

Patty's Motor Car

CAROLYN WELLS

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Title: Patty's Motor Car

Date of first publication: 1911

Author: Carolyn Wells (1862-1942)

Date first posted: Aug. 27, 2016

Date last updated: Aug. 27, 2016

Faded Page eBook #20160817

This ebook was produced by: Mardi Desjardins & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>

Patty's Motor Car

BY

CAROLYN WELLS

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TWO LITTLE WOMEN SERIES,
THE MARJORIE SERIES, ETC.



GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

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BY DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
Published, September, 1911

Printed in U.S.A.

DEDICATED
WITH LOVE
TO
KATHARINE CARLETON

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CHAPTER I

AFTERNOON TEA

Patty was curled up in her favourite big easy-chair in her own study.

Though called a study, because it had been used as such during her schooldays, the pretty room was really more like a *boudoir*. Her desk was still there, but was now filled with programmes, friendly letters, and social correspondence instead of school themes or problems. The general colouring of the room was green, but the sash curtains of thin yellow silk, and the heap of yellow sofa cushions, did much to lighten the effect, and gave the room a sunshiny air, even on a dull day. The couch, and the two big, soft, cuddly chairs were upholstered in yellow-flowered chintz, and on the pale green walls hung Patty's favourite pictures, and many curios or souvenirs of her year spent abroad.

It was the first of March, so the room was brightened both by a big bowlful of yellow daffodils and a blazing wood fire. The two things Patty liked best in life were warmth and colour, and so to-day she was sitting near the fire, with the splendid yellow glory of the daffodils in full view.

But she was not looking at them, for she was poring over a book. When Patty read she usually pored, for she was eager and enthusiastic over any story in which she was interested.

But to-day, she was not reading a story. She pored intently, and then, throwing back her head, she would stare blankly at the ceiling, thinking hard.

Then, perhaps, she would fly to her bookcase, tumble out two or three books, swiftly turn their pages, and then back to her big chair and the original book.

It was a very small book, with a paper cover, but it seemed to be most engrossing.

Two or three hours passed, and still Patty pored over the little book, rarely turning a page. Absent-mindedly, she rubbed her head until the hairpins fell out, and her golden hair fell around her shoulders, as bright a glory as the daffodils. Vacantly she stared into the fire or out of the window, and at last she flung her little book across the room and exclaimed aloud:

"It's no use! I can't do it!"

And then Nan, her pretty stepmother, appeared at the open door.

"Patty!" she cried; "in a kimono! And it's nearly four o'clock! Don't you know it's my day?"

"Nan," said Patty, with an anxious look in her eyes, "what is it, of which the poor have two and the rich have none?"

"Gracious, Patty! What a question! I don't know, I'm sure. Are you going in for more philanthropy? Because, if so, do wait for a more convenient season."

"No; it isn't philanthropy. It's——I say, Nan, how could a headless man write a letter?"

"He couldn't."

"And does a bookworm eat straight through a book, or zigzag?"

"I don't know. I've heard the Bookworm is only a fabled animal, like a griffin. Or, no; I think it's an extinct species, like the Dodo."

"Oh, Nan! You are so deliciously ignorant."

"No more so than you, or why do you ask me these things? Now, Patty, stop this nonsense, and get dressed. What *are* you doing, anyway?"

"Oh, Nan, the loveliest scheme ever! Let me tell you about it."

"No, not now. I must go down to the drawing-room. And you must follow just as soon as

you can. Do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear, you old Loveliness. But just tell me when London——"

But Nan had run away from the fire of questions, and Patty drew herself up out of her chair, stretched and yawned like a sleepy kitten, and then proceeded to make her toilette with expedition and despatch.

But as she sat in front of her dressing table, piling her gold hair into a soft crown above her pretty face, she frowned at her own reflection.

"You're a stupid idiot," she informed herself. "You don't know anything! And you haven't an ounce of brains! Now, *what* is it of which the poor have two, the rich have none, schoolboys have several, and you have one. Well, I can't think of a thing but mumps or measles; and, of course, they're not the answer, and you couldn't have one measles, anyhow."

As she dressed, Patty took hasty glances in the little book, and finally she left her room and walked slowly downstairs, murmuring, "Divide nine into two equal parts, which, added together, make ten."

But when she reached the drawing-room door, all the puzzling problems flew out of her mind, and she went in gracefully to greet Nan's guests.

As Patty was not yet out in society, she did not have her name on the card with her stepmother's, but she always assisted Nan in receiving, and informally asked a number of her own friends to call, too.

This was Nan's last reception day for the season, so it was a little more elaborate than others had been.

Patty wore an embroidered white *chiffon*, which delicate material clouded bows and bands of pale-blue satin. It was a lovely frock, and just suited Patty's blonde fairness. She went around among her mother's friends, greeting them with pretty courtesy, and chatting easily with them. But, after a time, her own young friends came, and, with the two Farringtons and Kenneth Harper, Patty went to the library, where they could be by themselves.

Soon, Mr. Hepworth came, bringing Christine Farley.

Christine had been in New York only a few weeks, but already she had lost much of her painful shyness, and, though still easily embarrassed by the presence of strangers, she usually managed to preserve her poise and self-control.

She greeted Patty with shining eyes, for the Southern girl was warmly affectionate, and adored Patty.

"And are you all settled, now, Christine, and ready to receive callers?" Patty asked.

"Yes, I am. I have a lovely room; not large, but sunny and pleasant, and I will gladly welcome you there at any time. And Mr. and Mrs. Bosworth are such kind people. Oh, I shall be very happy there."

"And the work?" asked Mr. Hepworth. "How does that come on?"

"It's all right," said Christine, soberly, but nodding her head with satisfaction.

Though shy in society, she was most practical and unembarrassed about her art study. Not over-conceited, but perfectly aware of the extent of her own talent, and also of her own ignorance. And she had a calm determination to improve the one and conquer the other.

Christine was pretty, in her soft Southern way. She was small, and dainty in all her effects. Her oval face was serious, almost sad in its expression, but, if she were interested in a subject, it would light up into sudden beauty.

Her clothes betokened her artistic tastes, and she never wore dresses of the fashionable type, but soft, clinging gowns in dull, pastel colours. A bit of old embroidery or unusual jewelry

added an effective touch, and Christine always looked well dressed, though her clothes cost far less than Patty's. The two girls were absolutely unlike, and yet they were fast becoming great friends. But Christine possessed almost no sense of humour, and Patty feared she could never be really chummy with any one who lacked that.

Elise was not very fond of Christine, for she didn't understand her at all, and secretly thought her rather stupid. But the boys, Roger and Kenneth, liked the Southern maiden, with her soft, pretty accent, and, of course, Mr. Hepworth was her friend.

So the whole group was fairly congenial, and they formed a pleasant little circle in the library, to drink their tea.

"Sorry I'm late," said a cheery voice, and Philip Van Reypen joined them.

"Oh! how do you do?" cried Patty, jumping up to greet him. "Miss Farley, may I present Mr. Van Reypen? I think the rest are all acquainted."

There were general greetings all round, and then Philip took his place with the rest.

"My aunt is here," he said, to Patty. "A little later, perhaps, she wants to meet Miss Farley."

"So she shall," said Patty, remembering Miss Van Reypen's offer to help Christine in some way. "Will you have tea?"

"Will I have tea?" echoed Philip. "That's exactly what I'm here for. Please, yes."

"Then here you are," said Patty, handing him a cup; "and, incidentally, do you know how a bookworm goes through a book?"

"Ugh! what an unpleasant subject," said Elise, with a shrug of her shoulders. "Patty, do talk of something else."

"I can't," said Patty, solemnly; "I *must* know about the manners and customs of a well-conducted bookworm."

"Do you mean a real bookworm, or a studious person?" asked Mr. Hepworth, who often took Patty's questions very seriously.

"I mean the—the entomological sort," said Patty, "and I'm in dead earnest. Who knows anything about the bookworms that really destroy books?"

"I do," announced Kenneth, "but nothing would induce me to tell. Theirs is a secret history, and not to be made known to a curious world."

"Pooh!" said Roger, "that's all bluff. Patty, he doesn't really know anything about the beasts. Now, I do. A bookworm is a grub."

"No," said Philip, "the book is the bookworm's grub. And pretty dry fodder he must often find it."

"I know what you're going to do, Patty," said Kenneth, in an aggrieved voice; "you're going to set up a pair of pet bookworms in place of Darby and Juliet. Please understand that I am distinctly offended, and I prophesy that your new pets won't be half as interesting as the goldfish."

"Wrong again, Ken," returned Patty; "no new pets could ever be so dear to my heart as those sweet, lovely goldfish. But, if you people don't tell me about bookworms, I'll have to look in the Encyclopædia; and, if there's anything I do hate, it's that. Christine, aren't you up on bookworms?"

"No," said Christine, in a shy whisper. She couldn't yet become accustomed to the quick repartee and merry nonsense of these Northern young people.

"I used to have a pet bookworm," began Roger, "but he got into a cook-book and died of dyspepsia."

"Tell us what it's all about, Patty?" said Mr. Hepworth, seeing she was really serious in her

questioning.

“Why, it’s a puzzle,—a sort of conundrum. This is it. Suppose a history in three volumes is placed upon a bookshelf. Suppose each volume contains just one hundred pages. And suppose a bookworm, starting at page one of volume one, bores right straight through the books, covers and all, to the last page of volume three. How many leaves does he go through, not counting fly-leaves, or covers?”

“Patty, I’m surprised at you,” said Roger. “That’s too easy. He goes through the three hundred pages, of course.”

“It does seem so,” said Patty, with a perplexed look, “but, as you say, that’s too easy. There must be a catch or a quibble somewhere.”

“Well,” said Elise, “I never could do a puzzle. I don’t know why a hen goes across the road, or when is a door not a door. But you’re a born puzzlist, Patty, and, if you can’t guess it, nobody can.”

“Elise, you’re a sweet thing, and most complimentary. But I know you have no talent for puzzles, so, my dear child, I’m not asking you. But, you men of brains and intellect, can’t you help me out? I’m sure there’s another answer, but I can’t think what it would be.”

“Why, Patty,” said Mr. Hepworth, thoughtfully, “I think Roger is right. If the bookworm goes through all three volumes, he must go through three hundred pages, mustn’t he?”

“No, indeed!” cried Christine, her shyness forgotten, and her eyes shining as she constructed the picture of the books in her mind’s eye. “Wait a minute; yes, I’m sure I’m right! He only goes through one hundred pages. He goes only through the second volume, you see!”

Elise looked at Christine a little disdainfully.

“You don’t seem to have heard the conditions,” she said. “The bookworm begins at the first page of the first volume and goes through to the end of the last one.”

“Yes, I heard that,” said Christine, flushing at Elise’s tone, which was distinctly supercilious. “But, don’t you see, when the books are set up on a shelf, in the usual manner, the first page of the first volume is on the right, just up against the last page of the second volume.”

“Nonsense!” cried Elise.

“But it is so, Miss Farley!” exclaimed Philip Van Reypen. “You’ve struck it! Look, people!”

He turned to a bookcase, and indicated three volumes of a set of books.

“Now, see, the first page of volume one is right against the last page of volume two. So the first page of volume two is up against the last page of volume three. Now, what does Mr. Bookworm do? He starts here, at the first page of volume one. He doesn’t go backward, so he doesn’t go through volume one at all! He goes through volume two, and, as soon as he strikes volume three, he strikes it at the last page, and his task is done, his journey is over. He has fulfilled the conditions of the original question. See?”

They did see, after awhile, but it was only the ocular demonstration that proved it, for the facts were hard to describe in words.

Elise flatly refused to see it, saying it made her head ache to try to understand it.

“But it was very clever of Miss Farley to reason it out so soon,” said Philip.

“Yes, wasn’t it?” agreed Patty. “I didn’t know you had a bent for puzzles, Christine.”

“I haven’t. But that doesn’t seem to me like a puzzle. I can’t do arithmetical problems, or guess charades at all. But this seems to me a picture of still life. I can see the insides of the books in my mind, and they are wrong end to,—that is, compared to the way we read them. You see, they really stand in the bookcase with the pages numbered backward.”

“Bravo, Christine; so they do!” said Mr. Hepworth. “Patty, that’s the answer, but, I confess, I was ’way off myself.”

“So say we all of us,” chimed in Roger. “I can only see through it, part of the time, even now.”

“I think it a most clever catch question,” said Philip Van Reypen. “Where did you find it, Miss Fairfield?”

“In a little book of puzzles; I’m trying to guess them all.”

“Let me help you, won’t you? I’m a shark on puzzles. I slipped up on this one, I admit; but I can do the ‘transposed, I am a fish’ kind, just lovely.”

“Ah, but my bookful isn’t that kind. They’re all of a catchy or difficult sort.”

“Well, let me try to help, mayn’t I?” Mr. Van Reypen’s voice was gay and wheedlesome, and Patty responded by saying, “Perhaps; some time. But now I must take Miss Farley in to see Mrs. Van Reypen.”

These two were mutually pleased with each other, as Patty felt sure they would be.

Mrs. Van Reypen assumed her kindest demeanour, for she saw Christine was excessively shy. She talked pleasantly to her, drawing her out concerning her life work and her life plans, and ended by asking the girl to call on her some afternoon, soon.

Then she went away, and Patty drew Christine into a corner to congratulate her.

“It’s fine!” she declared. “If Mrs. Van Reypen takes you up, she’ll do lovely things for you. She’ll have you at her house, and you’ll meet lovely people, and she’ll take you to the opera! Oh, Christine, do be nice to her.”

“Of course I shall. I liked her at once. She isn’t a bit patronising. But, Patty, your friend Elise is. I don’t know why, but she doesn’t like me.”

“Nonsense, Christine, don’t you go around with thinks like that under your pompadour! Elise is all right. She isn’t such a sunny bunny as I am, but she’s a lot wiser and better in many ways.”

“No, she isn’t! She’s selfish and jealous. But I’m going to be nice to her, and, perhaps, I can make her like me, after all.”

“I should say you could! Everybody likes you, and anybody who doesn’t soon will!”

CHAPTER II

AN ABLE HELPER

Nearly all the guests had left the Fairfield house, after Nan's pleasant afternoon tea. Philip Van Reypen had escorted his aunt out to her carriage, and she had driven away, while the young man returned for a few moments' further chat with his hostess.

Though he and Nan had met but a few times, they had become rather chummy, which, however, was not unusual for him, if he liked anybody.

Young Van Reypen was of a gay and social nature, and made friends easily by his sheer good-humour. He admired Mrs. Fairfield very much, but, even more, he admired Patty. Ever since he had met her unexpectedly on his aunt's staircase, he had thought her the prettiest and sweetest girl he had ever seen. So he was making every endeavour to cultivate her acquaintance, and, being of rather astute observation, he concluded it wise to make friends with the whole Fairfield family.

So the big, handsome chap went back to the drawing-room, and dropped on a sofa beside Nan.

"It's awfully cold out," he observed, plaintively.

"Is it?" returned his hostess, innocently.

"Yes; I hate to go out in the cold."

"But you have to go, sooner or later."

"Yes; but it may be warmer later."

"On the contrary, it will probably grow colder."

"Oh! do you think so? But, then again, it may not, and I'm quite willing to take the chance."

"Mr. Van Reypen, I do believe you're hinting for an invitation to stay here to dinner!"

"Oh, Mrs. Fairfield, how clever you are! How could you possibly guess that, now?"

Nan laughed and hesitated. She liked the young man, but she wasn't sure that Patty wanted him there. Patty was developing into a somewhat decided young person, and liked to make her own plans. And Nan well knew that Patty was the real magnet that drew Mr. Van Reypen so often to the house.

"What do you think?" she said, as the girl came into the room; "this plain-spoken young man is giving me to understand that, if he were urged, he would dine here to-night."

"Of course, it would require a great deal of most insistent urging," put in Philip.

"Don't let's urge him," said Patty, but the merry smile she flashed at the young man belied her words.

"If you smile like that, I'll do the urging myself," he cried. "Please, Mrs. Fairfield, *do* let me stay; I'll be as good as gold."

"What say you, Patty?" asked Nan.

"He may stay," rejoined Patty, "if he'll help me with my work on those puzzles."

"Puzzles? Well, I just guess I will! I'll do them all for you. Where's your slate and pencil?"

"Oh, not yet!" laughed Patty. "We won't do those until after dinner."

"Why do you do them at all?" asked Nan; "and what are they, anyway?"

"I'll tell you," began Patty; "no, I won't, either. At least, not now. It's a grand project,—a really great scheme. And I'll unfold it at dinner, then father can hear about it, too."

So, later, when the quartette were seated around the dinner table, Patty announced that she would tell of her great project.

"You see," she began, "it's a sort of advertisement for a big motor-car company."

"Don't try to float a motor-car company, Patty," advised her father; "it's too big a project for a young girl."

"I'm not going to do that, Daddy Fairfield; but I begin to think that what I am going to do is almost as hard. You see, this big company has issued a book of a hundred puzzles. Now, whoever guesses all those puzzles correctly will get the prize. And,—the prize is a lovely electric runabout. And I want it!"

"Hevings! hevings!" murmured Mr. Van Reypen. "She wants an Electric Runabout! Why, Infant, you'll break your blessed neck!"

"Indeed, I won't! I guess I've brains enough to run an electric car! If I guess those puzzles, that'll prove it. They're fearfully hard! Listen to this one. 'When did London begin with an L and end with an E?'"

"That is hard," said Nan. "It must be some foreign name for London. But *Londres* won't do."

"No," said Patty, "I thought of that. I expect it's some old Anglo-Saxon or Hardicanute name."

"I expect it's rubbish," said her father. "Patty, don't begin on these things. You'll wear yourself out. I know how you hammer at anything, once you begin it, and you'll be sitting up nights with these foolish questions until you're really ill."

"Oh, no, I won't, father. And beside, Mr. Van Reypen is going to help me, lots."

"Angel Child," said Philip, looking at her with a patronising air, "if all your questions are as easy as that one you just quoted, your task is already accomplished."

"Why, do you know the answer?" cried Patty. "Oh, tell it to me! I've puzzled so hard over it!"

"It's a quibble, of course,—a sort of catch, do you see? And the answer is that London always began with an L, and *End* always began with an E."

"Oh," said Patty, catching the point at once, "I should have known that! I pride myself on guessing those catch questions."

"You were clever to guess it so quickly, Mr. Van Reypen," said Mr. Fairfield; "or have you heard it before?"

"Not exactly in that form, no. But so many quibbles are built like that."

"They are," agreed Patty; "I ought to have known it. Well, I rather think there are some others you won't guess so easily."

"How many have you done?" asked Nan.

"I've done about twenty-five out of the hundred. Some were dead easy, and some I had to work on like the mischief."

"But, Patty," began her father, "what could you do with a motor car of your own? You don't want it."

"Indeed, I do! Why, I'll have perfectly elegant times scooting around by myself."

"But you can't go by yourself in the New York streets! I won't allow it."

"No, daddy dear, not here in the city, perhaps. But, if we go away for the summer to some nice country place, where there's nothing in the road but cows, then I could run it alone. Or with some nice girl by my side."

"Or with some nice boy by your side," put in Philip. "I'm an awfully nice boy,—they all say."

"If you help me win it, I'll give you a ride in it," said Patty. "But I haven't won it yet."

“No, and you won’t,” said her father. “Those contests are just planned for an advertisement. The prize goes to the daughter of the chief director.”

“Oh, Father Fairfield! What a mean thing to say! You don’t know that that’s so at all. Now, I believe in their honesty.”

“So do I,” said Nan. “That isn’t like you, Fred, to express such an unfounded suspicion.”

“Well, perhaps I spoke too hastily. But still, Patty, I don’t think you want the thing. If you get it, I’ll sell it for you, and give you the money.”

“No, sir-ee! I want it for itself alone. Oh, father, think what fun I’d have spinning around the country! Wouldn’t we, Nan?”

“Yes, indeed! I think it would be great fun. And they say those electrics are easy to manage.”

“Pooh! as easy as pie,” declared Patty. “And, anyway, I ran a big touring car once, in France. A big gasoline one. An electric is nothing to that.”

“What do you do to make it go?” asked her father, smiling.

“Oh, you just release the pawl that engages the clutch that holds the lever that sustains the spring that lets go the brake—and there you are!”

“Patty! where did you learn all that jargon?”

“Tisn’t jargon; it’s sense. And now, my dear ones, will you all help me in my stupendous undertaking? For, when I engage in a contest, I want to win.”

“Is it winning, if you have so much help?” teased her father.

“Yes, it is. The contest is to get the answers to those hundred questions and send them in. It doesn’t matter where you get your answers. You don’t want to enter the contest yourself, do you, Mr. Van Reypen?”

“No, no, fair lady. I would but be thy humble knight, and render such poor assistance as I may.”

“All right, then; right after dinner, we’ll tackle that book of posers.”

And so, for a couple of hours that evening, Patty and Philip Van Reypen exerted the full force of their intellects to unravel the knotty tangles propounded by the little paper-covered book.

Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield tried for a time, but soon grew weary of the difficult game.

“Now, take this one,” said Patty to her colleague; “How do you swallow a door?”

“Bolt it,” he replied, promptly. “That’s an old one.”

“I ought to have guessed that myself,” said Patty, “I’m so fond of slang.”

“‘Bolt it,’ isn’t exactly slang.”

“No,—I s’pose not. It’s just rude diction. Now, answer this. ‘The poor have two, the rich have none. Schoolboys have several, you have one.’”

“Well, that’s one of a class of puzzles to which the answer is usually some letter of the alphabet.”

“Oh, of course!” cried Patty, quickly; “it is *O*. There, I guessed that! Don’t you claim it!”

“Of course, you did! Now, you know this one about the headless man, don’t you? It’s a classic.”

“No, I don’t. I can’t see any sense to it at all.”

“Read it.”

So Patty read aloud:

“A headless man had a letter to write
It was read by one who had lost his sight,
The dumb repeated it, word for word,
And he who was deaf both listened and heard.”

“And you don’t know that?” asked Philip.

“No; the conditions are impossible.”

“Oh, no, they’re not. They only seem so. The answer is, ‘Nothing.’ You see the headless man could write nothing, that’s naught, zero, or the *letter O*. Then the blind man, of course, could read nothing; the dumb man could repeat nothing; and the deaf man heard nothing.”

“Pooh! I don’t think that’s very clever.”

“Not modernly clever, but it’s a good example of the old-time enigmas.”

“Gracious! What a lot you know about puzzles. Have you always studied them?”

“Yes; I loved them as a child, and I love them still. I think this whole book is great fun. But we’ll strike some really difficult ones yet. Here’s one I’ve never seen before. I’ll read it, and see if we, either of us, get a clue.

“What is it men and women all despise,
Yet one and all alike as highly prize?
What kings possess not; yet full sure am I
That for that luxury they often sigh.
What never was for sale; yet any day
The thrifty housewife will give some away
The farmer needs it for his growing corn.
The tired husbandman delights to own.
The very thing for any sick friend’s room.
It coming, silent as Spring’s early bloom.
A great, soft, yielding thing, that no one fears.
A tiny thing, oft wet with mother’s tears.
A thing so holy that we often wear
It carefully hidden from the world’s cold stare.”

“Well,” remarked Patty, complacently, as he finished reading, “I’ve guessed that.”

“You have! You bright little thing! I haven’t. Now, don’t tell me. Wait a minute! No, I can’t catch it. Tell me the answer.”

“Why, it’s An Old Shoe,” said Patty, laughing. “See how it all fits in.”

“Yes; it’s rattling clever. I like that one. Did you guess it as I read?”

“Yes; it seemed to dawn on me as you went along. They often do that, if I read them slowly. Now, here’s another old one. I’ll read, and you guess.

“If it be true, as Welshmen say,
Honour depends on pedigree,
Then stand by—clear the way—
And let me have fair play.
For, though you boast thro’ ages dark

Your pedigree from Noah's ark,
I, too, was with him there.
For I was Adam, Adam I,
And I was Eve, and Eve was I,
In spite of wind and weather;
But mark me—Adam was not I,
Neither was Mrs. Adam I,
Unless they were together.
Suppose, then, Eve and Adam talking—
With all my heart, but if they're walking
There ends all simile.
For, tho' I've tongue and often talk,
And tho' I've feet, yet when I walk
There is an end of me!
Not such an end but I have breath,
Therefore to such a kind of death
I have but small objection.
I may be Turk, I may be Jew,
And tho' a Christian, yet 'tis true
I die by Resurrection!"

"Oh, I know that one! It's a very old one and it's capital. The answer is A Bedfellow. See how clever it is; if I walk, it puts an end to me! and I die by resurrection! Oh, that's a good one. But you see this one?"

The golden head and the close-cropped dark one bent over the book together and read these lines:

"I sit stern as a rock when I'm raising the wind,
But the storm once abated I'm gentle and kind;
I have kings at my feet who await but my nod
To kneel down in the dust, on the ground I have trod.
Though seen by the world, I am known but to few,
The Gentile deserts me, I am pork to the Jew.
I never have passed but one night in the dark,
And that was like Noah alone in the ark.
My weight is three pounds, my length is one mile,
And when you have guessed me you'll say with a smile,
That my first and my last are the best of this isle."

"Now that's an old favourite with all puzzle-lovers," said Philip, as they finished reading it. "And it has never been satisfactorily guessed. The usual answer is The Crown of England. But that doesn't seem right to me. However, I know no other."

"But how does the Crown of England fit all the requirements?" said Patty, looking over the text.

"Well, 'this isle' is supposed to mean Great Britain. And I believe it is a historic fact that the Crown spent one night in a big chest called the Ark."

“What was it there for?”

“Oh, between the two reigns of William IV. and Victoria, there was a delay of some hours in the night before she really received the crown, and it was then placed in the ‘Ark.’ The weight of the crown is about three pounds, and they say, if drawn out into gold wire, it would stretch a mile.”

“It would depend on the thickness of the wire,” commented Patty, sagely.

“So it would. I don’t like the answer, anyway. But I can’t think of a better one. Let’s try some easy ones.”

“Take this mathematical one, then. ‘Divide nine into two equal parts that, added together, will make ten.’”

For some time Philip worked over this. He tried arabic figures, printed words, and Roman numerals. At last, he exclaimed, “Ah, now we have it!”

“Have you really done it?” cried Patty.

“Yes. Look. I write the Roman nine, IX, you know. Then I fold the paper crosswise, right through the middle. Now, what do you read on this side?”

“IV,” said Patty; “that’s four.”

“Yes. Now I turn the folded paper over, and what do you read?”

“VI; that’s six.”

“Yes, and six and four are ten. Though, as you know, we divided our nine into exactly equal parts by that crossways fold through the middle.”

“That’s a good one,” said Patty, with a little sigh; “but I don’t see how you guessed it.”

“But *I* see that you’re not to guess any more to-night,” said Mr. Fairfield, coming into the library, and looking at the absorbed puzzlers. “I’m going to take you both to the dining-room, where Mrs. Fairfield will give you a very small bit of very light supper, and then, Mr. Van Reypen, I shall send my daughter to her much-needed and well-earned rest.”

“But I’m not a bit sleepy, father dear,” protested Patty.

“No matter, my child; if you go into this ridiculous game, you must promise me not to overdo it. I will not allow you to work late at night on these problems.”

“All right, Daddykins, I promise. Wow! but I’m hungry! Come on, Mr. Van Reypen, let’s see what Nan will give us to support our famishing frames.”

To the dining-room they went, and Nan’s gay little supper soon brushed the cobwebs out of Patty’s brain. But she was well satisfied with her first evening of real work on her “Puzzle Contest.”

CHAPTER III

A LECTURE

“Patricia,” said Mr. Fairfield, one morning at the breakfast-table.

Patty gave a great jump, clasped her hands to her breast dramatically, and exclaimed:

“Oh, my gracious goodness! *What* do you call me that for?”

“Because,” went on her father, “I’m going to lecture you, and I’m in a very serious mood.”

“Proceed, Mr. Frederick Fairfield, Esquire,” and Patty assumed an expression of rapt attention and excessive meekness.

“Well, to put it in a few words, I won’t have that young Van Reypen hanging around here so much!”

“Oh! is that all? Well, you’re barking up the wrong tree! You should advise him of that fact, not me.”

“Incidentally, as I go along, consider yourself reprov’d for that awful bit of slang. But now I’m concerned with this other subject. It won’t be necessary for me to speak to the young man, for I’m telling you that you must discourage his attentions somewhat. He comes too often.”

“I think so, too,” agreed Patty, calmly. “But it isn’t me—I, he comes to see. It’s Nan.”

“Oh, Patty, how silly!” exclaimed Nan, laughing and blushing a little.

“Yes, it is, daddy. Nan encourages him something scan’lous! I don’t wonder you kick!”

“Object, Patty, not kick.”

“Yes, sir; object is just what I mean.” Patty’s demure air made her father laugh, but he returned to his theme.

“As you know, child, I like to have you amused and happy, and I like to have your young friends come to see you. But this chap has already been here three evenings this week, and it’s only Thursday.”

“That leaves him just three more to come, doesn’t it?” said Patty, counting on her fingers.

“Indeed, it does not! If he keeps this up, he’ll be forbidden the house altogether.”

“Oh, what a pity! And he such a nice young man, with rosy cheeks and curly hair! Father, you’re cruel to your only child!”

“Now, Patty, behave yourself. You’re too young to have a man calling on you so often, and I really object to it.”

“I will be good, dear mother,
I heard a sweet child say,”

hummed Patty, “and I’ll tell you frankly, my stern parent, that, if you’ll only let the Van Reypen villain stay by me until I get these puzzles done, I don’t care if I never see him again after that.”

“Oh, Patty,” cried Nan, “how ungrateful!”

“Ungrateful, perhaps, to that bold, bad young man, but obedient to my dear, kind, old father.”

When Patty was in this amiably foolish mood, she was incorrigible, so Mr. Fairfield said:

“All right, my lady. Let him come a few times to work out those pestilential puzzles, and then I shall hold you to your promise, to cut his acquaintance.”

“Is he really as bad as all that, father?” asked Patty, in awestruck tones.

“He isn’t bad at all. He’s a most estimable and exemplary young man. But I won’t have

anybody calling on you three nights in one week, at your age. It's out of the question! Kenneth doesn't."

"But Ken is so busy."

"No, it's because he has some idea of the proprieties."

"And hasn't Mr. Van Reypen *any* idea of the proprieties?" Patty's eyes opened wide at this awful suggestion.

"Yes, he has;" and Mr. Fairfield smiled in spite of himself. "Or, he would have, if you'd let him! It's all your fault, Patty; you drag him here, to mull over those idiotic questions!"

"I drag him here! Oh, father, what a rudeness! Well, I simply *must* have his help on the rest of those puzzles. How would it be if you engaged him as my assistant, and paid him a salary? Would that help matters?"

"How many of your precious puzzles are done?"

"Sixty-nine out of the hundred."

"How many have you solved yourself?"

"About fifty."

"Then that man did nineteen for you?"

"Yes; and, if he hadn't, I *never* could have guessed them! Oh, he *is* clever!"

"And when do the answers have to be sent in?"

"April first."

"H'm! an appropriate day! Well, Patty, as your heart is so set on this thing, carry it through; but don't ever begin on such a task again. Now, Mr. Van Reypen may help you, if you wish, but I mean it when I say he must not come here to call more than twice in one week."

"All right," agreed Patty, cheerfully. "May I send him some puzzles to guess, father?"

"Well, I won't have you writing to him. Not letters, I mean. But, if you can't guess a puzzle, you may send it to him, and I trust you not to let this permission develop into a correspondence."

"No, sir; I won't," said Patty.

But, after Mr. Fairfield had gone away, the girl turned to Nan, with a perplexed look.

"Whatever ails father," she said, "to talk to me like that?"

"He's right, Patty. You don't see the difference, but there is a great difference between your friendship for Kenneth and Roger, which dates from your schooldays, and your sudden acquaintance with Mr. Van Reypen, who is older, and who is a far more experienced man of the world."

"But Mr. Hepworth is a lot older than Mr. Van Reypen, and nobody objects to his coming here."

"Mr. Hepworth is an old friend of your father's, and has always been in the habit of coming here often."

"Well, these distinctions are too much for me," declared Patty. "But I don't care a snip-jack about Philip Van Reypen, personally. If I can just have his help on my thirty-one remaining problems, I'll cheerfully bid him farewell forevermore."

There was no mistaking Patty's sincerity, and Nan felt decidedly relieved, for she and her husband had feared that Patty was taking too deep a personal interest in the attractive young millionaire.

"All right, girlie. Suppose, then, you send him two or three of your brain-rackers, and ask him to come around, say, on Monday next. That will convey a gentle hint not to come sooner."

"That's a long time," said Patty, dubiously; "but, if I need to, I can send him more puzzles

before that.”

Patty ran away to her study, and spent the morning working on her puzzles. It was by no means drudgery, for she enjoyed it all. The puzzles were of all sorts, from charades and square words, to the most abstruse problems. She solved several, and four she gave up as impossible for her ever to guess. These she concluded to send to Mr. Van Reypen.

But it was more difficult than she anticipated, to compose a note to go with them.

She had no wish to disobey her father’s commands, even in spirit, and wanted to write an impersonal letter, such as he would approve.

But, for some reason, she couldn’t accomplish it. Philip Van Reypen was himself so straightforward, and so quick to see through any subterfuge, that all the notes she wrote seemed to her artificial and insincere. She tore them up one after another, and at last, seizing her pen again, she wrote rapidly:

“DEAR MR. VAN REYPEN:

“It’s no use. I’ve written a dozen notes and torn them up, trying to imply, or hint politely, what I prefer to say right out. It seems my parents think you come here too often, and, I daresay, you think so, too. So, at their command, you’re not to come again till next Monday. Come at four o’clock, and *don’t* ask to stay to dinner. I enclose some puzzles that I hope you can solve. I can’t.

“Sincerely yours,

“PATRICIA FAIRFIELD.”

“There!” said Patty, to herself, as she read it over, “I think that would do credit to a ‘Young Lady’s Model Letter Writer.’ It tells the truth without subterfuge, and it certainly does not invite the correspondence father is so afraid of. Now, I’m not going to touch these old puzzles again, to-day, or I’ll have brain failure. I think I’ll go and practise some new songs. Music hath charms to sooth a puzzled breast.”

So Patty warbled away for an hour or so, in her clear, sweet voice, and Nan came down to the music room to listen.

“Oh, Patty,” she said, “if you’d put half the time and pains on your music that you do on those foolish puzzles, you’d be a great singer!”

“Think so, Nannikins? I doubt it.”

“Yes, you would. You have a lovely voice, but it needs more training and lots of practice.”

“Well, it won’t get it. Life’s too short; and, too, nobody cares for parlour tricks of a musical nature. I sing well enough to entertain the Fairfield family, and that’s all I care for.”

“Patty, have you no ambition?”

“Yes; but my ambitions are sensible. If I practised four hours a day, I’d still have only a small parlour voice,—not a concert voice. And there’d be four hours a day wasted. And days are so short, anyway. I’m going to Christine’s this afternoon; do you want the motor?”

“Why, yes; I did expect to make some calls.”

“Oh, well, you can drop me on the way. But, won’t it be fun, Nan, when I get my own little runabout? I’ll be quite independent of Miller and the big car.”

“You can’t use it alone in the city.”

“Oh, yes, I could! Just to fly over to Christine’s in the afternoon, or something like that. Father would kick at first, but he’d soon get used to it.”

“You do wind that poor man around your finger, Patty.”

“Good thing, too. If I didn’t, he’d wind me around his finger. So, as it is, I have the best of it. But I’m not at all sure I’ll catch that runabout, after all. The first of April draweth near, and many of those silly problems refuse to let themselves be solved.”

“I hope you will get it, after you’ve worked so hard.”

“I hope so, too. But hopes don’t solve anagrams and enigmas.”

“Oh, well, if you don’t get it, there’s always room for you in the big car. What time do you want to go to Christine’s?”

“About four. She won’t be home till then. Does that suit your plans?”

“Perfectly, my child.”

So, at four o’clock, Nan left Patty at Christine’s new home.

It was not a typical boarding-house, but an apartment occupied by two elderly people, who had a room to spare, which seemed just right for the young art student.

Even in the short time she had been there, Christine had done much to make the plain room more attractive. And Patty had helped, for many of the comforts that had been added had been her gifts. A growing palm, and a smaller bowl of ferns looked thrifty and well-kept; and a large jar of exquisite pink roses gave the place a gala air.

“What lovely roses!” exclaimed Patty, sniffing daintily at one of them.

“Yes, aren’t they?” said Christine. “Mr. Hepworth sent them. He sends them every week. Isn’t he kind?”

“Yes, but no kinder than he ought to be. Everybody ought to be good to you, Christine.”

“Why?”

“Oh, because you’re so sweet and good, yourself. And you work so hard, and you never complain,—and you’re so pretty.”

Patty added the last clause, because her former words brought a pink glow to Christine’s cheeks, and a shining light to her dark eyes, and she looked indeed beautiful.

“I do work hard; but, Patty, I’m winning out! I’ve already had some illustrations accepted by a good magazine; and I’ve orders for two magazine covers.”

“Fine! Why, Christine, you’ve arrived!”

“Not quite that; but I’m steadily going ahead. I say that quite without conceit. It’s simply that I’m learning how to use the talent I have.”

“You dear!” cried Patty. “As if any one could imagine *you* conceited! And, of course, you’re going ahead,—fast!”

“And, Patty, Mrs. Van Reypen is so good to me. I don’t understand it. Why, she fairly showers me with kindnesses.”

“I understand it. Mrs. Van Reypen is very eccentric. If she dislikes people, she can’t be caustic enough to them or about them. But, if she takes a fancy to any one, then she just adores her. And I’m so glad she’s taken a fancy to you,—for she surely has.”

“Yes, she has. But sometimes it embarrasses me, for she invites me to see her so often, or to go to entertainments with her, and I *have* to refuse, for I mustn’t neglect my work.”

“Oh, she understands that. You stand by your work, and I know her well enough to know she’ll respect and admire you all the more for it.”

CHAPTER IV

THE HUNDREDTH QUESTION

It was the very last day of March. The next day Patty must send in her answers to the hundred puzzles, and she still had four of them unsolved. She had worked on these all day, and her brain was weary. Kenneth came in late in the afternoon, but he couldn't help, as he had no knack for puzzles.

"I don't like them, Patty," he declared. "You see acrostics have cross words to them, and cross words always irritate me. I like kind words."

"All right, Ken," said Patty, laughing; "I'll invent a new kind of acrostic that has only kind words in it, some day. But can't you help me with this one? A train of six cars is to be pulled up a steep incline. The engine provided can pull only three cars. Another engine of equal power is brought and put behind the train, to push it up the hill. The two engines, working together, get the train uphill. Supposing the cars coupled with chains, are the chains taut, or hanging loosely? I've puzzled over that for hours. You see, half the weight of the train is pulled and half is pushed, so how do those stupid chains know whether they're to hang loose, or pull taut?"

"H'm," said Kenneth, "there must be an answer to that. Where's your Van Reypen satellite? Can't he do it?"

"You needn't speak of Mr. Van Reypen in that tone," said Patty, annoyed; "he's helped me a lot more than you have!"

"There, there, Patsy, don't be an acrostic! Don't give cross words to your poor old chum, who lives but for to please you."

Patty laughed at Kenneth's mock tragic tones, but she went on:

"I do think you might do one for me, Ken. You haven't even tried."

"All right, girlic; I'll do this one about the cars and chains. Do you mind if I go off by myself to think it out?"

Kenneth went into another room, and Patty looked after him in wonderment. She didn't guess that he was longing to help her, and, though he couldn't guess conundrums, he hoped he might puzzle out this question of mechanical power.

And then Mr. Hepworth came, and also Philip Van Reypen. They knew it was the last day, and they wanted to hear what Patty's final report might be.

Philip Van Reypen had been greatly amused at the letter Patty wrote him, and, being an exceedingly sensible young man, he had not answered or referred to it definitely, but had accepted its dictum, and had called at the Fairfield house far less often. Nor had he again hinted for an invitation to dinner, but awaited one which should be freely given.

"How many yet to do?" he asked, blithely.

"Four," answered Patty, disconsolately.

"Out with 'em! What are they? Not charades, I hope; I simply *can't* do charades."

"There's one charade left, but here's an enigma, which is about as bad. Oh, Mr. Hepworth, can't *you* guess it?"

Appealed to thus, Hepworth made up his mind to help, if he possibly could, and both he and Van Reypen listened attentively as Patty read:

"I am intangible, yet I may be felt, seen, and heard. I exist from two to six feet above the ground. I have neither shape nor substance, and, though a natural production, I am neither animal, vegetable, or mineral. I am neither male nor female, but something between both. I am

told of in the Scriptures, in history, in song, and in story. I am sad or merry; loving or treacherous. I am given or bought, and, because of my great value, I am sometimes stolen. I am used by men who swear, and by innocent children. Of late, there has been a prejudice against me, but I shall probably be in vogue as long as the world shall stand.”

They all thought and pondered. Nan came in, and, as Patty read it slowly over again, even she tried to guess it. But they could not.

At last Philip Van Reypen gave a whoop of triumph, and exclaimed:

“I have it! Miss Fairfield, I’ve guessed it! Will you give it to me, if I tell you what it is?”

“Your speech sounds like an enigma, too,” said Patty, a little bewildered.

“But I’ve guessed it, I tell you. And, if you’ll promise to give it to me, I’ll tell you the answer.”

“No, I won’t promise,” said Patty. “It might be the motor car itself!”

“But it isn’t! It’s far more valuable than that! It’s a kiss!”

“Oh!” said Patty, “so it is! How *did* you guess it? It’s fearfully hard!”

Mr. Hepworth looked distinctly chagrined. Why, he thought, couldn’t he have guessed the foolish thing! It was easy enough,—after one knew it!

“Ken, come in here!” cried Patty; “we have guessed another! That is, Mr. Van Reypen did. Now, there are only three left.”

“Only two!” announced Kenneth, as with a beaming face he came in, bringing a dozen sheets of paper, scrawled all over with sketches of trains of cars going uphill.

“Oh, have you done that one?”

“Yes; I’m sure I’m right. The three first cars would have taut chains, being pulled by the front engine; and the three last cars would be pushed up close together, with their chains hanging limp, because they are pushed by the back engine.”

“Oh, Ken, of course that’s right! Thank you, heaps! Now I’ll get the other two, if I have to sit up all night to do it!”

“What are they?” asked Mr. Hepworth, conscious of a faint hope that he might yet be of assistance.

“One’s a charade,” answered Patty. “Here it is:

“‘Tis futile, Son, my first to use
To change to yours another’s views;
For one convinced against his will
Is of the same opinion still.

“If e’er a letter you receive
From maiden fair; pray don’t believe
All that the note itself may say,—
But to my last attention pay.

“My total may be well employed
To still a molar’s aching void,
When stopping has not stopped the pain;
That tooth will never ache again!”

“I’ve worked on that a solid week, but I can’t get it.”

“Count me out, too,” said Philip Van Reypen; “charades are too many for me.”

"I'll do that one for you, Patty," said Mr. Hepworth, quietly. "Give me a copy to take home with me, and I'll send you the answer to-night, or early in the morning."

"Bless you, my angel!" cried Patty. "Will you, really? Why, Mr. Hepworth, I didn't know you *could* guess charades."

"I can't!" said he, a little grimly; "but I'm going to, all the same. Good-bye, for now."

And, with a do-or-die expression, Mr. Hepworth took leave of the group.

"Poor man!" said Nan, "he can't guess it. He just wants to help you out, Patty."

But Patty smiled and shook her head.

"Nay, nay, Nan," she said; "if Mr. Hepworth says he'll guess that thing, he will! It's as good as done!"

"What faith!" murmured Van Reypen.

"Yes, indeed!" declared Patty. "Why, if I lost faith in Mr. Hepworth, I'd lose faith in the,—in the,—universe! I've known him for years, and he *never* fails me!"

"I guessed one!" said Kenneth, proudly.

"You did," returned Patty, smiling on him; "and just for that I'm going to take you a whole block in my motor car!"

"Oh! how lovely. But, first, catch your car."

"Now, what's the only one left?" asked Philip, who wanted to distinguish himself again.

"Oh, just a simple conundrum," said Patty. "What is lower with a head on it than without one?"

"That sounds simple, but it isn't easy," said Philip, after a few moments' thoughts. "Nails,—pins,—cabbage heads,—nothing seems to be the right idea."

And, try as they would, they couldn't think of anything that led to the right answer.

The boys went home, declaring they'd think it up, and Patty mulled it over in her mind all the evening, without result.

Then she went to bed, declaring she'd dream of the answer.

The next morning she overslept, and Nan, fearing she would be late with her list of answers, went to waken her.

"Wake up, you little April Fool," she cried, gently pulling Patty's gold curls.

"Oh, Nan! is it morning? I'm so sleepy!"

"But you must wake up! It's the First of April, and you must win that motor car to-day or never!"

Patty raised her head, and then dropped it back on the pillow.

"I can't get my head up," she said; "it's too heavy. I guess I'll give up the motor car. I'd rather keep my head on the pillow. Oh, Nan!" and suddenly Patty sprang up, with a wild yell.

"That's it! I've got it! Hurrah!"

"Mercy, Patty, do keep quiet. *What's* the matter?"

"Why, that's it! the last puzzle! What is lower with a head on it than without one? Answer: a Pillow! See?"

"Patty, you're crazy! I suppose that is the answer, but *I* think it's silly."

"No, it isn't; not as puzzles go! Oh, Nan, now I have them all!"

"Not the one Mr. Hepworth took away."

"He'll get it back in time. You see if he doesn't! Oh, Nan, Hooray with me!"

"I won't. You've made noise enough to frighten the whole block now! Do quiet down, Patty, and get dressed."

"All right, I will," said Patty, in a whisper, and Nan went away, laughing.

Patty went down to breakfast in a very happy frame of mind, and announced to her father that the motor car was as good as won.

"Why do you feel so sure of Mr. Hepworth's puzzle?" asked her father, a little curiously. "He never solved a charade before."

"It doesn't matter," said Patty, with supreme confidence. "He said he'd do it. If he hadn't *known* he could do it, he wouldn't have said he *would* do it."

"Oh, stop, Patty!" cried Nan. "You talk like a puzzle, yourself. Don't get the habit, I beg."

"I won't. But now I must go and copy my answers neatly, and by that time Mr. Hepworth's will be here, and I'll send 'em off about noon."

Patty spent a happy morning copying her answers in her neat script, and looking with pride at her complete list.

At last it was all done, and she had left a vacant space to insert the answer to the charade when Mr. Hepworth should send it. But at noon it had not arrived, and she had had no word from him.

"Telephone, and ask him about it," suggested Nan, as they sat at luncheon.

"No," said Patty, "he said he'd send it, and I'll wait for him."

"How long can you wait?"

"Why, the only stipulation is that the list of answers shall be postmarked not later than April first; but I hate to wait till the last mail."

"So should I; do telephone, Patty."

"No, not yet. He'll send it."

The afternoon dragged by, with no word from Mr. Hepworth. At four o'clock, Nan went to Patty's room.

"Dearie," she said, "don't lose your whole effort by a bit of stubbornness. Mr. Hepworth must have forgotten to send his answer—or, perhaps, he sent it by a messenger, and it went to the wrong place."

"He wouldn't do that," said Patty, shaking her head. "He'll guess it, and, as soon as he does, he'll telephone me. I know him."

"I know him, too, and I know his faithfulness. But mistakes do happen sometimes. If you'd only telephone,—or let me."

"No, Nannie," said Patty, gently. "This is my picnic, and I shall conduct it in my own way. And I won't telephone Mr. Hepworth, if I have to send the answers with one missing."

And then the telephone bell rang!

And it was Mr. Hepworth calling.

"I've guessed it!" he said, breathlessly, but triumphant. "But it's rather complicated, and I can't explain it very well over the telephone. I'll come right over. Is there time?"

"Yes," returned Patty; "come on. Good-bye."

She hung up the receiver, and turned to Nan with an "I told you so" expression on her face.

"But it was a narrow escape," said Nan.

"Not at all," said Patty.

Then Mr. Hepworth came.

He looked calm and smiling as ever, and showed no trace of his sleepless night and anxious hard-working day.

"It's 'Forceps,'" he said, as soon as he had greeted them; "but it isn't a fair charade at all. A charade should be divided into its two or more legitimate syllables. But this one is divided 'Force' and 'P.S.' You see, the P.S. is referred to as the principal part of a lady's letter."

“Oh, that old joke!” cried Nan.

“Yes. But, if it hadn’t been for that old joke, I never could have guessed it. For that was what put me on the right track. But the whole charade is distinctly unfair in its construction.”

“I think so, too,” said Patty, who had been looking it over. “Oh! Mr. Hepworth, how did you ever guess it?”

“I told you I would,” he answered, simply.

“Yes; and so I knew you would,” she returned, with a glance as straightforward as his own.

“Now, I’ll add it to my list,” she went on, “and then we’ll go out to the box together, to mail it.”

In a moment, Patty was ready, with the big, fat envelope, clearly addressed and much bestamped.

Throwing a light wrap round her, she went with Mr. Hepworth the half-block to the lamp-post letter-box. But the large envelope would not go in the box.

“Never mind, Patty,” he said; “I’ll take it to the post-office for you. That will be better, anyway, as it may be postmarked a little sooner. And it’s my fault that it’s delayed so late, anyway.”

“It is not!” exclaimed Patty. “If it hadn’t been for you, I couldn’t have sent the list at all! I mean, not a complete list.”

“Van Reypen helped you far more than I did,” said Mr. Hepworth, a little bitterly.

Patty noticed his tone, and, with her ready tact, she ignored it.

“Mr. Van Reypen did help me,” she said; “but, with all his help, the list would not have been perfect but for you. I thank you, very much.”

Patty held out her hand, and Hepworth took it slowly, almost reverently.

“Patty,” he said, “I wonder if you know how much I would do for you?”

“How much?” said Patty, not really thinking of what she was saying, for her mind was still on her puzzles.

“Shall I tell you?” and the intense note in his voice brought her back to a realising sense of the situation.

“Not now,” she cried, gaily; “you promised to get those answers to the post-office in double-quick time. That would be the nicest thing you could do for me.”

“Then I’ll do it, you little witch;” and, with a quick bow, Hepworth turned and strode down the street.

CHAPTER V

A SUMMER HOME

"If I were sure Patty would get her motor car," said Nan, "I'd vote for the seashore. But, if she doesn't, I'd rather go to the mountains."

"Course I'll get it," declared Patty. "I'm sure, certain, positive, convinced, satisfied beyond all shadow of doubt that I've cinched that car! It only remains to get the formal notice."

"And to get the car," added her father.

They were discussing, in family conclave, their plans for the coming summer.

Patty liked the seashore, and Nan, the mountains, but each wanted the other to be pleased, so there was a generous rivalry going on.

"But I can use it in the mountains," went on Patty; "mountain roads are pretty much civilised nowadays. And, anyway, it's sure to be a perfect hill-climber."

"Oh, *sure* to be!" said Mr. Fairfield, who never could bring himself to believe seriously that Patty would get the car.

"Well, let's divide the time," suggested Nan. "Let's go to the seashore first, and spend, say, May, June, and July. Then go to the mountains for August and September."

"That would be lovely!" declared Patty, enthusiastically, "if I didn't know you were planning it that way for my benefit. And I can't—no, I *cannot* bring myself to accept such a sackerry-fice!"

"You can't help yourself, you mean," said Nan. "And, now that part of it's settled, where shall we go?"

"I like the New Jersey shore," said Mr. Fairfield, "because I can run up to New York so easily from there. But I was thinking of buying a house, so we could go to it each summer, and so do away with this yearly discussion of where to go. Even if we have a summer home, we can go on a trip to the mountains as well, later in the season."

"That's so," agreed Nan. "No one wants to go to the mountains before August."

"Oh, won't it be gay!" cried Patty. "A home of our own, at the seashore! With little white curtains blowing out of its windows, and box trees at the entrance to the drive!"

"That sounds attractive," agreed Nan. "And wide verandas all round, and the ocean dashing over them, sometimes."

"It wouldn't be a bad investment," said Mr. Fairfield. "We wouldn't build, you know, but buy a house, and then fix it up to suit ourselves. And, whenever we tired of it, we could sell it."

"Good business, Mr. Fairfield," said Patty, nodding her head at him approvingly. "Now, I know the spot I'd like best. And that's at Spring Beach. It's the prettiest part of the whole Jersey coast."

"I think so, too," said Nan. "It's not a large enough place to be rackety and noisy, but it has beautiful homes and charming people. I've been there several times, though not to stay long."

"Be sure to buy a house with a garage, father," put in Patty. "For I must have a place to keep my car."

"Well, as we'll have our own car there, I fancy we'll have a garage, Puss. But we may have to add an ell, to accommodate your toy wagon. When do you expect to get it, by the way?"

"The winner will be announced on the twentieth of April, and the car delivered about May first. So I'll take you both for a May-day ride. Not both at once, of course."

"You'll take Miller on your first few rides, my girl; until you've thoroughly learned how to

manage the thing.”

“All right, I will. For I don’t want to make any stupid mistakes through ignorance. Accidents may happen, but, if so, I expect to be able to use my skill and knowledge to repair them.”

“Patty, you have a sublime self-confidence,” said her father, laughing; “but I’m glad of it. For it will probably carry you through when your vaunted skill and knowledge give out.”

A few nights later, Mr. Fairfield came home with several photographs of Spring Beach houses that were for sale. Each was accompanied with a description, and the Fairfield trio looked them over with great interest. Two seemed more desirable than the rest, and it was decided that, next day, they should all go down to the shore to look at them.

“Let’s take Christine,” suggested Patty; “a day at the seashore will do her good.”

So, next morning, the quartette started for Spring Beach.

Christine had never seen the ocean before, and Patty greatly enjoyed seeing the Southern girl’s delight.

It was a fine April day, the air clear and cool, and the blue sky cloudless, save for some cotton-wool masses near the horizon. The waves were deep, translucent blue, with brilliantly white crests, and they rolled and tumbled in to shore, as if anxious to greet Christine.

“Is it like you thought it would be?” asked Patty, as Christine stood, with clasped hands, gazing.

“Yes; in its lines. For, of course, I’ve seen pictures of it. But I didn’t know it was so *alive*.”

“Yes,” said Patty, with a nod of comprehension, “that’s the way it seems to me. Really alive, and always responsive to my moods and thoughts.”

“I didn’t know you had moods and thoughts,” said Christine, smiling at Patty a little quizzically.

“Deed I have! Perhaps not such subtle and temperamental ones as yours or Mr. Hepworth’s, but perfectly good moods and thoughts, all the same.”

“Why do you class mine with Mr. Hepworth’s?”

“Because you’re both artists. Aren’t artists supposed to have most impressive and unspeakable thoughts at sight of the ocean or the moon or the purple shadows on the distant hills?”

“Patty, I suppose you’re making fun of me, but I don’t mind a bit. And, of one thing I’m sure, whatever your thoughts may be, they’re never unspeakable!”

“Right you are, Christine! I’m glad you appreciate my talent for volubility! That’s why I like the sea. I can talk to it all day, and it is most appreciative, but it never talks back.”

“Oh, it talks back to me! It has told me lots of things already.”

“That’s because you’re an artist. But this must be the new house! Father’s turning in here. Oh, isn’t it lovely!”

It was a most beautiful place, though its somewhat dense shrubbery partly hid the view of the ocean.

But the house was delightful. Large, roomy, and well-built, it seemed all any one could desire for a summer home.

They went through it, with many comments, and then went on a block farther, to look at the other one they had in mind.

This was equally desirable, in every way, as a dwelling, but the large grounds had very few trees or tall shrubs, so that the sea-view was unobstructed.

“This is my choose!” declared Patty, sitting down on the steps of the front veranda.

“What’s the use of coming to the seashore and living in a forest? Oh, my fond parents, do decide to take this one, for your little Patty’s sake!”

“Will there be shade enough?” asked Mr. Fairfield.

“Yes, indeed!” declared Patty. “If not, we can go inside and draw the curtains. But I do love a house where you can see out. And I think this is the finest ocean view on the beach.”

“It is,” corroborated the agent, who was showing them the house. “And the sunrise view is grand.”

“I don’t often see the sun rise,” admitted Patty, laughing; “but perhaps I shall, down here, for I’m going to sleep out of doors.”

“In your motor car?” enquired her father.

“No, sir! I’m going to have a veranda bedroom. There, you see it, between those two front towers. I’ve always wanted to try that sort of a fresh-air fund scheme.”

“Well, whatever you and Nan decide on, I’ll agree to,” said Mr. Fairfield, who lived but to please his wife and daughter.

So, after some further serious consideration of rooms and outlooks, Nan and Patty agreed that the second house they had visited was the one for them, and Christine commended their choice.

“It’s rather large for just us three,” said Nan, but Patty replied: “Never mind, we’ll have lots of company. I expect to have house parties a great deal of the time; we’ve never had room for much company in New York. What shall we name the place?”

“‘Sea View,’” said her father, and Patty laughed.

“Yes,” she said; “or ‘Ocean View,’ or ‘Fair View,’ or ‘Beach View’! No, let’s get something descriptive and unhackneyed. Help us, Christine.”

“I like a name like ‘The Breakers,’” said Nan. “It’s so dignified.”

“How about ‘The Pebbles?’” asked Christine, looking at the pebbled walks that led through the lawn.

“That’s just right!” said Patty, “and it’s seashorey, too. We’ll call the place ‘The Pebbles’; shall us, Nan?”

“Yes; I like that. It’s simple and yet expressive.”

“And now,” said Mr. Fairfield, “let us go over to the hotel for luncheon, and then, while I have a little business talk with the agent, you ladies can rave over the sea, the sea, the open sea.”

“What good times you do have, don’t you, Patty?” said Christine, as they strolled along the board walk to the hotel.

“Yes, Christine, I do. And I often feel as if I didn’t deserve so much happiness; and perhaps it’s wrong for me to have so much, when many other girls have so little.”

“No, Patty; that isn’t the way to look at it. You ought to be glad and thankful, but never feel any doubt about its being all right. Myself, I have so much to be thankful for, sometimes my heart almost bursts with gratitude. But I know it’s all right, and that I *ought* to have it. Whatever is, is right, Patty.”

“Yes; I s’pose so. But, Christine, what do you mean, about yourself? Are you glad you have to earn your own living?”

“Oh, that’s merely incidental. Since I have to earn my own living, I’m glad I can, of course. Or, at least, I shall soon be able to. But I mean, I’m so glad that I have such talent as I have, and such a love of my life work, and such dear friends, and such a happy outlook generally.”

“Christine, you’re a darling. I don’t believe many people know how fine and lovely you are.

Do they?"

"I don't know many people," said Christine, smiling; "but those I do know don't all share your views. Elise doesn't."

"Bother Elise! Don't let her bother you! Why think of her at all? Christine, if your philosophy of happiness is any good, it ought to teach you to cut out anything unpleasant. And, if Elise is unpleasant, cut her out."

"No, girlie; not that. If Elise is unpleasant,—and it may be only my imagination,—I shall try to make her become pleasant."

"I wish you joy of your task," said Patty, grinning, for she knew Elise better than Christine did, and, while she liked her herself, she felt sure her two friends could never be very congenial.

The well-selected and well-served luncheon proved most acceptable to appetites sharpened by sea air, and, during its course, enthusiastic plans were made for improving and furnishing "The Pebbles."

"Christine will help us with the 'artistic values,'—I think that's what you call 'em," said Patty. "Nan can look after chairs and tables and such prosaic things; and I'll sew the curtains and sofa-cushions. I love to make soft, silky, frilly things,—and I'm just going to have fun with this house."

"What's my part in this universal plan?" asked Mr. Fairfield.

"Oh, you can just pay the bills, and say 'perfectly lovely, my dear,' whenever we ask you how you like anything!"

As this was just the rôle Mr. Fairfield had laid out for himself, he acquiesced graciously, and then, luncheon being over, they all went back to the house again.

"We'll have to come down several times," said Nan, "but we may as well measure for some of the hangings and rugs now."

So Mr. Fairfield filled many pages of his memorandum book with notes and measurements, and, after an hour or so, they all felt they had made quite a beginning on the furnishing of the new house.

One delightful room, with a full sea view, Patty declared was Christine's room, and she was to occupy it just whenever she chose, and she was to select its furnishings herself. The girl's eyes filled with tears at this new proof of loving friendship, and, though she knew she should take but few vacation days from her work that summer, yet she willingly consented to select the fittings, on condition that it be used as a guest room when she was not present.

Patty's own rooms were delightful. A bedroom and dressing-room, opening on a half-enclosed balcony, gave her the opportunity for sleeping out of doors that she so much desired. Her father insisted that she should have what he called a "civilised bedchamber," and then, if she chose to play gipsy occasionally, she might do so.

So she and Christine planned all her furniture and decorations, and made notes and lists, and, before they knew it, it was time to return to New York.

"You know a lot about house decoration, Christine; don't you?" said Patty, as they sat in the homeward-bound train.

"No, not a lot. But it comes natural to me to know what things harmonise in a household. Of course, I've never studied it,—it's a science; now, you know. But, if I didn't want to take up illustrating seriously, I would try decorating."

"Oh, illustrating is lots nicer,—and it pays better, too."

"I don't know about that. But Mr. Hepworth says I will make a name for myself as an illustrator, and so I know I shall."

Patty laughed. "You have as much faith in that man as I have," she said.

"Yes; I've implicit faith in his judgment, and in his technical knowledge."

"Well, I've faith in him in every way. I think he's a fine character."

"You ought to think so, Patty. Why, he worships the ground you walk on."

"Oh, Christine, what nonsense!" Patty blushed rosy-red, but tried to laugh it off. "Why, he's old enough to be my father."

"No, he isn't. He's thirty-five,—that's a lot older than you,—but, all the same, he adores you."

"I wish you wouldn't talk like that, Christine," said Patty, with a new note of hauteur in her voice. "Mr. Hepworth is my very good friend, and I look up to him in every way, but there is no affection or any such foolishness between us."

"Not on your side, perhaps; but there is on his."

"Well, if you think so, I don't want to hear about it. When you talk like that, it just goes to spoil the nice pleasant friendship that Mr. Hepworth and I have had for years."

"It isn't the same as you have for Roger Farrington and Kenneth Harper."

"It is! Just the same. Except that Mr. Hepworth is so much older that I never call him by his first name. The others were my school chums. Look here, Christine, we're going to be very good friends, you and I,—but, if you talk to me like that about Mr. Hepworth, you'll queer our friendship at its very beginning. Now, quit it,—will you?"

"Yes, I will, Patty. And I didn't mean any harm. I only wanted you to know Mr. Hepworth's attitude toward you."

"Well, when I want to know it, I'll discover it for myself, or let him tell me. You must know, Christine, that I'm not bothering about such things. I don't want affection, as you call it, from any man. I like my boy friends, or my men friends, but there's no sentiment or sentimentality between me and any one of them? Are you on?"

"On what?" asked Christine, a little bewildered at Patty's emphatic speech.

"On deck," said Patty, laughing at Christine's blank expression and changing the subject with promptness and dexterity.

CHAPTER VI

THE AWARD

Patty was in high spirits. It was the twentieth of April, and it was almost time for the postman to call on his afternoon round. The two Farringtons and Kenneth were present, and all eagerly awaited the expected letter, telling the result of the Prize Contest.

“Just think,” said Patty, “how many anxious hearts all over this broad land are even now waiting for the postman, and every one is to be disappointed, except me!”

“I believe you enjoy their disappointment,” said Elise.

“You know better, my child. You know I *hate* to have people disappointed. But, in this case, only one can win. I’m glad I’m that one, and I’m sorry for the others.”

“S’pose you don’t win,” observed Roger; “what will you do?”

“There’s no use s’posin’ that, for it can’t happen,” declared Patty, turning from the window, where she had been flattening her nose against the glass, in a frantic endeavour to catch a first glimpse of the belated postman.

“But, just for fun,” urged Kenneth, “just for argument’s sake, if you didn’t get that prize, what would you do?”

“I wouldn’t do anything. I’d know the company that offered it was a fake, and had gone back on its own promise.”

“Patty, you’re incorrigible!” said Ken. “I give you up. You’re the most self-assured, self-reliant, cocksure young person I ever saw.”

“Thank you, sir, for them kind words! Oh! sit still, my heart! *Do* I hear that familiar whistle at last?”

“You do!” shouted Kenneth, making a spring for the front door.

They all followed, but Kenneth first reached it, and fairly grabbed the letters from the astonished letter-carrier.

Returning to the library with his booty, he ran them over slowly and tantalisingly.

“One for Mrs. Fairfield,” he said. “From a fashionable tailor. Do you suppose it’s a dun? Or, perhaps, merely an announcement of new spring furbelows. Next, one for Mr. Fairfield. Unmistakably a circular! No good! Ha! another for Mrs. Fairfield. Now, this——”

“Oh, Ken, stop!” begged Patty. “Have pity on me! Is there one for me?”

“Yes, yes, child. I didn’t know you wanted it. Yes, here’s one for you. It is postmarked ‘Vermondale.’ Take it, dear one!”

“Nonsense, Ken. Not that one! But isn’t there one from the Rhodes and Geer Motor Company?”

“Why, yes; since you mention it, I notice there is such a one! Do you want it?”

Kenneth held it high above Patty’s head, but she sprang and caught it, and waved it triumphantly in the air.

“I told you so!” she cried.

“But you haven’t opened it yet,” said Elise. “Maybe it only tells you you’ve failed.”

“Hush, hush, little one!” said Patty. “I’ll show it to you in a minute.”

Accepting the letter-opener Kenneth proffered, she cut open the envelope, and read the few lines on the typewritten sheet enclosed. She read them again, and then slowly refolded the sheet and returned it to its envelope.

“After all,” she said, calmly, “it is well to be of a philosophical nature in a time of

disappointment.”

“Oh, Patty, you didn’t win!” cried Kenneth, springing to her side, and grasping her hand.

“No, I haven’t won,” said Patty, with a heart-rending sigh.

“I thought you were terribly positive,” said Elise, not very kindly.

“I was,” sighed Patty. “I was terribly positive. I am, still!”

“What are you talking about, Patty?” said Roger, who began to think she was fooling them. “Let me see that letter.”

“Take it!” said Patty, holding it out with a despairing gesture. “Read it aloud, and let them all know the worst!”

So Roger read the few lines, which were to the effect that, owing to the unexpected number of answers received, the decision must be delayed until May first.

“Oh, Patty!” exclaimed Kenneth, greatly relieved. “How you scared me! Of course you’ll get it yet.”

“Of course I shall,” said Patty, serenely, “but I hate to wait.”

Since it was not failure, after all, the young people felt greatly relieved, and congratulated Patty upon her narrow escape.

“But the situation is too dramatic for my nerves,” declared Kenneth. “When the real letter comes, I prefer not to be here. I can’t stand such harrowing scenes.”

“It won’t be harrowing when the real letter comes,” said Patty. “It will be just one grand, triumphant jubilee.”

“Well, jubilees are nerve-racking,” said Kenneth. “I think I’ll stay away until the shouting is over.”

“You can’t,” said Patty, saucily. “You’ll be the first one here, the day the letter is due.”

“Oh, I suppose so! Curiosity has always been my besetting sin. But to-day’s entertainment seems to be over, so I may as well go home.”

“Us, too,” said Roger. “Come on, Elise.”

So good-byes were said, and Patty’s friends went laughing away.

Then Patty took up the letter and read it again.

“Ten days to wait,” she said, to herself. “And suppose I shouldn’t get it, after all? But I will,—I know I will. Something inside my brain makes me feel sure of it. And, when I have that sort of sureness, it never goes back on me!”

She went upstairs, singing merrily, and without a shadow of doubt in her mind as to her success in the contest.

The ten days passed quickly, for Patty was so absorbed in the furnishings for the new summer home that she was occupied every moment from morning till night.

She went with Nan to all sorts of fascinating shops, where they selected wall-papers, rugs, furniture, and curtains. Not much bric-a-brac, and very few pictures, for they were keeping the house simple in tone, but comfortable and cheerful of atmosphere. Christine gladly gave her advice when needed, but she was very busy with her work, and they interrupted her as seldom as possible.

Patty bought lovely things for her own rooms,—chairs of blue and white wicker; curtains of loose-meshed, blue silky stuff, over ruffled dimity ones; a regulation brass bedstead for her bedroom, but a couch that opened into a bed for her out-of-door dormitory. By day, this could be a chintz-covered couch with chintz pillows; by night, a dainty, white nest of downy comfort. Several times they went down to Spring Beach, to inspect the work going on there, and always returned with satisfactory reports.

As the time of departure drew near, Elise began to realise how much she would miss Patty, and lamented accordingly.

"I think you might have arranged to go where we're going," she said. "You know you could make your people go wherever you wanted to."

"But you go to the Adirondacks, Elise; I couldn't run my motor car much up there."

"Oh, that motor car! Even if you do get it, Patty, you won't use it more than a few times. Nobody does."

"P'raps not. But, somehow, it just seems to me I shall. It just *seems* to me so. But, Elise, you'll come down to visit me?"

"Yes; for a few days. But you'll have Christine there most of the time, I suppose."

"I'll have Christine whenever she'll come," said Patty, a little sharply; "and, Elise, if you care anything for my friendship, I wish you'd show a little more friendliness toward her."

"Oh, yes; just because Mr. Hepworth thinks she's a prodigy, and Mrs. Van Reypen has taken her up socially, you think she's something great!"

Patty looked at Elise a moment in astonishment at this outburst, and then she broke into a hearty laugh.

"I think you're something great, Elise! I think you're a great goose! What kind of talk are you talking? Christine is a dear, sweet, brave girl,—and you know it. Now, drop it, and never, never, never talk like that again."

Elise was a little ashamed of her unjust speech, and only too glad to turn it off by joining in Patty's laughter. So she only said, "Oh, Christine's all right!" and dropped the subject.

By the first of May, everything was ready for occupancy at "The Pebbles." The lawn and grounds were in fine condition, and the house in perfect order.

But Patty begged that they shouldn't start until she had received word about her prize car.

"Why, Puss, all the mail will be forwarded," said her father. "You'll get your precious missive there just as well as here."

"I know that, daddy dear,—but, well,—I can't seem to feel like going, until I know that car is my very own. Just wait until the third of May, can't you?"

She was so persuasive that Nan went over to her side, and then, of course, Mr. Fairfield had to give his consent to wait. Not that he cared, particularly, but he was a little afraid that Patty would not get the prize, and thought she might bear her disappointment better if away from her young friends.

But they waited, and again the group of those most interested gathered in the Fairfield library to await the letter.

Christine and Mr. Hepworth were there, too, this time; also Philip Van Reypen.

Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield, though outwardly calm and even gay, were perhaps the most anxious of all, for they knew how keenly a disappointment would affect Patty.

The whistle sounded. The postman's step was heard. Instead of rushing to the door, Patty felt a strange inertia, and sank back in her chair.

"Go, Ken," she said, faintly, and Kenneth went.

Silently he took the mail from the carrier, silently he returned with it to the library. There was none of the gay chaffing they had had before, and all because Patty, the moving spirit, was grave and quiet, with a scared, drawn look on her sweet face.

Hastily running over the letters, Kenneth laid aside all but one, and slowly extended that to Patty.

She took it, opened it, and read it with a dazed expression.

The eager ones circled round, with faces tense and waiting.

Again Patty read her letter. Then, still with that dazed look on her face, she glanced from one to another. As her eyes met Mr. Hepworth's, she suddenly held the paper out to him.

"I've won," she said, simply, and gave him the letter.

Then she drew a short little sigh, almost a sob of relief, and then the colour came back to her face, the light to her eyes, and she smiled naturally.

"I've won!" she cried again. "It's all right!"

Then there was jubilation, indeed! Everybody congratulated everybody else. Everybody had to read the wonderful letter, and see for himself that the prize, the Electric Runabout, had indeed been awarded to Miss Patricia Fairfield, for the best and most complete list of answers to the puzzles in the contest.

Only the girls' parents and Gilbert Hepworth knew how tightly the tension of Patty's nerves had been strained, but they had been alertly watching for any sign of collapse, and were thankful and relieved that the danger was over.

Hepworth didn't stop then to wonder why Patty had handed him the letter first. And, indeed, she didn't know herself. But she felt his sensitive sympathy so keenly, and saw such deep anxiety in his eyes, that involuntarily she turned to him in her moment of triumph.

"I told you so!" Philip Van Reypen was shouting. "I knew we'd win! Hepworth, old man, you did it, with that last charade! Bully for you!"

"Yes, he did!" cried Patty, holding out her hand to Mr. Hepworth, with a smile of gratitude; "but you all helped me. Oh, isn't it splendid! I didn't so much care for the car, but I wanted to *win!*"

"Oh, *listen* to that!" exclaimed Kenneth. "She didn't care for the car! Oh, Patty, what *are* you saying? Give me the car, then!"

"Oh, of course I want the car, you goose! But I mean I really cared more for the *game*,—the winning of it!"

"Of course you did!" declared Van Reypen. "That's the true sportsman spirit: 'not the quarry, but the chase! I'm proud of you, Miss Fairfield! Your sentiments are the right sort.'"

Patty smiled and dimpled, quite her roguish self again, now that the exciting crisis was past.

"Nan," she cried, "we must celebrate! Will you invite all this hilarious populace to dinner, or give them an impromptu tea-fight right now?"

"Dinner!" cried Philip Van Reypen; and "Dinner!" took up the other voices, in gay insistence.

"Very well," said Nan; "but, if it's to be dinner, you must all run away now and come back later. I can't order a celebration dinner at a moment's notice."

"All right, we will." And obediently the guests went away, to return later for a gala dinner.

And a real celebration it was. Mr. Fairfield himself went out to the florist's and returned with a centrepiece for the table, consisting of a wicker automobile filled with flowers.

By dint of much telephoning, Nan provided place cards and favours of little motor cars; and the ices were shaped like tiny automobiles; and the cakes like tires. And all the viands were so delicious, and the guests so gay and merry, that the feast was one long to be remembered by all.

"When will you get the car, Patty?" asked Elise.

"I don't know exactly. In a fortnight, perhaps. But we'll be down at Spring Beach then, so whoever wants a ride in it will have to come down there."

"I want a ride in it," said Philip Van Reypen, "and I will come down there. May I ask you to

set the date?"

"You'll get a notification in due season," said Patty, smiling at the eager youth. "I'm not sure it's your turn first. No, Elise must be first."

"Why, I didn't help you at all," said Elise, greatly pleased, however, at Patty's remark.

"No, but you're my lady friend, and so you come first. Perhaps your brother will come with you."

"*Perhaps he will!*" said Roger, with emphasis.

"And who comes next?" asked Kenneth, with great interest.

"Christine, of course," said Patty, smiling at the Southern girl, who was enjoying all the fun, though quiet herself.

"Just as I guessed," said Kenneth. "And, *then*, who next? Don't keep me in suspense!"

"Owing to the unexpected number of applicants, decision is delayed for ten days," said Patty, laughing at Ken's disappointed face. "We'll let you know when you're due, Ken. Don't you worry."

"Need *I* worry?" asked Van Reypen, and then Hepworth said, "Need *I*?"

"No, you needn't any of you worry. But I'm not going to take anybody riding until I learn how to manage the frisky steed myself."

"But I can show you," said Philip, insinuatingly.

"So can I," said Roger.

"No, you can't," said Patty. "Miller is going to teach me, and then,—well, then, we'll see about it."

And, with this somewhat unsatisfactory invitation to "The Pebbles," they were forced to be content.

After dinner, Kenneth remarked that it looked like a shower.

"What do you mean?" asked Patty. "It's a still, clear night."

"You come here, and I'll show you," said Kenneth, mysteriously. Then, taking Patty's hand, he led her to a large davenport sofa, and seated her in the centre of it.

"Now," he said, "let it shower!"

As if by magic, a half a dozen or more parcels of all shapes and sizes fell into Patty's lap.

"It's a shower, for you!" explained Elise, dancing about in glee. "Open them!"

"Oh! I see," said Patty. "How gorgeous!"

The parcels were in tissue paper, ribbon-tied, and Patty was not long in exposing their contents. One and all, they were gifts selected with reference to her new motor car.

Elise gave her a most fetching blue silk hood, with quaint shirring, and draw-strings, and wide blue ribbon ties.

Christine gave her a lovely motor-veil, of the newest style and flimsiest material.

Roger gave her gauntleted motor-gloves, of new and correct make.

Kenneth gave a motor-clock, of the most approved sort; and Philip Van Reypen presented a clever little "vanity case," which shut up into small compass, but held many dainty toilette accessories.

Mr. Hepworth's gift was an exquisite flower vase, of gold and glass, to be attached to her new car.

Patty was more than surprised; she was almost overcome by this "shower" of gifts, and she exclaimed:

"You are the *dearest* people! And you needn't wait for invitations. Come down to 'The Pebbles' whenever you want to, and I'll take you all riding at once! I don't see where you ever

found such beautiful things! Nor *why* you gave them to me!”

“Because we love you, Patty dear,” said Christine, so softly that she thought no one heard. But Kenneth heard, and he smiled as he looked at Patty, and said, “Yes, that’s why.”

CHAPTER VII

A NEIGHBOUR

Two days later the Fairfields went down to Spring Beach.

The intervening day was a busy one. Mr. Fairfield went with Patty to select her motor car, for some details of equipment and upholstery were left to her choice. As the car had been built especially for the Prize Contest, it was a beautiful specimen of the finisher's art. It was a Stanhope, of graceful design and fine lines. The body was Royal Blue, with cushions of broadcloth of the same colour.

Patty was informed she could have any other colour if she wished, but she said the blue suited her best.

There was a top which could be put up or down at will, wide skirt-protecting mudguards, and a full equipment of all necessary paraphernalia, such as storm-apron, odometer, and a complete set of tools.

Patty had carried with her her flower vase and clock, and the man in charge agreed to have them fastened in place. The flower vase, he said, was unusual on a Stanhope, but, when Patty said it *must* be attached somewhere, he promised to have it done.

The steering gear was a bar, fitted with a hand grip, and both this and the controller were exceedingly simple and easily operated.

The demonstrator offered to give Patty a driving lesson then and there, but Mr. Fairfield preferred that she should be taught by himself, or his experienced chauffeur, the trusty Miller.

Of course, the men in charge of the salesroom where the car was on exhibition were greatly interested in seeing Patty, because she was the winner of the contest. One young man stepped forward with a camera, and asked the privilege of taking a picture of Patty seated in her own car.

But this Mr. Fairfield would not allow, and, after making the necessary arrangements about shipping the motor to Spring Beach, he took Patty away.

"Isn't it fun, father?" she exclaimed, as she went off with him, her hands full of descriptive catalogues and circulars, telling of the marvellous superiority of the Rhodes and Geer cars over all competitors.

"It's lots more interesting than if you had just bought a car and given it to me."

"And lots less expensive, too," said Mr. Fairfield, smiling. "Why, Patty, girl, that whole affair, as it stands, is worth nearly three thousand dollars."

"Goodness gracious! Is it really? I had no idea they were so expensive! Why, your big car didn't cost much more than that, did it?"

"But, you see, this Stanhope of yours is a special car, in every way, and all its fittings and accessories are of the most up-to-date and extravagant type. You must do all you can for the company, by praising it to your friends. I don't think you can do any more than that to further their interests."

"Oh, I don't feel under any obligation to the company. It was a business enterprise on their part. They offered a prize and I won it. Now we're quits. Of course, I shall praise the car to my friends, but only because it's such a beauty, and not because I feel that I owe anything to the company."

"You are rather a logical young woman, after all, Patty. Sometimes you seem a feather-headed butterfly, and then again you appear to have sound sense."

"A 'feather-headed butterfly' sounds pretty, I think. I guess I'll be that, mostly."

“You won’t have to try very hard,” remarked her father.

“But sometimes I have spells of being very serious: for instance, wasn’t I serious when I tried so hard to earn fifteen dollars in one week?”

“Yes, serious enough; but it was largely your stubborn determination to succeed.”

“Well, that’s a good trait to have, then. It’s what Mr. Hepworth calls steadfastness of purpose.”

“Yes; they’re about the same thing. And I’m glad you have it; it’s what won the car for you.”

“That, and my helpful friends.”

“Oh, the helpful friends were incidental, like text-books or cyclopædias. I truly congratulate you, Patty, girl, on your real success in this instance. But I also ask of you not to go into anything of such a public nature again, without consulting me first.”

“All right, Father Fairfield, I promise.”

And then they were at home again, and the luncheon hour was enlivened by Patty’s descriptions to Nan of her wonderful new toy.

“Are you going to give it a name, Patty?” Nan asked, after hearing of its glories.

“Yes; but not until after I’ve used it. I can’t tell, you see, just what sort of a name it needs until I try it. And, Nan, let’s do a little shopping this afternoon. I want a new motor-coat, and a few other trifles, to live up to the appearance of that thing of beauty.”

The shopping was done, some marvellous motor-apparel was purchased, and then, the next day, the departure from New York was made.

They reached “The Pebbles” in mid-afternoon, and the ocean and sky were a glowing mass of blue and white and gold.

Nan’s well-trained servants had the house open and ready for them, and Patty flew up the steps and into the great hall with a whoop of delight.

“Isn’t it great, Nan! Isn’t it fine! More fun than travelling abroad or touring through Sunny It.! For, you see, this is our own home and we own it!”

“Patty, your enthusiasm will wear you out some day. Do take it more quietly.”

“Can’t do it! I’m of a nervous temperament and exuberant disposition, and I have to express my thoughts!”

The big hall was in reality a living-room. It extended straight through the house, with wide doors at either end. It had alcoves with cushioned seats, a huge fireplace, deep-seated windows, and from one side a broad staircase curved upward, with a landing and balcony halfway.

The wicker furniture was well-chosen and picturesque, besides being very comfortable and inviting.

“Just as soon as I can get a few things flung around, it will be perfect,” announced Patty. “At present, it’s too everlastingly cleared-up-looking.”

She tossed on a table the magazines she had bought on the train, and flung her long veil over a chair back.

“There, you see!” she said. “Watch that veil flutter in the seabreeze,—our own seabreeze, coming in at our own front door, and then tell me if ‘The Pebbles’ is a success!”

“Yes; and, unless you shut that door, you’ll have a most successful cold in your head,” observed her father. “It’s May, to be sure, but it doesn’t seem to be very thoroughly May, as yet.”

So Patty shut the door, and then, opening the piano, she sang “Home, Sweet Home,” and

then some gayer songs to express her enthusiasm.

Her own rooms, Patty concluded, were the gem of the house. From her balcony, on which she proposed to sleep, she had not only a wide view of the sea, but an attractive panorama of the beautiful estates along the shore. A hammock was slung between two of the pillars, and, throwing herself into this, with an Indian blanket over her, Patty swayed gently back and forth, and indulged in daydreams of the coming summer. An hour later, Nan found her still there.

“Come to tea, Patty,” she said; “we’re having it indoors, as the wind is rising.”

“Yes, it’s breezing up quite some,” and Patty looked out at the waves, now so darkly blue as to be almost black.

She followed Nan downstairs to the hall, and looked approvingly at the tea-table, set out near the blazing wood-fire.

“Lovely!” she cried. “I believe I am chilly, after all. But the air is fine. Buttered muffins, oh, goody! Father, the table bills will be a lot bigger down here than in the city.”

“I daresay; but I won’t begrudge them, if you will put some more flesh on that willowy frame of yours. You’re not strong, Patty, and I want you to devote this summer to building yourself up physically. No study, not much reading, no ‘Puzzle Contest’ work. Just rest, and exercise moderately, and spend most of your time out-of-doors.”

“Why, daddy dear, your plans and specifications exactly suit me! How strange that our ideas should be the same on this subject! You see, with my new Stanhope, I’ll be out-of-doors all day, and, as I propose to sleep in the open, I’ll be out-of-doors all night. Can I do more?”

“I’m not sure about this sleeping outside. You must never do it on damp or foggy nights.”

“Now, father, the sanitariums advise it for everybody—every night. Well, I’ll agree not to sleep out in a thunderstorm, for I’m scared to death of them.”

“And you mustn’t begin it yet, anyway. It’s too cold. Wait until June, and then we’ll see about it.”

“All right, I’ll agree to that. Why, somebody’s coming up the front walk! Nan, here comes our first caller. Wow! She’s a dasher!”

In a few moments, Jane, the new parlour maid, admitted the visitor, and she came in with a self-important flutter.

“How do you do?” she said, cordially. “I’m Miss Galbraith,—Mona Galbraith, your next-door neighbour. At least, we live in the house with red chimneys, two blocks down, but there’s no house between us.”

“How do you do, Miss Galbraith,” said Nan, rising to greet the guest, and followed by the others.

“You see,” went on the young woman, volubly, after she had accepted the seat offered by Mr. Fairfield, “I thought I’d just run right in, informally, for you might feel a bit lonesome or homesick this first day. So many people do.”

“No,” said Patty, smiling, “we’re not lonesome or homesick, but it was nice of you to come to see us in this neighbourly fashion. Have a muffin, won’t you?”

“Indeed, I will; what delicious muffins! Did you bring your servants with you?”

“Some of them,” said Nan. “We’re simple people, and haven’t a large retinue.”

“Well, we have,” said Miss Galbraith. “And I’m at the head of the whole bunch. Just father and I; we live alone, you know. Will you come to see us? Come to dinner, soon, won’t you?”

“We’ll see about it,” said Nan, who scarcely knew how to take this self-possessed and somewhat forward young person.

Miss Galbraith wore a costume of embroidered white linen, but the embroidery was too

elaborate, and the style of the gown rather extreme. She wore a long gold chain, with what Patty afterward called half a peck of “junk” dangling from it. There were a lorgnette, a purse, a cardcase, a pencil, a vinaigrette, a well-filled key-ring, and several other trifles, all attached to the chain, and Miss Galbraith played with the trinkets incessantly.

“I hope we’ll be real good friends,” she said, earnestly, to Patty. “I want an intimate friend awfully, and I like your looks.”

As Patty couldn’t honestly return the compliment, she said nothing in reply. Miss Galbraith’s personal appearance was comely, and yet it was not of the type with which Patty was accustomed to be friendly. Her sandy hair was too much curled and puffed, piled too high on her head, and held with too many jewelled pins; while her rather large hands showed too many rings for a young girl.

Her high-heeled, white shoes were too tight for her, and her easy attitudes and frank speech were too informal for a first call on strangers.

“Of course, we shall be friends,” said Nan, with just enough absence of enthusiasm in her tones to convey to a sensitive mind her reservations.

But Miss Galbraith hadn’t a sensitive mind.

“Dear Mrs. Fairfield,” she said, effusively, “how good you are! I see you have the neighbourly instinct. Isn’t it nice that we’ll all be down here together for the whole summer? Do you swim, Miss Fairfield? and do you love to dance?”

“Yes,” began Patty, “but——”

As she hesitated, Mr. Fairfield came to his daughter’s rescue.

“To be frank, Miss Galbraith,” he said, “I am trying to keep my daughter rather quiet this summer. I want her to exercise only moderately, and I must positively forbid much dancing, and late hours, and all that sort of thing.”

“Oh, that’s all right,” returned the visitor; “nobody keeps very late hours at Spring Beach. Well, I must run away now,—and I give you fair warning! If you don’t come and return my call soon, I’ll come straight over here and return it myself!”

She shook a playful finger at Patty, and, after voluble leave-takings, she went away, tripping down the walk with the satisfied air of one who has accomplished her object.

“Well!” said Patty, with an air of utter exasperation.

“*Well!*” exclaimed Nan.

Mr. Fairfield smiled grimly.

“It’s our own fault,” he said. “We should have enquired as to the character of the neighbours before we bought the house.”

“How soon can you sell it, father?” asked Patty. “One more visitation like that would give me nervous prostration! Mona! Mona, indeed! I never saw a Mona before, but I might have known they were like that.”

“But can’t you really stay here?” asked Mr. Fairfield, in alarm.

“Nonsense, daddy, of course we can! Do you think I’d let myself be dispossessed by a mere Mona? No, sir; Nan and I can manage her.”

“I don’t quite see how,” said Nan, thoughtfully. “She’s that impossible sort. Oblivious to manner, impervious to hints. Patty, she’s dreadful!”

“Of course she is, Sweet Nancy. She isn’t our sort. But I’ll attend to her. I don’t know how, just yet, but I’ll find out. She’s a problem to be coped with, a difficulty to be overcome. But did you ever see such a gown? There was just enough embroidery on it for three self-respecting frocks. And her hair! Looked like the wax ladies’ coiffures in the hair-store windows!”

“Don’t make rude personal remarks, Patty, girl.”

“Oh, father, as if one could be rude to an object like that! Well, people dear, let’s put her out of our minds and hearts for the rest of to-day, anyway. I won’t have the birthday of ‘The Pebbles’ spoiled by a slight incident like that. Forget it!”

And so the impossible Miss Galbraith was voluntarily ignored.

CHAPTER VIII

SWIFT CAMILLA

At last the car came. Patty was in a flutter of joyous expectation, and, as Miller came whirring up the drive in it, the whole family assembled on the veranda to admire it.

"Isn't it a beauty, Nan! Oh, isn't it?" Patty exclaimed, as the sunlight flashed gold sparkles on the shining paint.

"It is, indeed, Patty. I never saw such a pretty one. Are you sure you can run it?"

"Oh, yes! I know how already. You just stick in a key and turn it, and grab the brake-handle, and take hold of the steering bar, and push and pull whenever you think you ought to."

"Not very technical language," said Mr. Fairfield, smiling, "but I think you understand the operation. Jump in, Puss; I'm going with you for your first spin."

But, though Mr. Fairfield was an interested spectator, Patty manipulated the car all by herself, and seemed to know intuitively a great many of the minor details.

"There's only one trouble, dad," she said, as they went spinning along the smooth, hard road, "I can't take you and Nan with me both at once."

"Never mind, girlie; when we feel as sociable as that, we'll go in the big car. Now, Patty, let me see you change the speed."

Then followed a careful lesson, in speed changing, stopping suddenly, turning, going backward, and all the various emergencies that occur in driving.

"You certainly are a born motorist, Patty," said her father, at last. "You are unusually clever and quick-witted about knowing what to do, and doing it swiftly and cleanly. Hesitation in motoring often means trouble."

"It's because I love it, father. I'd rather motor than go driving or boating or even flying. Aren't you glad I don't want an aeroplane, daddy?"

"You wouldn't get it, if you did. Not even if you earned it yourself, as you did this car. Now, Patty, turn around and let's go home."

Skilfully, Patty turned around, and they sped on their homeward way.

"Some things you must promise me, Patty," said her father, seriously, as they drew near the house. "Never start out without knowing pretty definitely how long it will take you, and when you'll return. Never go without being sure you have enough current for the trip. Of course, Miller will look after this for you, but I want you to understand it thoroughly yourself."

"Yes, I want to learn all about the working parts, and how to repair them, if necessary."

"That will come later. Learn to run it perfectly, first. And, too, I want you to promise never to start anywhere so late that there's even a possibility of your being out after dark. I wouldn't let you go out alone, or with a girl friend, in the city, but down here you may do so, if you never travel except by daylight. You understand, Patty?"

"Yes, father, and I promise. As you know, I only want to go on little, short drives, two or three hours, usually."

"Very well. I trust you not to do anything of which I would disapprove. You're a good girl, Patty; at least, you mean to be. But sometimes your enthusiasms and inclinations run away with you, and you have no sense of moderation."

"H'm," said Patty, smiling; "now I've been lectured enough for one lesson, father dear. Save the rest for another day, and watch me whiz up this drive to the house like an expert."

She did so, and Nan, awaiting them, exclaimed with pride at Patty's skilful driving.

"Your turn now, Nan," the girl called out; then, mindful of her promise, she looked at her watch. "It's just three," she said. "Let's go over to the Arbutus Inn Tea Room, have a cup of tea, and get back home before six? How's that, father?"

"That's all right, my good little girl. I don't believe you'll have any trouble running it, do you?"

"No, indeed! It's as easy as pie! I just love to run it."

Soon Nan was ready, and the two started off in great glee.

"I can hardly believe you really have the car, Patty; didn't you learn to run it very quickly?"

"Well, you see, I have driven cars before. Big ones, I mean. And this is different, but so much simpler, that it's no trouble at all. Oh! Nan, isn't the scenery gorgeous?"

Gorgeous wasn't at all the right word, but a tamer one would not have suited Patty's mood. They were rolling along the coast: on one side the ocean; on the other, an ever-changing panorama of seashore settlements with their hotels and cottages, interspersed with stretches of fine woods, or broad, level vistas with distant horizons.

"It's beautiful, Patty. We'll have a lovely time this summer."

"Yes; don't let's have too much company. I'd like to have Christine down for a few weeks, and of course Elise will make us a visit; but I don't want that horde of boys."

"Why not?" asked Nan, in amazement, for Patty greatly enjoyed the boys' calls in New York.

"Oh, I don't know! It's so quiet and peaceful, just with us; and, if they come, they'll stir up picnics and dances and all sorts of things."

"I know what's the matter with you, Patty," said Nan, laughing; "you've got automobile fever! You just want to ride and ride in this pretty car of yours, along these good roads, and just give yourself up to indolent enjoyment of it."

"That's just it! How did you know, Nan?"

"Oh, everybody feels that way when they first own a car. I've often noticed it. Sometimes they want to ride entirely alone, and just revel in automobility."

"Gracious, Nan! What a word! Well, I might want to go all alone once in a while; but usually I want some one to rave about it all with me."

"Well, I'm ready to rave at any time. Isn't that the Inn, off there to the right?"

"Yes, so it is. How quickly we've come! Nan, there's a line of poetry in my mind, and I can't think of it."

"Oh, what a catastrophe! Is it the only line you know?"

"Don't be silly. But, truly, I do want to think of it, for it's about the name of this car."

"Perhaps a cup of tea will quicken your wits."

"Perhaps. Well, we'll try. Jump out, Nan; here we are."

By a clever little contrivance, Patty could lock her car, and so feel sure it would not be tampered with. In a country place, like this somewhat primitive roadhouse where they now were, this was a decided satisfaction.

The Tea Room, though small, was dainty and attractive. It was kept by two pleasant-faced spinsters, and, though their clientèle was not large, they sometimes served guests at several tables.

"Only a little after four," said Patty, looking at her watch. "We can stay till five, Nan, and then get home by six."

"All right," returned Nan, who was walking along the narrow garden paths, admiring the old-fashioned flowers and tiny box borders.

Patty went into the little Inn, ordered tea and hot waffles and cakes, and then returned to Nan.

"It's a dear little place," she said. "I've heard of it, but I've never been here before. Tea will be ready in twenty minutes."

When served, the little repast was delightful. Old-time silver and old-fashioned china made it all seem quaint and interesting.

They dawdled over their tea, sometimes chatting, sometimes sitting silent. It was a bit of good fortune that these two were so congenial, for, Fate having thrown them together, they were much in each other's company. As there was but six years' difference in their ages, their relation was far more like sisters than like mother and daughter. And, though Nan never dictated to Patty, she taught her much by example, and, at the same time, she herself learned some things from her stepdaughter.

"S'pect we'd better move on, Nannie," said Patty, at last, as it was nearly five. "I'll pay the reckoning for this feast, and then we'll start. Oh, it has just come to me!"

"What has?"

"That line of poetry that I couldn't think of! This is it, 'When swift Camilla scours the plain.'"

"Well, what of it?"

"Why, it's the name for my car! Swift Camilla! See?"

"A pretty name enough. But is she swift?"

"I'll speed her going home, and just show you!"

"Patty, don't you dare! You know I'm only going to motor with you if you go with great moderation."

"All right; I won't scare you. But that's her name, all the same."

Soon the Swift Camilla was once more skimming along the country roads. Patty went only at moderate speed, for she had no wish to frighten Nan, and, too, she had promised her father to be very careful.

They were about halfway home, when Patty saw a cow in the road ahead.

"I wish that old cow would get out of the way," she said. "A cow has no business to be in the middle of the road like that."

She slowed down, and the car crawled along behind the cow, but the indifferent animal paid no heed to the motor or the horn, and ambled along in mild indifference.

"Oh, get out of the way!" cried Patty, exasperatedly. Then, more coaxingly, "Please, cow, nice cow, do get out of the way."

This brought no response, and Patty grew angry again.

"Shoo! Cow! Shoo! Get out of the road! If you don't, I'll—I'll——" But she could think of no direful deed that would affect the cow, so she paused. Then she resorted to sarcasm: "A nice sort of cow you are, anyway! Alone and unattended on a country road! Why, anybody might kidnap you! Where's your cow-herd, or whatever you call him?"

"Patty, don't be silly," said Nan, choking with laughter. "Get out and chase the cow away. Hit her with a stick, or something. Throw a little stone at her,—just a very little one. Don't hurt her!"

Patty's eyes grew round with horror.

"Why, Nan Fairfield, I'm more afraid of that cow than of all the automobiles in the world! I'm *terribly* afraid of cows! I'm more afraid of cows than of *anything*, except a mouse! But a mouse wouldn't block up the road so dreadfully. Nan, you get out and chase the cow."

“No,—no,” said Nan, shuddering. “I’m afraid of cows, too. Patty, I’ll tell you what! Steer *around* the cow!”

“Just the thing! I believe there’s just about room enough. If she’ll only stay in the middle, now. Which side do you think there’s more room, Nan?”

“On the right. Go round her on the right.”

There was plenty of room, and Patty steered carefully out toward the right, and passed the cow safely enough.

“Hurrah!” she cried, but she hurrahed a trifle too soon.

As she directed her car back to the hard road, she discovered that she had sidetracked into a very sandy place. The front wheels of her car were all right, but the hind wheels were stuck in the sand,—one but a little, the other deeply.

“Put on more speed!” cried Nan. “Hurry, before it sinks in deeper!”

Patty put on more speed, which, contrary to her intent, made the hind wheels sink lower and lower in the soft sand. The car had stopped, and no effort of Patty’s could start it.

She looked at Nan with a comical smile.

“Adventure No. 1!” she said. “Oh, Nan, we can’t get home by six! Indeed, I don’t see how we can ever get home.”

“Are you frightened, Patty?”

“No; there’s nothing to be frightened about. But I’m—well, hopping mad just about expresses my feelings! You see, Nan, it’s like a quicksand; the more we struggle to get out, the deeper we get in.”

“H’m; what are you going to do?”

“Just plain nothing, my lady; for the simple reason that there’s nothing to do.”

“And do you propose to sit here all night?”

“That’s as Fate wills it! Do you suppose father will come to look for us,—say, along toward midnight?”

“Patty, don’t be a goose! Fred will be scared to death!”

“Because I’m a goose? Oh, no! he knows I am, already. But, Nan, I’ve an idea. If I were only strong enough,—or if you were,—we could lift out one of those fence rails, and stick it in the sand in front of that deepest wheel, and get her out.”

“Patty, how clever you are! How do you know that?”

“Oh, I know it well enough. My general gumption tells me it. But,—we’re neither of us strong enough to boost it out of the fence and under the wheel in the right way.”

“But we might do it together.”

“We might try. Come on, Nan, let’s make the effort. Bother that old cow, anyway! But for her, we’d be almost home now.”

They got out of the car, and, with plucky effort, tried to dislodge a fence rail. But it was a fairly new and a well-made fence, and the rails would not come out easily. They tried one after another, but with no success.

“Well, Nan, here’s my only solution to this perplexing situation. We can’t sit here and let father lose his mind worrying about it, and thinking we’re ground under our own chariot wheels. So one of us must stay here with the car, and the other walk home and tell him about it.”

“Walk home! Why, Patty, it must be five miles!”

“I daresay it is, and I’d just as lieve walk it, but I hate to leave you here alone. So you can take your choice, and I’ll take the other.”

“But, Patty, that’s absurd! Why not let one of us walk to some nearby house and ask for

help?”

“Capital idea, but where’s the nearby house? There’s none in sight.”

“No, but there must be one nearer than home.”

“Yes; and, when you go trailing off to look for it, you’ll get lost. Better go straight home, Nan.”

“And leave you here alone? I won’t do it!”

“Then there seems to be a deadlock. Oh, hey! Hi! Mister!! I say! Whoo-oo-ee!”

Nan turned, frightened at Patty’s hullabaloo, to see a man just disappearing round a fork in the road. He had not seen them, and, unless Patty’s quick eyes had spied him, and her sudden call had reached his ears, he would have been gone in a moment. As it was, he turned, stared at them, and then came slowly over to them. He was a rough, but not unkindly-looking fellow, probably a farm labourer, and apparently a foreigner. He spoke no English, but Patty made him understand by gestures what she wanted him to do. A look of admiration came into his stolid eyes, at the idea of Patty knowing enough to use the fence rail, and his powerful strength soon removed a rail, and placed it endwise under the wheel of the captive car. Another was placed under the other hind wheel, and, after much endeavour and slipping and coaxing, the car was once again freed from the sand, and stood proudly on the hard road.

Patty thanked the man prettily, and, though he couldn’t understand a word, he understood her grateful smiles. More clearly, perhaps, he understood a banknote, which she drew from her purse and gave him, and, with a grateful, if uncouth bow of his awkward head, he trudged away.

Patty started her car, and soon, at a good rate of speed, they were flying along in the gathering dusk.

CHAPTER IX

MONA AT HOME

When they reached home it was really after dark, and Patty was prepared for an expected reproof. But Mr. Fairfield came out smilingly to meet them.

“Accident No. 1?” he asked. “What was it? Power gave out, punctured tire, or misjudged distance?”

“None of those,” cried Patty, gaily; “but it was a real accident, and a real unavoidable and unforeseeable one!”

“Oh, of course!” chaffed her father; “accidents are always unavoidable, and never the fault of the person driving!”

“I’m glad you’ve learned that,” said Patty, saucily, “for, if you have that theory firmly fixed in your mind, you have learned the main principle of motor adventures!”

And then the three sat down on the veranda, and Patty and Nan detailed the whole experience to Mr. Fairfield.

“You were certainly in no way to blame, Patty,” he said, heartily, “for, of course, you’ve had no experience with sand, and had no reason to suspect that the wheels would sink. But you’ve learned the lesson, and now that particular trouble is not likely to occur again, for you will remember to stick to the hard roads.”

“But, you see, the particular trouble was really the cow, and, of course, she’s likely to occur again at any time.”

“Then the only remedy that I can suggest is to have a cow-catcher built on the front of your car.”

“No; I’m not going to spoil the perfect lines of my beautiful Camilla by any unsightly device. You see, father, the lines of that car are simply perfect. I know this, because it says so in the booklet the company gave me. And it speaks quite highly of the car’s various points, and accessories, and really goes so far as to state that it is superior to any other car in the market! And the longer I use it, the more fully I agree with the booklet.”

“I’m glad your long experience justifies the company’s claims. Have you named the car Camilla?”

“Yes, because she scours the plain; don’t you remember how swift Camilla scoured the plain?”

“Yes, I remember, but it seems a more appropriate name for some patent cleaning powder.”

“Nonsense, daddy! Have you no poetry or romance in your soul? Swift Camilla is a lovely name for my car, and I mean to scour the plain for miles around. Come on, Nan, let’s go and tidy up for dinner. It’s getting late.”

“It is so,” said her father, “and, though I sha’n’t be too severe with you this time, I must mildly repeat that I want you hereafter to get home from your scouring expeditions before dark.”

“Sure!” cried Patty, gaily, blowing him a kiss from the tips of her fingers as she ran away.

The days flew by, and, as the weather was almost always fine, Patty went scouring with Camilla every day. Sometimes she took Nan, sometimes her father, and sometimes she went all alone for short drives up and down the coast. She had no trouble with the car’s mechanism, for

it was really of superior make, and its management was simple. But one afternoon, when she asked Nan to go for a little spin, Nan replied: "I will later, Patty, but first I think we ought to go and call on Miss Galbraith. It is more than a week since she was here, and, in common courtesy, we ought to return her call."

"But I don't like her, and I don't want to go to see her," declared Patty, a little petulantly.

"Don't act like an infant! Your not liking her has nothing to do with the case. We've had other calls down here, and we've returned them properly; now this is a social duty that must be attended to, so come along."

"Oh, Nan, you go without me! Make excuses for me, can't you?"

"No, I can't; and I won't! So go and put on a pretty frock and come right along. We needn't stay long, and we can go for a short motor ride after."

So Patty went away to dress, for she realised that she must go, however unwillingly. She put on a pretty calling costume of white serge, with black velvet collar and cuffs, and a large black hat.

"You look lovely," said Nan, as Patty joined her in the hall.

"Yes, I like this frock," said Patty, "but I'm sure Miss Galbraith won't; you know, her taste runs to more elaborate costumes."

"Oh, well, you can't expect to suit everybody! Come along."

Nan herself was in pale-grey cloth, with hat to match, and the two strolled along the short distance to "Red Chimneys," which they had learned was the name of the Galbraith home.

They turned in at the entrance gate, and saw a large and massive stone house, with many red chimneys. It was a handsome building, but over-ornate in its architecture and decoration.

"Looks exactly like Mona," said Patty, as they drew near. "It's just a mass of heavy embroidery!"

A footman answered their ring, and, taking their cards on his silver tray, ushered them into a drawing-room, and departed.

There was a rather long interval before Miss Galbraith appeared, and Patty fidgeted. The golden hours of her afternoon were slipping away, and she was impatient to go out with Camilla.

But presently Mona Galbraith came downstairs, and greeted them effusively. As she had been when they saw her before, she was overdressed and over-jewelled. She wore a house dress of blue satin, but so befrilled and bedecked with jabots of lace that it was not only unbeautiful, but no way did it resemble the accepted fashion of the day. An expensive and complicated necklace of turquoises surmounted the blue satin, and large-headed pins of the same blue stone adorned the piled-up masses of hair.

Patty's secret impulse was one of regret that a fairly pretty girl could make such a dowdy of herself, and she resolved, if ever they became sufficiently well acquainted, she would try to tone down Miss Galbraith's frantic wardrobe.

"I'm so glad to see you," their hostess said, "and, if you hadn't come to-day, I was going straight over to your house to tell you what I thought of you! Oh, you naughty people, to keep me waiting so long! Why didn't you come sooner?"

"Oh there's been much to do," said Nan, "fitting ourselves into our new home; and, too, I think we're fairly prompt returning your call."

"Oh, we mustn't make calls and return calls; that's too formal. We're neighbours, you know, and we must just run in and out without ceremony. Don't you think so, Miss Fairfield? Or, mayn't I call you Patty? Please let me."

Patty was good-natured and kind-hearted, but she began to think that Miss Galbraith's unwelcomed familiarity must be checked.

"Isn't it a little soon for first names, Miss Galbraith?" she asked, with a merry smile that took the rudeness from her question. "I like to win my friendships by degrees, and not jump into them suddenly."

But Miss Galbraith was not so easily baffled. "Oh, are you like that?" she said. "Now I'm just the opposite! I know at once if I like anybody, and I do like you, and so I'm going to call you Patty. Of course, if you're so cautious about making friends, you'll have to adopt me more slowly. But I'll warrant it won't be long before you'll call me Mona in spite of yourself. And you, too, Mrs. Fairfield," she added, turning to Nan.

Patty gasped, for she almost thought the forward girl was going to call Nan by her first name, but Mona did not go quite so far as that.

"You have a beautiful home here," said Nan, in order to change the subject. "Have you lived here long?"

"This is the fourth summer," said Mona; "my father built it, and he said he didn't care what it cost, if only it was the most expensive house at Spring Beach."

"I fancy he achieved his desire," said Nan, politely.

"Oh, yes, indeed! There's no other house been put up yet that cost nearly as much, and I don't believe there will be."

"Probably not," said Patty. "But it seems large for only two of you."

"Yes, but we have a great many servants; and, then, we like to have company. We invite a great deal of company, though they don't always come. It's strange how few people enjoy the seashore."

Patty privately thought that there might be other reasons for the guests' refusals than a dislike for the seashore, but she only said, "Yes, I like to have company, too; but I'm never lonely, even if I'm entirely alone."

"Yes, I can see that's your disposition,—sunshiny and sweet always. Oh, I'm so glad you've come to Spring Beach! I've wanted just such a friend."

As Patty said afterward, she felt herself being drawn into a net, from which there seemed to be no escape. But she determined to make one more effort.

"I don't want to seem ungrateful," she said, "but, to tell the truth, I'm not very sociable." Then, like a flash, she realised that this was not true, and endeavoured to amend it. "I mean," she went on, "in the summer time, when I'm away from home. That is,—don't you know,—I think one likes a sort of vacation from society during the summer; don't you?"

"Oh, yes! But, of course, the social doings down here are not like those in the city. I'm not much in society down here, myself; so we can have real good times with each other, and give society the go-by."

Patty gave up in despair. She couldn't make this girl understand that she did not desire her intimate friendship, without being positively rude; and, though of an independent nature, Patty was always unwilling to hurt the feelings of others.

But very soon Nan rose to take leave, and the call was over.

"What can I do?" exclaimed Patty, as they were safely out of hearing distance of "Red Chimneys." "That girl is the limit! She'll be over to our house all the time, if I don't do something to stop her!"

"Oh, don't take it too seriously!" advised Nan. "Sometimes these troubles that loom up so darkly fade away of themselves."

“She won’t fade away,” declared Patty; “Mona is no fader! But some day I shall take her out in my motor car, way, way out beyond civilisation, and come back without her!”

“That’s a splendid plan!” said Nan, approvingly; “practical, sensible, and easily carried out!”

“Yes, isn’t it,” said Patty, grinning. And then they were at “The Pebbles” again, and were soon arrayed in their motor toggery, and starting away in the Swift Camilla.

“Which way?” asked Patty, as she grasped the steering bar.

“Straight along the coast,” answered Nan; “the ocean is so beautiful to-day, I don’t want to get out of sight of it.”

“All right, here we go;” and Patty headed the car south along the line, continuous shore drive.

“Nan,” she observed, as they flew along, “do you happen to know of any remarkable, important, and very-much-to-be-celebrated day that is going to occur soon?”

“Day?” repeated Nan, looking blank,—so exceedingly blank that it seemed an assumed expression.

“Yes, day! *A* day,—*one* day,—an *especial* day! Do try to think. It may occur next week!”

“Let me see,” said Nan, in a deeply thoughtful tone, “this is May,—so you can’t mean Washington’s Birthday or Lincoln’s Birthday.”

“No! nor Christmas Day, nor St. Patrick’s Day in the Morning! But, all the same, it’s one of the most important dates in the annals of Time, and I’ll give you one more chance to save your reputation by guessing what it is, before I tell you.”

“Well, of course I have no idea when it occurs, but, if I’m merely guessing, I’ll guess that you refer to Mona Galbraith’s birthday.”

“Oh, Nan! you are too exasperating! Another speech like that and I’ll put you out of this car and let you walk home! Now the occasion to which I refer, and which you know well enough, only you think it’s roguish to pretend you don’t, is the birthday of one Miss Patricia Fairfield! a clever and charming young girl, who will on that day achieve the dignity of being nineteen years old!”

“Why, sure enough, it *will* be your birthday soon, won’t it?” exclaimed Nan, in affected surprise, which by no means deceived Patty.

“Yes, and what are you going to do about it?”

“Well, you ask me so suddenly, I scarce know what to say! What do you want done?”

“Well, you ask me suddenly, too, but I know exactly what to say! I want a celebration of the event.”

“Oh, you do! brass band, and torch-light parade?”

“Not exactly that, but something just as good. I want a house-party,—quite a large one,—to come the day before the birthday, and stay several days after, and celebrate all the time.”

“You’re so modest in your demands, Patty! Why don’t you have something really worth while?”

“Don’t be sarcastic, Nan; you’re too pretty to say such things! Now take a deep interest in my plans, won’t you, and help me decide things?”

“All right, Patty, I will, indeed. But I thought you didn’t want company down here, especially the boys, because you wanted to enjoy your scouring the plain, all alone.”

“Well, I did feel that way for a time, but I’m getting over it. Anyway, I want to try having company, and, if I don’t like it, I’ll try solitude again. Now you see, Nan, my birthday is next week, Thursday. I’d like to ask the people to come Wednesday, and then stay over the

weekend.”

“All right, Patty, I’ll do all I can to make it pleasant for you. But, you know, we have only four guest rooms. How big did you mean your house party to be?”

“Well, of course the two Farringtons and Christine and Kenneth would be about all we could accommodate. Then I thought, if Mr. Hepworth and Mr. Van Reypen cared to come, they could stay at the hotel.”

“It doesn’t seem very hospitable to invite them that way,” said Nan, demurring.

“Then they’ll have to stay home,” said Patty, cheerfully, “for, as you say, we have only the four rooms to give them. I thought our house was large, but it doesn’t seem so when you begin to invite guests.”

“Well, we’ll see about it,” said Nan.

CHAPTER X

THE COURTESY OF THE ROAD

That evening they discussed the project with Mr. Fairfield.

"I heartily approve of the plan," he said. "It's time we had some young life down here to stir Patty up. She's getting too sentimental from gazing at the sea and sky. And I think it will be quite all right to invite two of the men to lodge at the hotel. They can come over here for all their meals, and so they will practically be part of the house party. But, Patty, are you sure you want this house party for several days? You may find it more of a burden than you think, to entertain guests so long."

"Oh, they're not formal guests; it's just a young people's frolic. We'll go motoring and swimming and picnicking just as we like. But, of course, on my birthday I shall have a party,—a real party."

"You don't know enough people down here to make an evening party," said Nan.

"Oh, well, I know several," said Patty; "and if we have eight or ten in the house, and get eight or ten more from among the Spring Beach cottagers, that will be enough for a small dance."

"And there's Mona," put in her father, mischievously.

"Oh, *Mona*! I'm not going to ask *her*!"

"Why, Patty," said Nan, "you'll have to ask her,—your very next neighbour!"

"No, I won't have to, either! I'm not going to spoil my whole birthday just because she happens to live next-door to me!"

"Patty," said her father, "I think you must be a little more generous in your attitude toward that girl. You may not like her altogether, but you must be kind and polite to her, because, in a country place like this, we do owe a certain duty to our neighbours such as is never recognised in New York. And I want you to grow up an unselfish, generous woman, who would sacrifice her own feelings to those of her neighbour."

"Of course you're right, father, and I will try to conquer my dislike for that girl. But you know what she is."

"Yes, I know what she is; she is uncongenial, and her manner irritates you. But there must be some good in her, Patty, and suppose you set yourself to work to find it."

"All right, daddy, I'll go you; but won't you please let me wait until after my birthday is over?"

"No, child; I quite agree with Nan that you must invite Miss Mona to your party: that is, if you invite other cottagers. If you have only your own house party, of course you needn't ask her."

"Well, then, I won't ever ask her over here while the house party is on, except the night of my birthday, when I have the dance."

"It may not be necessary to invite her," said Nan, smiling; "she'll very likely invite herself."

"Well, we'll hope she won't," said Patty, with a little sigh. "Now I'll write to the others to-night, and I hope they can all come. I think they all will, unless maybe Christine will think she cannot leave her work. But I'll urge her to come for a few days, anyway."

Patty went off to the library to write her notes, and so interested did she become in her party, and her plans for her birthday celebration, that she quite forgot her unpleasant and unwelcome neighbour. Nor did she think of her again until the next afternoon, when, as she

swung in a hammock on the front veranda, she saw Mona Galbraith come walking up the drive.

"Here you are, Patty," called out the hearty and irrepressible voice of her neighbour; "I hoped I'd find you at home. I felt sort of lonely, and I said to myself I'll just run over to Patty's, and perhaps, if I ask her very prettily, she'll give me a ride in that little gem of a motor car that she runs so well."

Patty arose from the hammock, politely hiding her annoyance at Mona's arrival, and said: "How do you do, Miss Galbraith? Sit down, won't you? I'm not sure that I'm going to have the car out this afternoon."

"Oh, that's all right; never mind. Don't get it out purposely for me. I'll sit here and chat this afternoon, and we can take the ride to-morrow."

So Patty saw at once that she must either take her visitor motoring that afternoon, or merely defer the occasion, in which case she would have her on her hands for the rest of the afternoon, anyway. Of the two evils she concluded to choose the less. And she also concluded that, as her father had requested, she would be pleasant to this girl, and try to find some likable qualities in her.

So it was with a shade more cordiality that she said: "Oh, yes, we can just as well go this afternoon as any other! It's a good day, except that there's a pretty stiff breeze blowing. Are you dressed to go?"

"Oh, yes, this gown is all right, and you can lend me a hood and cloak or something. Haven't you extra ones?"

"Yes, of course," said Patty, wondering if this girl had no idea of social formalities. "But perhaps she never had anybody to teach her things," thought Patty, who, now that she was trying to be generous-minded toward Mona, found it easier than she had thought.

Patty rang for Miller, and ordered the car; then she asked Mona to come into the house, that she might fit her out with proper wraps. It was a warm, pleasant day, so a dust cloak of Nan's, and a silk hood belonging to that same amiable lady, were borrowed for Miss Galbraith's use.

"Of course I have all these things at home," she said, as she tied the ribbons under her chin; and Patty wanted to say, "Why don't you go and get them, then?" but she well knew it was because of Mona's unwarranted feeling of intimacy in the Fairfield household that she borrowed their wraps instead of going for her own.

This whole principle was foreign to Patty's nature. Systematic and methodical herself, she always used her own belongings, and never would have dreamed of borrowing those of another, unless through sheer necessity.

"There's one thing," she thought to herself, "if I give her this ride and get it over with, she may keep away while those other people are here. I must be careful not to let her know they are coming."

The car was at the door and they were soon started. Patty determined to be kind and pleasant to her guest, but to avoid personalities, and to say nothing which could be construed as an invitation to further acquaintance.

One point she conceded, however, and concluded to call Miss Galbraith by her first name. This she did, only because Mona persisted in calling her Patty, and it sounded so purposely stilted and ungracious to persist in saying Miss Galbraith.

Patty asked her guest to choose the road they should take, and was surprised to find that Mona knew of a great many lovely drives which Patty had not yet discovered. Though, of course, it was not surprising, as Mona had spent four summers at Spring Beach, and it was

Patty's first one.

Mona chose a route called the Blue Lake Drive, which took them through a lovely stretch of pine woods, and out into an orchard-dotted country, the goal being a small and very blue lake. On the shore was a tiny Tea House, which proved a pleasant resting-place for a half-hour.

The girls sat sipping tea and eating crumpets, and Patty began to think that Mona was not nearly as unlikable as she had thought. Her shortcomings were more those of an impulsive and untrained nature than any more serious faults. She was well educated and well read, and Patty found that they had many favourite books and authors in common. But she was pushing, and she continually asserted her intention of being Patty's intimate friend, until Patty lost her patience and broke out, rather sharply.

"Look here, Mona," she said, "I like you, or at least I think I'm going to like you, but I won't be pushed or pulled into a friendship so suddenly. You don't know me at all, but once in a while I have a way of speaking my mind right straight out, and I tell you frankly that, if you want to be friends with me, you'll upset the whole kettle of fish by rushing it too hard!"

Mona looked utterly amazed. "What are you talking about?" she said. "Do you call me pushing?"

"I do that!" declared Patty; "just exactly that! and you know it as well as I do! I shouldn't talk to anybody like this on such short acquaintance, but you brought it on yourself, and, if you want to get angry, you may!"

"Angry!" echoed Mona. "Why, I like you all the better for such straightforward talk! I'm sorry I seem pushing, but,—well,—you brought it on yourself!"

Patty had to laugh at this, for it was really a subtle compliment to her own attractiveness. Also, she decided she could do little by scolding Mona. So she began to talk of other things, leaving the question of friendship to be settled some other time.

Soon they started homeward again, for, as Patty explained to her guest, she was under promise to get home before dark.

"How beautifully your car runs," said Mona, as they skimmed smoothly along. "Do you never have an accident?"

"Nothing of any account," returned Patty, and then she told Mona of the day when her wheels got stuck in the sand. "But I have never had anything more serious than that," she went on, "and I hope I never shall. Have you never run a car yourself?"

"No, it never occurred to me to do so. We have several cars, of course, and lots of chauffeurs and grooms, but only since I've seen you in your car have I thought of driving one myself. But I'm going to; I've already asked father to get me one exactly like this."

"Will he do it?"

"Of course; he gets me anything I want. And when I get it, Patty, we can go out together in our two cars. Won't that be fun?"

"H'm, h'm!" murmured Patty, who wasn't overjoyed at the proposition. "Gracious! what's the matter?"

"Oh, my! what *is* the matter? Did something burst?"

"It did so," said Patty, cheerfully; "the inner tube of this front wheel has burst, and now, if you want to see a successful imitation of a young lady mending her own motor car, just watch me while I get out my little kit of tools, and put my reserve tube in place of this burst one."

"Can you do it yourself?" enquired Mona, with a look of surprised admiration. "I didn't know a girl could do things like that!"

"This girl can," returned Patty, opening her tool-box with a capable air. But the next moment

her capable air completely vanished, and she turned to Mona with a comical expression of dismay. "What do you think?" she said. "I'm always so careful to have my car and my tools and my accessories all in perfect order, and now see what's happened! I had this same experience the other day. The inner tube burst, and I put in my reserve tube and then I put the burst tube away in my kit, and here it is yet. I utterly forgot to have it replaced by a new one!"

"Oh, then the reserve tube that you want to put in is as burst as that one you have just taken out!"

"You've struck it right! that's the situation. Now what's the solution? There isn't any answer!"

"Then, what do we do?" asked Mona, looking scared.

"Oh, we just sit here," said Patty, returning to her seat in the runabout. "It isn't a question of doing anything, because we can't do anything. We can sit here, or we can walk home. Or, rather, you can walk home, if you want to. I sha'n't leave my car, if I sit here all night."

"And I sha'n't leave you, if we sit here all night! But if I can walk anywhere, and get assistance for you, I'll gladly do so."

"Mona, you're a good deal of a trump," said Patty, looking into the girl's earnest face; "but I don't know of any place you could get assistance nearer than home, and that's ten miles away. You see, Mona, when motor cars do break down, they invariably choose a place far away from any garage or repair shop. The farther away it is, the better the car likes it. Can't you hear Camilla chuckling at our discomfiture?"

"How can you joke, Patty? I think it's awful! What can we do?"

"We can't do anything, but, if we're patient, some one may come along who can help us. You know, there's a certain courtesy of the road among motorists that makes them help each other whenever they can. At least, this courtesy is said to exist, but I've never seen much of it, myself. However, I've had very few occasions to desire it. Now we'll sit and wait for courtesy."

Nor did they wait long. Very soon a good-sized motor came by, and the polite driver of it stopped and asked the girls if he could be of any assistance.

Patty liked his quiet, courteous manner, and she explained her difficulty.

But the man, though willing, was unable to help her, for his tires were not the same size as those on Patty's car. He would have been glad, he said, to tow her car, but he was going in the other direction. So Patty thanked him for his interest in the matter, and he went on his way.

"Now, you see," observed Patty, "that there *is* a courtesy of the road. I've no doubt some more courtesy will come along soon, and we'll get fixed up somehow."

But courtesy seemed to be scant that afternoon, for half a dozen cars, both large and small, whizzed past them apparently without noticing their plight.

At last, however, a man came by alone in a small electric runabout, not unlike Patty's own.

"Hi! there!" he called out, "you in trouble?"

Patty did not like his mode of address, nor did she like the looks of the man himself. And even though she greatly desired his help, and felt sure that he might have a reserve inner tube which would fit her tire, she hesitated to ask him for it, as she so distrusted and disliked his general appearance. He looked good-natured, but he did not look to be a man of refinement. But while she hesitated, Mona, greatly to Patty's surprise, took the situation in hand, and called back to the man: "Yes, we're in a dreadful fix! Can't you help us out?"

"You bet I can!" cried the man, and, springing from his own car, he came over to Patty's side.

"What's wrong, little one?" he said, looking boldly into Patty's face.

Patty was thoroughly annoyed at his manner, but now that things had gone so far, of course she must carry it through. Sitting up very straight, and assuming an air of severe dignity, she said: "The inner tube of a front wheel has burst, and I have no good one with which to replace it. If you have one you could spare, I should be glad to have it, and I will send you a duplicate one, if you will give me your address, or my father will send you a cheque for the price of it."

The man looked at Patty and smiled. "You needn't be so crusty about it," he said; "the other young miss ain't so crusty."

Patty was becoming a little frightened. The man was so easy-mannered, and, though she felt sure she could manage all right by herself, she had a fear that Mona might say something foolish at any moment.

"I don't mean to be crusty," said Patty, smiling pleasantly, but without friendliness. "I'm simply asking the courtesy of the road from a fellow-motorist, and I feel sure, if you can, you will give it to me."

The man backed away a little and looked at Patty with unmistakable admiration. "Well, I just guess I will!" he replied, and went straight to his own tool-box for implements.

Patty took this opportunity to whisper to Mona, "Don't you say another word to him! You mustn't speak to strangers so familiarly. You came near making serious trouble for us!"

Now Mona was of such a peculiar disposition that, instead of realising the truth of Patty's words, she became incensed at the idea of being scolded, and made no reply, save to pout her lips and assume a very angry expression of countenance.

The man returned from his own car, and in a short time had inserted a new inner tube, and Camilla was in perfect order for a fresh start.

"I thank you very much," said Patty, with a calm, gracious politeness; "and, if you'll give me your card, or your address, my father will send you a cheque for the tire, and a note of thanks for your kindness to his daughter."

"'Taint worth mentioning," said the man, looking a little sheepish before Patty's courteous dignity; "and I haven't a card, but here's my name, and I'll be glad to hear from your father, miss."

He scribbled on a bit of paper and gave the address to Patty, who put it in her cardcase, and, bowing civilly to the man, she started her car and drove swiftly away.

CHAPTER XI

THE FIRST ARRIVALS

“Mona,” said Patty, severely, as they drove along, “you ought to know better than to talk to a strange man in that familiar way! He wasn’t a nice man at all.”

“Well, he helped us out of our difficulty.”

“Yes, and he’ll be paid for it. But there was no occasion to talk to him as you would to an acquaintance.”

“Oh, I’m not so awful stuck-up as all that!”

“It isn’t a question of stuck-upness! Or, if you do call it that, it was just the time to be stuck-up. Proper civility is all very well, but you needn’t be chummy with a stranger. And I give you fair warning, Mona, that, if you want to be friends with me, you must never do that sort of thing again.”

“I do want to be friends with you, Patty, and I think I see what you mean now, but I didn’t think I was doing any harm. I’m glad to have you scold me, Patty, for I do want to do what’s right. You see, I never had much bringing-up. My mother died when I was a little girl, and since then father has indulged me in everything I wanted, but I’ve really had none of what you may call social training.”

Patty was amazed at the sudden humility of the girl whom she had considered arrogant and self-satisfied. She began to think that she might do a good work in teaching Mona some things of which she seemed to have no idea, but which came to Patty by instinct.

“My mother died when I was very little, too,” she said; “but I think my father brought me up as well as any woman could have done. And, then, I have the dearest stepmother. She’s just the perfection of all that’s sweet and gentle and refined.”

“You’re a lucky girl, Patty, and I envy you.”

“Now, that’s silly! You’re a lucky girl to have such an indulgent father, and oceans of money, and freedom to do exactly as you choose. Why, you have all sorts of possibilities, Mona. You could make yourself anything you want to.”

“Will you help me, Patty?”

“Why, yes, as far as I can.” Though Patty felt kindly disposed toward the girl, and wanted to help her, she didn’t care to take the entire responsibility of shaping her future, and she knew Mona’s pushing spirit would demand this, if given a chance. So she dropped the subject for the present, and they chatted gaily of all sorts of things. And, when at last Patty set Mona down at her own door, she had not mentioned the subject of her birthday, or said that she was expecting a house party of young people to visit her.

On reaching her own home, Patty related to her father and Nan the experience she had had.

“You did exactly right, Patty, girl,” said her father, “and I will send the man a cheque for the tube, and a letter of thanks for his kindness to my daughter, just as you told him I would do. I’m surprised that Mona should have acted as she did, for I supposed any young girl of the present day would know better than to speak familiarly to a stranger.”

“It wasn’t so much what she said, father, as her gay and easy manner, and the way she smiled at him. She showed no reserve or dignity.”

“Yes, I understand, and I am glad you reproved her. You may do her some good, Patty, by your influence and example.”

Patty sighed a little. “I’m willing to help her, but I don’t want to take the whole burden of

her social education on my shoulders.”

“Patty,” laughed Nan, “don’t take it so seriously. You’re not employed as nursery governess at ‘Red Chimneys’ yet, and the few occasions when you have opportunity to drop a good seed on Mona Galbraith’s thorny soil, it won’t hurt you a bit to do it.”

“Hurray for Nan!” cried Patty; “she always hits the nail on the head and rings the bull’s-eye! Well, anyway, I didn’t tell Mona about my birthday, or that I expect company.”

“It wasn’t really necessary,” said Nan, drily; “she’ll probably be over here a good deal of the time, anyway.”

“Not if I see her first!” retorted Patty, though she knew in her heart, if Mona chose to come, she couldn’t help herself.

“Well,” said her father, “now that we’ve all denounced Mona sufficiently, I’ll express my opinion of Miss Patricia Fairfield. Any little girl who pretends to keep her motor accessories in order, and then blithely rides away with an old burst tube in her repair kit, is, to my mind, as I’ve had occasion to tell her before, a feather-headed butterfly!”

“Oh, don’t call me such dreadful names!” pleaded Patty, wringing her hands in mock despair. “Do let me down more easily than that! I’ve never done such a thing before, and I’m perfectly certain I never shall again!”

“I don’t believe you ever will,” returned her father, kindly, and he said no more about what was really somewhat culpable carelessness.

The next day the guests arrived. It was Wednesday, and the birthday was on Thursday.

Elise and Roger were due at three o’clock. Mr. Hepworth was to bring Christine down a little later, and they were expected at five; while Kenneth and Mr. Van Reypen could not reach Spring Beach until seven.

So, a little before three, Patty started in her car to go to the station to meet the Farringtons. As Elise and Roger stepped off the train, they saw her sitting smiling at them, and they made a rush for the Stanhope.

“What a ducky little motor!” cried Elise. “Oh, Patty, it’s the prettiest one I ever saw! and it’s so becoming to you! Shall I get in?”

“Yes,” answered Patty, as she gaily greeted them both. “I’ll take you over to the house, Elise, but I can’t take you both. Roger, if you don’t mind, will you go in that stage vehicle, and I’ll give you a ride in my car some other time.”

“Yes, of course, Patty; and I’ll look after the luggage. You two girls go on, and I’ll see you later. Where do I go to, Patty?”

“Oh, just tell the driver to take you to Mr. Fairfield’s house. He knows where it is. We call it ‘The Pebbles,’ but he may not know it by that name. But you’ll get there, somehow.”

“Oh, I’ll get there!” declared Roger, and, with laughing good-byes, the two girls drove away.

“Don’t you love your car, Patty?” asked Elise, as they went swiftly along.

“Yes, I do, Elise. I love it almost as I would a human being. I’ve never told any one this, because it seems sort of silly. But sometimes, when I’m out alone in it, I talk to it just as I would to a person, and she seems to understand. I’ve named her the Swift Camilla, and somehow Camilla seems to understand everything I say to her, and she almost talks back. Then, when I take other people with me, Camilla likes or dislikes them. If she dislikes them, she shows it by not running quite so smoothly. She jumps and balks and shies, for no reason at all, except

petulance. Isn't that so, Camilla?" and Patty patted the side of the car with a caressing gesture.

"Does she like me?" asked Elise, anxiously.

"Yes, indeed! Don't you see she's flying along like a bird! She knows you understand her, Elise, and you don't think she's merely an inanimate object."

"Inanimate object! No, indeed! With her pulses thrilling and her sensitive nature alive to every passing incident, she's far from inanimate!"

Patty looked at Elise in surprise. "Why, girlie," she said, "I didn't know you had so much imagination in your make-up."

"I've always felt that way about motor cars, Patty. Our great big car is lumberly and fat, and a little bit stolid of disposition; but father has a little runabout that's the nervousest thing you ever saw. But this Stanhope! Well, I've simply got to have one like it, that's all! Father'll give it to me in a minute, if I only could persuade mother to let me run it alone. But I'm 'most sure she never will."

"This car of mine seems to sell others for the company," said Patty, laughing. "There's a girl down here, next door to me, who says she's going to get one, too. And I know the boys will all fall in love with this little beauty!"

"Meaning the car or the girl next door?" asked Elise, smiling.

"Oh, the car! The girl next door isn't a little beauty! Well, that is, I suppose she is good-looking in her own way, but——"

"But you don't like her, isn't that it?" and Elise smiled at her own intuition.

"No, I don't like her," declared Patty, honestly; "but I'm trying to. I'll tell you all about it some other time, and, anyway, you'll probably see her for yourself while you're here. This is her home we're passing now."

"Gorgeous place," said Elise, as she looked at the imposing "Red Chimneys." "But I like this next place better. This big white house is lovely."

"Good for you, Elise! This is 'The Pebbles,' and your own destination."

Patty turned into the drive, and stopped at the broad steps of the front veranda. Nan was there to welcome them, and the two girls sprang out as Miller appeared to take the car away.

"Roger will be here soon!" exclaimed Patty, while Nan greeted Elise warmly. "He's coming over in the stage, and he'll bring the luggage. Come on, Elise, I'll show you your room."

The two girls went off, and Patty took Elise to one of the pretty guest rooms. They stayed there chatting until Elise's trunk came, and then Patty declared she must run down and entertain Roger, while Elise unpacked her things.

She found the boy still on the front veranda talking to Nan, with whom he was a great favourite. Indeed, all Patty's boy friends were favourites with Nan, and she was so charming and attractive herself that they all liked to chat with her.

Kenneth Harper she looked upon as her especial protégé, for he was alone in the city; and Mr. Hepworth, of course, was one of her old friends.

As for Philip Van Reypen, Nan had liked him from the first, and they had established a very chummy acquaintance. So, on the whole, the house party bade fair to be a great success, and Nan expected to enjoy its fun almost as much as Patty herself.

"You're getting brown, Patty," said Roger, looking admiringly at the tanned face.

"Yes, it's outdoorsiness as does it! I swim and walk, and play tennis and go motoring all day long, and I sleep on a veranda at night."

"So you get tanned by the moon as well as by the sun," said Roger. "Well, it's very becoming, and you look a whole lot healthier than you did in the city."

“Yes, I am. Come on out and see my car, Roger, and I’ll give you a little spin, if you like. Elise is unpacking her finery and won’t miss us.”

Like every one else, Roger was enthusiastic in his praise of the wonderful car, and gladly accepted Patty’s invitation to go for a short ride. He complimented Patty on her skilful driving, and they went for some distance along the coast road.

“Let me drive back,” said Roger, as they turned homeward, and so they changed seats for the return trip.

“Beautiful car!” he repeated; “and perfect mechanism. Patty, I congratulate you on winning the thing, and it’s wonderful to think you did win it all yourself!”

“Oh, I had a lot of help, you know!”

“Well, it was your own enterprise, and you worked pretty hard yourself.”

“Yes, I did;” and Patty smiled at the recollection. “I sat up nights with those hundred questions, and lots of times I thought I should fail.”

“But still you persevered. That’s where you’re such a brick, Patty. If you set your heart on anything, you never give up.”

“Well, I’m glad I persevered this time, anyway, for this car is a perfect joy to me. I suppose father would have given me one, if I had asked for it, but somehow it never occurred to me that I wanted one. I had no idea I’d love it as I do.”

“Oh, they’re great things, and I’m jolly glad you’ve got this one. You’ll enjoy it more every day you own it. Now here we are at ‘The Pebbles.’ Do you want to turn in?”

“Yes; and I’m going to turn you out. Then I’m going to take the car and go back to the station to meet Christine. She’s coming down with Mr. Hepworth.”

“Let me go over with you, then I can give Christine my place, and I’ll tote old Hepworth over here.”

“All right; but I must see Elise before I go, and tell her where I’m going.”

To Patty’s surprise, Elise seemed a little annoyed to learn that she was going to the train for Christine. Patty had almost forgotten the foolish jealousy that Elise had of her own friendship with Christine. But, as always, she thought the best way to treat it was to ignore it; she simply repeated her statement. “Yes, Elise,” she said, “I’m going over to the station to bring Christine home with me. Mr. Hepworth will come over in the stage. He’s going to stay at the hotel, anyway; we haven’t room for him here. But, of course, he’ll be over here most of the time. Roger is going over with me, and then he’ll get out, and give Christine his place, and he’ll come back with Mr. Hepworth. What will you do while I’m gone? Will you dress for dinner, or will you take a little rest?”

They were in Elise’s room, and her pretty gowns and other finery were lying about, as she had unpacked them.

“Oh, it doesn’t matter about me,” she said, ungraciously; “you go on and meet your friend Christine, and I’ll look after myself.”

“Elise, stop being a goose!” cried Patty, grasping her by the shoulders and kissing her on both cheeks. “If you talk like that, you’ll spoil my whole house party and my birthday and everything! Now, you’re my friend, and Christine is my friend, and you two girls have simply got to be friends with each other; so make your mind up to that! If you say another snippy word on the subject, I’ll go and lock myself in my own room, and stay there until you go home!”

Elise laughed, for she was always a little ashamed of herself after an exhibition of her petty jealousy, and Patty knew that she wouldn’t repeat the offence, for the present at least.

“You ring for Louise,” Patty went on, “to help you put away these pretty frocks and things, and then you make yourself at home, and do just what you want to until I come back with Christine. And then, milady, you will be just as sweet and charming to Christine as you can possibly be! Catch on?”

“Yes,” said Elise, smiling, and Patty kissed her again and ran away.

CHAPTER XII

A MOONLIGHT RIDE

Patty seemed a little quiet as she and Roger drove to the station, for she was thinking how foolish Elise was, and what a lot of trouble she could stir up, if she chose to indulge in that stupid jealousy of Christine. If Christine had been more able to resent it, and take her own part, it would not have been so bad, but she was so sensitive to the slightest coldness, and so afraid of seeming to impose on Patty's friendship, that it made the situation a little difficult.

But Roger's gay banter revived Patty's drooping spirits, and, when they reached the station, they were in a gale of laughter over some joking nonsense.

The train soon arrived, and they saw Christine and Mr. Hepworth step down on to the station platform.

Roger met them, and conducted them to Patty. Then there were more compliments and congratulations on the new car, and soon Christine was tucked in beside Patty, and the two men waved them farewell.

"How are you, Christine?" asked Patty, looking anxiously at the girl's pale cheeks.

"Oh, I'm all right. A little tired, but a day or two down here will set me up wonderfully, I know."

"A day or two! You must stay a week, at least."

"No, I can't possibly, Patty. My work is very important just now, and I must go back day after to-morrow."

"We'll see about that," and Patty wagged her head, positively. "And look here, Christine, while I have you by yourself, I want to tell you something. Elise Farrington is here, you know, and she has a silly notion of some sort that makes her resent my friendship for you. Now I want to ask you, as a special favour to me, not to pay any attention to her foolishness. If she snubs you right out, I'll attend to her case myself; but, if she just flings little bits of hateful allusions at you, don't mind them, will you, dear?"

"I can't help it, Patty. Unkind speeches shrivel me all up somehow; I just can't stand them!"

"Well, stand them for my sake, please. You know I can't help it, and, if I had thought you wouldn't have a good time, I wouldn't have asked you here when Elise is here. But, you see, it's my birthday house party, and I want all of my dearest friends with me."

"And you count me among them? Oh, Patty, how good you are to me! Truly, I will try not to be foolishly sensitive, and I promise not to notice anything Elise may do or say, if I can possibly help it."

"That's a good girl," said Patty, giving Christine's arm a little squeeze. "But isn't it funny, Christine, that I have these little petty troubles among my girl friends, and never among my boy friends. The boys are all so nice to me, and they never get jealous of each other or anything silly like that. But you see this place we're just passing? It's called 'Red Chimneys,' and I have a girl friend in there,—at least, she's an acquaintance,—who makes me a lot of trouble, too."

"I don't make you trouble, Patty, do I?"

"Well, of course, it's mostly Elise's fault, but, if you'll just ignore it, and stand up for your own rights, you can help me a whole lot."

"I will, Patty; indeed, I will!" said Christine, earnestly, and then they arrived at "The Pebbles."

Dinner that night was a gay and jolly feast. It was the eve of the birthday, and the house

party had already assumed an air of festivity.

Mr. Van Reypen and Kenneth Harper had come down later than the others, and Philip Van Reypen had established himself at the hotel where Mr. Hepworth was, while Kenneth was a house guest at "The Pebbles."

But the men from the hotel came over to dinner, and announced their intention of staying as late as they would be allowed.

Also, to Patty's dismay, Mona Galbraith had come over just before dinner, and, as she was still there when dinner was announced, Nan felt herself really obliged to ask the girl to dine with them.

Patty didn't like it at all, but there was no help for it, and so Mona stayed. She looked very pretty that night, and was not quite so overdressed as usual. Moreover, she made herself bright and entertaining, without showing any of her less desirable traits of character.

Seated between Roger and Mr. Van Reypen, she ingratiated herself with both, and, when Patty saw that the boys seemed to like Mona, she felt rather glad she was there.

After dinner they all drifted out to the verandas, and, as it was a moonlight night and high breakers were dashing in on the beach, there was the usual chorus of admiration for the glories of the seashore.

There was much gay chatter and laughter, there was some desultory singing of songs, and at last Elise jumped up, saying: "I just can't stand it any longer! I simply *must* go down to the beach! Will anybody go with me?"

"I will," said Kenneth, gallantly. "I was just thinking about that myself. Anybody else want to go?"

"I want to go," said Christine, a little timidly, and Patty looked up in surprise, at the idea of Christine wanting to go with Elise anywhere.

But Christine was longing to get down to the water, and see the ocean nearer by, for it was about two blocks from "The Pebbles," though no buildings intervened.

"Mayn't I go with you, Christine?" said Mr. Hepworth; and, with a glance of gratitude, Christine said, "Yes, indeed."

"Come on, then," sung out Kenneth. "All ashore that's going! Let's all go."

But Roger said that the ocean must wait for him until next day, for he was going over to "Red Chimneys" with Miss Galbraith, just then.

"What for?" asked Patty, in amazement.

"He wants to see father's birds," explained Mona. "You know, my father has a really wonderful collection of stuffed birds,—and he'll be delighted to show them to Mr. Farrington, who says he is interested in them."

"All right," said Patty; "run along, you two. But don't stay late, Roger; we keep early hours down here."

"All right, Patty, I won't," and Roger walked away with Miss Galbraith, while Patty looked after them with a puzzled glance.

The four who wanted to walk to the beach had already started, leaving the two senior Fairfields and Patty and Mr. Van Reypen on the veranda.

"It's perfectly heavenly to get away from the city, and down to this beautiful, quiet, peaceful spot," said Philip Van Reypen, as he seated himself on the veranda railing, and leaned against a pillar.

"Is your life in the city so full of strife that you welcome peace?" asked Patty, smiling.

"Oh, the city itself is full of strife," returned Van Reypen; "isn't it, Mr. Fairfield?"

“Yes; compared to the seashore, it certainly is. This expanse of blue ocean is much more peaceful and calm than a scene in Wall Street, for instance.”

“Yes, that’s what I mean; and to get down here and just bask in the calmness and peace is a great delight to me. It was awfully good of you people to ask me.”

“We like to have you here,” said Nan, smiling at the young man’s frank and heartfelt gratitude.

“And I think it’s good of you to come,” said Patty; “for you must have lots of invitations to grander houses than this.”

“My child,” said Philip Van Reypen, looking at her, gravely, “it is not the grandeur of a house that attracts me; it’s the grandeur of the people. And I think you people are just grand! But, tell me, how do you like the motor car which you won by such strenuous exertion?”

“Which you helped me to win,” said Patty. “I never could have won it without your help. And to think you haven’t seen it! Come out to the garage now, and take a look at it. I’ve never seen it by moonlight myself; and I know it must look lovely.”

Catching up a light wrap, Patty flung it around her, and, with Mr. Van Reypen, walked around the house to the garage. The full moon was so very bright that, when the young man opened the big doors, Patty’s car showed as clearly and plainly as if it had been daylight.

“Isn’t she a beauty!” said Patty, in a voice almost awestruck, for the moonlight touched up the car with a sort of magic lustre never seen by day.

“She sure is!” declared young Van Reypen, with emphasis. “Wow! what perfection of detail, and what beautiful finish! Can you run it?”

“Can I run it? Well, rather! Why, I’ve run it hundreds of miles since I’ve had it!”

“Let’s get her out now, and just circle the drive once.”

“Oh, it’s too late now! I’ll take you out in it to-morrow.”

“Nonsense! it’s only about ten o’clock, and it’s as light as noonday. Come on, let’s do it.”

“All right, I don’t mind. But just around the drive; we won’t go out of the gate.”

“All right, then; hop in. Let me drive.”

“But I want to show off my driving.”

“Oh, wait until to-morrow for that, Miss Vanity. I know you drive beautifully, but I want to see how this thing works, myself. You know I guessed some few of those puzzles.”

“Yes, I know you did. All right, then, you drive.”

Philip assisted Patty in, and then took his own place and grasped the steering-bar and the controller.

“My, but she is a daisy! All the modern kinks in the way of mechanism!”

They circled the driveway twice, and, when passing the veranda, Patty turned to wave her hand to her father and Nan, she discovered they were not there. “Why, they must have gone in!” she said, in surprise.

“Perhaps they went down to the beach,” suggested Van Reypen. “Let’s go and see.”

They were near the gateway then, and, before Patty knew it, Philip had swung the car through, and they were spinning along the shore road.

The top of the car was down, and they had an unobstructed view of sea and shore. The night was still, save for the pounding of the surf, and the crested billows frothed and dashed on the white sand. The moon touched everything with its magic, and the sea, the beach, and the inland were alike shining with a silver glory. The smooth, hard road stretched ahead of them like a white ribbon, and it was small wonder that Philip Van Reypen did not stifle the impulse to send the car spinning ahead.

“Oh!” breathed Patty, entranced by the wonderful beauty of the night, and the exhilaration of that swift, soundless, gliding motion through it.

“Isn’t it great!” whispered Philip. “Did you *ever* know anything like it?”

“No, I *never* did! It’s like being in some enchanted place! I’ve never before been out at night.”

“And there never was such a night as this! Are you afraid?”

“Oh, no, not a bit! I know my car too well, and I know you are not driving recklessly, though we are going pretty fast.”

Philip slowed down his speed a little, and they went steadily on.

“We oughtn’t to be doing this,” said Patty, laughing like a gleeful child.

“Why not?” asked her companion, in an aggrieved tone.

“Oh, lots of reasons! For one thing, I’m a hostess.”

“Yes, but you haven’t any guests. They’ve all scooted off by themselves in different directions; even your father and mother deserted the veranda, so I’m the only guest you have for the moment, and, I assure you, I’m being very pleasantly entertained.”

“So am I,” said Patty, demurely. “But somehow I have an uneasy feeling that I’ll catch a scolding for this! I’m not accustomed to going out with a young man late at night.”

“Oh, well, I’m not very young, and it isn’t very late, so don’t bother about that. And anyway, if you’re going to catch a scolding, you may as well have the fun first. And it *is* fun, isn’t it?”

“Oh, it’s gorgeous fun! I never enjoyed anything more! But we mustn’t go any further. We’re about three miles beyond Spring Beach now.”

Sure enough, they had gone beyond all signs of habitation, and were on a long, straight stretch of road, with the ocean on one side and pine woods on the other. It was weirdly beautiful,—the dark shadows of the pines, darker than ever by contrast with the moonlighted spaces. There was no boardwalk here, and the sea dashed almost up to the road they were on.

“All right,” said Philip, in answer to Patty’s suggestion, “we will turn around in a minute. We’ll just go to that next clump of pines, and then we’ll turn back.”

He lowered the speed, and they crawled slowly along toward the trees he had indicated.

“It’s perfect,” sighed Patty, drinking in the beauty all around her. “I’m glad you helped me guess those questions, or I never should have had this experience. Except for one moonlight night in Venice, I’ve never seen anything so lovely.”

“Then you’re glad I brought you, if it *was* a case of kidnapping?”

“Yes,” said Patty, while a demure smile dimpled at the corners of her mouth. “I think I like being kidnapped. Are you going to hold me for ransom?”

“I’d like to, but nobody could offer a ransom big enough to get you back!”

“Now *that’s* a pretty speech;” and Patty nodded her head approvingly. “So, as there’s no ransom to be considered, please take me back to my fond parents, for I have no doubt they’re scared to death wondering where I am.”

CHAPTER XIII

PATTY'S INGENUITY

Philip turned the car around, and, in a few moments, they were swiftly speeding toward home.

"It's awfully good of you," he said, "to give me this little bit of your time all to myself."

"I don't think I gave it," observed Patty, smiling; "I think you took it when I wasn't looking."

"Yes, and when no one else was looking, or I mightn't have succeeded so well. But it's been a gorgeous ride, and now I'm going to take you right back to home and mother. Do you suppose those people who went to see the ocean are still looking at it? If so, it will be fun to drive right down to them."

"Oh, don't try it! Camilla cuts up dreadfully if she gets stuck in the sand. It's the one thing she won't stand!"

"All right, we'll go right, straight, bang home, then. Whew! We have come farther than I thought! We can't see the lights of Spring Beach yet."

"No; but I know where we are. It's about three miles to Spring Beach. Put on a good speed, and we'll soon do it. There's not a thing in the road, and I'll trust your fast driving."

"All right, my lady; here goes!" Van Reypen flung in the highest speed and they fairly flew. And then, quite suddenly and without any jar or jolt, or warning of any kind, they found themselves sitting quite still. Camilla had stopped of her own accord, and seemed absolutely disinclined to proceed. There was no noise and no fuss, the car simply stood motionless.

"What did you stop for?" asked Patty, turning an enquiring face toward Van Reypen.

"I didn't stop; she stopped herself. Your friend Camilla is not in such haste to get home as you are, and she wants to see the moonlight on the sea once again."

"Nonsense! Didn't you truly stop the car?"

"No, truly I didn't, and, what's more, I can't make it go on."

"Then something has happened!"

"Right-o! How clever of you to guess that! But it's your car, and you know its tricks and its manners. What does it mean when she stops like this, gently but firmly?"

"I don't know;" and Patty looked blankly bewildered. "She's never done such a thing before. Of course something must be out of order,—but I can't think what. The tires are all right."

"Yes, of course; it isn't a puncture. But I can't think myself what it can be. Well, I'll have to overhaul the engine and see what I can see."

Van Reypen got out and began to investigate, but he could find nothing wrong in any part. "Has the charge given out?" he asked.

"No, the batteries are all right. It was fully charged this morning, and I used it very little to-day. She's good for eighty or ninety miles easily, and I haven't run twenty to-day."

"Then, I give it up. I do know something about cars, but I'm much more experienced with the gasoline motors. However, this is so beautifully made, and yet so really simple of construction, that I feel I ought to understand it. You get out, and take a look."

Philip held the lamp while Patty peered anxiously into the motor.

She didn't understand fully all the complicated parts, but she had a fair working knowledge of its main principles, and she, too, was unable to discover anything wrong or out of order.

"We're in a lovely mess," she observed, cheerfully, as she stood looking at Philip.

"Yes, we're up against it," he rejoined, but his tone was as cheerful as her own, and they both laughed as they looked at each other. For, given a moonlight night, and two merry young people, it is not difficult to look on the bright side of a motor misfortune.

"Now," said Patty, philosophically, "what do we do next?"

"I'm not very familiar with this locality, but, if there were any chance of a big car coming along, we'd ask them to tow us. The running gear of this car is all right."

"Yes, and so is the steering gear. And the batteries seem to be in perfect order. I can't imagine what's the matter. However, I can inform you there's precious little chance of any car coming along this way now. Seashore people always go to bed early, and they never ride at night, anyhow. No, we'll have to walk home."

"And leave the car here?"

"Yes; I hate to do it. But nobody can steal her, for she won't go."

"But somebody might steal her and tow her away. That is, if a car *should* come along, and we weren't here."

"Oh, I can't bear to think of that! I don't want to lose my beautiful car! What can we do?"

"I don't see anything to do but to sit here in the car all night, and of course we can't do that. Nor can one of us go and one stay, for I wouldn't let you go alone, and I'm sure I wouldn't let you stay here alone."

"I think I'll go," said Patty, slowly. "You stay with the car, and I'll walk home alone. It's only three miles, and I'm sure it's perfectly safe; there's no one abroad at this time of night."

"Patty, I can't let you do it," and Philip Van Reypen looked deeply troubled. "I can't let you walk those three miles, alone, late at night."

"But you don't want to go and leave me here, sitting alone in a broken-down motor car?"

"No; I can't do that, either."

"And we can't both go,—and we can't both stay! So it's a dead—what do you call those things?"

"A deadlock?"

"Yes, that's what I mean. If neither of us can go, and neither of us can stay, and we can't both go, and we can't both stay, isn't that a pretty good imitation of a deadlock?"

"It certainly is! Now, in those lovely motor car novels that people write, somebody would come along just in the nick of time, and fix everything all right, and we'd all live happy ever after."

"Yes; but we're not in a novel, and I'm positive nobody will come along so late. What time is it?"

"A little after eleven," said Philip, looking at his watch. "Patty, I can't tell you how sorry I am that I got you into this scrape, and I must figure some way to get you out! But it hasn't come to me yet."

Philip's face was a picture of despair. He suddenly realised his responsibility in bringing Patty out here at night. It was done on a sudden impulse, a mere frolicsome whim, and, if the car hadn't broken down, all would have been well.

"Don't take it too seriously, Philip," said Patty, in a pleading voice, for, now that she saw how he felt, she was sorry for him. "We'll get out of this somehow! But, truly, I think the only way is for me to walk home and send father's big car back for you and Camilla. I sha'n't mind the walk half as much as I should mind sitting here, and waiting while you go."

"But, Patty, you can't walk three miles in those little, high-heeled slippers."

Patty looked down at her little evening shoes, with their French heels. They were not suitable for a three-mile walk, but that was a secondary consideration. "I *must* go," she said; "there is no other way."

"Then I'm going with you," declared Philip, stoutly. "And, if anybody steals that car, I'll give you another one exactly like it! I'll have it built to order, with the same specifications! This whole affair is my fault, and I'm going to get you out of it the best way I can."

"It isn't your fault! I won't have you say so, just because that stupid old car chose the worst possible moment to break down! But, all the same, I don't know how I can walk three miles in these high-heeled slippers with you any better than I could without you."

Philip grinned. "When you get tired, I'll carry you," he declared. "I tell you I'm going to get you out of this scrape, if it takes all summer!"

"Well, it will, unless we start pretty soon. Come on, then."

"Wait a minute. Suppose I take those heels off your shoes. Couldn't you walk better then?"

"Oh, fiddlesticks! I'm accustomed to high heels. I can walk in them all right."

"Yes; and, first thing you know, they'll throw you, and you'll twist your foot, and sprain your ankle——"

"Well, then you *will* have to carry me," said Patty, laughing. "But, before we start, do let's try once more to make the car go. Maybe it's nothing but perverseness."

But their efforts were unavailing, and Camilla stood stock-still in the middle of the road, as if she never intended to move again.

"It would be like the One-Hoss-Shay," said Patty, "only in that, you know, every part dropped to pieces; and here nothing's the matter with any part."

"But there *must* be something the matter," declared Philip, who was once again examining the batteries; "and, by jingo, Patty,—I've found it!"

"You have! What is it?"

"Why, the battery strap has separated, that's all!"

"What is the battery strap? I don't see any strap."

"Oh, it isn't a leather strap; it's this band of lead that goes around the battery, but they call it a strap. See this crack across it?"

"Oh, that little crack! Does that do any harm?"

"Why, yes, of course; it completely stops the current. You see, the two ends of the strap almost touch; if they did touch, we'd be all right. Now, if I had a little piece of lead to connect those two parts where they are separated, I could fix it in a jiffy! Got any lead?"

"I don't know. Look in the tool-box."

"Just a little piece of lead wire, or anything that's lead."

"Try a lead pencil," said Patty, but Philip was poking in the tool-box and paid little attention to her mild joke.

"There isn't a lead thing here!" he exclaimed. "Your tool-box is too everlastingly cleared up! Every tool in a little pocket by itself! Why don't you have a whole lot of old rubbishy junk; then we might find something for an emergency?"

"Can't you find anything that will do?"

"Not a thing! To think that, now we've found out what the trouble is, we can't mend it! and such an easy break to mend, if I just had a scrap of lead. Well, we may as well make up our minds to walk."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Patty; "I didn't mind walking so much when I thought the car had really broken down. But just that little bit of a crevice in the battery strap! Oh, can't we mend it,

somehow? Can't you pull the strap out longer or something?"

"No, angel child, there's nothing doing without some lead. After this, always bring some lead in your pocket."

"But I haven't any pocket."

"Ah, that explains the absence of the lead! If you had had a pocket, of course you would have brought some lead. You're excused."

"Well, next time I'll bring lead with me, you may be sure of that."

"I hope you will, fair lady, and may I be here to use it! Now, shall we start for our moonlight stroll?"

"Wait a minute; I have a idea!"

"Something tells me your idea is a good one!"

"I don't know whether it is or not. I'm afraid it isn't. And I'm afraid to tell you what it is, for fear you'll laugh at me."

"I laugh? I, a man in charge of a broken-down motor, and a fair young girl with French heels, and midnight drawing nearer and nearer! I laugh! Nay, nay, I'm in no laughing mood!"

"Well, if you'll promise not to laugh, I'll tell you,—or, rather, I'll show you."

From a little utility case, which was tucked away under the seat of the motor, Patty drew out a good-sized package of sweet chocolate. "I always carry chocolate with me," she said, "because it tastes so good when it's dusty."

"When the chocolate's dusty?"

"No, of course not; when the road's dusty, and your throat's dusty,—chocolate's awful good then."

As she talked, Patty had torn off the outer wrapper, and showed the chocolate neatly wrapped in tinfoil. She took this off carefully, and, tossing the chocolate aside, folded the tinfoil into a long strip, while Philip gazed at her with dawning admiration in his eyes.

"There's your lead," she said, simply, as she handed him the strip.

"Patty, you're a genius!" he exclaimed; "a perfect genius! How did you *ever* think of that?"

"Will it do?"

"Do? Of course it will do! It's just the very thing. I'll wrap it around that separated battery strap, and we'll be off in two minutes!"

In really less than two minutes, Van Reypen had wound the strip of tinfoil in its place, had jumped into the car beside Patty, who was already in, and they were flying along at top speed.

"How *did* you think of it?" he asked again, as they skimmed along. "It was terribly clever of you!"

"Why, I knew you wanted lead, and I knew tinfoil was lead. I was stupid not to think of it sooner."

"You're a marvel to think of it at all! It was wonderful!"

"Oh, not at all; that's nothing to what I can do when I really try! Have some chocolate?"

Patty was in gay spirits now, for they were flying homeward through the moonlight, and she was spared the three-mile walk and her beloved car was safe in her own possession.

"Yes, I will have some chocolate, thank you. We may as well take all the goods the gods provide, while we can. I'm glad to get you home safely, but I can't honestly say that I haven't enjoyed this whole escapade. Can you?"

"No," said Patty, looking at him with a demure smile, "not *honestly*, I can't. But, all the same, I'm glad we could manage to ride home instead of walk."

"Yes, so am I; and it's astonishing how hungry I am! Can you spare a little more of that

chocolate?”

“Yes, indeed,” and Patty broke off a generous bit; “but we’ll give you some supper at ‘The Pebbles.’ I fancy they’ll be rather glad to see us!”

“Yes,” said Philip, grinning; “and I rather fancy we’ll get a warm reception,—and I’m not sure but we deserve it!”

CHAPTER XIV

A BIRTHDAY BREAKFAST

It was not quite twelve o'clock when the Swift Camilla swung through the gateway of "The Pebbles," and around the long drive to the house. As might have been expected, the waiting group on the veranda greeted the returned runaways with various but vociferous exclamations.

Several of them said, "Why, Patty Fairfield!" Several others said, "Where have you been?"

Roger called out, cheerily: "You must have had a ripping good time! Wish I'd been along!"

Mr. Fairfield said only, "Patty!" and Mr. Hepworth said nothing at all, but looked at Patty with an unmistakable expression of reproof.

Philip Van Reypen took the brunt of the situation upon himself. He jumped out of the car, assisted Patty out, and led her straight to her father.

"Mr. Fairfield," he said, "here's your daughter, safe and sound, I'm happy to say. But I want you to decorate her with the Victoria Cross, or something just as good, for to-night she has proved herself a genius,—a wonderful genius! But for her ingenuity we should still be sitting in her little motor car, high and dry on a moonlit beach, listening to the wild waves. To her all the honour and glory, and, if there is any blame attached to our little excursion, it is mine. I kidnapped your daughter, but I fully meant to return her in ten or fifteen minutes, without ransom. I am no villain! But, owing to an accident, we were delayed."

"I should think you were!" broke in Mr. Fairfield. "It is nearly midnight, and I am——"

"Papa," interrupted Patty, "I know exactly what you are! You are surprised, astounded, amazed, astonished, dumfounded, taken aback, struck all of a heap, and completely flabbergasted! If you are anything else, you can let me know to-morrow. Meantime, we are two heroes, who returned with our shield, and on it, both! Incidentally we are starving, and, if we had some supper, we could relate our experiences in fine shape."

Patty's arms were round her father's neck, and, with a wheedlesome expression, her eyes looked up into his, and somehow Mr. Fairfield's indignation melted away.

"Patty's quite right," declared Nan, taking sides with the culprits. "Let's all go to the dining-room, and then later we'll hear about Patty's heroism."

"Mr. Van Reypen was just as much of a hero as I," declared Patty, as, with her arm tucked through her father's, she led the way to the dining-room, where a dainty little supper had been waiting for the return of the missing ones.

"It really wasn't a matter of heroics," said Philip Van Reypen; "it was only a simple, plain, everyday breakdown, caused by a separated battery strap. But the glorious part of it all was Miss Fairfield's cleverness in finding a remedy for the trouble, when it seemed at first there was absolutely none."

And then, while they ate salad and sandwiches, the interested audience listened to a full description of the breakdown, told in Philip Van Reypen's most graphic style. In no way did he try to evade the blame for the escapade; he frankly admitted that he ought not to have taken Patty off without permission, but so winning was his frank manner, and so gleeful his enjoyment of the whole recital, that he won the sympathy of all present.

"It's all right, Philip, my boy," declared Mr. Fairfield, heartily. "I don't blame you a bit for yielding to the temptation to slip out of the gate, and of course you could not foresee that peculiar accident. And I am proud of my girl for thinking of a way to fix the thing up! Tinfoil! Well, well! I doubt if I should have thought of that myself!"

Patty smiled and dimpled at the praises showered upon her from all sides, and she caught an approving smile from Mr. Hepworth, which showed his appreciation of what she had done.

“But I’m very sorry to have failed in my duty as hostess,” she said, demurely. “Did you manage to get along without me?”

“Oh, I was here,” said Nan, gaily, “and I kept the young people in order.”

“We did have a lovely time, Patty,” said Elise; “the walk along the beach was delightful; wasn’t it, Christine?”

“Yes,” replied Christine, slowly; “I never saw anything like it. I didn’t know there was so much beauty in the world.”

Mr. Hepworth smiled at the rapturous expression on the face of the Southern girl; and then he declared that it was quite time he and Mr. Van Reyepen should depart for their own domicile.

“But you’re to come back here to-morrow morning for breakfast,” said Nan, hospitably. “We’ll breakfast at nine, and inaugurate Patty’s birthday, which I can assure you is going to be a pretty busy day for all concerned.”

“It’s lovely to have a birthday,” sighed Patty as, a few moments later, she went up the broad staircase with her arms around Elise and Christine, who were on either side of her.

“And this is such a lovely continuous performance,” said Elise. “We’ve had a lot of fun already, and the birthday isn’t really begun yet.”

“Well, it has really begun,” said Patty, “because it’s after midnight, and so it’s already to-morrow; but we won’t have any more celebration until breakfast is ready. So good-night, girls, and be sure to be up on time for my birthday breakfast.”

The girls obeyed this parting injunction, but Patty herself overslept, and it was half-past eight in the morning when she opened her eyes to find her two girl friends hovering over her.

“Wake up, sleepy-head!” said Elise, pulling Patty’s curls. “I say, Patty, how jolly it is for you to sleep out here! But don’t you almost freeze?”

“Oh, no, indeed! I have so much bed-covering that I sleep warm as toast; but I love to feel the sea air blow on my face.”

Patty’s sleeping veranda was almost like a room. Partially enclosed on three sides, the front was open to the sea. There were broad wicker blinds to be drawn at will, but, unless in case of a very strong sea breeze, they were seldom drawn.

The girls were in their kimonos, and Patty sent them flying as she sprang up herself.

“Go on, you two, and finish dressing; I’ll be ready before you are, now!”

Elise and Christine scampered away, and Patty began to dress with all speed. And by nine o’clock she went downstairs, fresh and dainty, in a white, embroidered muslin frock, with knots of light-blue ribbon.

Elise and Christine also wore white *lingerie* dresses; Elise’s being much befrilled and adorned, while Christine’s was far more simple. But each was suited to the type of girl who wore it, and when Nan appeared, also in a white gown, it was a picturesque quartette that stood on the veranda looking at the sunlit sea.

“Here they come!” cried Elise, as Mr. Hepworth and Mr. Van Reyepen appeared round the corner. “And, Patty, see! They’re bringing presents to you! Just look at their arms full of tissue paper!”

Sure enough, both the men carried large parcels elaborately done up in tissue paper and bright ribbons. They came up laughing, and with merry birthday greetings to the queen of the

occasion.

“Breakfast is ready,” said Nan. “We were just waiting for you. Bring those impressive-looking paper affairs with you, to the table; there’s quite a collection there already.”

And, indeed, there was! The whole party took their seats at the large round table, and at Patty’s place was a veritable mountain of white-wrapped parcels.

“I’m overcame!” she exclaimed. “It’s quite enough to have all you lovely people come to visit me, without having gifts besides!”

“Do open them, Patty!” cried Elise. “I’m crazy to see what they are!”

“Just for that I’ll open yours first, Elise,” said Patty, laughing. “Which is it?”

“This one,” replied Elise, touching a large parcel; “and it’s perfectly heavenly, Patty! I did it, every stitch, myself!”

“I did every stitch of mine, too,” murmured Roger, “if that makes a present more acceptable.”

Patty untied Elise’s gift, and it proved to be an embroidered muslin hat, very frilly as to brim, and ornamented with tiny, pink-satin rose-buds.

“How lovely!” cried Patty. “Thank you, a thousand times, Elise. The idea of your making those billions of stitches for poor, wuthless me!”

“Wouldn’t you make one for me?” asked Kenneth, “if it’s a mark of such devoted friendship?”

“I’ll make you two,” declared Elise, with a smiling glance at him. “Put it on, Patty; let’s see how it looks.”

So Patty put on the pretty frilled hat, and it formed a most appropriate frame around her golden halo of hair, and her flushed rose-leaf face. She had never looked prettier, and everybody present gave back an answering smile to the dancing eyes and dimpled mouth that challenged it.

Philip Van Reypen said, “By Jove!” under his breath, and Roger, who overheard, murmured, “Yes, and then some!”

Then Patty unwrapped her other gifts. Christine’s came next, and it was a beautiful water colour of her own, in a simple, appropriate frame.

“It’s exquisite, Christine dear,” said Patty, “and I just love it! How you are getting on! This is a real work of art, isn’t it, Mr. Hepworth?”

“It is truly good work,” replied Gilbert Hepworth, and the approving glance he gave Christine brought the colour to her cheeks, and made her drop her eyes.

“Don’t tell her how lovely it is,” said Patty, laughing; “Christine can’t stand praise in public. Wait till I get you alone, girlie, and then you’ll see if I have a grateful nature!”

“Oh, open mine next!” cried Roger. “If you’re going to take us apart and tell us of your gratitude alone, I want to go right now!”

“You can’t,” said Patty. “You have to be thanked right before all the rest of the people! But this is great! You know I love these crazy things.”

Patty had opened Roger’s gift, and it was a grotesque bronze figure, representing some strange Japanese god. It was fascinating in its very ugliness, and was a really beautiful specimen of Japanese craft.

“You’re not eating any breakfast, Patty,” said Mr. Hepworth, suddenly. “Let me undo the next parcel, while you try some of this delicious omelette. I can vouch for its quality.”

“All right,” said Patty, “I *am* starving. And as a reward of merit, Mr. Hepworth, I’ll let you untie your own gift.”

“Good! I love to be in the limelight! Now this is mine, and may you enjoy it many times when I am far away.”

Then Mr. Hepworth displayed a very beautiful and complete automobile lunch basket, with fittings for two. It was of the finest design and workmanship, and the appointments were of the newest and best.

“Just what I want!” cried Patty. “Now I can go out for a whole-day picnic. And it’s such a lovely picnic basket! Mr. Hepworth, you do think of the loveliest things!”

The grateful glance that Patty gave him was met by one equally friendly, and, in order to escape drawing further attention to himself, Mr. Hepworth quickly opened the next parcel.

This proved to be Philip Van Reypen’s gift, and, as it was being opened, he said: “I, too, should have liked to bring you a really worthwhile gift; but I felt, Miss Fairfield, that I’m too much of a stranger to indulge in anything but the conventional ‘books, candy, or flowers.’ So I have brought you only a box of candy, but I hope you will have many happy returns of to-day, when I shall be an old friend, and can give you anything I choose.”

He looked enviously at the other men present, who had known Patty so much longer than he had; but, when his box of candy was finally released from its wrappings, everybody exclaimed in admiration. For it was by no means a simple box, but was really a French jewel case, whose various compartments were lined with tufted blue satin, and, though now filled with bonbons, were intended to hold trinkets. The outside was of French brocade, decorated with gold filigree and tiny French flowers. Altogether it was an exquisite piece of handicraft, and yet Mr. Van Reypen had, after all, only presented the conventional “box of candy.”

Nan was greatly pleased at his cleverness. She had liked Philip Van Reypen from the first, and he had proved himself a cultured and intelligent gentleman in every respect.

Kenneth’s gift was a fan; a point-lace mount, with pearl sticks. He had showed taste in the selection, and Patty was greatly pleased with it. Indeed, she was enraptured with all her lovely gifts, and fairly bubbled over with enthusiastic thanks.

“This is my present, Patty,” said Nan, producing a very long box. “It was too big to put on the table with the others, so please accept it, with the wish that it may prove useful some day.”

The long box contained a white-lace parasol, which was just the thing to be carried with Patty’s pretty summer costumes.

“Oh, Nan, what a duck you are!” she cried. “I suppose this is from you and father both, as I don’t see anything else from him.”

“Not so, not so, my child,” said Mr. Fairfield, taking a small box from his pocket. “On your nineteenth birthday I want to give you a gift all by myself.”

He handed Patty the box, and in it was a pearl ring. It was a beautiful pearl, and not too large for a young girl to wear. Everybody admired it, and Patty slipped it on her finger, and then, holding her lace parasol open above her head, she fanned herself with Kenneth’s fan. As she still wore Elise’s embroidered hat, she made a pretty picture of a typical summer girl.

“You look like a girl on a calendar,” said Roger; “rather fussily gotten up, but picturesque in a way!”

They all laughed at Roger’s speech, which really fitted the case, and then, breakfast being over, they gathered up Patty’s treasures and adjourned to the hall.

CHAPTER XV

A MORNING SWIM

“Now,” said Nan, “we must lay our plans. We’re going to celebrate Patty’s birthday, all day long; but there isn’t very much time in a day, after all, so you must all choose what you think would be the most fun to do. We’re going to the Country Club for luncheon, which is a motor trip of about twenty miles. Then we’ll come back, and this evening there will be a little dinner dance, which is, of course, the real birthday party. Now you’ve about two hours before we start this morning. What do you want to do?”

“I’m for a dip in the ocean,” declared Philip Van Reypen. “Does that hit anybody else?”

“Me!” exclaimed Roger, and, “Me, too,” declared Elise.

“I’d love to bathe,” said Christine, “if it isn’t too cold. Is the water chilly, now, Patty?”

“It is a little,” admitted Patty; “at least, it was day before yesterday. I haven’t been in since. But to-day is a whole lot warmer. I don’t believe it will be too cold, Christine.”

“Let’s all go in,” proposed Elise, “and then, if it is too chilly, we can turn around and come right out again.”

This plan suited, and the girls ran away for their bathing suits.

Patty’s was white, trimmed with light blue, and was exceedingly becoming. Her gold curls were tied up in a light-blue silk handkerchief, from which a few ringlets persisted in escaping, though she kept tucking them back.

“Let them hang down, Patty,” said Roger, “the salt water won’t take the curl out!”

“No,” said Patty, laughing, “it makes it curl tighter than ever!”

“I envy you that,” said Christine. “I always wanted curly hair.”

“You needn’t,” said Patty. “Your soft, sleek bands are much better suited to your face than my corkscrews would be.”

Mr. Hepworth laughed at this, for Patty’s curls when wet turned into veritable corkscrews, which hung from her temples like those of an old-fashioned belle.

Christine’s rather plain bathing suit was of navy blue, trimmed with white braid, but Elise was gorgeous in a suit of scarlet and black, with her hair tied up in a red bandanna.

Nan’s suit was entirely of black, and was both pretty and becoming; and, as Mr. Van Reypen surveyed the group, he said: “Well, you *are* a bunch of naiads! You look like one of Sorolla’s pictures, except that we haven’t any of his pumpkin-coloured light and purply-green shadows.”

“H’m!” commented Hepworth; “much you know about Sorolla’s work, if you express it in those terms.”

“Well, you see I’m not an artist,” said Van Reypen, for Mr. Hepworth’s tone was so good-natured he couldn’t feel annoyed.

“Who can swim?” Philip went on. “I’m for a long dash out to that farthest buoy.”

“I can swim,” returned Patty, “but I won’t go as far out as that buoy. I’ll swim part way.”

“Come on, then;” and the two splashed into the breakers. Patty was a good swimmer, and there was not much surf that morning, so she had no trouble in keeping up with Philip for a fairly good distance. Then she said: “Now I’m going to turn back, Mr. Van Reypen. I’ve learned by experience that it is better to turn back while we can.”

Van Reypen looked at her reproachfully as they swam slowly side by side. “You called me Philip, last night,” he said.

"I know it;" and Patty smiled roguishly; "but, you see, that was under stress of a great emergency. I scarcely realised what I was doing,—and I hope you'll forgive me."

"I'll forgive you only on condition that you never call me Mr. Van Reypen again, and that you give me permission to call you Patty."

"Aren't you demanding a great deal?"

"Yes, I am, indeed; but you are so generous-minded that I have a hope of your consent."

"I'll race you to shore for it," said Patty. "If you win, first names go; if I win, we shall continue with the more formal names."

"All right; it's an unfair advantage, but I'm going to take it. Of course, I can beat you swimming to shore, but I'll lag behind a little, and let you think you're winning, and then pass you with a grand finish."

"Oh, I don't know!" said Patty, teasingly, and then they both headed toward shore and swam rapidly.

As he had proposed, Philip kept a few lengths behind her, meanwhile gasping and shouting that he was almost exhausted, and that he feared he could never reach land.

Patty knew this was merely joking, and that soon, with a few strong strokes, he would pass her and come in a long distance ahead. But she had no intention of being beaten so easily. When nearly halfway to land, she saw Kenneth swimming toward her. As they met, she said, "Turn round and swim with me, Ken; quick!"

He did so, and Patty went on, talking rapidly: "I want you to do something for me, Ken. Let me go on, and you turn and delay Mr. Van Reypen. I don't care what you do,—talk to him, duck him, or tease him in any way,—but somehow or other keep him back until I reach shore, and don't let him know you're doing it purposely."

"All right, count on me;" and Kenneth turned, and circled leisurely around, until he came face to face with Philip Van Reypen. "Hello!" he said. "You're a ripping good swimmer! I want to show you a new stunt I learned lately. Mighty few could appreciate it, as I know you can."

"Some other time, Harper," hastily spoke Mr. Van Reypen. "I want to speak to Miss Fairfield just now."

"Oh, she won't mind," said Kenneth, taking care to keep directly in Van Reypen's way. "You see, you start sideways and then——"

"Oh, I say, Harper, wait till some other time! Let me pass, please. I'll be back in ten minutes, and glad to learn your new trick."

"Well, you needn't be stuffy about it!"

"Oh, I'm not stuffy, my boy, only——"

"Then I'll show you now. You see, you swim on one side;" and, before Van Reypen realised what was happening to him, Kenneth had grasped his arm and gently but steadily pushed him around until he was headed out to sea again.

At this moment Patty reached the beach, as Kenneth saw out of the corner of his eye, and, suddenly changing his tone, he said: "By George! Van Reypen, I believe you were in earnest! In that case, I'm sorry I insisted. Of course, I'll teach you the trick some other time! Go ahead, if you want to speak to Miss Fairfield. She's right over there."

Thus disarmed, Philip couldn't answer Kenneth angrily, and, suppressing his chagrin, he said: "All right, old chap, and thank you. We'll go for a swim together, to-morrow morning, and then I'll be glad to learn your new stunt."

Kenneth felt a little ashamed of his subterfuge, for he was of a frank, honest nature. But he had done it for Patty, and he felt sure that the whole thing was some merry jest.

Freed from his tormentor, Van Reypen struck out swiftly for the shore, and the next moment, throwing himself on to a big breaker, he was washed up on the beach at Patty's side.

"How do you do, Mr. Van Reypen?" said that mischievous damsel, smiling at him under her corkscrew curls.

"It wasn't fair!" growled Philip; "I was delayed. Harper stopped me, and I couldn't get away from him!"

"Oh, that's a pretty excuse," chaffed Patty. "I heard you say that you were almost exhausted and out of breath, and you *were* puffing like a whale!"

"Oh, that was mere foolery! I didn't mean a word of it! I'm not a bit blown. I could swim for miles!"

"That all sounds very well, but I think you'll have to admit that I won the race."

"The race is not always to the swift,—but I admit gracefully that you did reach the beach first, and I herewith relinquish all hope of ever being allowed the privilege I had requested."

"Oh, don't give up too easily!" said Patty, though she well knew that his speech was not made in earnest.

"Come along, Patty!" cried Nan. "Unless you want to go motoring in a wet bathing suit, you must scamper into some dry clothes. Come along with us, we're all going now."

The crowd of bathers dispersed, and, as there was need for expedition, in less than a half an hour they reassembled, clad in civilian's garb and all ready for the picnic.

The girls' light frocks were covered with voluminous motor-coats, and they all wore pretty motor-hoods or bonnets of soft-coloured silks.

Three cars were necessary to accommodate the luncheon party, and it was quite a gala procession that started from "The Pebbles."

First was Mr. Fairfield's own big car, driven by Miller, and containing Mr. Fairfield and Nan, Christine and Mr. Hepworth.

This was followed by a runabout, which Mr. Fairfield had engaged for the occasion, and which was driven by Roger.

This car held two in front, with a small rear seat for another. Philip Van Reypen sat next to Roger, and Elise sat alone in the small back seat, saying she had always wanted to try such a position, but had never before had opportunity.

"Hang on, then, Sis," warned Roger, as they started, "for I don't want to stop and run back to pick you up all the time."

"No danger," said Elise, merrily; "but it is fun! I feel like an enthroned princess."

"You look like one, too," said Van Reypen, getting in beside Roger; "and we are your two Gold-sticks in Waiting."

The Swift Camilla brought up the rear of the procession, and in it were Patty and Kenneth. Kenneth had begged for this arrangement, as he said he had not yet had a ride in Patty's new car.

"Neither have I," declared Mr. Hepworth, and, after a moment's consideration, Patty said that she would take Kenneth half the way and then exchange him for Mr. Hepworth.

"And nothing could be fairer nor that," declared Kenneth, as he accepted his fate.

It was a perfect day for motoring—bright, clear, and not too cool. Spring flowers were in bloom in the gardens, and palms and shrubbery, carefully kept, made the lawns picturesque.

"Ideal place to spend a summer," said Kenneth to Patty, as they flew along, "and great roads for motoring."

"Yes, it is," agreed Patty. "The others want to go to the mountains in August, but I'm just

crazy to stay here all summer. Perhaps I can persuade them to go off by themselves, and leave me here. I could have some one to chaperon me.”

“Of course you could; that would be gay. I expect Aunt Rachel would come, if you wanted her.”

“She’s a dear old thing,—nobody I’d like better! But I haven’t dared broach the subject yet. Don’t say anything about it.”

“All right, I won’t. But I say, Patty, what was that deal you had on with Van Reypen? He was awful mad when I held him up out in the water.”

“Oh, it was nothing but foolishness!” said Patty, laughing at the recollection. “I promised him that, if he beat me to the shore, we’d call each other by our first names,—otherwise not.”

“That was a *nice* wager!” exclaimed Kenneth, in disgruntled tones. “Why, Patty, you don’t know that chap well enough to call him by his first name!”

“Nonsense, Ken; I’m not grown-up and formal.”

“Well, he is!”

Patty laughed mischievously. “He is grown-up, but he isn’t a bit formal.”

“I should say not! I can tell you I didn’t like the way he carted you off last night!”

“Oh, Kenneth, what a goose you are! You know the whole story of that performance. He couldn’t help the strap breaking, and, if my father didn’t bother about it, I don’t think you need to!”

“That’s the same as telling me it’s none of my business.”

“Well, I didn’t mean it exactly that way, but, all the same, it isn’t! Don’t you like Mr. Van Reypen?”

“Yes, I do; he’s a rattling good chap. But I don’t want him coming down here and monopolising you for motoring and swimming and everything else. I s’pose you’ll give him every other dance, to-night.”

Patty drew down the corners of her lips and made a sobbing sound in her throat, as if she were on the verge of bursting into tears.

“D-don’t sco-o-ld me, K-kenneth!” she pleaded, in a voice which she meant to sound tearful, but which was choking with laughter, and didn’t fool Kenneth a bit.

“You’re a little coquette, that’s what you are, Patty; and I won’t stand it! I knew you long before Van Reypen did, and he’s not going to cut me out, I can tell you!”

“Good gracious, Kenneth! I should say he wasn’t! Why, he’s only an acquaintance, and you’re one of my oldest friends!”

“Of course I am;” and Patty’s hearty tone made Kenneth feel a little ashamed of his flash of jealousy.

“Well, then, don’t let me hear any more such foolish talk! Here I am taking you ridy-by in my dear little car, and, instead of appreciating it, you scold me all to pieces!”

“Forgive me, Patty; I am a brute. But somehow Van Reypen has such a way with him. He acts as if he owned you and this car——”

“And ‘The Pebbles’ and father and Nan;” supplemented Patty, going off into a peal of laughter. “Well, Ken, I can’t see any way for you to get even with him but to act as if you owned us all yourself.”

“I can’t do it,” said Kenneth; “I haven’t that arrogance of nature.”

“What a pity!” said Patty, looking at him, with laughing eyes.

CHAPTER XVI

A CHANGE OF PARTNERS

Their foolish little squabble over, Patty and Kenneth were as good chums as ever, and they skimmed along in the same satisfied friendliness they always felt when together.

All too soon, in Kenneth's opinion, they had traversed half their journey, and reached the place where it had been arranged that Patty was to change her companion and give Mr. Hepworth his ride.

The big car was waiting for them as they came along, and, though Kenneth said "Confound it!" to Patty, under his breath, no one else heard it, and he exchanged places with Hepworth with a smiling, agreeable countenance.

The transfer being effected, the two cars started on again.

Patty drove, and Mr. Hepworth watched her with admiration and interest.

"You're a wonderful child," he said; "you can do almost anything you turn your hand to."

"Indeed, I can't," returned Patty; "I can't paint like Christine."

"Oh, well, that's a special talent of hers. Your special talent is your singing. But I mean you can do all sorts of other things, like guessing puzzles and running motor cars."

"Yes, so I can; but don't forget that, if you hadn't guessed that last charade for me, and an unfair one at that, I never should have had this car. So you see the car is partly yours."

"Well, I'll take out my share in going riding with you."

"Wouldn't you like to drive it yourself, some day, Mr. Hepworth? You could take Christine out."

"Christine! I'd rather take you."

"Rather take *me* than Christine Farley?" Patty's blue eyes opened wide, and it was plain to be seen that her surprise at this statement was unfeigned, and by no means a bit of coquetry. But it piqued Gilbert Hepworth, and he answered, a little shortly:

"You know I would! Why do you pretend otherwise?"

"I don't know any such thing! Christine is your special friend."

"And aren't you my special friend?"

"Why, not exactly;" and Patty's cheeks dimpled as she smiled. "I'm your special friend's daughter. Isn't daddy your special friend?"

"Yes, of course;" and Mr. Hepworth looked decidedly cross, as he always did when reminded of the difference of age between himself and Patty,—a thing which Patty never seemed to forget.

"But just now," he went on, "you're so absorbed in your special friend, Van Reypen, that you have no thought of anybody else."

"For the land's sake!" exclaimed Patty; "and that's an expression I use only on the strongest provocation! But I'll tell you something, Mr. Hepworth,"—and she looked at him squarely,— "when Kenneth Harper was with me just now, he held me up on account of what he called my friendship for Mr. Van Reypen! Now, if you're going to do the same thing, I give you fair warning, I'll put you out and I'll take Philip Van Reypen in this car! So there, now!"

Mr. Hepworth laughed at the flashing eyes, and the rose-flushed cheeks that faced him, very much like an angry kitten.

"Forgive us both, Patty," he said, smiling in spite of himself at the ridiculous situation. "You see, the truth is Kenneth and I are both jealous of your new friend. And you'll probably find

that Roger is in the same unenviable frame of mind.”

“Fiddle-de-dee, and fiddlesticks, and fiddle-strings!” exclaimed Patty; “you people all make me tired, you do. As you know, I adore all my friends, and I want them all to adore me, and, when I make new friends, they’ve all got to adore each other, too, and that’s all there is about that! But don’t you worry over old Roger. He’s fallen a victim to the charms of Mona Galbraith. I never was so surprised in my life! You know, I don’t like that girl very much, and last night, as soon as Roger met her, they immediately fell into a deep friendship!”

“Why don’t you like her?”

“Oh, she isn’t exactly our sort. She’s a little forward, a little pushing, and a little lacking in certain varieties of good taste. But she’s warm-hearted and generous, and, if she had had proper training, would have been an awfully nice girl.”

“Can’t you help her, Patty?”

“Yes, Mr. Hepworth, I can; but I don’t want to.”

“Why don’t you want to?”

“Only because I’m a horrid thing! I know that, if I begin to help her, she’ll want to be helped every minute in the day, and I’ll have my hands full. I suppose I’m lazy and selfish, but I do hate to take that girl’s bringing-up on my shoulders.”

“I don’t blame you altogether, Patty;” and Gilbert Hepworth smiled at her gravely, yet kindly. “But don’t you exaggerate a little bit? I know what you mean. I saw last night what insistent ways Miss Galbraith has, and I know her demands on your time and attention would be incessant. But, Patty, think how much you have!—not only worldly goods, but love and care and protection and interested sympathy. Isn’t it your duty to do what you can for this strange girl, thrown so definitely in your way?”

“She *is* in my way,” said Patty, pouting; “very much so!”

“And do you realise,” went on Mr. Hepworth, very seriously now, “that, just because of all this love and praise and appreciation you receive, you run a pretty strong chance of becoming selfish and self-centred?”

“Mr. Hepworth! I do believe you are lecturing me!”

“That’s exactly what I’m doing. I’ve done it before, and never has it failed to produce a good effect. I’m very fond of you, Patty, as you know perfectly well; and I cannot bear to see your sunny and generous nature spoiled by indolence or thoughtlessness on your part. Now I’m going to drop this lecture right straight now. I’ve said all that is necessary, and I know it has sunk in your heart deeply, as I intended it to. And I know that you will overcome your dislike and disinclination for the work, but that you will honestly and definitely try to do all you can for that girl, and be all you can to her.”

For a moment Patty was silent, and then she said, in a low voice: “You are right, Mr. Hepworth, as you always are. I understand all you have said, and all you have meant, and I make you no promises; but I promise myself to do all I can for Mona Galbraith, to help her in the way she needs help.”

“That’s my little trump!” exclaimed Mr. Hepworth, in a voice which betrayed a thrill of real emotion, and then he quickly changed the subject and called Patty’s attention to a picturesque bit of landscape in the middle distance.

The rest of their ride they chatted in a lighter key, with no reference to duty, and, when they reached the Country Club, they were both laughing merrily as they joined the rest of the party.

“I’m as hungry as a hunter!” cried Patty, springing from her car. “I wish I’d brought Mr. Hepworth’s luncheon basket, well filled, along with me.”

"You'll have luncheon enough, Puss," said her father, "and, as we're a little later than I expected, we'll have it served right away."

The Country Club House was an elaborate one, with broad verandas and large, high-ceilinged halls and rooms. The walls bore the usual decorations of antlers and other trophies of the chase, and the appointments were luxurious and comfortable.

Patty had never been to just such a place before, and was interested in it all.

"Can't we become members, father?" she asked, as its plan and scope were explained to her.

"Next year, perhaps, my dear. But this summer we'll content ourselves with coming over here occasionally, by the courtesy of my friends."

Luncheon was served in a small dining-room, which they had quite to themselves. The viands were most attractive and proved more than acceptable to the hungry motorists.

After luncheon, they wandered about the beautiful grounds, and some of them went for a row on the lake, while some others had a short game of tennis.

Patty had such a good time that she was sorry when her father called them to go home.

"We just fly from one kind of fun to another!" exclaimed Elise, as they made ready to start. "Mayn't I ride home with you, Patty?"

"No, no, Miss Farrington," said Philip Van Reypen, overhearing her; "it's my turn to ride with Miss Fairfield. We're going to put you and Mr. Harper in the roadster, with Mr. Hepworth behind to see that you don't fall out."

As usual, Mr. Van Reypen's audacity carried the day; and, too, Elise had no objections to driving home with Kenneth. This left Roger and Christine to go in the big car with the two elder Fairfields, and the arrangement was fairly satisfactory all around.

But, as Patty and Mr. Van Reypen were about to start, Roger came up to speak to them.

"You must play fair and square, Patty," he said. "You divvied up the ride, coming over, and you must do the same, going back. You take Mr. Van Reypen as far as that halfway place, and then you've got to exchange him for me."

"All right, Roger, I will; it's only fair that all you boys should have a spin with Camilla in turn."

"Oh, I don't know," said Philip Van Reypen, as they sped away. "I don't think you need to change partners on this short trip."

"'Deed I will!" declared Patty. "I've had enough of being scolded because I don't play fair. Now when we get to that halfway place, you know where I mean, that tumble-down house with the vines all over it, I'm going to put you out and take Roger in."

"All right," said Philip, humbly. "But you won't do it until we do reach the tumble-down old house, will you?"

"No, I won't," agreed Patty.

After a while, Philip asked that he be allowed to drive, and, as Patty was quite willing to be an idle passenger, they changed seats.

"I'm sorry that I have to call you Miss Fairfield," said Philip, resignedly, as they were once more spinning along. "It's so formal it takes away all the pleasure of our conversation."

"Too bad," said Patty, demurely; "but do you know I rather like formality, Mr. Van Reypen."

"I'm glad you do, Miss Fairfield. It's a charming day, isn't it?"

"Yes, Mr. Van Reypen; delightful," returned Patty, and then the conversation lagged.

"I want to tell you something," said Patty, suddenly. "I don't feel quite honest, and I want to 'fess up."

"What is it, Miss Fairfield?"

“Why, it’s just this. You know this morning, when Kenneth delayed you, and you lost our race?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I asked him to delay you, on purpose.”

“You did? You little rascal! Why, that was downright dishonesty! Aren’t you ashamed of yourself?”

“Yes, I am,” said Patty, hanging her head, and looking like a lovely penitent. “Can you ever forgive me?”

“No, I never can!” Van Reyepen’s tone was very stern, and Patty was amazed at the serious way he took what she thought was a joke.

“Oh, truly! can’t you forgive me?”

“No! I *never* shall!” and he glared into Patty’s upturned face with an expression so savage that it suddenly dawned on Patty that he was fooling, after all!

With a beseeching glance and a drooping curve to her lips, Patty then murmured, in low tones, “Can’t you ever forgive me,—Philip?”

“Patty! Of course I can! And there’s nothing to forgive, you little rogue! But now you’re going to call me Philip, all the time, aren’t you?”

“I thpothe I am,” said Patty, foolishly, and in an idiotic tone, and then they both giggled.

“And now can you be entertaining?” asked Patty, briskly; “and not just sit up and remark that it is a charming day?”

“But the day is more charming than ever!” declared Philip. “And I must emphasise the fact.”

“But, goodness gracious me! wherever is that halfway place? Have we passed the tumble-down old house with vines clambering all over it?”

“No, we haven’t passed it yet,” said Philip, innocently.

“We ought to reach it soon,—I’m sure it’s time.”

“How complimentary you are! Does the way seem so long?”

“It doesn’t seem so long, but it seems strange. I don’t remember these houses. Did we pass them on the way over?”

“You must have been so busy driving the car you didn’t see them.”

“Nonsense! I’ve never been this way before in my life! You’ve taken the wrong road, and you’ve done it on purpose,—Philip!”

“So I have, Patty! At least it’s a different road, but it isn’t a wrong road. It’s just as direct to ‘The Pebbles’ as the other road, but it has the advantage of not passing by the clambering house with the tumble-down vines!”

“Oh, you’ve done it, so we’d slip Roger!”

“Of course I did! Clever of me, wasn’t it? Oh, you haven’t the entire monopoly of clever ideas, if you *did* mend your motor car with chocolate!”

Philip was gleefully chuckling at his successful ruse, and, when Patty realised that she couldn’t help herself, she laughed, too.

“Roger won’t mind, anyway,” she said; “he’s such a good-natured old duck. And I’ll make it up to him by taking him out for the whole day to-morrow, on a picnic with my new lunch basket. I’ve been wanting to try that lovely basket, and see if it will carry a picnic for two.”

Philip’s face suddenly lost its jovial smile. “There’ll *be* a ‘picnic for two,’ if you cut up any such trick as that! And you and young Farrington will see what kind of a picnic I mean! Why, Patty, you’re hostess of this house party of yours. You can’t desert all your other guests,—and go skylarking off with only one of them.”

“Unless it’s you,” said Patty, with a demure glance at him.

“Yes, unless it’s me,” said Philip, smiling broadly.

CHAPTER XVII

A DINNER AND A DANCE

When Patty and Philip reached home, a little later than the others, Roger was nowhere to be seen.

"Where's Roger?" asked Patty, as she jumped out of the car, for she wanted to make peace with him at once.

"He's gone over to 'Red Chimneys,'" said Elise, laughing. "He's taken a terrible fancy to that Galbraith girl."

"I told you we needn't mind about Roger," said Patty to Philip. "I'm glad he does like Mona, though I confess I was a little surprised at first."

Very soon Roger came back to "The Pebbles," bringing Mona with him.

"Hello, people!" the girl called out, as she neared the veranda. "You kept terribly sly about your birthday, didn't you, Patty? But Mr. Farrington told me last night, and father telegraphed to New York for a present for me to give you, and it's just arrived by special messenger. How do you like it?" and Mona tossed a small box into Patty's lap.

The others crowded round to see, and Patty opened the box, to find a beautiful jewel pendant hung on a slender thread of a platinum neck-chain. The pendant was a fair-sized sapphire, surrounded by tiny diamonds, and was of fine design and workmanship.

"Mona! How lovely!" cried Patty. "But I can't accept such a valuable present from you."

"Nonsense! It's a mere trinket. I'm delighted to give it to you, and father was delighted to get it for me, so you'll simply have to take it. I was only afraid you wouldn't think it pretty!"

"Pretty? Why, it's perfectly beautiful!" and Patty clasped the chain around her neck at once. She was a little uncertain how to take the gift, but she could not so hurt Mona's feelings as to refuse it, and, if she accepted it, she might as well do it gracefully. She cast an enquiring glance at Nan, who, as usual, came to her aid.

"It's a lovely present, Patty; and Mona is most kind and generous to give it to you. I'm sure we all appreciate it."

Thus tacitly advised, Patty thanked Mona prettily, and then Nan declared it was time to think about dressing for dinner.

"You're coming, Mona, aren't you?" said Patty, for she knew Nan had invited her.

"Oh, yes, indeed; I'll be the first one here and the last one to leave. Trust me for that!" and, with a merry laugh, Mona ran away across the two lawns to her own house.

"She's all right!" said Roger, looking after her.

"Yes, she is," said Patty, generously; and, indeed, Mona had risen in her estimation since Roger showed such approval of her.

And then the group separated, to meet again at the birthday dinner.

The three girls gathered in Patty's room for a short chat first.

"What are you going to wear, Patty?" asked Elise.

"Oh, I have a new blue affair that's perfectly dear. What's yours, Christine?"

"White," said Christine, simply. "I can't wear many colours."

"You don't need to, you angel person," said Patty, kissing her. "You'll look heavenly in white. I've never seen you in evening dress. It is evening dress, isn't it, Christine?"

"Yes; that is, it's a round neck, but it's very simple."

"You're simple yourself," said Patty; "simply sweet! Isn't she, Elise?"

It was Patty's delight to make Elise admire Christine, and of course it wasn't possible, when thus appealed to, for Elise to do anything but acquiesce in Patty's opinion.

"And now, honey, what's your gorgeous creation that's to dazzle the eyes of the country people down here?" said Patty.

"Mine is green," returned Elise; "and it's a good enough frock, but I know it won't be in it with yours, Patsy."

"Nonsense! It's probably far handsomer. Aren't we all getting grown-up, to have dinner parties and low-neck gowns! Though mine isn't exactly low neck, it's just cut out sort of round."

"Yes, a Dutch neck," said Elise; "that's what mine is."

"But still it does seem grown-up," went on Patty, musingly, "to have a birthday dinner and dance, instead of just an ordinary party."

"Well, you are grown-up when you're nineteen," said Christine. "I'm twenty, and I think I'm grown-up."

"That's because you're Southern," said Patty. "We stay little girls a lot longer up here. And I'm glad of it, for I hate being grown-up. I wish I could wear pig-tails and hair ribbons! Anyway, I'm not going to act grown-up to-night; my party's going to be a frolic, not a formal affair."

"How many are coming?" asked Christine, who had not entirely overcome her shyness with strangers.

"Well, there's about ten of our own crowd, and Nan has invited about ten more of the Spring Beach people. The two Sayre girls are awfully jolly; you'll like them. And Jack Pennington is a dear boy, and so is Guy Martin. And then there's Dorothy Dennison and her brother,—and Phyllis Norton,—oh, quite a bunch of them! And, Christine, don't you go cutting up any of your shrinking violet tricks! I want you to be the belle of the ball!"

Elise looked up in surprise, but, seeing the determined expression on Patty's face, she said nothing; and, if she had her own opinion as to who should be belle of the ball, she expressed it only to herself.

An hour later, the three girls went downstairs together. Patty in the middle, with her sky-blue chiffon frock, was looking her best. The pale blue suited her golden hair and pink cheeks, and the semi-low-cut neck was exceedingly becoming to her rounded throat and chin.

Elise's green dress was far more elaborate, but her brilliant beauty seemed to call for an ornate setting.

Christine's gown was perhaps the prettiest of all. Of white *crêpe-de-chine*, it hung in soft, straight folds, and around the throat was a delicate pearl embroidery. A girdle of pearl-work, with long ends, gave a finishing touch; and on Christine's willowy figure, and with her Madonna face, the gown was appropriate and effective.

The boys, who were waiting in the hall, exclaimed in vociferous compliment as the girls came slowly down the staircase, and declared that such a trio of beauty had never before been seen.

"Nonsense!" cried Patty. "Don't you talk to us as if we were grown-up young ladies! We're only a little bit more than schoolgirls. Just because I'm nineteen, I'm not going to be treated with dignity! Roger, will you dance the first dance with me?"

Roger looked embarrassed, and, though he tried to speak, he hesitated and stammered.

"Why, Patty,—that is,—I'd be only too delighted,—but——"

"But you've already asked Mona!" cried Patty, with a teasing laugh. "I knew it perfectly well, Roger, and I only asked you to tease you. And I'll be perfectly content with the second,

so save that for me.”

“Indeed I will, and thank you kindly,” said Roger, and then Philip Van Reypen and Kenneth both said at once, “May I have the first dance, Patty?”

“No, indeed,” she returned, laughing gaily at them; “I’m not going to give my first dance to any of my house party. There are several Spring Beach boys coming, and I shall dance with whichever one of those asks me first.”

Patty’s own particular decided wag of the head accompanied this speech, and the men knew it would be of no use to coax her.

And then the other guests began to arrive, and the great entrance hall of “The Pebbles” was a scene of merry laughter and chatter, and greetings and introductions on all sides.

Under Nan’s orders, the whole place had been beautifully decorated. In the hall and rooms were garlands and banks of flowers, and tall palms shading alcoved nooks. The verandas were hung with Japanese lanterns, and a few of these were scattered among the shrubbery, to light the way for any who might be inclined to stroll on the lawn.

At eight o’clock, Patty, taking her father’s arm, led the way to the dining-room. Nan and Mr. Hepworth followed, and then the others in merry procession.

Dinner was served at small tables, as the number of guests was too large to be accommodated at one. Each table was beautifully decorated with flowers and candles, and pretty place-cards as souvenirs of the occasion.

Of course there was a birthday cake, and when at last Patty cut it, and each guest had partaken of it, the dinner was over, and the dance about to begin.

Several musicians were on the broad landing, halfway upstairs, and played just the right kind of music for young people’s merry dancing.

Jack Pennington asked Patty for the first dance, and, a little to his surprise, she graciously granted it. He had hardly hoped for this honour, but he didn’t know that Patty had planned it thus in order to avoid selecting one of her house party in preference to the others. So she danced with Jack Pennington, and afterward, as they sauntered out on the veranda, all the other men clustered around Patty, begging for dances, until her programme was full, and many of the dances had been divided. Of course, as Patty was hostess, she would naturally receive much attention, but her own merry and charming personality made her easily the most popular girl present, though the others were almost equally so. Handsome Elise was a general favourite, and Christine’s delicate Southern beauty attracted many admirers.

Mona was resplendent in bright pink silk, elaborately ornamented. She wore too many jewels, as always, but her whole-souled, good-tempered gaiety, and her hearty enjoyment of the occasion, made her attractive to many.

After a dance with Philip, Patty and he wandered out on to the veranda, and sat for a moment on the railing.

“Beautiful show, Patty,” he said; “one of the prettiest parties I ever saw. These lanterns are gorgeous. Why don’t you keep them here all the time? Sets off the house wonderfully. Come down on the lawn for a little stroll.”

“I’m afraid you’ll kidnap me,” said Patty, mischievously.

“No; honest I won’t. Though I’d like to. Say, let’s get Camilla out, and go for a little spin. Will you?”

“Indeed, I won’t! We got out of that other scrape pretty well. But I’m not going to take any chances again! Beside, the next dance is Kenneth’s. I’d better get back where he can find me.”

“Oh, he’ll hunt you up, all right! Hello! Who’s this?”

Some one came running toward them through the semi-darkness. It was Mona, out of breath and laughing. "Hide me!" she cried. "Hide me! I'm running away from Roger!"

"How extraordinary," laughed Patty. "You *are* a coquettish young thing, aren't you, Mona?"

"Hide me, Patty," urged Mona. "That's a dear. Let me get behind you too."

Mona slipped around behind Patty and Philip, but, anxious to help her, Patty said: "Back into the arbour, Mona; we'll keep in front of you. Hurry! here comes Roger."

"Have you seen Miss Galbraith?" asked Roger, coming up to them, entirely unsuspecting of Mona's whereabouts.

"We've just strolled out here," said Patty, innocently. "Why don't you look on the veranda, Roger? Does she know you're looking for her?"

"Of course she does! On the veranda, you say?" and Roger was off like a shot.

Patty and Philip, stifling with laughter, turned back to Mona, who stood with her finger on her lips, cautioning silence.

And as, in obedience to her gesture, they were still, they all distinctly heard a voice speaking on the other side of the arbour. The speaker could not be seen, and the hearers had no intention of eavesdropping, but it was Kenneth's voice, and his tone was tense and angry.

"I tell you, Elise," he said, "I don't believe Patty ever said that!"

"She did," said Elise, with the accent of one who reiterates.

It was Philip Van Reypen's impulse to walk round the arbour at once, and make their presence known, but Patty silently put her hand on his arm and led him toward the house.

Mona followed, also silently, for she realised at once that Patty was disturbed at what she had heard. The words in themselves might mean a mere trifle or nothing at all; but the seriousness of Kenneth's voice, and the petulant insistence of Elise, seemed to forebode trouble.

"What does it mean?" whispered Philip, as they neared the house.

"Nothing,—nothing at all," said Patty, but she spoke in a low voice and her lip was quivering. She had divined intuitively that Elise had told Kenneth something to make him angry, and she felt sure that Elise had done it purposely, and that she had misrepresented the facts.

"Shall I take you into the house?" asked Philip, gently. "I think you said your next dance is Harper's."

"Not just yet," said Patty, who was so hurt by Elise's treachery that she could not fully control her quivering lip and the tears that came to her eyes.

Mona had disappeared, and so Philip said, "Let us stroll once more round the drive, and then it will be all right."

His voice was so pleasant, and his manner so quiet, that it acted as a balm to Patty's shattered nerves, and she looked up gratefully, and smiled at him through two teardrops that trembled in her blue eyes.

"You're awfully good," she said, "and I'm not going to be silly. Never mind it. But aren't you engaged for this dance?"

"Yes, to Miss Galbraith," he replied, smiling; "but I feel quite sure she has forgotten it in her game of hide-and-seek with young Farrington."

"But you must go and find her, all the same," said Patty, suddenly mindful of etiquette. "Come! let us hurry to the house. I'm all right now."

They quickened their pace, and Philip talked with a cheery banter, so that, when they

reached the veranda, Patty was her own smiling, merry self, and she felt profoundly grateful to Philip because he had not again referred to the bit of conversation they had overheard.

CHAPTER XVIII

MONA INTERFERES

Patty found Kenneth in the doorway, awaiting her.

“Here you are,” he called out, cheerily enough, and Patty hoped it was only her imagination that made her think his manner a little constrained. He was gentle and kindly as ever, but he was not in merry mood, and Patty felt this at once.

They began to dance. Their steps suited perfectly, and, though Patty herself was such an accomplished dancer that she could adapt her step to any one, yet she always specially enjoyed a turn with Kenneth. But now he seemed different, and, though he danced as perfectly as usual, and so did Patty, there was a certain constraint in his manner and he spoke only occasionally, and then the merest commonplaces. Patty realised fully that there was something wrong, but she also knew she could do nothing then and there to set it right. She couldn’t ask Kenneth what Elise had said to him, and she couldn’t think of any other way to open the subject.

So, after a few turns round the room, she was really glad that another partner claimed her, for this was one of the dances that she had divided.

Kenneth left her, with a simple “Thank you, Patty,” and, turning on his heel, went out of the dancing-room. In the hall he met Mona, who said, abruptly and impulsively: “Oh, Mr. Harper! I haven’t any partner for this dance. Come for a walk round the lawn, won’t you?”

“Wouldn’t you rather dance?” asked Kenneth, who was in no mood for conversation.

“No,” said Mona, smiling wilfully, “I want to walk out under the lanterns on the lawn. They’re so lovely and Japanesy.”

Mona had a wheedling way with her, and Kenneth smiled a little as he escorted her down the steps and along a side path through the grounds.

“You think I’m a queer girl, don’t you, Mr. Harper?” she began, as they strolled along under the trees.

“If I did, you couldn’t expect me to tell you so, Miss Galbraith,” he parried.

“Well, even if you haven’t thought so before, you will now;” and Mona gave a determined shake of her head. “But I don’t care if you do. I want you to answer me a question. What did Miss Farrington tell you that Patty Fairfield had said, and you returned that you didn’t believe Patty said it?”

Now Kenneth was an exceedingly well-mannered young man, but he was certainly taken aback by this question flung at him so suddenly by a comparative stranger, and he was tempted to reply so plainly that she must think him rude. But, after a moment’s hesitation, he modified his intentions, and only said:

“I’m sorry to have you think *me* queer, Miss Galbraith, but, even at that risk, I must decline to answer such a very personal question. And, too——”

“And, too,” repeated Mona, stopping and turning to look squarely at him, “you were going to say, that I’m an eavesdropper, and, except for your inability to be so rude, you would tell me so.”

Kenneth was amazed at the girl’s intuition, but he said honestly, “You are very nearly right, Miss Galbraith.”

“Very nearly right? I’m exactly right, and you know it! Now let me tell you, Mr. Kenneth Harper, I don’t care one snip-jack for your opinion of me, and you may think just exactly what

you choose! But I have another's interest at heart, and I'm perfectly justified in asking you the question I did ask. Please tell me."

At the last words Mona's voice sank to a pleading whisper, and there was such heartfelt urgency in her voice that he was moved against his will.

"Why do you want to know, Miss Galbraith?" he asked, more gently.

They were walking on again now, and Mona looked straight before her as she replied: "I cannot tell you that, but I beg of you to tell me what I ask. Was it anything about me?" Mona had no idea that it was, and this was a purely strategic enquiry.

"No, it was not about you,—and now I hope you're satisfied."

"No, I'm not satisfied. Was it about you?"

"Yes, it was."

"And was it something mean Patty had said about you?"

"Yes, it was."

"Mr. Harper, you are not a true friend. You know Patty Fairfield couldn't say a mean thing to save her life! And especially about you, one of her best friends!"

"Oh, I don't think I'm that," said Kenneth, in a cynical tone.

"You are, too! Now, are you sure Patty said this thing?"

"Elise said so," muttered Kenneth, who had forgotten he was talking to a stranger, because Mona had assumed such compelling intimacy.

"And are you sure it was mean?"

"Well, rather! You can judge for yourself!" Kenneth's indignation got the better of his self-restraint, and he told Mona frankly the truth.

"Once, when Patty went away, I gave her a little locket as a parting gift, and she thanked me and said she liked it. Now, Elise tells me that Patty told her she didn't care a snap about that locket, and she only wore it once or twice."

"And you told Miss Farrington that you didn't believe Patty said that?"

"Yes; but Elise insisted that she did say it, and somehow I believe Elise. Her words had the ring of truth."

"Thank you, Mr. Harper, for your confidence;" Mona spoke very earnestly. "Believe me, you have done no harm in telling me this. You think it is none of my business, but it is. You think me a queer girl, and I am. But let me tell you one thing, Patty Fairfield is a true, sweet, loyal nature, sound to the core; and Elise Farrington is not above a trifling deception, now and then, if she wishes to gain a point. Please take me back to the house."

They walked the short distance in silence, Kenneth secretly thinking that Miss Galbraith was certainly queer; and at the same time wondering if Elise could have made up that story. But, as he had said, there was something in the tone of Elise's voice, as she repeated Patty's words, that convinced him they were true. With a sigh, he went up the steps by Miss Galbraith's side, and then they separated, to join other partners.

The dance went on, with its merriment and gaiety, and of course no one would have known that either Patty or Kenneth had a troubled mind. Elise was in specially gay spirits, and Mona seemed to be enjoying herself thoroughly.

"It was a lovely party!" declared Elise, after it was over and the last guest gone. "It was just perfect. There wasn't a flaw! Isn't that so, Patty?"

"I had a good time," said Patty, a little wearily; "but I'm awfully tired, and I'm going right

straight to bed. Good-night, everybody; good-night, Roger,—good-night, Ken.”

She nodded pleasantly to the young men, and started up the stairs at once. Elise and Christine followed, and, when they reached the upper hall, Patty bade them a brief but pleasant good-night and went straight to her own room.

“I don’t know what to do,” she thought to herself, as she took off her pretty blue frock. “I can’t let the matter go without saying a word,—and I can’t say anything, because that would put Elise in the wrong, and she is my guest! I’ll just have to live it down, I suppose.”

But it wasn’t so easily lived down. The next morning, though Patty tried to be especially cordial to Kenneth, he avoided her whenever possible. Not noticeably to the others,—but Patty realised that he did not seek her company, or sit by her on the veranda, or ask to ride with her in the motor.

The morning dragged along, nobody seeming to have energy enough to propose any sort of fun.

“Patty’s birthday seems to have been too much for this crowd,” said Nan, laughingly. “I propose that you men all go for a swim, and let these exhausted girlies take a little nap. I think they danced too late, and I sha’n’t allow such dissipation again.”

“I feel fine, Mrs. Fairfield,” declared Elise. “I never get tired dancing. Do you, Christine?”

“No, I didn’t get tired,—I thought it was a lovely party. I very seldom have an opportunity to be in such gaieties.”

“But you’re tired, aren’t you, Patty?” asked Elise, as Patty sat on the veranda rail, leaning listlessly against a pillar. Before she had time to answer, however, a servant came walking along the drive, whom Patty recognised as one of the “Red Chimneys” footmen. He brought a note, which he handed to Patty, and then, with a deferential bow, he went away.

Patty asked permission to read the note, glanced it over, and then tossed it to Roger, saying, “We seem to be especially favoured!”

The note was an invitation for Patty and Roger to come over to “Red Chimneys” at once, but no one else was asked.

“Come on, Patty,” said Roger; “the others will excuse us for a little while, I’m sure.”

So Patty and Roger walked away by the shortcut across the two lawns, and found Mona in the doorway awaiting them.

She smiled as she put her arm around Patty, and said, “You’re the one I want,—I asked Mr. Farrington for a blind.”

“Well, I like that!” exclaimed Roger, looking incredulous.

“Well, I’ll tell you,” went on Mona, smiling at him; “the truth is, I want to see Patty privately on a *very* important matter. I didn’t want to send for her alone, because it looked so conspicuous. But our private conference won’t last more than ten minutes, and, if you can entertain yourself that long, I’ll take care of you afterward. Here’s the morning paper, and do try to be patient.”

Mona didn’t wait for Roger’s response, but, with her arm still around Patty, led her to the library, took her in, and closed the door.

“Patty,” she began, “I’m a queer girl, and you know it,—and I know it. You don’t like me very much, but I like you, and I’d do anything for you.”

“Good gracious, Mona! What *are* you getting at?”

“I’ll tell you exactly what I’m getting at,—and I’ll tell you right now. I may be queer, but I can see a hole through a millstone when anybody I love is concerned. Now, you know when you and Mr. Van Reypen and I were in the little arbour last night, we overheard somebody

talking on the other side of the thick vines.”

“Really, Mona, I must beg of you not to go too far, or I may lose my temper!”

“Oh, no, you won’t, Patty Fairfield! You just sit still and listen. Now you know, as well as I do, we weren’t eavesdropping,—any of us,—but we all heard what Mr. Harper said to Miss Farrington.”

“Well, what of it?” Patty’s face was pale and her lips were set hard together. She was thoroughly angry at what she considered Mona’s unwarrantable interference, and she felt she could stand but little more.

“Just this of it! I asked Mr. Harper what it was that Miss Farrington told him about you.”

“Mona Galbraith! You didn’t!”

“I certainly did; and, what’s more, he told me.”

“Kenneth told you?” said Patty, incredulously.

“Yes, he did. And this was it. But perhaps you don’t want to know what it was.”

“Of course I do! Mona, tell me, quick!”

“Well, he said that Miss Farrington told him that you didn’t care a snap about the locket he gave you and that you only wore it once or twice.”

“What?” exclaimed Patty. “I don’t quite understand. The locket Kenneth gave me?”

“That’s what she said.”

“Oh, for goodness’ sake! I understand now! That locket! Why, the idea! Say, Mona, you’re a trump to find this all out!”

“You didn’t think so at first.”

“No, I didn’t; and I’m sorry! You have played the part of a real friend, and you’ve done more for me than you realise! But, oh, Mona! how *could* Elise do a thing like that?”

“She’s that sort, that’s all. You know as well as I do she likes Kenneth Harper an awful lot, and she knows that he likes you better than he does her, so she’s trying to set him against you.”

“Set Kenneth against me? She couldn’t do it! Dear old Ken, we’re too good friends for that! But, Mona, how did you find out all this? You scarcely know these people.”

“Oh, I sized up that Farrington girl the minute I saw her! She isn’t a bit like her brother. He’s an all-round, good sort. And the poor chappie is still out there reading the paper! He must be devouring the advertisements by this time. Now, Patty, forget *my* part in this affair, skip over home, make it up with Mr. Harper, and do whatever you think best with that Farrington girl.”

“I can’t do anything with her, because she’s my guest; but I can make it up with Ken in just about two minutes! And, as for you, Mona, I don’t know how to thank you!”

“Oh, cut it out! I’d do heaps more than that for you, if I only had the chance! Fly now, for you must know how impatient I am to go and talk to my new beau, Mr. Farrington.”

So, after an embrace that was hearty enough at least to indicate her gratitude, Patty flew.

CHAPTER XIX

PHILIP'S PICNIC

On Patty's return she found the veranda almost deserted. Christine and Mr. Hepworth, Elise and Mr. Van Reypen had gone down to the beach. Mr. Fairfield had gone to the city, and Nan was chatting with Kenneth.

"Ducky stepmother of mine," said Patty, as she wound her arm around Nan's neck, "if you don't want to monopolise this young man, I'd like to borrow him for a short time."

"You may take him, Patty," said Nan, with a resigned sigh. "But I suppose you know you will leave me alone in a cold world! Your father has gone to New York."

"But, Nan, you ought to have some time to yourself. Solitude is an awfully good thing once in a while. Don't you sort of feel the need of it now?"

"Yes, I think I do," said Nan, laughing; "so you may have Kenneth for a while. What are you going to do with him?"

"Take him for a spin," said Patty, "Come on, Ken."

Kenneth hesitated for a moment. "Don't you want to go spinning with Patty, Mrs. Fairfield?" he said.

"No, thank you; I have some household matters to attend to. One can't have a house party without occasionally having an eye on domestic affairs. So, good-bye. Be home in time for luncheon."

Soon Patty and Kenneth were flying along the beach road, and the Swift Camilla was living up to her highest reputation. Patty was driving, and Kenneth was polite and amiable, but not merry.

After a time, Patty slowed down speed a little.

"Kenneth," she said, abruptly, "I've something to say to you, and I'm going to say it right straight out. You know what Elise told you that I said about you, or rather about the locket you gave me?"

"Yes, I know; and, by the way, it seems that just about everybody else knows, too."

"Never mind that," said Patty, knowing that the boy was annoyed because Mona had interfered in the matter. "The point is, Ken, that what Elise told you I said wasn't entirely true."

"Not entirely true? How much of it was true? Since you seem to know all about her conversation with me, I suppose she told you."

"No, she didn't. Now listen, Ken; I hate, awfully, to talk against Elise, but I've simply got to stand up for my own rights in this thing. I did tell her that I only wore that locket once or twice, but I *didn't* tell her that I didn't care anything about it. For I do. I care a great deal about it."

"Then, why don't you wear it oftener?"

"I'll be perfectly frank with you, Ken. It's just because that locket with your picture in it was too,—well, too personal a sort of present for you to give me, or for me to wear."

"You took it!"

"Yes; after I'd asked father, and he told me I might, but you know I went away with Elise then, to Paris, and every time she saw it she pretended that it meant a great deal more than it did. Of course, it was only a token of our boy and girl friendship, but she chose to pretend it meant romance and sentiment and all those things."

"But since it meant and still means our boy and girl friendship, I think you might wear it sometimes."

"I see I'll have to tell you the whole story," said Patty, with a little sigh. "Well, last Christmas Elise bought a seal ring for Roger, and then, at the last minute, she decided she'd like to give it to you, and she asked my advice about it. I told her it was too personal a present for a girl to give a young man, and I didn't think she ought to do it. It wasn't that I didn't want her to give you a nice present, but I didn't think it looked right for her to give you that kind of a one. I told her to get you books, or something like that."

"What's all this got to do with the locket?"

"Why, Elise said that I needn't talk about personal presents, after I had accepted from you a locket with your picture in it. And so I told her that that was very different, as we were old friends, and, anyhow, I had only worn it once or twice. But I didn't say I didn't care anything for it."

Kenneth's face cleared, and he turned toward Patty with an honest, beaming smile.

"It's all right, Patty; I see through it now. Elise did try to make me think you had said something mean, but you didn't, and I felt sure you hadn't."

"You didn't feel *quite* sure, Ken."

"No, I'm ashamed to say I didn't, at first, but that was because I was so hurt at what I was told you had said. But it's all right now, and I know you'll forgive me, like the trump you are. I'd grasp your strong right hand, if I weren't afraid that would make you steer us both into the ocean."

"I'll consider it grasped. And I'm downright glad that we're good chums again, for I hate to have squabbles with anybody, and I almost never do."

"I know it, Patty; you're a sweet-tempered little thing, and I was a mean-spirited coward to believe for a minute that you'd say anything unkind about any of your friends."

"Especially you, Ken," and Patty flashed him a glance of comradeship. "But it was Mona who fixed this thing up for us."

"Isn't she a queer girl? She's so blunt, and yet very few girls could have done what she did for you, Patty."

"I know it; and I do appreciate it, and I shall always love her for it. But, Ken, what can I say to Elise?"

"Don't say anything, Patty; that's the best way."

"And, if she ever tries again to lower me in your esteem, what then?"

"She won't succeed! I've had my little lesson."

"Good for you, Ken! If you ever have reason to think that I said anything mean about you, you come and ask me about it,—because Mona may not be around next time."

"I will, indeed, Patty."

And then, peace being thoroughly established, the trouble passed out of their minds forever, and the old chummy relations were resumed. They had a beautiful drive along the coast, and, when they got back to "The Pebbles," it was nearly lunch time. They found the whole crowd assembled on the veranda, and Mr. Van Reypen seemed to be spokesman at a very important conference.

"It'll be the most fun of anything you ever saw!" he declared. "A real old-fashioned picnic! None of your modern country-club affairs. But a tablecloth spread on the ground, and sandwiches and devilled eggs, and a campfire to boil the coffee, and lemonade, and hopper-grasses hopping in the pie, and everything just as it should be! Oh, gorgeous!"

"Why sit on the ground?" asked Christine. "Aren't there any benches in the picnic place?"

"We're not going to a picnic grounds, little girl," Mr. Van Reypen informed her; "we're

going to a real, live woods; to the darksome depths of a dingley dell.”

“Tell us all about it!” cried Patty, as she and Kenneth joined the group.

“Entirely my own invention!” cried Philip; “it’s a picnic I’m arranging for to-morrow, and I’d be honoured if you two would deign to attend.”

“We will that!” exclaimed Patty; “but I heard something about grasshoppers. Do we have to have those?”

“No; if you prefer, you can have ants or spiders. But you can’t have a real picnic without some such attachments. Now listen to what I’ve planned! It’s just too lovely! I’ve engaged three runabouts from the amiable garage man over forminst. Camilla will make four, and, if Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield will lead the parade in their own car, we’ll have an imposing procession.”

“Not I!” cried Nan, gaily. “If you young people want to go on this entomological picnic, I’ve not the slightest objection. And I’ll see that you have enough sandwiches and devilled eggs to feed both yourselves and the grasshoppers, but I’ll have to ask you to excuse my husband and myself from attending.”

“The only regrets I’ve had so far,” said Philip; “anybody else who don’t want to go?”

But the others all declared that the plan was perfect, and they wouldn’t miss the picnic for anything.

“Now, I’ll run the whole show,” went on Philip. “You understand it’s my picnic entirely, and I’m host, and master of ceremonies, and chief engineer. I shall provide the entire luncheon, and, with due respects and thanks to Mrs. Fairfield for her offer of hard-boiled eggs, I must decline it, as I shall get all those things from the pleasant-faced and generously proportioned lady who is queen of the kitchen over at my hotel.”

They all professed themselves satisfied to let Mr. Van Reypen take full charge of his own picnic, and all expressed perfect willingness to be merely passengers. Mona was present, as usual, and was of course included in the invitation. She was enthusiastic in her delight at the prospect, and, quite forgetting to go home to luncheon, she accepted Nan’s invitation to lunch at “The Pebbles.”

The next day proved an ideal one for Philip’s picnic. They were to start about ten o’clock, for he informed them the particular dingley dell he had in mind was a fairly long distance off.

So, promptly at ten o’clock, he came over to “The Pebbles” in a runabout, accompanied by a chauffeur. He was followed by two other runabouts, each in charge of a chauffeur.

The picnic party stood on the veranda, not quite sure what the arrangements were to be, but laughingly declaring they were ready to follow orders.

“First,” said Mr. Van Reypen, “I’ll load up this car;” and into the first runabout he assisted Miss Galbraith, and bade Roger Farrington get in beside her. Needless to say, these two were well satisfied, and went spinning off down the road.

Next, turning to Mr. Hepworth, he asked him if he could drive a car.

“An electric? Yes,” said Mr. Hepworth.

“Because, if you don’t want to drive it, this car will hold three, and you can take a chauffeur,” said Philip, who had provided for every emergency.

“No, I prefer to drive,” said Mr. Hepworth, quietly, and then Philip said: “All right; and I give you Miss Farley for a companion. Don’t quarrel on the way.”

And so, with Christine, Mr. Hepworth drove away, and Philip turned to the others.

“I hardly know how to divide up the rest of us,” he said, stroking his chin, thoughtfully,

“but I’ll try it this way. Harper, will you take Miss Farrington in this very pretty-looking new runabout?”

It was an awkward situation, though Philip didn’t know it. Elise was delighted with the plan, and beamed all over her face as she took the seat indicated. Kenneth was not at all pleased, and it was really with difficulty that he refrained from showing it. But Patty gave him a pleading look, as if begging him to make the best of the situation, and so, with what was apparently hearty good-will, he took his seat beside Elise, saying, “All right, here goes for a fine ride!”

Kenneth was fond of driving a car, and, not owning one himself, he rarely had the opportunity; so Patty felt sure he would enjoy the trip quite irrespective of who might be beside him. And, as Patty realised, there was no other way to arrange the couples from Mr. Van Reyepen’s viewpoint, for she knew from the beginning that he intended to ride with her.

“I declare, I’m a car short!” exclaimed Philip, as Kenneth and Elise drove away. “I should have ordered four cars, and I only engaged three! We’ll have to stay at home! Shall you mind?”

“No,” said Patty, mischievously, “I don’t mind. I’ll read aloud to you, if you like.”

“It seems too bad for me not to go when it’s my own picnic,” said Philip, musingly. “You don’t happen to know of any little motor car we could use, do you?”

“We might take Camilla,” suggested Patty, in a dubious tone.

“Just the thing! Say we do? How clever of you to think of that!” and, as Patty broke into peals of laughter at his foolishness, Philip flew down the steps and around to the garage, returning in a moment with Camilla, which Miller was impatiently holding in readiness.

“I’m going to drive,” Philip announced, calmly.

“All right, I don’t care; but, then, you must let me drive coming home. I declare, with a house party, I almost never get a chance to drive my own car!”

“Never mind! Your horrid old house party will soon be going, and then you can drive all you like.”

“It isn’t a horrid old house party! It’s a lovely, sweet, delicious house party, and I wish it would stay forever!”

“This part of it will, if you give him the slightest encouragement.”

“Oh, I don’t want part of it unless I have it all! I had no idea house parties were such fun. I think we’re having beautiful times, don’t you?”

“Yes; since you’ve made up with young Harper;” and Philip’s eyes twinkled.

“Why, what do you mean?” exclaimed Patty, blushing pink. “How did you know anything about it?”

“I didn’t, and I don’t, and I don’t want to! But when I see my little hostess going around with a sad and forlorn expression on her face, and one of her guests looking as if he’d lost his last friend, and then they both go for a motor ride and come back jubilantly chummy,—why, then,—I Sherlock it out that they’ve had a squabble and a make-up! Am I altogether wrong?”

“Not altogether,” said Patty, demurely.

CHAPTER XX

A NARROW ESCAPE

The picnic was the real thing. That is, it was the real old-fashioned sort of a picnic, and it was therefore a novelty to most of its participants.

Patty had been on many motor picnics, where elaborate luncheons were served by white-garbed waiters, with the same appointments of silver, glass, and china that she would use at home. But not since her Vermont days had she attended this sort of picnic. There were no servants. The simple but appetising luncheon was spread on a tablecloth laid on the grass, and, true to tradition, a grasshopper now and then leaped in among the viands, or an audacious spider attempted to approach the feast. But these were few and easily vanquished by the brave and valiant men of the party.

The men, too, proved themselves capable in the arts of fire-building and coffee-making, so that Patty, who was a born cook and loved it, found no use for her talent. So she and the other girls set the table as daintily as they could with the primitive means at their command, and decorated it prettily with wild flowers.

“As a rule,” said Elise, as she sat with a sandwich in one hand and a glass of lemonade in the other, “I like silver forks and china plates at a picnic, but, for once, I do think these wooden butter plates and paper napkins are rather fun. What do you think, Patty?”

“Far be it from me to cast reflections on the goods my host provides, but, generally speaking, I confess I like my table a few feet above the over-attentive population of Mother Earth.”

“Oh, pshaw, Patty!” exclaimed Philip. “You’re no kind of a sport! You’re a pampered darling of luxurious modernity.”

“Gracious! What an awful thing to be!” cried Patty, in mock dismay.

“And, anyway, Patty,” said the blunt Mona, “if you hadn’t put all those old weedy flowers on the tablecloth, there wouldn’t be any ants and things. They’ve mostly come out of your decorations.”

“I believe you’re right,” said Patty, laughing. “So the picnic is a success after all, and it’s only our decorations that made any trouble.”

Then they all ate heartily of the feast, and there was much laughter and merriment, and afterward they sat round the fire and told stories and sang songs, and they all declared it was the very nicest picnic ever was, and they were sorry when it was time to go home.

“But we must be going,” Patty said, “for I promised Nan we’d be home in ample time to dress for dinner, and it’s a fairly long ride.”

“Do we go back the same way we came?” asked Elise, looking at Philip with an arch air of enquiry.

“Go back any way you please, fair lady,” he replied. “The way we came is the shortest, but there is a longer way round, if you prefer it.”

“I don’t mean that,” said Elise. “I mean do we go with the same partners?”

“I do,” declared Philip, “and Miss Fairfield does. The rest of you may do just as you choose.”

“Then I think we’ll go as we came,” said Elise, with an air of satisfaction.

The simplicity of Philip’s picnic made it an easy matter to pack up to go home, as there was little beside the tablecloth to take with them, and so they were soon ready for the homeward

trip.

As host, Philip sent off the other cars first, and, after they were all started, he stepped into the Swift Camilla, beside Patty, who was already in the driving seat.

"I'm going to drive home, you know," she said. "I'm simply dying to get hold of this steering bar once more."

"All right; you may drive, but let's go round the other route; it's only a little bit longer."

"How much longer?"

"Not more than a mile or two,—two at the most."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Positive!"

"All right; then we've time enough. Where do we turn off?"

"At this next turn to the left. That takes us around past Berry Hill, and so on around by Blue Lake."

"Oh, yes, I know the way after we reach Blue Lake. Here we go, then!"

Patty took the turn Philip had indicated, and, as she did so, she caught the last glimpse of the other three cars disappearing in the distance as they went home by the same road they came.

The road she had turned into was far more picturesque and beautiful, and, as this portion of it was new to her, she was delighted to see it.

"What high hills!" she exclaimed. "Why, they're almost mountains!"

"Hardly that; but they are fairly high hills, to be so near the seashore. Don't you want me to drive, Patty? This road has sharp corners, and around these hills it's hard to see anybody coming."

"No, I'll drive and you keep a watch out. We haven't met a car yet."

"No, and I wonder at it. Usually there are lots of racers and touring cars along here. But, of course, it's early in the season for them."

"How is that you are so familiar with this locality? You seem to know all about it."

"I spent a summer down here some years ago. That's how I knew where that picnic ground is. Look out, there's a bad place in the road!"

But Patty had already seen it, and was skilfully steering so as to avoid it.

"You see everything," said Philip, admiringly; "you're a wonderful little motorist! I never saw anybody drive better than you do; and so easily, too. Merciful Heavens!"

Patty gave a jump at Philip's excited exclamation, and saw, straight in front of her, an immense red car at full speed. It had swung around a sharp angle, and could not possibly have been seen by them until it burst on their vision not twenty yards away. They had heard no signal, which was culpable carelessness on the part of the driver of the big car, and perhaps Patty was equally culpable in not having sounded her own horn.

But this was no time to think of such matters, for they were really in perilous danger. The driver of the big car did nothing to avert disaster. It could not be he was indifferent to the awful situation; he looked more as if he were stunned by the sudden realisation of it.

Patty was absolutely paralysed with fear. She realised fully their plight, she knew that nothing could save them from instant and terrible collision, and her muscles were absolutely powerless to move.

The short distance between the two cars diminished like lightning, and neither car had swerved from a straight line leading to the other.

Patty tried to shriek, but her stiffened tongue gave forth no sound.

At sight of the big car, Philip Van Reyphen was stunned also. But, in an instant, he recovered his senses, and, in another instant, he had shot out his right hand and, seizing the controller handle, pushed it backward with a force that nearly crushed Patty's hand that held it. Then, grasping the steering bar with his other hand, he swerved the car over to the right, blindly trying to find the reverse lever with his foot.

Then happened what Philip knew would happen. The Camilla banged into a sheer cliff of rock, but took it sideways. He grasped Patty as the car stopped, and they were both jolted backward.

By presence of mind and quick action, he had run the car into the cliff, causing thereby a minor smash-up, instead of meeting the big red car in a head-on collision, which would surely have meant fatality.

Patty was very white, but she did not faint. The shock restored her numbed senses, and she turned to Philip with a glance of perfect understanding of what he had done.

"Oh, Patty," he whispered, in a tense voice, "thank Heaven you're safe!"

"It was a miracle, Philip; but you did it yourself! I knew it at the time, my brain worked perfectly, but my muscles were paralysed by fear. Oh, suppose yours had been, too!"

"I could have done better if I could have sensed the thing an instant sooner. For a second my brain wouldn't work, and then I saw my way clear, like a flash, but it was too late! I hadn't time to back or to get across in front of the car. It was either to run into this cliff, or have that immense machine run into us."

"It was splendid!" said Patty, the tears coming to her eyes; and then the reaction from the shock came, and she burst into violent sobbing.

"Don't, Patty; don't do that," said Philip, in a pained voice, and Patty looked up, smiling through her tears.

"I'm not really crying," she said; "it's just a foolish reaction, and I can't help it. I'm sorry to be so silly, but I'm just a little hysterical from,—from joy, you know."

"You behaved splendidly, Patty! If you had moved hand or foot, we would have been dashed to pieces. It was only because I could get full command of the controller and the steering bar that I could manage at all. If you had given a convulsive push the other way,—well, never mind that! But I expect I crushed your hand when I grasped the controller. I had to, to make sure that you didn't jerk it the other way unintentionally."

"I guess you did hurt my hand;" and Patty held it up to see. Sure enough, black and blue bruises already appeared on fingers and palm.

"Poor little hand," said Philip, taking it in his own. "I'm so sorry, Patty."

"Don't talk to me like that!" exclaimed Patty, "as if I were a molly-coddle! I'm glad you smashed my hand, as that was the only way to save us from——"

"From certain death," said Philip, gravely.

And then they heard a motor coming behind them, and, looking up, found a good-sized touring car, which was about to pass them, but had stopped at their side.

"Want help?" called out a cheery voice, and Philip answered, "Indeed, we do!"

The stranger jumped out of his car, and came over to inspect the Camilla.

"I ought to get out," whispered Philip. "Are you brave enough to sit here alone, Patty?"

"Of course; Camilla can't run away now!"

Philip and the other man looked about to see what had really happened to Patty's car. There was not so much damage as it seemed at first, for, with the exception of a smashed mudguard, and some dents and bruises, nothing was broken, except the shaft drive axle. But this, of

course, rendered the car helpless as to her motor, though her running gear was all right.

"I'll give you a tow," said the stranger heartily. "Where do you want to go?"

"To Spring Beach," answered Philip. "Are you going that way?"

"I can go that way as well as not, and, when people come as near death and destruction as you people did, I think it's only human to take you home. Perfect marvel, though, how you escaped with so little injury to the car!"

"Perfect marvel how we escaped at all!" said Philip. "I did what I could, but, when I see the narrow margin we had on either side, I wonder we weren't smashed to bits, anyway."

"It is a wonder!" said the stranger. "Most marvellous thing I ever saw,—and I've seen lots of motor accidents. My name's Hampton,—Henry Hampton,—and now, if you'll help me rig up the tow, I'll pull you home."

And so, after a short time, Philip and Patty, still seated in the damaged Camilla, went swiftly along, towed by kind-hearted Henry Hampton's powerful car.

Of course, when they reached "The Pebbles," an anxious crowd awaited them.

"It's getting to be sort of a habit, our getting home late, with an accident to report," said Philip, as they turned in the gate, and Patty couldn't help smiling, though her nerves were still tingling from the recent shock, and from the realisation of their wonderful escape.

The laughing crowd on the veranda grew suddenly still as they saw a strange motor enter the gate with the Camilla in tow.

"What has happened?" cried Nan, as they came within hearing distance.

"We're all right, father!" called out Patty, anxious to allay the look of fear and consternation on her father's face.

"Patty, dear child, what is it?" exclaimed Mr. Fairfield, as he lifted Patty, still white and trembling, out of the car.

"An accident, father,—an awful accident! And Philip was the hero this time; he saved my life, and he did it in a most wonderful way! I'll tell you about it sometime, but I can't now;" and Patty fell limply into her father's arms.

"Never mind, darling, it's all right," said Mr. Fairfield, soothingly, as he kissed the pale brow, and carried Patty up the steps and into the house. He laid her on a couch, and, under Nan's gentle ministrations, she soon revived.

Meantime, Henry Hampton was telling the tale as he had understood it.

"Mighty slick piece of work!" he said. "Never saw anything like it in my life! That young fellow ought to have medals pinned all over him."

"There, there, Mr. Hampton, that'll be about all," said Philip, trying to shut off the tide of compliments from the stranger.

"No, 'taint about all!" declared Mr. Hampton, wagging his head, "but I guess the little lady can tell you the story, once she feels like herself again. I must be gettin' along now, but I just want to remark, edgewise, that I've seen lots of pluck and bravery in my day, but for hair-trigger intellect, coolheadedness, pluck, and plumb bravery, I never saw such an exhibition as this here chap put up to-day! Good-afternoon, all;" and, with a wave of his hand, Mr. Hampton went away.

Philip was the hero of the hour, but he would not admit that he had done anything praiseworthy or unusual.

"There was only one thing to do," he said; "only one possible chance to take, and of course I took it; and almost by a miracle it went through all right, and we smashed the car, but saved our lives."

“Don’t you listen to him!” called out Patty. “You people come in here, and I’ll tell you all about it! I was driving, and it was next to impossible for Philip to get hold of the bars, across *me*. But he did it! and he did it in time! and he did it exactly right! And I just sat there paralysed with fear, and unable to move. But I suppose you don’t expect a girl to be very brave,—and I sort of collapsed, I know. But Philip is a hero, and I want him appreciated as such.”

“He is, Patty dear,” said her father; “and, though he’s awfully modest himself about his brave deed, he has the honour and respect and gratitude of all of us for his wonderful quickness of brain and hand that saved his own life,—and that of my little girl.”

Mr. Fairfield’s voice broke as he folded Patty in his arms, and he kissed her with all of a father’s love for the treasure he had so nearly lost.

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The winking lights flashing from the old tower on the grounds of the Bonds’ new home defy explanation. There is no one in the tower—and no electric power or connections! Had the engaging circus family that Carol befriended anything to do with the mystery? And what interest had Parsnips, the queer old farmer, in the “ghost” tower?

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Transcriber's Notes:

Hyphenation has been retained as in the original. Punctuation has been corrected without note. Other errors have been corrected as noted below:

page 106, many jewelled pines; ==> many jewelled [pins](#);

page 138, you're right, fathery ==> you're right, [father](#)

page 267, spider attempted to ==> spider [attempted](#) to

[The end of *Patty's Motor Car* by Carolyn Wells]