke the table listened with attention. Madame called him Monsieur le Chancelier. He represented the French government in some capacity in New York, how we did not know, but he was important evidently.

The baseball player was named Grayson. I liked him better than anybody at the table. His wife was an actress with a perennial grouch against managers, having been kept out of her own by them according to her way of thinking. She had played good parts but never seemed to be able to stick. She was not an American, but I could not spot her nationality. She wanted people to think she was French, speaking constantly of Paris and how she loved the city, but there was a subtle difference between her speech and that of M. Durand that told me she could not be of his country. She paid very little attention to her clean, cheerful looking athlete of a husband but spent her time trying to engage the admiration of the chancellor.

Opposite us, and of equal unimportance in madame's eyes, sat two maiden ladies from the middle west. They were at Maison Gaston with the dire purpose of learning French. Eagerly they drank in the pure tones of M. Durand and laboriously they endeavored to enter into the conversation. They were tolerated by the others but only tolerated. Mrs. Grayson was frankly bored by them and openly rude. Next to them were some long haired art students who had been driven out of Paris by the war and were now dragging out a miserable existence in their native land until they could return to the city of their adoption. I felt it would be the better part to play had they stayed there and helped save the country they seemed to think so much of, but they looked too feeble to wield anything more dangerous than palette knives and then they had such enormous appetites that perhaps France was better off without them. I am sure that the dinner they got at Maison Gaston was the only meal they had. They ate too much to want breakfast and they were afraid to eat luncheon for fear of ruining the dinner.

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I cannot describe all the twenty who ate at Madame Gaston's table d'hôte. There were some French milliners whose gay chatter of shop must have appealed to the hostess as she placed them next to her. There were some clerks, some music students and one tall blond young man named Smith who had a room in the house and no settled occupation that one could state. He had near-sighted blue eyes and a very red mouth which he kept tightly closed except when he was eating and then he opened it very wide indeed and shoveled in quantities of food in evident appreciation of the French cooking. Indeed it was excellent and neatly and expeditiously served by madame's two daughters, Yvonne and Claire.

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Claire, the child of twelve, looked pale, delicate and overworked, but she waited as well and even better than her

sister. She watched her mother furtively for signs which that grenadier-like lady was free to give. Little Claire seemed to know what she meant by her frowns and nods and was quick to do her bidding. Not long was she allowed to tarry in serving the ravenous artists; the best must be taken to M. Durand; Mr. and Mrs. Grayson were also high in favor; the milliners must be attended to carefully; we didn't count at all, nor did the maiden ladies from the middle west, nor the blond Mr. Smith.

The machinations of our hostess were so amusing I could not help smiling and then blushing as I caught the eye of Mr. Smith. He was gazing intently at me. I wondered if he knew that Madame Gaston put him in the category with the little southern girls who were then occupying her third floor back.

The talk was of the war, always the war. That fall of 1916 was a tense one in the United States. Officially we were not in the war, but the hearts of most good Americans were beating with the Allies. It was a matter of months only and maybe weeks before we would be standing by their sides as a nation.

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The conversation was as a rule in French but at times the whole table would drop into English. We were there to learn French but I, for one, was always relieved when I was not having to learn it quite so hard. It was so difficult to follow a discussion of politics in a foreign language that I found I could not eat and listen too. This was brought to my attention when Yvonne whisked my plate away before I had even so much as touched my chop and peas. The only comfort I got out of it was that madame smiled her approval and beamed on me as though she might sooner or later let me come sit by her or even put me up next to the great chancellor. I fancy poor little Claire got that chop and after all she needed it more than I did.

Yvonne was pretty, exceedingly pretty, and she tripped around the table like a stage waitress, making eyes at the men as she served them and sometimes leaning against them just a tiny bit so that they might think it was accidental. I noticed that she was especially solicitous where Mr. Smith was concerned and as she held the Brussels sprouts so he could serve himself she leaned over so far that her fluffy hair brushed his face. The color mounted to his forehead. I wondered if he liked being flirted with in that way.

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“Polly voo Fraunsay?” One of the maiden ladies was addressing the Tuckers and me.

As usual Dum and I looked to Dee for assistance.

“A little!” she answered.

“Eel fo polly Fraunsay eesy. Ou avy voo prunny voter dejernay?”

The French of the eager thirster after languages was so bad that

we understood it very readily, much more so than when the table d'hôte's spoke with the pure Parisian accent. If Dee was to answer in French, answer she must. She was quite equal to the occasion of informing the lady where she had lunched.

"Café de l'enfant," she announced in a clear tone. There had been a lull in the conversation when the maiden lady had addressed us in her execrable French. Even the clatter of knives and forks had ceased as though the whole of Maison Gaston awaited with intense interest to learn where the new boarders had taken their luncheon on their first day in New York.

"Café de l'enfant?" questioned M. Durand. "I do not know that café. Is it near by?"

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"Oh, there are a great many of them, all over the city I believe." Dee's eyes were full of fun. The chancellor had fallen into English and since he was the Autocrat of the Dinner Table we had the right to follow suit.

"Ah, French restaurants?"

"No, Monsieur Durand!"

By this time the table was rocking with laughter.

"She means Child's, she means Child's!" they shouted. The chancellor laughed and clapped his hands. The milliners applauded; the clerks laughed gleefully; the art students looked up and in whispered converse decided Dee and Dum were both paintable and I was chic; Mr. Grayson smiled in a friendly way: the maiden ladies would have joined in if they could have seen the joke but they were still seeking the point when the subject got changed. The only persons at the table who did not laugh were Mrs. Grayson and Madame Gaston. The former seemed to resent M. Durand noticing one of us and the latter evidently did not consider that a third floor backer had any right to crack a joke at her exclusive table d'hôte.

At any rate Dee's answer had broken the ice for all of us and we did not feel near so strange and alien. Monsieur le Chancelier had smiled on us, the rest of the table had applauded and now we were in society. Soon we were chattering away in pigeon French, quite holding our own in the conversation.

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It was the custom of the house when dinner was over for the boarders to congregate in the ugly parlor for about half an hour and then at an unmistakable signal from madame to disperse. That canny lady had no idea of having her plush chairs unnecessarily sat upon or her lamp-post gas burned unduly. If the place was ugly by day when the sunlight was only allowed to come through the drawn blinds in narrow streaks you may fancy how hideous it was by night when gas was turned full on

the bilious paper and the gilded cooking utensils.

M. Durand seemed quite willing to pursue the acquaintance with the Tuckers and me. He asked us to be seated on the long sofa and placed himself in front of us but madame would have none of it. She called us off to show us a picture executed by her daughter, Yvonne, who was responsible for all of the strange and wonderful ornamentation. The chancelor, no doubt, was very agreeable but nothing could exceed the delight we took in this picture. It was a country scene with everything in it one could find in the country. There were houses and barns and fences and trees and water mills with wheels and streams and clouds.

The artist had resorted not to mere pigment for her effect, which fact madame pointed out with pardonable pride. The houses and tree trunks were made of bark glued to the canvas. Leaves were formed of moss, dried and colored, also the grass. For clouds and waterfall the genius of mademoiselle had resorted to pure white cotton which fluffed and foamed in a manner most realistic.

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“How wonderful!” gasped Dum. “How did she ever think of doing such a thing?”

“O, my daughter is clever, so clever I shall find it hard to discover anyone good enough to marry her,” declared the fond mother. “A girl with her education and attainments should marry only the best.”

As madame spoke I noticed she involuntarily glanced at M. Durand. Could she have her eye on the grand chancelor as a future son-in-law? Certainly she would not let one of us have a word to say to him and perhaps that accounted for her ill-humor in discovering we were not children. I recalled that the female boarders were none of them of a type to attract middle-aged Frenchmen. Perhaps madame would not welcome such to her table d’hôte. As for Mrs. Grayson: she was safely married and a mild flirtation carried on between M. Durand and her would not hurt her daughter’s chances.

M. Durand followed us on the tour of inspection, which our hostess conducted even into the corners. She opened up the mail box showing us that it concealed a case with two decanters and some wine glasses. As the star boarder approached she could hardly conceal her vexation and quickly gave the congregated boarders to understand that the half hour was up and she was going to turn out the gas. There was nothing for us to do but mount the stairs to our third floor back.

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M. Durand followed us and kept us for several minutes on the landing in front of his room (the second floor front) talking to us most agreeably. He was an interesting, well educated gentleman in deep distress because of his beloved country.

“Aren’t you dying to be at the front?” blurted out Dum.

“Ah yes, mademoiselle, but my country sees fit to keep me where I can do the most good.”

I noticed the door of the room next to M. Durand’s was opened a tiny bit and a faint rustle behind it gave me the knowledge that someone was standing close to the crack.

“How can one serve so well as at the front?” questioned Dum, who usually pushed a point until she was through. She was very staunch pro-Ally, as were all of us, long before we, as a country, cast our lot with them. M. Durand flushed. Dum was not tactful in her remark, but Dum was not the tactful kind. No man of fifty or younger or older likes to have his fighting ability questioned and certainly no Frenchman during the great war enjoyed being quizzed as to his loyalty.

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“There are many ways and I am no slacker.”

“Oh, I did not mean that—”

“To fight men must have munitions. New forms of firearms, offensive and defensive, are constantly being invented. France must have representatives in this country of all others where the inventive genius is most developed. Now only this day a man came to my office with—” but at this point the man checked himself and shut his mouth with a click. What was he on the point of divulging?

The door next to his room creaked a tiny bit but no one seemed to notice it. I remembered a letter that I had written Father and hoped to get off on the night mail. There was a box near the house and I thought I would run get my letter and slip out and mail it, while the Tuckers were talking to M. Durand. Without saying anything I started up the steps. As my eyes reached the level of the floor above, they came full upon a pair of listening legs. Someone was interested in the conversation being held on the landing below. Instinctively I rejoiced that the Frenchman had shut his mouth when he had. The legs beat a hasty retreat and by the time I arrived at the top of the stairs the hall was empty. I could not tell who was the owner of the legs. I only knew that whoever did own them was possessed of something long and slim.

The creaking door below and the listening legs above made me feel that M. Durand should be careful of his conversation, but I determined to say nothing to Dum and Dee as I often got unmercifully teased by them over the blood and thunder plots that I had a way of seeing around me. If I had merely suggested German spies they would have had a joke on me forever.

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CHAPTER III. ADAPTING OURSELVES.

“Well, how do we like it?” Dee asked as we threw ourselves in the rickity Morris chairs.

“All right, so far!” was Dum’s verdict.

“Well cooked food and copy to burn!” was mine.

“Did you ever see such funny folks? When I got off my café de l’enfant joke and the laugh spread around the table I longed for a camera. Dum, I wish you were going to be a great caricaturist instead of a great sculptor.”

“Do you reckon we shall have to go to bed every night at this hour?” asked Dum.

“Of course not, we don’t have to go to bed now, but we do have to get out of the holy of holies,” I laughed. “Madame means for her boarders to sit in their rooms. Hence these folding beds!”

“Surely she will let us see any guests we may have in her hideous old parlor,” said Dum shuddering, her artistic soul quivering in remembrance of the country scene.

Her query was settled by a timid knock at the door.

“It must be little Claire,” I ventured. “Maybe she comes up to turn down the beds, poor child.”

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“I hope it is not that Yvonne,” said Dee. “She is something of a minx to my way of thinking.”

Again the timid knock while we sat and surmised.

“Come in!” yawned Dum.

The door opened slowly and there stood Mr. Reginald Kent!

“I—they—told me to come right up!” he stammered.

The breeding of the Tuckers was always to be relied upon. Anyone would have thought that their lives had been spent in third floor backs with folding beds and that it was the ordinary occurrence to have young men come to call on them in such places.

“This is where we live,” said Dee graciously. “We are very glad to see you.”

Certainly he was delighted to see us, especially Dum who had made an impression on the young man years before, one that

had never been effaced. Dee and I squeezed in one of the Morris chairs, the one that seemed the most able to carry double, and a seat was made for our guest.

Reginald Kent's appearance and personality were quite as pleasing as they had been years before when he had paid the visit to his cousins, the Winns, down in my country, and had gone on the memorable deer hunt with us. He had obtained our address from Sally Winn, who was an indefatigable letter writer and had taken great pleasure in letting her handsome young cousin know all about our going to New York and our plans to live in the French boarding house. He had wasted no time in looking us up, determined to be the first one to offer assistance to three lone lorn maidens adrift in a great city.

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After we were comfortably seated and had answered and asked the questions that always get into the conversation for the first few moments, before persons who have not met for a long time can adjust themselves, Mr. Kent looked curiously around our quarters.

"Rather different surroundings from the last in which we met," he ventured.

Our minds flew back to the old library at Bracken, my beloved home. A great cheerful fire was lighting the book-lined walls, close to the hearth was the ever present circle of dogs and then a widening circle of happy, gay persons. Father was there and Mr. Tucker; poor Sally Winn forgetting for the moment her imaginary aches and pains; the silent Jo Winn, his eyes ever fixed on Dee, in hopeless admiration, while he softly pulled the ears of his favorite pointer; Reginald Kent and Dum were deep in the contemplation of an old book of engravings; and I was busying myself seeing that our guests were comfortable. Ah, me! Why should we want to leave such pleasant surroundings and come to a great place like New York and live in the third floor back of a French boarding house where the madame scorned us and put us in a chamber with folding beds and hideous busts and vases and green paper that was enough to turn the stomach of an ostrich? Why? Because we were young and must go try our wings.

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Reginald Kent gazed long and hard at the boot vases filled with red and purple paper flowers and then an uncontrollable fit of laughter seized him and we joined in. We told him of the fearful and wonderful decorations in the parlor and promised to let him get a glimpse of them some day if he was very, very good.

The coming of this young man had put heart into all of us. We felt that in some way he was a connecting link between the old and the new life. He offered his services and even wanted to call and escort us to our various classes which we had planned to begin on the following morning. Dee and I declined as we were to go together to the College of —— and felt we could

manage without his assistance, but since the Art Students' League where Dum was to enter was right in Mr. Kent's line, she accepted his offer with thanks.

Reginald Kent was a young artist who had gone into commercial art with all his energy and talent and was making good in a most surprising way. I could but compare him with the art students at Madame Gaston's table d'hôte and my respect for commercial art arose to great heights. A man can be just as artistic with his hair cut, an unshaven chin, neglected nails do not necessarily mean an eye for color or line.

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I was glad he was to start Dum on the right road and knew an introduction at the art school by an arrived artist (even though he did happen to have arrived by commercial art) would be no small thing for a new student.

Our caller did not stay long. He made an engagement to meet Dum in the morning and took himself off, a happy smile on his pleasing countenance.

The business of getting to bed was a strenuous one. The double folding abomination had a way of catching midway and it took the combined strength of all three of us to pull the wretched thing down and then when it was, as we thought, safely placed on its extra hinged legs it suddenly, without the least warning, slowly resumed its perpendicular position.

"Only suppose we had been in it!" cried Dum. "We must sleep with our heads to the foot, Dee, so if we do fold up in the night we can be upright. I should hate to be found dead standing on my head."

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By diligent search a clamp was discovered that locked the bed into position, not that we trusted the clamp. It had a nonchalant, unreliable expression and we suspected it of being something of a practical joker, so we remade the bed so in case of accidents the twins would be discovered standing on their feet.

My bed had its idiosyncrasies also. Thinking it was to be stubborn as was the way with folding beds, we all caught hold of it and with a strong pull, and a long pull, and a pull altogether, bang! the beast came down on my poor head.

"Poor Page! That was too bad," commiserated Dee, dabbing a wet rag on the place.

"Oh, it's nothing. 'My head is bloody, but unbowed.' Now let's hunt for a clamp so I won't spend the night in a vertical position. I am tired enough to sleep standing up in my stall but I'd rather lie down," I laughed.

There was no clamp and we discovered that nothing but main strength could raise my little couch.

CHAPTER IV. THE FOLDING BED THAT FOLDED.

With much giggling, more like the three girls of fifteen who had just met at Gresham, our boarding school, than grown-up young ladies, we finally composed ourselves on our precarious beds. We had pinned back the stuffy curtains and tucked up the heavy valances and then raised the windows to let in all the fresh night air possible.

“Bed comfy, Page?” whispered Dee.

“Fearsome! I’m going to look like the tramp who went to sleep on the park bench with kinks in him made by the arms. How about you?” I whispered back.

“I’m not asleep!” declared Dum in a loud tone. “No use in whispering. This bed is like an old year-before-last hammock. Either I have to sleep on top of Dee or she has to sleep on top of me. It sags in the middle so. I bet you some three hundred pounder has been occupying this elegant suite before we came here and he got this bed in bad habits.”

“Well we might as well make the best of it,” yawned Dee. “So night, night, and pleasant dreams.”

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Sleep did finally claim us and dreams too got in their work though not such pleasant ones as far as I was concerned. There was a jumble of Gresham and Maison Gaston. Miss Plympton and madame seemed to be one and the same with the disagreeable traits of both. I had to recite algebra to Mrs. Grayson who sneered at me unmercifully and finally hit me in the back with her husband’s baseball bat. That was when one of the ruts in the bed got me in an unwary rib. Zebedee, all the time, was trying to help me out but he seemed to be nothing but a little boy with short velvet trousers and a Lord Fauntleroy collar. Afterwards I remembered it was the kind the sickly looking art students wore, who had sat opposite me the evening before.

“Never mind me, go to Tweedles!” I had cried out in my dream. “They are purple in the face from standing on their heads.”

“Help; Help!” Tweedles yelled. (Tweedles was the name the father of the twins had given his daughters when they were spoken of collectively.)

“Zebedee is coming! Don’t let the German spy find the inventions,” was my irrelevant rejoinder.

Suddenly the realization came to me that I was talking in my sleep and talking arrant nonsense. I sat up in my furrowed bed

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trying to wake up enough to realize that Zebedee was not a little boy in corduroy coat and big lay-down collar and that Mrs. Grayson and no one at all ever could make me study algebra again so long as I should live.

“Page! Page!”

“Help! Help!”

Could I be dreaming sitting up in bed? I pinched my stupid self.

“Let us out!”

Heavens above! It was my room mates. They were in trouble, but what trouble and where? The folding bed! The clamp that looked like a practical joker! I sprang up and ran to the assistance of the twins. The bed had quietly closed itself but thank goodness the girls were standing on their feet somewhere within that mummy case. I grabbed the foot of the bed and pulled with all my might and main. My pull amounted to about as much as a voteless woman who wants to get an appropriation out of the City Council for civic improvements she deems necessary. I must call for help. The girls might smother. Their cries were growing fainter. Even then they might be beyond help.

“Somebody come!” I shrieked flying to the door and letting out a shriek into the quiet, dark halls. “Help! Help!”

“Fire! Fire! The house is on fire!” someone yelled from the lower floor. I thanked the person in my soul. That would get assistance.

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There was a commotion on every floor. Lights began to gleam; doors were opened; hurried questions were asked and vague hurried answers given.

“Here! Here! Third floor back!” I cried, lighting the gas.

“Fire?”

“No! Smothered!”

“Oh, it’s out! Those southern girls have put it out,” was the relieved remark made by some female.

“They are not out! Come!” I pleaded.

Mr. Smith, the tall young man who seemed to have a room on our floor, was the first to arrive. He was fully dressed, evidently being a keeper of late hours. Next came M. Durand in a flowered dressing gown; then Mr. Grayson running up two steps at a time. Mrs. Grayson did not appear. Madame Gaston was shouting directions from the bowels of the earth but no one marked her.

“The folding bed!” I gasped as Mr. Smith and the chancellor ran to my assistance. “The twins are shut up in it!”

“Sens dessus dessous?” was monsieur’s horrified question.

“No, right side up!”

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“Ah, c’est convenable!”

For the second time that night three persons heaved to on that old bed. Smothered giggles relieved my mind greatly. The twins could not be smothered if their giggles were. Slowly the refractory piece of furniture gave way to our combined persuasion.

Discovered: Caroline and Virginia Tucker lying with hands crossed on their breasts and on their countenances, what they fondly hoped simulated the peace of untimely death.

Just as the bed slowly descended Madame Gaston came puffing into the room.

“Qu’est ce que c’est que ca?”

Mutely I pointed to the recumbent figures. The girls lay looking as much like the “Little Princes in the Tower” as they could.

I was pleased to see real concern on the countenance of our landlady. It would not be good for her business to have two girls smothered in a folding bed in her establishment, even if they were nothing more than third-floor backs.

“Dead!” she gasped.

“No—o! Just—just kind of overcome.”

M. Durand was with difficulty restraining his laughter. I wondered how long I could keep back mine, also how long the girls could hold their position.

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“I’ll get some water,” I suggested. I was thankful that some instinct had guided me to slip on my kimona while I was crying for help. I was still barefooted, however, as I hastily ran down the stairs to the bath room, which was on the second floor. I knew perfectly well that those girls did not need water but I felt I should burst if I could not get out of the room a moment and let out a few chuckles. Mr. Grayson and Mr. Smith both offered to go but I was in the hall and half down the steps while they were protesting.

The disturbed boarders had gone back to their rooms when they found out it was not fire. The doors along the halls were all shut except the Graysons’ and M. Durand’s. As I flew noiselessly down the carpeted stairs, my bare feet making not a sound, I was much taken aback to see Mrs. Grayson coming from the chancellor’s room. In her hand she held a roll of

papers and on her handsome countenance was an evil leer of triumph.

I crouched down behind the bannisters until I heard her door softly close and then I got the water and returned in great haste.

It was an easy matter to restore the shamming pair to life. A few flicks of cold water and they were quite themselves.

“Brava! Brava!” cried the chancellor. “Bernhardt herself could not improve on it.”

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He was careful to say this in an aside as the chancellor evidently held madame in wholesome awe. The lady was busily engaged in closing the windows and unpinning the curtains.

“The night air will kill all of you. The night air of New York is quite as injurious as that of Paris and we all know that in Paris, persons who sleep with the windows up soon lose their eyesight.”

Dum was on the point of protesting but Dee gave her a warning pinch and she desisted. Dee’s policy through life was to let people think they were having their own way as much as possible but go on and have hers nevertheless. Surely it was a much easier matter to wait until madame was gone and then get up and open the window than have a war of words with her on the subject.

We thanked the gentlemen who had so bravely come to our assistance. I suddenly became conscious of the fact that I was barefooted and in decided negligee and Tweedles at the same time pulled the covers closely up under their chins. It was something in the nearsighted eyes of the tall Mr. Smith that made me conscious. The girls said afterwards that they did not like his looks either. His mouth was too red.

Just as our deliverers were departing while madame remained to reprimand us I fancy, the magic bed again began slowly to fold up. The girls shrieked and I hung on to the footboard. The gentlemen turned to come back but madame shooed them out and sternly bade Tweedles to arise while she sat on the dashboard. How I wished it would go up with her but she knew her weight and relied on it.

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“I have never heard such a commotion in a respectable house,” she stormed.

“Neither have I,” said Dee coolly. “It is too bad you should not have had the bed repaired before you put us in it. Suppose we had been the children you say you expected—what would have become of us? I have no doubt you would have been arrested for infanticide. If we had not had the sense to sleep with our heads to the foot we would have been seriously injured. It is no

joke to be awakened from a sound sleep to find yourself standing on your head in an airtight compartment. You have no right to put anyone in such a death trap.”

When Dee got started there was no stopping her. She was a most tactful good tempered girl, but when she felt herself to be abused or realized that fraud was being practiced she was exactly like her father who let no man walk over him. Madame actually seemed to shrink up. She began to weep and sobbed out something about being a widow and every one taking advantage of her.

“No one is taking advantage of you,” continued Dee. “Our father wrote engaging board for my sister, my friend and me. You seemed in your correspondence glad enough to get us. We come. You treat us with scant courtesy; give us one room when he wrote for two; put us in folding beds that are thoroughly uncomfortable and unsanitary; you do not warn us that there is danger of this one’s folding up when it is occupied. You send a young gentleman who is calling on us up to our bedroom when you know perfectly well it is not the proper thing to do. He is a gentleman and we are ladies so it has made no difference but I shall ask you in future to send us a message when we have callers and if it is the custom of the house for your boarders to see their guests in their rooms we shall of course conform to it, but we do not wish to have any and everyone sent to our room without notice.”

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“Certainement, mademoiselle!” it was a very crestfallen madame who meekly let herself out of our door and crept downstairs.

“Dee, you are a wonder!” I exclaimed.

“I should have made the old brute sit on the footboard all night so we can get some sleep,” yawned Dee, but Dum was already busy with trunk straps. She fastened the leg of the big bed to the leg of the small one.

“United we fall, divided we arise,” she said as she viewed her ingenious device. Once more the windows were raised and we crept to rest, committing our souls to our Maker and bodies to the folding beds.

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CHAPTER V. A LETTER IN THE POST OFFICE.

The night had been exciting enough without my divulging to Tweedles what I had seen on the stairs when I went for the water. I knew it would interest them so much that there would be no sleep for any of us. I merely bided my time however. The question was too important for me to try to decide what must be done all by my lonesome. Besides I felt it would be a low trick to keep such a wildly exciting bit of news to myself. As soon as morning came and the ominous creaking of the springs of the magic bed and the straining of the trunk straps gave evidence that one or both of the twins was awake, I sat up in one of the troughs in my bed and called out:

“Are we pro-German, or pro-Allies?”

“Page has gone crazy, Dee. Only hear her!” cried Dum coming violently to life. “What a question!”

“Well, we are not yet at war. We have a right to be either, you know,” I asserted.

“Yes, we have right to put a bomb under your bed and blow you to smithereens too,” put in Dee.

“Well I am merely testing your Anglo Saxon loyalty,” I laughed, “but I am the one who is going to put a bomb under your bed. What would you think if I should tell you that last night when I went down for the water I saw Mrs. Grayson coming out of M. Durand’s room?”

“Page, how astounding!”

“And in her hand she was carrying a roll of papers that looked like blue-prints, and on her face such an evil leer of malice and triumph and hate—oh, girls, she is nothing but a spy, a nasty foreign spy! Didn’t you notice when the chancellor was talking to us that she was inside her door listening?”

“I heard the door creak,” said Dum.

“So did I!” from Dee.

“And what’s more, when I came up the steps while you were still jawing with M. Durand, someone was listening over the bannisters. I only saw his legs, but they were the long slim ones belonging to that Smith. Smith indeed! I bet his name is Schmidt and he is in cahoots with the fair Grayson. She pretends so hard to be Parisian. I’ll wager anything she is straight from Vienna. Both of them are here to spy on M. Durand.”

“Oh, and maybe he came in here and fixed our bed so it would fold up so we would have to holler for help and then he knew the courtly Durand would come and she was to stay below and get the papers,” said Dum breathlessly, her eyes shining with excitement.

“Oh Dum! Such a movie plot!” laughed Dee. “I’ll grant you that if you turn up this bed you will find: ‘Made in Germany’ on the bottom, but I can’t think the Huns are mixed up in its ways beyond that.”

“Who knows?” was my wise remark. “There is no telling what they are mixed up in. But the question now before the house is: what are we to do? If we are pro-Ally we must warn the chancelor. Why chancelor? I wonder, but that is the name Madame Gaston gives him. If we do not let him know we are no better than Pacifists or Huns. But how are we to let him know?”

“Well I’m going to run and get a bath and while I’m gone I’ll be thinking and you and Dum keep thinking too. We can get some way to do it among us or we had better go back to boarding school where such things are taught.”

Dee was back in a few minutes, triumph beaming out of her eyes.

“I’ve found a way! Write a note and I’ll divulge.”

And so we wrote the following note, not trusting our shaky French, but using what English we could command and copied out in Dum’s best writing which was legible and strong.

Dear M. Durand:

We are three American girls who are heart and soul on the side of the Allies in this great war and we hope the time will soon come when we can say our country is one of the Allies. In the meantime we feel that we must do anything to help your country that we can. Last night, while you were so kindly assisting us when we were in dire distress some papers were taken from your room. Perhaps you have not missed them yet, but when you do you may find they are very important. We feel that we must tell you where they are—they are in the hands of Mrs. Grayson. She got them while you and Mr. Grayson were unfolding the bed. We hope we are doing right in telling you.

Very sincerely,
THE THIRD FLOOR BACKERS.

“And now we mail the note!” cried Dee.

“But Dee, he must get it immediately before the arch-fiend can make use of the knowledge she has stolen,” objected Dum.

“Of course, but my post office is near at hand and the delivery

is very quick and exclusive. Come!”

Noiselessly we followed Dee down the steps. Outside of the Grayson’s door were two pair of boots, one pair, nice manly tan ones that reminded me somehow of Zebedee, the other pair, high heeled fancy things that one might have known Mrs. Grayson would wear. By the chancelor’s door were his little varnished boots, very short and natty with Cuban heels. I wondered if the little overworked Claire did the boots of the second floor boarders.

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“There is my letter box!” whispered Dee and quick as a flash she had deposited our note in one of the varnished boots. She gave a quick little rat tat on the door and without pausing a moment we were down the steps before the owner of the boots could open his door and take them in.

As we slid in our places at the breakfast table we heard M. Durand’s door open. Dee pinched me and I pinched Dum.

“Safe!” we whispered.

The dining-room at Maison Gaston presented a different aspect in the morning from the cheerful one of the evening. The outside table boarders did not breakfast there and all the inside boarders who were of any importance had their breakfast of coffee and rolls taken to their rooms. The long table was dismantled, a doubtful red cloth spread at one end where some six or seven places were laid. Chairs were piled up in one corner of the room preparatory to a big sweeping. The basement was dark and madame wasted no gas on such as did not have breakfast served in their rooms. Bowls of luke warm oatmeal were brought to us by the little Claire who had red rims to her eyes which looked as though her mother had perhaps taken out her spite on her offspring.

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“Voila, Yvonne, le dejeuner de Monsieur le Chancelier!” we heard Madame Gaston say to her daughter.

Yvonne came through the dining-room with a dainty tray in her hands. She looked more than ever like a stage maid with the freshest of ruffled aprons and a most coquettish little cap. The aroma from the star boarder’s coffee pot floated to my nostrils making me take heart. Even though the oatmeal was frankly heated over and not heated much, we were to have good coffee. The rolls were pictures of rolls, which I glimpsed as the saucy girl whisked herself through the dining-room without so much as a glance in our direction.

Alas! Coffee for the second floor front was not coffee for the third floor back. Claire brought some dismal second brew to us with skim milk of the same vintage we had had served to us for our oatmeal. There were rolls and rolls we also learned. Ours were hard and tough and weather beaten, looking as though they might have seen better days but even in the heyday of their

youth they had never looked as did the ones sent to monsieur.

“When do you think we will find out about it all?” was Dee’s query as she and I boarded the elevated train which was to bear us to our college where we were to begin the lectures. Dum had joined her faithful swain at the corner drug store. From there they were to walk to the Art Students’ League, which was not so very far from our home.

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“I don’t know, Dee, but I am sure that short story writing is not going to interest me much today. My mind is too full of German spy plots.”

That night at dinner we were on the alert for developments in the case. Mrs. Grayson was as handsome as ever and as attentive to her neighbor who was quite as gallant. However he drew us into the conversation more and more as though determined that if we had come to the Maison Gaston to learn French he was going to help us to our goal. The look he bent on us was kindly and fatherly.

Madame Gaston’s manner to us was polite and solicitous. Our bed had been mended, so she informed us. She also told us that the hall room on the third floor was vacant and she had converted it into a small sitting room, where we could receive our guests. The star of the third floor back was in the ascendency evidently.

After we went up to our room, little Claire brought us a package, which she said had come to us by special messenger.

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“Candy! I know it is candy and a five pounder!” cried Dee. “I bet that Reginald Kent is trying to get in with the crowd so we won’t butt in on him when he calls on Dum.”

“Nonsense!” declared Dum, blushing up to her widow’s peak.

“Well since it is addressed to all of us I shall open it and find out,” I declared, suiting the action to the word.

It was tied with many yards of ribbon and there was a box within a box. On the inside one there was a card:

“TO THE THIRD FLOOR BACKERS.”

On raising the lid, which opened up like a small trunk on hinges, a card was discovered on which was written the following message:

In the name of France I thank the young ladies in the third floor back. They have been of inestimable service to me in establishing the identity of the German spy, who I have been sure for some time is among us.

I know they will be glad to learn that the papers stolen last night were nothing more than a decoy. I guard more

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carefully the secrets of my beloved nation and even when I hear in the night the cries of beautiful damsels in distress I remember first the call of France and of her damsels and the Hun, who is many times more cruel than a folding bed.

One service I am going to ask of the staunch allies of France: another one in the Maison Gaston is suspected by me of taking an undue interest in my papers. Watch carefully and report to me if you discover anything warranting suspicion.

The special messenger you chose is fleet of foot and will serve again I am sure.

With assurances of the deepest respect and highest regard I remain your devoted servant,

SECOND FLOOR FRONT.

“Isn’t he precious?” cried Dee.

“And what a pretty wit!” said Dum diving for a choice chocolate.

“Do you imagine that every time we catch a German spy it will mean five pounds of the best candy? I have two more in mind.”

“Two! Who besides this so-called Smith?” queried Dum her mouth so full of chocolate one could hardly understand her.

“That would be telling! Let’s start a detective agency and each one work on her own clue and see what we can get out of it,” I suggested. “I don’t mean candy, but satisfaction.”

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“Great! Already I begin to have my suspicions. How about—but that is telling,” and Dee shut her mouth up very tight considering it was so full of the wonderful candy.

“Girls do you realize we have been in New York just thirty-six hours and already we have had adventures enough to fill a book?” I asked.

“Been shut up in a folding bed—”

“Brought a beast of a landlady to her knees, so to speak—”

“Caught a German spy—”

“Started ourselves on the road to learning—”

“Formed ourselves into a detective agency—”

“And best of all—got a candy beau—”

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CHAPTER VI. LETTERS FROM HOME.

From Dr. Allison to his Daughter:

Bracken, Va.
October —, 1916.

My dear Page:

Your letters have given me the greatest pleasure. Next to being free in a great city myself is to have you there so you can tell me all about it. Catch all the spies you can and come home with your belt hanging full of scalps. I wonder what your Cousin Park Garnett would say if she could know that you were mixed up in such things and I was aiding and abetting you. I think the little chancelor must be a pretty nice chap. Watch out for that Smith, though! I don't like the sound of him. I can bet on you girls to do him up in the open, but these Huns—well never mind about what we think of them. I only wish that the gentlemen in Washington would settle matters—but I am for them, whatever they are doing. I feel it must be right and the President will save the honor of the United States.

We are jogging along much the same as usual here at Milton. I am up early and out late trying to make all of my patients get through with their diseases so I can get off some time soon and come to New York with Jeff Tucker. The county has been trying itself in the baby line lately. I am sure the census taker will see a great difference in the population. All the babies are boys too, so Mammy Susan is sure we will be at war soon. She says that is a sure sign. I am thinking of having a flying machine built in the form of a stork. Don't you think that would be neat? Not too gaudy?

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Sally Winn is vastly pleased with herself at having rendered first aid to her cousin, that fine young Reginald Kent, in sending the address of you girls to him so he appeared on the scene on your very first evening in the metropolis. Sally's soul is filled with romance and she is sure that Reginald and Dum will make a match of it. I tell her pish! tush! nonsense! But she persists in her prognostications. I informed her that the Tuckers are no older than you and I wouldn't thank anyone for planning your making a match with—with even the man who kills the kaiser. Sally smiled in a sly and most disagreeable manner. It was enough to make me want to put aloes in her heart drops. Don't you go get Sally started on you. She keeps dinging at a thing so and thinks so much about it that I verily believe she brings it to pass. Influence of mind over matter perhaps!

Mammy Susan is furious that the French boarding housekeeper gives better coffee to the ones on the second floor than she does on the third.

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“Is them Frenchies the ones you alls would gib de shuts off’n yo’ backs fur?” she asked me the other day when I read her your letter. “I don’t see no diffunce ’tween them an’ the Dutch.”

“But Mammy, there are French and French,” I objected.

“Yes, an’ they is Dutch an’ Dutch.”

Mammy Susan is very lonesome for her little girl. The old woman is beginning to look quite feeble, but perhaps it is only that she is missing you. She watches for the mail like any girl parted from her lover. You must write to her oftener than you do to me. I shall understand. Of course she brings your letter to me to read and I get the benefit of them as well as she does, but she has the satisfaction of knowing they were meant for her. The poor old woman is a little jealous even of your love for me.

The dogs miss you too. I found Splutter the other day lying by the fire in the library hugging a raveled old red sweater of yours.

Are you going to be able to stick it out at the Maison Gaston? Of course I know it is interesting, but I don’t like the idea of uncomfortable beds and poor breakfasts for growing folks, or folks already grown, for that matter. I should hate it for myself. The grand table d’hôte can’t make up for gluey, slimy, half-warmed-over cereals in the morning nor will the wonderful plots you can get from baseball players and their Austrian wives and young Germans with red lips and middle-aged French consuls or what not make up for rocky, sagging beds and abusive landladies. Of course you girls must judge for yourselves. Tucker and I sent you off feeling we could trust you to use the sense God gave you to take care of yourselves, but for goodness sake don’t get pale and thin in your search for copy.

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What you tell me of your lectures is tremendously interesting. I never told you that when I was a boy I quite contemplated following the fiction muse for a profession. It was a tug between medicine and magazines, but the living was sure from medicine and very uncertain from magazines and there was your dear little mother who was tugging at my heart strings and unconsciously threw herself on the side of medicine and the life of a country doctor. I have never regretted my choice, but I am still interested in how the apple gets in the dumpling of literature.

Tucker and I have no idea when we will come on to New York, but we might surprise you by walking in on you any day in the next two months. If you are still at Madame Gaston’s I bid to go out to breakfast. I may even treat the whole crowd every morning to coffee and buckwheats at Dee’s favorite Cafe de l’Enfant. Tell her that is a good joke, but I am sorry to tell her I have seen it before in some comic paper. My love to the

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twins. Don't let the old madame get ahead of you, but I am betting on the twins to down her if it comes to a fight.

Much love from FATHER.

From Mr. Jeffrey Tucker to his daughters:

Richmond, Va.
October —, 1916.

Dear Tweedles:

What have I run you up against? And I thought I was being so clever too! In fact I was being so clever—How could I know that the preacher was going to recommend such an old skin? Don't stand for it—get out—find another place—never mind the fact that your board is paid in advance—lose the board—bite your thumb at Madame Gaston. How can she be French? How could she have been born in that wonderful country that I'd give my soul to help? I believe she is a Hun in disguise. But surely she cannot know of the perfidious nature of the wife of the ball player, who sounds like a decent chap himself. The man with the red lips—watch out for him. He sounds dangerous to me. Has anyone ever discovered why Germans have such red, red mouths? Sucking the blood of other nations? Right you are—go up head! When will Wilson and the leisurely gentlemen in Washington let us get in the game? I am upholding the administration with all my might, with tongue and pen, but sometimes I find myself wanting to bust out in cries of impatience. Don't you girls tell on me that for one moment I expressed the least doubt of the wisdom of our rulers. When we do get in God grant that every blue-blooded American, man and woman, will do his or her part.

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I am missing my girls worse and more than usual it seems to me. I am almost sorry I am such a liberal minded parent. How nice it would be if I were one of these old-fashioned fathers who thought his daughters belong to him heart and soul and body, and all they wanted on earth was to administer to his wants. Then you would have to stay home all the time and sew seams and preserve fruit. I wonder how you would like that.

I know one person who would like that arrangement, that is poor Brindle. He has no patience with this new woman business. He is of the opinion that a woman's place is at home. There she can give him his needed baths; and catch his fleas (I am sorry to tell you, Dee, that he has 'em); she can see that he has his proper exercise; and that the grocer keeps the kind of dog biscuit he favors. Really poor old Brindle is in a bad way. I don't have time to do for him as he should be done by. I have not the proper spirit about poor Brindle. I am frank to confess that I am ashamed to take him walking by daylight. He is so—so—but I shall spare Dee's feelings. I am going to get some false whiskers and disguise myself so that I can do my duty by

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Brindle. He is such a snorter and snuffler and panter. He will lie down so many times when one is trying to take him walking and insists upon going up so many alleys and in so many back yards. Of course I know his puffing and panting are entirely due to the shape of his nose and his nose is shaped that way because of his pedigree, but that does not make it any more agreeable to have a dozen boys marching along the street by one hooting at one's dog.

What do you say, Deedle dumpling, to my sending Brindle out to the country to some quiet pleasant boarding place? There he could spend his declining and reclining years. It would be happier for him. I could find a place where they would make him little puddings and things and where they would let him sleep under a mosquito bar so the flies would not worry him. They might even furnish him fresh eggs and cream when he is po'ly. Think about it honey. I am sure we could make him more comfortable than he is at present with nobody but me to do for him, and I'm so busy and so proud stomached!

If your present abode gets too much for you, and I don't see how you have stood it as long as you have, why get that Kent fellow to help you find a more comfortable place, he seems to be a gentlemanly enough person and no doubt would help you out. Dr. Allison and I are going to New York as soon as we can get a respite from babies and extras.

Give my love to Page and ask her to write to me. Let me know by return mail your ultimatum concerning Brindle. And, Dee, don't say hard things about your poor devoted

ZEBEDEE.

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CHAPTER VII. BRINDLE TAKES A JOURNEY.

“Now just listen! Isn’t this about the most Zebedeeish letter you ever heard?” stormed Dee.

We had come in after a strenuous day of study and adventure. All days in New York seemed full of adventure and now that we were in swing with our lectures most of them were also full of study. We picked our letters out of the pile we found on the hall rack, a very precarious place for boarders’ mail with one spy for sure in the house and maybe two. While I read mine from father the girls read theirs from Zebedee. Then I read extracts of mine to them and then Dee read all of theirs to me.

“I know what it means,” sighed Dum. “It means Brindle will soon be boxed and on his way to New York. I bid for him to sleep in the folding bed and I’ll get up some night and slip the clamp. Brindle would be much prettier mashed out nice and smooth.”

“Well it certainly means something must be done,” declared Dee, swelling up like a turkey cock. She was ever touchy about her beloved pet and it was the one thing on earth she could see no joke in. Brindle was a serious matter to Dee. [64]

“Brindle can’t help being born,” continued Dee. “It is not his fault he was brought into this world and now he is here we must take care of him until—”

“Until a merciful Providence removes him,” put in Dum, but a glance at Dee’s countenance arrested her flippancy. “I beg your pardon Dee.”

“Oh, that’s all right,” declared Dee in her most gentlemanly manner. “I know you love Brindle yourself Dum. You couldn’t help it. He is so human.”

“So are the art students who eat here human, and so is the red-lipped Smith, at least almost human, and I don’t love them.”

“Do you think Madame Gaston would allow Brindle to come live here?” I asked. “Couldn’t you let him go the pleasant boarding house in the country until you get back to Richmond?”

“Why Page, Brindle simply hates boarding houses,” said Dee in a manner somewhat aggrieved that her best friend should be suggesting such a thing.

“But this is a boarding house.”

“Of course, but then we are here.”

There was no gainsaying that. We were certainly there.

“You had better ask Madame Gaston before you make any arrangements,” suggested Dum.

“Of course, but she could not object to such a nice person as Brindle,” said Dee. “He is ten times as charming as that little poodle Mrs. Grayson keeps in her room.”

“Well I don’t envy you the job of tackling the old she dragon on the subject,” I laughed, “but I bid to be in hearing distance when you do it.”

“Come on, I am going to do it this minute.” The Tuckers never stopped to worry over doing a disagreeable thing. If it must be done, the sooner the better was their motto.

We had been at Maison Gaston two weeks and we felt that Madame Gaston had a different feeling towards us from the one of disdain she had evinced for us on our arrival. Perhaps it was owing to M. Durand, who never lost a chance to be attentive and kind to us. We thought from her change of manner that he must have had a talk with her. Mrs. Grayson too seemed to be trying to make us like her. It was with difficulty that we concealed our feelings concerning that handsome lady. Dee well knew that the way for us to serve M. Durand and France was to keep her in ignorance of what we knew of her relations to Germany. It was hard on us to have to see her exercising her blandishments on M. Durand and then to include us when we felt like shouting from the house tops: “Spy! Spy!”

Smith was quiet and unassuming. If it had not been for his over red lips we might almost have liked him. Every evening he put his long legs under madame’s table d’hôte and then occupied himself in the business of filling them. I set myself to watch him, trying to find out if he and Mrs. Grayson were in partnership in their villainy. Never once did they glance towards each other. I began to feel we had been mistaken in our surmise. He perhaps was just what he said he was: a young man from Indiana who was out of work but expected soon to get a good job in New York. The listening legs I had seen the first evening may have meant nothing at all. He may have been lonesome, poor fellow!

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Dee approached Madame Gaston with her accustomed tact. First she praised the food at the table d’hôte; then she said pleasant things about the beauty of Yvonne and how much M. Durand seemed to admire her; then she praised Madam’s coiffure, which was indeed fearful and wonderful; she had something nice to say about the general air of gentility that was so apparent in the house; she even dragged in the beautiful furnishings in the parlor. Perfidious Dee! Gradually she led up to Brindle. How she adored him! What a well bred beast he was! How well trained!

Before Madame Gaston knew where she was standing, Dee had got her consent to bring Brindle into the exclusive circles

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of Maison Gaston, and she immediately flew to the telegraph station to wire Zebedee to send on her beloved pet. She was afraid the landlady might change her mind if she did not clinch the matter.

“If only he didn’t smell so like a dog!” sighed Dum when Dee was out of hearing. “I almost hope Zebedee will know enough not to send him. Of course, I am fond of Brindle in a way myself, but I do think he is, after all, nothing but a dog and a mighty snuffy old dog at that.”

If Mr. Tucker did know enough not to send the dog on to New York he did not make use of his wisdom. Brindle came and came so quickly that Dum and I had a suspicion that he had him all ready to send even before he got Dee’s wire. No doubt an old bull dog who must be exercised and hates to walk would be a great nuisance to an active man like Zebedee. I know I always hated to have to exercise him and nothing but my extreme regard for his mistress would have reconciled me to appearing on the streets of New York with the puffing, panting, wheezing, snuffling beast. I love dogs too, love all animals that are supposed to be loved, but Brindle was certainly far from attractive. About the only attractive thing about him was his affection for Dee. He would stand and gaze into her face, tears streaming from his stewed prunes eyes and his little excuse for a tail, so ingrown in folds of flesh that it was hardly visible, wagging violently.

“Who could help loving anything that loved you so much?” cried Dee soon after Brindle’s arrival. The poor old dog was tired and stiff from his journey, but he followed Dee around like her shadow and when she sat down came and devoured her with his loving gaze.

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“What are you going to do with him all day, Deedlums?” asked Dum, laughing at the abandonment of love expressed in the poor old dog’s countenance.

“Why nothing! I’m going to take him for an airing every morning before breakfast. Little Claire is going to let him stay down in the back yard when it is fine weather. When I come home from lectures I am going to take him for another run—”

“Run?”

“Well, walk!”

“More likely, crawl!”

“You don’t have to bother with him, anyhow,” declared Dee.

“No, I don’t have to, but I fancy his Aunt Dum will occasionally go along, and his Cousin Page, eh Page?”

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“Yes, I’ll do my part by our guest,” Dee looked at me gratefully.

Brindle came and licked my hand as though he too felt relieved that when he went crawling all of us would go along.

“Are you going to like it here, old doggie?” I asked.

“Woof! Woof!” answered Brindle in his soft gutturals.

“That means, yes,” asserted Dee.

“Were you tired on the train?” I continued, scratching him between the wrinkles on the back of his neck.

“Grrrh!”

“Sure, that’s what grrrh means. Now say he is not human!”

As we weren’t prepared to say it we let Dee’s challenge pass.

My only objection to Brindle was the same one Dum had expressed not in Dee’s hearing. It was the strong pungent bull dog smell that no amount of bathing could overcome, but we loved Dee enough to be willing to put up with a goat in the room if she should so ordain. With plenty of air at night we hope to be able to stand the odoriferous Brindle.

CHAPTER VIII. A THEATRE PARTY.

“Mees Tuckair, are you acquainted with a gentleman in your city of Richman by the name of Mistair Trouville?”

It was the precious half hour that madame allowed her boarders to converse together in her prized parlor and M. Durand had gallantly seated us on the sofa and placed himself in a chair facing us. He spoke in a whisper but anyone who cared to hear him might have done so as his whisper was decidedly a stage whisper.

“Our father knows him,” answered Dee. “I have often heard him speak of him. He is something of an inventor I believe.” She pitched her voice low too. Mrs. Grayson moved over closer to our group, although she was deep in a conversation with one of the bloodless art students.

“Do you happen to know the address of M. Trouville? If so I shall ask you to be so kind as to take this letter and write the address thereon,” he asked in his quaint stilted English. He held out to Dee a square envelope which had not been sealed.

“I am so sorry, but I have no idea of his home address,” said Dee. “But I can get it from my father.”

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“Ah, if you will be so kind! Perhaps mademoiselle would enclose this in a letter to her father and he would then forward it to M. Trouville.”

“Of course, that would mean he would get it sooner. But you must seal it.”

“Ah no, mademoiselle! That is not convenable, to seal a letter entrusted to the kindness of another. It is most important to my country that M. Trouville should get that letter and his address has been mislaid, but I am sure France can trust you and your father without the insult of sealing the epistle.”

The gallant gentleman’s conversation had been held with Dee and while I heard every word, I was interested at the same time in the conversation Mrs. Grayson was pretending to hold with the art student. It was so silly and she seemed just as busy trying to fascinate him as she usually was the chancelor.

Behind the sofa Mr. Smith was engaged in a mild flirtation with Yvonne, who seemed to be much interested in the owner of the red, red lips.

“I’ll write to my father this very night and send the letter by the mid-night post,” said Dee.

“Oh, you need not be in such great haste.”

“But it will be no trouble,” insisted Dee, tucking the letter in her blouse.

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“Miss Tucker, my husband and I want you and your sister and Miss Allison to go to the Hippodrome with us this evening,” said Mrs. Grayson, breaking into the conversation a little abruptly.

I could not help seeing that Mr. Grayson looked astonished. He was carrying on a desultory conversation with one of the spinsters. At his wife’s remark he looked up suddenly. His expression was that of a baseball player who has a ball pitched to him that he was not expecting. His training on the diamond served him well. He did not miff the ball but was ready in a moment to do the polite to his wife’s guests.

“Will you come?” continued Mrs. Grayson with her most ingratiating smile.

“Why—ye—s, I reckon we can,” faltered Dee. “I have a letter to write if you could wait a few minutes.”

“Such an important letter it cannot keep? The show begins early and we have not reserved seats as we were not sure of your acceptance,” said our would-be hostess.

“M. Durand said it was not imperative to get it off tonight,” whispered Dum, “come on!”

“Mademoiselle must not let my little affair keep her back,” insisted M. Durand. “Tomorrow will do.”

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As I arose from my seat on the long sofa I caught midway a glance from Mrs. Grayson’s piercing eyes that was meant for the young man standing behind the sofa. She had never paid any attention to him before, ignoring him with an almost studied insolence. The look she gave him was a peculiar one, long and steady. He bowed his head slightly.

“Won’t you come with us, Mr. Jones?”

“No, I thank you. Smith is my name,” he answered stiffly.

“Ah, excuse me! It was a foolish mistake. I am sorry you cannot join us. We must be going, young ladies. I am sorry my husband will have to be sole cavalier for four ladies.”

We assured her that cavaliers were nothing to us, quite grateful in our hearts that Mr. Smith had not accepted the invitation. We raced upstairs for hats and coats, jubilant over the prospect of an evening’s entertainment. Of course we did not like Mrs. Grayson much, not at all in fact. We had reason to believe she was a German spy, but then M. Durand was still friendly in his attitude towards her and we must do as he had told us and not

let her know we were on to her machinations. A show was a show and the Hippodrome was running a most entrancing one, according to the papers.

“Brindle, my baby, how can I leave you alone on your first evening in New York?” exclaimed Dee as we hastily got into our wraps.

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Brindle puffed and whined in answer.

“Never mind, I am going to let you have a teensy bit of gas to keep you company and you can lie by this nice warm radiator,” and Dee gave a hug to her old dog.

“Put the letter away carefully, Dee,” I admonished.

“In my top drawer, that is where it has gone! Nobody living but me can find anything in that maelstrom. I’ll write to Zebedee when I get home and Brindle and I will run and post it.”

The show was good and we had a delightful time. It was my good fortune to sit by Mr. Grayson who proved to be a most agreeable companion. He was well educated, a college graduate and such a gentleman that one wondered he had married such a person as his wife, who by her bizarre dressing and loud voice showed herself to be anything but a lady. This was more apparent in public places than at the table d’hôte of Maison Gaston.

She talked for the benefit of persons sitting before and behind us at the theatre and turned and twisted her handsome head with the evident desire of showing off. I glanced at Mr. Grayson to see how he liked it, but his calm, well bred young countenance told no tales. Either he was so much in love with his handsome wife that he was blind to her behavior or he was too much of a gentleman to show what he really felt.

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After the show Mrs. Grayson would have us go to a café for supper. Dee protested, remembering the letter she wanted to get off, but our hostess was so persistent that we were forced to comply to her demands. At supper she did much loud talking, using many French words as though anxious to let every one know that she was Parisienne.

I registered a secret vow never again to be caught in a public place with the handsome actress.

It was a quarter to one as we opened the door at Maison Gaston and after thanking the Graysons with all the insincerity we could muster, we climbed the stairs to the third floor back.

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CHAPTER IX. BLOOD WILL TELL.

“Too late to get my letter off!” declared Dee in a whisper as we reached our landing. The Grayson’s had gone in their room and shut the door. “And poor Brindle! I know he has been lonesome.”

We had left a finger of gas burning, but through a crack in the door a streak of bright light fell across the dark hall. It struck me as strange. Of course Brindle was almost human, but he couldn’t exactly turn up the gas.

As we opened wide the door a strange sight met our gaze. Our neighbor, Mr. Smith, on all fours, his face deadly pale and his long legs actually trembling with fear was held at bay in a corner of the room by old Brindle. The dog’s bristles were standing up as stiffly as the plush on Madame Gaston’s sofa; his eyes were red with fury and from his old throat there issued a steady growl. Dee’s top drawer had been pulled out and the contents dumped on the carpet. Brindle was protecting the property of his beloved mistress. There was no telling and we never will know how long the despicable Smith had been kept in the undignified position in which we discovered him. The chances were that he had entered the room sometime before as he wanted to find what he came for before we would be returning from the theatre. Of course he knew that Mrs. Grayson would insist on the mid-night feast and that we would not be home in time to catch the mail as Dee had planned to do. Everything favored him except the old dog. If it had not been for Brindle he could have made an exhaustive search of our room without being disturbed. We had not mentioned the fact of having a new room-mate so the boarders were ignorant of Brindle’s arrival.

Smith’s position was so absurd and it did seem so ridiculous to be afraid of Brindle that we could not refrain from laughter. Brindle did not laugh however, he continued his low growling, like distant thunder, and the hair bristled on his back and neck like the quills of a porcupine.

In the midst of the tangle of collars and belts in Dee’s overturned drawer was the square, white envelope entrusted to her care by M. Durand. On this letter Brindle had planted one determined paw. That letter was evidently what Smith wanted.

“Call off your dog!” he pleaded and his voice sounded far off and muffled as though a ventriloquist had spoken from his boots.

“Grrrrhhh!” from Brindle.

“I won’t call him off and what is more I’ll sick him on you if

you don't tell us what you are doing in our room at this time of night or at any time, for that matter." Dee's voice was tense and little white dents had come on each side of her nostrils, a sure sign of fight in a Tucker.

I slipped quietly out and called down the stairs for Mr. Grayson. I knew he would be ready and willing to come to our assistance. His door opened immediately as did also M. Durand's. That gentleman was attired in his gorgeous flowered dressing gown. So quickly did he appear that one might have fancied he was waiting for a summons.

Up came the men, two steps at a time and close on their heels was Mrs. Grayson.

"What is it?" they cried in a breath.

Brindle still held Smith on his knees. When he attempted the slightest movement the old dog growled ominously and the intruder cowered among the collars and belts and ribbons.

"Look!" was all I said.

"Whew!" whistled Mr. Grayson, but M. Durand only smiled a whimsical smile and said nothing.

"Ah! The young ladies from the south seem to have a hard time," said Mrs. Grayson, taking in the scene. "Is this not the second time the household has been aroused? What is the trouble?"

"Call off the dog!" pleaded Smith.

Dee at last relented and called Brindle to her. He came reluctantly, backing away from the scene of his triumph, his eye still sternly fixed on the culprit and a growl in his throat.

Smith arose from his tired knees, evidently a little stiff from the enforced posture which must have been endured for many unhappy minutes perhaps hours.

"Explain yourself, sir!" said Mr. Grayson, sternly.

"I heard a noise in here, a crash, and I immediately came to find out the trouble. The drawer was on the floor with its contents in the present disarray. I stooped to pick up the things when this brute of a dog attacked me—"

"Don't you dare to call him a brute or I'll sick him on you in good earnest!" cried Dee, the dents coming back in her nose.

Smith sidled around towards the door but Grayson stopped him.

"Who do you think pulled the drawer out?"

“How should he know, my dear,” broke in his wife. “Evidently some thief, hunting trinkets. See if everything is safe, Miss Tucker. I think you should be quite grateful to Mr. Jones—excuse me—Mr. Smith, for coming in the nick of time. I hope none of your little treasures have been taken.”

Mrs. Grayson could make Sarah Bernhardt feel like a bread-and-butter school girl if she wanted to I am sure. Her tone to us was one of superior tolerance quite different from the manner she had employed towards us during the evening at the theatre and café. Then she had made us feel almost grown-up.

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“Let me help you pick up your things!” she stooped before we could stop her and began to gather up the debris.

“Grrrrhh!” and Brindle had broken from Dee’s detaining hand and once more planted his paw on the white envelope. Mrs. Grayson scrambled to her feet in a manner not befitting a leading emotional actress.

Such a look of hatred as Mrs. Grayson bent on Brindle I have never beheld. It must have been the look she saved up for the lines when she acted Lady Macbeth: “Out damned spot!”

Much Brindle cared. He had got in his head by some dog reasoning that he was to keep everybody away from that tumbled up drawer and especially from that square, white envelope.

“I never saw such a beast, he is positively dangerous,” hissed Mrs. Grayson.

Dee remembered in time that she had but lately accepted the hospitality of that lady and so did not give vent to the feelings that were boiling within her bosom. Dum was not so polite and spoke up boldly.

“No doubt Brindle knows whom to trust.”

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At these words what did the noted emotional actress do but fall over in a dead faint. She did it gracefully and without noise and fuss. She just toppled. Even Brindle was nonplussed and went over in the corner where Dee had made up his bed before going to the show.

Dee had studied first aid to the injured and I was not a doctor’s daughter for nothing. We went to work on the fainting lady in a most professional way. I knew from the first that she was shamming, but to be certain I put my fingers on her eyelids and gently rolled them back. Instead of the lifeless glaze that one finds in a fainting person, I met the wily conscious gleam of a serpent’s eye. And my, but there was hatred in it! I have tried that trick before on persons who were feigning unconsciousness and it always made them angry.

Dee however went stolidly on with her first aid methods with

the help of the husband, while Dum raced to the bathroom for water. Mrs. Grayson decided to get over her spell without the aid of the cold water that would certainly have been dashed in her face. She sat up rubbed her eyes in the most approved fashion of melodrama and then lay down again, this time on top of the pile of ribbons and collars and what not.

Her hand quite without guidance, seemingly, fumbled among the collars and belts for the white envelope. I stooped down and quietly took it from her eager fingers and placed it safely in my blouse. With that she evidently gave up the ghost and deemed it best to recover and go to her room. Such a look of venom, though, as she treated me to.

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“Where is that man, Mr. Smith?” asked Dee when she realized that her patient did not need her any more.

“I should not be astonished if he had left the city by this time,” said the chancelor quietly, a gleam of humor on his usually sad face. “He took advantage of the indisposition of madame to take what you call in Amerique: ‘French leave.’ I heard him stop long enough in his room to get his valise, which seemed providentially packed and then without any formality he ran hastily down the steps and I thought I heard the front door softly close.”

“I am going after him,” said Mr. Grayson, “The cur!” but Mrs. Grayson showed signs of fainting again, leaning heavily against her husband’s arm and he was forced to lend her assistance to descend the stairs. I thought he looked rather glum. I wondered if he too knew that his handsome wife had treated us to a bit of play acting.

“I am glad the creature got away,” said Dee. “He had better not come near me though. I could tear him limb from limb. The idea of his calling Brindle a brute!”

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“The idea!” laughed M. Durand. “Brindle, is that his name? Brindle, a prince of dogs. He should have the croix de guerre.”

“Only think, poor old Brindle has hardly got a tooth in his head and he kept that silly spy cornered for hours perhaps! I am going to tell that to our friend down stairs. She would be so pleased,” said Dee. “Why, M. Durand, I have to soak Brindle’s dog biscuit before he can eat it. He hasn’t even teeth enough to chew his own food let alone the legs of aspiring Germans. Smith came in late to dinner and evidently had not heard of the arrival of Brindle.”

“Brava! So much the more does he deserve recognition from our country. And now let me tell the dear mademoiselles a little secret: the letter you are to send for me is of no importance except as a blind. I knew all the time both Madame Grayson and the long legged Smith were listening to my conversation down in the parlor this evening. It is written in

cipher and when it is deciphered would tell nothing except that it looks like rain in New York and my address is 254 West 53rd Street. I felt sure by this decoy we would catch the other spy. I heard Smith go to your room and knew he was still there. What kept him of course I could not tell, but I was waiting for you to come home. I only wanted to be sure who was the second one.”

“I saw Mrs. Grayson look at Smith when she asked us to go to the Hippodrome and I also saw him bow his head slightly. Wasn’t she sly to pretend she thought his name was Jones?” I said, disgust written all over my countenance.

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“Yes, sly, but not so clever as she thinks. These Germans are bungling at best. Ah, if your country had only declared itself for the Allies we would have these two where they could do no damage.”

With many protestations of gratitude and a final pat for Brindle our chancelor took himself off.

“Well, ain’t this the life?” yawned Dum as she fell into the creaking folding bed.

“And what do you say about my Brindle now?” asked the triumphant Dee.

“Three rousing cheers for Brindle!” I cried.

“Blood will tell,” was Dum’s sleepy tribute to the wonderful old dog who was breathing stentorously on his bed in the corner.

“He is a real hero,” declared Dee. “I must write Zebedee all about it tomorrow.”

“He is a real hero surely,” said Dum, “but somehow he smells mighty like a dog.”

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CHAPTER X. THE PASSING OF BRINDLE.

The next morning Brindle was undoubtedly ill. His breathing was even heavier than usual and he made no attempt to get out of his bed.

“Sweetheart, are you sick?” moaned Dee. Brindle put out a feeble tongue and tried to lick her hand, but even that was too much for him and he shut his eyes with his tongue sticking out in a droll way.

“Umhum! Tongue very white and furry; I think you need calomel,” said the anxious Dee. “Girls, I can’t think of going to lectures today. Brindle might need me.”

“Nonsense, Dee! We can carry him down in the yard and let him lie on his mat in the sun. You can’t stay in all day just to hold Brindle’s paw,” objected Dum.

“Yes I can, and many days, or weeks, even years if it would give him any comfort. I wouldn’t leave my doggie to be sick by himself any more than I would Zebedee.”

“Shame on you, Dee, to class our father with a dog, even though it is a good old dog who caught a German spy and earned the croix de guerre.”

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“Zebedee would be the last person to mind. He would understand I know. But you girls go on—don’t wait for me. I don’t want any breakfast.”

We took her up a tray, feeling in a time of distress that she should be bolstered up with food. Madame Gaston was rather stiff with us, blaming us for the hasty departure of the long legged Smith. Yvonne was insolent in her bearing, bringing in the luke warm oatmeal with her pert little nose up in the air and as she put the bowls on the table had quite the expression of gladly administering cold poison to us. I wondered if the seemingly mild flirtation she was carrying on with the departed boarder had been taken seriously by the girl. I felt sorry for her. Her eyelids were red with weeping. What had M. Durand told her and her mother? Did they realize that they had been harboring an enemy to their country and to the country of their star boarder? I felt pretty sure the chancellor had not divulged the perfidy of Mrs. Grayson. She was doing no harm so long as he had his eye on her and the wise little gentleman was determined to keep her in sight, letting her find just enough seemingly important papers and plans and drawings to make her think she was serving her master, the Kaiser, and hoodwinking the agent of France.

We hated to leave Dee alone with the sick dog, but leave her

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we must. We persuaded her to eat some breakfast telling her it was important for the nurse to keep up her strength for the patient's sake.

"Well I'll do it for Brindle, but it will 'most choke me," she declared.

Dum and I smiled but we did not let her see us. This was a very serious matter to poor Dee. She loved her dog with a love that no one who has not had a dog and loved him could understand. I had sat by the death bed of many a dog at Bracken and I could sympathize with the poor girl. I knew just what her agony of mind was. I was almost afraid to leave her, thinking perhaps the old fellow would pass away in our absence and Dee would have to face it alone, but an important lecture was on for that morning and I could not well afford to miss it.

"I'll be back early," I whispered as I stooped over to embrace her.

"Maybe you'd rather I did not go at all," suggested Dum, realizing as she looked at her sister that she was very miserable.

"Oh, no! I'd really like to be by myself," declared Dee, a little catch in her voice that presaged tears, and imminent tears.

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Dum and I came back home early. There was a look in Dee's eyes when we entered the room that told of a morning of extreme misery. The old dog was still breathing and occasionally he opened his eyes and bent a loving gaze on his broken-hearted mistress.

"Let me get a doctor, Dee," I begged. "There must be a vet somewhere in New York."

"I wouldn't have a vet unless it could be our own Dr. Epps from Richmond. I'd rather have a folks' doctor."

"All right! A folks' doctor it shall be," I declared, turning away to hide the smile that would come. I knew if Dee caught me smiling at such a time she would never forgive me.

Down stairs I flew, determined to bring back a doctor of human beings even if I had to conceal from him the fact that his visit was to a dog. Just as I started out the front door the bell rang. I bumped into a young man, in fact almost knocked him down the steps in my haste.

"Hello, Page! What's your rush?"

"Stephen White! Wink! I'm so glad to see you! Come with me immediately! I was just going to hunt for you!" I cried, grasping him by the hand.

"Oh, you were, were you?" he said looking pleased. "How did

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you know I was in New York?"

"Never mind that now! We need a physician."

"Oh!" he said, somewhat crestfallen. "Who's sick?"

"Dee—"

"Dee! Oh, I'm very sorry."

We were at the top of the stairs by this time and I had no time to set young Dr. White straight as to who his patient was. I ushered him into the room without ceremony.

"I've got him, Dee!" was my triumphant introduction.

"Stephen White! I'm so glad to see you!" cried Dee.

Dum almost hugged him, she was so glad to see him. "Of all the people in the world we are gladdest to see you!"

Stephen looked greatly mystified. "Why all this gush?"

"It is Brindle, poor Brindle! He is dying we are afraid. Page wanted to get a vet but Dee wants a—a folks' doctor."

"I found him on the door step," I put in, proud of my expeditious manner of obtaining a physician.

"Pretty clever of you!" was Stephen's dry remark. "Now let's see the patient. I am glad you are not ill, Dee. I gathered from Page's ravings that you were ill unto death."

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"I wish it was me," moaned poor Dee, not particular about her moods and cases at the death bed of her pet.

Dr. White was quite serious and sympathetic as he bent over the poor old dog. I believe I never liked him so much in all my acquaintance with him as I did when he took over the case of Brindle. Stephen White had been in a measure an irritation to me ever since the night of the hop at Willoughby Beach, several years before, when he had made violent and foolish love to me on the very first time in my life that I had tucked up my hair. He had persisted in this notion that he adored me although I knew perfectly well that it was nothing but stubbornness on his part. If he did adore me he took strange ways of showing it. He usually managed to row with me before he had been in my presence five minutes. He was so clever and so charming to other persons that I resented very much his grouchiness when with me. I liked him very much. Would have asked nothing better than to have him for a friend, but whenever I suggested such a thing he would go off into a tantrum and tirade about love or nothing and then I would get furious and declare it would be nothing.

Dee and Stephen, or Wink as we called him, were the best of

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friends. They always had much to talk about and were absolutely congenial. Stephen was a good looking young man and certainly the cleverest youth of our acquaintance. He had stood high at the University, bearing off honors galore. Now he was to be in New York in one of the large hospitals, having through his ability been appointed as interne.

When I saw the young physician bend over Brindle I knew he would be a good doctor and a popular one. The sick room manner is a gift of the Gods. A man may know the whole of the *Materia Medica*, backwards as well as frontwards; he may have an intimate acquaintance with every bone in the human body with an insight into all the organs thereof; he may have such perfect knowledge of muscles and arteries that he could cut a man's leg off blindfolded; but if he should lack the proper sick-room manner all his wisdom will count as nothing.

"What is the trouble with him?" he asked Dee gently.

"He won't eat but just lies here as you see him. I think he is feverish."

"No doubt!" the doctor took the patient's paw in his hand. "Has he had a shock of any sort recently? He seems apoplectic."

Then we told him of the man in our room the night before. The doctor was sure that the long strain Brindle had been on while he held the spy at bay had been too much for his old heart.

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"I think he will pass away in a few minutes now," he said sadly and sweetly. "I think it best to give him a hyperdermic of morphine and then he won't suffer at all."

"Would you do that to people, human folks I mean?" sobbed Dee.

"Surely! We wouldn't let poor people suffer any more than dogs."

"All right then! But I don't want anything done to Brindle that wouldn't be done to human beings."

"I'll promise," Stephen said sincerely. He took from his pocket a small leather case containing a hyperdermic syringe and various vials of drugs. "Some water!" he demanded of me and I flew to do his bidding.

With tenderness and adroitness he had soon administered a hyperdermic of morphine to the suffering canine. Dee turned away her head and then when it was accomplished she gazed long and lovingly into the eyes of her pet. She realized that the faint consciousness still discernable in those damson preserves orbs would soon be gone forever. I fancied poor Brindle knew the end was near too. He raised his head a bit by a superhuman effort (Here am I using the word superhuman in connection with the dog and doing it quite naturally. But Brindle was

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human and why not superhuman?) I repeat it: by a superhuman effort he raised his poor feeble head and his eyes told Dee all the things dumb animals spend their lives trying to tell unseeing, unthinking human beings.

In a few moments he was quiet. His breathing was better and the twitching in his legs ceased.

“Look at him! He is better!” cried Dee. “Oh, Stephen, maybe he will get well! If he can only get a good, quiet sleep—”

The young doctor looked at her sadly. His manner was so sympathetic and his eyes were so kind that I felt myself liking him more than I dreamed I could.

“I hate to tell you, Dee, but he is almost gone. I don’t think it is right to give you false hope.”

He sounded a little like my own beloved father when he found it necessary to tell disagreeable truths to his over hopeful patients. What a help Stephen White would be to my father if he would decide to settle at Milton! Father had been hunting for an assistant, one on whom his mantel could descend when he wanted to give up practice. I knew perfectly well that if I could make up my mind to be a little bit kind to Stephen that he would settle at Milton. He loved the country and was quite seriously considering entering on the career of a country doctor. Could I be kind? Was I selfish in persisting in a certain hardness that I always showed to young Dr. White? If he only would not be so soft where I was concerned, so soft and so grouchy!

Dee interrupted my musings by suddenly sobbing out:

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“Page, please telegraph Zebedee. It isn’t fair to him to keep him in ignorance of poor Brindle’s condition.”

“Must I tell him to come?”

“Oh no, he mustn’t come unless he feels he cannot stay away. Just leave that to him.”

It was almost sunset when I made my way to the nearest telegraph station and sent the following message to Mr. Jeffrey Tucker.

Brindle is dying. Cannot live more than few minutes longer.

PAGE.

I was quite proud of getting the message in ten words. I sent it to the newspaper office in Richmond, feeling sure he would get it before he knocked off work. I did not tell him not to come as I felt in my heart it would be better for Dee if he should come. I was afraid she had a feeling that the old doggy should not have been sent on this trip to New York and would blame her father somewhat for being willing and eager to shift the care of

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Brindle to her shoulders.

When I got back to Maison Gaston and hurried up stairs I found Dee sobbing in Dum's arms while the physician in charge patted her helplessly on the back. A stiff form in the corner covered with a bath towel told the story to me. Poor Brindle had passed away.

In an incredibly short time an answer to my telegram was delivered, but then newspaper men seem to be able to pull wires when the time demands it, even telegraph wires.

Wait funeral for me. Am leaving for New York immediately.

ZEBEDEE.

CHAPTER XI. THE FUNERAL.

“His heart beats ceased, but in the noble eyes
There lingered yet affection’s dying fire,
So loathe to go, so sad with foiled desire,
Dimmed by the mists of Death, so swift to rise.
There was no sound, the golden words men prize
Seemed mean and poor debased by earthly mire—
He was, and is not—thoughts that would not tire
Moaned through our minds with pitiless soft cries.
No more, no more, of all sad words the worst,
That hold no blessing now, or hope to be,—
That have no power to raise this languished head,
That bring no water to our Sorrow’s thirst—
He lived and loved and ne’er again shall be—
Old Brindle, our beloved dog, is dead.”

The above poem was written by Stephen White. I did not know it was in him. Of course all of us were aware of the fact that Stephen was clever, but how clever we had not grasped. I knew he could turn out a limerick with the best of us, but a sonnet was a different matter. I really think the poem comforted Dee even more than the first class funeral her father consented to give the departed pet.

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Zebedee arrived on the morning train. His taxi buzzing at the door was a welcome sound to my tired ears and his genial, handsome face a more welcome sight to my eyes that were big and dry for lack of sleep.

“Page, you dear little girl! You look as though you had been through the mill!” he cried holding me close to him for a moment and almost kissing me, but he seemed to remember in time that I was not one of the twins and stopped midway. I had run downstairs to let him in when I heard the taxi buzzing.

“Oh, I’m all right!” I declared, trying to smile.

“I bet a hat you have been sitting up all night with—with the body.”

“Well you see Dee was so worn out I was afraid she would be sick and I got Stephen to give her some powders to put her to sleep and she wasn’t willing to take them unless Dum and I promised to sit by Brindle, so we divided the night. Dum took the first half and I the second, but to save my neck I couldn’t go to sleep the first half so the consequence is I haven’t had a wink.”

“Speaking of winks—I guess you had Wink White,” he said a little coldly, his manner contrasting strangely with the embrace he had so recently administered.

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“Thank goodness we did have him!” I said stiffening up in spite of myself. “He—he—was mighty comforting to Dee and did everything in his power for poor Brindle. I don’t know what we would have done without him.”

“Very kind of him, I’m sure,” he said evidently trying to warm up. “Are you angry with me, Page?”

“Angry with you? The idea! What for?”

“I don’t know exactly, but your little back got so straight all of a sudden and I’m sure if you had fur on it it would be bristling.”

“Well I haven’t and you got peevish before I did—but come on up and see the girls,” and I ran on ahead of him to show the way to our diminutive sitting room.

Dee was still asleep, the powders having been most effective, but Dum was up and in her kimona ready to greet her beloved Zebedee.

“Where is he?” asked Mr. Tucker reverently and in a whisper.

“Madame Gaston let us—lay him out in the front room, the room the spy used to occupy,” and Dum plunged into an account of Mr. Smith’s perfidy and Brindle’s bravery.

“Good old Brindle!” and Zebedee wiped his eyes and blew his nose violently as he looked down on the stiffened form of the dear departed. “I reckon Dee kind of blames me for not keeping him in Richmond,” he said timidly.

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“Not at all!” I declared, “Does she Dum?”

“No indeed! Dee was so glad to have him and Stephen says he had a tendency to apoplexy and might have gone off at any moment, anyhow, and Dee takes great comfort in having been by his death bed and able to hold his paw to the end.”

I could not help smiling but there was not a single answering gleam in the eyes of either father or daughter. I turned away quickly to hide my tell-tale grin. I was sorry Brindle was dead, sorry for Dee and sorry for Zebedee, who no doubt was reproaching himself for having in a measure rebelled at caring for the old dog who certainly had become a nuisance, but for the life of me I could not help wanting to laugh at the solemnity of the Tuckers.

“Have the arrangements been made?” Zebedee asked.

“No, we waited for you,” said Dum.

“I am glad you did that. I fancy I’d better go see to them immediately. Will you go with me Page, while Dum gets dressed?”

Zebedee always knew how to find things and persons. He had an address of a man whose business was cat and dog funerals and the waiting taxi soon landed us there.

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Arrangements were quickly made. Simple elegance was decided on as best suited to the high-bred dog.

“Do you wish him embalmed?” asked the canine undertaker who reminded me strongly of an old hound we had at one time had at Bracken and who had met an untimely death because he had been caught killing sheep. The man’s ears had the same dejected flop and his voice the same hungry whine.

“Oh, no!” I broke in. “There is no use in that.”

The man looked at me sadly as though I had no feeling and he wished I had stayed at home, but his customer agreed with me so we settled on a nice neat grey dog coffin, lined with horizon blue, because Zebedee remembered that Brindle liked that color blue in an especial rug he favored for sleeping purposes. A large roomy limousine was ordered and we decided to carry the coffin on our knees although Flop-Ears whiningly informed us that the better classes always had a hearse.

A small plot was purchased in the dog burying ground and arrangements were completed for the funeral to come off at eleven.

We got back to Fifty-third street in time for breakfast for which I was very grateful, as I had that gone feeling that is sure to come after a sleepless night. I can well understand the necessity of funeral baked meats after the experience of sitting up with poor Brindle. I was starved.

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Madame Gaston of course fell to the charms of Zebedee. All persons did. His manner was so genial, his disposition so sweet, his voice so cheery. In spite of the sad mission he was on he could not help breaking out occasionally in some bit of fun, and the landlady and both daughters came into the dining-room many times during that breakfast which had been bolstered up in honor of Mr. Tucker with a fresh pot of good coffee and hot buttered toast.

At eleven sharp we started on the memorable ride to the dog cemetery. Brindle had been tenderly placed in his handsome grey coffin with the horizon blue lining. Quite handsome and noble, he looked like a bronze statue of a dead dog.

Stephen White came bearing a bunch of chrysanthemums and the sonnet written in honor of the occasion. M. Durand sent a design of immortelles which is what the French use on graves and with it a note of condolence in which he said fine things of our noble Brindle.

If it had not been for the little grey box we would have enjoyed

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that ride to Brindle's last resting place. In our secret hearts I am afraid we did enjoy it; I know I did. It was fine crisp autumn weather when New York is at its best. New York can be the most disagreeable and unfriendly place on the globe and it can be the most delightful.

Our limousine being the entire funeral procession with no laggards we could go as fast as the chauffeur chose and he chose to put on speed to the limit, so great in fact that we were afraid of getting pulled. Flop-Ears sat on the front seat and his dejected back was a silent protest to the high spirits that would arise in my bosom. Dum's heightened color and sparkling eyes gave the lie to the drooping corners of her mouth. She had taken on an expression she deemed fitting for the occasion and was exerting all efforts to retain it until the funeral was over. Her father was laboring in the same way. His eyes were shining, but his mouth was very solemn.

Dr. Stephen was bubbling over with kindness and anxiety to please. He insisted upon holding the grey box on his knees, thereby earning the undying gratitude of Brindle's sorrowing mistress. I felt myself liking Stephen White more and more. His manner to me was so much more sensible. Not once in all that long ride did he look at me like a dying calf nor did he get miffed with me about imaginary slights. He talked charmingly and intelligently and I found myself entering into the conversation with my usual vivacity. On all occasions hitherto when Stephen White had been in the party, I had been made more or less uncomfortable by his absurd attentions to me. As a rule we quarreled and disagreed. On that funeral ride we conversed amicably and actually agreed on many subjects and when we disagreed it was as ladies and gentlemen disagree, not as cats and dogs.

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Poor Dee had covered her sad face with a black veil borrowed from Madame Gaston. I know she deeply regretted that her suit was blue. If she had not been afraid of ridicule I am sure she would have put on mourning for her pet. However, she contented herself with the veil and a black ribbon band tied around her left arm.

The dog cemetery was like any other in that some graves were cared for and others neglected; some marked by imposing stones, others only tiny grassy mounds. Epitaphs of all kinds were carved on the stones and I am sure they told the truth in their eulogies more than is usually the case in cemeteries.

The grave was already dug and the coffin was quietly lowered by Stephen and Zebedee. Flop-Ears filled it in and patted it down with great precision. Dee bore up wonderfully well. I really believe she began to realize that poor Brindle was better off than he would have been dragging out a miserable snuffling existence at Maison Gaston.

"He was a great sufferer," she said sadly as the last bit of earth

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was pressed down and molded into shape by the skillful hands of the undertaker.

“Yes, and I know he is happier as he is,” said her father.

“I am sure of it, and I don’t mean to grieve. Page please untie my veil and Dum help me get this band off. I am not going to mourn and I would not have him back. I am glad he was taken away as he was. I almost feel as though I had helped the Allies in some way by owning such a dog.”

“You have, I am sure,” declared her father evidently greatly relieved that his daughter’s time of mourning was over. The day was too perfect to be grieving and since poor Brindle was better off why not have a pleasant time on this his day in New York.

Back to New York we sped, a much merrier party than had hied forth earlier in the day. If it had not been for the dejected droop of Flop-Ears’s shoulders we might have forgotten entirely that we were not out for pleasure. Now that Dee had decided to be cheerful she was being it with great success.

“Will you have a stone erected to the—er—the dear departed?” asked the undertaker, turning in his seat and looking at us reproachfully.

“Why, I don’t know,” answered Mr. Tucker. “What do you say Dee?”

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“It would be nice, if you can afford it.”

“I noticed some neatly painted boards out in the cemetery, how about one of them?” suggested the long suffering Zebedee.

“That would do nicely. I know a stone must cost like smoke and you have had expense enough,” was Dee’s magnanimous verdict.

“We could have an epitaph, I could do the lettering, at least I could get Reginald to do it for me, Mr. Kent, I mean,” said Dum looking a little confused as her father bent inquiring eyes on her ready use of the young artist’s Christian name. “He letters beautifully and I know he would do it.”

“We have such head boards all ready for the grave,” put in Flop-Ears, evidently fearing that his profits were going off and that someone might offer to carpenter the board as well as do the lettering.

“That is good! Now who will write the epitaph?” asked Zebedee.

“I have already written one,” I blushing confessed. “I wrote it during the early morning watch, but after Stephen’s beautiful sonnet I did not like to show it.”

“Oh come now, that isn’t fair,” laughed the poet. “I bet yours beats mine all hollow. Read it, read it!”

“All right! Here goes!” I said.

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BRINDLE’S EPITAPH.

Stranger pause and pray for the repose of Brindle.

Beneath this turf lies faithful Brindle—
No more with love his eyes will kindle,
No more his tail waves to and fro
In eloquence men never know.
Stilled evermore the honest bark
We knew so well and loved to mark.
In some dog paradise he strays
With nobler dogs of nobler days.
Perhaps he’s one of Dian’s pack—
With Argus greets Ulysses back,
Or Laelaps met him when he came
And told the other dogs his name.
God grant that when our time shall be,
When o’er Death’s cold and sunless sea
That the first anthem we remark
May be old Brindle’s welcome bark.

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CHAPTER XII. PAIRING OFF.

We had a wonderful time on that day in New York. Zebedee had to take the night train to Richmond so we crowded in everything we could in the few short hours that remained to him of the metropolis.

Stephen's duties at the hospital had not yet begun so he stuck to us closer than a brother. We lunched at one delightful place and dined at another and took in a matinee and a movie in between. At luncheon we met Reginald Kent. It was at a little hole-in-the-wall on Tenth Street, a place to which he had introduced us where much choice, strange food was served at a minimum price.

The young man did some blushing as we entered and Dum's cheeks flew the red flag of danger at the same time. I glanced at Zebedee to see if he had noticed his daughter's evident confusion over the encounter. A great sigh which he heaved gave me to understand he had. He did not like to see his girls growing up and blushing over handsome young commercial artists. His manner to Reginald was perfect however and he greeted the young man with his accustomed cordiality although I could see it cost him an effort.

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"Come make an afternoon with us," he suggested.

"Thank you, I will if I shall not be one too many."

As there were three females and only two males in the party one could easily see he would not be too many, but just balance the sexes. Again Dum blushed and again her father looked grim.

"What do you think of this business, Page?" he asked me as we paired off on our walk after luncheon.

"What business?"

"Now please don't pretend you don't know what I am talking about because I know you know and you know I know you know."

I realized that it was absurd for me to pretend I did not know that Mr. Tucker was speaking of the affair between his daughter Virginia and Reginald Kent. I always did know what he was talking about and very often what he was thinking about and he seemed to have an uncanny insight into my think tank as well.

"Speak out, little friend! I have let my girls come on this mad adventure just because you were along and now you must be

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quite frank with me about them.”

“But, Zebedee, I am not quite as old as Tweedles!”

“Nonsense! You are years older in practical sense. Why, honey child, you are older than I am.”

“Of course I am that, but you are still in knee breeches as far as practical sense goes,” I laughed.

“Yes, and you are so old in wisdom and ways of the world that you are almost in your second childhood. Well now, Grandma, tell me what you think of Dum and this young Kent.”

“I just think he is about the nicest and most interesting man Dum has ever met or is likely to meet perhaps and that she is of course the most charming girl in the world and he knows it and they like the same things and like to do the same things and the chances are that sooner or later they are going to tell each other so.”

“And then?”

“And then—”

“Then what?”

“Then you shall have to order a big breakfast with pancakes and syrup.”

“What do you mean, Page?”

“Don’t you remember when Miss Cox got married Dum said she intended to have pancakes and syrup at her own wedding breakfast?”

“Yes, I remember,” he said quite solemnly and wiped his eyes.

“What are you making Zebedee cry about, Page?” asked Dee teasingly.

Dee and Stephen White had paired off quite naturally and as usual were having a good time together. Dee’s expression was a bit pensive and it was evident that she was making an effort to throw off her sorrow and that Stephen understood her feelings and was helping her all he could. He had been so kind about poor Brindle and his manner with Dee still smacked of the sick-room. I had noticed at luncheon how tenderly he had helped her to hashed-browned potatoes and how solicitous he had been in choosing the fluffiest and most delectable French pastry on the tray, as though to comfort her in her bereavement.

“I guess I’ve caught a little cold,” was Mr. Tucker’s answer to Dee’s query. He had done no such thing, but the thought of ordering pancakes for a wedding breakfast for one of his beloved twins had been too much for his lachrymal ducts.

“Do you want your girls to be old-maids?” I asked as once more we resumed our walk, two by two.

“N—o, not exactly, but as long as I remain a bachelor—I mean a widower—I guess they might keep single.”

So Mr. Tucker was contemplating matrimony himself at some remote period. I smiled to think how the twins would rage and at the same time I gave an inward sigh to think how I wouldn't like that very much myself. Zebedee married! It was a terrible thing to contemplate. And still it was most selfish of me to want him to remain in “single blessedness” forever. No doubt he was lonely. The girls were away from home much of the time and he had no home life to speak of.

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“Are you—thinking of getting married yourself?” I faltered.

“Why yes! I must say I am.”

“I hope you will choose someone the girls like,” I said stiffly.

“I'll try to,” he said laughing a little, “although I can't see that they will think much about me when they do their choosing. I almost wish they would hurry up so I can get to work myself. Suppose I choose and then some lucky dog who is foot loose has stepped in and got my little girl.”

“She is little then?”

“Oh, ‘as high as my heart’!”

“I—I hope you will be very happy, Mr. Tucker.”

“Thank you, Miss Allison, I wish you knew how much your good wishes mean to me in this matter. You see you are—you are such a good friend to my girls and if you—if you kind of approve maybe they will see fit to behave themselves when—when I break it to them that—that I am head over heels in love.”

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He came out with this announcement so suddenly that I gasped. I felt myself turning pale and my lip trembled, but I bravely swallowed and pulled myself together. I tried to persuade myself that I felt so sorry for Tweedles and that was the reason of my turning cold and my heart's beating so strangely. It thumped against my side as though I had just run a race up hill. I turned my face away from the steady gaze he bent on me.

“Won't you look at me, little friend?”

I tried but for the life of me I couldn't. I could only murmur:

“Poor Tweedles!”

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CHAPTER XIII. THE BLUES.

Tired out from a day filled to the brim with emotions we at last arrived at Maison Gaston. The twins were always blue after telling their father goodbye and my spirits were the color of indigo on that night. My soul was filled with pity for the girls who no doubt would soon have to do the polite to some step-mother or other. Did they guess it or were they in blissful ignorance of the fact that their youthful parent was contemplating a second wife? As for my own feelings: I would not let myself think how much I hated it. Every time the realization would strike me anew I would shove it away and keep on saying: "Poor Tweedles!" But way back in my subconsciousness something was crying out, "Poor Page! Poor Page!"

Our room at Maison Gaston had never seemed so forlorn and unattractive as it did on that night. According to the custom of madame, the house had been hermetically sealed all day and the close musty odor was sickening to the three tired girls who wearily climbed to the third floor back. Brindle had passed away but one could still perceive him through one of the senses as we opened the door to our dark room.

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"Light! More light!" I cried, striking a match, while Dum hastily raised a window.

It was almost as though Brindle's spirit lingered in the room. Of course his bed was still in the corner and that would retain the strong doggy smell forever.

"Such a personality as Brindle's would have to make itself felt even though he has passed away," said Dee, sadly. Dum and I silently agreed with her.

Never had the abominable folding beds creaked so dismally as on that restless night. Not having slept for thirty-six hours one would think that as soon as my head touched the pillow I would have been off to Shuteye Town, but no such luck! I tossed and turned on my narrow couch while the grand big bed sounded like a threshing machine.

"Can't you sleep Page?" finally came in a whisper from Dee.

"No!"

"Now I was almost over the top and you pulled me back," complained Dum.

"Sorry—but I felt as though I'd go mad if I didn't hear a human voice. Somehow I keep hearing Brindle scratching and whining."

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I knew perfectly well it was the smell of Brindle that was suggesting all those other things to his mistress, but delicacy forbade my saying so. Nothing is so potent in suggestion as the sense of smell. Sight and hearing cannot do what smelling can. I know a whiff of honeysuckle will transport me to the porch at Bracken in a twinkling and a suggestion of wood smoke and warm leather and I am back in the library at home, curled up in one of the old sleepy-hollow chairs.

“I don’t believe I’ll ever be able to sleep in this room again somehow. It seems foolish of me but too much has happened here,” sighed Dee.

“Well what makes us stay here?” I cried sitting up in bed so that the sagging springs creaked ominously.

“What indeed?” chimed in Dum. “We are not comfortable and Madame Gaston is really nasty to us when you come right down to it. She was rather kind about Brindle—”

“Very!” from Dee.

“But she feeds us like orphans for breakfast and we cannot live on dinner alone. I go to the League so hungry I eat the crusts of rye bread after I have used the crumbs for rubbing out in my charcoal drawings,” complained Dum.

“Well let’s go to housekeeping,” I suggested.

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“Wouldn’t that be great?” tweedled the girls.

“We have given this a fair trial and that was all that was in the bond. I simply hate it here with Yvonne snipping around; and old Madame Gaston always rubbing it in that we are third-floor backers; and Mrs. Grayson keeping us guessing about whether or not she will put a bomb under our beds,” I said.

“Yes, and only think what beds!” from Dum.

“And how she abuses us about bathing!” from Dee.

“And the bust of Schiller and the paper flowers!” from me.

“When shall we move?” asked Dee.

“Tonight!” suggested Dum, who believed in doing what had to be done in a hurry.

“We really might get out to-morrow,” I moderated.

“Reginald Kent showed me a darling place down in Greenwich Village. We passed it yesterday on our way from lunch. He says some girls he knows had it and have left for work overseas. It is all furnished too and for rent cheap.”

“Bully! Won’t it be fun?” cried Dee, cheering up greatly. “I just

feel as though we couldn't go on staying here.”

“What will Zebedee say?” asked Dum.

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“He told me yesterday he thought he had picked out a lemon for us,” I confessed. “He said he wondered we had stood it as long as we had. And my father said all the time he doubted our sticking to it. The only regret I have is leaving the dear chancellor. He will miss us I am sure.”

“Well let's try and get a little sleep now!” yawned Dum. “If we are not going to move tonight we had better snatch a little repose.”

Repose! Would the twins be reposing or trying to repose if they knew their beloved father was head-over-heels in love with some horrid designing female? Regular breathing from the big bed soon gave me to understand that the poor girls were asleep, but my bed seemed to be made of thistles. Who could it be? What girl did I know who was likely to have captured the heart of Mr. Jeffrey Tucker? Maybe Binks! But she was certainly higher than his heart. She really overtopped the gay widower an inch or so. Gay widower! What a name to be giving my dear friend. He was my dear friend and he might marry even Mabel Binks and remain my dear friend. I could not expect him to live in eternal singleness just on account of me—certainly not on my account if he did not on his daughters. I for one was not going to grieve nor would I let “concealment like a worm in the bud feed on my damask cheek.” If Zebedee chose to end his widowhood far be it from me to make myself miserable about it.

After this decision I turned over with one more creak and went to sleep. I dreamed Mabel Binks was the one and I was flower girl at the wedding and the hateful thing called me little one and made me feel as small as possible. I had on short dresses with socks and funny little strap slippers and my legs were very cold, but not so cold as my heart. I awakened to find all my covers on the floor, which was a way my couch had of doing unless I lay very quietly. No wonder I was cold.

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The morning brought three special delivery letters to us. All of them were from Zebedee and all of them marked “Private.” A way he had of doing occasionally. His letters were usually public property as far as the three of us were concerned, but when he had anything of a secret nature to impart he would put “Private” on the envelope.

Of course I never knew what he had to say to the twins in those letters received that morning, but mine took a load off my heart and gave me spunk to do the many things that I had planned to do on that day. He had written the letters as soon as he got on the train and mailed them at Newark. Mine was as follows:

My dear little friend:

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Can you forgive an old fool for his crazy talk today? If you can
I'll be just that much more grateful to you than I am already. To
forgive thoroughly you must also forget, so forget all I said.
Don't let anything remain in your mind to mar the happy day we
had together. Let me know that we may have many more like it.
Your doddering old fool of a friend,

ZEBEDEE.

CHAPTER XIV. MOVING TO GREENWICH VILLAGE.

Breaking to Madame Gaston that we were contemplating leaving her old third-floor back was not so easy at it seemed when we decided to take that step. She looked especially grenadierish and forbidding and her face was as hard as her upholstered head.

Our board was paid in advance and when she came forward with a bill for extras such as soap and service, Dee asked her sternly how about our wounded affections in having one of her boarders come into our room, upsetting a bureau drawer and bringing on a stroke of apoplexy to our beloved defender. This silenced her and we were allowed to take off our trunks without more ado.

Reginald Kent attended to the renting of the studio for us. He was delighted that we were to leave the dismal confines of Maison Gaston. It took great courage for a young man to call on anyone in such a place and Reginald had become a frequent caller.

“You will like it down in the village I am sure,” he said. “Of course the place is teeming with nuts, but there are many persons down there who are as clever as can be and quite normal.”

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Greenwich Village has been described so often in song and story that it seems foolish for me to add to the bulk of literature on the subject. It is such an amusing little place though, dumped right down in the heart of the great city, that I must try to give my impressions of it. Crooked streets and crooked houses with a sky line as varied as ever seen! All kinds of shops, every known occupation and as many different kinds of people as exist on the globe! Banana carts lock wheels with grand limousines. Great artists have studios adjoining sign painters. The biggest novelist of the day is cheek by jowl with the merest hack writer of penny ballads. In one restaurant a single item will cost as much as the whole table d’hôte, wine included, of another humble eating place close by.

Of all the cosy little nooks in the village I am sure ours was the cosiest. We came very near not getting it though as some refugees from the Latin Quarter in Paris were ahead of us. They were holding back trying to get the agent to reduce the rent a bit when Reginald Kent dropped in to see about our taking it. Dum had telephoned him early in the morning after the restless night just described.

Delighted at the thought of being able to call on Miss Virginia Tucker without all of the embarrassments of Maison Gaston, Reginald was eager to do our bidding.

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“Will you come down to see it?” he asked over the phone.

“No, we are sure we’ll like it,” answered the impulsive Dum.
“Just take it: ‘As is,’ and we can move in this afternoon.”

“And the price?”

“If it is too much we can do without butter or something and make it up,” was her reply.

All of these dog funerals and moves necessitated too many lectures being cut to suit me, so I was very glad to have the matter settled and to take the place “as is” which was an expression we had just learned from bargain counters in New York. Of course it means with all its faults and no redress for breaks or leaks or moths or what not.

We were thankful to get ahead of the refugees, who were most indignant so the real estate agent told us later, but they were welcome to the third-floor-back on Fifty-third Street if they really had no place to go. When we saw the apartment Reginald had procured for us we were thankful indeed to have beat the refugees to it. I felt that the girls who had left such a charming suite must surely have had a strong duty call to help humanity on the firing line.

The house looked like an old country home that had somehow strayed into town and had not been able to find its way back. Could it be that it had been there before Manhattan Island was so densely settled and at one time it had boasted a garden with trees and maybe even a white paling with syringa bushes? If such treasures had ever belonged to it they were long since forgotten unless the crooked brick chimney could remember or maybe the sagging green blinds.

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The hall had the ugly awkward look that halls always have in houses that have been built for one family and then been ruthlessly converted into tenements. The front door gave promise of better things and I was astonished to find myself in a long, narrow, dark tunnel instead of a spacious hall that I am sure was originally there.

“That is where Grandison lives,” said Reginald pointing to a door at the rear of the lower hall. “He is quite a character in the village. Amusing cus!”

“What does he do?” I asked.

“Oh, anybody! But perhaps I shouldn’t say that. He is a pretty good fellow and would share his last crust with a friend, but the trouble is he has munched his last crust ages ago and now he expects his friends to share all they have in the way of crusts and everything else with him. He has been some illustrator in his day. You girls will enjoy meeting him I am sure but don’t let him get too friendly or you will have him on your hands.”

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“I reckon we can meet him without sharing crusts,” laughed Dee.

“I am not so sure of that. I’ll introduce you but remember I warned you,” declared our guide.

Up two narrow flights of rickety steps we climbed before we reached our destination. The converting saw and hammer had spared the third story. It was as it had been in the beginning except that a funny little excuse for a bathroom had been hitched on to the back. There were two large rooms and a hall room. The gabled roof broke the ceiling into all manner of queer angles and curves and the dormer windows added to the irregularity of the apartment. The furniture was simple and inexpensive, but in excellent taste. The living-room was done entirely in brown willow with a brown crex rug and a comfortable porch swing, upholstered in brown denim suspended from the ceiling. There were two hammocks stretched from doors to windows.

“Gee, those girls believed in comfort!” declared Dum.

“I reckon they are getting precious little of it now,” said Dee.

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The bed room had two iron cots, a dressing table made of a drygoods box and wardrobes of what could only have been coffin boxes so tall and narrow were they.

“One of these girls was a great carpenter. She could do anything with hammer and nails. Indeed her work abroad is helping to rebuild the ruined villages,” said Reginald, proudly opening one of the coffin boxes to show us the neat shelves and drawers that the owner had so skillfully inserted.

“You girls take the cots and I’ll sleep in the swing,” I suggested, but they would not hear of it so we decided to take turns in the denim covered swing, each one occupying it a week at the time.

The hall room was the dining-room and kitchen. The cooking arrangements were entirely concealed, in a commodious closet. The tiny gas stove was hung from the inside of the door with pots and pans on hooks above and around it and dishes and cans for provisions ranged on shelves.

“Oh! Oh! Oh! I’m afraid short story writing and journalism generally shall have to give way to culinary arts!” I cried, “I’m nearly dead to stir up an omelette and cook it in that long handled frying pan on that darling stove.”

“Now Page, remember what Zebedee said about our not letting you do all the cooking!” admonished Dum.

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“Yes, I remember, but Zebedee is in Richmond and I am in New York and that darling stove is here too.”

“May I come in?” came in a beseeching voice from the hall.

The voice did not wait to be permitted but came in. It belonged to a peculiar looking individual in a long brown ulster. Above the turned-up collar there beamed a rosy countenance covered with a mop of curly brown hair. For a minute I could not tell whether it was a man or woman. The face was so smooth and rosy and the voice so soft and gentle.

“Hello, Grandison!” Reginald greeted him. “Let me introduce you!”

“Awfully good of you, old man! I heard you trooping up the steps and my curiosity got the better of me.” This time the voice was not at all childlike. Evidently the mysterious Grandison had two voices, one for beseeching and one for plain everyday talk. The everyday one was nice and pleasant with a little drawl.

We were duly introduced and asked our new acquaintance to sit down.

“Thank you, but I only ran up for a moment to welcome the new comers. You see I have been living in this house so long I am kind of King Cobra here and anybody who comes down my hole has to be introduced to me.” This he said with a whimsical smile and in his nice masculine voice.

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“I fancy Kent has told you what a worthless individual I am,” he continued, changing his tone to the childlike note of appeal.

“He told us you lived on the lower floor and you were a mighty good fellow and would share your last crust with a friend,” put in Dee, ever ready with her tactful gift.

“Did he now? Good old Rex!” The masculine tone again.

“Aren’t you hot in that heavy ulster?” asked Dum. It was a warm day for that time of year and our apartment was steam heated, quite a rarity in the type of house we had chosen for our abode.

“Yes, quite warm! But I love to store up heat for the cold winter which is before us.”

“But you know—” Dum began in an arguing tone, but a glance at the childlike eye of our new acquaintance warned her that a sensible argument would have no effect on him. If he chose to think wearing a heavy ulster in warm weather would help him get through the cold winter far be it from us to disabuse his mind.

“This looks like an overcoat,” Grandison continued, “but it is in reality a dressing gown. You may be astounded at my appearance in it but should I take it off—O me! O my!”

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“Come on Grandison, let’s leave these young ladies to get themselves settled,” said Reginald hurriedly. He evidently did not know what his friend might say next.

“All right Rex, I know you are afraid I might do or say something to shock the young ladies. You don’t know me, old sport, or you would trust me.”

“Not at all! I just thought—”

“You just thought I am best taken in broken doses.”

“As you will, but come on!”

“First, my dear boy, you must tell them that my name is not Charles. I could not bear for them to think for an instant that I am named Charles Grandison, that arch villain of all fiction. Tell them I am Temple Grandison.”

But Reginald Kent had him by the ulster sleeve and was leading him from our presence.

“Temple Grandison! Only think! I have been reading his poems and seeing his illustrations ever since I could remember,” exclaimed Dee.

“I never dreamed it was Temple Grandison,” cried Dum. “But what a nut he is!”

“Why I think he is a dear,” declared Dee, “so sweet and helpless! He looks to me like a person who needs looking after.”

“Heavens!” said Dum, “another lame duck for Dee. No doubt he will be delighted to be taken care of.”

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I said nothing but foresaw that Brindle’s place might soon be filled. Dee simply had to have something to nurse and look after. I had been vastly entertained and amused by Temple Grandison, but I wondered how much of him was natural and how much poseur. He was a type that I had met only in fiction and it was very exciting to come face to face with him in real life.

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CHAPTER XV.

AFTERNOON TEA WITH TEMPLE GRANDISON.

Life in Greenwich Village was like life anywhere else except that there were more surprises. One of our surprises was that our house backed on a swell restaurant, at least a restaurant where swells seem to eat; another was that a preacher lived right under us; and on the same floor with us there dwelt a premiere danseuse, one who had tripped the light fantastic toe before all the crowned heads of Europe and was now drawing a fabulous salary for a ten minutes' dance in a musical comedy then running in New York.

Her apartment and ours occupied the entire third floor of the house with the exception of a small studio stuck in between which saw the light of day only through a skylight as it had no side window. A young girl from Tennessee lived in this forlorn room. She was studying modeling at night at an art school and by day she painted on tapestry willowy maidens and bold dashing cavaliers with fountains and sun-dials and stone benches etc.

As Temple Grandison had said: he was the King Cobra of that particular hole in Greenwich Village. In fact he seemed to be a general favorite in the whole quarter. We were asked to tea with the great Grandison! the sad little artist from Tennessee assured us it was an honor, one longed for by dwellers in Bohemia.

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Being the guests of honor we thought it right to be prompt and so arrived at Temple Grandison's studio at five sharp, although it had meant much hurrying and scurrying to get ourselves properly dolled up for the occasion. Not that we did much dolling up for any occasion, but hair must be smoothed and blouses changed after the labors of the day.

We need not have been in such a rush we decided as we entered the door of his abode in answer to his masculine: "Come in!"

The place was in semi darkness with one candle burning feebly in the middle of the floor. For a moment we thought the room was empty in spite of the masculine "Come in!" but the flickering flame of the candle lighted [a pair of legs in dingy grey trousers emerging from under a table](#) in the corner. The curly head quickly followed the trousers and the rosy face, rosier from the exertion of diving under tables wore an expression of triumph. In one hand he clutched a silver dollar, in the other several smaller coins.

"A feast! We can have a veritable feast!" he cried.

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We looked mystified and he quickly put us wise.

“You see it is this way—I am a terrible fellow about money. I can’t keep money for the life of me although I can earn it—sometimes I can earn a great deal of money, and when I get it I squander it outrageously. The time comes when I am flat broke unless I have been able to hide some money from myself and so I have hit upon this plan: when I get a check from a magazine I have it changed up into different sized silver and a few bills, then I sit in the middle of my room like this”—and he sat down by the candle—“and I hide the money like this”—and he began throwing the smaller coins around. Some of them rolled under the divan, some back under the table, and some sought out black, unexplored corners of the room. “Then you see when I get hard up and have asked beautiful ladies to come to tea, all I have to do is get down on my knees and hunt and presto, the money is there!”

“But it is gone again,” I blurted out.

“Ah but I can find it again and more too,” he insisted eagerly.

“Let me help,” begged Dee, and together they dived under the table bumping heads and laughing and Dum and I soon joined in the hunt and when the next guests arrived the guests of honor were discovered on all fours diligently searching for nickles and dimes in the unswept corners of that queer genius’s room.

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The new arrivals seemed not a whit taken aback. Evidently they were accustomed to Grandison’s tricks and manners. It seemed that tea at Grandison’s meant many things besides tea, and sometimes no tea at all.

“Now I must go forage for food,” he said coming up from behind a pile of drawings with another haul in the shape of a fifty-cent piece. “Who will go with me? Please you say you’ll go,” he begged of Dee.

The shopping in Greenwich Village is easy and close. Dee and our host were not gone many minutes and in the meantime we turned in with the other invited guests and cleared the table of palette knives and half finished ink drawings, soap dishes, soiled collars and whatnot and lighting a small alcohol lamp set the kettle which was already filled to boil.

While we wait for our erratic host and Dee I’ll try to give some idea of Temple Grandison’s studio. I think in old days when the house perhaps boasted a garden with syringa bushes and a white paling the room must have been the kitchen. It was on the ground floor and in the rear. It was a large square chamber with low raftered ceiling and a huge fireplace with cunning little cupboards hid away in the chimney. I fancy those cupboards must have been built wherein some Knickerbocker housewife could raise her dough. It would surely have been an ideal place. Or maybe Father Knickerbocker kept his pipe in one and perhaps even his bottle of gin.

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On the mantelpiece was a collection of rare old candlesticks with wax candles of assorted lengths which Grandison lighted before going on his foraging expedition. One of his peculiarities was that he was constantly in arrears with the gas company and his light was often cut off by the heartless officials. He declared he preferred candles anyhow and would squander much of his hard earned money in a dazzling array of wax candles.

The furniture was of a nondescript character as it well might have been, since he had literally picked it up from side walk sales. A lumpy couch was squeezed into the open fireplace and there he slept, as he declared, snug and warm dreaming of the grand old roaring blazes that had formerly occupied his quarters. The chimney had been closed, he complained, when steam heat had been installed in the old mansion, otherwise he might have had the joy of lying on his couch and gazing up into the starry heavens.

“It might have rained down on you, though,” objected the practical Dee.

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“But it never rains in my dreams and I only dream I might have gazed up into the starry sky.”

We soon found there was no use in presenting a sensible argument to Temple Grandison. He always turned it off with some whimsical remark and the best way to get along with him was to be as childlike as he was.

The foragers returned laden with goodies. Reginald was right: Grandison was willing to share his last crust with his friends. This feast was not composed of crusts however, but of French pastries of the most select make; tea of the choicest brand and Vienna rolls that were of the crispest.

“I will make the tea! I always make my own tea,” he insisted when assistance at that rite was offered by eager helpers. “Tea must be made most carefully and I trust nobody.” He took from a shelf a rare old teapot, measured out the tea and started to dump it in the pot, but suddenly stopped, a delighted expression on his countenance.

“By Jove! If here isn’t one of the bills I hid from myself—a fiver too! We came very near having green tea,” he laughed. “And here is my pipe too!” he cried exploring further into the depths of the rare old pot. “I lost it weeks ago, a favorite pipe with a grand old bite to it. My, I’m glad I decided to have a party!”

“Suppose you let me make the tea,” I suggested, having a feeling that a teapot that had concealed for weeks a fine old pipe with a famous bite should have some attention with soap and scalding water.

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“Do let her do it,” begged Dee. “You don’t know what a grand tea maker Page is.” And so to me as usual fell the part of cook.

The kettle had just come to a boil as I finished washing the teapot at a shady looking little sink concealed behind a Chinese screen of the sixteenth century, so Grandison informed me as he hovered around while I took matters in my own hands. As I poured the water over the tea, which was certainly of the finest, I heard a strange rattling in the kettle. It turned out to be two eggs which our queer host had started to boil for his breakfast and then been diverted by an idea for an illustration. He was not in the least abashed as I fished them out, but on the contrary seemed rather pleased to see them.

“I thought I had been feeling empty all day. I guess I forgot to eat my breakfast.”

Dee looked sadly and pityingly at him. Dum and I had seen her look at Brindle just as she did at Temple Grandison. It usually meant an increase of dog-biscuit allowance when she looked that way at her departed pet. What she meant to do for the poet illustrator Heaven alone knew.

The entertainment was a howling success. The room was quite crowded with guests as Grandison never counted noses but just asked indiscriminately and regardless of how many cups and spoons he possessed. I had to empty and fill the pot three times and Dum had to race up to our apartment and bring down more cups while Dee and Temple Grandison hurried out with the precious five-dollar bill to buy more tarts.

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It was a strange gathering of people. There were several great ladies whose limousines blocked the street; a rich banker from Wall St.; one of the leading architects of the world; a publisher of fair repute; a shoemaker from across the way; a chorus girl from the Follies; a generous sprinkling of art students, male and female; writers of vers libre; the preacher from the second floor; a Russian girl who was a political refugee; a funny little couple who had amassed quite a fortune making rag dolls; a young woman who had a curio shop around the corner known as: “The sign of the Pink Monkey”; then there were few just people, plain people.

Of course there were not chairs enough to seat so many persons and it was difficult to eat fluffy tarts and eclairs and cream-puffs without squirting on your neighbors. In a short time many of the guests seated themselves on the floor. There was much good talk and nobody waited for an introduction.

I found myself seated next to a charming looking young woman with sparkling grey eyes and pretty brown hair. Everybody called her “Judy” and everybody seemed to know her from the great architect to the makers of rag dolls.

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“Isn’t Grandison ridiculous?” she whispered to me. I noticed

all of our host's friends called him Grandison. "He is positively silly at times but one has to love him. I have known him for years and have seen him at his silliest, but I simply adore him. He is so clever one must respect him and so childlike there is no getting angry with him. It took many months to make my husband see any good in him, but he too is rather fond of Grandison now."

So this handsome young woman was married! I wondered who she was, but did not like to ask her name. However she saved me the trouble.

"Please tell me your name! I am Judy Kean Brown, Mrs. Kent Brown. One of Grandison's fads is not introducing his guests. We were asked to meet some new friends of his but he did not tell us their names or sex and I haven't the slightest idea which ones of the company are the honored guests."

"I am Page Allison, Mrs. Brown, and I believe I am one of those things," I laughed. "The others are the Tuckers, those girls sitting opposite, twins."

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"Not the Tucker twins! You are not Page Allison of Virginia!"

"Yes!"

"Found! Found! Oh Kent, I have found them!" A very good looking young man who was trying to talk to the great architect and eat a cream puff at the same time responded to this cry with alacrity.

At the same time Reginald Kent turned around to see who wanted him.

"Found whom?" asked the husband, the Mr. Kent Brown.

"Found the Tucker twins and Page Allison!"

"But we weren't lost," insisted Dum.

"But we are very glad to be found," put in Dee.

"You see Molly Brown, Mrs. Edwin Green, is my sister-in-law, and she met you in Charleston and has been writing frantic letters to me to go see you in New York. You had written her you were boarding on Fifty-third Street. I went there and an ugly old French woman in a hideous parlor insisted she had never heard of any of you and had no idea where you were. I was almost sure she was lying and have pictured all kinds of things as having happened to you. I went to see you only yesterday."

"But Madame Gaston had our new address," I said.

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"Wasn't it exactly like her to pretend she didn't know anything about us?" cried Dum, "the old—I hardly know what name to

give her.”

“Well it makes no difference now I’ve found you. Molly Brown was so determined that we should meet. She was mashed on the whole lot of you and even Edwin Green, who is too accustomed to girls, being a professor at a female college, to be enthusiastic about the species as a rule was quite taken with you. It maybe your not being college girls is what appealed to him.”

It was nice to run against the Kent Browns. We had heard much of this same Judy from Mrs. Edwin Green on our memorable trip to Charleston, and had been hoping she would come to see us. Kent Brown was a worthy brother to his sister Molly and that is saying a good deal because of all the persons I have ever met I liked Molly best.

“We live right in this house and you will come to see us soon we hope,” said Dee.

“Indeed I will, and what’s more I’ll bring my perfectly good young husband to call on you too.”

Reginald Kent was introduced to our new friends and he and Kent Brown claimed kin, finding after some conversation that they had the same great, great, great, grandfather.

Grandison’s tea was certainly a great success, Reginald Kent found a cousin; Judy found us without having to comb New York with a fine tooth comb, which was what she declared Molly Brown would have had her do; and Grandison himself had found his five-dollar bill and his precious pipe with the strong bite.

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CHAPTER XVI. AROUND THE GAS LOGS.

The winter went merrily on. There was much hard work done by all of us and which made us feel that we deserved the good times that were sandwiched in between the hard work. The Kent Browns proved a great addition to the little circle in which we found ourselves moving. Judy had been an art student in New York and Paris. Kent Brown was an architect of considerable promise. They took us under their hospitable wings and many gay evenings were spent with them.

Judy was working hard for the French War Relief, giving all of the daylight hours to it and Kent was drilling several nights a week but they still found some time to play and we did much playing with them. The Kent Browns had been in Paris the fall of 1914 and their sympathy for France was intense and they both felt that they could not work hard enough. Kent had taken the training at Plattsburg and was only waiting for United States to cast down the gauntlet when he would spring in the ring. Judy aided and abetted him in his decision.

“We can’t get in it too quickly to suit me,” she would declare, “and if I had a hundred young husbands all of them should go help the Allies.”

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She told us wonderful tales of the outbreak of the war and how she had stayed on in Paris waiting to hear from her father and mother who were bottled up in Berlin. She told us how Kent Brown had come over post haste to get her when he found she was caught in Paris; how he had been submarined on the way over and carried around for weeks in a German vessel; how she had mourned him as dead and put on very becoming mourning; and how he had come to life and made her marry him with no more notice than the Huns gave a vessel before torpedoing it.

Delightful friends they both proved to be and we thanked our stars many times that had made us make friends with Molly Brown and her professor in the old cemeteries of Charleston, South Carolina.

That winter of 16-17 was a memorable one. The country was in a state of un-rest waiting for the powers that were in Washington to decide whether to be or not to be. New York was feverishly excited and we felt the same boiling within our veins.

Sometimes I wonder how we could have worked as hard as we did but we certainly did show ourselves to be an industrious trio. It is easy to work if all around you are working and difficult to do so if you find yourselves among a lot of loafers. It so happened that all of our friends were workers. Even

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Temple Grandison, in spite of all his strange ways, was very industrious. Of course he worked in an erratic manner just as he did everything, but work he did. He often slept all day and worked all night; and sometimes he did not sleep at all and would forget to eat; and then again days and weeks would go by and he would do nothing but sleep and eat and would behave as though work and he were complete strangers.

Stephen White was hard at it in a hospital with only one evening off a week which he usually managed to spend with us. A change had come over him. I could hardly believe he was the same person who had managed to make me so uncomfortable time and time again. I really enjoyed seeing him now and looked forward to the evening when he would come in from his week's labors, tired but cheerful and ready for any lark that might come up.

Reginald Kent was a steady visitor and I saw with only half an eye that he and Dum were becoming more and more interested in each other. I didn't blame either one of them but I used to wonder what Zebedee would think of me for not warning him that things might be reaching a crisis. I used to dream of wedding breakfasts with cakes and syrup for two.

"He shouldn't have sent her the fur toque and collar if he did not expect to make mashes," I would argue with myself.

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Mr. Tucker had given his girls for Christmas, beautiful brown fur toques, and tippets and certainly they were a handsome pair in the stylish outfit. He had written them that he was so afraid that they might begin to dress like Greenwich villagers in paint rags and Liberty scarves that he had chosen the fur as a reason for their staying stylish and not getting dowdy.

Dum had been rather carried away by the soft colors and flowing draperies of some of the art students, but the very up-to-date fur hats and collars did not gee very well with the artistic get-up that she was beginning to effect and the fur was too becoming to eschew so she gave up what her father had called the paint rags instead.

"The only objection I have to them is that Dee and I look too much alike in 'em," declared Dum as she stood by her sister and peered in our one rather small mirror.

Certainly with her hat hiding her widow's peak and Dee's collar concealing the dimple in her chin the likeness between the twins was more striking than usual.

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"Gee! We sure do look alike!" cried Dee. "I'm mighty glad you are so good looking if I have to resemble you so much."

"Same here, Miss Conceited!" was Dum's rejoinder.

"I wish you would tie a pink bow or something on," I laughed,

“because really I can’t tell you apart. Your hair is covered up and your foreheads and chins are gone and unless I can see the difference in the color of your eyes I am likely to make a mistake. What business have you with the same noses and mouths?”

The winter was a cold one and the fur was quite necessary in that blizzardy New York. I had a set that was frankly made of dyed rabbit but it was quite as warm as the finer kinds. Brer Rabbit has to live through just as cold winters as Russian sables and his little coat is as warm.

As I remarked before, Reginald Kent, if he had found Dum charming without furs now found her irresistible with them. Dee rather resented the attentions of this young man. His tendency was to monopolize Dum, and Dee did not at all like it. Sometimes she was not her tactful self in her treatment of the young man and relations would become strained in consequence. I did all in my power to keep the peace, knowing full well that nagging would drive a couple to drink or matrimony.

“Why is Miss Dee so hard on me?” Reginald had asked me one day when Dee had been quite severe with her sister’s admirer. “I like her so much—I can’t see why she doesn’t like me more.”

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“Perhaps you have not let her see that you like her,” I suggested. I felt the time was not ripe to suggest to the boy that his attentions to Dum were what was worrying her twin.

“By Jove! Perhaps that’s so,” was his contrite rejoinder. He had been so busy paying court to Dum that he had never thought of currying favor with anybody else.

“I’ll try to make her like me as much as I like her. You know I like you don’t you?”

“Certainly, but it is only by instinct. You have never looked at me twice,” I teased.

And so Reginald Kent started in to make, what he hoped was his future sister-in-law, like him. No longer did he single out Dum on every occasion but sometimes he tried to get a seat by Dee and even walked with her when we sallied forth on some jaunt. He was a clever, bright fellow and so eager was he to curry favor that Dee had to be pleasant to him in return. Sometimes I fancied Dum looked a bit astonished and once a little pensive when her devoted cavalier divided his attentions. I was dying to tell her why it was but I was sure Reginald had not gone far enough in his suit for any such confidences.

It was a blustery night in March. War with Germany was assured while it had not been formally declared. We were excited and exalted as we sat around the gas logs in the Kent

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Browns' sitting room.

"We must have some kind of fire to look at," Kent declared. "Something cheerful, and wood is out of the question in New York so these imitation horrors have to serve. I reckon when we fellows are sitting around camp fires we shall remember these gas logs with much affection."

The talk was all of war. Every man of our acquaintance felt the call to arms.

"Of course I am going to enlist," said Reginald Kent. "I wish I had entered the officers' training camp last summer, but since I did not I am simply going to enlist as a private. I might get over there faster than I would if I tried to train for a commission."

Dum looked at the young man with a great light in her eyes and he returned her gaze. I fancy many young men and maidens gave just that look in each other's eyes when war was first realized as an assured thing for us and the subject of enlisting came up.

"I'll do more good as a doctor," put in Stephen White who was spending his evening off with us. "I'd rather handle a rifle just now than a thermometer, but after all it is where we can do the most good, not what we want."

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"Good for you Wink!" I cried out enthusiastically.

"Gee! I wish I had been Dum's twin brother," said Dee. "I'd like to nurse but they wouldn't take me 'cause I'm too young. I reckon I'll have to pick lint at home."

"Yes, there is plenty of work for all of us right here," said Judy, soberly. Judy often spoke soberly those days. Her eyes were just as brilliant but sometimes there was a mist as of tears over them and her mouth was almost stern. She had seen the horrors of war and there was no romance attached to it for her, but stern reality and hardships.

I wondered how Zebedee felt about the war—whether he would enlist in spite of having daughters to support. Perhaps even then he was looking into the eyes of the girl he had chosen to be his second wife and telling her he was going, and in her eyes and his there was the same light I had detected in Dum's and Reginald's. I wished somebody would look in my eyes that way. There was Stephen White! It would be a simple matter to call up such a light in his handsome eyes. I had half a mind to try it. I had applauded him when he had said he could do more good as a doctor and he had given me a friendly smile but nothing more. Perhaps the time for such looks from Stephen had passed.

"Ah, well!" I sighed to myself, "I can be a nice old maid and tell other folks' grandchildren about the time the United States went to war with Germany."

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CHAPTER XVII. AND THEY MIXED THOSE BABIES UP.

“What do you girls say to walking home?” suggested Reginald Kent. “It’s a bully windy night and walking will be fine.”

The Browns lived in an apartment overlooking Central Park and Greenwich Village was many blocks off but we were game for the walk. Stephen White had to leave us to get back to his hospital but Reginald was to see us home.

“Ah, he has things to say to Dum, this night!” I thought.

I was rather surprised when Dum tucked her arm in mine and the young man went off walking with Dee.

“I’m glad Dee and I wore our furs,” shivered Dum as she snuggled up close to me. “It is cold for March.”

“Only think at Bracken the wild flowers are peeping up! Father wrote me that he had seen some wind flowers last week.”

“Don’t you want to see your father awfully bad Page? Sometimes I want Zebedee so bad I can hardly stand it. Somehow I wish I had a mother now more than I ever did before. Poor old Zebedee! We have been so mean to him when we thought maybe he was thinking about marrying again.”

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“Have you ever seriously thought it?”

“Sometimes, but we have behaved so badly that if he was contemplating it he was scared out of it. I believe I’d know better now somehow.” Dum clasped my arm closer.

It was strange how well I understood my friend. I knew she was thinking of Reginald. I wondered however that she should have chosen to walk with me instead of her admirer and then came to the conclusion that she had felt after that long glance that had passed between them sitting around the gas logs at the Kent Browns’ that she had had happiness enough for one evening.

Dee and Reginald walked briskly on ahead.

And now I am going to do something that is bad form in one who is telling a story in the first person: I am going to switch to the third person and tell just what happened between Mr. Reginald Kent and Miss Caroline Tucker without the formality of being present. Dee told me all about it and I can truthfully do it.

Reginald tucked Dee’s hand under his arm in such a masterful way that, although the Tuckers as a family liked to walk alone and swing their arms, Dee submitted with good grace. Our

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walk led straight down Fifth Avenue. The streets were crowded considering the lateness of the hour, but war was teeming in the veins of all good Americans and everybody felt like getting out in the open for the latest news.

Reginald and Dee had just crossed 42nd Street ahead of us when a New York blockade occurred and Dum and I were left high and dry on the other side. We cooled our heels for some minutes before we could get across. In the mean time the couple in front had walked along saying nothing. Dee's mind was full of bitterness that she was too young to apply for nursing at the front or anywhere for that matter, and Reginald was dreaming.

"We are pretty far ahead," he broke the silence, finally by saying. "Are we walking too fast for you?" He gave Dee's hand a slight pressure.

"Not at all!" Dee hated what she called lollapalussing and thanked no man to press her hand.

Reginald stooped to look around her turned up fur collar, but she was interested in a show window, and twisted her head away from her cavalier, who gave her hand a decided pat.

Dee's impulse was to pull her hand from his arm, but she thought she might have been mistaken and did not want to seem unnecessarily squeamish. Again they walked along in silence. On Reginald's face was an expression of absolute happiness as he bent his head now and again to glance at the softly rounded cheek turned so persistently from him.

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Reginald Kent walked well, so well that it was almost like marching to music to walk with him. Dee enjoyed it in spite of herself. The keen March breezes brought a color to her cheeks and the bit of one of them that her companion could see was glowing like a winesap apple which had been well polished by an Italian fruit vendor.

"Here is the Faragut monument," said Reginald as they came to Madison Square. "Let's sit down a minute until the others catch up with us."

The statue of Admiral Faragut is mounted on the back of a curved bench which offers an inviting resting place to the passer-by on Fifth Avenue but for some reason one seldom sees anyone sitting there. It is a quiet part of the avenue and not very brilliantly lighted.

Dee complied and sank on the broad stone seat. Reginald sat rather closer to her than was necessary considering the roominess of the bench, but the March wind was high and perhaps he was protecting her from its chilliness. At least Dee hoped that was his reason for crowding so close.

“I have tried to hold on to myself, but oh, my dear, I can’t any longer!” Dee wondered if he was talking about the wind which had certainly turned quite blustery.

“I—I love you so much, I simply must say so—”

“Love me! Why man you are crazy!”

“So, I am darling—crazy about you. I know you are young—too young for me to be telling you this but then the war is upon us and I must have some assurance from you before I go—”

“Mr. Kent, this is absurd!”

“Oh, honey, please don’t tease me. You could not have looked at me as you did not half an hour ago and then say this is absurd.”

“Look at you! I haven’t looked at you in any way. I know what is the matter, you must mean my sister.”

“Your sister! Why dearest, you can’t believe I have cared for her, not in the way I care for you. I think she is fine, she and Page, both of them, the nicest girls I ever saw except you, but you are just you and to know you is to love you. Have you been thinking because I have tried to make your sister like me that she was the one I was loving? Why I was courting you through her—you must have known it.”

“Well I didn’t! And I must say you have acted in a manner not in the least becoming a gentleman.”

“A gentleman! Well if that is the way you think of me I fancy there is no use in my saying anything more.”

“You are right, not the slightest!” was Dee’s emphatic rejoinder.

She sprang from her seat on the cold Faragut bench. Just as she did so a great gust of wind came sweeping over Madison Square and lifted her pretty fur toque as though it had been the lightest panama and took it sailing up the avenue.

Sentiments of misery and indignation were dividing the honors in the bosom of poor Reginald. He would have been more miserable if he had not been so angry. Angry or not he must go chase the fur toque of the heartless girl who had flaunted his love so cruelly. With all the dignity one could command in such a plight he ran after the refractory hat which seemed endowed with legs and wings now running up the street like a rabbit and now sailing through the air like a flying squirrel.

Captured at last! He brought it back very dusty from its mad flight up Fifth Avenue. He brushed it off with his handkerchief and handed it back to the indignant Dee. It was bad enough to have a man, whom you had just begun to like, to insult you

without having your hat blow off and your hair come down to boot. And now she must unfasten the fur collar to twist up the loosened hair.

Reginald handed her the naughty hat. He was so angry he did not want to look at her but so miserable he must perforce do it, hoping still she might be teasing and not in earnest.

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Who was this young woman with blue black hair growing straight across her broad forehead and a rounded chin with an unmistakable dimple therein?

“Dum—Dee—who are you?” he stammered.

“I am Caroline Tucker, known to my intimates as Dee.” She need not have put such a disagreeable accent on intimates.

“You are not Dum, then?”

“Dum, who said I was Dum? You are dumb yourself!”

“I thought you were Dum—I—I—” and the poor young man sank down on the bench and covered his face with his hands.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

WASHINGTON SQUARE

It was all the fault of the fur toques and collars. He had tucked Dee's arm in his certain she was Dum and since he had lately been signaling Dee out trying to curry favor with her she had let him choose her as a companion for the long walk home, not that she wanted in the least to walk with him, much preferring me.

It was such a perfectly absurd mix-up and nobody but the tactful Dee could have handled it as she did. She was on the point of laughter but she felt that the matter was too serious to poor Reginald for her to indulge in the fit that had well nigh seized her. Instead she put her hand on his shoulder and said:

"Now see here Rex, you brace up and think how much worse this might be. Suppose, only suppose I had been Dum and had turned you down with nothing but harsh words, what then? On the other hand suppose, only suppose, I had been Dee and had accepted you with alacrity, what then?"

Reginald groaned and sighed. It was no joke for him to have poured out his love into the ears of the wrong girl even if she did happen to be his sweetheart's twin sister.

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"Now brace up, old boy! I give you my word of honor as a gentleman that Dum shall never know a word of this unless you feel like telling her yourself. I know you think we Tuckers make a joke of everything, but this is no joke and if it is I'm never going to crack it to Dum. I'd like to tell Page because she is so sensible."

"Oh, you are a bully girl, Dee!"

"Now, I tell you what let's do—let's wait here until the others catch up, then let's play ladies change. You walk the rest of the way with the right girl."

Just then Dum and I hove in sight.

"You are awfully slow walkers," grumbled Dee.

"And you are awfully fast ones," I responded.

The change of partners was made quite simply but this time my partner and I took the lead and then it was Dee told me of the case of mistaken identity that had come near wrecking the happiness of a certain young man.

"I give you my word, Page, if my hat had not have blown off the poor silly fool would have gone off and we never would have seen him again and Dum never would have known what

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was the matter. I felt that I had made it clear I was Dee when I said it must be the wrong girl and then when he got off the song and dance about courting me through my sister I simply thought he was crazy.”

Then I told Dee of my talk with Reginald and my advice to him to make her like him. We had a good laugh over the whole mix-up as we fairly ran down the street feeling the kindest thing we could do to the poor embarrassed young man was to leave him a clear field.

What would the courting couples in New York do if it were not for the occasional public square that gives them some place where they can sit down and talk things over? Washington Square was the next in line for the amorous Reginald. As we flitted down the side street leading from that picturesque spot a glance backward disclosed Dum and her swain sinking on a bench in the shadow of the Washington Arch.

It was Dum’s week to occupy the swing couch in the living-room. Dee and I got quickly to bed and talked things over. Even then we were sure our beloved Dum was being made ardent love to out there on that cold bench in Washington Square.

“I wonder if he will say the same thing over,” speculated Dee.

“Maybe Dum will be a speck more responsive than you were and it won’t be such hard work,” I suggested with a laugh.

“Page, I’m most sure Dum will be kind to him. When he spoke to me he said something about the way I, meaning Dum, had looked at him this evening and you know and I know that when Dum ever gets to the point of looking at a fellow with her heart in her eyes she is loving that fellow pretty hard. Only think, Dum being proposed to and like as not getting engaged! I have to pinch myself to realize it and here we are lying up here and discussing it quite calmly. I don’t think it would be near so bad as I used to believe it would be, to have Dum married.”

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“But she won’t be married, not for years and years I fancy. Rex is going to enlist as a private and \$30 a month would be right poor pickings for two,” I consoled Dee, for although she was declaring she thought it was all right I knew she was simply putting as brave a face on the matter as she could. To have our beloved Dum engaged even if she were not to be married immediately was something for us to feel very sober over.

“How do you reckon Zebedee will take it? I bet he raises a rumpus.”

I had been wondering the same thing myself.

“We have been awfully mean to Zebedee about marrying again,” continued Dee. “I think he would have been much

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happier married and if he finds the right woman I'm going to behave much better than I ever have. Of course all the women he has been on the point of marrying have been purely imaginary so far, but just as soon as he would waltz around a room twice with the same person Dum and I would begin to make ourselves very twinish and hateful. Poor old Zebedee! Dum and I go off and leave him all the time and expect him just to be our devoted parent and nothing more. We never have been fair to him. I just know our little mother, had she lived, would have been much kinder."

"Well, she would hardly have advocated his marrying again," I said grimly.

"N—o, not exactly. Say, Page, don't you think it's getting mighty late for Dum to be getting engaged out there all by herself in Washington Square?"

"But she's not by herself."

"I just know she is accepting him! Maybe she is telling him how much she loves him. Do you know, Page, I think it would be great to have a fellow love you, that is if you loved him back? It was horrid and crawly to have one propose when you didn't love him at all, the way I felt when Rex busted loose this evening."

I remembered very well how I felt when Stephen White would make love to me and I quite agreed with Dee but said nothing. "Don't you think Stephen looked handsome this evening?" she continued somewhat irrelevantly. "I think what he said about being willing to serve where he could do most good was just fine."

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I agreed with her. He had looked handsome and what he had said was fine.

"Do you think Zebedee likes Stephen, Page?"

"Yes, I think he does." I wanted to add: "Why?" but refrained.

A light was beginning to break on me. Dee was more interested in the young doctor than I had realized. And so, that was the reason of her being so sorry for poor Zebedee and taking Dum's engagement, or possible and highly probable engagement, so calmly! Was Stephen equally interested in her? I devoutly hoped so. I also thanked my stars that I had not sent any admiring and amorous glances his way when we were sitting around the gas logs at the Brown's.

Dee must never know of his foolish proposal to me. I'd never tell and I was pretty sure he never would, at least not for years and years after they had grown to be old, old people. In my mind I was jumping to the conclusion that Stephen was as interested in my friend as she was in him. They were so

singularly suited to one another and their friendship was based on such a good congenial foundation, no mad “love at first sight” foolishness but a pleasant platonic friendship, warm and kindly because of their similar tastes, that had gradually grown into something closer. That is what I hoped it would be.

“Time will tell,” I murmured to my pillow, with a sigh. Dee had dozed off and I was almost asleep. The lovers had not come in yet but I fancied it was not easy to come in under the circumstances.

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Finally I heard footsteps on the stairs. It was not necessary for Mr. Reginald Kent to come in the house and up the two flights of steps with Dum. Usually our escorts left us at the entrance to our house when the hour was late and we scurried up the steps alone, but now forsooth he must climb the steps, and climb them very slowly. I heard the old timbers creaking and then a long silence. They had reached the door leading into our apartment. I know it was a good five minutes before the door was opened. Then I heard rapid footsteps going down the stairs. Dum crept softly into the living room. The door between the bedroom and living-room was open. I heard Dum run swiftly across the floor and raise the front window. From my bed I could see her lean far out. I was actually afraid she might topple over into the street.

“Heavens above! She is waving to him! Five minutes in the hall wasn’t enough to say good-by. Gee, but Dum is hard hit!” I said to myself.

Dee slept peacefully on. I was glad she had not seen Dum waving to Rex from the window. The Tuckers were great teasers, all of them, and I was almost sure Dum would have come in for more than her share of guying had her sister seen this little bit of sentimentality.

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Why shouldn’t she wave to him? I am sure the young man looked back at his sweetheart’s window and went home even happier than he was, if that were possible.

Reginald Kent must have felt that he had spent a very eventful evening. To be rejected and accepted within twenty minutes does not fall to the lot of many men. Surely it did not take longer than that to walk from Madison Square to Washington Square and I am certain that he went right to work as soon as we flitted down the side street.

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CHAPTER XIX. CONFIDENCES—THREE IN THE BED.

I would pursue the same plan of jumping from the first person in my style of writing to the purely narrative form and tell all about how Rex proposed to Dum, what he said and what she said, but I cannot truthfully do it as Dum did not tell me all about it as Dee did. I have tried to write only about the things I actually know about and this was something I did not know about at all, whether a young man in making two proposals in the same evening would make them precisely alike is something of which I am entirely ignorant. All I know is that Dum was very gentle and dreamy eyed the next morning and put six lumps of sugar in her coffee, although she usually takes only one.

“How about the starving Belgians, honey?” asked Dee and Dum quickly fished them out with a mortified expression and did not answer her sister at all, which showed there was something the matter, as on ordinary occasions she would have come back with as good as she got.

Dee looked distressed. This gentle Dum was enough to make one uneasy. She went about her share of the housework without once being driven to it and even spilled over on our share but I fancy she did not mean to do that but was in such a dream she hardly realized what she was doing. Dee and I did not thank her for one thing she did, that was making up our bed upside down with the blankets on the bottom and the sheets on top, but we remembered her state of bliss and forgave her. It was hard to forgive her however when she went off to school with one of Dee’s rubbers and my rabbit skin muff with the note book that I particularly needed that morning for a lecture.

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“I don’t see why getting engaged would make her so dippy,” said Dee as we started off for our morning ride on the subway. “She must have been in love yesterday morning and she was perfectly sane and she must have known that Rex was mashed on her too and still she kept her head but now—Oh Lord! Now just the bare fact of having had him tell her what a peach she is and having told him he is the finest fellow in New York and Virginia has robbed her of all sense. Do you reckon we’ll be that silly, Page?”

“When?”

“When we get engaged?”

“Are we going to get engaged?”

“Why—why—not that I know of—not,” but just then a loaded truck made us skip across the street in a great hurry and Dee did not have to finish her sentence.

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Dum kept on saying nothing and we respected her silence and spared her feelings although we were dying for her to 'fess up and tell us all about her Rex. He came oftener than ever if possible and seemed already like a brother to Dee and me. We wondered if he thought we had been fooled and did not know what had been going on in Washington Square.

I wondered if Dum did not think she owed it to her father to tell him of the turn in her affairs. I, for my part, was thinking a great deal of Mr. Tucker. I could not forget the conversation he had had with me about wanting to get married and being afraid of hurting his girls. In spite of the letter he had written me begging me to forget the whole matter I could not get it out of my mind. Both of the twins had told me they would not make a row if their father did decide to marry again and somehow I felt I should let him know of this decision on their part. As he said, somebody might step in and get his girl while he waited for Tweedles' approval.

I hated the thought of his marrying anybody, but if his own daughters withdrew their objections, surely it was not right for me to misbehave. I lost sleep worrying over whether I should or should not write to him on the subject. Of course I could not divulge that Dum was really engaged. I did not know for sure whether she was engaged. She and Rex may have talked things over and decided to be brother and sister or merely friends or some such stuff; but one thing I was sure of and that was that both girls had called their father "poor Zebedee" and declared that they had not been kind enough to him in the matter of making him live in single blessedness. He had told me he was very much in love and I felt I had no right to keep from him what the girls had said. It would surely bring him great happiness and far be it from me to deny my dear friend any happiness. Of course it would change my life. The Tuckers wouldn't want me around all the time if Zebedee got married and the second Mrs. Tucker might even hate me. I almost knew I'd hate her, stuck-up thing, whoever she might be!

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It came around my week to sleep with Dum and Dee's to occupy the swing couch. The twins had had their week together and still Dum had not mentioned her engagement. If confidences are ever to be exchanged between girls occupying the same bed it will be sure to bring them forth. Then a girl can blush unseen and pour forth her soul secrets to her chum, saying things she could never bring herself to give voice to in broad daylight.

Of course I knew very well Dee was a poor person to talk to in bed as she was apt to go to sleep in the first throes of one's confidence. This is most disconcerting, but Dee was a healthy girl, looking at life quite simply, and unless there was something engrossing on her mind she would go to sleep as soon as her head hit the pillow. Perhaps Dum had tried to confide in her and was met with snores. I wondered if this had been the case.

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My first night with her I stayed awake on purpose to have her love affairs poured in my ears, but although she cleared her throat several times she did not seem to be able to begin. Finally she dropped off to sleep before I did with her love lyric unsung.

The next night Dum lay quite still until Dee's breathing from the swing couch in the next room gave indications of her having reached the Land of Nod on her usual express, then she felt for my hand under the cover and gave it a tiny squeeze.

"Page, something has happened!"

"Something nice?"

"I—I—don't know, but I'm all up in the air about what to do. You see—you see—Rex and I—that is Rex—he—he says he thinks I'm right nice—and I—I think he is nice—and we—we—we are engaged!" she came out with the last part with a jerk so violent that I almost fell out of bed.

"No, not really!" I said feeling that I must pretend ignorance. "I think that is splendid, dear, if you 'like' each other so much." [171]

"It seems mighty queer. I have to pinch myself all the time to realize that I am Virginia Tucker. You do like Rex, don't you Page?"

"Yes, indeed, I like him a whole lot. Have you told Dee yet?"

"N—o! You see it is this way: I can't bear to tell Dee until I tell Zebedee because sometimes he thinks we girls are banded together and don't take him in our affairs. I want to tell Zebedee first and still somehow I hate to worry him. I just know it will break him all up. You see we have always planned to get a house and live together and Dee and I were never going to marry anybody and Zebedee was going to get old with us. My marrying will upset all the plans—and still—still—Oh Page, I am so happy!"

"Dear Dum! I am so glad for you."

"I know Dee will just hate it too, but I think she likes Rex better than she used to. He thinks she is great."

"Are you—er—contemplating matrimony in the near future?"

"No, not until the war is over. You see Rex wants to get in it and I wouldn't have him stay out. I just know nothing will happen to him and he will come back safe. He can pick up his business fast enough he thinks when the war is over and then—then—" [172]

A squeeze of my hand completed the sentence.

"I wish you would tell your father. He will have to know

sometime and now is the best time. Write him!”

“I can’t! If he could only come up here I would tell him to his face easier than I could write him. I know he is going to weep suds and I can cry with him and we can have a big make-up. Rex wants to tell him but I just asked him to wait and let me do it.”

“Well then tell Dee!”

“Tell me what?” came in a sleepy voice from the swing couch.

“Tell you to go to sleep,” I laughed back.

“How can one go to sleep? You and Dum sound like a windy night in a pine forest. I never heard so much whispering in all my life.”

“Tell her now,” I implored Dum. “Call her in here!”

“Ain’t you cold, Dee? Come get in bed with Page and me.”

In Dee raced and jumped in the middle and then the great news was told to her and the tactful soul never, for an instant, let on that she knew all about it before hand.

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We slept all night three in the bed as a kind of celebration of the wonderful thing that had happened to our Dum.

“I reckon Zebedee never would have let us come off from home all alone if he had known such a thing as this would happen,” Dum said.

“Yes, and he trusted Page to keep us out of mischief and here she is aiding and abetting,” declared Dee in a voice once more full of sleep.

“I wonder which one of us will be the next,” said Dum.

“Not me!” I asserted decidedly.

“You can’t tell.”

“Yes, I can—I never intend to marry but am going back to Bracken and raise collie pups for the dog market and write stories for religious papers.”

“Heavens, Page, how gloomy!” cried Dee, waking up.

“And why are you so certain you will never marry?” asked Dum already wise in the ways of getting engaged. “Nobody ever can tell.”

“I just know,” I answered and in my heart I wondered if the girls’ father would not be the next and who the cat was he was thinking of placing in the unenviable position of stepmother to

the twins.

CHAPTER XX. RICE AND FUDGE.

Our finances were low, very low in fact, so low that we were flat broke. Living expenses were soaring and our ideas were soaring somewhat too. The allowances that we had been able to live on quite comfortably when we first came to New York were no longer adequate.

We had been having too much company for our resources. Of course it was most pleasant to give the perfect little dinners that we had learned so well to manage but those same little dinners were expensive. We had many invitations to dine out but we extended more hospitality than we received. The Tuckers were great inviters and I, having been raised in a hospitable home, never could resist the temptation of asking any and everybody to meals.

Temple Grandison was a fixture at our hospitable board and the sad little girl from Tennessee was a frequent guest. She looked so undernourished that we delighted in including her when we had a nice juicy beefsteak or something equally desirable and blood making. Belle Tompkins was her name. A pleasant little person she was and so earnest and hard working and so poor that we felt the least we could do was occasionally to fill her up. She could not return our hospitality but in a hundred ways she tried to show her gratitude and appreciation. She always would wash the dishes after one of our royal feasts, insisting that she liked to wash dishes, although I am sure she must have hated it just as much as the rest of us did. In fact she was too nice a little woman not to hate it. I am sure there is something radically wrong with anybody who really and truly likes to wash dishes.

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Miss Tompkins also insisted upon darning our stockings. Now darning is something that goes hand in hand with dishwashing and no normal person could like to do it. I used to feel like a hound dog when our modest little guest would call for the stocking basket and, drying her hands from the hated dishwashing, begin to weave wonderful darns in the heels and toes of our wornout hose.

Another steady guest was a sub professor who lectured at our college, Professor Bingham. I had found him most interesting on the short story and he seemed to find me worth while. At any rate he was quite encouraging over my work and suggested coming to help me at home. Of course this was a wonderful opportunity for me and I jumped at it, being immensely flattered. He came and came again and again. All of us found him interesting and liked to hear him talk. He was of great assistance to me, going over my manuscript, criticizing and helping me. His visits did however get to be a little too frequent to suit us and finally we began to speak of his many

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calls as dinner calls, because he always made them at a time when we could not get out of asking him to stay to dinner. I can still recall his rapacious eye as one of the twins would begin to set the table and I would disappear into the tiny kitchen to cook our dinner. His bored expression when Temple Grandison would appear in the door, frankly attracted by the appetizing odors that were wafted down the stairs to his den, always made us laugh.

Grandison was always quite frank about being hungry and hard up. Professor Bingham usually pretended he did not know it was dinner time and feigned great astonishment when that meal was placed on the table but Grandison would say:

“My dear angels! Once more you feed the starving: I have actually swept my studio, hoping to find some loose coin that has escaped the search, but nothing, nothing!”

Grandison was going through a period of lying fallow, germinating, he called it. He had done no work for weeks and consequently had no money. Such times were usually followed by a state of great activity when he would reel off poems by the yard with illustrations that no editor could refuse. I believe editors had long since ceased to refuse Temple Grandison. It rested with him how much money he could make but he insisted that there were times when his muse was off galivanting with another fellow and then it was up to his friends to feed him. He never borrowed money no matter how hard up he got, but ate on his friends and when they failed him as they sometimes did would run up bills at the restaurants in Greenwich Village. They trusted him in these restaurants just as his friends did, feeling sure that Temple Grandison’s muse would sooner or later return and once more he would have money to scatter in the dark and dusty corners of his studio.

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Evidently he liked my cooking and the little dinners we gave as I am sure he honored us at least three times a week for several months. Rex had warned us but we had not heeded him and now that young gentleman was off in a training camp we had no one to say: “I told you so.”

Reginald Kent’s friends had persuaded him to enter an officers’ training camp instead of enlisting as a private and he, lured on by the hope of a commission and a salary that might make it possible to marry his Dum, had consented with a string tied to it that if he did not get over to France soon he would pull out and enlist in the ranks. Get to France he must and Dum encouraged him in this determination.

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No doubt had “our fiancé” as we called Rex, been around he would have seen that we were riding for a financial fall and put a stop to our extravagancies in the way of hospitality. He was a careful person in regard to money with no foolish extravagancies, not at all stingy but simply cautious. Before he went to camp he used to give us lovely treats in the way of

pleasant little dinners at inexpensive table d'hôtes and the theatre afterwards, but we always sat in the roost for about one-fourth of the money it would have taken to get the best seats. We could see and hear quite well up there and we honored and respected our host for taking us where he could afford to go.

We missed our fiancé sorely and when that evening came in which we finally realized we were absolutely without funds we missed him more than ever.

We came in from our respective callings, tired and hungry, each one hoping the other had a little money. No reimbursements were due from Virginia for at least three days and our money pig was empty. We kept all the household funds in a china money pig and when food was to be bought we shook the pig. Every Saturday night we put equal amounts in the insatiate monster and then if necessary through the week we filled him up again. If we wanted to borrow we borrowed from the pig. Judy Kean, Mrs. Brown, had told us of this method of co-operative housekeeping. It was the way Molly Brown and Judy had kept house in Paris, only they had had a toby jug instead of a money pig. It worked splendidly with us and spared the twins many a row as they now could work off their humors on the pig instead of one another. Instead of Dum's borrowing from Dee she must borrow from the pig and her I. O. U. dug from the hollow insides of that domestic animal was not to be disputed.

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On that evening in spring as Dee and I boarded the subway we gave up our last pennies for tickets. I had fondly hoped Dee was not so low in funds and she had had the same faith in me and my pocket book.

"Maybe Dum is better off," was Dee's cheerful remark when I asked her to lend me something. I had already shaken the pig in vain that morning before going to lectures.

"Maybe!" but I was almost sure Dum was in a worse fix than we were if possible.

On arriving at our apartment we both made a dive for the poor money pig. I had a forlorn hope he had found something to eat in our absence.

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"Silence! The last death rattle rattled itself out yesterday," sighed Dee. "Empty is the cradle!"

"Dig down in it with this hairpin," I suggested. "Maybe there is a five-dollar bill tucked down in there."

She dug but nothing was forthcoming but several I. O. U.'s, signed by the different members of the firm.

"Bankrupt! Poor piggy, your goodnatured trust in humanity has

been your undoing. Dum owes the pig six dollars; I owe him four; and you owe him ninety-eight cents. You must have been out buying a bargain, Page.”

“Not at all! Ninety-eight cents was all he had left when I borrowed it last week,” I laughed. “But this isn’t getting dinner.”

“No, and who can lend us any?”

“Grandison is on his uppers and no doubt will come prancing up the steps to get fed himself. I wouldn’t mind borrowing from him very much because I believe he would understand although he never borrows himself, that is never borrows money. If all the dinners he has consumed up here were borrowed and could be paid back we would not go hungry for months to come,” I declared as I took off my hat and began rummaging in the larder to spy out the nakedness of the land. My cupboard was a veritable Old Mother Hubbard’s. I did unearth a can of condensed milk, a little rice, some sugar and enough coffee for one meal. As Mammy Susan used to say: “We done et too close.”

“How about Belle Tompkins?” queried Dee. “Might we not borrow from her?”

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“I couldn’t bear to. She mightn’t have it and then think how embarrassed she would be. If only Stephen White would turn up, but his evening off just happened two or three days ago.”

“Would you borrow from Stephen?” asked Dee making another forlorn dab at the poor piggy bringing more color into her cheeks by the vigorous shaking she decided to give him.

“Certainly! I’d borrow from any gentleman who honored us with his friendship. Wouldn’t you?”

“Ye-s, but somehow I’d hate to borrow from Stephen—not that he wouldn’t lend it—I mean—”

But just then Dum came wearily up the steps and Dee did not have to explain why she did not want to borrow from Stephen.

“You are late, honey,” I said as Dum sank in a chair.

“I walked home and I tell you Fifty-seventh Street is some walk.”

“Why on earth did you walk?”

“Busted!”

Our last hope fled.

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“So are we and there is no dinner in the house,” was Dee’s grim remark.

“Well we’ll just borrow.”

“From whom?”

“From—from—the Lord knows.”

“Judy and Kent Brown are off visiting the Greens at Wellington College; Grandison is busted too, our fiancé is gone.”

“Yes—gone! And I’m so—so hungry!” Dum’s eyes were full of tears and I thought she was going to say so lonesome or so love lorn and when she came out with so hungry I had to laugh. She laughed too and Dee joined in but we were not fed on laughter.

“Don’t you reckon we can get tick at some of these shops where we have been dealing?” I asked.

“I doubt it but we might try,” was Dee’s fearful and hopeful answer.

“But s’pose they refuse!” wailed Dum. “Only think of asking for credit and being refused. I believe it would kill me.”

“It wouldn’t be near so bad as starving,” I said busying myself preparatory to cooking the handful of rice. “I’ll make some fudge with the condensed milk. I believe there is a piece of chocolate here, the one the little mouse gnawed on that time. Fudge is very nourishing and whole nations, the Chinese and the people of India, subsist on rice. It finally does up your eyes, so I am told, but maybe relief will come before we go blind.”

“Thank goodness we have milk and rolls left in the morning, and not on a cash basis but on the door sill. You had better save the coffee for breakfast, Page dear,” suggested Dee.

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“Certainly, and some of the cold rice if there is any left. I wish they would accept cold rice on the subway. How on earth will we get to college?”

“Foot it, I guess!”

“Well anyhow if Professor Bingham makes a dinner call this evening he will get left,” I announced. “I do not intend to share my rice and fudge with him.”

“Me neither!” said Dum.

We had hardly got the words out of our mouths when there was an apologetic knock on the door and there stood the professor, a roll of corrected manuscript under his arm and a hungry smile on his face. I guess a sub professor is not overpaid and consequently underfed.

“Er—er—come in!” I said tentatively.

“Perhaps you are going out.”

“Oh no!”

He came in and sat down, unrolling the manuscript and plunging into a criticism of my latest attempt at short story writing.

“Don’t let the water in the rice boiler get low,” I whispered to Dee, “and stir the fudge. For Pete’s sake don’t let it burn.”

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I sat down by Mr. Bingham and endeavored to listen intelligently to all he had to say of my faults and virtues as a budding author.

It was time for Dum and Dee to set the table if it was to be set and time for me to go cook the dinner if there was to be any dinner, but Dum was deep in a charcoal sketch of her own left hand while Dee was busily engaged in working strange looking buttonholes in a shirt waist she was making by hand.

“What makes them so grubby looking?” she sighed.

“Never mind, dear, they will iron out better,” comforted Dum.

Making buttonholes seemed an after dinner occupation to the hungry sub professor. He looked from one to the other of us in some bewilderment.

“May I come in?” called Grandison from the hall. “Ah, what have we here? If my old nose don’t tell no lies it’s chocolate fudge.”

Of course it had boiled over. Dee had been so taken up with her uncertain buttonholes that she had forgotten to stir.

“Yes we are dining on rice and fudge tonight,” said that young woman with all graciousness of manner. “We shall be more than pleased to have you join us.” She bowed taking in the big-eyed professor in her obeisance.

“Ah—ah—thank you, thank you very much,” he stammered, “but I am promised for the evening.”

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“Too bad!” teased Dee. “You don’t know how nourishing rice and fudge are. Whole nations live on rice, Chinese and Indians I believe, not the red kind but the coffee-colored ones. Of course if your eyes are weak, rice is not the best thing for them, that is not a steady diet of it but then there may be something in chocolate fudge that would counteract the effect of rice.”

She followed him to the door as he took his departure and as he went down the steps her voice still trailed after him telling him of the nourishing qualities of rice and fudge.

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CHAPTER XXI. THE BUCKET BRIGADE.

“Put me wise! Put me wise!” cried Grandison sinking in a chair and laughing heartily. “I don’t like the way that man’s eyes stick out anyhow.”

“Put you wise to what?” asked Dum beginning to set the table.

“Why, rice and fudge?”

“There is nothing to say except that is what we have for our frugal repast,” I said as I poured out the fudge and began to beat it violently using the method Mammy Susan had taught me in welding an iron spoon.

“Is the rice done?” he asked quite simply.

“Not quite!”

“Well hold it back for five minutes. May I borrow—”

“Sorry but we are broke,” blurted out Dum.

“I never borrow money,” he said reproachfully. “What I want to borrow is your back kitchen window, just for a moment.”

“Help yourself,” we chorused, but we were very uneasy about our erratic friend. Was he crazy and did he mean to commit suicide out of our back window? Had rice and fudge driven one man to lie and another to suicide?

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He leaned far out of the window, whistling shrilly through his fingers to a waiter whose head appeared in the basement of the restaurant which backed on us.

“Hi there! You, garcon! Henri!”

“Voila, Monsieur Grandison!” came from the paved court below.

“What have you for dinner today, mon brave?”

“Filet de sole, rosbif, macaroni au gratin, petit pois, salade romaine, fromage suisse au confiture, cafe noir!” in a singsong voice of a French waiter accustomed to rattling off a bill of fare.

“Good! Send me up five portions as quickly as you can. We are starving.”

“Ah but monsieur, we are short of garcons since the war began and I have no one to send.”

“Oh that’s all right! Put it in a bucket, and never mind plates and silver, we have all that. I’ll let down a rope.”

“A bookeete! Qu’est-ce que c’est que ca?”

“A bucket—a pail—how the mischief can I teach you English out of a third-story window?”

“Un sceau!” called Dee.

“Of course, just so! Put the filled dishes in a so and we will let down a rope to draw it up. Hurry up! Vite!”

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“And charge it to Monsieur?”

“Of course! Charge it to me? I’ll be rich next week.”

“We never before realized the joy of backing on a swell restaurant,” I cried. “But Grandison, you should not have done it, and five portions! Why five portions?”

“One for Miss Tompkins to be sure. Don’t you know I have been on to how kind you girls are to her and what it means to her. I’m no dead beat like that Bingham cuss. I bet you anything he is banking the price of his dinner. I—I am simply hard up for the time being but I am going to be rich next week and then we will feast right royally.”

“We never thought you were a dead beat,” said Dee, “and we love to have you come and dine with us whenever you feel like it.”

“What is going to make you rich?” I asked curiously.

“Why my pen and pencil! Already I am full of ideas. I felt them coming when I smelled the fudge. Often an odor will get me going. Listen to this:

Though food they do not begrudge
To dead-beats whom nothing will budge,
They hit on a plan
To get rid of one man
By serving him nothing but fudge.

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See my muse has returned! Come to my arms my darling!”

“Oh what a delicious goose you are!” cried Dee.

“But a rope! A rope! Where is a rope? We may have to catch hold of one another and draw up our food out of the back yard if no one can produce a rope,” and he ran around quite frantically searching for a rope, which of course we did not own.

“Invite Miss Tompkins and ask her to bring a rope,” he suggested.

Of course that resourceful little lady did have, if not a rope, something that did just as well. She tied together various bits of stout twine pieced out with a trunk strap and two old cravats and to our delight it almost reached the ground when we dangled it out the window.

That restaurant in Greenwich Village was the old fashioned kind, the kind that served a portion big enough for two or even three if the diners were not in a famished state. The bucket had to be lowered three times to bring up the great quantity that Henri placed tenderly in it.

“And to think we thought we were to dine on rice and fudge,” said Dee, raising one of the silver covers and sniffing delightedly.

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“We’ll have enough to keep us going several days,” I whispered to Dum, “That is if we don’t have any more guests and if we do not act piggy ourselves.”

The words were hardly out of my mouth when there was a sound of someone coming up the steps two at a time.

“Rex!”

“Our fiancé!” burst from us.

Very handsome the young man looked in khaki. He was an upstanding youth at any rate and the military training could do nothing for him in the way of improving his carriage as his bearing was about perfect. He hugged Dee and me and gave Dum a formal handshake. I don’t know why lovers always feel themselves privileged to embrace the female connections of their beloveds and then are so shy about showing their affections to those to whom it most concerns. Dee and I took the vicarious hugging in good part however.

I began to think that Grandison had shown his wisdom in ordering five portions. Another place was laid for Rex and we were ready to begin our feast when another knock was heard at our overworked door.

“Heavens! Who on earth?” grumbled Dee, but her “Come in” was as polite as usual.

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Stephen White in the Red Cross khaki entered the room.

“Ah, I hoped I’d be in time to get all of you to come out and dine with me! Am I too late?”

“Not too late to dine with us,” I said, jumping up for another plate and knife and fork for our rapidly growing party.

“Gee! Why this spread?” asked the young doctor, squeezing in by Dee’s side.

“Well you see we are flat broke,” explained Dum.

“It looks like it with all these silver dish covers and garnishings,” laughed Stephen, “cress and sliced lemon and curly paper fixings on the filet de sole looks poverty stricken I am sure.”

Rex and Stephen looked quite solemn when we told them that we had not a cent between us and were walking to work, and that Grandison had saved us from starvation.

“This won’t do,” declared Stephen as though he owned the whole bunch of us.

“What would you have done if Grandison had not come up to dinner?” asked Rex.

“Just eaten our rice and fudge. I guess there are many of our Allies who would be glad to get it,” answered Dum, who was eating with her left hand. No doubt she could have handled her petit pois with more grace had she been able to use her right hand in the operation but that member was mysteriously engaged under the table.

“I—I—can lend you some money,” faltered poor little Belle Tompkins. “I’d be proud if you would borrow from me.”

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We very well knew she had hardly enough to keep body and soul alive but her manner was so earnest and her eyes so moist that we quickly thanked her in chorus and asked her to lend us five dollars until reimbursements should arrive from home. We much preferred borrowing from females.

Our party broke up rather early. Grandison must take his muse quickly to his lair and begin to make money if he expected to be rich by the next week. Already his eye was in a fine frenzy rolling.

“The old scout will be burning the midnight oil for days to come, now,” said Rex. “I think better of him than I ever did for feeding you poor starving girls, but I always said he would share his last crust with his friends. Didn’t I?”

We could not help seeing the contrast between Professor Bingham and Temple Grandison. The one ran when rice and fudge were fired at him while the other stayed and saved the day.

“I’m only to be in New York twenty-four hours,” said Rex, pathetically. “Can’t we leave this debris and take a little walk?” His question was addressed to all of us but we knew perfectly well that all of us but Dum could stay with the debris as far as he was concerned.

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“Do let’s get out,” broke in Stephen. He had been called to service too and was leaving for a base hospital in a day or so.

I wonder what woman's instinct won't tell a girl. Mine told me to let the twins go walking all they wanted to but I was to stay at home and help dear little Belle clean up the despised debris. Usually the Tuckers were loud in their regrets if I refused to accompany them on the slightest pretext of pleasure but they were both silent when I announced my determination and even Wink White who was always most solicitous that I should be considered did not press the point of my accompanying them.

"Ah, well!" I sighed to myself as I began to gather up the broken bits of food. "Belle and I can be two nice domestic spinsters. We can make ourselves useful and beloved."

There had been a look in Stephen White's eyes as he helped Dee put on her jacket that made me think I would play the more popular role by staying home and washing dishes. I wondered if Dee recognized that gleam in the eye of the young doctor.

CHAPTER XXII. A LONELY STROLL.

Khaki seems to start things somehow. As soon as a young man puts it on he feels he must get a sweetheart. I suppose he immediately sees himself looking like the handsome young man in the recruiting posters marching off with the band playing "The Girl I Left Behind Me." Now what is the use of the band's playing that stirring tune if a fellow hasn't any girl to leave behind him? The best thing to do is to get himself one.

"Ah me!" I thought as I dried the dishes that the faithful Belle took steaming hot from her dish-pan, "it seems a long time ago that Stephen White made such desperate love to me out on the piazza at Willoughby Beach, the night of my first hop. I am getting to be quite an old lady now with only a motherly interest in the love affairs of other girls." Then I brought myself up with a jerk. "Page Allison, are you jealous of Dee? Do you want a beau in khaki and would you like that lover to be Stephen White? I am ashamed of you and don't intend to own you as my ego any longer!"

I looked at my little neighbor and wondered if she had ever had a lover. She was rather pretty in a demure modest way. Must not some man have recognized the charm of her mild soft eyes and the smooth neatness of her hair which gave a classic line to her well-shaped little head? Belle Tompkins had lived and worked many years in Greenwich Village but she had never felt the artistic call to bedeck herself in scarves and draperies. Her clothes were simple and neat and might have belonged to some little seamstress who went out to sew by the day.

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We went on with our dishwashing task in silence. The many courses of Henri's table d'hôte had called for many plates and the dirty dishes were stacked high on table and sink.

"You should have gone too," Belle at last broke the silence that had gone on for many minutes as plate after plate was washed and wiped.

"I wanted to stay and help you. You are too good to do all this dishwashing."

"I like it—that is I don't mind it. It is something I can do and you girls are so good to me. Do you think Dr. White is in love with Dee?"

"I am almost sure he is."

"I used to think he was more interested in you."

I could have ducked my head in the soapy, greasy dishwater I was so furious with myself for blushing, but blush I did

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although I am sure I never had blushed before for Stephen White. I fancy it was because I had just been calling myself to account for being a bit lonesome. I may have been sighing for the unattainable but that unattainable was certainly not Wink White.

“He is a good friend of mine but has preferred Dee’s society to mine for a long time now,” I answered, trying not to look as prim as my words sounded.

“I have a fancy those twins won’t stay single very long,” suggested Belle. “What will their father think?”

“Oh, I don’t know! I fancy he will marry again very soon if his daughters get engaged.”

“Well, well! I wonder how they will like that.”

“Like it! I don’t see what they will have to do with it!” I answered with more heat than the subject called for. “Why should they think they can get engaged all they’ve a mind to and keep a man of his age perennially a bach—widower.”

Having up to this time had a sneaking hatred for Zebedee’s lady love, whoever she might be, I suddenly had an accession of pity for her. I was to be her champion I decided. What if I should have to go back to Bracken and raise Collie pups with all my friends marrying? Zebedee was one of the best friends I had ever had in my life—I might even say the very best—if he wanted to marry he should be allowed to do it and I would show my friendship for him by managing the twins.

If I could see him I would tell him that already Dum was contemplating matrimony and Dee was on the borderlands of becoming engaged. They were not fair to him and I, for one, was going to aid and abet him in grasping his happiness. I was going to do it if it broke my heart in the doing.

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Every dish at last washed; the food that was left carefully saved on butter dishes (there was so little that they were the only things small enough to hold it); the silver covers and platters loaded in the bucket and lowered to the anxious Henri; gentle little Belle gone; and I was left alone.

I felt old and tired and very much did I want to see my father and Mammy Susan. I longed for the dogs at Bracken and their affectionate nosing and fawning and canine embraces.

It was getting very late and still the girls tarried out with their soldier lovers. I could not blame them. It was a wonderful spring night, the air soft and balmy. No doubt they were sitting in Washington Square perfectly oblivious to the passage of time. Rex was soon to go back to camp. There was no telling when he could see his Dum again and as for Stephen and Dee; at that very moment they might be swearing eternal love.

Stephen too, no doubt, felt the call to have a girl to leave behind him. Who could make a man happier than dear Dee? She seemed made for Stephen and he for her. They had always been congenial and now their friendship had strengthened and deepened into love, the kind of love that would last forever I felt sure, since it was based on true congeniality and no love-at-first-sight foolishness.

The night was so lovely I felt tempted to call my neighbor and get her to go out in the street with me but I knew she needed the rest that by that time no doubt she was getting. I leaned far out of the open window and gazed longingly up and down the street. Greenwich Village is quite as lively by night as by day so the sidewalk was teeming with people. I had half a mind to go out alone. Why not? What could happen to me? We often went out at night without an escort but we had always gone two or three strong, never alone.

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“I don’t intend to stay stuck up here with all the world out on the street!” I said aloud. “If Tweedles get back before I do there is no reason why they need worry about me any more than I am about them. I reckon I can take care of myself as well as Rex and Wink can take care of them.”

There was no need for hat or jacket on such a mild night. I grabbed up Dum’s beloved blue scarf and throwing it around my shoulders sailed down the steps.

Temple Grandison’s door was closed but the strong light that streamed across his worn old sill gave evidence that he was burning many midnight candles and the steady click of his typewriter told that his muse was no doubt playing stenographer for him.

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“Good luck!” I softly whispered.

If it had not been an unwritten law in Greenwich Village to respect work I would have tapped on his door and asked him to come walk with me. But work must not be interrupted no matter whose work it is and certainly not the work of a man who had been idle as long as our erratic friend. I scuttled along the lower hall and was soon out on the street.

What a happy street it was! There were many couples loitering on the sidewalk, lovers I fancied them to be. Now I was out of doors where should I go? Anywhere just to be going!

I crossed the street at random, glancing back at our house which was dark except for the third story. I had left the gas burning at full tilt in our living-room. What an extravagance! But the street sounds were calling me and the street smells were calling me and above all I was lonesome and blue and felt I must get out and mingle with human beings. What difference did it make to me if our gas metre was clicking away like a taxi cab?

Through the open window I could see a sash curtain waving in the spring breeze. I thought of Dum the night she came home, having plighted her troth to Rex, and how she leaned out of the window to wave to her departing lover. Soon Dee, no doubt, would be rubbering out of a window trying to see the last of Stephen White's coat tails.

"I never would have thought it of Tweedles," I sighed.

In the shadow of a tall house I noticed a man standing. I had seen him as he turned the corner and came down the street towards me. There was something strangely familiar in his lines but I had been so intently gazing up at the sash curtain waving out of our window that I had not paid any attention to him. Suddenly I realized that he too was interested in the same window. At least he had stopped short on the sidewalk and was looking in that direction.

I turned again and looked up at the window. The curtain fluttered as though some hand were directing it. Perhaps the man who was gazing in that direction fancied someone was trying to attract his attention. Absurd! I stopped gazing and started forward simultaneously with the stranger. A collision and bump were inevitable. The impact almost felled me. He put out an arm and caught me.

CHAPTER XXIII. MY HEIGHT.

“I beg your par—why Page, little Page! What on earth are you doing out here on the street?”

It was Mr. Tucker! I clung to him and laughed nervously. As soon as I could get my breath which he had almost knocked out of me I retaliated by saying:

“And you? What are you doing on this particular street?”

“I had to come to New York on business and I am stopping at a little hotel up on Washington Square. I only this minute deposited my grip and just thought I’d wander down the street to see if by any chance you girls could have a light in your window. If so I was going to propose a party to the Midnight Frolic. I hear there is a bully show on there. But you haven’t told me yet what you were doing out here.”

He tucked my arm in his in a very masterful way and I thought his voice sounded a little stern.

“It isn’t afternoon you know, my child, but almost midnight.”

“Yes, I know—but—I just had to get down in the street a minute. I—I was kind of lonesome.”

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“Lonesome! I am lonesome all the time! Where are Tweedles? Aren’t they company enough? I can’t fancy any place more lonesome than a New York street all by yourself, no matter how crowded the street is. But where are the girls?”

“They are out walking.”

“Why weren’t you out walking with them?”

“I didn’t want to go.”

“Have they been catty to you?”

“Catty! Dum and Dee! Mr. Tucker you are crazy!”

“Well, why should they go off and leave you lonesome?”

“They asked me to go too.”

“And why didn’t you go?”

“Just because!”

We were walking towards Washington Square. I seemed like one in a dream. I had never been addicted to somnambulism but now I had to pinch myself to make sure that I was not asleep. I

was dressed, I was certain of that, and Dum's blue scarf was thrown around my shoulders. In strange dreams of walking on the street one is usually extremely uncomfortable in a nightgown or even less dressy garments. It was a strange situation to look out of a third-story window on a spring night, feel a call from the street, a nameless, wordless, silent call, but a call for all that; go down the steps, out on the street, and there run into a person you were pretty sure was in Richmond, Va.

"Page, you are concealing something from me. I am not going to take issue with you for being on the street alone at this time of night. Anyhow you are not alone now," and he tucked my hand in closer under his arm, "so I'm going to pretend you were not wandering along like a little sleepwalker when I almost knocked you down, but I am going to insist that you tell me what has happened."

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"Well you see—"

"Jump right in, don't wade around!"

"I have been thinking I would tell you the first chance I got because I did not think it was fair. If you want to get married the girls have no right to raise a row."

He looked down into my face, his eyes twinkling but his mouth very grave.

"Go on!"

"Dum is in love and—and engaged—"

"Virginia Tucker?"

"Yes, Virginia!"

"Who is it? That—that—Reginald Kent, I reckon."

"Yes, and he is a dear."

"No doubt! And Dee, is she up to something too?"

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"I'm not sure, but I rather think when she gets home she will be engaged too."

"Umhum! I hope to goodness it isn't that artist illustrator poet fellow she has been writing about."

"Grandison, Temple Grandison, what an idea! No, it is Stephen White."

"What, your devoted? Is that the reason you were lonesome? Poor little Page!"

"You mean because of Stephen White? You make me tired."

“Oh, I do, do I? I’m glad to hear it. Go on!”

“Well you see,” I faltered, “I know the girls think they have been selfish with you about not letting you—marry again.”

“Let’s sit down here,” he said abruptly. We had reached Washington Square and Zebedee pulled me down on the first bench we saw as we entered the park. “Proceed!”

He was trembling a little and I felt so sorry for him I squeezed his arm.

“Dum wants to tell you about Rex but she couldn’t bear to write it to you and thought she would wait until she saw you. Of course Dee may not have anything to tell but she has let me understand that she would make no objection if you marry again. I have been feeling for some time that I should let you know. You might want to—to—propose to that girl.” I almost choked but I got it out.

He was quite still but his heart was pounding so that I could feel it quite distinctly under my hand that he still kept tucked in his arm.

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“Propose to her! I should say I did want to. It seems to me I have wanted to since the first moment I laid eyes on her but of course that is absurd. But are you sure about Tweedles. Somehow I can’t get used to it. I’ve been trying to school myself to give up for so long I can’t get it into my head that I am free to live my own life.”

“I am sure about Dum and almost sure about Dee. I know she told me herself that she thought she had been unfair to you.”

He gave a long sigh.

“I am certainly torn by conflicting emotions. I never thought I could greet the news that my girls were getting or had got engaged with such composure, almost joy; but all the time I have been afraid somebody would come in and steal my little girl away from me before I could declare myself. Even now it may be too late. Is it Page—do you think it is too late?”

“I don’t know, sir, I am sure.”

“You don’t know! Why don’t you know?”

“How should I know?” I asked stiffly. I had done my duty, told my friend what I felt he should know, but I had not bargained for this aftermath. Let him go ask the girl, whoever she might be, but not come pestering me with whether she would or she wouldn’t. No doubt she was a cat and played with men as though they were mice but that was Jeffrey Tucker’s lookout and not mine. Suddenly I felt very tired and I shivered a little.

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“I must go home.” I started to rise from the bench.

“Not yet! It is early.”

“You just informed me it was nearer midnight than midday.”

“But Page you can’t go until you give me my answer!” he pleaded.

“Answer! What answer?”

“Is it too late?”

“Too late to be on the street?”

“You know what I mean—don’t tease me—above all don’t flirt with me.”

Flirt with Mr. Tucker—Jeffrey—Zebedee! The idea was so absurd I laughed although I had a terrible feeling that my dear friend had gone crazy.

“Don’t laugh at me either. Can’t stand it. I know I am an old fool—old enough to be your father, but I don’t feel a bit like a father to you—never did—always looked up to you—asked your advise—admired your intelligence and wisdom—your judgment and poise. Page, Page, is it too late?”

What words were these? What was he talking about? I turned and looked my companion in the eyes. The square was quite brightly lighted and I saw on his face a look that I shall treasure to my dying day. No more words were necessary. Any further explanations would have been tautological. I trusted that look in his dear eyes and simply snuggled up close to him on the bench.

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“No, sir, you are just in time,” I whispered.

He held me close in spite of its being a public park, but I fancy the public parks of New York are accustomed to such demonstrations of affection.

Where was my loneliness now? Where my determination to raise collie pups at Bracken? I was happy, so happy that I wondered at my misery of only a few moments ago. Suddenly I felt a great sorrow for that other girl, the one Zebedee had told me about on his last visit to New York. She must be loving him too, must be expecting him to come some day and claim her hand. I had felt in honor bound to tell him of his daughters’ change of heart on the subject of his marrying again not only on his account but on account of the girl, whoever she might be. Of course I had thought of her as more or less catty—had hated her in fact, but that was no reason why I should take advantage of her. I pulled myself away from him.

“I can’t have you unfair to that other girl. It isn’t right.”

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“What other girl?”

“That one—that one—who is just as high as your heart.”

“Why my dear little girl, don’t you know your own height?”

CHAPTER XXIV. WHAT DID HE CATCH?

I have some advice to give my readers. Of course I know most of them are young yet, too young to need this advice for many a long day, but listen, girls, and don't forget it when you arrive at the age at which I had arrived on that never-to-be-forgotten night when I behaved in the imprudent manner described in the last chapter, running out on the street alone and unprotected in the great city of New York.

Don't get engaged near midnight! Choose a time early in the evening if it is possible so that all the things that must be said can be said, or at least touched on, before the wee small hours begin to encroach on your happiness. Of course in my case it was impossible to control the time and place because it was as big a surprise to me as ever befell a girl. How was I to have known that all the time I was the girl? Certainly he never said so and it would have been absurd presumption on my part to take for granted that he was talking about me. Naturally, had I known I was the one I would not have felt it my duty to tell him that there was no longer any reason why he should not propose to me.

We tried to say everything we had to say on that park bench but we only got about a millionth of it done when I realized that I must get back home. How could I be a guide and example to Tweedles if I behaved as I was doing? I jumped up and in spite of his entreaties for just a moment more, I resolutely turned my face homeward.

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"Oh what a Miss Pressy Prim you are!" he cried as he caught step with me.

"And what would you say to Dum and Dee if they stayed out in Washington Square until this hour?"

"Maybe now I would not be so severe on them."

"Maybe not, but I must go home."

"I reckon you are right, but Page honey, it has been a long wait until I could tell you what you know tonight. I haven't near finished but praise God I never will finish telling you how much I love you. Are you sure you love me?"

"Sure!"

"If you didn't know you were the fabulous monster who had stolen my affections I don't see how you could have loved me so all of a sudden. When did you begin?"

"When did you?"

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“When you produced such a good lunch on the train when I was taking Tweedles up to Gresham to boarding school, the very first time I ever saw you! And you?”

“When you complimented my lunch so and ate so much of it.”

He told me good-night down in the lower hall outside of Temple Grandison’s door. The poet’s typewriter was still clicking.

“Tomorrow, dear little girl!”

“Yes, tomorrow!”

“Don’t tell the twins yet. Let’s make them tell me first, the monkeys! They haven’t proper respect for their father. Just tell them I am in town and will see them in the morning. By Jove, I wish it was noon instead of midnight!”

I started up the steps.

“Page!” he cried from the dark hall below, “Page! Honey! I’ve got something terribly exciting to tell you. Come down a minute please!”

“You’ve told me,” I answered, longing to go back but resolutely mounting the stairs.

“Not at all! This is something quite different, not that I love you —” An ominous silence from Grandison’s lair made me to know he had heard Zebedee’s voice. “Of course I do love you, I love you so much I couldn’t stop loving you long enough to tell you something else interesting. I helped to catch—”

Grandison’s door opened precipitately. I scurried up the steps but I heard the poet say:

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“Were you speaking to me, sir?”

“Not at all! I was talking to myself,” was the confused rejoinder.

“What egotism! But I thank you all the same. I am busy on a poem that has just come to me and you have given me a wonderful idea. I’d ask you in, but my muse might leave, so I’ll bid you good-night.” He went in and shut the door.

I heard a muttered imprecation from Zebedee as he felt his way down the long narrow hall.

Tweedles had not arrived. I found the room empty and the gas still burning at top notch, the sash curtain still waving gaily out the open window. I ran to the window and looked into the street. Far up at the corner I could see the Tucker twins with their escorts walking sedately home. Their father crossed the street and once more took his stand in the shadow of the

building where I had not so many minutes before bumped into him. Was he not going to speak to his own girls when he had not seen them for weeks and months?

He saw them, he could not help seeing them as there were few pedestrians left on our square and they could have seen him if he had not dived in the shadow of a protecting doorway. He did not want to see them, did not want to see anybody, not even his own girls. I well understood his feelings as I didn't want to see anybody myself. I wanted to be alone and hug my happiness.

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I leaned far out of the window and waved my hand. I saw the answering flash of a white handkerchief from the dark doorway across the street. Then I lowered the gas to a finger of flame and got out of my clothes and into my nightgown in such a hurry that when the twins opened the door and crept into the room I was in bed and pretending to be asleep.

It was my week to sleep with Dee. I wished it might have been my turn for the swing couch. I felt as though I simply must be alone. So much had happened to me in that short half hour, or maybe hour, that I wanted to pull myself together and go over the situation. No doubt Dee was feeling the same way if the look in Stephen's eyes had led him where I fancied it would, to a declaration of love. She must want to get to herself and think it all out. Through the open door I noticed she ran to the window and looked eagerly up the street.

"The last of Wink's coat tails!" I said to myself.

"Are you asleep, Page?" whispered Dum as she came in the bedroom for her nightgown.

"No-o!" I yawned, pretending a drowsiness that I far from felt.

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"Have you been lonesome, honey?"

"Not very! By the way, your father is in New York."

"Zebedee!" they exclaimed in a breath.

"The same!"

"Oh, wasn't he put out at our not being here?"

"When did he come?"

"Why did he come?"

"How long is he going to stay?"

"Heavens above! One at a time!" I implored. "He wasn't put out at all; he come quite late, having just deposited his grip at a hotel in Washington Square—it was almost midnight I believe but he wanted us to go to the Midnight Frolic with him if he

found us still up.”

“And why did he come to New York?” insisted Dum.

“I—I never asked him and he forgot to tell me, and I don’t know how long he is going to stay.” I felt rather foolish in not being able to answer all the girls’ questions but my time had been all too short and more important things than business had been under discussion. “He said he caught something or other but he never finished what it was.”

“Caught something! Caught what? Now see here, Page, you wake up and tell us what he caught. Was it measles? You are sure it wasn’t scarlet fever?” and Dum pulled the cover from up around my ears where I had tucked it in spite of its being a warm night.

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“Yes sure, he didn’t have anything the matter with him, not a disease of any kind, I am sure.”

“Maybe it was a fish,” suggested Dee.

“I believe it was a fish, now I come to think of it,” I declared, shutting my eyes and pretending to be dead asleep.

“Ain’t she dippy, though?” was Dum’s disgusted reception of my remark.

I couldn’t help giggling at this. That was no way to speak of one’s stepmother, to call her dippy right to her face.

“He’ll be around first thing in the morning,” I ventured again, pulling the sheet up over my cheek, sure that it must be as red as a rose. It may have been but the twins did not notice it. No doubt they had matters of their own to think about.

Dee crawled in bed by my side and lay as still as a graven image. I had a feeling she was bursting with news but was determined to burst rather than to let anything leak out. Finally she whispered:

“Page, I’ve got something to tell you but I think I ought to wait and tell Zebedee first although it might put Dum in bad if I do.”

“Nothing could put Dum in bad I am sure but perhaps you had better wait, honey.”

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I kissed her tenderly and with a happy sigh dear old Dee turned over and went to sleep. Not even her own engagement could keep Dee awake for any length of time when her head once touched the pillow.

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CHAPTER XXV. CONFESSIONS.

No Art League for Dum the next morning and no lectures at college for Dee and me! We were up bright and early to get our apartment in order for early visitors. Such a turning around and stirring up of long laid dust was never seen. By eight o'clock it was swept and garnished and I ran out on the street to buy a bunch of spring flowers from a passing cart. I had not slept much the night before but who wants to do such a prosaic thing as sleep? Dee seemed to, but Dee was a sleepy head.

Who should come swinging down the sidewalk but Zebedee, looking as gay as a lark and as fresh as the morning? I've always been so glad I fell in love with such a nice clean man. It might have been some wretch, bearded like a pard, whatever that is, who chewed tobacco and took baths only when absolutely needed. I don't fancy I fell in love with Mr. Jeffrey Tucker just because he was so clean and I believe I would have loved him even if he had been dirty but I can't tell. Cleanliness always seemed to be a part of him just as youth was. I could no more conceive of his being dirty than I could of his getting old.

He came along just in time as the old man who was selling the flowers could not change the five-dollar bill we had borrowed from Belle Tompkins. One bunch would not satisfy the lavish Zebedee but he must get one for Dum and one for Dee and one for me.

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"And one for our happiness, sweetheart," he whispered and the old flower man looked up and grinned and Zebedee overpaid him in the exuberance of his joy.

"Can't you tell me a better good morning?" he begged as we started up the first flight of steps.

I looked warily at Grandison's door but the sound of his typewriter was stilled and a gentle wheezing noise gave me to know that the poet slept. I complied. Who could deny such a lover as Zebedee.

The girls were shy and a little stiff with their father at first. It was no easy matter to confess to him that all of their talk of living only for him and keeping house for him and looking after him in his old age was nothing but flim-flam.

They finally came out with the truth, first Dum and then Dee. I wanted to leave the room but they held on to me.

"I wanted to tell you, but I just couldn't write it," declared Dum. "You mustn't blame Rex, though."

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“I don’t blame anybody,” said their father rather meekly.

“Stephen and I only just found it out,” was Dee’s shy contribution to this confessional. “He is going to France so soon that we just had to get it settled before he went.”

“You don’t mean married?”

“No, just promised to be.”

“That’s the way with Rex and me.”

“And now my dear Tweedles, I’ve got something to confess too.” Zebedee drew the girls down on the sofa by him.

“Oh, Zebedee, not Mabel Binks!”

“You crazy galoots! I should say not! What do you take me for?”

“But you know you were awfully attentive.”

“Nonsense! I hated her from the beginning. This is someone you love at least you have always professed to love her and if you don’t love her you haven’t a ray of sense or a scrap of gratitude.”

“Well don’t rip us until we say we hate her,” cried Dum, who was weeping profusely.

“It is—” but Dee didn’t give him time to say who it was.

She caught me around the waist and hugged me until I almost broke in two pieces. “Why it is our Page!”

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“Really?” cried Dum. “Oh Page, you peach of a little stepmother!”

All of us then cried together. The Tuckers always cried but I reserved my tears for great occasions. This seemed to be one.

We then talked it all over. Mr. Tucker was to go to a training camp too and hoped to get on the other side for a few licks at the hated Huns. There were to be no weddings in the Tucker family until after the war.

In the meantime the Tucker twins were to go to Bracken with me and stay there until their father’s return. Zebedee had already seen my father and they had made the arrangements. Father had decided he was of more use where he was than any other place on the globe as the whole country was dependent on him for doctoring, but he felt he could undertake the care of my friends with impunity.

“It won’t be long, girls, before Rex and Stephen and I will come marching back with all kinds of commissions and medals

and scalps,” declared my ever sanguine and youthful lover.

“Zebedee, you never did tell us what you caught,” remembered Dee. “Page said you caught something but it wasn’t measles.”

“Why Mrs. Kent Brown and I caught two German spies on our way to New York. It is a most interesting story. She identified them by sketches she had made of them in another disguise and she also identified me by sketches she had made of you girls. I tell you she is a clever girl.”

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I would tell you all about how Judy and Zebedee got together on that train coming to New York and how they nabbed those spies but that is another story and this story is ended.

Tweedles and I are to go to Bracken and there await our soldier lovers. We are not going to loaf but will start a Red Cross chapter and work day and night, trying to be worthy of the men who are going off to fight for us and freedom.

God grant the war will soon be over and that we shall be spared the great sorrow of losing our sweethearts, a sorrow that may come to us as well as to many others.

Did my young readers know when they started out on these adventures with me following the Tucker Twins through all of their pranks that I was finally to end up as their stepmother? I am sure I did not know it myself.

THE END.

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- Silently corrected several palpable typos in spelling and punctuation; retained understandable but nonstandard spellings.
- Added a list of the books in the series to the title page
- Left the original copyright notice unchanged, although the book is public domain in the U.S. and Canada.
- Left the precious word “stentorously” unchanged for those who'd like to ponder whether it should have been “stentoriously” or “stertorously” or is meant to suggest both.
- Left the expression “on whom his mantel should descend” unchanged for the sake of the striking image.
- Left the expression “welding an iron spoon” for the shock effect in a culinary context.

[The end of *In New York with the Tucker Twins* by Emma Speed Sampson]