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BETTY LEE, SOPHOMORE

By

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BETTY LEE, SOPHOMORE

CHAPTER I—"GYPSY"

"Why, Kathryn, I think you're awfully pretty!" Betty Lee exclaimed in some surprise. "And I'm not saying that just to console you, either. Why, the idea!"

"Well, Betty, you needn't go that far. I don't have to be pretty to be happy, you know, but it did hurt to have her tell me that Peggy said it."

"In the first place, Kathryn, I don't believe Peggy ever said it. You know what people say goes with their characters. And Peggy isn't like that."

"N-no," replied Kathryn, doubtfully. "Peggy has always seemed to like me."

"I think that it was just a hateful twisting of something Peggy did say, or maybe it was just made up. What sort of a girl is this Mathilde Finn anyway? And how is it that I haven't met her if she goes to Lyon High?"

"Oh, she was out last year, at a private school, but she is coming back. They have plenty of money and Mathilde thinks that she is everybody, you know. She was abroad this summer and was somewhere with Peggy last week. They came back earlier than they intended. Somebody was sick. The girls used to call her 'Finny' and I imagine that she will hear the same nickname this year, though she hates it."

Betty laughed. "If she only knew it, she's given you a pretty nice nickname at that. Why shouldn't you like to be called Gypsy? Why, Kathryn, I know a perfectly darling girl, only a grown-up one, that everybody calls Gypsy; and she likes it and signs her letters Gypsy!"

Kathryn shook her head. "To be told that I looked like a horrid old gypsy!"

“You couldn’t look horrid if you tried, Kitten. I’ve seen you this summer in your worst old clothes, haven’t I now?”

“You certainly have,” laughed Kathryn, her black eyes sparkling and her vivid face all alive amusement at the thought of some of the performances in which she and Betty had taken part.

“And do you remember that week when Cousin Lil was here and you did dress up as a gypsy in your attic?”

Kathryn nodded.

“I always meant to tell you that you made the prettiest gypsy in the world, the nice, romantic Romany kind, you know, with a handsome lover and everything as spuzzy as gypsies could have.”

“You’re the kind of a friend to have, Betty Lee,” laughingly Kathryn remarked; “but I always wanted to have golden hair, like yours, and be a goddess-like creature, all pink and white.”

“Isn’t it funny—and ever since I read a story about a beautiful creature with black, black hair and flashy dark eyes—I longed to look like that, so entrancingly fascinating!”

“Probably that is the way girls are, want to look like something else. Well, I don’t know that I’d mind being called Gypsy. It is a cute nickname. Oh, did you know that Carolyn is coming back today or tomorrow?”

“Gypsy”—and Betty looked wickedly at Kathryn as she used the term. “Gypsy,” Betty repeated, “I have had just one letter from Carolyn all this summer. I answered it and wrote pages; but not one word more have I had. If you have had a late letter I’m terribly jealous.”

“Good!” returned Kathryn. Then her face grew a little sober. “No, Betty, I’ve not heard from Carolyn either, except a card at the first of the summer. But I may as well confess one more secret. I’ve been telling you everything I know all summer, you know.”

At this point a slender brown hand and slim brown arm reached over after Betty's almost equally tanned head. "It's this and I'm ashamed of it, too. I've been worrying for fear when Carolyn comes we can't be such friends as we have been this summer."

"Why not, Kathryn Allen!" Betty squeezed the hand which had slipped inside of her grasp and sat a little closer on the step of the porch. "Is that why you said 'good,' when I said I'd be jealous?"

"Yes. Because I'm jealous myself."

"Jealousy is a very bad—um—quality."

"Yes; I know it. But I do hate to have you like Carolyn best!"

As Betty looked now seriously into Kathryn's face so near her, she saw that Kathryn was in earnest and that tears were springing into her eyes. "Why, Kitty!" she exclaimed softly. "I didn't know you liked me as much as that. I'm rather glad to know it, though it's very silly, 'cause I'm not worth it."

"Yes you are, Betty Lee. I'm not an old silly softy, Betty. You know that. I don't go around having crushes and all that. But I like to be with you. And when Carolyn comes—" Kathryn could not finish her sentence.

Betty's arm was around Kathryn now. "Listen, Kathryn—I'm glad you told me this, because if you hadn't and had gone on and felt bad, when there wasn't any need of it, it would have been horrid. But you know I do like Carolyn a lot, and will you feel bad if I show it? That would make it pretty hard for me, too. There isn't any 'best' about it. I never thought about it at all. You know how wonderful Carolyn and Peggy have been to me, ever since I came to the high school as a scared little freshman, almost a year ago."

"Yes; they're my friends, too."

"I'm not sure but I know you a little better than either of them now, after this queer summer and all our being together and having so much fun. Why, I shall look at you even in class when I think of something funny. And if you cast those gypsy eyes in my

direction with that look of yours, when I'm reciting Latin or Math or something——”

Betty stopped to laugh, and Kathryn gave an answering chuckle. Tension was lessening. The idea of Kathryn's feeling that way! Well, surprises were always happening.

“I like to have friends, Kathryn; and you have ever so many.”

“Yes, Betty, and I have sense enough to know that a girl like you will always have a great many, just like Carolyn.”

“I can't see that either of us have more than you have. But that isn't important, after all. Let me tell you what Mother said one time when the twins were fussing and Dick said that Mother liked Doris best. Mother pretty nearly said that there wasn't any best about it. She said that she loved all her children to pieces, whatever they did; that each child had his own place in her heart, and that she didn't even love them all together in a lump, just separately and a great deal. No child could take the place of another and she couldn't even be happy in heaven unless we all were along!”

“Your mother must be a dear. Well, I know she is, from what I saw of her last year. Mother says that she wants to know her better, judging from what she has seen of you this summer.”

“Why, how nice! Gypsy, you'll spoil me.”

“No I won't. You're unspoilable! But I'd like to be friends with you forever. Honestly, Betty, I'm not going to be crabby about your being with Carolyn, or Peggy, or anybody.”

“It wouldn't be like you, Kathryn; and let's make a sure-bond of friendship, to tell each other things the way we have this summer. And you can count on me, Kathryn, not to say mean things about you; so if Mathilde or anybody says things, please come straight to me about it, will you?”

“Yes, I will, but I couldn't believe that you could say mean things; you don't say them about anybody.”

“Oh, dear, I’m afraid I do criticize sometimes!”

“I never heard you say a mean thing—so live up to what I think of you, Betty Lee!” Kathryn was grinning at Betty now.

“I’ll try to,” laughed Betty. “It’s good of you to think I’m nice. Wait till I bring you another piece of fudge.” Betty dashed into the house, to return with the fudge pan, which they placed between them. That fudge was good. It was in just the right stage, a little soft, but firm enough to hold in pieces. It certainly did melt in one’s mouth.

“Is the back door locked?” asked Kathryn.

“Yes, indeedy. We must go in pretty soon, for Father will be driving out early. He said he was going to take us to a chicken dinner at Rockmont, a real country dinner. I hope they’ll have corn on the cob!”

“Yum-yum!”

“Oh, I’m so happy over your spending this week with me, Kathryn, and I think it so wonderful of your mother to let you do it!”

This was toward the close of Betty Lee’s odd, but interesting summer, after her freshman year in Lyon High. The summer months had been very hot at times, but the city was still new to Betty, with much left to be seen and all its summer forms of entertainment to be investigated. As she had written more than once to her mother, “I’d rather be here than anywhere, Mother. You needn’t feel sorry for me. It’s absolutely nothing to look after the house, and Father takes me out to dinner so often that he will be bankrupt, I’m afraid.”

It had been the Lee custom since “time immemorial,” as Betty had told Kathryn Allen, for Mrs. Lee to take the children to her mother’s for most of the summer. There, at “Grandma’s,” in the country, they had become acquainted with all the pleasure and some of the lighter work, indeed, that the big farm afforded.

But this year Grandma was not so well. The first plan had been for Dick to accompany his mother and small Amy Lou, for Dick was to “work,” at least to have certain duties, in looking after the stock, particularly the horses, of which he was especially fond, and the chickens, for this branch of farm life had been developed into quite a plant.

Betty was to “keep house for Papa,” and Doris was to be with her part of the time, at least. But this arrangement did not work well. Doris was disappointed and not very sweet about it. She resented Betty’s authority, yet was too young to have as much judgment as Betty. Accordingly, Doris was bundled off to the farm by her father and Mrs. Lee’s worries over Betty’s being alone through so much of the day commenced. This was when Kathryn began to come over so often, spending whole days with Betty. To be sure, there were other people in the house, the two who lived in the upper part of the house. But sometimes Mr. Lee was delayed, or there would be some evening conference, which made the safe disposition of Betty necessary to be considered; and Betty began to have visitors.

She always declared that her real knowledge of the art of cooking began the summer she “kept house for Father,” and had, “one after another,” her “sisters and her cousins and her aunts” come to visit her. “I couldn’t let them do all the cooking, could I? And we had three meals a day. My, it was good when Father took us out for dinner!”

But the “sisters and cousins and aunts” amounted to only one young cousin, Lilian Lee, bright girl of about seventeen years, and an older one, related to her mother. She enjoyed being escorted around the city by Betty, who added to her own knowledge at the same time. The only drawback during the three weeks of this visit was that Cousin Eunice was so afraid of burglars. Betty privately informed her father that she “most smothered” every night, because her cousin was afraid to have the windows up enough.

Then there was one unexpected guest whom Betty enjoyed, a former school chum of her mother's with her daughter, a girl about Betty's age. They were motoring through and expected to find Mrs. Lee at home. But they were persuaded to stay a few days when it was found that Mr. Lee was obliged to make a trip away. Their coming was "providential," Betty declared.

So the summer had flown by on wings, with a little practicing on the precious violin, much less than anticipated, but with much coming and going, rides about the city, visits to the little resorts near by and several excursions on the river boats. It was characteristic of Betty, who usually forgot the unpleasant features, that she should write to her mother of "one continuous picnic," which she declared the summer to have furnished. "Of course," she added, "there have been some funny times, and I burnt up toast and scorched some soup, and things like that, but it's all been very exciting!"

Mrs. Lee thought that very likely some of it had been too exciting to be safe; but she did not spoil Betty's morale by too many cautions, other than the general rules she had established before she left.

And now, while the girls talked of intimate matters in the late afternoon on the Lee porch, here came a big car that stopped before the house and someone leaned out, waving excitedly.

CHAPTER II—CAROLYN ARRIVES

“Carolyn!” exclaimed Betty and Kathryn in one breath. Both girls jumped up and ran toward the pavement where Carolyn, trim and pretty, and still in her traveling suit, was lightly and quickly leaving the car, looking back for a word or two with its occupants and then, smilingly, coming to meet her two friends.

“Am I still on your list of friends?” she asked, holding Betty off after an embrace. “Kathryn, I don’t deserve to have such a nice welcome and I know it! Will you girls ever forgive me for not writing?”

It was the old Carolyn. My, but she was sweet. Betty knew why, “all over again,” as she said to herself—why she loved Carolyn Gwynne.

“Do you have to do anything for ten minutes or so?” continued Carolyn, walking between the girls to the porch and being escorted, not to the steps, but to a hanging swing in which they all could sit.

“Not a thing,” Betty assured her, “and for more than ten minutes, I hope, if you are mentioning how long you can stay.”

“They’ll be back for me,” said Carolyn. “We came most of the way by train, but were met, and I asked to drive around this way in case I should see anything of Betty, to make my peace with her—and here are both of you. I’m positively afraid to meet Peggy Pollard. I owe her two letters, and I don’t owe you girls but one! And oh, I’ve the grandest plan for next summer. Positively, you’ve both got to begin planning now to come to our camp with me. Even if I didn’t write, I thought of you—every time I went in swimming, Betty—or almost, to be real truthful—I could see you in your bathing suit, cutting the ‘dashing waves’ or rolling in the sand with me.”

“I’d love ‘rolling in the sand’ with you, Carolyn,” laughed Betty, “but I’ve had a perfectly delicious summer at home. I am, of

course, very much offended at you for not having answered my letter; but I'm afraid I can't keep it up because there's so much to talk about. Kathryn, can you stay mad at Carolyn?"

"Never could," smiled Kathryn. "Carolyn gets away with a lot of things she forgets because she is so nice about remembering some more important things."

"There!" exclaimed Carolyn. "You're a friend worth having, Kathryn!" And Carolyn wondered at the affectionate glance, full of meaning, that Betty gave Kathryn. It was generous of Kathryn to praise Carolyn, in view of her acknowledged bit of jealousy.

"Betty, I laughed and laughed over that letter. It was too clever for words. And the funny things that happened to you! How do people ever keep house and remember all the things that they have to be careful about? I suppose it's nothing unusual to have somebody at the back door, a ring at the front door, the ice man coming and all while a body is talking at the telephone and trying to get an important message, but you certainly made it funny. 'Hello, hello—yes, Father—I don't quite get that—where did you say to meet you?—mercy, there is the ice man and somebody else is knocking, too and the door-bell is ringing—what'll I do?—you can't hold the 'phone?'—something like that, Kathryn. And you must have been scared the time you forgot to keep the screen door fastened and that agent walked right in."

"Yes," laughed Betty. "I thought he was taking a gun from his pocket and I backed toward the front room door, ready to run, while he fixed me with his awful eye, and then asked me if I wanted to buy whatever he had. I didn't even look at it. I gasped out, 'No, sir,' and then I heard what I had on the gas stove boiling over and knew it would put out the gas; so I turned and fled, and when I came back the man was gone and nothing was missing!"

"How soon can you girls come out? I'll be unpacking tomorrow and the house will be upset while things are getting back into shape

again, but the day after that—oh, have you heard about Louise Madison, and Ted Dorrance?”

Carolyn’s manner was so impressive as she asked this question that Betty’s heart gave a little leap. What could be the matter! An accident?

“What about them?” asked Kathryn, “married?”

“Not a bit of it. Just the other way. My sister heard all about it. Somebody wrote to her from the same summer resort where the Dorrances and the Madisons happened to be together. Somebody that goes to the University was there, too, and paid a lot of attention to Louise; and she liked it—and him, of course—and you may imagine what Ted thought about it. So all at once Ted left and went somewhere else, with some boys from here, and the girl that wrote to sister claims that Louise is engaged to the other man, though we don’t believe it. Louise is only a freshman in college!”

“You never can tell, Carolyn,” wisely returned Kathryn. “Louise is sort of flirty anyhow. And, for that matter, Ted is pretty nice to all the girls, only since he has been taking Louise around there’s been nobody else.”

“It seems too bad,” remarked Betty, pondering. “They are both so nice. I thought it so romantic last year.”

“I never thought it could last,” said Carolyn, “from what my sister said then. You see, Louise is older than Ted and a year ahead of him in school; and it doesn’t stand to reason that when she is with all these University people next year, in the same classes, and the boys liking Louise the way they always do—that Ted would have much of a chance.”

“But Ted is a very unusual boy,” Betty insisted.

“Ted is one of those boys that everybody likes,” Carolyn assented. “Well, we’ll let him look after himself. Kathryn, did you hear that Finny is coming back to join her more democratic sisters in the sophomore class?”

“Yes. I was just telling Betty about her. Do you know why she decided to come back to high school?”

“I wouldn’t say anything about it except to you two and Peggy, because it wouldn’t be fair to Mathilde not to let her have a chance to make her own reputation in high school; but I’m pretty sure, from all the really mean things I heard said about her, that even ‘discounting’ the truth of some of them, as the person that repeated the most said to me, the school where she was didn’t exactly appreciate her. Besides, she failed in several branches and had to make up what she could this summer. But she’ll be a sophomore all right. Now, please don’t tell a word of this. I wouldn’t want it to come from me, or be mean to Mathilde, though I’m going very slowly in that direction!”

This from kind Carolyn was a good deal, as Betty knew. Still, in the excitement of the return and news telling, girls were likely to say too much.

“We’ll say nothing,” replied Kathryn. “At least I can promise for myself, and you know Betty.”

“Oh, how did violin practice go, Betty? You didn’t say a word about it in your letter. It didn’t ‘harmonize,’ to be very musical in my speech—with washing dishes and cooking and having company did it?”

“Not so very well, Carolyn, but I really did a little bit every day and I played for Father and he liked it. He would, you know, because I was doing it, though I will say that Father couldn’t stand a discord or a rasping bow. Jazz makes him nearly crazy when the discord lasts too long, you know. He took Cousin Lil and me to a movie and got up and left, asking me if I’d mind first. I whispered that he could stop his ears while the jazz lasted, but he shook his head; and when we got outside there was Father waiting to take us into where we could get a sundae. He said he had accomplished several errands.”

“Think you will get into the orchestra?”

“That is another thing. I did want to, you know. But I found out that I couldn’t be a real member until I was a junior, unless I was a genius or something so wonderful that they had to have me. I was told that this summer, so my energy lagged in the hot weather. Father said he was sorry because I ‘lacked an incentive,’ but I don’t know. I like violin anyhow, and maybe it’s just as well not to feel hurried and lose all your dreams.”

“Now isn’t that like you, Betty! That’s one reason I like you,” Carolyn declared, “because you do have ‘dreams.’”

Carolyn looked at Kathryn as if for confirmation of her speech and Kathryn nodded with a wide smile.

“I’m very practical, though, girls. I’m not sure that having dreams is altogether good, either.”

“First you say one thing and then you say another,” Kathryn accused her. “It’s as bad as saying it the way Mr. Simcox answers our questions: ‘Well, yes; and no!’”

Kathryn had so nearly presented their teacher’s voice and intonation that Carolyn and Betty answered with giggles. But Kathryn went on to say, with real seriousness underlying her fun, “What we should say about Betty is that she is hitching her wagon to a star and it makes everybody else want to hitch up, too.”

“‘Inspiration,’ then,” said Carolyn. “What’ll I hitch up with? I couldn’t play a violin.”

“Aspiration,” chuckled Betty. “Pick out your brightest dream, ‘Caro,’ and put on the harness!”

“She calls me ‘Caro.’ What kind of syrup do you like best, Betty?”

“Scuse me, Carolyn. I felt affectionate and had to make up a nickname.”

“You are excused. Really, we might have made some little names of our own to call each other by. Wouldn’t it be fun?”

Betty looked mischievously at Kathryn. “We were talking of nicknames this afternoon, Kathryn and I.”

“Betty!”

Carolyn looked from one to another. “You have some secret. That is mean, to leave out your old and tried friend Carolyn.”

“Oh, it wasn’t anything, Carolyn, only I’m joking Kathryn about a nickname she doesn’t like.”

“I’m not so sure now but I do like it,” Kathryn replied, taking up Betty’s half explanation. “Tell Carolyn if you want to.”

“Not all of it?”

“Yes, what Peggy is supposed to have said.”

Upon this permission from Kathryn, Betty explained that a speech of Peggy’s had been repeated by Mathilde to Kathryn and how the gypsy reference had been interpreted. “Do you think that Peggy Pollard would be likely to say anything unkind about Kathryn?” Betty asked in concluding.

“I can’t imagine it. Kathryn, notice how Peggy acts when you see her and if I were you I’d feel around with some reference to something of the sort. I’ll wager you’ll find Peggy as ignorant as can be of even what you mean. You’ll find out that Peggy Pollard is all right. And by the way, I hear that they are having little sororities in spite of the rules. If it is all right, and the authorities allow it, why not? There’s one in our class started! The question is who started it, and why, and how, and if so, can we make it, and do we want to make it——”

Carolyn was obliged to stop for breath.

“Hum,” said Kathryn. “Yes, I’ve heard about it, but I didn’t tell Betty. I heard Betty’s father say that he was glad there weren’t any sororities in high school!”

“Poor Mr. Lee!” exclaimed Carolyn. “Betty, do you know what you’re going in for this year—swimming, I suppose?”

“Oh, yes. But no, I haven’t thought about it. I took everything with such seriousness last year; but if I want to, I’ll sign up for a number of things this year. They don’t meet often, and you can always stop if you can’t keep on, and I’d love to be on some team, if there’d be no trouble about it.”

“There’s always trouble about making a team. There are too many that want to be on it.”

“But you can try out, and if you stand better than somebody else, you get it and she doesn’t. That oughtn’t to make trouble.”

“Why don’t you try out for the hockey team in the fall and the basketball in the winter?”

“Perhaps I will. Wait till the time comes. Oh, there’s your car, Carolyn. What a shame!”

“Yes, and I haven’t made a date with you at all.”

“There’s always the telephone,” Betty reminded her. “It was lovely of you to stop, Carolyn. See you soon. Come back as soon as you can. ’Bye!”

CHAPTER III—THE GREAT SURPRISE

Betty Lee had not forgotten that, in the nature of a reward, she was to have a surprise at the end of the summer; but nothing had been said about it by her father and Betty felt a delicacy about reminding him of it. Now only two weeks remained before the opening of school. Betty was eager to begin, strange as it may seem; but boys and girls, even those not particularly keen about their studies, do look forward to the companionship, the gay plans, the activities that school brings them.

One week more would bring the twins, Dick and Doris, little Amy Lou and, best of all, Mother! Perhaps the surprise would not occur until the family was together again. Poor Daddy! How hard he had been working—not even a chance to drive up to the farm over a week-end; for it was a long drive, and it was not thought best to try it while Grandmother was so miserable and nervous. Accordingly, everybody tried to make the best of the separation, Dick had written, “we can hoop (whoop) and holler outdoors, but believe me we’re quiet in the house. Even Amy Lou has stopped whining.”

Then, on Sunday morning, when Betty and her father were driving home from church, he asked her, “Are your clothes in proper shape for a trip to New York with me tomorrow?”

Mr. Lee looked a little guilty, for it had been a letter from his wife that had reminded him of the comparative importance of clothes, and he had not thought about it.

“Why—Father! Do you mean it?” cried Betty, who sat beside her father and looked at his smiling face, turned straight ahead to watch traffic, for many machines were whirling along at the close of the various church services.

“Oh, I know! Is that the surprise?”

Mr. Lee nodded assent. “I meant to tell you before, but we had so much doing yesterday that I forgot it—well, to tell the truth,

I was not sure that I could get away at all. There was some talk of sending another man. But Murchison thought that I'd had more experience with this sort of a job; and moreover, he wants me to meet his sister and a niece who has been at school in Switzerland."

"Oh!" softly cried Betty again. "Murchison" was the big man in the business, the man who had offered her father the opportunity in the company. Although Betty had visited the office occasionally, she had never seen the "big bug," as Dick called him.

There was silence for a little. Cars passed and Mr. Lee stopped once to pick up a man he knew and take him on to his residence. "Missed you coming out," said Mr. Lee, and the two men talked while Betty tried to digest the great news. Betty had never been to New York. She had never spent a night on the train. It would be glorious! Of course she had clothes ready. Oh, that was what Mother meant when she told Betty always to have her suit and accompanying garments ready. At the time, Betty had thought that her mother feared a call of everybody to the farm, if Grandma continued to "go down." Dear me, she had had such a good time, as things had turned out, with the girls staying with her, or other company, that she didn't need any other reward. Still, Betty knew that she had worked hard at times. Even with the woman who came occasionally to clean, things would get "so messy," though Betty was learning now not to make work for herself by carelessness. She was glad that she had planned a nice Sunday dinner for the two of them at home today. And Father had said, "Do not invite anybody for this week, Betty." This was what he had in mind, and would not tell her for fear of some disappointment. That was it, she knew, more than his "forgetting."

"Oh, Father, I'm so excited," she exclaimed, as they left the car in front of the house, ready for a drive, if they should feel like it. "I'm all mixed up and you'll have to watch me or I'll burn up the dinner or something!"

"I thought that you'd like the plan, Betty; but I was a little afraid that something would happen to upset it. It was understood long

ago that I was to go to New York in the fall. This meeting the countess is a new proposition, however. Do you think we are equal to it?"

"The Countess!"

"Yes; at least I think it is a countess. I will have her name in full, however, before we go to the ship after her."

Mr. Lee's eyes were twinkling, and Betty, after one look at him began to laugh. "You're breaking it to me by degrees, aren't you? Well, I guess I can stand it. I'm awfully hungry right now, aren't you? Seems to me the sermon was longer than usual. Wait till I put on the potatoes and then please tell me everything!"

"I will, child, and I'll not tease you a bit. I'll help you with the dinner. Didn't you say you had a 'T-bone' steak for the two of us? Just watch me broil that steak!"

"Oh, goody! We'll have a lot of fun. I'm going to heat some canned asparagus tips for our other veg'table, and throw together a fruit salad, on head lettuce, and I bought a grand pie at the exchange yesterday. Will that be enough?"

"Indeed it will, and I have the dearest little cook in three counties. I presume you'll have bread and butter, however; and suppose we have an iced drink instead of coffee."

"Oh, yes, by all means. You fix the ice, Daddy, and I'll squeeze about two oranges and two lemons, I think—right away, so it'll be cold!"

A happy girl worked with a capable father, who took off his coat, tied an apron around his waist and had as much fun as Betty, especially when the time came to cook the steak. Appetite did not lack when dinner was ready and before there was any thought of dish washing, Mr. Lee sent Betty to hunt up her over-night bag and looked up his own grip. "Put in a dress that you can wear to dinner in a hotel, Betty," said he, "and don't forget the fixings."

“Oh, Daddy, my chiffon dress won’t muss a bit and I mustn’t forget my shoes that go with it!”

Betty forgot all of her duties as a housekeeper, as she laid out on the bed the array of what she wanted to take with her to New York—New York! “How long are we going to stay, Father?” she called from her bedroom.

“Just two or three days—have to be back to meet Mother and the children, you know.”

“How long does it take to get there?”

“About a night and half a day,” replied Mr. Lee, who was preparing another small surprise for Betty. She was so absorbed that she did not realize how time flew until she ran back into the dining room and found that her father had cleared the table and was washing the last dish.

“How awful! Father, I’m just as sorry as I can be! I never saw you washing dishes before!”

“I have, daughter, in dire emergencies, but this time it was for fun. Are all the gew-gaws, or doo-dads, ready?”

“I’ve got everything I ought to have, I think, ’cept washing out some silk stockings. Do you think it would be wicked if I’d do it tonight?”

“That is, indeed, a serious matter,” grinned Mr. Lee, looking like Dick. “But since it is my fault and not yours, and they will have to get dry to be packed, we might consider it. And matters of necessity are different, though we’d not make a point of saving our stockings to be washed on the Sabbath, would we?”

“Oh, Father, you are just killing! What time tomorrow do we start?”

“Not until night. We get right on the sleeper and go to bed.”

“Hurrah. Then I’ve plenty of time.”

“And the muted question can be put off for decision until some other time?”

“Yes. Mother says if we begin to do weekday things on Sunday, we’re likely to keep on.”

“Your mother is always right, and the oldest daughter has to be an example.”

“I never can tell when you are joking and when you aren’t! I’m no example, Father! Oh, I’m just almost crazy with delight. Wait till I call up Kathryn and Carolyn and Peggy to tell them what the surprise was! And, oh, I have to leave the house in order!”

In such a fashion the great surprise was inaugurated. A very demure and well-mannered young girl of nearly sixteen years accompanied a dignified but wide-awake business man to the train Monday night. Betty was concerned with the mysteries of a berth in a sleeping car and was glad of her father’s clear directions. She would not for “worlds” appear ignorant of what to do, though she might well be excused for not knowing. But Betty was sensitive, quick to learn what was proper and polite, and a little too proud not to be unduly mortified at any mistake.

At the station Mr. Murchison met them, talking for a little with Mr. Lee about business which Betty did not understand, and in which she was only slightly interested. He had met Betty courteously but was preoccupied with plans with her father. As the train was called, however, he turned to Betty. “You are just about the age of my niece, I judge. Her mother is to make the experiment of placing my niece in the public schools. It may be that you will be in the same school. If so, I shall be glad to have her know you, for you can be of great help to her, doubtless. It is unfortunate that she does not want to come to America.”

“I shall be very glad if I can be of any service to your niece,” returned Betty, a bit stiffly, for Mr. Murchison’s keen eyes rather disconcerted her. Betty was not sure that she liked him “a bit.” But of course she had to, for her father’s sake. Who was that

foolish girl that didn't want to come to America? Of course Mr. Murchison's sister was one of those American girls who had married a titled foreigner. So her father had said. But Betty smiled at Mr. Murchison and prettily said her farewell.

How funny the Pullman looked, all green curtains already down, berths all made up. As it had suddenly turned cold, Betty's father asked the porter for extra blankets, showed Betty where to put her things and advised her to know which berth was hers when she came back from the dressing room. But Betty decided to mark hers in some way and finally tucked up the curtain in a certain fashion before she explored the dressing room. It was more private, she decided, to undress in her berth. Also, she would wear her silk kimona all night! It was cold enough.

For a long time Betty could not sleep, but finally Nature overcame unaccustomed nerves and she fell into a sound sleep, not to waken till her father called her. She decided that she liked traveling and would like to go into a "diner" often, to eat the sort of pancakes that were brought on in covered silver dishes, and to help her father decide what would make a good breakfast.

The scenery was interesting. It was new to pass through the different states. She would never forget it. And New York! Was this really Betty Lee, riding in a taxi up Broadway and along Fifth Avenue?

Owing to her father's different errands, which he accomplished by taxi for the most part, to expedite matters, Betty was taken to various parts of the city, even to the docks.

They crossed the Hudson on a ferry boat without getting out of their taxi. Birds flew about. Different kinds of crafts floated upon the river. A great liner was just entering a space between piers. "Will Mr. Murchison's sister come in on a boat like that?" asked Betty.

"Something like that," answered Mr. Lee. "How do you like this incidental sight-seeing?"

“Ever so much, especially since you bought me the map. I look it all up, and I’m glad to go over the same streets more than once, especially Fifth Avenue and Broadway. I know Madison Square Park and the City Hall Square already.”

Betty had one rather lonesome day at the hotel when her father could not let her accompany him, but after that he took her on regular sight-seeing trips, during which she saw more than most strangers because of her father’s familiarity with the city. She decided that she could find her way by herself, but her father preferred not to have her attempt any “solo flights,” he said.

Business was completed in comparatively short order. Mr. Lee sent telegrams to his firm; but then they were held, as Betty, at least, could not regret, by the non-arrival of the expected countess. Day by day the reports of the incoming ships were changed somewhat. There had been storms and fog. Sea traffic was held up, said Betty, and her father said that if the ships all came in safely they would do well. At the same time, he was rather restless. It did not look as if they would be able to carry out their plans. “Oh, what if we can’t get there before Mother?” Betty asked.

“In that case, I shall merely telegraph her. The key is with the people upstairs, you know. Your mother will understand. But I’d rather meet my own wife than any countess!”

“And I’ll be a day late at school, if the ship puts off coming in much longer! But Father, I can’t be sorry to have these great days in New York. What shall we do today?”

“We shall see. Wait till I telephone the steamship company at the pier again.”

Then came a telegram from home. A cablegram had been received stating that the countess and her daughter had sailed on a different ship from the one she had written her brother to meet. It was the Statendam, Holland-American line, due Saturday.

That settled it. Mother could not be met. Mr. Lee telegraphed to Mr. Murchison that he would meet the Statendam. To the farm and to the home, in case there was some delay in the country, word went that Mr. Lee and Betty were unavoidably detained in New York. Betty was rather worried about missing school Monday, as was most likely, but she enjoyed the excitement and the extra expeditions due to the delay. It was an ill wind that didn't blow anybody any good, she remarked. "Can we leave as soon as the ship comes?"

"That, Betty, is in the hands of a very uncertain woman, I judge," smiled Mr. Lee. "It will be necessary to do whatever Mr. Murchison himself would be obliged to do. I shall handle the matter as well as I can."

"Are you scared because she is a countess?"

"Scarcely. But be as polite and helpful as you can, Betty. Having you will make it all easier, I think. Privately, Betty, I gathered that Miss Murchison was very badly spoiled as a girl. People exist to do her pleasure. See?"

"And we pretend that we like it?"

"No—it is not necessary to pretend anything. We really want to help them, do we not?"

"Oh, yes; but I dee-spise being patronized."

"Of course. A true lady, however, does not show it—indeed, it is almost impossible to patronize a true lady."

"Hum. That is all very well in theory, my precious father, but—well, I suppose I'm not a true lady inside!"

The Statendam, due on Saturday, arrived on Sunday, and Betty with her father, was somewhat annoyed as they crossed on the ferry, to see the tall smoke stacks and funnels of the liner already at the pier. "Stars!" cried Betty. "Now we're late, and no knowing what has happened to the countess!"

CHAPTER IV—BETTY MEETS THE COUNTESS

“We shall not worry about being late, Betty. They have to get through customs first and it is doubtful if all the baggage is off the vessel as yet. It can not have been in long.”

Nevertheless Betty could see that her father was uneasy. The taxi lost no time in speeding from the ferry to the pier where the great ship stood. Such a coming and going of cars and buses, in and out of a great entrance! Other cars and taxies waited their turn outside. Their taxi found a place to stop and deliver its passengers, but Mr. Lee had to steer Betty carefully through the throng of people and cars.

Next came the art of finding their friends. Mr. Lee had cards which entitled them to enter customs. “My, I hope we find them!” said Betty for the third or fourth time. “And oh, how do you speak to a countess? Shall we call her ‘La Countessa’? or just Countess Coletti? And what is the daughter of a countess called—anything at all? Or could I call her ‘Signorina?’?” Betty had been reading an Italian story.

“I’m sure I don’t know, Betty, but it would be sensible, I think, to keep to English, especially as the countess is an American. I shall not get away from ‘Countess Coletti’ and perhaps we shall not have to address the daughter particularly. ‘Miss Coletti’ does sound like a funny combination, doesn’t it! Try out ‘la signorina’ if you like. I don’t know that we are of any special importance anyway.” They were climbing the stairs now and Betty’s father gave her arm a little squeeze as he spoke, looking laughingly down into her face.

“Yes, we are,” said Betty, “and we can learn how to do it properly!”

Fortunately the countess and her daughter had not yet finished with customs. When Mr. Lee and Betty found the proper place and stood looking about, they had little difficulty in selecting the two whom they thought were the countess and her daughter. “We ought to have arranged to wear a red rose or a white gardenia or

something,” said Betty. “But that is the countess, I’m sure. Look, she has a maid with a lot of little baggage, and everybody is doing things for her. Wait a minute, Daddy. She’s having an argument with the customs officer, I guess—isn’t she?”

Mr. Lee did wait. Though anxious to serve the lady, he did not care to sponsor her declaration in regard to duty payable to Uncle Sam, and it must be said that the countess looked perfectly able to take care of her own interests. But the affair seemed to be adjusted amicably. A great quantity of baggage, it seemed, was hastily examined, and as Mr. Lee saw that they would soon be ready for departure, he approached, with Betty.

“Is this the Countess Coletti?” he inquired politely, though by this time he had noted the name upon one of the trunks. “Your brother, Mr. Murchison——”

“Oh, did Lem send you to meet me?” vivaciously the countess interrupted, “That is good. I was just wondering if any one was here. Where’s Lem?”

Mr. Lee had had no opportunity to mention who he was, but he explained that her brother was not able to leave affairs and that he would make any arrangements for her and her daughter. “My name is Lee, Countess Coletti, and this is my daughter, Betty.”

“Oh, yes,” brightly answered the countess, “I am very happy to met you—and Miss Betty. This is my daughter Lucia, Mr. Lee—and Miss Lee. Now if we can arrange to have all this baggage sent to whatever station my brother said, and get us to a hotel for the night, I shall be very much obliged. I want to go right on through tomorrow; but Lucia is very much upset and so am I, for that matter. It was a horribly rough passage. This customs business is always so trying!”

“I am sorry to have been late,” said Mr. Lee, “but the hour told me over the telephone was much later.”

“Oh, yes. You never can tell. It wouldn’t have made any difference. They were very good about getting all my baggage off early, as I made quite a point of it. There were mobs on this boat, from first class down. Suppose we get out of here.”

“I have a taxi waiting, Madam,” said Mr. Lee, starting to escort the countess down to where his taxi driver had said he would be waiting inside. By this time it was very likely that he had been able to enter. Betty and a very unresponsive girl of about her own height and age followed. My, but the countess was pretty! And if she had any foreign airs they were laid aside for the present. But the daughter was cool, and though polite, most uninterested in the two people whom she had just met. “Poor thing,” thought Betty, “she is worn out and half sick; but I wish I’d had her chance of crossing the ocean, even if it was so rough.”

Both the countess and her daughter were quietly and suitably dressed for the occasion of leaving the ship. But oh, how evidently expensive everything they wore must have been. The maids were carrying two beautiful warm coats, which had obviously just been laid aside when the cold sea breezes were past and they were no longer necessary. “Send the maids and the personal baggage in a separate taxi, please,” directed the countess. “We want to be alone.”

Whether that was a hint for Mr. Lee and Betty not to accompany them or not, Mr. Lee did not know, but as he had had no least intention to accompany them, it did not matter. He had expected, however, that the maids might be wanted.

Pleasantly he assisted the two ladies into the taxi, one chosen for its superior appearance, and directed the driver to the hotel, the hotel selected by Mr. Murchison, who requested that Mr. Lee and Betty stay at the same one. It was not hard to find a second taxi for the maids, from the numbers of empty taxis whose drivers were anxious for remunerative passengers.

“Now, Betty,” said Mr. Lee, “for the baggage. You stay in one spot, right here, where I can find you, while I see about having that lot sent to the station. Let us hope that nothing is missed! But the countess told me the number of pieces, all marked with her name, she said.”

“Oh, please let me come with you, Father! It’s scary here, and it’s such fun to go around. I see where Lu-chee-a and I become intimate friends, don’t you?”

Mr. Lee laughed. “The poor child has been seasick,” he replied. “But I fancy that she has been a very unwilling migrant this time. She looked not only sick but cross.”

“Did you notice it, too? But she was real polite to you, Father, and decent to me. She isn’t as good-looking as her mother. I don’t blame Count Coletti for falling in love with her. Probably Lucia looks like her father.”

“He is a very handsome man, I understand,” returned Mr. Lee. “I thought Lucia Coletti rather attractive.”

“Yes, but not as much so as her mother. Still, it may be just her disposition that was sticking out tonight!”

“Why, Betty! That isn’t like you.”

“I guess I’m tired and cross, too. I will wait for you, right here by the stairs.”

Betty had quite a wait of it, but at last her father appeared and they took a taxi back to the hotel. There her father inquired if the countess, daughter and maids had arrived and were occupying the suite reserved for them. They had arrived, found everything to their satisfaction, and dinner had been sent up to them.

Betty thought that a little more respect for her father was in the voice of the man at the desk since the arrival of the countess, for whose comfort Mr. Lee appeared to be responsible. Glad that everything had gone successfully for her father, Betty took the elevator to her room to dress for dinner at the hotel. They did not

always dine there, but would tonight, her father said. It seemed a pity to “waste” their last night in New York by staying in the hotel, but Mr. Lee had to arrange for Pullman reservations as well as he could at the last minute, for he had not had the slightest notion whether the countess would want to stay several days in New York—or a month—so far as he knew, or whether she would want to go on home, to her people. He thought, however, that very likely the decision would be for home. Mr. Murchison had not intimated any trouble, but Mr. Lee very strongly suspected that there was some likelihood of a disagreement between the countess and her husband and a possible separation. This he did not express to Betty.

Fortunately Mr. Lee had no trouble in obtaining reservations on the train whose time of leaving and of arrival seemed most suitable. A drawing room for the countess and her daughter, berths for the maids, and berths for himself and Betty were soon engaged by telephone, and on Monday morning Mr. Lee went to the station to see that everything was straight.

This was all very interesting to Betty, whose ideas of how to manage these matters had been very hazy. The reservation for Mr. Lee and Betty were in another car, which was just as well, Betty thought, though if the younger countess—that is, if she is one, thought Betty—had been friendly, it would have been fun to talk with her about her school in Switzerland and what she studied and all.

The trip home, however, proved more interesting than Betty anticipated. Perhaps Countess Coletti had suggested to her daughter that she ought to pay a little attention to Betty, who did not see either of them on Monday until the uniformed and meticulous “door-keeper” of the hotel, as Betty called him, put them all into their separate taxis for the station. Lucia favored Betty with a smile, which Betty returned; and when they waited for the train to be called, Lucia asked Betty to be sure to come for a

visit with her on the way. "It will be so stupid this afternoon," said Lucia. "I'm too tired to read."

Betty promised, but she waited until she thought Lucia might have reached the state of being bored. So far as Betty was concerned, there was nothing to tire her, and the scenery was too interesting; guessing what the rivers were, asking her father, noting the stops and admiring the suburbs of Philadelphia in particular, furnished her with considerable entertainment. "I think Pennsylvania is the loveliest yet," she confided to her father. "Let's move to Philadelphia some time!"

"Haven't you had enough of a move already?" asked Mr. Lee.

"I think I like adventure, Father," brightly answered Betty.

"I suppose so," rather wearily her father remarked. "But remember, my lass, that there is a certain safety in being located. Did you say that the 'younger countess' asked you to call? I think I should do it, Betty."

"All right, I will. How do I get there?"

"Their car is only one or two in front of ours. Shall I take you?"

"Mercy, no! I can get there after skipping through so many to get to the dining car on the way to New York. Your daughter considers herself quite a traveler by this time."

So Betty, rather dreading the coming interview, departed to be pleasantly surprised. She had no trouble in finding her new acquaintances and discovered that they were really quite interested in finding out all Betty could tell them about school.

"I am going to hate it," said Lucia, who spoke with a decided Italian accent, but used many Americanisms, probably caught from her mother. "But just the same, if I have to, I have to; and will you help me when I come out to the school the first time?"

"Certainly I will. But are you sure that you will come to Lyon High?"

“Oh, that can be arranged,” carelessly returned Lucia, who was used to having things “arranged” for her. “I’ve heard so much about that high school and if I have to go, I want to go there. There were some American girls in my school in Lausanne, so I know a little bit about how they do. Do you like it?”

“Very much. I’d love to hear you tell about the school in Switzerland, though.”

Lucia was in a favorable mood. For the next hour she and Betty talked, while Betty heard about life in foreign countries and what Lucia had studied in her different schools there. She was advanced in some lines, Betty found, behind in others, but Betty told her that it all sounded as if she would be a sophomore. “Will you use any title?” Betty rather timidly asked, for she thought that if Lucia was a “countess or something” herself, it would not go so well in school.

Countess Coletti heard the question and replied herself. “Lucia is going to try democracy, Betty Lee. She will be called Lucia Coletti or Miss Coletti everywhere. I want her to have a little American training. To be sure, I was taught in private schools myself, and Lucia may in time return to them. But not until she has done some good work in high school.”

What was back of Countess Coletti’s determined tones Betty did not know. But there was some strong feeling there; that was certain.

Lucia did not speak of her father, but when Betty said that it was all fascinating to hear about and asked her where her real home had been, Lucia after a slight hesitation, waxed almost enthusiastic over an Italian villa where she “loved to live” best. Every now and then Lucia would use an Italian expression, which Betty thought very impressive, though she could not help thinking of some less fortunate Italian girls in school and she wondered how Lucia would treat them, in case she were thrown into classes with them.

But here came Father with the suggestion that it was an appropriate time to go for dinner. Accordingly, he escorted the countess through the cars, while Betty and Lucia followed. Betty, who always declared that she thought of too many funny things, wondered about the maids. But when they were all established at a table, with an obsequious waiter taking the order from the countess first, Betty saw the two maids at an inconspicuous table some distance from them. Probably her father had arranged it.

Then they had a most “scrumptious” meal, by Betty’s report at home. She gave her father an inquiring glance before she decided upon her own order and he smiled upon her; suggesting that she order a good meal, for the dining car would be taken off and their breakfast would be delayed. “We shall probably, all of us, breakfast at home. Mr. Murchison will meet the countess, Betty, and we shall take a taxi straight home.”

So Betty grasped the fact that her father wasn’t “caring for expenses,” as the girls were accustomed to express such recklessness, and modeled her own order after Lucia’s. Comfortably filled, she watched her father pay the bill and leave what seemed to her an enormous tip for the waiter. But sakes alive, weren’t they dining with a countess?

CHAPTER V—A REAL SOPHOMORE AT LAST

“Hello, Betty Lee! Where in the world have you been?”

Betty was just coming from the office where she had been “signing up” for her sophomore year’s work and obtaining her schedule of studies, her home room assignment and various points of information. She was very much interested in seeing to what teachers she would recite, but looked up smiling at the boy who addressed her. Classes were passing for the fifth period, the one before lunch, she supposed.

It was Tuesday, but Betty had not been able to get to school till after the taxi ride home with her father, the exciting reunion of the family, the good breakfast and many little delays. Dick and Doris had gone to school on time; but Betty tarried with her mother and could scarcely stop talking long enough to scrub up and dress suitably for school.

“Why, Chauncey Allen, howdy! I haven’t seen you all summer! Where’s Kathryn?”

“Wondering why you didn’t show up at school yesterday, I imagine. We heard nothing else last night at dinner.”

“Mother could have told if she’d telephoned. We were just detained at New York because the Statendam didn’t get in on time—just got home this morning about breakfast time.”

“Have a good time?”

“Grand!”

“How was the countess?” Chauncey was grinning widely now.

“All right,” smiled Betty. But Chauncey, seeing several girls headed in Betty’s direction, threw up his hands as if to say, “Help, see who’s coming,” and with a comical glance at Betty, hurried off to join another boy.

“Oh, here you are!” exclaimed Peggy Pollard, kissing Betty warmly, while Betty held out her hands to Selma Rardon and Dotty Bradshaw.

“I didn’t think I’d be missed,” said Betty, “for you all would be so busy on opening day; but we can’t talk now, can we?”

“No; come on. Are you signed up for Miss Heath’s class?”

“Yes. I was so scared for fear I’d get put in another section.”

“Good; we’ll all be together, then.”

Scampering down the halls in order to be on time to class in the limited time between classes, the girls arrived breathless, Betty to exchange nods and smiles with girls and boys who were slipping into class room seats, and to catch a pleasant, welcoming smile from Miss Heath, who presently, in attending to the roll, gave Betty a chance to present her card.

How different it was from the year before! Now she knew what to do and she began the year with a group of dear friends among the girls, to say nothing of the jolly boys.

There was no lunch in the lunch room on these first days, but the usual early dismissal occurred. However, a group of Betty’s friends sat for a little while in a grassy spot on the grounds, to discuss important affairs, as well as to see Betty and each other.

“I hated to leave camp,” said Selma, “but isn’t it good to be back? Say, Betty, try out for the hockey team. We need a lot of good material besides just the regular team.”

“Maybe,” said Betty.

“Tell us what you saw in New York, Betty,” suggested Dotty Bradshaw, cute little Dotty, as “big as a minute” and so serious about some things.

“It would take too long,” replied Betty.

“Oh, just mention a few things.”

“Like Fifth Avenue and Broadway, for instance? Well, the parks and the Tombs with the ‘Bridge of Sighs’ across from the Criminal Court——”

Betty adopted a hollow tone here, but went on more cheerfully—“and Tammany Hall, another wicked place, I suppose, and the skyscrapers and the Hudson River and of course the statue of ‘Liberty Enlightening the World.’ We took a little trip up the Hudson and crossed on the ferries, and rode out Riverside Drive, and went into the big stores, and I spent all my money, of course; and we had delicious things to eat at different places, and museums and art galleries and the Battery. Father gave me a good time. It was said to be a reward of virtue for keeping house for him. But I’ve had a fine time all summer.”

“How many art museums did you eat, Betty?” asked Peggy.

Betty looked blank for a moment, then laughed. “I did mention the museums and art galleries along with things to eat, didn’t I? But don’t begin on English now, Peggy. I’ll get enough of that pretty soon.”

“So will we all,” returned Peggy Pollard, pretending to groan.

“Shall, Peggy,” corrected Carolyn, and Peggy reached over to tweak the curve on an ear that showed among curling locks. Carolyn had acquired a new style of hair dressing during the summer, and Betty privately determined to copy it. It was becoming to Carolyn and she thought it would be to her. She would try it anyway, and see.

“Did your father meet the countess, Betty?” Carolyn inquired; but just then two girls sauntered up. They were Mathilde Finn and Kathryn Allen. Kathryn was making funny signs to Betty behind Mathilde’s back, but Peggy welcomed them both. “Lo, Finny,” said she, “have a seat on the ‘over-stuffed’ furniture. It’s been so dry that we’re perfectly safe on the grass now. How’s everything signing up and starting in?”

“Perfectly terrible,” returned Mathilde cheerfully, as she plumped down beside Betty. Kathryn managed to squeeze in beside Betty and whispered, “You see how friendly Peggy and Mathilde are?”

“M-hm,” replied Betty, linking arms with Kathryn. “You’ll slide down this slope the first thing you know.”

“Who said something about a countess?” asked Selma.

“I did,” answered Carolyn. “I asked Betty if her father met the countess.”

Mathilde gave Betty a glance full of interest. “Introduce me, Peggy,” she whispered.

“Oh, yes. Betty, I want you to meet a new sophomore, Mathilde Finn. Mathilde, this is Betty Lee.”

Betty smiled and acknowledged the introduction with a little nod, as Mathilde and Peggy were some little distance away. “I hope you will enjoy being a sophomore,” she said.

“I have been one at another school,” Mathilde remarked rather airily. “But there is such a difference in courses, you know.”

Kathryn nudged Betty, who kept countenance and acknowledged that there was, a great difference. Betty recalled Carolyn’s question, but thought that she would not answer it unless some one insisted.

Curiosity, however, had been aroused. “Well,” said Selma, “how about the ‘countess,’ Betty?”

“Oh,” said Betty. “Mr. Murchison asked Father to meet his sister, Countess Coletti, and her daughter. They came over on the Statendam. That was why I couldn’t get home till today. First the ship was to arrive on—Thursday, I think. Then the New York Times said Friday and the next day it was Saturday. It really came in on Sunday; so, of course, we had to wait till we could meet them.”

“Did you meet them, too?” asked Selma, a little impressed with Betty’s opportunity.

“Yes, I went with Father to the boat. He thought it would be better, since Miss Coletti was coming, too.”

“What is the girl called, Betty?” asked Peggy.

“Lucia.”

“I didn’t mean that. Hasn’t she any title, too?”

“I don’t know what they call her over in Italy, or at the school in Switzerland that she has been attending. But her mother say that she is to be Lucia Coletti, or Miss Coletti at school. She wants to come to Lyon High; but I don’t suppose they will hurry about it.”

“Are they really going to send her to a public school?” asked Mathilde in a shocked tone.

“That shows what you really think of the public school, Mathilde Finn,” said Dotty, not unpleasantly, but with firmness.

“Suppose I do,” returned Mathilde, a question in her tone, as well as a bit of resentment.

“Well,” said Dotty, “all I have to say is that there are some who would call that snobbish!”

“All right, if you think that, Dotty Bradshaw, think away!”

This was getting a little too warm for comfort and Betty spoke again. “I think we must all be nice to Lucia, for she will not know what to do, she says, and besides, she will be terribly homesick. When I first saw her she was both seasick, or just getting over it, and homesick, too. But her mother says that Lucia is going to have a taste of American democracy.”

“She will probably get all she wants of it here,” sarcastically said Mathilde. “But Betty Lee is right—we must all be friendly.”

Kathryn nudged Betty again. “She will, all right,” Kathryn whispered, “the little snob!”

Betty gave a sideway smile at Kathryn and whispered, "Tut-tut!" But Kathryn's eyes were twinkling and her expression not as unpleasant as her words.

"My mother was at school with Miss Murchison, I think," Mathilde continued. "She will probably call upon the countess."

"And you ought to go with her, Mathilde," wickedly added Kathryn.

At this Betty jumped up. It would be better not to say anything more about her trip with the countess and her daughter and maids. Betty had learned since coming to the city that telling all you know, with perfect frankness, was not always wise. There were some understanding people, but also many others who were critical, or at least not at all appreciative. It was sometimes best not to satisfy curiosity or place yourself open to misunderstanding or criticism. It was a courteous Betty who said to Mathilde that she hoped she would enjoy being a sophomore "with the rest of us," and to the rest she said she had too much to do at home to stay any longer.

"I'm suffering from an aching void, girls," declared Dotty. "It's past lunch time for me!"

"Come on home with me, Betty," begged Kathryn.

"No, both you come with me," said Carolyn. "I have an arrangement with Cook for a special lunch of something I adore."

"Thank you, girls; I must get back to Mother, besides having a lot of things to see to. Just think, I haven't seen my mother all summer, except just a little while this morning. I have to hear all about how my grandmother is, and Dick and Doris have actually grown this summer. I can see it, to say nothing of Amy Lou, who is peachier than ever."

"You do love your family, don't you, Betty Lee?" said Carolyn.

"I should think so!"

“Well, come along, Kathryn. Take pity on me and let’s have a good old visit together. Peggy, can’t you come, too?”

Peggy accepted, and Kathryn gave Betty a meaning look as they separated, taking different cars. “Maybe I’ll call you up tonight, Betty,” she said.

“Do it, Gypsy,” replied Betty.

CHAPTER VI—DOING HER BEST FOR LUCIA

No message came from Kathryn, and Betty had scarcely time to think of whether “Gypsy” had had an opportunity to find out anything further about Peggy’s reported speech. How wonderful it was to have Mother at home again! Betty had missed her presence and advice and help so many times, fun though it was to take the helm herself. Still, it hadn’t always been so much fun.

Now clothes for school, countless little errands, decisions, and the work of settling into the routine again engaged Mrs. Lee and the rest of them. Jelly and fruit canned at the farm was a great asset for the coming season. Grandma was ever so much better; but a good stout woman was now installed in the old home. Dick had really been of great help and Doris had learned to do many things. Amy Lou had been a “lamb” and had learned to read with Grandma. She was “five years old and reading in a primer!”

To tell the truth, Betty thought Doris was very cross at present, but then she might still be resentful about her little flare-up at the last of her stay with Betty. Betty had apologized for her own share in it, but the fact was that Doris had been most to blame. They had parted friends, but Betty felt that her sister had certain reserves with her and was not warmly affectionate, though she had seemed glad enough to see her on first arrival.

However, Doris would probably get over it. Betty thought that she’d better not pay any attention to any grumblings or cross speeches. Dear me—it was hard enough to keep patience over things at times. How did Mother ever do it? She must put most of her time and thought on having the family machinery run smoothly. And Betty was quite right, though a great purpose for one’s children helps any father and mother through.

A telephone message from Countess Coletti to Betty that evening was one feature of affairs. “Hello—oh—yes’m, this is Betty.” Betty was wishing that she had not said “hello” quite as if she were

answering a call from Kathryn. Betty flushed with embarrassment as she listened to the first few words from Countess Coletti.

“I am wondering, Miss Betty, if we stop for you with the car tomorrow morning, you will be willing to go with Lucia and me to interview the principal of Lyon High a little before school begins. I should like to have you go around with Lucia and I think I could get you excused from your classes.”

Betty had her doubts about that, but she did not express them. Perhaps Mr. Murchison’s sister could manage it, but the public schools were not like that. They went on regardless of countesses and influential people in general, so far as the daily schedule was concerned; and Betty had had reason to know how particular her principal was about the regular program of every student. Still, as it was a little unusual—it would be fun to take Lucia in charge. Betty could imagine how eyebrows would lift at her and demure glances of her friends in classes of her own would meet her.

All these thoughts rapidly ran through her mind as she listened to what further Countess Coletti had to say. Oh, then Lucia’s credits were already in the hands of the principal.

“I see, Countess Coletti,” Betty’s clear voice made reply. “I shall be very glad to do anything—oh, yes, I shall be ready to go with you early. Certainly. I’ll find out everything as soon as I see Lucia’s schedule, and meet her at lunch and—oh, well, that is as the principal says, I suppose. Yes, Countess Coletti. Good-bye.”

“My me!” Betty turned from the telephone to see Dick’s grin.

“What do you have to do now, Betty, act as nursemaid to the countess’ daughter?”

“Just about, Dick! No, I needn’t say that, either. I imagine that Lucia has a lot of grit herself; though that wasn’t my first impression. But anybody would feel lost in such a big school. I did, and I hadn’t been to private school all my life, either.”

Betty went on into the living room and dining room from the hall where she had been using the telephone. Doris was busy with her lessons there at the big table, which was usually cleared of anything else for school books and papers. Any one who wanted real privacy could go to bedroom or den, as the case might be. Dick had a small set of shelves in his den, and the girls had a similar set in their bedroom.

Doris did not look up as Betty sat down by her and took up her geometry, though Betty knew that she must have heard the conversation, or Betty's part of it, since the wide doors between dining room and the front room were open, as well as the hall entrance, never closed, for the good reason that it could not be.

Dick was calling up one of the boys now, to make sure of an assignment. Presently he, too, was back at the table. "We're in high society now, Dorry," said he. "Didja hear Betty talking to the countess?"

"Ye-ah," drawled Doris. "I think my mother is better than any countess, so we needn't get worked up about it."

Betty drew a figure on her sheet of paper. Little Dory was jealous! It was a shame. Here she had been to New York and had had all the fun!

But Betty need not have felt self-reproachful. She had earned her trip to New York by her own pleasant spirit, much real effort that to some girls would have been very trying, and by overcoming some loneliness in times when company was lacking. Doris would have her turn, in a family where fairness was characteristic of its parents. But it was just as well for Betty to be thinking about her sister now, instead of herself.

Morning came, and with it the new excitement. Dick, frankly interested, kept an eye out for the Murchison car, a beautiful thing in dark wine-color. "Gee!" cried Dick in a tone discreetly low, "that's a beauty! I'm going to have one just like it some day.

There's your colored chauffeur, Sis, in uniform. Say, I didn't know that Dad was hobnobbing with the aristocrats!"

"Hush, Dick," said Mrs. Lee, annoyed. "Mr. Murchison is a very wealthy gentleman and lives in accordance with his means. Are you ready, Betty? Please answer the bell, Dick. It is the chauffeur."

"Give me an apron and cap, Mom," remarked the irrepressible Dick, "for the maid must answer the door."

"You're wrong. Dick," said Doris, who was gathering up her books. "The butler should be at the door. See how elegant you can be, though I'm afraid they will think you rather young."

But the bell had rung, and Dick ran, rather too hurriedly for dignity in his role of butler, if that suggestion by Doris was to be taken seriously. She was listening as Dick threw open the front door.

"Is you-all ready foh goin' to school with Miss Lucy an' Loosha?"

"I'll call Betty," said Dick. "Yes, she is ready." So the girl Betty called "Lu-chee-a," the chauffeur called "Loosha."

"Miss Lucy said that she wanted to take all the children to school, foh she thought there was some o' them that went to the Junior High School."

"Please thank the countess," said Dick, as properly as if it had been his father. "We shall be very glad to come and we can be out as soon as we can gather up our books."

The chauffeur went back to the car, while Dick hastily called Betty and Doris, though Doris had been curious enough to stay within hearing, and if the truth were told, Doris had taken extra care with her toilet that morning, in case she should happen within sight of Countess Coletti and Lucia, her daughter.

"She wants us all to come, Mother," excitedly she reported. "Shall we?"

"Certainly. It would be impolite to refuse. Yes, better wear your coat, though it is so warm this morning."

“Shall you go out to the car and meet them, Mother?” asked Betty, doubtfully, though that is what would have happened in their old home, if any friend had driven up, or strangers, indeed, with such an invitation to the children.

“No,” replied Mrs. Lee. “Had the countess appeared, or asked to see me, I might; but they are all in a hurry. Don’t waste a moment. It is very thoughtful for the countess to include you and Doris, Dick. Just be appreciative, polite and quiet. I can trust all of you to be that, I’m sure.”

But Countess Coletti might be trusted also, to make the children feel comfortable. She was smiling at the three with their books, a necessary accompaniment, alas, as Doris thought. “Good morning, Betty,” she said, while Lucia smiled and nodded, leaving conversation to her mother. “You are good not to keep us waiting. These are your brother and sister, I’m sure. This is my daughter, Lucia Coletti. Now you may sit here, Betty, your sister there and the brother, too. Ready, Horace.”

Horace did not look around, but started the car and off they went in the fresh September morning, bright and clear. “It is Dick and Doris, Countess Coletti,” said Betty, thinking that the names of the twins should be mentioned. The term “discretion” did not do justice to the attitude of the twins, almost too sober, Betty thought, but they were dear children!

Yet the experienced countess led the conversation, telling them of Lucia’s troubles in arranging her schedule, some of them to be discussed with the principal that morning, and chatting of how pleasantly Lucia was impressed with her mother’s old home and how good “the old town” looked to one who had been away as many years as she herself had passed abroad. “We never could seem to find a time,” said she, “when it was convenient to come, though my brother and his family were over often.”

Betty wondered what family Mr. Murchison had. Her father probably did not know or he would have mentioned it.

The handsome car and its occupants caused some notice among the early arrivals at the school. The chauffeur drove in and parked the car behind the building on one of the drives there. Betty showed the party how to reach the nearest entrance and led them up the stairs and through the halls to the office of the principal. He was affable but business-like. He hesitated when Countess Coletti asked that Betty be permitted to show Lucia about, though she asked most prettily and with no assumption that it must be done for her. "It would be such a favor," said she, "if Betty will not miss anything important."

"Everything is important, Countess Coletti," smiled the principal, "but I think we shall arrange it for your daughter not to be lost. Here, Betty, is the schedule we have made out for Miss Coletti. See if you have any classes together?"

With the principal, Betty, feeling rather important for a modest body like herself, worked out a program for the day. She would take Lucia to her first class, introduce her to the teacher and leave her there, stopping for her at the close of the period without losing much time, since the recitation rooms happened to be near. They had the same home room, which made it easy to begin the day together. Betty herself had not been there on the opening morning and had been forced to see her home room teacher later in the day, to find out many things. There were practically no recitations of any length, and periods were shortened for an assembly. Lunch, fortunately, would be prepared in the lunch rooms and the full day's schedule carried out, an unusual proceeding even for the third day, why, Betty did not know.

"Your daughter, Madam, need not worry at all. In case she becomes confused, there is always the office. We are ready to rescue any pupil, and without reproof in these opening days. I hope that Miss Lucia will enjoy the new experience."

With this the interview closed. Betty showed the countess how to reach her car, but with the ringing of the gongs, she and Lucia went to find their home room and report.

It was a home room of girls, to be sure, but Betty felt a little self-conscious as she accompanied Lucia to the desk and introduced her to their home room teacher, not the dear Miss Heath, but a teacher to whom Betty had not happened to recite in her freshman year. Keen eyes appraised her and Lucia, who was not at all embarrassed. Lucia was accustomed to being stared at and to traveling around. As long as Betty kept her from being lost about places and duties, it was all right. What difference did it make to her what impression she was making?

“Lucia Coletti,” the teacher repeated, taking the card from Lucia and pronouncing the name correctly, as Betty had given it. She made a few notes on a paper at hand. “Is she a friend of yours, Betty Lee?”

“Yes’m. That is, I’m showing her around because she is new to everything. She just came to New York on the Statendam and has been to school in Switzerland.”

Miss Orme, who was accustomed to meet many Italian children in the city schools, revised her first impression made by the name, and looked again at this easily poised girl who had been to school in Switzerland. Lucia met her gaze without interest, politely waiting directions. “Lucia is the daughter of——”

“Count Coletti, of Milan,” suddenly said Lucia, to Betty’s surprise. Betty had not intended to tell the teacher who Lucia was, then thought perhaps she’d better, for Lucia’s sake, for her relatives, the Murchisons, were well-known in the city and it would be better, too, for Miss Orme to place the girl at once in her mind. But why did Lucia forestall the introduction as her mother’s daughter? Perhaps that was it. Was there some idea of loyalty to her father, or was she just proud of it?

“Oh, yes,” laconically replied Miss Orme, who had, unfortunately, a rooted distaste for American women that married foreigners. “I think I have heard of your mother. Betty, there is a vacant seat across from you on the back row. Too bad you are both so late, but

you can get from the other girls what has already been said about many of the details. Show Lucia to her seat, Betty.”

As Betty went down the aisle ahead of Lucia, Peggy Pollard caught her eye and coughed discreetly. Selma grinned up at her and Kathryn widened her big eyes purposely. This home room of sophomore girls was the limit!

CHAPTER VII—LITTLE ADJUSTMENTS

The next morning Selma joined Betty on the walk from the street-car to the school building. "Betty," said she, "I'm really in earnest about your being on the hockey team. I'm afraid not enough of the girls are going to take an interest. I mean the kind of girls that count. You are so quick and graceful about your swimming and good at everything you do, and I saw you play hockey once last year."

"I haven't a quarter about me, I'm afraid," said Betty, very soberly, looking in her small purse.

"A quarter—what for?" asked Selma before she sensed what Betty meant. "Oh, that's all right. You needn't pay me for the compliments, and I'm not saying it just to get you to be on the team. Miss Fox has charge of the hockey this year and she asked me to keep an eye out for good material. The team is pretty well made up, I guess, and she says that I should be captain, but that is as it may be, Betty. Please don't mention my speaking of it to you."

"But I want a second team to play against, and a good one at that. I'd give a lot for the sophomores to beat the other classes at hockey."

"Hurrah for the sophomores," remarked Betty. "I can't get used to our being sophomores, Selma, but isn't it nice not to be freshmen any longer?"

"Yes, though we were such unusually fine ones!" Selma chuckled. "We're a good deal of a mob yet, but not like the freshman bunch. Were we really like that last year?"

"I suppose so. Well, Selma, I don't know what to say about the hockey proposition. I'm pretty sure that Mother thinks hockey too rough. Perhaps not exactly that, either; and I did like to play last year occasionally, just on the side. Possibly, if it is just as a sort of substitute, I might do it. I'm a full-fledged G. A. A. and ought to help out where I can, oughtn't I?"

“It’s your duty to be a good sophomore, too.”

“I remember how seriously I took everything last year,” said Betty, “and it was sensible. But I’m going to join anything I like this year; and if it doesn’t work, all you have to do is to stop.”

“Not to break up a team, though, Betty.”

“Oh, no. I didn’t mean that, and I like to do anything pretty thoroughly, too. All right, I’ll see about it.”

“Lo, Betty,” said some one else.

Selma and Betty were mounting the steps of the school now, near the entrance, where pupils were going in and groups of others stood about. This was Mathilde Finn, who detached herself from one of the groups and came toward the two girls. “Bye,” immediately said Selma, whisking into the building as some one pushed open the heavy doors before her.

“Going to wait for Lucia Coletti?” asked Mathilde.

“No; she knows how to get to the home room now,” answered Betty. “Anything I can do for you?” Betty smiled pleasantly, though she intended to be a little reserved with Mathilde. From all she had heard, she did not have the greatest confidence in Mathilde’s sincerity. But Betty was always glad to be on a friendly footing with other girls. She did “hate” disagreeable undercurrents, though one could not always avoid them.

“You are a bit new yourself, aren’t you?” Betty continued.

“Oh, yes, but not like Lucia, and my work was all fixed up in plenty of time. I do feel strange in a public school and I can’t say that I like it now; but if Lucia can stand it, I think I can. You don’t have to know everybody, of course. Some of the boys and girls are too common—for words!”

That speech grated on Betty. “Perhaps so,” she answered, “but a lot of them are as fine as can be. Besides, we have to live in the world with everybody, don’t we? And I haven’t seen anybody here that

wasn't nice—well, hardly. But the boys and girls that won't work or keep the rules get sent out.”

“Oh, I suppose they all behave well enough,” carelessly replied Mathilde. “They have to. But look at their clothes, and the way they talk!”

“I never dress up much for school myself,” said Betty, who had a sound suspicion that the reason Mathilde was attaching herself to her this morning was her relation to Lucia Coletti. “And when it comes to language, do you know, some of the worst I've heard came from girls out of wealthy homes. So far as I'm concerned, give me the good old public schools, though I'd love to go to boarding school some time, just for the fun of it. Why, there's Lucia now!”

Betty and Mathilde stopped in the middle of the big hall as Lucia Coletti came out of the principal's office. Her face lit up as she saw Betty and she hurried toward the girls.

“This is—what you call luck—Betty. Good morning—and I think I met you, yesterday, Miss ——?”

“It is Mathilde Finn, Lucia,” said Betty, as Lucia looked doubtfully at Mathilde. “She has been at a private school, too, and is coming back to us now—a sophomore like the rest of us.”

Betty spoke cordially, as Betty would, and together the three made their way to their home room. But Mathilde's manner to Lucia amused her and when lunch time came and Dotty Bradshaw fell in with her, just behind Lucia, whom Mathilde had in tow, she could not help smiling at Dotty's comments.

“Ha!” said Dotty in a dramatic whisper. “Finny is rushing the countess, I see. Look out, Betty. She'll cut you out with royalty.”

“Why should I mind, Dotty?” laughed Betty. “I like Lucia and I think that she's going to take hold of things as you'd scarcely expect a girl that's been used to everything to do. She's got a lot of those old Romans in her, I imagine, to say nothing of what she

gets of good American pep, if not so old! Oh, Dotty, I've got such loads to do I haven't time to think about whether I get cut out with anybody!"

"Lessons getting on your nerves?"

"Somewhatly!"

"That's always the way at first. Cheer up. You're not interested, then, in hearing about the new sorority?"

"Well, I might have a little natural curiosity."

"I'll say! I'll tell you everything I know at the first chance."

This was while the crowd was mounting the stairs to the lunch room. At the top of the stairs Betty saw Mathilde usher Lucia inside of the lunch room, though Lucia turned and looked inquiringly at Betty.

Betty smiled and waved her hand, nodding approvingly as if to say "It's all right with me," and just then Kathryn appeared in the line behind Betty, having hurried to catch up. Dotty was by several girls beyond her in the line that was forming for the cafeteria procession; and Kathryn, having Betty's ear in spite of the rattle of dishes and the buzz, or more appropriately "roar" of conversation, pitched above other sounds, informed her that she had "a lot to tell her."

"Tell it now," urged Betty.

"Fat chance, as Chauncey says. I'll see you somewhere. Skip along, honey. I hope they've got plenty of good things left. I always prefer being called to first lunch."

"How strange!" laughed Betty. "I certainly hate it when we are last to be called and all the best desserts and salads are gone. But can't you give me an idea?"

Kathryn shook her head in the negative, concerned now with looking ahead to choose what she would have for lunch.

Betty with a full tray looked around for Lucia and saw that she and Mathilde were together at a table which was rapidly filling up. Carolyn at another table waved at Betty and Kathryn, who hurried there to join her. But the hungry girls were most interested in the business at hand and Carolyn, after the first pangs of hunger was relieved, was started on athletics, lamenting the loss of the senior football men and relating what material she had heard was available for the year's team.

Betty saw for the first time Ted Dorrance, who was not acting at all as a senior whose heart was broken should act. With a group of senior boys he was laughing and talking at a table not far away. Betty wondered how it happened that they had had lunch at the same time, and while her eyes were turned in that direction, Ted saw her and gave her a gay salute. Poor boy, perhaps he was just putting on all that fun and was really feeling terrible about Louise. No—perhaps they had made up!

Lessons, lessons, lessons! How hard these first assignments seemed! Some of their teachers "had a heart," as Dotty said, and others hadn't the sign of one. Again they had to carry all their books around until lockers were assigned. Mathilde complained constantly, Betty thought; but Lucia, with a neat brief-case of leather, kept all her paraphernalia together and carried them around without a word. "Lucia Coletti is a good sport," said Dotty Bradshaw.

Finally, toward the end of the week, Kathryn had a good opportunity to talk to Betty. It was on the street-car, but they had a back seat together and could talk in ordinary tones without being overheard. Both had errands down town, as it happened, and were to go down right after school to meet their mothers.

"Here you've kept me in suspense all week, Kathryn," Betty accused her friend.

"I suppose you've laid awake nights over it, Betty."

“Oh, yes, of course. My dear, I have laid awake a while over a lesson or two!”

“I’ve had reason enough to, but not I. When my head strikes the pillow not even anything Mathilde or anybody could say, to say nothing of mere lessons, could keep me awake!”

“By the way, is it clothes you’re going to see about this afternoon, Kathryn?”

“Yes. I’m going to get a hat and a dress, and look at coats.”

“Here, too, Kathryn, but I’ll wait to buy a coat till I see what you get, I think.”

Upon this there followed a discussion of styles and materials quite interesting to Betty, who did want to look like the rest but had had little experience so far in city shopping. Kathryn advised her a little about the best places to shop, where “things were expensive” and where one could get good values for a reasonable sum. They concluded to get the mothers together at some store and arranged the meeting place before any school matter was touched upon again.

Then Kathryn began. “I could have told you that everything is all right about Peggy, but some way I wanted to have a good chance all by ourselves before I did. You know how we went out to Carolyn’s that time. We had a good deal of fun over that lunch, and Peggy was just as much fun as she always is and I never acted any different from the way I always do. I just thought, if Peggy didn’t like me and talked about me, I couldn’t help it anyhow and there was no use in acting ‘sore’ about it. That is what my brother always says, Betty.”

“You needn’t apologize, Gypsy. I have a brother, too.”

Kathryn laughed. “It’s very convenient when you want to use slang to quote from your brother, isn’t it?”

“Very.”

“Well, it seems that Peggy had overheard you call me Gypsy, though how I don’t know.”

“Oh, I’m sorry, Kathryn. I meant that for our little secret!”

“I know it, but really I don’t care. I rather like it now. You remember that we told Carolyn about it, at your house.”

“Yes.”

“Carolyn told me afterwards that she had it in mind when she asked us for lunch; and didn’t Peggy call me ‘Gypsy’ as she passed me the sandwiches?”

“No! Why, what did you think when she did that?”

“I was startled, of course. She said, ‘Gypsy, have another sandwich!’ and I looked up at her in amazement, though not a bit offended, you know, and she laughed. ‘Who started that name for you?’ she asked. ‘You’re looking so surprised that maybe you don’t like it,’ she went on. ‘I just heard Betty Lee call you that one time and I thought it cute. I told Mathilde Finn just the other day that you looked like a gypsy queen or something awfully romantic.’

“There it was, Betty, just the sweet way you thought about it and not the way Mathilde told me. You were right. I don’t believe Peggy Pollard would say mean things about a girl she knows as well as she does me, and maybe not about anybody, though you are too trustful of your friends, Betty!”

“Am I?”

“Yes, I’m afraid so; but I think it’s a good fault and I’m going to cultivate it.”

Kathryn slipped her hand through Betty’s arm as she spoke. “Well, just then Carolyn spoke up. ‘Mathilde Finn didn’t say it that way when she repeated it to Kathryn,’ she said.”

“‘What do you mean, Carolyn?’ Peggy asked. She looked just as surprised as could be. Then she whirled around to me. ‘Kathryn, what did Mathilde tell you?’

“I sort of hesitated, you know. A body would. And Peggy asked me again. ‘From what Carolyn says, I imagine that Mathilde has said something horrid,’ she said.

“Well, I just got the impression, Peggy, that you were criticising my looks and while I’m not posing as a beauty, it wasn’t awfully pleasant to think that you would say what Mathilde said you did.”

“‘Kathryn!’ Peggy said. She looked sort of helpless, you know, as if she didn’t know what to say and probably thought I wouldn’t believe her. Then, I don’t remember how it all came around, but Carolyn helped out and quoted what Peggy had just said and asked me to believe Peggy and I said I would and Peggy said a lot of things and I hated to have them think I wanted to be thought pretty and so I said so and I told just exactly what Mathilde had said and Peggy told as nearly as she could remember just exactly what she had said, and the girls all said that they didn’t think me sensitive about my looks and knew that I just cared about having Peggy like me. So it turned out all right and it was Carolyn that did it after all. You can like Carolyn better than me any time, Betty!”

Betty laughed and squeezed the arm in hers. “How we do change,” said she. “But I told you all about how I feel about my dear friends. And you said ‘all the girls.’ Was any one there beside you and Peggy and Carolyn?”

“Sure enough—I didn’t tell you. I think from what Carolyn said she did mean to have just Peggy and me—and you, of course, if you could have come. But then, not being sure about Peggy after all, she thought perhaps she’d ask somebody else in your place. So on the car there were Dotty Bradshaw and Mary Emma Rowland and she asked them to come. They accepted after a little hesitation on account of being expected at home. But Carolyn said that they could telephone home from her house and that she would herself to

let them know that it was all right, if they wanted her to. You know how hospitable Carolyn is, and her mother lets her do these things. I imagine that they knew it was the first of school and she would be wanting to see some of us. Anyhow, there was a special lunch for us, outdoors on the big porch. I'm sorry you missed it."

"So am I. But under the circumstances I couldn't. And now that is all over and you haven't a worry have you?"

"No. I'd a little rather Dotty hadn't heard what Mathilde said to me, for she almost despises Mathilde anyhow. But it can't be helped and everybody said they wouldn't say a word and would treat Mathilde 'the same as ever.' And you would have laughed to hear Dotty, when Carolyn used that expression."

"'The same as ever?' she asked. 'Then that doesn't bind me except about this little trick of hers. Sure I'll treat Mathilde the same as ever!'" Kathryn was laughing now.

Betty looked thoughtfully at Kathryn. "Dotty speaks too quickly and sharply, I'm afraid. I felt real uncomfortable when she had that passage at arms with Mathilde that day. But Dotty is a sincere person and she may have some reason of her own about Mathilde."

"I haven't a doubt. But I thought about you, Betty, when I said to the girls I'd rather not have it make any difference with the way they treated Mathilde. You're always so fair to everybody, and this wasn't so much after all."

"It was the spirit it showed or you thought it showed on Peggy's part that worried you, and that is important when it comes to a nice friend like Peggy; but I think you were wonderfully nice about it, and—thank you for your opinion of me. That's another thing for me to live up to!"

"I don't think you need worry about that, Betty Lee. But to change the subject, you're going to go on the G. A. A. hike a week from Saturday, aren't you?"

“Why, I don’t know, Kathryn. I hadn’t thought about it much. There’s so much to do at home, and Saturday is the only day there, that I’m not sure I can. I ought to help Mother, for with three of us to get ready for fall and winter in school, to say nothing of Amy Louise, and meals now for everybody, Mother is just as rushed with work as we imagine we are in school.”

“We really are,” insisted Kathryn. “I think your mother will want you to have some outdoors on Saturdays, and I know that you help some every day. So do you mind if I ask her about it, if we manage to have the mothers see each other down town?”

“I don’t mind a bit, and I think the G. A. A. hike will be great fun. Suppose Lucia Coletti will want to go?” Betty looked roguishly at Kathryn as she spoke.

“And if Lucia, then our friend Mathilde, to be sure. Well, anyhow we must be sure to ask Lucia. She’ll probably want to be a G. A. A. If she lives in Italy, she probably will know how to swim, and don’t they walk and hike a lot in Switzerland?”

Betty asked Kathryn why she was sure Lucia could swim if she lived in Italy and Kathryn replied that she might live on a hill-top for all she knew, but that rich foreigners always took trips to the water, “and isn’t the Mediterranean right there?”

Betty could not answer that it was not and so they dropped this subject, not forgetting the G. A. A. hike in prospect.

CHAPTER VIII—THE G. A. A. BREAKFAST HIKE

Dear me—the hosts of things to be decided during these first weeks of school! But wasn't it interesting?

There was talk of a new sorority. There was the revelation of some that had existed before, *sub rosa*. Indeed everything was secret and the way the rules were substantially avoided without breaking the letter of the law was another astonishing feature. Betty Lee did not quite understand that yet. The sorority fever had not struck the little group of her especial friends in their freshman year. There had been some of the girls who were what the rest called "snooty" or "high hat," the terms in common parlance for a species of snobbery. But as "little freshmen" their assumptions made small impression on their associates of the freshman class.

Prominent juniors had been paying some attention to Lucia Coletti and incidentally to Betty and Mathilde and Carolyn. Peggy and Kathryn seemed to be left out. Nothing had been said so far, but notice had been taken, no doubt. Betty was thoughtful. She had been thrown with Lucia first because she could be of service to her. Now no delicate withdrawal was possible because Lucia, naturally depending upon Betty for much information and liking Betty very much, a fact that Betty did not realize, turned to her for companionship whenever their work made it possible.

Betty saw that her first impression of Lucia had not been entirely correct. To be sure, Lucia had been spoiled, as an independent American girl would view her upon first acquaintance, adding the feeling of rank to that of the superiority of wealth and opportunity. But in some respects Lucia was timid, and Betty had some idea now of how she had dreaded the new environment. Any timidity was hidden, however, behind a reserve which had a little dignity and which Betty told herself was a bit of the Count Coletti.

Then again Lucia would be impulsive and in high spirits with Betty's friends and tell them little things about her old schools

abroad, for she had been in several, owing to the travel of her parents. This was all very interesting and Betty was becoming fond of Lucia, though she was sure that Carolyn, Kathryn, and Peggy would always stand first. But Betty liked "lots of friends."

How high school affairs were impressing themselves upon Lucia Coletti she did not say and the girls did not ask, though they could see that she was interested. She spoke English very well indeed and made excellent recitations in her different studies. To every one she was uniformly polite, but not even Betty was invited to her confidence, though it must be said that Betty, absorbed in putting through her own work, did not notice it.

Among other things difficult to get started early, the G. A. A. hike was numbered. The heavy work of the opening weeks hindered the teachers who were in charge of athletics. Then Jupiter Pluvius took a hand and there was a week of almost steady rain. But warm days in October with bright sunshine came along and at nearly the end of the month the day was "actually appointed," said Peggy.

"It's a shame that we couldn't have had it when it was so nice and warm," said Mathilde, who was privately intending to offer Lucia a ride to the spot chosen for the breakfast.

"But it would have been too warm for the hike," answered Lucia herself, who was a member of the Girls' Athletic Association by this time and on one of the committees. "I think that I shall enjoy that."

"Won't it be too far for you?" asked Mathilde, who was lazy, and only "going in" for the easiest form of athletics she could find, though she was fond of games, which saved the day for her, and she liked the interpretive dancing, in which she was quite graceful.

"Only five miles?" asked Lucia. "Why, we think nothing of that in——"

Lucia broke off, for her mother had warned her not to compare anything to her life abroad. She made an excuse of speaking to

Miss Fox, who had this expedition in charge, and moved away from Mathilde quite naturally. Lucia, however, was quite friendly with Mathilde. What girl would not like another who was flatteringly attentive and evidently impressed with her? Moreover, Mathilde was a fair, prettily-dressed girl, attractive enough when she chose to be.

“Listen, Finny,” said Dotty Bradshaw, coming up to Mathilde. “You can be on the soup committee if you like and ride out with us.”

“‘Soup Committee!’ I hope you are not going to have soup for breakfast!”

“Don’t be so literal, Finny. Of course we are not going to have soup or anything like it. Can you cook wieners?”

“I should say not!” Mathilde started away in disgust. “Besides, I want to take the hike and get credit for it.”

“Haw, haw, haw,” said Dotty in low tones to her friend Selma, who knew Mathilde almost as well as Dotty did. “When I get outdoors I shall indulge in ‘laffcher,’ I think. But wouldn’t I have been sold if she had taken me up? It would just about have spoiled the fun the committee is going to have!”

“Dotty, Dotty, Dotty!” reproved Selma; but a smile and dancing eyes showed that she did not blame the irrepressible Dotty too severely.

This took place at a meeting of various committees on the Friday before the breakfast hike. Betty had been persuaded to be on the committee for refreshments, though she, too, would have liked to take the entire hike and earn the points for it. But it would be fun. Kathryn said that any girl who had really done any cooking was capable of bossing the entire affair and if Betty would be chairman of the committee, she would impart all her own valuable knowledge of what to cook and how on picnics.

“Kathryn Allen, I’ve never been to a camp and all you other girls have. I simply can’t be chairman!” This was Betty, in the corner of the big room where the refreshment committee was getting together to discuss arrangements.

“Listen, Betty. The chairman bosses the rest. They do the work!”

Betty laughed. “On that basis, then, Gypsy, I don’t care, but I think one of you ought to be chairman just the same. Will Miss Fox know how much of everything we ought to have?”

“Of course she will. She’s got the names of everybody that signed up to go. I don’t know whether we ought to allow for girls coming at the last minute, or bringing company, or allow the other way for those that think they’ll go and won’t.”

“Always better to have too much, than not enough,” said Betty, thinking of one or two tight squeezes when her mother had had the missionary society and more came than usual.

“Yet that is very wasteful, Betty.”

“Yes, Dotty, it is. I think you ought to be chairman.”

“No, thanks. Some time I’ll tell you how narrowly we escaped having another member on this committee.”

“You are a case, Dotty Bradshaw. What have you been doing now?”

“Nothing much, Kathryn. Somebody call this meeting to order.”

“All right. Betty, you’re chairman.”

“Honestly, I wasn’t named chairman, girl. Ask Miss Fox whom she intended for chairman—please, Gypsy.”

“All right—to settle it.”

Kathryn dashed across the room, stopping behind Miss Fox and waiting for an opportunity to speak to her. There was a brief conference and Kathryn returned to tell Betty triumphantly that she was chairman.

“Yes, of course,” returned Betty. “I saw you fix it up with her. Did you tell her that I would be deeply disappointed if I didn’t have the honor?”

“Something like that,” laughed Kathryn. “Now let’s get down to business.”

The morning of the hike was clear and sunny, when the sun finally decided to get up. Fifty girls were up first, getting ready. The “bunch” who hiked were to meet at the school, but the committee on refreshments was to drive with their supplies. Miss Fox had accepted the offer of Kathryn’s brother to drive the Allen car out for them and to help arrange their temporary camp. Lucia Coletti, interested and anxious to help, had begged her uncle for the use of his car. “It will be ready for you to go to business,” she said, “for it is only to take out boxes of food and perhaps a few rugs.”

“Why turn my car into a grocery delivery wagon?” teasingly Mr. Murchison asked Lucia.

“Because the groceries will not deliver the things for us.”

“Very well, then, Lucia, if you can make your peace with the chauffeur.”

“Oh, Horace! He will do anything! But I will tell him to come back immediately.”

“Will there be no one to come back, nothing to bring?”

“Oh, no—no—no, we all hike back, even those who ride out to do the breakfast.”

“I see; and the food will have been disposed of. See, Lucy, sister, how American your daughter is becoming? She talks of hikes and things.”

“I am only part American, Uncle,” said Lucia, soberly and with emphasis. “I am also the daughter of Count Coletti!”

Chauncey Allen, understanding that only Kathryn and Betty would be in their car, asked two of his friends to accompany him. When they appeared at the Allen house Kathryn wanted to know "how come," as Chauncey reported to Chet Dorrance later on.

"I have to have somebody, don't I, to keep me in countenance before all those girls. Moreover, I want help in making the fires."

"We girls are perfectly capable of making the fires."

"Honestly, Kit, don't you like it?"

"Yes, I really do, but I don't know whether it's proper or not, or whether Miss Fox will like it or not."

"She knows I'm going to drive, don't she?"

"Doesn't she, you mean. Yes. Oh, I suppose it's all right, if we can get all the things in."

"Wait till you see us fix 'em!"

Thus Kathryn and Betty had three escorts and a goodly amount of supplies. It was cold riding in the early morning, but the girls wore warm knickers and sweaters and drew over the blankets which the car was furnished. It was a jolly ride. Betty had scarcely seen all summer these boys with whom she had become acquainted at the freshman parties and other meetings of her first year at Lyon High. Kathryn's brother had been at a boys' camp. Chet had been away with his mother and brother, Ted, of the romantic disaster. The other boy was "Mickey" Carlin, whom Betty did not know so well; but Mickey was full of fun and contributed his share of life to the occasion.

The five miles were quickly covered by machine and as the spot chosen was a picnic resort on the river, it was not difficult to dispose of the supplies which they had brought. They arrived at about the same time as Miss Fox and more of the committee in two other cars, and while they were unloading, here came the Murchison car and its colored chauffeur in uniform.

Miss Fox was not only not annoyed at the presence of the boys but was glad to accept their services. "We need some camp-boys," said she laughingly. "It isn't going to take our hikers so long to cover five miles, though I told them to take their time and see whatever there was to see on the way."

"Don't worry, Miss Fox," said Chauncey with a chuckle. "They'll wait till they hike back to see things, and believe me they'll have an appetite for breakfast!"

"All right, Chauncey. I shouldn't be surprised but you're right. By the way, you are invited for breakfast with the other boys, and you might just consider yourselves added to the refreshment committee. Yes, girls, all the milk and stuff can be carried to those picnic tables under the shelter house. We'll mix the cocoa there and open up the buns. Careful to wipe off the tables and put papers under everything, girls. If we eat our peck o' dirt we'll do it without germs, I hope."

Pans, stacks of buns, paper plates, pickles (so appropriate for a breakfast, Dotty said), eggs to be scrambled, bacon to be cooked, and great sacks of apples and bananas were sorted and arranged under the direction of Betty, who sprang to the fore when she saw that Miss Fox was going to leave it to her. Betty had learned that summer that orderly arrangement was half the battle in getting a meal. Quickly, from her little note-book, in which she had carefully written the names of the committee assigned to the various tasks, she told each one her duty and divided the supplies accordingly. Fun was held in abeyance for a little, till things were fairly started. Oh, it would work out all right, Betty told herself. The girls would select each a plate and visit "each pot and pan," in due order.

The sun was up and it grew hot near the fires, but sweaters could be thrown aside. The cooks were adorned with a pointed head-dress of white with G. A. A. in blue letters printed upon it. Dotty called it the G. A. A. crown and fastened one around Betty's locks, saying that she was chief cook and bottle-washer and must have one whether she really cooked or not.

“I’m floor-walker, Dotty, but I’m going to oversee the scrambled egg business, because if we have ’em at all they want to be good. I’ve practiced at home several days under Mother, so I’m going to do the mixing up. Gracious, did we bring the salt!”

For a minute Betty looked blank, while Dotty consolingly remarked that the bacon would be salty enough anyhow. But the salt was discovered in one of the cars, a whole container of it, and Betty’s moment of panic was over. This was to be a real breakfast, Dotty declared, and several little squirrels dashing up and down the trees nearby were doubtless hoping that they would be invited.

CHAPTER IX—WITH LUCIA AND MATHILDE

Meanwhile the hikers were having a good time of it. Scattered in little groups of two or three or more, they were steadily advancing over hill and dale in the beautiful country surrounding the city, striking through in a direction not so closely built up in suburbs, for the high school was one in an outlying suburb, where beautiful homes and large estates were the rule as soon as one passed beyond its center.

The country was in its handsomest fall attire. Leaves of all colors attracted the girls who were interested in trees and learning to know them by their leaves, as well as those who, with no knowledge of this sort at all, could still appreciate the beauty of color with which the woods were alive.

This hike, naturally, was not confined to sophomores, though that class had been charged with the duty of serving the breakfast this time; and a good breakfast it should be, thought the sophomores.

Lucia Coletti had fallen into conversation with Carolyn Gwynn before the start and asked if she might walk along with her and Peggy Pollard, who was with Carolyn. "Indeed you may," said cordial Carolyn, looking admiringly at Lucia, for she was a slender, pretty figure in a costume that had seen use in Switzerland, it was evident, and was different from what the other girls wore in the style of its short coat, the knickers, stockings and strong shoes. She carried, moreover, an alpenstock, for which she apologized when she saw that the other girls did not carry them.

"I should not have brought this, I think," she said, her dark eyes very serious.

"Why not?" asked Carolyn. "I think that's great."

"But you girls do not carry them. I suppose the hills are not very steep, but it seemed hilly when we were driving with my uncle."

“It is. Sometimes we girls cut sticks to use on hikes or when we are camping in the mountains. Mother uses one all the time in the summer at our camp. We go to the mountains, you know.”

“So do we,” said Lucia, apparently relieved over the idea of being different. She was beginning to care now. These were fine girls and this was a good school.

Mathilde, late, came hurrying up from a car which had deposited her at the school. “Oh, here you are, Lucia. How charming you look! Do you do any mountain climbing in the Alps?”

“Some,” answered Lucia, more annoyed than pleased with the compliment. Already she sensed that these girls were not warmly attached to Mathilde. What was the trouble? It must be that Mathilde was too proud with them. She herself must not be so.

Other girls noticed Lucia, though she was not known to them. She swung along gracefully and easily, accustomed to such trips, that is, to walking and climbing. Her alpenstock was brought into play in more than one little leap over the hilly way with its ravines, now more or less slippery with its damp leaves. The other girls who had thought to take Lucia more or less under their wing, were put to it to keep up with her, and Carolyn frankly laughed over that fact, when Lucia waited for them at the top of one high hill.

“We thought that we’d be so good to you, Lucia, and show the stranger the way and help her over the worst places. Now here you are the champion hiker of us all!”

“Oh, I ought not to do it, I think! Do you care? I forget, and I like to see how quickly I can reach a certain place.”

“Of course we do not care!”

But there was one who did. Poor Mathilde had been quite forgotten by Lucia in her quick advance. Now, as the girls sat down to rest for five minutes or more, Mathilde came toiling up the hill, almost exhausted. Within she was cross at the girls, Lucia included. It certainly wasn’t nice of them to leave her behind! And the girls

were unconscious of offense, for they had started in a large group, many of whom had fallen behind or gone in a different direction to reach a given point.

“I’m all out of practice walking,” gasped Mathilde as she threw herself on the ground, “and I’m a little lost right here. I’m so used to the car, you know. I suppose we must be nearly there now.”

“No, indeed,” said Peggy, who had her opinion of Mathilde but was sorry for her at this juncture. “We have come about half way, Mathilde; but there is an easier way, without so much climbing, if you’d rather take it. See that little dirt road down there? Well, if you’ll follow that, it skirts the hills and you can’t miss the way. Besides, there were several girls that wanted to come that haven’t been well and can’t climb the hills or aren’t supposed to. You’ll have company, I’m sure, for it is a bit longer, and I think they would walk more slowly.”

Mathilde, who had groaned aloud at the statement that they were only half way there, now glanced where Peggy pointed and felt that it was probably the only possible thing to do. Perhaps some car would come along, dirt road though it was. Somebody with a Ford would live on it. Her feet were nearly killing her and she knew they were blistered! She looked at Lucia, to find her looking off at the pretty view, uninterested in Mathilde’s decision.

But now she turned her head and looked at Mathilde kindly. “I would, if I were you, Mathilde. There’s no use suffering when you haven’t been walking much. You ought to take it more gradually. You might injure yourself if you overdo.”

Mathilde felt better at that speech. “You ought to know, Lucia, with all your experience in mountain climbing. I will take your advice, I think, and see you at the breakfast.”

With this Mathilde stiffly rose and looked at the thickets between her and the little road which wound below. “Can you make it, do you think?” asked Peggy. “Take it on the bias, Mathilde. Don’t try to go straight down.”

“There isn’t any good trail, Peggy, but it’s no worse than some we’ve been through already. Going on yourself now?” Mathilde was thinking that she would not start first. They’d watch her go down, of course.

“Yes. We might as well.” Carolyn answered Mathilde, rising as she spoke, though without the effort which had characterized Mathilde’s movement. Carolyn had been in many trails that summer, though that was because of opportunity as well as because of her own volition. “Come on, Mathilde. I’ll go down half way with you. I know how hard it is to start after a body hasn’t been hiking. After I was sick a while last summer—a year ago, I mean, I thought I’d never get limbered up.”

“Thanks, Carolyn,” airily replied Mathilde. “I think I can go down hill, at least!” And off she started, to be tripped by a treacherous root and fall ignominiously, rolling into some bushes which checked further descent.

“Mercy, how she’ll hate that!” exclaimed Peggy, starting toward Mathilde with both Carolyn and Lucia.

Lucia reached Mathilde first and reached a hand to her as Mathilde, flushed and annoyed, sat up and brushed away leaves and dirt from hands and face. “No, I didn’t bruise my face at all,” she said in answer to Lucia’s question. “My foot caught in a trailing vine, I think. That’s what it felt like.”

“I’ll just go down with you,” said Lucia. “You need my old stock, Mathilde. It will swing us over bad places. Go ahead, girls, I’ll join you around the next hill. You said over there, didn’t you?” Lucia was pointing as she spoke.

“Yes, Lucia,” answered Carolyn, noting how Mathilde’s face brightened. “All right, you go down with Mathilde and see if some of the other girls are coming along. Don’t get lost yourself, though. We’ll saunter along and you won’t have much woods to get through over there.”

The girls watched Lucia and Mathilde as the light-footed Italian girl took Mathilde's arm and with a laugh started down hill, instinctively choosing the easiest descent.

"This was a mean hill, Carolyn," said Peggy, "but how Mathilde hates it not to appear 'it' in any way. Have you noticed how she's really studying some and getting her lessons now?"

"Yes," thoughtfully replied Carolyn. "Maybe she really does like Lucia and it isn't just wanting to stand in with a title. That was good of Lucia, wasn't it? She seemed so indifferent at first, but now she's interested in things."

"Mathilde doesn't 'really like' Lucia much, Carolyn; but she ought to now. Isn't this the prettiest part of the trail—don't you think, so wild and lovely? You can't even see a house from here. Look at those girls across there. This was the best way to come. They're having a great time getting across that little branch of the run. Maybe the rain carried away that big log we used to cross on."

Lucia appeared at the appointed place without her alpenstock. She had a few blossoms to show the girls and asked them what they were. "We have ever so many of the same trees and flowers that you do," she said, "but there are some of these fall wild flowers that I never heard of."

The girls discussed the flowers and then asked for Mathilde. "Oh, Mathilde's in a good humor now," smiled Lucia. "A truck came along with two girls sitting behind and dangling over the rear. I left Mathilde sitting beside them, but as she seemed to like my cane, I let her take it. It will help her when she walks again. The truck was going only a little way. The girls were laughing and having a great time of it."

The rest of the trip was made in good time by the three girls, joined by others at different points; and when they came into the temporary camp, with its fires and moving figures of the committee and boys, to say nothing of the fresh arrivals—though

Carolyn, Peggy and Lucia were among the first, oh, what enticing odors of cocoa and of bacon frying met them.

Betty, wearing her cotton crown with its “G. A. A.” came running up for a moment or two with the girls, answering their questions with, “Oh, everything is going off wonderfully. As soon as the girls all get here we’ll scramble the eggs and be ready. No, there isn’t a thing for anybody to do, only to see that no girl is too timid to get all she ought to have to eat. Carolyn, you’re great on looking up the girls with a timidity complex, so do your stuff, as Dick would say.”

“Note how Betty keeps on quoting from her brother,” laughed Peggy.

“It’s very convenient,” laughed Betty. “By the way, have you seen our boys? Do take Lucia over to where they are sometime when it seems appropriate, or drag them over to her, to meet her.”

“So your boys have to be dragged to meet me?” queried Lucia, but with a smile and a comical lifting of her brows.

“I’m not so sure,” said Betty, “but they are keeping in the background at present, for fear that Miss Fox’s cordiality will wax cool.”

“I see. Well, don’t let us keep you, Betty, but do come and sit by me when you eat your breakfast,” said Lucia.

“If any,” added Betty. “I’m going to see that the great Sophomore Class of Lyon High serves enough to make this hike something to be remembered!”

“Hear, hear!” cried Peggy. “It smells like a million dollars, Betty!”

But it was not long before the fifty and a few more of the guest hikers were seated here and there and everywhere it was convenient or attractive. Mathilde was in good humor as she sat with a full plate right next to Lucia, contemplating with satisfaction her own new elk-skin shoes, laced high, in contrast with Lucia’s similar footwear, much the worse for wear. Lucia did look pretty

and romantic, she thought; but her own outfit was much more in the latest style, which for Mathilde was the criterion of worth, along with the impression of expense.

“Oh, it wasn’t any trouble to finish the hike,” said she. “My fall only jolted me and the rest on that funny truck fixed me all right. And your alpenstock was a great help, Lucia. I shall have one myself if we go abroad next summer.”

“You could probably get the same thing in this country,” said Lucia.

Had Peggy been there she would have rolled her eyes at Carolyn, perhaps, at Mathilde’s mention of going abroad, but Peggy was at some distance with another group and this was one of older girls for the most part, girls who had their eye on Lucia for their sorority. When Carolyn and Peggy saw the move on the part of the older girls, they withdrew, though it might not have been necessary, and were sitting on an uneven log with Dotty Bradshaw, Mary Emma Howland and Selma Rardon. They, too, noted the junior girls with Mathilde and Lucia, but made no comment.

“Say, Carolyn,” said Dotty in a low tone, “did you notice Louise Madison and a lot of the University girls at the little skit and pep meeting of the Dramatic Club the other night? I heard Louise say they came over to help root for old Lyon High. And there was Ted Dorrance, big as life, joking with them in the hall before it began. Have he and Louise made up, do you think? I heard that they had a terrible break-up this summer.”

“Oh, a body can hear ’most anything, Dotty. I’m glad Louise and the other girls haven’t forgotten high school days. She’s only a freshman at the University, of course; and that isn’t as thrilling, I imagine, as being a senior at Lyon High.”

“It wouldn’t be, would it?” thoughtfully returned Dotty, while Peggy, who was more interested than she would admit in Ted and Louise, considered Dotty’s bit of news. But here came Betty with her plate piled full.

“Is the last egg scrambled, Betty?” asked Dotty. “Come on, we’ve saved room enough for you on this log. We spread out, kind of, to keep it. It isn’t as soft as the ground, but easier to sit on with a plate. I considered getting down with my plate and a cup full of chocolate and gave it up.”

“I will, too,” assented Betty, carefully balancing her plate as she cautiously sat down on the big log and the others adjusted themselves after their move. “I’m lucky to have such a good place. You must have reserved your seat early.”

“We did. Look at Lucia with the juniors, Kiddie.”

“I noticed. I looked for her because she spoke of wanting to be with us.” Betty said “us” instead of “me.” “It is good for Lucia to get acquainted,” she added, but Betty pursed up her lips as she made that remark.

“Q. E. D. sororities,” said Peggy apropos of the geometry which the sophomores were just beginning.

“Yes,” said Carolyn, “but the less said about them right now the better. By the way, Louise Madison is being rushed by the Kappa—oh, now I’ve forgotten the rest of it, but it’s one of the best in the University.”

“Well, ask what Louise thinks of sororities,” said Betty, “if you ever see her. Doesn’t she come to see your sister, Carolyn?”

“Yes.”

“Did Louise belong to a high school sorority, Carolyn?” asked Dotty.

“No, she didn’t but I never dared ask her why.”

“She must have been asked,” said Betty, “because she was so prominent in everything.”

“That isn’t a sign. Look at that silly Rose—I can’t think of her name right now. She wasn’t in anything, but she was the High Mogul in her sorority.”

“Social stuff,” said Peggy Pollard. “That is a good line, Betty. Don’t think that scholarship is the only thing.”

Betty looked at Peggy to see if she were serious or joking, but saw that Peggy was serious.

“Maybe you’re right, Peggy. Perhaps doing the things you are expected to do in school isn’t all there is. Still, I have a prejudice in favor of getting your lessons, or rather for girls that do it or do something else at any rate.”

“Social stuff keeps them very busy, Betty,” said Peggy, laughing now. “And if you want to get married—well, just watch that kind of a girl.”

“Peggy’s getting too sophisticated,” said Carolyn. “That is what my sister would call it. But I’d like to combine the ‘social line’ with good sense and ‘doing something’ as Betty means it. About Louise, remember that with possibly one or two exceptions, sororities are new in Lyon High. Of course, I don’t really know how many may have flourished without anybody’s knowing a thing about it. There always are little cliques, I guess. But let’s talk about Hallowe’en. How about a sophomore party that night, or a smaller one anyway?”

“That would be great, Carolyn,” said Dotty, “though I’m afraid we haven’t time to get up a class party. Betty, can I get you another bun?”

“No thanks. I’ve eaten two.”

“That is nothing. The rest of us had three. I insist. Hand me your plate, please. No one shall say that the chairman of the sophomore refreshment committee didn’t have enough to eat. There are loads left and I see that Chet Dorrance is cooking some more bacon, just in time for Betty’s last sandwich!”

Without protest Betty handed her plate to Dotty. She was tired and “ought to have strength for the hike back,” as Peggy suggested. And when Dotty came back, didn’t the three boys come with her,

to stand in front of the five upon the log and suggest a sophomore class yell.

“It’s too much mixed up, Chet,” said Carolyn, “and we’ll let the others tell how good the sophomore committee was. Aren’t you a reporter for the Lyon paper, Chet? Write up Betty as chairman.”

“I will. Betty, may I hike home with the chairman and her friends?”

“Of course, unless Chauncey wants you in the car.”

“What Chauncey wants is not the question, ladies, and there are almost no supplies to go back. I speak for a hot dog to eat on the way.”

“Make as many ‘hot dogs’ as you want, Chet,” laughed Betty, taking a good bite from her own sandwich just brought. “You boys ought to have all you want for helping us out. Please see that Miss Fox is looked after.”

“Miss Fox has had every attention, and we hope that this is not the last time we go on a out—I mean a picnic—with the G. A. A. girls.”

“Hear, hear,” said Dotty, widely grinning.

CHAPTER X—A STARTLING SITUATION

In a number of G. A. A. girls as large as this it was natural that Betty Lee should have contact with a good many outside of her own class. Lucia looked her up and her new satellite, Mathilde, was not far from Lucia; but one junior and one senior girl remained in Lucia's neighborhood at the start of the hike home. Mathilde's fall and incidents of the hike out had been related to Betty while she ate her luncheon and were enlivened by Dotty's comments. Betty, however, was not disturbed by any of the little undercurrents. She wasn't jealous of anybody, didn't hate anybody, the sophomore part of the hike had been a success and the whole thing was great fun.

Mathilde still carried Lucia's alpenstock on the way back and used it with great effect. She seemed in a happy mood and the only remark which might have been considered to carry a sting was one made when Betty waxed enthusiastic over hearing a meadow lark. "Oh, listen!" cried Betty. "The birds aren't all gone yet by any means, and if there isn't a dear old meadow lark singing in the sunshine!"

Lucia looked interested and followed Betty's glance, trying to find the bird. But Mathilde laughed. "Oh, yes. Betty Lee's from the country and knows the birds!"

Betty said nothing, but a junior girl remarked, "Well, then, let me stick to Betty on this hike. We study those things in the Girl Reserve camp. Are you a 'Girl Reserve,' Betty?"

"Oh, yes. I joined last year, but I don't belong to the same group in high school that you do, of course."

"No. We've been watching the fall migration and gathering some of the fall wild flowers for botany class, too."

"I'd like to do that," said Lucia. Mathilde tossed her head and looked disgusted, saying something about there being such a "fad for nature study."

“It’s more than a fad,” said Lucia. “It’s good for you to get outdoors more, and then it helps your country to look after the birds and wild flowers. I don’t know much about your American birds and flowers and trees, but I could learn, perhaps.”

“Oh, that would be lovely, Lucia!” cried Betty. “I don’t know much, but I can tell you a little when we take the hikes. You’d soon get ahead of my small knowledge, though.”

“Girls,” said the junior, “I’m going to have a party Hallowe’en night and I’d love to have you come. I’m getting it up rather suddenly, but there are a few sophomore girls that I want. Will you be one of them?”

“Thank you,” said Lucia. “I will ask Mother.”

“I’d be delighted,” said Mathilde.

“It’s so good of you,” smiled Betty. “I think I can come. Some of the girls were talking about a sophomore party, but I don’t see how we could get up such a big affair on short notice.”

“I wouldn’t try a class affair,” pleasantly advised the junior. “I’ll call you up, perhaps; but if I don’t you will understand, I hope. I’m sending out some funny invitations and suppose you just give me your addresses now, though I could look it up in the directory, of course.”

Addresses were scribbled on scraps of paper, which was all any of them could muster, it seemed. The invited guests were naturally wondering what they would be expected to wear, though Hallowe’en customs gave them a pretty good idea. “What sort of a party is it?” asked Mathilde, “a costume party?”

“Yes. Wear anything you happen to have, and a mask, of course. We’ll do the usual things, indoors and out if it isn’t too freezing cold by that time. We’ve an attic and a basement and I’m going to use both for stunts.”

“How jolly!” Betty’s face brightened with her happiest enthusiasm, and the junior, Marcella Waite, was glad that she had invited her, privately thinking Betty a “dear.”

Betty was wondering if Marcella was one of those who wanted Lucia in a sorority, according to the ideas of Dotty and the rest. Oh, wasn’t life nice with so many mysteries and good friends and everything and plenty of things to do! She would probably meet a number of the older girls at this party. It would have been more than human not to be pleased at notice from the juniors. But of course it was probably on account of Lucia. She needn’t plume herself upon it.

They had played a few games before starting back, but to walk back five miles and arrive in time for lunch, even a late one, precluded a long stay at the picnic grounds. Besides this was a hike. It was about ten-thirty when Betty received her invitation. The girls strolled along, not caring much whether they made any “record time” or not. This would be their last hike, they supposed, while the country was still so pretty.

Chet, who had asked the privilege of “seeing Betty home” with much fun and nonsense, had gotten separated from her group and was seen in the distance with Carolyn and Peggy. Kathryn was nowhere in sight.

And now they had reached that wild stretch through which the early hikers had come and where Carolyn, Peggy, Lucia and Mathilde had rested, on one of the hills. That one they avoided but crossed the little stream on stones recently provided by the hikers. Lightly they jumped from one to the other, balancing uncertainly on the log which was left by former waters, turned from its proper position, as Marcella said. “There must have been a big current here,” said Marcella, “to move that old thing that’s been here for years!”

“There ought to be some flowers along the little stream, ought there not?” asked Lucia, whose English was often a bit formal.

“I think those frosts were pretty bad on the wild flowers, Lucia,” replied Marcella. But Lucia was strolling up stream along a low bank lined with bushes, and the other girls followed her. Betty heard another meadow lark and turned to follow with her eyes the course of a hawk that flew from a dead tree back from the stream. “That’s a marsh hawk,” she said, turning to Lucia, only to find Lucia rising with an exclamation from where she had been stooping close to Betty. She held up her hand, looking at it. “I’ve been bitten!” she exclaimed. “What sort of snakes do you have here, Betty?”

“Oh—a lot of them, most of them harmless!” said Betty, startled, but not wanting to frighten Lucia, who was white, yet with her lips pressed together in perfect self-control. She whipped out her handkerchief hastily. “We must make a tourniquet at once. Let me wipe this off—and I’ll suck out the poison, Lucia. I did once when Doris was bitten.” Betty’s memory went back to one awful experience alone in the woods with Doris.

“You will not,” firmly replied Lucia. “It is dangerous for you might have some broken spot in your mouth. Reach in my pocket, Betty. I carry stuff for this sort of thing. Mother told me to bring it.”

As she talked, Lucia, though white and trembling, was squeezing the wound, now bleeding a little, while Betty shakily was tying the handkerchief about Lucia’s wrist, just above the scars and stooped for a stick to draw it tightly. Marcella, meantime, was at hand without a word and reached in Lucia’s pocket instead of Betty.

“Look out!” cried Lucia as when Betty stooped there was a rustle in the grass and something long and slim darted across the little path between the thickly lined stream and other bushes at this point. It all happened almost too quickly to describe. Betty recoiled, Marcella snatching the little stick from her hand and not losing a minute in tightening the bandage or tourniquet.

“Lucia—I saw it! I think it’s only a garter snake!”

Betty gave one quick glance at Lucia, seeing that Lucia herself was pouring something from a tiny vial into the wound. The snake was lying under the fallen leaves, Betty thought, where a maple tree had been shedding its brown and golden foliage. There was a stone of good size at the very foot of the tree and this Betty seized, standing a moment to locate the snake if she could. She thought that she detected a slight movement under a pile of leaves and launched the stone, stepping back immediately after to pick up a branch, thick and broken, that also lay fairly near.

But the stick was not needed then. The stone, to Betty's own surprise, had hit the mark. There was a great whipping of leaves for a few moments. In spite of weeds and other growth Betty could see the pattern on the little snake, not so long after all—oh, thanks be—it was a garter snake! Betty had dreaded its being either a rattler or a copperhead. There were what the boys called vipers, too, she had heard. How sensible of Lucia to have come prepared!

“You've got it, Betty,” said Marcella with excitement. “It's only a garter snake, Lucia—I'm sure. How do you feel?”

“All right,” said Lucia, though her pale face did not bear testimony to her words. “I ought to have used my knife to open up the place a little. You do it, Marcella! No, you'd hate to hurt me, wouldn't you?”

Bracing up with her words, Lucia drew a little pearl-handled knife from her other pocket and carefully enlarged the punctures made by the snake. She paid not a bit of attention to Betty or the struggles of the snake caught by the stone.

Betty, who had seen Dick kill snakes but had always felt rather sorry for the snake and had never killed one herself, was bracing herself to finish what she had begun. But when she cleared away the leaves with her stick and could see the results of her throw, she saw that the stone had crushed the snake's head and that the demise would not take long. Nothing more was necessary and she turned

from the painful sight to Lucia, who had succeeded in what she had attempted. My, but Lucia was brave!

“I can’t be sure, girls, that that was the snake that bit me,” said Lucia, “so I’ll just do everything, just as if it were something very poisonous. There isn’t any of the venom that’s very good to get into your system, I imagine. Can we sit down somewhere?”

The girls helped Lucia to a spot safe and clear where the hill began to rise. None of the others were in sight, though it had been only a few minutes since they had separated from several of them. Mathilde, to be sure, was there, but useless.

“You feel all wobbly, I know, Lucia,” said Betty, her arm around Lucia, who sat without a word, though her brows were drawn together in a frown.

“Yes, yes. It is painful. Betty, you could loosen the tourniquet now, I’m sure, and suppose you tie it again a little higher up.”

“Oh, I wish we had some way of getting you home,” said Marcella. “I’ll watch and hail somebody. Lean over on Betty, Lucia.”

Marcella was afraid that Lucia was going to faint. But that did not happen. “I do feel a bit sick, Marcella, but I never fainted in my life and I’ll not begin now. I can walk home. It isn’t so much, but not being sure what sort of a bite it is, I’ve had to hurt myself more, you see. I’d rather look for flowers and birds, Betty, than for snakes. I thought I saw a flower under the leaves and stooped for it—and found a snake instead!”

“Oh, it’s just too bad—your first hike and everything!” Betty was loosening the tourniquet and making ready to put it on again. Marcella had run around the hill.

Presently two girls made their appearance and Marcella came back. “We’ll make our way over to the road, Lucia. I’ve got a guard stationed to stop any automobile that looks as if it were being driven by anybody safe—nobody that would kidnap us for ransom, I mean. Come on, if you think you can walk as far as the road.”

“I could walk all the way home, Marcella,” said Lucia, smiling for the first time. “There is nothing the matter with me but a scare. Wait till I take a look at that snake!”

By this time Betty dared push the stone off the snake’s head, and they all regarded it. They all agreed that it was a “big garter snake,” though Lucia remarked that she could tell better about its belonging to the dangerous group if she could have seen the shape of the head. “But it’s shapeless now, poor thing,” said Betty. “You did a bad thing for yourself, snakey, when you bit Lucia!”

“It was only protecting itself,” said Lucia.

“What was that medicine, Lucia?”

“I don’t know how Mother fixed it, but I heard her ask Uncle if he kept any permanganate of potash crystals, and when he said no, she sent to the drug store. She wrapped this bottle in cotton and told me not to lose it. I had full instructions what to do if I got bitten by a—rattler, I believe. Mother makes a lot of fuss over me!” Lucia closed her remark rather apologetically, but the other girls were far from any critical thought. The Countess Coletti had “fussed” to some purpose this time. If it had been a diamond-backed rattlesnake! And perhaps it wasn’t the garter snake that had bitten Lucia. Mathilde now kept bringing that up with little sympathetic remarks like, “It is such a shame, Lucia! I do hope that it will prove to be nothing serious. I don’t think that it could have been a rattlesnake, do you, Betty?”

Mathilde had screamed and run to a safe distance before she knew what it was all about. Cautiously she had approached to see what had happened and ran again as Betty started after the snake. Again she had tried to come up and be sympathetic, but could not stand it to see the wound. “I faint so easily, girls,” she had said, weakly, when the knife came out. “I’ll have to go away.”

“Well if there’s any fainting to be done,” Marcella had said, “don’t do it here!”

But the girls scarcely thought of Mathilde at all until it was all over and she sat down by Lucia on the hillside. Alas for Mathilde, and she had wanted to join the sorority to which Marcella belonged! Yet Mathilde had not been trained to courage or helpfulness and was not altogether to blame for her inefficiency on this occasion. It had been a difficult situation, when speed was a necessary element and knowing what to do another.

“I looked out for the stick,” said Mathilde, handing the alpenstock to Lucia, who took it with a smile.

“I’m glad you did,” she replied courteously. “No, Betty, with this I’ll need no help. I’m getting along famously now and don’t feel sick any more. Come on.”

They made their way to the little dirt road and walked slowly toward the city, relieving the guard, as Marcella put it. The other girls hurried on, promising to send back any conveyance that they might come across, provided it were possible to engage it. “Don’t take the trouble,” urged Lucia.

But when they had walked about a mile further, Lucia was not sorry when the Allen car with Chauncey and Kathryn came speeding toward them. Without a word Lucia climbed in, smiling her welcome. Marcella, Mathilde and Betty followed, Betty asking Kathryn how it happened.

“One of the girls went to a house and telephoned,” replied Kathryn. “Chauncey had just gotten home after taking the things Miss Fox wanted brought back to wherever she wanted ’em. He picked me up on the way—some of us were just getting into town, and so we’re here. Now tell me, are you all right, Lucia?”

“Yes; just tired from being scared. I wonder why the girl didn’t telephone for our car.”

“Afraid of scaring your mother, she said,” Kathryn replied. “We’ll take you right up home.”

“I want Betty, too, please,” said Lucia. “Will you come?”

“Of course I’ll come,” said Betty, though wondering how she would get a chance to telephone her mother.

It was Betty’s first near look at the beautiful Murchison place when Chauncey drove in and stopped at its impressive front, but Betty had other thoughts and dreaded the coming interview with the countess. Perhaps she would not be at home, however, and that would be worse.

A butler admitted the two girls, though Lucia did not ring and hurried through the hall and up the stairs. “I need you as a shock absorber,” said Lucia in a low tone, a half smile twisting her lips, and Betty made a low response. But Betty thought that she would not enjoy being a shock absorber and felt none too comfortable. Still, she thought to herself, the important thing was to make sure that Lucia was “all right.”

It was an uncomfortable few minutes for sober Betty when Lucia entered a large and beautifully furnished sitting-room upstairs and found the countess there. Briefly Lucia told Countess Coletti what had happened and said that she had followed directions. “The girls were lovely, Mother, and I brought Betty along to tell you better how the snake looked.”

The countess rose in some excitement and went directly to a low table on which the telephone apparatus stood. She tapped her foot impatiently while she waited for the operator to put her in touch with a doctor, whose presence was requested and the reason told him. Then there followed a busy few minutes of directions to Lucia and maids or persons of some sort, and when Lucia was ordered to her room, Betty rose from her chair to go.

“Mother, can’t Betty stay to lunch with me?” asked Lucia, protesting. “I asked her to.”

“Oh, but,” began Betty, but the countess turned to Betty, whom she had scarcely noticed, with a charming smile. “Another time, Lucia. Thank you, Betty Lee, for everything. Now I must see to Lucia,” And Betty understood that she was dismissed. That

smile would make everything seem all right, thought Betty, as she was courteously bowed out by a solemn butler. "I imagine that Countess Coletti tries that on the count times when she is having her own way! But she can certainly do things!"

So ran Betty's thoughts, for Betty was learning to be an observing little person, though ashamed of herself when her observations were the least unfriendly. No car but the street-car waited for Betty, but she took one after quite a walk and went home to tell her mother and the rest all about the "latest excitement" and to enjoy a delayed lunch.

CHAPTER XI—HALLOWE'EN SURPRISES

It was Hallowe'en, so much more thrilling in the city than in the small place which Betty Lee formerly called home. In the different suburbs, like villages themselves, children were already appearing on the street in costumes and masks, although it was scarcely dark. Many of them carried baskets, for in gypsy fashion, perhaps, they were accustomed to receive contributions from the persons whose bells they rang.

Mrs. Lee did not like the custom and would not allow Dick or Doris to "beg," as she called it. "Have all the fun you want in costume," she said, "but don't ask for charity!" Mr. Lee made no mention of the fact that he intended to trail the children a little to see that they were not carried away by the freedom of the night, but he told his wife that Policeman Leary would be "on the job" and that he was an easy-going soul when children were concerned. Mrs. Lee was not so sure that easy-going would do on Hallowe'en, but her husband explained. "He will not stand for any destruction of property, particularly in this neighborhood, but he's not likely to arrest children or be hard on them."

From the standpoint of Dick, Doris and Betty, everything was lovely. Even little Amy Lou was permitted to dress up and as she made an adorable little gypsy, with a fetching mask balanced on her small nose, Doris was rather proud to lead her forth. "We'll bring you right back if you get fussy, though," warned Dick, "and I have to go with the boys pretty soon."

"Oh, Dickie, I won't fuss, honest! And Dorry will take care of me, won't you Dorry?"

"Yes, for a while, anyhow, as long as you ought to stay out. I wish you were going to be at home, Betty!"

"I don't," frankly replied Betty, who was in front of the mirror seeing how she looked in the small black mask, from whose openings her eyes twinkled. "But you will have lots of fun, and if

you give Amy Lou a grand little outing, she'll be angelic when she comes in; for Mother's going to have a little Hallowe'en party for her, all by herself, with a great surprise!"

As Betty spoke, she looked down at the tiny gypsy, very solemn and important now. Amy Lou smiled up, however, with a smile much like that with which her older sister was regarding her. "Give me a name, Betty! Give me a name!" she demanded, "a gypsy name!"

"Oh, you're the Queen of the gypsies, the Princess Maria Sophia Cleopatra Amy Lou."

"All right," shouted Amy Lou, running out of the bedroom to follow Doris, who was ready to start.

Betty's costume was not one as hastily fabricated as those of the other children for her mother, realizing that she was to mingle with other boys and girls who would be well costumed, had gone to considerable trouble to make her "little girl" pretty. Betty was Titania of the fairies and was airily dressed in white with "spangles" appropriately attached, Roman pearls around her young neck, several tinkling bracelets on her arms and a few tiny silver bells so disposed that they sounded a little as she walked. And now her mother brought a warm wrap for her shoulders and the long, shrouding domino that she was to wear over all. What fun!

There followed the ride to the party in Mr. Lee's car and a merry good-bye to him as she joined the company of shrouded figures or funnily costumed ones that were descending from automobiles, or entering the gates, or being ushered in at the door of the house. My, it was going to be a large party, but Marcella had told her at school that she had decided not to have it confined to juniors at all. "I owe such a lot of the girls, and so I'm going to have—everybody!"

It was not quite that, to be sure, but the upstairs rooms were full where wraps were being laid aside. How funny not to know a soul to speak to! But Carolyn had told her what her costume would be

and she had confided what hers would be. Perhaps Carolyn knew about some of the others.

“Oh, aren’t you sweet!” squealed somebody in a high, assumed voice. “Look, girls, here’s the queen of the fairies. Now, who is she? Gilt hair, cute chin and a dimple or two!”

Betty laughed at the description. So she had gilt hair, had she? That hair had been arranged as she never wore it before. She did hope that she wouldn’t be found out right away; yet this girl was a tall one and nobody she knew, she imagined. But she picked up her fairy wand, laid aside while she removed her wraps, and waved it regally toward the speaker. She, too, tried to disguise her voice as she said, “The fairy queen bestows honors and gifts for tonight!”

At that a slim little person in a gay gypsy costume ran up, holding out her palm. “Cross my palm with a nickel, Titania, and I’ll tell you a fortune, for even the fairies don’t know everything!”

The gypsy’s voice was pitched low and rang a little hollow; but surely Betty knew that hand and arm, all covered with rings, beads and glittering gold or brass! “Oh, it’s you, Gypsy, isn’t it?” she whispered in the gypsy’s ear. “I might know that you would be a real gypsy tonight! You look darling!”

“Then I didn’t fool you a little bit! I hope I have better luck with other people. Was it my voice?”

“No, your hand, Gypsy. And did you know me right off?”

“No, honey, not till you said ‘Gypsy’ just now. Nobody else calls me that much—yet.”

“Yet is a good word, Kathryn. After tonight you may be called that more. Let’s go around together, then, the Gypsy Queen and the Fairy Queen, that is, I’m supposed to be it.”

Together Kathryn Allen and Betty Lee descended the stairs where their feet sank into a soft carpet. Below, on either side of the hall, large rooms stretched out, opening in to the hall with its pillars and draperies. “What a lovely home,” said Betty.

“Yes, isn’t it. I’ve never been here before. And aren’t the Hallowe’en decorations cute?”

Arm in arm the girls entered at the right, where a sort of receiving line seemed to be. And there was Marcella, without her mask, yet covered with a domino which concealed her costume. “Hello, girls,” she greeted them. “I’m sorry not to be able to speak your names, but I think you need no introduction for I can guess what you are without any trouble. Titania, greetings. By what name shall I call your friend?”

“Allow me to present the Gypsy Queen, Miss Waite,” said Betty with mock formality.

“Happy to meet you. Titania, let me introduce the Sultan of Turkey and the Pirate of Penzance.”

Two tall lads stood just beyond Marcella. Betty shook hands with a richly dressed “Sultan” and a wildly equipped pirate, who looked very handsome and bent over Betty’s hand like some cavalier of old. Betty wondered if these boys were guests or just on a sort of receiving committee. If the pirate were one of the boys in school, he must be a senior or one of the older junior boys she was sure.

Two boys, who had been chatting with some others, turned back to be introduced to Betty and Kathryn by the pirate and Betty understood that they, too, properly belonged in the receiving line. All were masked except Marcella, who wanted to meet her guests in her proper person.

“The thing to do next,” said one of the girls, “is to go through the main rooms, see the decorations, visit the tent and have your fortune told, go and bob for apples or do some of the other stunts, whatever you can get in before the masked dancing begins. We’re going to have the old-fashioned square dances just as soon as everybody is here. But of course, you’re to talk to the other girls and boys and try to find out who they are—oh, you’ll see what to do. Marcella has somebody to tell you.”

Kathryn and Betty, however, did not feel like fortunes yet. They looked all around for Carolyn, who evidently had not arrived, and had an amusing conversation with a rollicking clown, who turned out to be, so they thought, Chet Dorrance; but he would not acknowledge it when Kathryn said that she “guessed it was Chet.” Betty hoped that Ted was there among some of the tall figures. He probably knew Marcella.

“It’s a good thing we’ve been having the funny old dances in ‘gym,’ isn’t it?” asked Kathryn. “Do you suppose the boys know ‘em?”

“They can learn. I imagine we’ll all be told what to do. Besides, nobody has to dance that doesn’t want to.”

Carolyn came and found the girls, though she was claimed almost immediately by another clown, very spotty as to his ruffled and bulging suit and wearing at first a mask which covered his entire face, but that proved too hot. He had an ordinary mask in his pocket, he told Carolyn, who encouraged him to put it on. “Get into a corner and whisk off that hot mask,” she advised. “I’ll turn my back to you and hand you the little one.”

“You won’t give me away if you happen to see?”

“Of course not. I will keep your secret till we unmask!” she added, in lofty tones, then giggled.

Meantime, Betty decided that she would have her fortune told. Kathryn said that she would do it, too, and see what the other gypsy looked like.

The tent was a flimsy affair, as one put up in a drawing room would necessarily be. The fortune-teller was one of the older girls, who did it very cleverly. Her costume was not like Kathryn’s, but very gay with sashes and ribbons, beads and jewelry of all sorts. Her long earrings glittered and the wide gold bracelets that she wore jingled as they were struck by other loose narrow ones.

“I see that you will have to make a great choice,” she said to Betty, as Betty stretched forth her capable little hand and the gypsy pored over it, or looked at as much of Betty’s face as she could see.

“You have gifts. You might have a career. You are musical and there are some practical lines in your hand, too. Your life line is good—yes, I see a long life for you. You are rather creative.”

“What is the great choice?” asked Betty.

“Oh, yes. It’s the usual choice between marriage and a career.”

“Couldn’t I have both?”

“It doesn’t work,” laughed the gypsy, forgetting her pose. “I mean to say that you may have several serious love affairs and you may choose to marry. When you take your mirror tonight and your candle and look in the mirror, repeat this charm; for it will drive away the goblins and witches and other evil spirits and you may really see the one you are to love best!”

The gypsy handed Betty a piece of paper, cut from a gay Hallowe’en strip of some sort. It was folded and the gypsy warned her not to open it until just before she “performed the fatal rite.”

“It will lose its power if you do,” said she. “No, friend gypsy, let me see what the fates have for you. Oh, yes. That’s a nice hand, good lines, some mentality, not too much, some gifts; you will marry and there will be several, one, two, three children, a long life—but beware a dark woman who will try to come between you and the man you love!”

“She isn’t so good,” laughed Kathryn after she and Betty left the tent, “but she was jolly all right. If it is a dark woman, it can’t be you, Betty, so we’ll remain friends, I see.”

“I suppose there’s some arrangements for the mirror stunt,” said Betty. “Oh, there’s the music—let’s see where it is. Why, Gypsy, Marcella has a real orchestra—or a number of the pieces anyhow. Listen! They’re tuning up!”

The fun of the old-fashioned dances began. The Pirate of Penzance made straight for Betty, who wondered more than ever who he could be. He was evidently speaking in his natural voice, but she had never heard it before, at least it was not at all familiar. Marcella must know him very well, Betty thought, for she noticed a private confab between the two.

Her pirate was very graceful, she thought, and his costume, with its dark red and dark blue, and gay sash with its array of knives, was a good one. The knives he laid aside for the dances, but assumed them again when it was announced that the company would now proceed to the basement where witches and goblins were holding their annual frolic. “Be very careful,” announced the Pirate of Penzance, “and the witches will be friendly.”

Down the stairs to the large basement with its concrete floor, tripped the company. Except for the part devoted to the furnaces, the place was decorated and the only light came from large pumpkins, amusingly cut and containing the customary candles. A hollow-voiced witch in a long black robe stood at the door and odd little goblins and black cats and other appropriate Hallowe’en figures hung from the low ceiling of the cellars.

Betty had not seen the place to bob for apples, mentioned by the girl of the receiving line, but here she found it, and groups of boys and girls separated to perform the various Hallowe’en stunts provided. The Pirate of Penzance had held Betty’s arm coming down stairs, but now, with the girl she thought was Marcella—indeed it must be—he was guiding this one or that one and helping to start the fun. Could it be Ted Dorrance? He was tall enough, but no; he was good-looking but his chin was different and his mouth firmer some way; and if it were Ted, he had stained his skin darker, that was all.

But Betty had little time to think. She was doing things with the rest, with boys and girls whose identity she did not know. Neither Kathryn nor Carolyn were in sight, though the light was dim enough in this spooky place, and they might be around.

And now her turn came to go into the “hole in the wall,” a jog of some sort in the solid masonry, before which a black curtain fell. By the light from a widely grinning pumpkin Betty read the charm which was supposed to keep her from baleful influences:

“O Witches and Goblins, by this little light,
Please send me the face of my true love tonight!”

“Say it out loud,” prompted a voice behind Betty. The black witch stood there.

“All right. Do I light my candle first?”

“Yes.” The witch, who wanted to laugh herself and chuckled a little now over something Betty wondered about, held out a match.

Betty scratched the match on the rough stone of the basement’s big partition. It went out and so did a second one. There was a little draught somewhere, that made the curtain shake a little.

“Don’t let the third one go out,” warned the witch, now solemn and speaking with a deep voice. “When the third one fails, the bad luck hails!”

“How awful!” cried Betty, giggling as she struck the third match. But she held her hand so that the little flame was sheltered from the draught and the candle was lit successfully.

“Better watch the flame while you go behind the curtain,” suggested the witch in almost human tones, “and don’t set anything on fire. Here’s the mirror.”

Darkness met Betty as she passed beyond the curtain. She felt like examining the place, especially when she heard a door softly close. It seemed right by her—oh, her candle went out! Oh, but it was spooky. Well, she’d brace up, say her little charm and pretend when she went out that it had been all right.

“O Witches and Goblins, by this little light,
Please send me the face of my true love tonight!”

Betty's voice was a little unsteady. It wasn't any fun to be in this unknown spot all in the dark. That thick curtain behind her didn't let in a bit of light. She'd wait just the appropriate moment when she would be supposed to look in the mirror and then wouldn't she skip out!

But in that little moment a match struck close by her and while she could not help a low exclamation, her candle was lit for her and a voice whispered, "Good work. You didn't squeal or anything. I was here just for fun, but I didn't blow your candle out. I shut the door that had sprung open. See?"

"Oh!" gasped Betty, looking at the brown hands that lit the candle.

"Now you shall see somebody, if it isn't your own true love," whispered the voice. "Look in your mirror, Titania!"

Betty looked. She saw the dark costume of the Pirate of Penzance, whose amused face, without the mask, smiled at her from the mirror. "Oh!" she gasped again.

"Now let me see you without the mask," whispered the lips in the mirror.

Betty handed her candle to the pirate and obediently took off her mask, smiling up with confidence into the "nice face" that the supposed pirate carried.

"Thanks," said he, "Good-bye."

The pirate blew out the candle this time and Betty heard the door near at hand softly close. He had gone, and Betty lost no time in appearing beyond the curtain. The witch looked suspiciously at her and Betty was glad that the light was dim in the basement. She kept away from the rays of the pumpkin.

"Didn't your light go out?" asked the witch. "I was talking to the next masker but I saw no light for a moment through the crack by the curtain."

“Yes, but—there was a match there—so I—well, I looked in the mirror all right and, of course, I saw my true love!”

“Fine,” said the girl to test her luck next. “Hurry up and give me a match, please. That whole bunch that’s bobbing for apples is coming here next.”

Betty was glad that there was opportunity for no more questioning, such as “where did the match come from?” Why, what a funny time! The Pirate of Penzance was nobody she had ever seen before. He must be some friend of Marcella’s who knew all about the place, basement and all. And wasn’t it nice of him to do that? He was quite clear that he wasn’t her “true love,” though he looked older, older than Ted even, and perhaps he was engaged to somebody. Of course! He was some University student, engaged to some senior who was here. No, if she had been here, he wouldn’t have paid so much attention to Betty and danced with her so much. Well, then, he was just helping Marcella with her party and having a lot of fun on the side.

By this time Betty was used to mingling with the unknown, guessing at who they were and joking with any one at all as it happened. She thought she knew a few of the juniors, whom she had known as sophomores last year. Then there was some of her own class she was pretty sure, boys that would be invited to equalize the numbers of boys and girls, and she knew what girls of her class had been invited. Size, however, was no help, for even if juniors were supposed to be older and to be still “growing,” some of the juniors were shorter than some of the sophomores.

Carolyn Gwynne was going up from the basement as Betty reached the stairs. “Oh, Betty, I mean Titania,” she cried, lowering her voice. “I guess nobody heard that. Excuse me. Did you go in to look in the mirror and did they have the big mirror up then?”

“No. I mean I went in to see my true love in a glass, but I was given a little hand mirror.”

“Well, when I went in they had a square mirror propped on a sort of ledge in front of me. But the next girl had just gotten inside when she dropped her candle and squealed terribly and I suppose she reached out to grab something and down came the mirror and smashed like everything!

“She came out all scared to pieces and the witch started to tell her it was bad luck all in fun, but the girl cried and Marcella came running to tell her that the mirror didn’t matter and there wasn’t any such thing as good and bad luck really.”

“Which girl was it?”

“She took off her mask, but I didn’t know her. It was some junior girl, I think. Marcella took her upstairs. Why, she is in a colonial costume, Martha Washington or Dolly Madison or something like that.”

“I don’t believe Martha and Dolly would dress alike, Carolyn,” laughed Betty. “Let’s go and sit down somewhere. I think the orchestra’s going to play again. So many of the crowd have come up from ‘witchdom’ now. It was sort of spooky downstairs, but such fun.”

“Wasn’t it. Did you see anything in your mirror, Betty?”

“Oh, of course,” laughed Betty, who wasn’t going to tell. Not even Carolyn, or Kathryn were to know about that little interchange between Titania, queen of the fairies, and a Pirate of Penzance!

Betty was conscious of some inward excitement later, when the little orchestra played familiar and lively tunes and the invitation to supper was given. What exclamations and little squeals and giggles and happy laughter there were when the unmasking took place at the tables.

“I knew all the time it was you!”

“Oh, you fooled me perfectly! I hadn’t an idea!”

“I thought it was you, and then you had changed your voice so that I was not sure.”

“You gave yourself away when you used that funny expression about Jean. I’d heard you say that before.”

“Yes, and when you wrinkled up your forehead I knew you!”

Such were some of the merry expressions.

Betty was quite impressed; but she looked all around, as best she could without seeming to look, to see if she could see the Pirate of Penzance. But he was nowhere to be seen and much else engrossed her attention, her pretty place card, the little Hallowe’en souvenir at each plate, the good supper, light but savory, and the general jollity. Betty had scarcely given a thought to Lucia, except to wonder if a pretty Italian peasant could be Lucia. But she found herself at the same table with Lucia, who was in a beautiful costume as the Queen of Sheba. Real jewels flashed on her neck and arms and Betty wondered how she dared wear them.

“Are you all over your being bitten by the snake, Lucia?” someone asked.

“Oh, yes. I want to forget it. It didn’t make me sick at all, though Mother kept me at home from school for several days. She wasn’t sure what sort of a snake it was, you see, so she had everything attended to. I’m going on hikes and everything just the same, though I’ll not try to pick a flower without looking. That serpent ought to have been in winter quarters and wasn’t.”

“Are you going in for athletics?”

“Some of it. I’m going to swim, like Betty Lee, and then I ride, though I may not enter their course here. I play hockey on the ice, but I don’t know about it here. You have regular class teams, don’t you, and have to be elected in some way before you can be on one?”

“Yes, in a way you’re chosen.”

“Well, I’m not an applicant for anything.” Lucia smiled but tossed her head up a little proudly, and a look was exchanged between two of the sophomores. If Lucia played hockey in Switzerland, she might not be a bad person to have on the team. Perhaps she could be persuaded to “try out” for it. They would get her to play on a “scrub team” some time for fun.

But what was that junior saying?

“What is a mere hockey team to the Queen of Sheba?”

CHAPTER XII—BEATING THE JUNIORS WITH LUCIA

Life went on in such a rush! It always did, but that was half the fun now, Betty thought. At home little was demanded of her except the regular little duties, given to each of the children and expected more by their father than their mother, though for her benefit.

Athletics started off with a boom, pep meetings, the new football team on the platform, the organization of the girls' teams, all sorts of try-outs and some scheming. Alas, the seniors who had been on last year's champion football team left such a hole that it was hard to fill with material good enough to make a winning team. And oh, how sad it was when a series of defeats made the championship out of the question for Lyon High. At least they must beat the Eagles, and the coach tried to prepare them for that almost final game. But no! Betty, who sat beside Louise Madison, loyal enough to see the great game of the year by her beloved high school, and they shook their heads sadly at each other as the time passed first with no score at all on either side for the first half, then with the Lions unable to "hold them" and the Eagles scoring both by forward passes and "straight football." It was awful, Louise said, but "Maybe the Lions have it coming to them," said Louise. "And it isn't good for a high school to get too cocky. We've got about all the cups there are—so let the Eagle scream this time!"

It was so romantic! Here was Ted again, coming around to talk to Louise, and Louise, more flirtatious and self-conscious than she had been before University days, being just as charming as she could. But Ted paid just as much attention to Betty and was as gallant as ever to both of the girls. Lucia, also, came in for her share of attention, as she sat next to Betty in the big stadium and heard all the comments with the greatest interest or amusement as the case may be.

"Oh, your football is so exciting," she said. "It makes me think of the bull fights in Spain!"

“Yes, and you used to have thumbs down in your Roman theatres, too,” mischievously added Ted.

“We have a big picture of the Coliseum at home,” said Peggy, behind Lucia, and Lucia turned to give Peggy a glance of amusement.

“We had lions, then,” she added.

“Lions, rah!” said Ted Dorrance, but the tiresome last plays were on now. Time was nearly up and there was no hope for the Lions, even if they should score. Lyon High rooters began to rise, wearily, and gather up rugs, cushions or newspapers to take their departure.

This game took place just a week before the final hockey matches between the classes. Lucia and Mathilde had “made” the hockey team. Betty had been hurt a little in the try-out, and Peggy insisted that Mathilde did it on purpose, but Betty refused to believe it and played happily on what they themselves called the “scrub team,” the team which played with its own team to prepare them for the contest, also to have able material on hand in case it was necessary or best to put in substitutes. Betty was always keen about whatever game she played, but she really cared for excellence in its proper sense only in swimming.

“Don’t worry, Kathryn,” she said to Gypsy. “Whether Mathilde intended that or not doesn’t matter, I’ll watch after this and somebody has to be on the second team, so why shouldn’t it be I? Moreover, I had everything to learn about hockey, after all, and I think Mathilde has played.”

“She said she has, but I don’t believe it. There’s favoritism. Mathilde for some reason stands in with one of the athletic teachers and I saw her talking with the others that day. I’m not going to tell you who she is, though. Do you mind?”

“I’d rather not know, though of course I’m curious. Tell me after the match!”

But all things considered, Betty began to want to do well. "Let's beat the first team, girls," she said to her girls just before the last practice game, and beat the first team they did, though scolded for it.

"Now don't let the fact that the second team beat you discourage you at all, girls," said the athletic teacher who had watched the game. "It was a close game and let it make you all the more careful against the other teams in your class contest. I'm not favoring one team more than another; but I want to encourage every one to do its very best."

"The freshman team hasn't had enough practice," said Carolyn in the gym before the games. The girls were putting on their customary equipment and donning sweaters, for it was cold though clear outside, with the ground hard, yet free from snow. Unless it rained, the climate in which Lyon High rejoiced was good for outdoor sports almost until Christmas. "So I think that the freshmen will be out of it and the juniors and sophomores play against each other at the last. The seniors are too sure and they have some weak material. I've been watching their practice games."

Carolyn was not playing, but "terribly interested," she said. Many sophomore rooters were on hand when the games were played, and sure enough, it was the juniors against the sophomores at the last. Mathilde was hit by one of the hockey sticks early in the games and Betty took her place, much to Mathilde's discomfiture. Her "hated rival" played along with the daughter of a countess, whose friendship Mathilde so much wanted to have for herself, and only for herself.

"Good, Betty," said Lucia, when Betty was put in. "I'm sorry for Mathilde, but she makes so many wild plays and isn't quick enough. Now let's beat the juniors all to pieces, as you girls say!"

Fast and furiously went the game. The juniors expected to win, yet they were never taken unaware. It was a fair and excellent game, the athletic directors said, yet the sophomores did win and Lucia

threw her arms around Betty after it was over. “I’m going to tell my uncle how you played, Betty!” she exclaimed. “I wanted Mother to come and see me do something, but she wouldn’t. She only hoped I wouldn’t get hurt and it wouldn’t turn out like the hike! How’s that for a mother that came over here on purpose to make an American out of me?”

“Did she, honestly, Lucia,” asked Betty, hugging Lucia in return.

“Of course she did and I like it now, only I shall always want my father, too.”

“Well, you write him that you were ‘the noblest Roman of them all,’ according to me, and I know!”

“I will, Betty,” and Lucia’s smile was a happy one. “Come on,” said she, “let’s go and comfort poor Mathilde.”

“That is dear of you, Lucia, and I would, only it would look too much like crowing over her because I was put in in her place. Besides, she’d be happier anyway for you to think of her—by yourself.”

Lucia’s dark eyes surveyed Betty thoughtfully. “You always think of everything, Betty. How do you do it? I like you, Betty Lee!” and Lucia turned to find Mathilde, who was limping away with a small group of sophomores.

“You’re pretty nice, yourself, Lucia,” Betty sent after her, and Lucia waved a deprecatory hand.

CHAPTER XIII—LIGHT ON THE SORORITY QUESTION

Betty had to decide what she would do about “sororities.” She had discussed them frankly with a few of the girls, those she knew well, perfectly sincere girls and her good friends. Outside of that little circle she had been careful what she said. She had been included with Lucia, Mathilde, Carolyn and Peggy in attentions from the juniors of the Kappa Upsilon. That there was a small addition to that “chapter” in process of being made among the sophomores she knew. If the other girls joined, especially Carolyn, would it make a difference in their friendship? Yet Kathryn, while she had been invited to Marcella’s party, that glorious Hallowe’en party, had received no further attention. Perhaps it was a matter of numbers.

Now Marcella had come right out and asked her what she thought of Kappa Upsilon and whether she had any objection to a high school sorority that “really complied with the rules you know.”

Fortunately the question came at the close of school when Betty was rushing home to let her mother go somewhere without Amy Louise. Betty was going to get the dinner that night. “Why, Marcella, I think anything that you belong to would have to be all right,” she answered. “I’ve got to rush, Marcella, to catch that car!” and Betty scampered as fast as she could, noting from Marcella’s smile and nod that she understood. More than one important conversation was sometimes interrupted because one of the participants had to hurry to orchestra practice or a Dramatic Club meeting or a meeting of the Lions’ Roar reporters or editors, or merely to catch a car home, as in the present instance.

All the way home, the people in the car were as shadows to Betty as she sat squeezed in between a fat lady and one of the senior girls until the car reached her stop. She vaguely recalled answering a few remarks from the senior girl, whom she did not know, but her mind was chiefly concerned about what she should do.

She nearly put sugar instead of salt into the potatoes when she mashed them, and when she finally took up the supper and was sitting in her mother's place, fixing Amy Lou's milk, she answered a question from her father, with such a blank, "What, sir?" that Dick looked up from his plate to say rudely, "What's eating you Betty?" and Doris said "Are you mad at anybody?"

Betty waked up immediately and came back to the present scene. "Oh, no, Doris! I've just been thinking about something."

"Betty has great powers of concentration," said Mr. Lee, with a twinkle in his eyes, "but look out; it's dangerously near absent-mindedness."

"So it is, Daddy. I've got a funny little problem to solve, that's all. I'm sorry I was so absorbed. But the twins were telling you all about their affairs anyhow——"

"When last you heard anything," laughed Dick. "We hadn't said a word for at least a full minute and a half!"

"It was Amy Lou, then," suggested Betty.

"I didn't do anything," said Amy Lou, getting ready to put up an injured lip.

"Mercy no, darling. You're all right. It's old Betty that isn't much good as a mother substitute. Isn't that so?"

But Amy Lou was drinking her milk now and when she put down her tumbler she said, rather gaspingly, "I love Mother and I love Betty, too. She made the dessert just like Grandma."

After dinner Doris and Dick did the dishes, by previous arrangement, and Betty went to her lessons, while Mr. Lee had his customary little visit with his youngest daughter before her bedtime. That was to be a little later than usual this time. But Betty could not study very well. It was hard to settle to anything someway and when Amy Lou's father was putting her to bed, the telephone rang. Dick answered it and called Betty, who had been alone back in her bedroom.

It was Carolyn Gwynne. “Lo, Betty. Betty I’ve got a problem I can’t answer.”

“Have you, what is it?”

“I had an invitation this afternoon and I sort of suspect you had, too. Did you?”

“Why—I don’t know. I’m not sure just what you mean. Perhaps I would have had one if I hadn’t had to rush for a car and get home. Mother was invited out for dinner and I cooked ours.”

“Oh, did you? I wish I knew how! Well, I just have to see you some way. Could you leave for just a little while if I drove over for you!”

“I’ll ask. I’ve lessons well enough up, I suppose. I got most of them at school, and if you’re thinking of the same thing I am, I’d surely like to talk it over with you. Hold the wire a moment.”

Betty tiptoed back, hoping that Amy Lou hadn’t gotten to the stage when it was best not to rouse her from her sleepiness. But she heard her childish conversation with her father and went near the door. “Father, excuse me, but Carolyn wants to know if I can drive over with her if she comes for me. We have—something to decide and it’s—important.”

“Is she driving, this late?”

“Oh, no. She wouldn’t be allowed. She will be driven.”

“Very well, then, but do not stay late.”

“No. I have my lessons pretty well, Father.”

Betty reported the favorable answer and it was not long before she and Carolyn were in secret conference in Carolyn’s pretty room. Carolyn put Betty in the gay chaise lounge that was her own, drew up a big chair for herself and established a little “end table” between them. On this reposed a box of taffies and a plate of apples.

“My, such preparations!” laughed Betty.

“Don’t you like ’em?” twinkled Carolyn.

“Indeed I do! I’m so thankful to be invited over, for I couldn’t study or do anything else,” and Betty gave Carolyn a history of her preoccupation while she tried to cook dinner and serve it.

“Tell me why you were preoccupied, Betty,” urged Carolyn.

“Oh, you tell what your problem is.”

“Please,” said Carolyn, and Betty “weakly yielded,” as she announced before she told.

“It’s just because you’re nicer than I am,” said Carolyn, “but I have a reason.”

“You may not think what I have to tell you is much, but it was Marcella’s manner and I saw that she wanted to talk to me,” said Betty, who went on to give an account of what Marcella had said.

Carolyn listened with interest. “Yes, that was it. It was one of the other girls that talked to me, though. But she told me that some of my special friends were being asked, or would be asked to join the Kappa Upsilon. It would be fun, Betty!”

“Yes, it would; but there’s a lot of things to be considered. In the first place it is, really, a high school sorority. The girls don’t even pretend that it isn’t, or practically the same thing. How do they get around it, Carolyn?”

“By having people outside of high school belong to it and claiming that it is just a society and not a high school affair.”

“I see. I’ve been trying out Mother and Father on high school sororities and all I can get out of them is surprise that I should mention it at all. ‘How can they have sororities if they are forbidden?’ asks my dear mother!”

“Yes—my father the same—but Mother knows. She just laughs. I didn’t tell her I’d been bid today. Well, now, listen, Betty. We agree that it would be fun. So it would. That’s that. It sounds well to be a Kappa Upsilon and we can go around if we like and be as snooty

as any of them. But they've dropped Kathryn since the party, for one thing. She did not mention it, though of course she has noticed it, but when I asked her about something that I was in on she didn't know a thing about it and looked at me as funny—I don't think it was nice of them, to pay attention and then drop a person like a hot cake."

"No. That isn't like Marcella Waite, though."

"Marcella is a fine girl, but there are two or three that are different. Oh, they're nice enough. A body could have them for friends, but they take up little things. Kathryn may have said something that wasn't according to their notion. Kathryn is pretty independent, you know."

"So am I," said Betty.

"Yes, but with a little difference, and then you are prominent now in athletics. They all expect you to win something in the girls' swimming meet and you are going to make the basketball team."

"Am I?" laughed Betty, "how nice!"

Carolyn laughed too, but went on. "So you are as good as asked, Betty. Now the question is, what are we going to do about it? I want to and I don't want to—and oh, I must tell you what Louise Madison says. She is over here once in a while, you know, and I was talking to her about sororities.

"She said, 'Why don't you wait till you go to the University and join some sororities that amount to something and are real sororities, national and all that?'

"Then my sister said that the girls were afraid that they might not get bid to one in the University, that a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush and that some of them thought a girl was more likely to be asked into a sonority in the University if she had belonged to a high school sorority."

"Does Louise belong to a sorority over there?"

“Yes, and my sister, too, but they were talking about some of their friends that didn’t get in and how unhappy they were. That’s the worst of it. Louise was asked by my sister’s sorority.”

“Was Louise in a high school sorority?”

“No—she said that she wouldn’t be. There wasn’t any one started that she wanted to join when she was a freshman or sophomore and then she got into so much responsibility in the G. A. A. and cared for athletics so much more, I guess. But Louise didn’t say a word about herself. I got all about her through Letty. Letitia didn’t go to high school much. She was sick some and it was better for her to go to private school. My Dad’s the one that insisted on my going to Lyon High.”

“I’m certainly glad that you did,” said Betty, with emphasis. “I’m glad to hear all this, Carolyn, and Louise’s idea. There’s another thing. I can’t see that it makes much difference on our ‘social position,’ outside of just a few girls that we like, like Marcella, because there’s such a mob of folks in this big high school. The sororities can’t have so much influence, outside of their own little group, and we could just as easily have our own friends. There are such loads of nice girls in the Girl Reserves, for instance, and in the swimming and games who cares what sorority a girl belongs to, or knows, for that matter!”

“Oh, they work for their own, Betty. You’d be surprised at the things some of the girls will do to be represented in prominent affairs.”

“Does it get them anywhere?”

“Sometimes.”

Betty thoughtfully tapped her fingers on the arms of the chaise lounge and Carolyn offered the box of taffies.

“Do you know who are going in with the Kappa Upsilon?” asked Betty, talking off the oiled paper from her candy. “Carolyn,” she said, by way of parenthesis, “if I eat this, I’ll not be able to talk!”

“That’s all right,” said Carolyn, removing the paper from her piece. “Perhaps we need to do some thinking!”

“Yes—but I’ve thought and thought. What I need to do is deciding.”

“Help me decide, too.”

“I wouldn’t dare take the responsibility.”

“It makes a lot of difference what you do, Betty. I’ll not care so much to be in it unless you are.”

“Oh, Carolyn!”

“It’s so, Betty Lee! But you asked me who were being asked or who were going in, which isn’t quite the same thing. I think Peggy Pollard will, and Lucia has said she would. They are crazy to get her into it—the daughter of a count and countess!”

“Yes, but Lucia is good enough to be asked on her own account, and she can be pardoned, perhaps, for being ‘snooty’ in social matters.”

“I don’t see why!”

“I mean because of the way she has been brought up. Don’t you suppose if you’d had family and wealth drilled into you and all that way of living it would make you different?”

“Yes—I imagine it would. Lucia’s been everywhere.”

It was, indeed, difficult to talk now, since the taffies were being more than sampled. But by degrees a few more thoughts on sororities were exchanged.

“Suppose we sleep over it,” suggested Betty. “I’ve got to make a list, I think, of arguments for and against. The biggest argument for is Marcella and how good it is of them to want us. A person hates to refuse and seem not to appreciate being asked. And then you run the chance of their unfriendliness, too.”

“Yes,” said Carolyn, with a frown; “but I don’t believe Marcella Waite would be that way. Do you think so?”

“I hope not. I had the best time at her party!”

“So did I. Oh, by the way, Mathilde is invited and there isn’t any chance of her not accepting. Julia—I may as well tell you who asked me—Julia Hickok said that Mathilde is so fond of Lucia Coletti and that they think she, Mathilde, will make a very loyal sorority sister.”

Betty gave Carolyn a sober glance. “Lucia could handle Mathilde, if necessary,” she replied. “Lucia is a girl of some force, Father says. But on which side of the arguments for and against shall we put Mathilde’s being in the sorority?”

Carolyn smiled. “It wouldn’t make so much difference to me. I could get along with ‘Finney’—I’m not like Dotty.”

“I think you could get along with anybody, Carolyn, you are such a dear. But there it is. I think ‘getting along’ with sorority sisters that one did not choose for intimate friends would hinder me in my ‘great ambitions’ in other lines. But I’ve simply got to sleep on it, Carolyn.”

“Probably I’d better, too, but we haven’t much time, Betty. I told Julia I’d tell her in the morning. I had to ask what Mother and Father thought. She laughed at me for a goose, then told me that I mustn’t make that an excuse. I told her that I thought they would let me do what I wanted to do, but that I ought to tell them at least. I hope that she didn’t take that as a promise. Away from Julia and talking it over with you makes me not so enthusiastic. Call me up in the morning, Betty, if you’ve decided before you go to school.”

“I will have decided all right,” said Betty. “It’s a thing you can’t put off. I’ll decide, if I have to draw cuts!”

CHAPTER XIV—THE DECISION

Carolyn rode home in the Gwynne car with Betty, but they talked of other things, especially the coming season of basketball. Betty declared that she did not play a good game and Carolyn said that she played as well as the other sophomores and that moreover she was swift and graceful about everything just as she was in swimming. "Go in for it, Betty; please do."

"I'll think about it," promised Betty. "It's so that most of our hockey team want to play basketball, too."

Taffies, no matter how toothsome, are not the best preparation for a sound night's sleep; but Betty was too sleepy to give sororities any further thought that night and the only effect of the taffy was in giving her a dream in which she and Carolyn were being initiated into Kappa Upsilon, while Kathryn stood by watching them.

In the morning she woke with a pretty good idea of what she was going to do. It was not necessary to marshal the arguments for and against. "I'm not going into a thing that leaves out a lot of my special friends," she said to herself as she dressed. "Lyon High is too big for it to make any difference to me. The question of sororities in college can wait. I may go away to school or be in the University here. Carolyn's so sweet it won't make any difference if she does go into it; and I like Kathryn so much; and if Peggy changes, I can't help it."

Peggy, however, was a big pull toward the sorority for Carolyn, she knew. She almost wished she did not have to call up Carolyn. She didn't want to use any influence with her. It wouldn't be fair. Perhaps by this time Carolyn wanted awfully to do it and her decision would be a sort of wet blanket. Still, she had promised to tell her before they went to school.

Betty hurried with her dressing and breakfast, helping a little as usual and to her relief, while she was still at the table, the telephone rang. Carolyn was calling her, she thought.

Doris answered it this time, but she called Betty. “It’s Carolyn,” she said. “It must be something important for her to call you at breakfast time.”

Betty only smiled as she hopped up and ran to the front hall. “Yes, Carolyn?”

“Betty, Peggy called up last night and she is going to join and is crazy to have me do it!”

“Well, Carolyn, why not, if you want to?”

“I told old Peggy that I was trying to make up my mind but I didn’t mention you at all. I thought you’d rather not. She did, though, and said they wanted to have you. Lucia, too, had asked them if they had asked you, with the idea that it would be a lot more attractive to her if they did!”

“That was very nice of Lucia.”

“Well, Betty—have you decided?”

“Yes, Carolyn.”

“That doesn’t sound as if you were going to do it. If I know you, you would have said something enthusiastic about Peggy and Lucia. Dare I ask you what you have decided?”

Betty’s little chuckle went over the wires to Carolyn.

“I am putting off telling you till the last minute, you see, because of what you are saying about Peggy and Lucia and how you may feel yourself about it. Please don’t be influenced by what I do or don’t do. That sounds conceited, doesn’t it? But really I’m not a bit about it. You just consulted me and seemed to care what I thought about it, you know!”

“For pity’s sake, Betty, don’t apologize! And I can’t wait a minute longer to know!”

“All right, then,” said Betty, with no chuckle this time. “I knew when I woke up that I wasn’t going to join. All the reasons against it win, Carolyn.”

“Well, I just about knew how you would decide. I’ve got to think it over between now and the time I get to school. I didn’t know at all when I woke up what I was going to do. Peggy’s enthusiasm last night shook me.”

“Why shouldn’t it? You’ve known Peggy for a long time. And don’t think that your belonging to any sorority will make me think any less of you. That will be just one little organization that we aren’t in together. There are plenty of societies in Lyon High, Carolyn.”

“Yes. All right, Betty. I’ve got to think it out myself, just like you. See you at lunch.”

Receivers were hung up. The discussion was over. Now Betty was to think of her own relation to these girls, particularly of what she should say to Marcella. It was not likely that Carolyn would mention her knowledge of Betty’s decision.

But Betty was glad to put off the evil hour and when she met Kathryn as she descended from the street car and walked up to the school entrance with her, she knew that she was safe, though she saw Marcella in the hall, gave her a smiling bow and saw Marcella thoughtfully regard her and Kathryn. But the Kappa Upsilon were having quite a time with their “pledges.” It wasn’t possible to invite all of any little group of friends.

It must be said that Betty’s thoughts outside of lessons that day were more concerned with basketball than with sorority. Carolyn’s ideas started that line of thought. But Mathilde would work against her—oh well, things would turn out as they would.

It was after school when Marcella Waite spoke again to Betty. “Just a minute, Betty Lee. Are you rushing off to catch a car this time?”

“No, indeed. I’ve all the time in the world—not even anything of the G. A. A. this afternoon.”

“Then perhaps you can come along with me and some of the other girls and have dinner down town. Lucia is going, and perhaps we can get Carolyn and Peggy.”

“I couldn’t do that, Marcella, but thank you so much for asking me. I have to go home.”

“Oh, I could take you home to dress. The car is out here this time. But I’ll not urge you if you have other things on hand for tonight. I think you know what I want to see you about. You said something sweet about Kappa Upsilon yesterday, so I’ve been hoping that you would be quite ready to say yes about joining us. What do you think?”

“Do you mean that you are asking me to join?”

“Just that.”

“It is so good of you, Marcella. I did think about it for I thought that you would scarcely have said that to me if you hadn’t meant something of the kind. And it would look so good to be in anything that you are in. I’ve enjoyed knowing you so much!” Betty was sober and earnest, with her eyes somewhat troubled as she looked straight at Marcella, standing aside from the walk a little, away from the hurrying pupils.

“But when it comes to joining any high school sorority you know that there are a lot of things to think about.”

“Not so important as you think. It is just a lot of fun for the most part.”

“I know, and that part of it is lovely. But I decided this morning that it wasn’t best and if I should be asked by any of them not to do it.”

“That is final, then?” asked Marcella, more business-like than offended.

“Yes. It has to be, though I can’t tell you how I appreciate it to be chosen by the Kappa Upsilon.”

“That is all right, Betty Lee. I’m sorry, though, and I think you’ll regret it—not that we’ll do anything to make you regret it, you understand.”

“My, no! I can’t imagine your doing anything mean, Marcella.”

“Thanks for your good opinion. By the way, my brother was home the other day and asked what had become of the little girl that was Titania at my Hallowe’en party.”

“Did I meet him? Your brother?”

“Why, of course, but—that’s so—perhaps you didn’t know who he was. He had to make a train and could not stay for the unmasking or the refreshments, except to eat something back in the kitchen! He was the ‘Pirate of Penzance.’”

“Oh!” exclaimed Betty, rather overwhelmed. She certainly did remember the “Pirate of Penzance!” What a pity that she had not known before! No, her decision would have been the same!

“Doesn’t your brother live at home?” she asked.

“Oh yes; but he is at college in the East. He just happened to be at home, unexpectedly, so I worked him in to help out and I thought he looked splendid in that costume I got up for him.”

“He surely did.”

“It was a pity you shouldn’t have seen him unmasked, though. He’s quite handsome at times, though I’m probably prejudiced.”

“I don’t think you should say that. Besides, it’s a good thing to be proud of your brothers and sisters.”

“I have two brothers,” said Marcella, “and this one is the younger one. He’s a sophomore this year. Well, Betty, I’m sorry. But don’t feel uncomfortable about it. I see that you do, and sororities don’t like to be turned down, either. But it isn’t so bad if you have just

decided against high school sororities. I suppose your parents have had some influence against them most likely—I must run!”

Marcella hurried away, to Betty’s relief this time. She had meant to make it easy for Betty, though, and Betty was grateful. Marcella was a fine girl. And oh, the Pirate of Penzance, whose memories had some glamour of romance, was her brother! How silly it had been of her not to find that out before.

But Betty Lee, while not lacking in initiative, was timid about some things. She had not wanted to seem curious or too much interested in any boy. She had asked, indeed, if Carolyn knew who the Pirate of Penzance could have been, but Carolyn had not known. Kathryn had joked her about his choosing her for a partner, but Kathryn had wondered who he was, and to ask Marcella was a thing Betty would not do.

So it happened that until this moment Betty had no least idea of whom she had met in that dark “hole in the wall.” So it was a pity that she had not seen him unmasked? Very vividly that smiling face in the mirror, lit only by the dim candle-light, kept Betty company in her thoughts on the way home.

Evening was not quite so good a time for courage as morning. Betty suffered the natural reaction from a decision which definitely cut off any prospect of being in tempting sorority atmosphere, so heralded by girls of some schools; and any secret society has fascinations of its own.

She knew that she had been sensible, but she had no word from Carolyn and felt a sinking at her heart when she thought that Carolyn, influenced by Peggy’s joining and the sweet urging of Marcella, had probably gone into the Kappa Upsilon sorority. When she thought of Mathilde, however, she had a different feeling. Imagine being intimate with a girl like that! Mathilde was not only spoiled but rough at times, physically, if not in language, in spite of all her airs and superior assumptions. But Kappa Upsilon might not find that out.

It did make more of a difference than she thought it would about Carolyn, but—oh well—it was done. She would probably do the same thing if she still had to decide.

Her father asked her to play with Doris a simple melody arranged for the violin, whose piano accompaniment Doris managed very nicely, Betty thought; and with the violin tucked under her chin she felt comforted. There were “lots of happy times” that had nothing to do with school or sororities or being on teams or keeping on the honor roll—even!

But Doris, who, like the rest of the junior high girls, was interested in Lyon High doings and heard plenty of gossip about sorority affairs and the rushing recently done, asked Betty outright if she had been asked to join any of the sororities.

Betty hesitated, as she looked through some sheet music and put something new before Doris to try. “We don’t talk about those things, Doris,” she said.

“Why not?”

“Just—because.”

“You could tell at home, if you’d been asked and were going to join.”

“If I were going to join,” repeated Betty, soberly.

“What is this?” asked their father. “The high school students are not allowed to have sororities, Doris.”

“They have ’em just the same, Papa. I’m going to join one, that is if I get asked.”

“Indeed?” and Mr. Lee lifted his brows.

“You’re not likely to be asked,” said Betty, “if you’re that frank about wanting to get in.”

Doris paid no attention to Betty's remark, but addressed her father. "Oh, now, Papa, they get around it all right! I've heard all about it."

"How you know more than I did is a wonder, Doris," said Betty. "There must be some one of your friends that knows the ins and outs."

"There is. She has a sister who is a senior."

"How about it, Betty?" asked Mr. Lee, interested. "Have you been approached on the subject?"

"Yes, sir. I was asked to join a good one, nice girls anyhow, but I decided not to go into any. I'll wait till I get into college, if I go, and if anybody wants me."

Mr. Lee gave a nod of satisfaction and turned back to his book. "There is a reason for there being no sororities in high schools," said he. "In the smaller schools particularly it makes trouble."

But Doris was at once alive with interest. "Tell me, Betty! Which one?"

"Really, Dorry, I'd like to tell you; but it wouldn't be nice to do it now. You might forget and say something about it. Will you be satisfied if I say that I will tell you some time?"

"I suppose I'll have to be."

"Aw, she'd be saying, 'My sister was asked to join one of the sororities!'" Dick's tone was as much like a girl's as a boy whose voice was beginning to change could manage.

"I will not!" vehemently Doris asserted.

"That will do, children," said Mrs. Lee. "This is Betty's affair. She probably feels uncomfortable enough to refuse an attractive invitation."

Mother knew, bless her! Perhaps she had been through the same thing.

Then there came a ring at the telephone and Betty flew. "Somebody's calling up Betty!" said Doris, rather pettishly, though she did not close her ears to Betty's side of the conversation.

"Oh, Carolyn!" said Betty, and then there was a silence on her part for a little.

"You 'almost did?' Maybe you should have done it, Carolyn. Sure you'll be happy over it?"

Another long silence on Betty's part.

"It is good of you to tell me all about it. Yes, Marcella is the greatest attraction. I hope—what is that? Yes."

"Marcella Waite, Dick," said Doris in a low tone. "It's the Kappa Upsilon! I knew it!"

"Doris," said Mrs. Lee, pleasantly but firmly, "whatever you may know or guess, I trust your sense of what is fitting to keep your ideas to yourself."

"All right, Mamma—but I can't help hearing what the other kids talk about."

"The other children, you mean."

"Yes'm."

Mrs. Lee sighed, laying aside some mending for a magazine. This school-grounds language! But perhaps, if they heard correct and cultured speech at home it would do some good.

CHAPTER XV—CLASS CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES

School went on the next day much as usual. Betty met Marcella in the hall and received a friendly smile, though Marcella was preoccupied. As the next few weeks went by, Betty almost forgot how important the sorority matter had seemed. They did not see as much of Peggy, that was all. And it was probable that Carolyn and Betty did not confide such intimate affairs to Peggy as before. It made a difference to feel things might be passed on to others with whom Peggy was now intimate. The girls wondered how she “stood” Mathilde, but Peggy never mentioned Mathilde.

The weeks sped on with the customary tests and the welcome Holiday season. Betty did not see anything of her old friends, Janet and Sue, who could not visit her at any time suggested. But they all went to the farm on Christmas, for Grandma was well and longing for them to come once more. There was plenty of snow there and hills for sledding. Dick tried to make some skis, without remarkable success, but Doris and Betty enjoyed trying them.

The spread of white, snow-covered fields, the freedom from the city’s noise and traffic and the great open fires of the old farmhouse were a joy to everybody. But Mr. Lee made plans about how a furnace could be put in for Grandmother, since she refused to leave the home place. That should be done before another winter. The children had brought their various reports to show Grandmother, who asked Betty, “Still on the honor roll in spite of athletics?”

“Yes’m,” said Betty, with an engaging smile. “You see, hikes and swimming and practice games are in the nature of recreation. I go home and rest and eat good meals and then I can get my lessons all right.”

“Aw, Betty is just smart, Grandma,” said Dick. “Couldn’t all of them do it.” And Betty, surprised at this brotherly tribute, made Dick a sweeping bow.

Betty was on the regular class basketball team now. There were about two hundred girls who had “gone out” for basketball on the call for the inter-class contest teams, though the contest would not start until February. But the teams were organized before Christmas and Betty was chosen captain. How that had happened she claimed not to know and was really surprised, for she thought that one of the athletic teachers had been influenced by Mathilde and did not like her.

But Betty had played good hockey and in basketball practice games she was light, active, showed powers of leadership, and best of all, could make baskets, an important ability in basketball, it would seem! In consequence she found herself in command of the Sophomore Jumping-Jacks, a name for which Betty was not responsible. But some one had watched them and declared that several of the girls were “regular jumping-jacks” when it came to lifting the ball to and through a basket. Some one who overheard called them the Jumping-Jacks and the name stuck till the girls considered it “cute” enough to be adopted. The “squad” was a large one, with a number of girls who played nearly as well as those on what was considered the “team.” There were a few jealousies to be handled, as Betty well knew. How she had made the position of captain she scarcely knew yet. Carolyn told her that she was the “dark horse,” as she said her father called it in politics. “Sort of a compromise?” queried Betty, who had not even sought to be captain and dreaded it.

“Yes. Everybody knew you weren’t after it, and there was such a mess this time, sorting out for the first and second team. So you’re it. Now see that we beat everybody. I’m only playing basketball on your account, Betty.”

“Don’t you really like it?”

“Yes, but I don’t enjoy a big contest. I’ll do my best, though, to make my part of the second team so good that I’ll get called in to help out the first squad.”

“Good for you. If I have anything to say, you’ll get a chance to play with me!”

Kathryn was on the first team and a good player. She was as quick as Betty and with her practiced on the floor to make long shots from different angles. “It sometimes saves the day Betty,” said Kathryn. “Do you remember last year how Freddy Fisher had a chance to put the ball through that basket from ’way across the floor! We certainly have missed Freddy this year, haven’t we? But Ted Dorrance is playing basketball and he’s good.”

“Is that so? He wasn’t on the football squad.”

“No. His mother draws a line on football and said she’d take him out of school, or send him away somewhere to school if he played. But he’s grand in basketball. Didn’t you see that write-up of him in the Roar last week?”

“I missed getting that number, Kathryn. Have you a copy?”

“Yes. I’ll show it to you.”

“What is his speciality?” asked Betty, thinking of the tall boy she admired so much.

“Well, in the first game he made some under the basket shots that were just in time to make the score. It beat the other team. It’s a shame you didn’t see the account of the game. It’s all in the paper.”

“All I knew was that we beat,” said Betty. “I didn’t even see the evening paper at home. That was the night I was studying for a test and forgot everything else. It was my only chance, for we were doing things all day Saturday.”

“Ted has a new girl, Betty, they say.”

“Really—who?”

“Oh, one of the junior girls that he is taking all around to the parties and everything. He had her out here at the school for the minstrel show the other night. That was real funny. Did you go?”

“No. I can’t go to everything and I just have to go to the musical things. Mother and I went to the Symphony Concert the last time.”

“It’s funny Chet didn’t ask you. He’s been hanging around so much of late, Betty.” Kathryn gave Betty a roguish glance as she decided that they had practiced enough and sat down to change her shoes, donning the ones fit for the street. Betty, too, took off her gym shoes for the same purpose. The gym was almost empty now, for it was after school hours.

“Oh, Mother wouldn’t let me go out at night with the boys yet,” answered Betty. “It’s all right for parties and picnics and things like that, it seems, but not for shows and things. Mothers are funny; but I have a very nice one and I suppose she knows why she lets me do some things and says no about others.”

“My mother says that she hasn’t the least idea what to do with me about anything in ‘these days,’ but she hopes to take care of me, if she has my ‘co-operation.’”

Betty laughed at this. “Our poor mothers! Well, I rather guess it’s up to us to co-operate then. Why, if you won’t tell, Chet did ask me and I couldn’t go with him, but he wasn’t mad at all. Mother just told me to put the blame on her, so I did, explaining, you know. Then I felt as I told you about choosing the things I can go to myself.”

“Chet is a pretty good sort of a boy, of course. Chauncey said the other day he thought he’d cut him out with you, Betty, and I told him to go and do it.” Kathryn slipped a foot into a shoe and stood up laughing. “I’d like you real well as a sister, though I didn’t go so far as to say that to Chauncey.”

“I should hope not!” said Betty, with emphasis. “It’s none of it as serious as all that, Kathryn, but I don’t mind being liked and being invited, do you?”

“What girl does? But I don’t want a real ‘case’ yet.”

“Mercy, no! And Mother says I mustn’t accept invitations from boys that I don’t know anything about, no matter how nice they seem here. There are some drawbacks to numbers after all.”

“Yes, but you can usually tell about boys and girls, too, and it’s easy enough to find out about them. Dad says that he is a ‘social democrat,’ but I notice that he is terribly particular about my company.”

“We have such a lot of things going on at school that it is easy enough to make friends and be with boys and girls you like without bothering about dates any more important than meeting your ‘boy friend,’ as Dick calls it, at the picnic or at the ball game. Carolyn’s parties are always such fun. I want to have one the spring vacation, though that seems a long way off, doesn’t it!”

“I’m having one in two weeks, on Friday night, Betty, so save that date, please. I’ll have a time getting ready for it during school, so please come early and help me, will you?”

“Of course I will. It will be fun. What do you want me to do?”

“I’ll tell you in plenty of time. I want it a real party and I’m going to invite Lucia, of course, so it must make a good impression on our lady from the Italian nobility.”

“Lucia won’t be critical, Kathryn. She said that she liked you. You were ‘so sincere.’”

“Did she? I like Lucia, too, though some things made me a little tired at first.”

“Just think of the handicap, Kathryn, of not being born an American!” Betty was grinning, but she really felt that Lucia had not had a fair chance to be like a girl who was born in the “land of the free.” This was a phase that had crept out with Lucia a time or two in her contact with other girls and had amused that daughter of the Caesars as much as a few of her ways amused the American girls. But they were meeting on common ground in the

school room and in the case of the few girls of whom Lucia was becoming fond, friendly adjustments were easy to make.

The matter of being acquainted with boys was natural enough in a large high school, and a large residence district as good as that from which Lyon High drew most of its attendance supplied children of some of the city's best citizens. It was not very likely that boys attracted to Betty and Kathryn would not have a good background, to say the least. Many of them they had known all through their freshman year. What Betty did not know was that Chet Dorrance was at present going out of his way just to pass Betty in the hall, whether he had an opportunity to speak to her or not. In a class or two in which both recited, he never stared directly at her, but one corner of his eye knew where Betty was and what she was doing. It was his first attack and very acute, Ted would have said. Chet, however, was good at concealing his feelings and would not have had the boys guess how much he liked Betty. Of course, they teased him a little for "hanging around," but Chet, with apparent candor, said that he liked "that bunch of girls" and didn't care who knew it. "You have to have a little social life," said he. "It's a poor sophomore that can't take a girl out once in a while."

If it had been Ted, Chet's brother, now, Betty might have been thrilled a little at the frequent meetings and all the excuses that Chet made to speak to her about this or that. But Betty was demurely responsive, or pleasant, interested in what Chet had to say, but not including him in any of her dreams. Chet wasn't the Prince Charming by any means. Yet Chet would be that to some one, doubtless, one of these days.

The names of the basketball squads were posted, that of the freshmen having more extras than those of the other classes. The sophomores now had only a few more than the two "teams." Betty found that she was a good deal more excited over the coming contests than she had expected to be, since so much responsibility for whipping the sophomore team into shape rested upon her.

Dates of games to be played in the girls' gym were also posted, another spur to excellence. Kathryn postponed her party because of the necessity for strenuous practice, but said that she would have one to celebrate, when the sophomores "beat the championship game." Betty told her that too much confidence was a "hoo-doo," but Kathryn told her that determination to beat was "one of the greatest assets" a team could have.

Betty, Kathryn and Carolyn had a front seat at the first game of the contest, played between the seniors and freshmen. It would have been hard to say which were the more excited, the busy players or the rooters who were girls expecting to meet the two classes they were watching, in a future game.

"Watch that freshman guarding, Betty. She's rough. We'll look out for her and see that nothing is done that isn't seen! Say—that was a good play! Did you see that?"

Betty was watching too closely to say a word. If she could get the tactics, provided there were any special ones, or the important characteristics of the senior girls, it would help, she thought. She early dismissed the freshmen as opponents. They were playing a good game in the main, but not a winning game. They needed practice and more "team-work."

This game was on a Tuesday afternoon, after school. The next day the seniors were to play against the juniors, and the girls of all the teams, as far as possible, were urged by their captains to be present. The score of seniors versus freshmen was only eleven to six and the freshmen were jubilant over having kept the seniors from scoring as heavily as they had expected. But Betty saw that senior mistakes would be corrected. She still thought that her greatest effort would be in the game against the seniors. Still, some had said that the juniors were playing excellent games.

On Wednesday the gym was again full of interested girls who gave their class cheers and cheered for the enemy. The sophomores

rooted chiefly for the seniors, but to their great surprise, the juniors won! “Well!” cried Betty. “I’m not a prophet, and that is that!”

“I’m glad we don’t meet the juniors or seniors first,” said Lucia Coletti, who sat next to Betty this time. Lucia was not playing basketball, but she was interested sufficiently to identify herself with her class and attend the games.

“Tomorrow we play against the freshmen, don’t we?” she asked.

“Yes, and what did Miss Orme do but give us a test, a last hour test, mind you, just before the game. I told her, but she looked at me in perfect disgust. ‘Do you think we should dismiss school on account of the games?’ she asked.” Betty sighed.

“Oh, well, you’ll be less excited for something else to think about. Perhaps it will not be hard.”

“And perhaps it will, Lucia. Be glad you aren’t in her class. But that is a good idea about thinking of something else. I’m gone if I worry. And I’ve been getting that work so far. I’ll just take it all as sport. But I do want my team to play well.”

“They’ll beat the freshmen, I think, though those freshmen aren’t to be despised.”

“Indeed they aren’t.”

Betty was pretty well keyed up before her first game of the class competition, but Betty never lost her self-control. She set her lips and went through the rather difficult written test as well as she could. The air grew close, and it was with a thrill of actually joyous expectation that Betty hurried to the gym as the time approached, and joked with the freshman captain whom she met on the way. She could breathe in the gym!

“We’re going to ‘lick’ the sophomores,” jovially the freshman captain informed her.

“Don’t be too sure. We’re out to win,” cheerily answered Betty. She gathered her girls together and told them of some points she

had noted about the freshman playing and they entered the game with confidence, though warned not to be too sure. The “rough” freshman was taken out after some too apparent fouls due to her performances, and the final score was eighteen to three in favor of the sophomores. They had won their first game at least, Betty said. “Now send up the score, girls, as high as you can with every game. No telling what we can do if we try!”

The inter-class games continued, with some intervals due to other important school events, for three weeks. Classes were given more than one opportunity to better their score against other classes. But finally it narrowed down to a contest between the juniors and sophomores, Betty finding the sophomore record making her “famous,” as Kathryn said. Senior luck held part of the time only, but that class never had done as well in basketball as in other things, Carolyn told Betty.

The championship game was to be played in the boys’ gym, which was larger, and the boys were allowed to attend. Betty, her cheeks pink from excitement, saw that her mother with Amy Lou had a good seat. “Look out, Amy Lou, and don’t get hit with the ball!” and Betty left them to disappear into the regions of the girls’ gym, where the teams were getting ready.

Dick and Doris were there and all the girls of the G. A. A. who could come, to say nothing of various boys, particularly those of the sophomore and junior classes. “Forget the crowd, girls, and whether your nose gets shiny or not,” advised Betty. “You’re a graceful lot anyhow and usually succeed in avoiding a terrible scramble. But remember that we have to beat those juniors!”

Betty was distrustful of Mathilde, who had gotten on the first team by no wish of hers. She would be playing against Marcella and the other juniors of Kappa Upsilon and Betty thought, though she could not be sure, that she surprised a message between Mathilde and one of the junior players at the other game they played with that class. Mathilde’s play had been a failure. Could it have been

that she wanted to give the game to the junior captain, her sorority sister?

Betty told her worries to no one but Kathryn. She did not want to worry Carolyn, who could not imagine that any one would be as mean as that and was too unsuspecting to see anything but the most flagrant acts. "I'll keep an eye out, Betty," said Kathryn. "Mathilde doesn't care for the sophomores or anything but that old sorority, and she doesn't like your being captain, though I hate to tell you that."

"Don't worry. I know it. We'll just keep awake and I'm glad to say that it's Miss Fox who's keeping an eye out this time, besides the referee. But it's going to be a fast game and no telling what may happen."

First with applause, then with silence, the little audience in the gym greeted the two teams as they came out, without the preliminary stunts that sometimes marked school affairs, and started right in. Amy Louise stood straight up when she saw for the first time the big ball, tossed from one to another, going across the floor, in the hands of Betty's girls, to be popped into the proper basket. That was after the "tip-off," as a freshman girl told Mrs. Lee. She knew few of the correct expressions, but enough to indicate results. "The point is to put the ball through their own basket, Mrs. Lee and they 'make the goal' and 'score.'"

But there was little opportunity to explain. As had been predicted, the game was a fast one. The sophomores had the advantage at the first and scored several times. Then the juniors succeeded in keeping the sophomores from scoring, put up a clever defense of their own, carried the ball with bewildering speed from one to another and passed the score of the sophomores with their own. The sophomores came back with a series of successful plays after disaster temporarily visited the juniors; and Kathryn covered herself with glory by making the long shot, for which she had been practicing, and saved the day in a bad situation which had

occurred. Advantage now on this side and now on that, the first two quarters ended with an equal score.

“If we can do that, Betty,” whispered Kathryn, “we stand a good chance to beat.”

But Betty was too engrossed to heed. Miss Fox was talking to Mathilde, who was answering loudly. The referee was called to the conference. Then Miss Fox came to Betty, who was watching. “I—we—are taking Mathilde out, Betty. She is not guilty of any foul, but we think that she purposely lost an advantage. I’m not going to risk it. Put in Mary Emma Howland for the rest of the game. If the juniors beat us they want to do it fairly.”

Mary Emma was only too glad to play. The other girls wondered a little, but the game was too engrossing, when again they were in the midst of it, to care who was playing. Betty gave Mary Emma a few instructions, but Mary Emma was one of the best on the second team and had been hoping for a chance to play the Championship game. Mathilde was very angry, as Betty could see. She came up to Betty and said, “You put Foxy up to that, I know!”

“I didn’t even see what you did, or didn’t do, Mathilde,” replied Betty, but she turned away. It would not do to get into a discussion now.

Again the contest waxed hard and fast, each side to put the ball through their own basket, each side to keep the other from doing the like. It took quick thinking and quick action and keeping the rules. Betty had an opportunity at showing what she could do in scoring, getting away from her guard and making two beautiful “shots” from unfavorable angles. The juniors felt that it would be a disgrace to let the sophomores beat the contest and began to grow excited. Betty never was more cool within, though physically she was warm from the action. It wouldn’t be so terrible to be beaten by juniors—but oh, how good to beat them—even Marcella, who was playing a good game.

But personal relations were forgotten on the floor. Marcella was kept from sending the ball through the junior basket and Mary Emma starred as guard in that occasion. The quarters,—the halves—passed, and the pistol shot rang out for the close of the game with the score even.

No one was satisfied, of course, but many were the compliments for the playing of both teams. Few fouls, clean playing, fast playing, enough baskets, the comments declared. “It’s so stupid when nobody can score,” said one. “These girls managed to do it some way in spite of good interference.”

Twenty-five to twenty-five the score stood, said Marcella caught up with Betty as they went back to the girls’ gym to change costumes again. “The idea that you beat us, Betty,” said Marcella with a smile. “I just declared that you never would!”

“Why, we didn’t beat you!” cried Betty.

“You might as well. We couldn’t beat you, anyhow, which was terrible! I think we were a little better in our guarding, but you overcame that disadvantage by those long shots that we did not dream you could make. You and Kathryn are stars, Betty. I’m sorry we did not get you in Kappa Upsilon. What was the trouble with Mathilde, Betty?”

“I don’t know, Marcella. You’ll have to ask Miss Fox or the referee. I didn’t see anything.”

“I imagine you have an idea, though,” said Marcella. “Well all hail to the Jingly Jumping Jacks! The Lucky Leapers are forced to give them credit, though we don’t want to do it.”

“Aren’t you a great jollier, Marcella Waite! I’m glad it’s over, but I’d rather somebody would beat. Still, there are things to be said in favor of a tie, provided a body couldn’t win the championship outright. Oh, do you suppose they’ll make us play another game?”

“Let us have another chance, you mean,” winked Marcella. “No, the big excitement is over and they’ll not do it, though I’d love to.”

“The sophomore team will be ready,” said Betty, “though just now I’m for a good dip in the pool and a square meal at home!”

“Sensible idea. You make me hungry at the thought. Oh, Mathilde! Wait!”

Betty watched Marcella follow Mathilde, who neither turned around nor waited, but hurried into the other gym.

CHAPTER XVI—A PARTY AND A REAL “DATE”

It was early in March when the inter-class basketball contests ended with the championship game that resulted in a tie. Kathryn's party was given on a Friday night, when a western blizzard had occurred and the rest of the country was surprised by a heavy snow. Memories of the bob-sleds at the Dorrance home during their freshman year came back to more than Betty Lee of the “old crowd.” Chet Dorrance had the best of excuses to make arrangements with Betty for a snow date, as he called it, and she promised to go with him and the rest on the next day after school. “Make it a regular date, Betty,” said he, “for we'll have something doing whenever we have enough snow.”

Betty was delighted with the snow, but made no “long distance” engagements. There had not been “a decent snow all winter,” everybody claimed, and great was the enthusiasm. Great drifts edged the walks at Kathryn's and Betty came early to help, as she had promised. She, Chauncey and Kathryn had a brilliant idea and made a big snow man on the front porch, where he would be well lit up by the porch light at the arrival of the company. “We'll have to have something or other outdoors,” declared Chauncey, who went around behind the house to reconnoiter. Kathryn and Betty, who were flying around inside, tried to think as they filled pretty little dishes with bonbons and finished the decorations.

“It's Chauncey's birthday,” said Kathryn, “but he wouldn't let me tell a soul. I don't think the other boys know. They surely would wash his face for him in the snow if they did!”

“I'll not betray him,” laughed Betty. “But why not have a snow fight? Listen, Gypsy. Those high piles of snow along the walk you know, why not use them and make a fort or two?”

Chauncey came in with the same idea, except that he thought the best place was in the back where snow had drifted in certain hollows. “It'll spoil everybody's good clothes, though,” said he.

“Do you suppose the girls will come in those thin things they wear?”

“Not tonight, Chauncey, because I told some of them that we’d probably do something outdoors, and the rest will have a pretty good suspicion that we will.”

Kathryn’s party included some of the older boys and girls to whom she was indebted. Lucia, as the stranger in their midst and a good friend, was invited. Marcella and Peggy were the only other representatives of the Kappa Upsilon. Ted Dorrance was there and the junior girl to whom he was supposed to have transferred his affections since Louise Madison began to have social relations with the University men.

“Hello, Betty Lee,” said he. “I haven’t seen you except at a distance for some time. Congratulations for not letting the junior team beat you in basketball. Those girls ought to feel crushed.”

“But don’t,” added Betty. “Congratulations yourself on your own basketball record. I was so surprised when I heard you were on the team. I haven’t missed a game that was played here if I could help it. You’ve become a star.”

“According to the Lyon’s Roar,” answered Ted, in derision. “They’re hard up for somebody to write up as a star if they have to take me!”

“Your modesty is very becoming,” demurely remarked Betty, as an older girl might have done, and Ted looked again. This was a cute girl, this little sophomore. He remembered her coming to Lyon High for the first last year. Chet had her in his crowd. How would it do to take her somewhere some time?

In consequence of these impulsive thoughts, in the course of the evening’s fun Betty found Ted Dorrance beside her several times and once he asked her if she “had a date” for the next Symphony Concert.

“Why, no, though Mother and I go to some of them,” said Betty, not dreaming that Ted meant to ask her. But she was mortified at the thought of what she considered her “dumbness,” when he asked her to go with him on that coming Saturday night.

“Oh!” she said. “Why—Mother never lets me go to anything down in the city with anybody; but I think she would let me go with you.”

“I hope she will,” smiled Ted. “Let me know, Betty.”

“I will tomorrow,” said Betty, feeling uncomfortable, as girls do, for fear the boys will think them too childish. But Betty had confidence in her mother and she knew well that the ban would be off when she grew older. Oh, how wonderful to be going somewhere with Ted Dorrance! She looked so happy, though full of fun, as she helped Kathryn serve, that more than one boy looked her way and thought that Betty Lee was a “pretty girl.” Then they all put on wraps and as a final spurt of fun went out for a battle of soft snowballs, by the girls’ direction. No fort was made, for it was too late when the indoor fun was finished, but great plans were made for the following afternoon and evening, to take advantage of the winter’s one great opportunity.

And the snow man remained, to melt in a day or two into a messy heap on the porch; and an early robin cocked his head at the sight, as he stopped for the crumbs from the cake Kathryn had stuffed in the gaping mouth of the snow man. “Let’s give him a cooky,” Kathryn had said, as she and Betty laughed at Chauncey’s last artistic efforts.

Indeed, the birds were arriving all through March and April. It was baseball now, not basketball, though Betty did not play. She was devoted to the swimming in particular and was getting ready to take part in the events of a girls’ high school swimming meet, in which the swimmers from the different high schools would compete for excellence and points.

“No,” she said to Miss Fox. “Hockey and basketball were enough. I’m out for swimming, and that is all I can do, Miss Fox, if I get

my lessons. Oh, of course hikes and all the points I can make when I'm not needed at home."

"I like to hear you say that, Betty. Too many girls don't want to help at all at home."

"I don't do enough," Betty replied—"but I have a dear family and we go out together in the machine a lot."

Going out with Ted was a great event, for Mrs. Lee said that she might, "though this is not to be taken as a regular break in our ideas," Betty's mother was careful to add.

"I don't care, Mother," said Betty, "only I wish I didn't have to say that my mother doesn't like to have me do it."

"You can make your own excuses, Betty."

"Of course. But if the boys think you don't want to go with them it makes them mad and you won't get asked again."

"And that would be terrible," laughed her mother, who had little fear but that Betty would have enough "dates" to keep her happy.

"Yes, it would," Betty answered, but a little smile crept about her lips.

"How would it do just to say that you are allowed very few engagements, especially at night?"

"I might work out something else. You should have seen—or heard—how dumb it sounded, what I said to Ted!"

"There he is, my daughter," said Mrs. Lee as the bell rang. Betty looked in the glass, patted a refractory lock, and walked sedately through the hall and into the front room, where Ted, all correct, in a new top-coat, and carrying hat and gloves, waited, having been admitted by Dick.

Ted rose and shook hands, as Betty entered, but said that he was late and that if she would put on her wraps he "thought they'd better start." Mrs. Lee came in then and Betty ran back for her

wraps, thankful that they were new, this year, and that her gloves were everything that could be desired. She had worn her prettiest dress and hoped that Ted, who was accustomed to taking out girls, would find nothing lacking in her ensemble.

“Betty’s beginning rather young,” said Mr. Lee thoughtfully, coming in from the garage where he had been putting in his car. “That is a good car young Dorrance is driving. Do you suppose it is his own?”

“Very likely, though I do not know, either.”

“There were some others, so I imagine it is a ‘theatre party.’”

“All the better—but I’d like to keep Betty from all that till she is older. I shall, too. She is obedient and sensible. We shall have this the exception rather than the rule.”

“I’m glad to leave it to you, Mother,” replied Mr. Lee.

“I’ll warrant,” laughed his wife.

Betty need not have worried about Ted’s superior knowledge of the ways of society. He was only a high school boy after all, and though Mrs. Dorrance had been left a widow with plenty of means, she was a woman of culture and of a certain both practical and realistic sense when it came to social affairs. Real things that mattered and not foolish forms of convention governed her and provided for her boys a certain freedom, while asking of them the ordinary courtesies and consideration of gentlemen.

Another senior boy and a senior girl were in the car, Betty found, and she was glad to settle beside the senior girl in the back seat while Ted and his old friend Harry sat in front.

The “theatre party” was a very modest one, for Betty was not led to a box. But they had good seats, well in front in the balcony, and Betty enjoyed all the little attentions that Ted knew so well how to give, though as a matter of course.

The playing of the orchestra happened to be just what Betty liked best, not so much of the musical fireworks, but the lovelier selections from the classics. Even Ted was forgotten during one number till as she leaned back with a little sigh after it was over he said, "You liked that as much as I did, didn't you? Do you do much with your violin now?"

"Scarcely a bit," she whispered, "but I love to hear it. How did you know I played?"

"A little bird told me," said Ted.

CHAPTER XVII—"JUST LIKE A FISH"

"Look at Betty!" cried Kathryn, who was not taking part in the swimming meet, but was a part of the audience. "Isn't she graceful? What a dive! Betty's a regular fish for the water!"

"She went into the water like a bird catching a fish," replied Carolyn, who had memories of a northern lake in summer.

"Yes; but she says she likes the water and feels at home in it. She is a natural swimmer, I suppose, if there is such a thing."

The seats around the pool were full of spectators, some mothers as well as girls from the different high schools concerned in the meet. Others leaned forward, all interest, from the balcony above, among them Mrs. Lee and Amy Lou. Betty had located her mother before the meet proper began and welcomed her with a smiling salute from a distance. To Amy Lou, who waved wildly at her older sister, she gave a separate salute, and blew her a kiss. Betty looked happy and unworried, a trim little figure in her tight, dark blue bathing suit.

A group of sophomore girls were equipped with Lyon High banners and sat together on one side of the pool, ready to root for their own school and their own class swimmers as well. When Betty came out for the diving events, they cheered for her. Amy Lou was frightened and squealed out a little when Betty made a "back" dive that was greeted with general applause. Mrs. Lee held her breath for a minute, afraid that Betty would hit the diving board and gave a sigh of relief when that did not happen.

Carolyn, who sat beside Mrs. Lee, turned to her enthusiastically to say, "Wasn't that splendid? Betty is getting better and better!"

"I hope she won't do that again, though," said Betty's mother.

"Oh, that's perfectly safe for Betty, Mrs. Lee. They wouldn't let her try it if she weren't used to it and Betty can just do almost anything.

Besides, it isn't as close to the board when she does it as it looks. If you were right up at that end you'd see."

"I see. I have heard Betty talk about all this so much, but I must say that all the remarks about this and that sort of a stroke and the different kinds of diving have rather gone over my head. I've not been able to get to the little meets the girls have had. This is delightful, the big pool and all the excitement. No wonder the girls like it, but Betty did not seem to be excited over it or care about taking first place. I wonder why?"

"Betty's pretty level-headed," laughed Carolyn. "She's getting ready to do big things in her next two years, you see, big things for the G. A. A. So she isn't going to get all worked up now. I shouldn't wonder if she did get the best record for the diving, though. Those other girls weren't half so good on that event, though that senior girl from North High is a wonder in swimming. Wait till those speed tests—or events—come off and watch her. Without her cap Betty'd be a goldfish, Kathryn!"

Mrs. Lee consulted her program. It was a help to see everything down, in black and white. Here was a certain sort of a stroke, and she could see it being done. "Amy Lou," said she, "watch how they do it. Some day you will be doing that perhaps."

"Oh, yes," soberly said Amy Lou, watching the next group of contestants come in from out behind the curtains and stand in readiness. "I'm going to be a G. A. A."

"The whole association, Amy Lou?" asked Kathryn, who liked to tease a little.

Amy Lou smiled a little. She didn't mind Kathryn, who was always remembering her in some little way. "Yes," said she. "I can swim now a little, up at Grandma's, can't I Mamma?"

"Yes, dear—but watch and keep still. The girls are going to start."

Amy Lou had stopped jumping at the pistol shot and now leaned over with the rest, though she had to stand up to do it, to see the

slim young bodies cleave the clear water of the pool, swim the length of it, turn, pushing their toes against the concrete wall of the pool and start for the other end.

The diving included “front, back and running,” the program said. Then there were a “twenty-yard back stroke for speed, a twenty-yard side stroke for speed and a twenty-yard free style for speed,” and Carolyn explained that “free style” meant “do it any way you want to—just get there!”

“Will Betty try to win on speed?” asked Mrs. Lee.

“I doubt it. Betty’s working on trying to do everything just right, and grace and ease in the water, and keeping your head, I guess, from what I hear her say. You see, you have to do your breathing a certain way, though that doesn’t seem to be any trouble to Betty.”

“It looks painful to me,” said Mrs. Lee.

“Watch Betty and you won’t think so.”

“They turn sideways and swallow the air, don’t they?” said Amy Lou.

“Just about,” laughed Carolyn. “Here comes Betty again, Amy Lou.”

Amy Lou joined in the Lyon High yell this time, to the great amusement of Carolyn and Betty, but they did not let the child see their smiles and Mrs. Lee did not make any objection. What was Amy Lou’s small voice in the general uproar?

No one girl was permitted to take part in any large number of events, thought there had not been this time too great a number of contestants who wanted to enter for the meet.

Betty was not tired and after the first diving event did not feel excited. There were only a few more people looking on, and the cheers were a part of it all. This was noted as “Push off and coast across pool for speed” and to Betty’s surprise she was first across the pool. Later there was a “relay” event, in which Betty did well,

her best, but was not first. That ended her part in the meet and she was satisfied. She took her shower and dressed without watching the rest, though Carolyn exclaimed afterward when she found that Betty had “missed the rest,” and at an inter-school contest.

“Well,” said Betty, “why sit around in a wet bathing suit? I knew I could get dressed in time to hear the final results announced. Of course, I was crazy for Lyon High to win the meet, but even with my blanket around me I was a little chilly and I’d promised Mother that I’d not take an unnecessary risks of cold. I did hate to miss one event, but I’d seen such a lot of swimming.”

Yet Betty had won some points for her school and she was, indeed, back where she could hear the announcement after the final event and to join in the wild cheering of feminine voices which marked the announcement that Lyon High had won the meet by a narrow margin. It was well that it was so, for there had been some good swimming done by all the schools.

“Going to take the life-saving tests, Betty?” asked Lucia Coletti, who chanced to be by Betty as the crowd left the pool and the building.

“No, not now, Lucia. Next year is time enough. I might get ready for it, but I’m just learning a lot of things and trying the endurance stunts a little. Perhaps I’ll swim across to Italy one of these days.”

Lucia laughed. “That’s what I’d like to do right now, though I prefer going on a steamer. I’m homesick to see my father,” she added.

“Will you be going over this summer?” queried Betty, though casually, for Betty was not one to be curious.

“No. Mother says not,” replied Lucia, and Betty did not ask whether or not the count would come to America. There was some trouble there, Betty supposed. It did not always work when an American girl married a foreigner. But how dreadful for Lucia who

loved both parents, of course, if you were separated! Why didn't people think about their children a little instead of themselves?

"Betty," said Lucia, "Mother is going to entertain for me this spring and you are the first one I want to invite. I haven't had you over at all."

"But I haven't had you either," said Betty. "We just couldn't manage parties some way this year with all that has been going on at school and Mother so busy and Father working so hard, too. You were the stranger to be invited."

Lucia slipped her hand inside of Betty's bent arm and patted it. "But I know perfectly well that it was Mother's place to show some attention to your father and mother. But Mother has been considerably upset—about some of our affairs. She's been in the social columns of the papers all right, but she's not done any of the entertaining herself."

It was rather an odd place for any confidences, Betty thought, but Lucia was likely to say things when she wanted to do it. No one could hear, however, as they went out of the open doors and ran down the steps together. Lucia nodded good night and then went to where the Murchison car waited for her.

Betty waited a few moments for her mother and Amy Lou to join her, but they took the street car home, sleepy as Amy Lou was by this time. For Dick and Doris, to their great disappointment, were showing signs of sore throat and measles was making a few absences at the junior high school. Mrs. Lee was hopeful that the sore throats were only the results of an early hike that the twins had taken together; and she had been sent off to the meet by her husband with the announcement that he was quite able to act as nurse and see that they took their medicine.

Fortunately the measles did not materialize, but Doris had missed seeing the meet and Dick had missed something else. Both missed school for a few days, which loss had its compensations.

It was true that neither Betty nor her mother had known just what to do about paying any attention to the countess. The countess had not met her mother and had not said anything to her father about liking to have his wife call. The Countess Coletti had, of course, many friends of former days among the wealthy members of what was called society in the city. For this group Mrs. Lee had neither means, time nor any real interest, though no one was more likely to have friends. It was easy to make them, in the church, or in the other relations which living naturally brought about.

“We belong to a different ‘aristocracy,’ Betty,” said Mrs. Lee. “We, too, can have a certain influence in the community, a good one, I hope, and a little circle of pleasant friends. One is always running across kindred spirits.”

“Carolyn and Kathryn are my chief ones,” laughed Betty.

These remarks were made on the way home from the meet, when in a seat together, Amy Lou half asleep on their laps, they discussed what Lucia had said.

“Of course you will not repeat to any of the girls Lucia’s reference to the countess and her being ‘upset’ about some of her affairs. It is important to your father that nothing we do is a mistake in reference to that family. We have made no mistake in waiting for them to take the initiative. It was a little odd for Lucia to be so frank, but she has her worries, too, no doubt, and felt that she could trust you as a confidante.”

“She can,” replied Betty. “I wonder what sort of a party it will be? All the sorority will be there, of course, and probably ever so many girls that I do not know. Lucia has some friends in the private schools, but she likes Lyon High now and wouldn’t leave it for any other school. You should have heard her tell me about how some of the girls tried to get her away. ‘No, no, no,’ she said, in that rapid Italian way she has, ‘I like this big school and everything they do. I’ve been in a private school. I shall have my high school diploma

to show my father!' I imagine the count, then, doesn't object so much to Lucia's going to school over here."

"His troubles are in another line, I presume."

"Well, whatever their troubles are, I'm glad Lucia came. She's very interesting." So declared Betty.

CHAPTER XVIII—THE COUNTESS ENTERTAINS

Spring affairs came on with their hikes, their different activities, their work and their fun, till Betty almost forgot what Lucia had said to her, in the interest of other things. She saw very little of Lucia now, for the sorority seemed to take up Lucia's time, so far as her associations were concerned.

Betty was working hard on her studies. She had passed her mid-years with credit and now she was keeping up the standard for the second semester. It was not so hard as the freshman year's work, yet there were more distractions as she increasingly took part in the school's activities.

However, there was no basketball. She made progress in swimming, took a little part in other athletic affairs, earned points and hoped that she would win "something or other" on honor night, that last function and climax of the G. A. A. The girls had wanted her to play baseball, but she "said them nay" as she stated at home. And in her free time she took up serious practice upon her violin, as well as regular lessons again. Saturdays she saved for picnics and hikes, except a few hours devoted to study. Mrs. Lee had a little maid come in now to help at home, though Doris and Betty still had very light tasks, chiefly in looking after their own room and keeping things in order. School was exacting and the girls needed their time if they stood well in their studies, Mrs. Lee said.

There was some discussion between the parents as to whether it was not outside affairs that took the girls' time and strength, but inasmuch as more of it was in the line of healthful activity than of late parties, the decision was to let the girls, particularly Betty, just now, "have their chance" and their good times. The little maid needed the work, moreover, and it gave Mrs. Lee the freedom she needed to leave Amy Lou and get away from cares.

Betty was "crazy" to get into the junior orchestra another year. Ted, who had been somewhat of an attraction, to be sure, would not be

in the senior orchestra, but Betty liked the idea, with or without any interesting boy. He had not invited Betty to accompany him again to any school or city entertainment, but he had asked her to a picnic with a few chosen friends and she had had a wonderful time, she reported to the girls. However, Ted said that Chet and some of the other boys had said "Hands off" about Betty Lee. So Ted put it, and while he reported it jokingly, Betty had an idea that it would make a difference. Well, it was better than being invited and dropped without a reason, and no boy should think that she wanted his attentions! And of course Ted was very much interested in this other girl. They both would be in the University next year.

Betty felt more grown up when she was with an older boy like Ted and enjoyed the feeling. The junior girls and some of the senior girls knew Betty and were quite inclined to be chummy, at least when thrown with Betty at any gathering.

The sophomores had a picnic, to which Chet invited Betty and one of the girls whom Betty did not know so well, remarked: "Well, the Dorrance boys keep you in the family, don't they?"

"Oh, no," lightly answered Betty, who did not like the remark, but did not know how to answer it. Betty did not like to resent what was probably not meant to be annoying. From certain indications she was pretty sure that Chet had resented Ted's taking her out and that Ted had promised Chet not to interfere.

So the time flew, till in the lovely Maytime Mrs. Lee was invited by the Countess Coletti to an afternoon tea at the Murchison home, and Betty was reminded of Lucia's remarks. The countess was "being nice to Mother" now, and Mrs. Lee reported a large gathering of charming ladies, some of them not so attractive or cultured, but many of them simple and interesting with the results of many opportunities for travel and reading, study and pleasure. "The countess herself is very delightful as a hostess, Betty," said Mrs. Lee. "I feel sure that if she entertains for Lucia it will be a gathering planned in every detail."

The series of teas and other entertainment at the Murchison home was followed “at last” by the arrival of invitations for Lucia’s friends, invitations with a “crest!” For the Countess Coletti was entertaining for her daughter.

“Oh, dear, why aren’t I Lucia’s friend and a little older?” sighed Doris, whimsically, examining the pretty invitation. “I’d always keep this, Betty, but if you don’t care for it, let me have it.”

“You can borrow it any time you want it, but it has to go among the archives, Dorry. I’m sorry you can’t go; but it’s very likely, if we stay here and Father is in the same business, that you can go there some time.”

“But that isn’t now,” said Doris, strictly adhering to fact.

Betty wondered whether it was a girls’ party or whether the boys would be invited, but as she saw several invitations displayed among the boys at school, her unuttered question was answered. It seemed to be taken for granted that the countess did not expect the young gentlemen to bring the young ladies, though Chet said, “see you at the party, Betty. I hope I’m your partner at supper.” Budd Leroy, also, who had shown recent signs of being interested in Betty Lee, made a similar remark about meeting her at Lucia’s, though he did not suggest himself as her partner. “Do you suppose the countess will wear her ‘tie-airy?’” Budd added.

“Do countesses have tiaras?” asked Betty. “I hope whatever she has she will wear it. What is the use of being a countess if you can’t have some sign of it?”

“Sure Mike,” said slangy Budd, who was to be very correct in his speech in the high society atmosphere at the Murchison home a few nights later.

Betty felt very fine indeed, when the Murchison car came for her. Lucia had told her that day at school that it would. “We’re taking care of my sorority and your little crowd, Betty, which is my

crowd, too, though they don't seem to know it since I joined the sorority. I didn't think it would make that difference."

"Do you really care about the girls, Lucia?"

"Of course I do."

"Then I'll tell them, if you don't mind."

"Tell away," said this Italian-American girl with a laugh.

So here were both Carolyn and Kathryn in the car with Peggy and another of the sorority girls. There was plenty of room for them to keep their fluffy dresses from being mussed and with great anticipations they arrived at the large place which Lucia now called home.

Mr. Murchison was a widower of some two years' standing. This accounted for the fact that the recent visit had been the first that Mrs. Lee had made there. There was no entertaining done until his sister, the countess, came home. Mr. Murchison had explained the situation to Mr. Lee early in their acquaintance and entertained Mr. Lee and other men friends at his club down town. There was an old, old grandmother, Betty had heard, but Lucia never talked about the household and Betty, of course, never inquired.

There were no class or sorority decorations here. The great rooms, of an old-fashioned type with their high ceilings, heavy woodwork, dark and carved, were fragrant with the odor of roses, which were Lucia's favorite flowers. The walls bore some fine originals from the brush of famous artists and Betty felt that she would like to wander through the rooms just to look at them.

But human relations were more interesting yet. The countess did wear her tiara. Perhaps Lucia had suggested that the girls would like it. At any rate here was near-royalty with its jewels. Lucia was in pink, very becoming to her style, and wore pink corals, necklace and bracelets. But Lucia, in the language of society, was a sub-deb and must not be too gorgeous yet.

Handsome books were in the library. Vases, tapestry, and rugs, exquisite ornaments, not in too great a profusion, indicated the wealth and taste that had collected them. Poor Mr. Murchison, thought Betty, to think he had to lose the wife that helped him make this home. But there again, Betty was mistaken, for it was the Murchison wealth and taste, including that of the Countess Coletti, that had made the old home what it was. Mr. Murchison received with the Countess and Lucia. Betty had thought that possibly the sorority president would be asked to receive with Lucia. But no, it was merely the family, distinguished enough to be sure. Mr. Murchison had not forgotten Betty and met her with a kindly grace. "You are particularly welcome, Miss Lee," said he. "I have not forgotten how you and your father looked after Lucia and my sister for me."

The first comers were a bit overwhelmed with the elegance of everything, but the countess was cordial and easy and as the rooms filled up with familiar faces, the general stiffness disappeared. Ted Dorrance was there and a number of juniors, Marcella, of course, and her friends of both junior and senior classes. Some older boys Betty did not know at all, as well as girls, airy and assured, that Betty thought must be from the private schools of which Lucia had spoken. But they were pretty and clever and with charming manners. Betty was glad to meet some of them. Mathilde was in her element, so far as her feelings was concerned, Betty saw; but she felt sorry for her, for she was so evidently not of the elect, so far as those other girls were concerned.

Chet and the boys that she knew came around, with Carolyn, Kathryn and the other girls. Lucia mingled with them all and the countess did not retire, as mothers have some times been known to do. Even Mr. Murchison stayed until games and some dancing were started. Then he disappeared. And Lucia, too, had an orchestra to discourse sweet music, either for dancing or games or, later, for supper. But who should be her partner for a funny game

of which Betty had never heard before, but Marcella's brother, the Pirate of Penzance!

"I believe, I'm quite sure, indeed, that this is the fair Titania," said he, as Marcella introduced him to Betty and told him that he was supposed to be Betty's partner "for these games," said Marcella.

"Do you know how to play this?" asked Lawrence Waite.

"No, I don't," replied Betty, as Marcella left them.

"Then come on," said Lawrence. "I know a secluded and not too secluded spot. Let's talk. They'll let me do it because I'm not in school with the rest of you, and already I know Lucia very well."

Lawrence Waite, known as Larry, explained to Betty, as he escorted her to just such a spot as she had read about in the grown-up books. Well, what of it? Wasn't she past sixteen? Why should she not have a handsome young man seating her in the conservatory by a fountain? It turned out to be some sort of a treasure hunt; but when Ted rushed by and called, "Come on, Larry, get into the game after treasure," Larry waved a careless hand and said, "I've found her."

Ted laughed, appreciating the point and Betty naturally dimpled with amusement, but Larry turned to her again, smiling, but not altogether in fun. "Really, Miss Lee, I have wanted to meet you since that Hallowe'en at our house."

"It has been sometime, Mr. Waite," suggested Betty demurely.

"Yes, but I've been away at college except at the Christmas vacation. I'm home on a rush trip now. Father wanted me to come, a business matter in which I could help him. I wanted to ask you if you minded that little affair. I was around looking for things for Marcella, and I took a chance of frightening you, I know, when I lit that candle; but I had recognized you, that is, as Titania, and I had to make a train and wanted to see what you really looked like. You were very good to take off your mask."

“It was just great fun, Mr. Waite. I should think I didn’t mind! It would have been very stupid just to have your candle go out and not to have a single thing happen, not even to look into the mirror.”

Larry had half a mind to mention one more thing that he had been tempted to have happen when he saw Betty’s face under that shining hair, but he decided that it was not best. She might think it just his line, and she was too sweet anyhow and too young for any suggestion of a stolen kiss. Pray heaven she went through high school and college as above anything doubtful as she was now! Larry had asked his sister what sort of a girl Betty Lee was, for Larry Waite was really interested.

“It was fun for both of us, then. I told at college that I had looked over a girl’s shoulder in a mirror at Hallowe’en and the fellows said, ‘Beware, Larry.’”

“I’m not a bit dangerous,” laughed Betty, though pleased. Betty was modern enough not to be entirely unsophisticated and she did think that this was what the girls called his “line.” But it was a jolly one, anyhow. She could safely have a good time with Marcella’s brother. He reminded her how as Titania and the Pirate of Penzance they had tripped “the light fantastic” together and now, as her especial cavalier through the games and at supper, he really took her some distance on the path of pleasant acquaintance.

There was no more on the personal line but they were as one on athletics and many other features of school life. Betty was fascinated at his tales of college life and thought it must be great fun to be away at school. Larry was quite popular with all the girls, Betty saw, and she wondered how Marcella had happened to assign him to her for the supper, for Betty was too modest still to guess that he had made the arrangement with Marcella, who was planning the arrangements with Lucia and the countess.

If any one had expected any Italian dishes at supper she was doomed to disappointment. Perhaps the countess was as glad to return to American food and cooking as are many travelers. At

any rate it was the customary late evening supper, dainty and appetizing. Lights, conversation, gay dresses, young faces, much laughter—Betty never would forget it she declared to Doris the next morning as she described it in detail to her sister.

“Everybody and everything were lovely, Dorry. I wish you could have been with me. And the Countess Coletti is a peach!” with which conclusion Betty hopped out of bed and began to dress.

“Isn’t it a pity,” sighed Doris, “that life can’t be parties all the time? And think of it, Betty; school is almost out and next year you’ll be a junior!”

“That is so,” thoughtfully replied Betty, but she was thinking just then of the “Pirate of Penzance.”

THE END

[The end of *Betty Lee, Sophomore* by Harriet Pyne Grove]