NATALIE PAGE

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KATHARINE HAVILAND TAYLOR

HODDER & STOUGHTON

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"YELLOW SOAP," "TONY," "STANLEY JOHNS' WIFE,"

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DEDICATION

TO

VERY DEAR “AUNT EVA”
(MRS. O. F. HOFFMAN)

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CHAPTER I—HOW IT BEGAN

I THINK it is strange how the scenes surrounding big events stay in your memory. And sometimes with years they become more clear than the happening which impressed them. I know this, because I remember a big four-posted bed, and a lot of people around it—crying. And then I remember someone lifting me up to kiss the woman who was on the bed, but I do not remember how she looked, and she was my mother. She died at that time, and now I only recall the crying people and the big four-posted bed, and thinking it funny that a bed should wear petticoats. It had a valance on it, you see, and I evidently had not noticed it before.

Just in that same way I remember coming to live with Uncle Frank Randolph, who is my mother's brother. And all I remember about that is whiskers (they were miles long, I was sure!) and the fact that it was raining. And now—somehow—when I think of home and saying good-bye to it, all I can see is swirling yellow leaves and the dust and peanut shells and bags that were flying in the wind around the station.

But I must start this story properly. It really all began the day I rode a bicycle down the Court-house steps on a bet. At that time I saw nothing wrong in doing this, and to be frank I was quite proud that I could do it, for there are fifteen of those steps, and they're quite steep. After I did it I went over to the drug store with Willy Jepson and had a soda, and then we rode down to the ball field, and I pitched nine innings for the Red Socks, after which I thought I'd go home. I usually went home, when I had a funny hollow feel under my belt. And Uncle Frank didn't mind my not being on time for meals, so it didn't matter. But when I got in that night I knew something had happened.

In the first place, Uncle Frank wasn't reading any of his bug books (Uncle Frank is very famous for his bug knowledge, as you probably know—some people even calling him the "Second Fabre"), nor did he have on two pairs of glasses. In fact, he was acting entirely unnatural and quite as people of his age do when they are preparing to be disagreeable.

"Ho hum! Where have you been?" he asked, as I sat down at the table.

"Down at the flats," I answered. "Pitched nine innings against Corkey McGowan's Gang, and we licked 'em." And then, feeling some pride, I reached for the spiced peaches and chocolate cake and began to satisfy my craving for food.

“Don’t you”—he began, hesitated, fumbled for words, and then went on—“ah—like the—ah—gentler pursuit of maidens?”

I said I didn’t.

“Ho hum!” he said. And he wagged his head several times, which means he is perplexed.

“How old are you?” he asked next.

I told him I was sixteen (I do every two or three days), and then I asked him to pass the strawberry preserve, because I found that I was still hungry. He did, and then he asked me whether I had eaten any meat. I had always depended upon his absent-mindedness, and I was surprised to see him so obviously upset and, truth to be told, also a little annoyed; for I knew that my life would be one series of explanations, if he began to notice.

I told him that I hadn’t felt the need for anything but chocolate cake and preserves, but he wagged his head again and then he drew forth a letter, and I knew by the shade and the address which was engraved on the envelope that it was from Aunt Penelope Randolph James, who lives in New York.

“Penelope,” said Uncle Frank, “intimated as much—where is it?—ho hum—oh, here we are,” and then he read aloud this:

“ ‘With your erratic habits, my dear, she is probably growing up like a young Indian, and I dare say she eats whatever she pleases, and does whatever she likes.’ ”

I said: “Why shouldn’t I?” And then, “Will you please pass the cake?” for I realized that Uncle Frank was absorbed. He passed it to me as he turned the page, and went on with: “ ‘Obviously, she must have two or three years in a good school, and one here, after her coming out. I think she will be happy with Evelyn and Amy, and we will love having her. I want to know her, to have a few years of her, and a chance to do whatsoever I can—because of Nelly.’ ”

And after that Uncle Frank stooped and stared down at the letter. “Nelly” was the name of my mother, and everyone who knew her loved her a great deal; so much, in fact, that they can’t speak of her easily. I always wish, and so much, that it was hard for me to speak of her. But, as I said before, I can only remember the big four-posted bed and the crying people. And I never did think that was quite fair, for as I look on girls with mothers I realize I have missed a great deal. I do think that I at least might have been allowed to have a few years of mine. But—that attitude doesn’t help me. In this world you have to make up your mind to lots that isn’t happy. For, if it IS, all your complaints won’t change it.

But—to get on. I was not impressed with my aunt’s letter. I knew I wouldn’t have a good time with my cousin Evelyn, because I wear her old

clothes sometimes, and by their architecture I realize that our tastes are not in common. They are very flossy. Usually she chooses the kind of colour that soils when you shin up a tree, and they have lots of buttons on them that sort of catch when you take any mild exercise, such as sliding down a barn roof on your stomach (there are some ideal barns for that in this section), and once, when I went down the spouting from the Jepsons' third floor (we were playing hide-and-seek), I got hung up by a button three feet from the ground and had to scream for someone to loosen me, and was consequently "It;" beside which I might have been killed if it had been higher and the button had not held. This is all mixed, but English is not my strong point. I like gym. work best of any study, and do best in it.

Then, beside that, I have a photograph of Evelyn, and I realized from it that we wouldn't mean much to one another; also I have never got along very well with girls.

So I said: "But I feel that my education is finished."

My uncle didn't think so, and he tried not to smile, which I think is a very impolite habit of older people. I'd rather they would really smile at you any time.

I went on. I said, and heatedly, I must admit: "I can say the multiplication table up to the twelves, and what more can you ask?" And just to prove it I did, up to "twelve times twelve is one hundred and fifty-nine;" but even then he didn't look convinced.

"There are other things," he said. I asked what, but he wasn't concrete.

"I love life as it is," I said, and none too steadily. I couldn't *bear* to think of leaving Queensburg and Virginia! But uncle had got up and was puttering around near the bay window, where a bookcase stands, and so I knew he didn't hear me. I tried once more to attract his attention, but he was looking at a lot of coloured plates of the antennæ of some sort of rare beetle, and I had to give up. But after I had eaten another piece of cake and a little more preserve, I got up. I picked up the dishes and went to the kitchen with them, for I always clear the table for Mrs. Bradly, who is Uncle Frank's housekeeper.

She was washing lettuce and splattering a good deal of water.

"Bradly-dear," I said, "do you know about this letter?"

"Set," she said, and waved toward a stool which stood before the back window. I settled on it and looked out in the garden, which is a shabby but dear place. The hollyhocks were beginning to sag, I remember, and sprawled every way; and the zinnias positively blazed colour in the first taupe shadows of the dusk. . . . It was pretty, and it made you feel *still*, as if you wanted to close your eyes halfway and smile just a little; but it made you feel sad. . . . I

don’t understand that feeling, but sometimes I have it. . . . Mrs. Bradly never had it, for I asked her. But I think my mother would have understood it. . . . Pretty things make it, and some kinds of music, and I don’t know whether anything else does or not, but those are the only things that have made *me* have it. . . . I don’t imagine uncle ever felt it. One day I asked him.

“Uncle Frank,” I said, “do you ever feel sort of sad, and *awfully* happy, when it’s just hazy, soft-dark outdoors and the crickets squeak and everything seems cosy and yet sort of lonesome, and you feel sort of contented and yet—miserable, the way you do after you’ve eaten a big Thanksgiving dinner——”

“Crickets?” he said, looking over his glasses. “Dinner? . . . Ho hum!” And then he went and got some engravings that he bought in France, of some sort of cricket who was *eating her husband*! They do it, quite a lot of them. And although that does seem cruel, they are very bright and intelligent in more ways than just that. Their husbands weren’t useful and so they ate them, which is more than some women do. This is mixed, but as I said, gym. work is where I star.

But of course I knew from that that he had never felt that poetic longing, or whatever it is, that I felt that night when Mrs. Bradly was washing lettuce and I asked her about the letter.

“High time,” she said, after I spoke, “that you was sent off! *I* can’t do a thing with yuh! . . . Playin’ *ball*, a great girl like *you*!”

“Oh, Bradly-*dear*!” I said. I hated displeasing her. But she did not soften.

“Well, I’ll stop!” I said, after a deep drawn breath. I sighed, because playing ball means a great deal in my life.

Bradly-dear sniffed and flopped the lettuce terribly.

“I didn’t play at Parsons,” I went on. She didn’t reply.

“I wanted to frightfully,” I said. “It is quite an honour, Bradly-dear, to pitch on a business men’s team. And they had to let Mr. Horner do it, and he has a glass eye and let three men sneak in to third, because he couldn’t see out of the glass one.”

I had wanted to play ball in Parsons. It is a town some ten miles’ distance where *all* the trains stop. They claim that it has ten thousand inhabitants, which, of course, makes it a city. . . . The reason I didn’t play was because the minister, Mr. Diggs, called and asked uncle not to let me. I don’t know why religious people are so often disagreeable. Bradly-dear spoke again, and witheringly.

“*Fine* life for the daughter of Nelly Randolph,” she said, “to set here and *rot*! . . . The place is all right for your uncle—laws, he could mash his bugs and

put ’em on paper anywhere—but for a girl——” Again she sniffed.

“But I love it,” I protested. “This sort of a life is all I want——”

“Your mother,” she went on, “spoke French and was a lady. She could enter a room and talk high-falutin and entertain *anybody*. She could wave a fan—and you”—she faced me and waved the lettuce quite as if that were an ostrich plumed fan and she a court lady—“and you,” she repeated, “you can wave a baseball bat, but enter a room? Why, you slide your feet under every rug that isn’t *glued* down, and you tangle up in all the cheers, and you say ‘Hello’ when you should say ‘Howdy,’ and—well, it ain’t no ways fittin’ or proper that you should stay here and act like you was training for to be Ringling’s star performer!”

I didn’t reply. There wasn’t anything to say. For all that Bradly-dear had said was true. I am very awkward—but—I like being so.

“Your mother,” she said, slowly and solemnly, “would ‘a’ wanted you to be learned right and proper manners——”

I stood up.

“All right, Bradly-dear,” I said, “if you really think she would—and Uncle Frank thinks I should——” And then I stopped speaking. I had never felt so miserable.

I went out in the garden, and Willy Jepson yelled over from the kitchen roof where he was mending a fish line.

“Come over and play catch,” he howled.

“Don’t believe I can,” I said, sort of stiffly, I guess.

“Why not?” he yelled.

“I’m not going to tell the whole town!” I answered, and after that he slid down, by way of a grape arbour, and came over to stand near the fence.

“Why not?” he repeated.

“My last game of ball is played,” I said. “It seems—I am too old for it, or something. They—they don’t want me to. At least not in big games, and I couldn’t indulge as an amateur.”

“My gosh,” he said, “that’s fierce!”

I nodded. I almost never cry—in fact, I don’t cry any oftener than Willy Jepson does, but I was near it then, so I looked down at the hedge and broke twigs.

“Why,” he went on, “it’s *fierce*! You have the making of a big leaguer—that is, if you’d been a man—I say, it’s fierce. Your drop curves——” He paused, and that pause meant a lot.

“Just because you’re a girl?” he asked. I admitted it. I had to.

“That’s fierce!” he said again. His kindness helped me a great deal. And his commendation was not a light thing, for Willy does the best spit balls in our county. They are really dreams of poetic beauty and almost never fail him. I looked up and said: “Thank you.”

And again he said: “My *gosh*, Nat, that’s *fierce*!” And I did feel cheered up. Then I heard uncle’s voice—calling me—and I went in. I found him mounting a black beetle.

“No more——” he began, and then looked perplexed. He scratched his head and dislocated one pair of his glasses, and I supplied, “ball.”

“Why, yes,” he said, “that *was* it.” And then: “You are to go to your aunt’s the last of this month. . . . Mrs. Bradly thinks she can get your clothes ready by that time. . . . We will miss you, my child. . . . Let me see. . . . Ho hum! Long feelers *and* hard back—page nine hundred and twenty-seven.” I left him to his bugs.

I went to the kitchen, but I only stood in the door for a moment, and then I backed away, for Mrs. Bradly was crying—awfully hard—her face buried in the roller towel. And I knew it was because I was going away. . . . I felt that way too, but I never cry, so I went up to my room and got out my fishing tackle and tried to make a fly for a shallow, shady stream out of some gray and green silk and a grasshopper wing. . . . But it didn’t divert me much. . . . I didn’t think I could exist very long in real civilization. I knew I didn’t want to. All the loveliness that I felt earlier in the evening was gone, and all that was left was an ache, a dull, sodden, gray, growing-larger-all-the-time ache. . . . You see, I cared awfully for outdoors and the sports that keep you there. They were all I really knew of life. . . . And my New York relatives live in an apartment.

“I will be bored,” I thought, “and miserably, horribly unhappy!” But—whatever else I was—I was not bored! Oh, my soul, no! Not for one instant! Sometimes it was almost ghastly, that mystery which gripped and held us all, and even now I tremble to think of phases of it; but it gave more in the end than it took, which is the curious way of much pain and discomfort. When I think that—but I mustn’t begin now. For that part comes much later.

CHAPTER II—GOOD-BYES

THE next few weeks were so crowded that the events which came in them have a kaleidoscopic flavour. Everyone called on me, and everyone gave me advice. The calls, the advice, the shrill of the locusts, the way the sunlight looked in the garden, and the braid which Mrs. Bradly insisted must be put on my new dresses, all tangled. I can't think of one thing without having something else, that came in that time, creep in. I suppose it was because I was so hurried that nothing was sorted. It all simply sunk in my mind together as I rushed; and, of course, there was no calm between, in which one's consciousness builds fences, or tethers a thought in its proper pasture. My going away acted like a big egg-beater on everything that happened then; everything was too well mixed and—flavoured with tears.

Mrs. Bradly wept over everything, including my favourite things to eat, which she cooked for every meal.

"Corn fritters," she'd say, and then begin to catch her breath. "Won't be so long now that I *can* make 'em for you. . . . Thought you'd *relish* 'em. . . ." And then she'd go out in the wood-shed, pretending that she needed a little kindling to hurry the fire. But I knew she didn't. And it made me feel awfully. I think I was never quite so unhappy as then, when everyone was so kind to me. But I didn't cry, because that isn't the way I show unhappiness. Hurts make a hard, heavy load which roosts on my heart and does something to my lungs. They want to take long breaths, but feel squeezed. Sometimes I think this sort of misery is really more uncomfortable than tears, but at least no one can see whether your heart has a red nose, and of course outside tears leave traces. There are advantages.

Willy Jepson seemed to understand how I felt, more than anyone else, which was surprising. He sat with me a good deal in the garden, while I sewed on braid. I was not interested in the braid, nor sewing it on, but Mrs. Bradly made me put yards on everything. She said: "Yuh gotta look swell in New York. Take this here and put three rows above the hem." And—for the first time in my life, I sewed. We put narrow ribbon velvet on my thin things, and lace wherever it could be attached. When I had to rip it off, I did almost cry; and not because of the work, but because dear Bradly thought it was so fine. I can't quite explain, and I haven't time here. But when people whom you love think things are beautiful, you don't like to destroy them.

“Whatcha doing that for?” Willy asked one afternoon. We were sitting in the arbour. I told him Mrs. Bradly thought you had to be trimmed a lot in New York.

“Well, it is,” he said, looking at my skirt a little doubtfully, “and it doesn’t look like you.”

That annoyed me because I’d pricked my fingers a lot.

“It’s got to,” I said. “I’m going to wear it.”

“You’ll have it ripped off in two days,” he replied. “I know *you*. You’ll shin up something, or slide down something, and that stuff’ll trail behind you for blocks.”

“What’ll I slide down in New York?” I asked resentfully.

“Oh,” he answered, “there are fire-escapes.” I sniffed at that. I never dreamed I ever would—but of course that time I didn’t know what was coming. After that we were quiet. I sewed hard, and Willy looked at me. I felt him, as you do, and wondered whether I was losing my petticoat or anything. When he spoke he did something noble, which I shall never forget.

“Look here, Nat,” he said, after a cough.

“I can’t,” I answered. “I have nine more yards of this stuff to lam on. It goes around the sleeves too.”

“Well,” he said, and his voice was very gruff, “it’s this way; if you get too darned homesick you can always come back and marry me.”

I appreciated that. I really did, although it was not my idea of a romantic proposal. My reading taste most closely embraces Alger, but I have read a few love stories, and Willy didn’t act at all like the man in “The Rosary.” But Evelyn says that men never do act like books. She has had several proposals. She says they look sort of scared, and as if they wished they hadn’t begun it, and usually stutter a little, beside gulping. But, as I said, before criticizing Willy’s technique, I was grateful, for I thought if nothing else turned up I could marry Willy before I became an old maid. No woman really wants to be one; she only says so after SHE IS.

“Don’t you tell any of the fellows!” said Willy, after a few moments.

I said I wouldn’t. Then I thanked him and said I might call his bluff when I was about twenty-two or so. . . . That memory is closely wrapped in braid and a blue-and-pink plaid dress. Aunt Penelope gave that one to the janitor’s daughter.

Willy’s offer was a help, for Uncle Frank had told me that I must try to stay in New York with Aunt Penelope for the three years, anyway. He explained about the locusts and how they went through stages, and he thought

it would take about three years for my country shell to slip off and be replaced by the new one, which New York would grow underneath. It seemed Aunt Penelope has a country place, but uncle was afraid it was not very wild (it is at Southampton), and she wants me to go there with her. When I heard that I wasn't to come home at all, I almost expired.

"But anyone needs a vacation," I said, sort of shakily. "If I can't climb trees or go bare-foot at least *once* a summer, I shall *die*. . . ." But Uncle Frank had forgotten me, and got up to hunt a picture of a variety of the praying mantis, which he found climbing a tree. It did not cheer me.

I said: "I wish I was one!"

And he said, "Rare specimen, rare specimen, ho hum!" and again went to poring over his books.

Those weeks passed. In them I found that I cared a lot about many people whom I had almost avoided before I knew I was to go away. Even old Mr. Diggs, who growls and used to complain of me so often (I occasionally broke a window in his house; it stands near the diamond which is nearest school), stopped me and gave me a mouth-organ he had had when he was a boy. I appreciated it, for I knew it meant lots to him, if it wasn't exactly useful to me. When I showed it to Mrs. Bradly, she said, "*Swell* thing to play on in New York!" and really laughed. . . . But afterward she went to the wood-shed—to get kindling, and I knew she was thinking of the New York part of her joke. Aunt Hetty James knitted me a bridge jacket, and she used to come regularly to talk with uncle about my ways. And five other women, whom I hadn't thought liked me much, made me bridge jackets too, but they were all different colours—I mean the jackets, not the women. I had seventeen pin-cushions given me, and nine boudoir caps. Jim Hooker, who is the town disgrace (but with whom I often fished, meeting him a little way out, on the Chanceford Pike; he can cast better than anyone I ever saw), gave me a collection of flies that were wonderful. And Willy Jepson gave me a box of lavender correspondence cards, which I thought beautiful before I had become acclimatized to New York. They had pink edges and gold N's on them.

To be brief, everyone was kind to me, and it made my throat feel stuffy. It was honestly a relief to go, for I knew it had to come, and the feeling of its coming was like that pressure that going to the dentist's to-morrow lays on your spirit. And at last the day did come, and I went.

The morning of that day, I went out in the garden and looked at it carefully. I thought that perhaps I could pack the way it looked in my heart, as I had Uncle Frank's face, and Bradly-dear's fat figure, just dimly indented at the waistline with her starchy, blue-checked apron. . . . And so I walked around a

little while. August had made it sag, but it was lovely; grass was sprouting between the red bricks of the walk, the picket fence was leaning and, being grayed from sun and the rain, made a lovely background for the late flowers and the dusty foliage.

Across the fence was the spot where Willy Jepson taught me to pitch, and on the small platform outside the back door was the hook where they used to tie me when I was a tiny girl and ran away so much. . . . Everything was familiar, and because of that very dear. . . . And because I knew it and had lived in that house, loved, and been loved by the people of that house, it was home.

Willy Jepson got up early that morning. He came out in the back yard carrying a cruller in one hand and four plums in the other.

“Heavy rain last night,” he said. “Breakfast isn’t ready yet. Thought I’d take a bite to carry me on till Liza gets up. Got packed?”

I said I had.

“Send me a line sometimes,” he said, between bites. “And what I said about marrying me goes. I’ll *let* you, if you can’t stand it in New York, although a woman hampers a man.”

I didn’t think that was a happy manner of putting it, and said so.

“Oh, shucks!” he replied. “Don’t expect slush from *me*. I’m not anxious to get married. I say so frankly. A woman hurts a man’s career, but considering your drop curves and sense, I’m willing to help you out if you *need*, really *need*, helping.” Then he went on eating his plums. “I *like* you,” he continued after several chews; “it isn’t as if I *didn’t*.” And he didn’t look at me, so I knew he wasn’t as averse to marrying me as he seemed. I’ve known Willy for a long time and so I understood quite a lot he didn’t say.

“I don’t think I shall trouble you,” I said, “although I am grateful, and it is nice to think that there is somewhere where you can go, if your family won’t receive you before your education is finished.”

Willy nodded and went on chewing.

And then Bradly-dear called, and I knew that breakfast was ready.

“Good-bye, Willy,” I said.

“Coming down to the station,” he said, and very gruffly.

I said, “All right,” and went toward the house. When I reached the porch I looked back, and I knew that Willy felt badly, for Willy wasn’t chewing.

Chapter III—Mrs. Crane's Story

As I said before, almost all I remember about going away is the leaves, bags, dust, and peanut shells which whirled in the wind around the station platform. A great many people came down to see me off, which was dear of them, considering that my conduct has not always been exemplary. And they all kissed me and said that they hoped New York would be pleasant and that I wouldn't be lonesome, and a few of them, women, said that they hoped it would tame me down, which I did not entirely enjoy.

Even the minister came down, and he put me out of the choir last year because I let mice loose in the middle of Miss Hooker's solo, which she finished from the top of the organ, in a squawk (Willy Jepson dared me to), and it was especially nice of the minister to come down, I thought.

Uncle Frank coughed a lot and blamed it on the dust, but I think he was feeling badly because I was going away. "Ho hum," he said, "dust pretty bad, pretty bad! I have here——" And then he pulled out a little box in which he'd mounted a little beetle, which stays in the ground three years and then comes out and acquires lovely shiny wings and flies, beside making a real song with its hind legs. He said he hoped I would understand the implied lesson, and he meant that I was to dig hard at knowledge for three years, not that I was to attempt noises with my hind legs. He said when things looked hard I was to look at that little insect who so patiently waited for wings and worked so hard to get them and to be ready to float and make attractive tunes. And I said I would keep it on my bureau next to the china cat with a hollow back for matches that Bradly-dear gave me.

And then there was a great deal of kissing; Uncle Frank ho-hummed some and coughed, Bradly-dear frankly wept, Willy Jepson reminded me that I could lean on him, *if I had to*, leaves swirled madly as the train pulled in and made a real breeze around the station, and—I started.

I carried five bouquets which had been presented, an umbrella, a suitcase, and a shirt-waist box which held all those things which the trunk wouldn't hold, beside a basket of Miss Hooker's sheep-nose apples. I have often eaten them, but she never *gave* me any before. I was ever so grateful. Her orchard is walled and guarded by a dog, and getting her apples is really difficult. We used to do it by dropping a packing-box over the dog and then adding bricks, to be sure that he'd stay, but that is another story. The gift of those apples really

touched me, but they didn't taste as good. I can understand how self-made men feel about their fortunes. It is perfectly natural to enjoy something that you steal under adverse circumstances. It sort of makes you feel clever, which feeling everyone enjoys.

But to get on. I was to go to Doctor Crane's for the night. His wife was a great friend of my mother's, and has always written me more or less regularly, beside sending me things at Christmas-time. And, although it is hard for me to meet strangers, I really looked forward to going there. And it was lovely.

I arrived in Baltimore at eight that night, and I was never so frightened. In the first place, I had never been in a large city before, and the crowd was dense. And then—I am used to being near people I know, and I hadn't spoken a word to anyone beside the conductor all day. I began to feel terribly lonely.

So, after I had got to the waiting-room with the help of a porter, I stood and waited, feeling intensely miserable. And—when I heard, "Miss Natalie Page?" in a nice man's voice, I said, "Thank you *ever* so much, God——" (inside) for I was beginning to wonder what I should do if I wasn't met. I didn't feel as if I could go out and take a taxi as I had been told to. For I was sure I wouldn't know a taxi from any other kind of a car, although Miss Hooker said they had flags on them.

Well, it was Doctor Crane, and he has a real smile.

"Yes," he went on, "it is Miss Natalie Page, *and* some baggage," and we both laughed. Then he got a porter, had my things put in his small car, and we started.

"I think Mrs. Crane has a little supper waiting," he said very cheerfully (I am sure he somehow knew that I felt timid and a little alone), "for I heard her ordering patty-cases and French pastries this morning. I don't suppose you *like* them?"

I said I was sure I would.

Then he asked about uncle and my trip, and whether I'd ever been in a city before, and I answered him, trying ever so hard not to be frightened by the great crowds that ran right in front of cars at the crossings. I was quite sure we could kill someone, but we didn't.

"Nervous?" asked Doctor Crane as we turned up into a quieter street which went past the Walters' Art Gallery (Doctor Crane told me what it was). I said I wasn't exactly, but that I expected to see someone killed in the mob through which we had threaded.

He laughed and replied that he didn't have to do it with a Ford—because he was a doctor. And then we rode quite a distance, although it didn't seem so, for I was interested, and at last we stopped before a lovely old white house. A

little girl of about thirteen stood on the door-step, and as we neared I heard her call: “Mother, she’s come! They’re here! *Mother!*” And then she stopped yelling into the house and ran down to open the door of the car for me.

“I am Mary Elinor Crane,” she said shyly, but she smiled so genuinely that I liked her right away.

“Yes,” said the Doctor, “the only girl we have left, and if *she* marries there’ll be a massacre around here!”

And then Mrs. Crane came to the door, and I forgot Mary Elinor and the Doctor. She kissed me and said, “Why, my dear little girl!” and I felt as if I had always known her. “Just like your mother,” she went on, “just like Nelly Randolph—the prettiest girl in the Green Spring Valley!” And I saw that her eyes were too bright, and swimming. And then she changed the subject abruptly and said: “Come in, dear. . . . You must be tired. . . . Ted, have Lucky take those bags up to the blue room”—Lucky was the darkest little coon I ever saw—“and,” she went on, “Mary Elinor, you take Miss Natalie upstairs and see that she has clean towels and has a nice chance to brush up, and then come down to supper.”

“Come on,” said Mary Elinor, as she slipped her arm through mine. And we went up some splendid broad, winding stairs which led to a great upstairs hall. It was the loveliest house I’d ever seen. I could only gasp.

There were dark old pictures in beautifully wide, gently mellowed gilt frames, and funny old-fashioned pieces of furniture standing here and there. I particularly noticed one, and Mary Elinor told me it was a frame on which people of our great-great-grandmother’s time did embroidery. . . . And on the floor were rag rugs, in the prettiest colours. They belonged with the old mahogany. I don’t know about periods or anything like that, but I could feel that they fitted.

As we went along, Mary Elinor talked ever so fast. She said that they had always been poor, since people almost never paid the Doctor unless they were awfully sick and wanted him to come again—and most always they were only *really* sick once. But she said that they had an aunt who gave them a lot of money and that now they were comfortable and had ice-cream as often as three times a week, and two cars, one of which her mother ran. And she has two sisters, and a brother who was visiting then and was going to college. And that little girl is the aunt of two children! A boy and a girl. She said her sister Barbara almost named her baby after her, but it happened to be a boy, and of course a name like Mary Elinor was out of the question. She told me quite a lot as I washed up, and said she wished I would stay, as she missed her sisters and brother and would like to have me around. I thought it was dear of her, and

then, as I was ready and awfully hungry, we went downstairs.

And there—I began to understand that it was not all history, geography, French, English, and mathematics that I was to learn in New York. I began to see what I never had seen—or could see—in our little village. That is—the prettier way of living. For even Miss Hooker's table never looked like Mrs. Crane's. And Miss Hooker went to the World's Fair, studied singing in Washington in 1895, and has been as far West as Chicago.

It was lovely. I did wish that Uncle Frank and Bradly-dear could see it! There was a lunch set on it, and the way the table gleamed between the lace edges was beautiful. . . . There were candles with pink shades, and in a high glass basket late autumn roses. . . . Then there were tiny baskets of nuts and candies. . . . I could only look.

I said, "I think that is *beautiful*, Mrs. Crane!" and she said, "*Dear* child!" which wasn't exactly an answer, but which satisfied me. . . . Then we ate, and the things were very good. I did enjoy myself.

They laughed and talked a lot, and we had such a good time. Mrs. Crane and Mr. Crane seem to talk by looking, too, which is queer—and yet, I suppose if you've been in the same house with a person for a great many years, and loved them lots, you would understand every little flicker that makes a change in expression, just as I understand what sort of a fly fish will want—from a look at the light and the depth of the water, and the sort of wings the insects have that hover above. . . . Sometimes I think that everything in the world is observation, that that is the only education. And that education perhaps, after all, only tries to make you do that.

I was deeply impressed by the French pastries. Of course, I had never had them before, because almost everyone in Queensburg does their own baking, and there isn't any bakery nearer than Parsons, and that deals in nothing more involved than macaroons. I asked Mrs. Crane whether she thought that I could get them in New York, and she said I could. I was ever so glad, for I think that if you are very homesick you can be diverted as well by cheerful things to go inside as by cheerful surroundings. I told them so.

Mary Elinor agreed with me.

"Eating," she said, "is underrated. It has a great deal to do with the set of your spirits (mother, I would *love* having another pastry—the brown one was a *complete* disappointment, and I *only* ate it to save it), and when I grow up and am a doctor I am going to advocate complete freedom in gratifying appetite."

"Better advocate complete freedom in engulfing soda mints," advised Doctor Crane. "Most people need 'em, even while eating with care."

Mary Elinor didn't answer. She was too much occupied with the pink

pastry. When she did speak, she announced something which excited me. “Natalie,” she said, “mother’s going to give you a present to-night, something that is really yours and ever so valuable because of historic association, and I am so anxious to see you get it. For it is really yours, your moth——”

But her mother interrupted with “That’ll do, Chicky,” and she didn’t finish. And then an old coloured woman came in with little cups of coffee for Doctor and Mrs. Crane, and chocolate with whipped cream on top for Mary Elinor and me. We walked a little longer, went in a yellow room and played the victrola, and then I said good-night, and Mary Elinor and I went up.

After I had got undressed and was in bed, Mrs. Crane tapped on my door.

“Dearie,” she said, “may I come in?”

I sat up and said, “Oh, *please* do,” just as Mary Elinor, from way down the corridor, screamed a request to come over too.

Mrs. Crane asked if she might, and I said I’d love having her, so she did. When she came along, Mrs. Crane said: “Get in with Natalie—if she doesn’t mind. Daddy hasn’t any time to fuss with colds now, and this is a long story ——” And then, as Mary Elinor got under the covers, Mrs. Crane opened a square box which was covered in yellow satin (a satin which had once been white), and held it so I could see a beautiful bracelet inside.

“This, my dear,” she said, “was your mother’s, and her father gave it to me a short time after she died. . . . Isn’t it lovely?” She held out the box, and very carefully I picked it up. . . . It was a wonderful thing of soft, dull gold, and the sort that they wore at that time—broad and firm looking. . . . I had a queer feeling to think that it had been around my mother’s arm, and I ran my fingers around the inside of it. . . . Then Mrs. Crane leaned over and clasped it on my arm and kissed me. And I was awfully afraid I was going to cry, but I didn’t. I find if you swallow two or three times, very hard, when tears are near, that you can divert them.

“Well,” said Mrs. Crane as she sat down on a little rocking-chair that stood near the bed, “that has a history. A great history. It belonged to Madam Jumel. . . . She married Aaron Burr, you know, when she was an old woman and he was seventy-eight. Nice rosy age for romance, wasn’t it?”

I was glad to have something at which to laugh.

“Yes,” she went on, “that was her bracelet. It happened that one of your great-great-grandmothers sailed for Bordeaux on the same ship in which Madam Jumel took passage. Madam Jumel was then travelling under the name of the widow of the Vice-President of the United States (although she divorced Aaron Burr after they had been married for less than a year), and a very grand lady indeed she thought herself to be. She had letters to write to French

nobility, letters which she wished to send from Bordeaux, announcing her arrival; but her French was faulty, and she found the task of writing them extreme, and the result far from her personal satisfaction. So—your great-great-grandmother, being a person of education and the nicest sort of French, helped her.

"One noon, Madam Jumel waited for her at the entrance to the dining-saloon, and as your relative approached said: 'Pardon, madam, but I heard you conversing in the most elegant and genteel French (I could not help but overhear it), and I wondered whether you would be so good as to offer me your assistance. My letters to royalty'—and history says she waved a hand most airily—'are things that must be just so, as you can understand. . . . I am proud that crowned heads bow to me, but laws, my dear, it is a pest!'

"And the long and the short of it is that she was helped, and by your great-great-grandmother, Natalie. . . . After the letters had been corrected and little niceties were added, Madam Jumel expressed deep gratitude. . . . 'Thank you a million times, dear friend,' she said, in very quaintly broken French. And then, taking this bracelet from her arm, added: 'No doubt one day, when I am dead (but not forgotten), the bracelet which I retain, the companion to this, will be displayed. . . . They will say it belonged to the widow of Burr (my dear, he was a wretch!), but this one, which I give you, and you must accept (I will have no noes!) your descendants will display as having belonged to your friend—a friend who was helped by a friend. Let me clasp it, please. Ah, there we are, and well it looks upon your arm, although it has not the round fairness of *mine*.' And—that is the story."

I looked down at the bracelet.

"Did my mother wear it?" I asked.

Mrs. Crane's face changed curiously, and then she said she had—but not often.

"But she did?" I questioned further. "Really did?"

"Yes, dear," she responded.

"There's a picture in the Jumel mansion," she went on, after a few moments, "which you will doubtless see. It shows Madam Jumel wearing the companion to this bracelet. The painting was done in Rome, the last time she went abroad, which was the time your great-great-grandmamma met her. In it she is sitting between her niece and nephew—the nephew who afterward, angered at her, threw an ink-well at his aunt's face in the painting, missed it, and left a scar above his own head."

"Wasn't that frightful!" I said. (I was thinking of the aim, more than the motive.) "He must have been a rotten pitch." But Mrs. Crane thought I meant

his anger was wrong.

“It was,” she said, “and yet—old Madam Jumel was a queer piece. She adopted children who, one by one, all left her. She was a lonely old woman and one pities her—but, Natalie—the world gives back what you put in it. And usually when people are lonely, they have been cruel.”

“I suppose so,” I said. “What was the matter with him? Didn’t he ever play ball?”

Mrs. Crane didn’t know, but went on with:

“You’ll be interested in the Jumel Mansion, because of your bracelet. . . . And in Madam Jumel. Her husband, Aaron Burr, killed Alexander Hamilton in a duel; and Alexander Hamilton’s son, who was Alexander Hamilton, Junior, was her lawyer, even during the time when she was Mrs. Burr. . . . Wasn’t that strange? . . . There are lots of queer things about her, and more about her influence——” Again Mrs. Crane’s face changed (I wondered what made it), and she looked at the bracelet.

Then, after a little more talk, she kissed me, ordered Mary Elinor off, and put out the light. . . . When I was alone I put the bracelet under my pillow and kept my hand on it. I loved feeling it. It was nice to think that my mother had worn it, if only for a few times. . . . I lay awake thinking of it for a long time; and I am sure it must have been away past eleven when I at last slept. Before I did I thought of Uncle Frank and Mrs. Bradly. I wasn’t worried about Uncle Frank, for he always has bugs. But I did hope that Bradly-dear wasn’t crying. . . . When I thought she might be, I was miserable again—and then I found the bracelet to be a comfort. I put my hand on the inside of it, for Mrs. Crane did say my mother wore it sometimes. And it seems queer, but it helped lots—lots!

Chapter IV—What Mary Elinor told Me

The next morning I got up quite early, and Mrs. Crane, who did too, helped me to assemble my things. She loaned me a suitcase for the bridge jackets and my pin-cushions (which would *not* go in the trunk!), and then, taking a few of the best flowers from each bouquet, made them into a small one, which she pinned on me with a lovely little gold-headed pin, which she called a "violet pin." And all the time we worked together she talked most comfortingly.

"If everything seems right different at first, dear," she said, as she folded up my nightie and bath-robe, "don't worry. . . . Things have a way of smoothing out, you know. And you'll accommodate yourself. I suppose you're used to being outdoors?"

I responded that I was.

"Then," she said, and very cheerfully, "think of the walks you can take in New York! The things you can see! The most beautiful buildings, and parks, and dear knows what all, honey! Why, you'll have a beautiful time!"

"I sort of hope," I confided, "that I can get to one of the big league games." It was hard for me to speak of it, because I did so want to go, and I was afraid it wouldn't be suitable or something. For, almost invariably, things that are pleasant are not proper to do. I've always noticed it.

But Mrs. Crane thought my uncle would take me if I told him how much I cared about going.

"*Do* you?" I said, and ever so earnestly, for it meant a great deal to me.

"I don't see how he could help it," she answered; and then, after kissing me, she told me to hurry on with my dressing and come down to breakfast. And I did. As I did my hair (which was, at that time, a very simple operation, and involved three licks of the comb and one rubber strap), I thought of Mrs. Crane, and I did wish I could stay with her, for I began to see that my clothes did look strange, and I knew that she would help me to fix them without laughing at me or them. Bradly-dear had had them made so that I was too aware of them, and so that no one else could overlook them. It is hard to explain, but the trimmings and the dresses didn't *mix*, and the braid drew attention to the dresses, and the dresses drew attention to the braid, which was not all moored on the level. I anchored a good deal of it myself, and I can tell you that it is far easier to pitch against a left-handed batter than to put on a

yard of serpentine braid, beside being a great deal more interesting.

Just as I had got my dress on and was trying to hook it under the arm, someone tapped, and after my “Come in,” I found it was Mary Elinor. “Bill’s home,” she said first. “He just got in. He’s glad he’s going to meet you. He likes baseball too. I have something to tell you, but I don’t just know how. It is a delicate thing to say and requires womanly tact, of which I have not much, since father whips us if we tell fibs. That kind of an upbringing is an awful handicap.”

She sat down after this, and began to plait her handkerchief.

“If you feel as if you ought to say it,” I said, “go to it. I won’t mind.” And she did.

“It’s about the bracelet,” she said. “Mother doesn’t believe in such things, but Aunt Eliza (she’s our cook) knows *all* about them, and *she* says that probably the ghost of the first owner has put a ‘hant’ on it. . . .”

“I don’t believe in such stuff,” I answered. “You know how niggers are.”

“I know,” Mary Elinor answered, “but—well, look here, your own *mother* thought so.”

“Thought what?” I asked, and quickly. I was getting excited, and I wanted her to come to the point.

“Thought Madam Jumel didn’t want anyone to wear her bracelet, and made them unhappy—in some queer way—if they did. *Everyone who wears that bracelet has awful things happen to ’em!*”

“What?” I asked. I sat down on the foot of the bed.

“Well, mother said your mother said that because she wore it the first time your father kissed her, he died with pneumonia before he’d ever seen you. She said *that* made it.”

“I don’t believe it,” I asserted. I was annoyed. It didn’t sound like Mrs. Crane. Mary Elinor bridled, and her eyes snapped.

“Then *don’t*,” she said. “I only thought someone *ought* to tell you, before something frightful happened to *you*. And I don’t lie, Miss Natalie Page. You can ask my father, because he taught me not to and——”

“I know you don’t,” I answered, “and I’m sorry I said that.” And then I decided I’d better hear the story. Beside, I wanted to. So I told her to tell me all about what she knew of it, and she did.

It seems they have a room which they call “the winter room,” and this contains a cosy little alcove, lighted by a high window, which is remote and an ideal reading spot. And one day after Mrs. Crane got Uncle Frank’s letter, the letter about my coming, Mary Elinor happened to be there, reading. It was a

book she had read before, and of course she knew what happened next, and so she wasn't especially interested, and what her mother and father said sort of floated in her consciousness and rooted, she said, before she realized that she was listening. Then, since they hadn't known she was there, she decided not to enlighten them. She knew that they would be shocked by her presence, and she assured me that she always tried to be considerate. And, she reasoned further, that since she had heard so much, almost involuntarily, there was no use stuffing up her ears, and beside, she was interested.

It *was* interesting, but I didn't believe it—then.

"Ted," Mrs. Crane had said (Doctor Crane's first name is Theodore), "I want to give Natalie Page that bracelet, but—you know poor Nelly's foolish fear of it bothers me."

"Nonsense!" Doctor Crane answered, and Mary Elinor said she knew he was smoking, by the tight way he spoke.

"I suppose it is," Mrs. Crane said, "isn't it?"

"Why, of course it is. . . . Nothing the matter with that bracelet. My dear, how could it affect anything? . . . And as for poor Carter Page's pneumonia" (Carter Page was my father, and he was an Admiral in the Navy), "he went off with that because of a severe climatic change, a bad sailing, and a weak heart. And of course Nelly was upset both physically and mentally by that."

"But before," said Mrs. Crane. "You know her little sister—the one who was killed in that Carrol County Hunt—thrown from a horse—well, she'd *borrowed this bracelet and wore it that day*."

"My dear," said Doctor Crane, "that's simply coincidence. And it certainly proves nothing. . . . I think Nelly's daughter ought to have it, because of its historic value, and I wouldn't be bothered for a second by those imaginings."

Then Mary Elinor heard him scratch a match and relight his pipe. She said that it was really interesting the way she could tell what was going on without seeing it. It was like movies for the blind.

"Suppose," said Mrs. Crane, "there is something in that sort of thing (although, of course, there isn't) and I did give this child something that would ——"

Then Doctor Crane asked if she needed a tonic, which is his way of saying that people are cross, or crazy, or nervous.

Mrs. Crane laughed.

"Ted," she said, "I know I *am* crazy, but when I remember it——" And then Mary Elinor said her voice became soft as she told this story. . . . I had heard it, but never told this way. And here it is:

I was born while my father was cruising the Pacific. Each day he had hoped to be able to come home, but orders were against him and, like all sailors, he had to abide by those and not by the dictates of his heart. And so—I grew for three months, and then one day my mother heard that father was to come home and would probably be in port within three or four weeks. Mrs. Crane's description of that was lovely. And she could describe it, for my mother then lived in the Green Spring Valley with grandpapa, and Mrs. Crane went there often, taking Alix, Barbara, and William. Mary Elinor *wasn't*, at that time.

"Excitement, Ted!" said Mrs. Crane. "I wish you might have seen it. . . . But you remember how I told of it——"

"A little."

"Well, Nelly was the happiest little person I've ever seen, and simply delighted over the beautiful baby she had waiting to show her husband. Each day little Natalie (who really was a sweet child) was dressed in her best and ready for display. For Nelly couldn't realize that three weeks at least must elapse before her big husband could come home to her. And she herself, pretty as ever, would wail: 'Dear, *do* you think I'm as pretty as I was? Carter always thought me pretty, you know. . . . *Do* you?' And then, quickly: 'But if he doesn't there's the baby—and she *is* a beauty!' . . ."

"Always was a coquette," said Doctor Crane.

"Yes," admitted Mrs. Crane. "Nelly knew her husband was wild about her. They really loved each other too much—the other would have been easier if they had been a bit closer to normal caring——"

And then came what I have always known, and been saddened by. For my poor little mother, after getting me all ready for my daddy, and herself all ready for him, too—both of us in our prettiest things—had a wire. And in this she heard that he was dead. And when she heard that she took off the bracelet (I did not know this part of the story) and flung it far from her. And then she fainted. And she never cried at all. Which I can understand.

Well, a few months went on, and, although they said I cared a great deal for her, she didn't seem to care for anything—even me. And quite naturally, she began to be ill. I suppose that there was nothing left for which life was worth the living. . . . A big mammy took care of me, and my grandpapa loved me a lot, but I am sure, even then, that I wanted my mother most. . . . One day, perhaps six or eight months after my father's death, my mother asked for the Jumel bracelet. And when they brought it to her (with a dent in the side, which had come from her throwing it) she smiled. . . . "I'm going to take it to its jealous owner, Chloe," she said to my mammy. . . . "Or at least—I will take it

where no one else can wear it—and where Madam Jumel will not mind its being worn.” And then again she smiled.

And when she died she had it on her arm, and of course she had meant that she was to be buried in it. But Chloe, my mammy, would not have that. She did not believe in carrying unhappiness to the other world, and, like a great many of her race, believed that you could take things with you—if they went in your coffin. Which is, of course, silly. For all you really take is love, and the whitest part of your soul. I am sure all jealousies, and hurts and little things stay here, and I like to believe so. . . . But to get on, old Chloe told my grandfather, and he, a broken-hearted old man, took it off. And then he kissed my mother’s arm, at the spot where the bracelet had made a mark, and he said: “It’s all right now, my little girl, *isn’t* it? It’s all right now!” For he hoped she was very happy. And then he went off and sat down on the porch, his head sagging down on his chest and in his hands the Jumel bracelet. . . .

There were three years which followed, three years in which nothing happened. And then, my grandfather began to lose money. I remember that time, although I was only three and a half. I remember his holding me very tight and pressing his face against my chest; and I remember that I always hugged him and said, “Granddad—*dear*,” for Chloe, who taught me everything, had said: “Your granddaddy done gotta have a lotta love, honey chile. He done gotta, for he’s lost a lotta love—a powerful lot! . . . .” For two of his daughters and his wife had all gone—within eight years.

And I did love him.

I remember also how, when they brought him in, bleeding, and with his eyes wide open but sightless, how I felt, how I screamed, and how even Chloe could not stop me. . . . Little by little he had lost money. And the small sums had worried him, and he had tried to catch them back with the big ones. And somehow, after a little time of this—there were no big ones. And then—one day in hunting season they found my dear grandfather by a stile, where they thought he had fallen and accidentally discharged his gun, which is, of course, possible. Anyway—he had evidently lain there for a good many hours, and he had bled to death.

And they found the Jumel bracelet in his pocket—flattened and bent. Looking as if someone had stepped on it, ground it into the earth, and—believed the story!

Chloe took charge of it, and Mrs. Crane saw it when she came out to take charge of me until I should go to Uncle Frank’s. And Mrs. Crane took the bracelet, because she thought no one of our family would want to see it, since even Uncle Frank seemed to believe in the ill omens it carried. She had it

straightened and made whole again, and sometimes wore it; but not often, since she cared deeply for my mother, and the memories it gave her hurt. And so the bracelet was kept until I got it.

Doctor Crane asked about Aunt Penelope, and how she would feel about it, but Mrs. Crane said she had never believed a word of the tale. She was my mother's much older half-sister—my grandfather first married a Northern woman, and after she died my mother's mother.

"It won't bother Penelope," said Mrs. Crane. And she laughed. And then, Mary Elinor said, she added: "I wonder how Natalie will get on there, Ted? I imagine that there is a good deal of worldliness and thought of form. I do hope it will be all right, for if she is like her mother she is a dear!"

Chapter V—New York and My New Home

I had a very happy time with the Cranes, and, although Mary Elinor's story upset me a little (in spite of my then not believing it), I was cheered by the time I left, and entirely myself.

Mrs. Crane told me to go play ball with William, after breakfast. She said I was foolish to drop it entirely and that she knew Mrs. Bradly would want me to play if she realized what good exercise it was. And Doctor Crane said he would write her. So I played, and after William let go of two hot ones and said "Ouch!" before he could suppress it, I felt better.

Doctor Crane rooted—for me, and it was all very happy. And I *did* so want to stay! He and Mary Elinor sat on grapefruit crates and yelled; Mrs. Crane came to the door now and again; Lucky, the awfully black little nigger, climbed up on the laundry roof, and every once in a while old Aunt Eliza would look out the window and laugh so that she shook all over.

"Doan that beat *all*?" she'd say. "An' Mistah William droppin' them balls!" And then she'd laugh again, and William did too, although he couldn't have enjoyed having me come out on top. But they are all that way. They really don't mind discomfort, if other people are happy, they are so kind!

We scored by making each other drop and miss balls, but of course the aim had to be square. The method was the thing. And just as Doctor Crane was yelling, "*Good* grounder, Nat! Now sock him with a warm baby!" Mrs. Crane opened the door and said: "Ted, you've got to start. . . . It's almost half-past. . . ." And I had to put on my hat. I hated to. I just wish I could have stayed there and had my education applied!

They all went to the station with me except Mrs. Crane, and Mary Elinor bought me a little box of mints, and William gave me a glass baseball bat filled with tiny candies, for a joke. Then Doctor Crane bought me several magazines, some of which were *full* of baseball stories, talked to the porter about me (Doctor Crane somehow got through the gates), and I was off.

And all the way to New York I was cheered by the way the Cranes had said good-bye to me. Mrs. Crane was lovely and, with Mary Elinor, made me promise to come again; and Doctor Crane wrote down just what I was to do if I wasn't met, beside being awfully good to me, and William said I *could* play ball.

I thought about them a lot; about my new bracelet, and about New York.

I had dinner on the train, which in the North they call lunch, and got on very well. It wasn't difficult, because you wrote down what you wanted, and I knew exactly what that was. I ordered lobster, which I had never tasted, ice-cream, cake, a cream puff, and chocolate with whipped cream on top of it. A gentleman who sat opposite me gasped and said: "Oh, *my*!" Then he asked me if I was tired of life. He seemed impressed with my order, but I don't know why. He got zwiebach (he told me what it was) and soft-boiled eggs and milk. And after he finished lunch he offered me some pepsin tablets. He took several, but I refused. And he said perhaps I was wise, for, he said, he didn't know what one little tablet could do against that line-up. Then he asked me if there were any ostriches among my ancestors. He was selling automobile tyres, and called the waiter George, and seemed to know him very well. And he told me all about his indigestion, as his eyes roved over my order. "As for eating a mess like *that*——" he said, and then ended with, "*Oh*, my——" but I cannot quote him entirely, for it was terrible. It is that word which goes in church, but which becomes swearing when a man says it in talking to the umpire. I suppose this man was in pain. . . . After that we talked of baseball, and he knew Hans Wagner and had known him since the beginning of his career, when he played in the Oil League in Western Pennsylvania.

Of course I was interested. I lingered over my cream puff, ice-cream, and cake, and he lingered over his milk. He said he'd look me up in New York, and I was awfully grateful, and I said I was sure my aunt would love to have him come to supper. To which he replied, "Me for it, kid," which sounded a little queer to me, even then. I did not know, at that time, that you are not supposed to talk to people to whom you have not been presented, or who have not been presented to you. I learned that later. But that belongs in another part of this story.

We reached New York when it was just growing dark, and never in all my life will I forget the look of it, the dazzling lit-Christmas-trees look of the tall, bright buildings, and the hurrying, bright-faced crowds. Everyone seemed in a hurry, and some people actually ran, and especially as they crossed Fifth Avenue, where we drove for some distance.

My uncle's chauffeur met me, and he did not seem very sociable (I had not learned that you mustn't talk to them, at that time), and after I asked him how he was and whether my aunt and uncle were well and whether they had had summer colds or hay fever, which is the way we start acquaintance in Queensburg, I stopped talking and looked. And I never saw so much to see before. It is wonderful. It took all my dreams of fairyland and made them look like a miffed ball. I looked up, and began to see why they picture the Reuben

type with their mouths ajar. It is natural to let your chin droop from surprise.

"Are we almost there?" I asked, after we'd gone about a million blocks.

Jackson replied, "Not yet, miss," and stared straight ahead.

And I said: "Well, *isn't* this a long way!"

And he said: "Yes, miss."

After that I did some more looking. . . . The dusk had fallen, and it made a lovely haze around the tops of the buildings, and looking down the side streets one could see only millions of motor head-lights, and nothing but those. And the women were so beautifully dressed! Some of them, in the passing motors, leaned way back and looked tired, but beautifully so. . . . Not as the women do around Queensburg. When they are tired they wear calico wrappers, and their backs get stooped, and usually there is a baby clinging to their skirts. . . . But here it is different. I can't say why. The women's eyes are narrowed as if they *wanted* to look tired. And they are so pretty. "Jackson," I said, "I never saw such beautiful complexions"—no, I said, "Mr. Jackson," then. And he said: "Yes, miss."

Well, after a great way of this we reached a quieter section, and here, in front of a very tall, brownstone building, Jackson alighted, and I followed. A girl, whom I knew to be Evelyn, came out of a doorway, and said, "Why, what made you ride up with Jackson?" and then she turned her cheek for my kiss. And I can't yet understand what there was about that which made me feel so hollow and cold inside.

Then she said: "Come in, and we'll go up. I don't think mother's in, but she will be soon. . . . I hope your trip was pleasant?"

I replied that it was. But I don't think she heard what I said, for we had stepped in an elevator and she was busy smiling at a man who leaned on a heavy cane.

"Charming day, Mr. Kempwood," she said. "You've been motoring?"

He said he had.

"I have too, a bit," said Evelyn, "but I was kept in most of this afternoon by a wild bout of auction. And—I took the prize!" She showed it to him. It was a beautiful thing, a little enamelled box on a gold chain, and in it was a powder-puff, pink powder, and a place for coins. Even I was impressed with it, and at that time I knew little beside what the proper balance of a bat should be. I began to feel worse and to swallow hard. The man looked at me in a quizzical way, his eyes narrowed, and little wrinkles showing at the corners of them. Then he said good-night and got off.

"Mr. Samuel Kempwood," said Evelyn, as we went on (she said this in a

low tone so that the elevator man shouldn't hear), "has the apartment on the third floor. *Wonderful* collection of ivories, and is the most *thrillingly* romantic person. . . . Ah, here we are!" And then we stepped out.

Well, I don't know what I had expected, but I know I had not expected a flat, I mean apartment, like this. It is wonderful. In the first place, it takes up the whole floor of that great big building, and doesn't seem at all crowded. I had expected folding beds and having to put your hat on the piano and eat off a card-table, but it isn't that way.

When we got off we stepped into a little outer hall, and Evelyn rang. Then a maid opened the door, and we went in without speaking to her. After she took Evelyn's furs, Evelyn said: "Is my mother in, Jane?"

And the maid answered with: "Not yet, Miss Evelyn."

After that Evelyn said, "You had your dinner on the train?" and I said I had. She didn't say anything about supper, and of course I didn't understand at that time. But I began to feel frightfully hollow under my belt. I stood this a little while, and at last I said: "Could I have a cup of tea? I don't like to make any trouble—but——"

"Tea?" she echoed, and raised her eyebrows as if she were ever so surprised, and then added: "Of course."

And she rang a bell. "I didn't get any supper," I explained, "because I thought you'd be waiting it here for me."

"I thought you meant you'd had your evening meal," she said quickly. "It is called dinner here. You will avoid confusion if you remember that. Jane, please see that some dinner is put on for Miss Natalie. She has not dined." Jane bowed and left, and I began to feel even more hollow, and this time it was my heart that felt that way too. Evelyn moved around humming. She had been reading a great deal of mail and casually commenting on it as she read, like this: "Tuesday. . . . Um, I don't—know. . . . And does Mrs. Stanwood think I would accept *her* invitation? . . ." And then she would hum something else. She shakes her voice a great deal when she sings. She forgot me even more than she had, and I did feel so alone.

When Jane at last came back, Evelyn looked up and spoke. "Really," she said, "you must excuse me. . . . I didn't mean to neglect you, but I had to get through my mail; you know how it is, of course. . . . Do you want to brush up before you eat? Frightful of me to forget to ask you."

I said all I wanted was to eat, and then Jane said, "This way, please," and I followed, sort of tiptoeing because everything seemed so very grand, and it all made me seem even shabbier than I was.

The dining-room is all panelled in some sort of dark wood, and has

beautifully upholstered dark furniture in it. Silver gleamed from a long sideboard, which hasn't one mirror in it (they all have mirrors on them in Queensburg), and a Jap served things. I liked him; he smiled at me.

There were roses and lilies of the valley in a great silver bowl which stood in the centre of the table, and I liked those better than anything. And when I looked at them my eyes filled. And I guess the Jap man saw it, for he took out a rose and several sprays of lilies of the valley and laid them by my place and said, "Like flowers. . . . Always pretty," and I said: "*Can* I really have them?" And he smiled at me again.

And then he got food, and gave me the right fork, after I had used up the wrong one on the wrong thing to eat it with, which is mixed, but as I said, gym. work is where I do well.

After I had got through, and the Jap had given me a bowl of water with a flower floating in it (it confused me then) and was asking me whether I wanted coffee here or in the drawing-room, Amy, my cousin who is nearest my age, came in.

"My *dear*," she said, "I simply hated not being here to receive you, but it was my dancing-class afternoon, and afterward I went to dinner with a friend. I couldn't in decency refuse her. I hope your trip was pleasant? . . . Do let us go in where we can talk comfortably. . . . (Ito, coffee in the drawing-room, please.) Mother isn't in, is she? . . . Poor mother, so rushed! . . . But everyone is. We love having you, Natalie!" And then she slid her arm through mine and squeezed my hand. And I loved her from that minute on. For—although we are very different, and she sometimes seems affected to me, she is kind. And you can overlook anything if people are that.

Evelyn is not. When you humiliate her, she hurts you to pay it back. I know that. . . . After the first half-hour of Evelyn, I learned my first big lesson from New York. And that wasn't calling dinner supper; it was that kindness and making other people feel happy is the most important thing in life, and the thing that counts most truly and deeply. I try hard not to err in this now, for I know how it feels to have people do it.

When we reached the drawing-room, we found Evelyn had left. She is twenty-one and "out," and she goes to parties a great deal. Amy sat talking about her and her beaux (she didn't call them that), and her engagements, and I sat trying to look as if I cared a great deal about what Amy said, but thinking of Uncle Frank, Bradly-dear, and of Willy Jepson. That night I was quite sure that Willy Jepson would have a wife before he was eighteen! But he didn't. However, that comes later.

At about ten Amy asked whether I'd like to go to bed, and I admitted that I

was tired, and so she showed me to the most beautiful little room near hers, with a bathroom which she and Evelyn and I were to use.

“Absurd little room we had to give you, dear,” she said, “but I suppose you can make out. If you need anything, the button is by the door, and the electrics turn on here. Anything I can get you?”

I thanked her and said no, and then she wished me happy dreams and left.

Alone—I looked around. It was the most beautiful bedroom I had ever seen, but that did not help me. There was a dressing-table with three mirrors to it, and long mirrors in all the doors. There was a table by the bed, with a telephone on it, under a little lady’s fluffy skirts. And there was a light on this table too, with a pink shade from which roses artistically drooped. There were books by this, and a flashlight. . . . I never dreamed then that I would use that flashlight as I did later. . . . The walls were of brocade, in a rose shade, and the furniture was gray, with baskets of roses painted on it. And there was a sort of a lounge on which you could sit up, but lie down, if you understand, and deep, cretonne-covered chairs. When you opened the cupboard door the cupboard lit up, and there were hangers inside, and it was scented. I went around touching things very timidly and looking. And, as I said before, it was the most beautiful bedroom I ever saw, and at that time frankly awed me; but—it showed how little *things* count. For I wanted my own, bare-floored little bedroom with no decoration except two fish-nets and a mounted eagle, and which held nothing but a straight-backed chair, a bed, and a bureau with a wavery mirror. . . . I wanted it terribly. . . . I wanted to hear Uncle Frank “Ho hum” and to have Mrs. Bradly scold me, when all the time she was loving me—inside. I wanted to hear Willy Jepson whistle and yell: “Come on, Nat! Let’s go fishing!” I wanted *home*!

But I swallowed hard and began to unpack. When I found the china cat I held him awfully close between my hands, and then—when I found the bug that stays in the ground three years, I stood up.

“I’ve got to,” I said unsteadily, “for Uncle Frank and my mother. I’ve got to—and—*I will*!”

And then I set those things on the bureau and began to undress. I looked at them a lot as I did. And after I was ready for bed I said my prayers awfully hard, the way you do when things go wrong and it is nice to remember that there is someone who will do His best to right fouls, if you need it. And then I turned off the lights and got in bed. I couldn’t sleep. So after quite a while I got up and fumbled around to find the Jumel bracelet, Bradly-dear’s cat, and the bug. And I put them all on the table by my bed, and then, after I’d touched them now and again, I slipped into dreams.

And I dreamed that Uncle Frank said: “Ho hum, ho hum! She’s a pretty nice little bug!”

Chapter VI—The Second Bracelet

The whole mystery really began the next afternoon. But I must begin by telling of what happened in the morning. I got up and met my aunt. She sent for me, and I went to her room, where she, dressed in a beautiful négligé, was eating her breakfast.

She looked a little tired and white, but she didn't let herself seem so when she talked.

"My dear child," she said, "we are so happy to have you here. Sit down—not there, dear; that's a frock I've had sent up on approval, and one doesn't like to crush them more than so much. . . . I was so sorry I couldn't meet you last night, but I was persuaded to stay down-town and go to see something light with a group of friends. . . . So seldom have an evening free. . . . Not *that* blouse, Jane! . . . Now let me see you, Natalie. Stand up."

I did so, and she said, "Hum——" in a lingering, speculative way. I didn't feel very comfortable.

"Well, we must go shopping," she said with a sigh. "Jane, go ask Miss Evelyn to be kind enough to come here a moment——"

Jane vanished, and my aunt went on looking me over.

"Some gray mixture for your day frocks, I think," she said at length. "With your gray eyes—yes, gray. And we'll look at something soft in rose and in pink for evening. . . . Lovely hair you have, dear. Like your mother's. But it looks more like New Orleans than Virginia. I wonder whether there *was* Creole blood in your mother's mother's family?"

I said I didn't know, and then Evelyn came in. She spoke to me pleasantly, although carelessly, and then to her mother. The way she spoke to her was not pleasant. "What is it?" she almost whined. "I was right in the middle of notes, mother!"

"I wanted you to telephone Mrs. Lethridge-Guth; tell her I'm indisposed—can't play this morning. . . . This child will *have* to have some clothes. . . ."

Evelyn looked at me.

"She most certainly *will*!" she admitted. "I should think some of that braid could come off before you go out——"

Aunt Penelope nodded, got a scissors, and I slipped from my frock. Then I

sat down and began to rip off the braid which I had so painfully attached.

"My dear *child*," Evelyn broke out, after a look at my arm, "where did you get that? Have you been in my things?"

I hated that last, and I suppose I showed it, for I know my head went up, and I answered coldly.

"That," I said, "is the Jumel bracelet, and it is mine. It belonged to my mother."

"Almost forgotten it," said Aunt Penelope; "let's see the thing. . . ." I slipped it off and handed it to her.

"Evelyn's father had one like this made for her," said Aunt Penelope. "He had Tiffany send a man up to the Jumel Mansion and make drawings of the mate of this, which is in a case by the painting. I think Eve is a little annoyed at your having the real one while hers is a copy." And Aunt Penelope looked shrewdly at Evelyn and laughed a little.

"How *silly* of you, mother!" said Evelyn hotly. "I'm nothing of the sort!" And then she spoke of the dent in mine, and handed it back to me. You could see she thought mine was very unimportant. After that, she asked some fretful questions about what she should say at the telephone and left.

"A little out of sorts," said my aunt, as Jane came back with her street things; "late hours, you know. . . . We'll have to get you something that you can put on immediately, for there is a friend of your mother's coming in to tea, whom you must see—dear old soul. Not *that* one, Jane. . . . Mercy, my girl, can I never teach you—no, the *gray*——"

After my aunt had dressed for forty-five minutes, she was at last ready to start, and we did. But we didn't go down to the shopping district by motor, for aunt said that took too long, so we walked a little way and then went in the subway, which was hot, and that made everyone look sleepy and yawn. Aunt Penelope bought me a great many things, and enough underclothes to change every day! They were very pretty. And I must say I did enjoy trying on the soft things I was to wear in the house at night. There was a white crêpe de chine, with a broad yellow sash and hand-embroidered scallops done in yellow around the collar. The woman who sold us things, who had a beautiful voice, and who was very polite *and* complimentary, said: "Beautiful with her hair and skin. The two are a rare combination."

And my aunt said: "Yes, let me see that gray, with the rose girdle——"

And she bought that too. And then she bought a rose-coloured dress which was untrimmed except for broad collars and cuffs of scrim, and a plain heavy white dress, untrimmed except for buttons and stitching. And she bought stockings to match all these. She selected shoes for me, skirts for me, morning

frocks, as she called them, a motor-coat, a suit, and several hats, all of which were very plain, and a squashy black tam made of lovely soft velvet. I could only gasp. Oh, yes—I almost forgot. She bought brushes and combs for me too, and a little tiny brush to brush my eyebrows with! I almost fainted. And all that took us quite a while, of course. We had lunch in the store, but I didn't enjoy it much, because my aunt selected it, and naturally it was nourishing, which always detracts from the interest of food.

And then we went home.

As we walked down a side street I saw the loveliest white house on a hill and realized it stood only a few blocks from aunt's. I asked what it was, and found it was the Jumel Mansion.

Some of the things had reached home before we had—those that we bought first—and it was while I was standing and gazing rapturously at that pink dress that I saw the note.

It was scrawled on my telephone pad, and it said: "Do not wear the Jumel bracelet to-day. It is my wish that you do not.—E.J." I read it two or three times and then I went to the drawing-room. Jane was dusting, and I asked her what I wanted to know.

"Jane," I said, "what was Madam Jumel's first name?"

"I can't say, miss," she replied, "but if she is important, you'll find her in the New York Guide, perhaps."

I thanked her and went to look it up. And I found that Madam Jumel's name was Eliza. . . . Well, I'd heard of spirits writing, but I hadn't believed it before; and I really didn't believe it then; I thought it was a joke. But I decided I would go over to the Jumel Mansion for a few moments if my aunt would let me. I felt as if I must. So I asked her, and she said I might—for "just a little while." . . . I put on my new suit and the tam (which I had worn home), defiantly clasped that bracelet around my arm, and started.

And when I got there I found that it was open and that anyone might go in, so I did, and I did enjoy it! . . . In the first place, it is a lovely old house, and it has in it everything in the way of interesting relics that you can imagine. It was Washington's headquarters for more than a month during the Revolution, and the room where he slept especially interested me. It proved to me that good deeds don't die. For Washington, who did lots of them, is remembered because he always did his best and was upright and fine and true. And now—every little thing that he even touched is kept and treasured. I stood looking at the Washington relics for a long time, and then one of the curators asked me whether I would like to see the door through which the Indian braves came to pledge allegiance to Washington, and I said I would. So he showed it to me.

“Through this,” he said, “they trooped in; soft-footed, I suppose they were, since they all wore moccasins; and they carried laurel branches as an outward sign of the tune of their spirits.”

And then he told me that the British occupied the house later—they captured it November 16, 1776, to be exact—but he said there was no soft-footed approach with them. He said they were a noisy crowd who liked their ale.

I said: “Perhaps they were homesick and had to do something to cheer themselves up.” I could understand *that*.

“Why,” he said, “perhaps they were!” and he smiled at me. Then he asked me if I was from the South. He said he rather noticed it in my voice, and he smiled again. I told him yes, and then I thought perhaps he would be interested in my bracelet, and so I showed it to him, and my! the confusion that ensued! . . . He called everyone else who took care of the house, and they all came, and I had to tell my story at least six separate times, and quite an interested crowd of visitors listened and looked at it too. . . . I simply told them how it came to me, and not about the tragic happenings that it made, for at that time I had made up my mind I would not believe in that tale!

Well, we stood around talking and then we went over to the painting of Madam Jumel, and near that I saw the bracelet she had kept. It was in a little case.

“A great many people admire that,” said one of the women who stayed there, “especially the women. There was a little Spanish woman in here the other day who was simply mad about it. All she could say was, ‘Es incomparable lindo y yo lo deseo!’ ” which the man said meant: “Incomparably beautiful! How greatly do I desire it! . . .” She said that men liked the Washington things best, but that women almost always liked the bracelet.

Then, because it was growing late, I knew I must go, although I hated to. The people who took care of the house all asked me to come soon again, and I said I would, for I liked them and the house. And, after good-byes and a promise to return and show them the bracelet again, I hurried off.

And outside it began. . . . I don’t know how you know that you are being followed, but I did then. And suddenly—I heard soft, scuddy footsteps drawing closer to me at every second. . . . I ran, and then—I stopped, for I meant to be brave and face it, and I give you my word, although not a second before I had heard those hurrying feet, when I turned there was no one in sight except an old man, who was sitting on the kerb and holding out a tin cup. He wore dark glasses, so I knew he was blind. . . . I went back to him.

“Did you,” I asked, and foolishly, I realized afterward, “see anyone pass?”

“I am blind,” he replied.

And then I said that I knew that was silly to say and that I was sorry. And I gave him fifteen cents, which was all I had with me. . . . I went on, and I began to hear those footsteps again, coming closer and closer—and then ahead of me I saw the man that Evelyn said was “romantically thrilling,” and I ran for him.

“Someone,” I gasped, “is following me.”

He stopped and looked down, and I saw that he didn’t recognize me, and then he looked back, as I had, and saw nothing.

“There’s no one in sight,” he said soothingly, “and I’m sure there’s nothing to be frightened about.”

“Perhaps not,” I answered, “but if you are going home, I’ll go with you.” And then I told him that I was Evelyn’s cousin, and when he said he hadn’t recognized me I told him my aunt had bought me a lot of new clothes. And I told him quite a little about them, because he was sympathetic and easy to talk to. He is a little lame and has to use a cane all the time, and somehow his being not just like other people makes you want to be kind to him; and that—or something else—has made him very kind.

As we turned in the apartment-house I saw the blind man going along the other side of the street, his cane doing the feeling for him, and his movements awkward and stiff. There are a great many things that are sad in New York, which seems strange, for so many people are so wealthy. Now, in Queensburg no one has much money, but no one could go in want, for the people who have just a little more than they have wouldn’t let them.

I told Mr. Kempwood a little about Queensburg too, and he was really interested. And that helped me, for not even Amy will listen to that. He rode up to our floor with me, and stepped off to wait until I got in. Then he shook hands and said good-bye. As he rang for the elevator he said: “If that hat is one of the new ones, you did well. It’s a corker!”

I thanked him and admitted it had some sense, for you could keep it on if you wanted to make a home run. He said I seemed to be doing that when we met, and then the elevator came and he went down. And I went in, remembering his smile so hard that I almost forgot about being followed.

My mother’s friend was there, and I liked her, and I enjoyed the tea, although Aunt Penelope suppressed my natural tendency to engulf cakes and indicated thin bread and butter sandwiches. Then Amy came in, and I went with her to dress. Aunt told me to bathe and put on one of my soft frocks, and to do that each evening at the same hour; but not to wear one frock continually, simply because I liked it. I said I wouldn’t, and decided to wear the pink one

every *other* evening.

I slipped off the bracelet and laid it on my bureau. When I was bathing I heard a little noise, but I didn’t pay much attention to it. I thought that Amy had come in my room to get a pin, or to borrow some hairpins. She uses invisible ones to make her hair look curlier around her face. But when I got out and was doing my hair I saw another note. It lay where my bracelet had been. On it was written:

“I told you not to wear this. My warnings are not given without reason. When I deem it wise this will be returned.—E. J.”

Chapter VII—Real Excitement

If the bracelet had not been gone I would have thought I imagined everything of the afternoon before, but when morning light and a real search revealed no trace of it, I believed I had been followed and had heard those footsteps drawing closer and closer to me as I ran. And it did not make me comfortable. I wondered what to do all morning, and after reflection decided not to speak of it to my cousins, aunt, or uncle (my uncle I had met the night before; he had just come in from a business trip), for somehow I knew they would not believe it, and I didn't want them to laugh.

My Uncle Archie has a great big stomach and says "Huh?" if anyone speaks to him, which they don't often. He eats a great deal, and tells Ito to "hurry up." He said something about bills to Aunt Penelope. They don't seem to be very congenial. But he can talk, for I heard him at the telephone. "Sold it *to-day*!" he simply yelled; then, "Fools! I'll teach 'em! I'll—the——" and he simply spluttered. It was becoming interesting when Aunt Penelope said, "Ito, close the door," and, of course, when Ito did, the rest was lost.

I was sorry, but Amy only looked bored. Evelyn, after having tea with us, had gone out to a dinner dance. Aunt Penelope at tea told the other women what a great treat it was to have Evelyn at home. She did it a great many times, and it almost seemed as if she wanted them to know that Evelyn went out a great deal, although why she didn't say it outright, if she did want them to know, I don't see. But that's the way a great many people in New York act. They sort of sidle around back of the truth and shout around it—about the weather. Which I think is silly. Well, to get on. After dinner Amy and I sat. I never have done so much sitting as I have done since coming to New York. The chairs and davenports are so luxurious they just must be sat on or curled up in. Amy and I each have our pet arm-chair and way of sitting in it. But this is beside the subject.

I found that Amy had never done any hazing. And she was much interested in my accounts of it. I told her how we had had a secret society called "The Ancient and Effervescent Order of Yellow Pups," and how we made the new members get down on all fours and chew at a ham-bone, and she honestly giggled. And then I told her how Willy Jepson had filled his aunt's bedroom slippers full of tar, and she was interested in that and a description of how his aunt acted when she slipped her feet in the slippers. You see, she was still half

asleep and sort of blinky, the way you are in the morning.

“Who would we haze?” she asked. I suggested Evelyn. And not alone because I wanted to, but because I thought she honestly needed it. I decided it would do wonders for her character.

“How would we do it?” Amy next asked, and I suggested the “cold bottle trick,” which is simple, but satisfactory.

You take a bottle and fill it with cold water, the colder the better. And if you can get ice in it, that adds a great deal. Then you tie a ribbon around the cork, awfully tight, and pin the other end of the ribbon to the bottom of the mattress, and the bottle, then in place and at the foot of some dear friend’s bed, awaits. When their feet hit it, they naturally reach down and pull, and when they do it uncorks and the puller wades. And I can tell you, it is one thing to wade in the babbling brook, and another to wade in an Ostermoor! Willy Jepson put green paint in the bottle he put in his brother’s bed, and his brother looked like the first note of spring for weeks, but we decided that wouldn’t do for Evelyn, because the sort of stockings she wears show the colour of her skin.

Amy said people would comment on it if her ankles were green, and I believed it. “We could blame it on Jane,” said Amy. I didn’t think that was fair, until she explained. It seems Jane is exceptional because she is willing to be a parlourmaid and help Aunt Penelope dress too, which combination is not often found. “Mother wouldn’t think of dismissing her,” said Amy, “so that would be all right.”

I agreed. Then Amy told me that they were bitterly poor and lived like paupers, and my chin did drop! And she went on to say that her mother encouraged her father to make money *all* the time, but that he didn’t make nearly all that they really needed, now that Evelyn was out and had to have about sixty costumes to the minute.

I just listened. It was the only thing to do. But I thought too! And I decided that it is *bad* to want *things* so much. And that it is especially easy for a girl to do, and so it is well to guard against it. Here was my cousin Evelyn with this lovely home, and simply beautiful clothes—wanting more and fretting because she can’t have them. And my aunt hurrying my uncle so that he hasn’t time or energy left to do anything but eat and say “Huh?” when he’s at home, and Amy—being sorry for herself because she hasn’t all the pretty things that her wealthiest friend has. And I saw that wanting was just a habit, and a bad one.

I said: “I think it would be a fine thing for you to take account of stock, Amy, and count all the lovely things you *have*. Maybe you’d feel better.” But she said: “I haven’t time; I’m too busy thinking of the things I *haven’t*——”

And the whole trouble lay right there.

Well, as I said, we talked a lot, played the victrola a little, and then we got a long-necked mint-sauce bottle from the cook and fixed Evelyn's bed. And then we turned in, or, as Miss Hooker would say, "retired."

And I thought, as I always do, about Uncle Frank and Bradly-dear, and the Cranes, Willy Jepson, and baseball. But I went to sleep feeling less badly than I had the night before, for I felt confident that the bracelet would come back to me, and somehow Mr. Kempwood had made me less afraid, and home seemed nearer.

Evelyn found that bottle. I never heard such a noise. She said someone was trying to murder her! And everyone got up except Amy and me. We giggled until Aunt Penelope came in and said, "Does either of *you* know anything about this?" (Amy had come over in my bed), and then Amy said, "Maybe Jane did it," but her mother didn't seem convinced. She only said, "I will attend to *you* two in the morning!" and she said it sternly. When she went out we giggled some more. It was impossible to help, for Evelyn's room is near ours, and we could hear her gasp and threaten to sit up all night, and then sort of hiccup and say she thought she was getting hysterics and that she hoped her mother would beat *me*. . . . And we could hear Aunt Penelope and Jane flop around and bells ring and hot drinks ordered, and all because Evelyn's feet were a little wet, which was irrational, since she puts them in the tub at least once every day.

But as Uncle Archie said to me much later, "There is no reasoning with a woman," and there is a lot in that statement. We giggled until Aunt Penelope returned, when we pretended to be asleep. I hoped the way we looked in sleep would soften her, but it didn't.

I was in disgrace until about seven the next evening, but that comes later.

The next morning I will pass over hurriedly, as it was not pleasant. Aunt talked to us frankly, and Amy put the blame on me, where it belonged. But I would have liked her better if she'd let me step forward and *take* it, as I intended to. "You know it *was* your fault," she said, after we went out of her mother's room.

I said I knew it was.

"Well," she said, "you needn't be annoyed because I *said* so."

I wasn't annoyed. I was sorry that she was so poor a sport, but I wasn't angry. I pitied her. I think you always feel sorry for a person when they don't play the best game they can.

Because Amy had failed to stick to fair rules, I didn't care so much for her that day, and I suppose because she dimly felt that she'd failed, she avoided

me; so, after lunch, I asked aunt if I might go walking. She said yes, if I was careful not to get lost, adding that she would rather not have me leave the immediate neighbourhood. I said I wouldn't, and then I started out. I put on the tam again because it sticks and doesn't have to have pins. And then Mr. Kempwood said it was becoming. I will acknowledge that that influenced me a little.

After I'd walked around several blocks and seen nothing but the same sort of houses and pavements and babies, all with nurses, I turned toward the Jumel Mansion. And again the people who take care of it were kind to me, and I enjoyed my visit.

And I learned some more about the place. It seemed the French merchant, Stephen Jumel, did not build it, but Roger Morris, then loyal servant of the King, built it for his wife, seven years after they were married. Before she became Mrs. Morris she was Mary Philipse, nicknamed "The Charming Polly." He built it well and strongly, which was fortunate, since it was to have so many inmates and so much wear. When you think of it, a house that was put up in 1765 and 1766 would have to be splendidly made to stand the years.

"The Charming Polly" must have been indeed charming, for her descendants say that Washington, who was, just before her marriage, a man of twenty-five, offered her his hand and name, but from the look of things it would not seem so. For a friend of Washington's, Joseph Chew, wrote him that Captain Roger Morris, who was a "lady's man, always something to say," was breakfasting often with Mistress Philipse, and that the "town talk't of it as a sure & settled affair," and he added an urgent appeal for Washington to return, as he was sure Charming Mistress Polly must prefer Washington to all others. . . . But perhaps Washington had found another "Charming" somebody, for the letter of July brought no visit from Washington until late one winter's eve, when, the descendants of Mary Philipse say, he "arrived post haste, and demanded an interview immediate, notwithstanding that the hour was late. . . ."

However, whether or not it was more than a flirtation or a light admiration, it does seem strange, does it not, that Washington should direct his army from the house that his rival built for the much-admired and talked-of Mistress Polly Philipse?

Mary Philipse and Captain Morris were married in 1758. They had four children, two boys and two girls, if I recall correctly what I was told; and when General Washington took command at Cambridge, they had been married for seventeen years.

Now, to me there is something unsatisfactory about a man who doesn't take sides, and Captain Morris didn't. In fact, the builder of that lovely house

evaded siding with either the British or the United States, at the time of the Revolution, and one day while the mails were being taken aboard *The Harriet Packet* he quietly slipped aboard with John Watts, who, with Roger Morris, was a member of His Majesty's Council for this province. Together they sailed for England, and Captain Morris remained abroad for almost two years. And unhappy years they were too, for he was homesick for the big white house, his lovely wife and children. (And I can understand the first, although no one who hadn't lived in it would think that Uncle Frank's house was lovely.)

Rumour states that Captain Roger Morris took rooms in "London Town," so to be nearer the mails of the ships, that his wife's letters would come to him without delay. . . . And can you see him waiting for those, wanting them, and looking for the crosses that his girls and boys wrote at the bottom of the letter? . . . I am sure they were there. . . . Perhaps his littlest girl wrote, "For my dearest father, whom I do so greatly love. . . . Dear kisses," and, of course, one of every doubled *s* was written like an *f*, for that is the way they did it in that time.

Can you see it? The little girl in quaint, long frock, painfully writing out a message, while her mother looked on and wondered whether the "dearest father" would ever reach home? . . . The letters he wrote her were lovely, but I didn't see those that day. Mr. Kempwood showed me those after he began to teach me to SEE history. For history, he says, is not a dead thing although it is about dead people. . . . All you have to do is to remember that they LIVED, just as we do, and to shut your eyes, not to think dates *most* important, and to remember those people as *living*. And he taught me to do that. But that comes later.

Well, after I'd learned quite a little bit about the Morrises and had felt ever so glad that he did get back, the man who had so kindly told me these things had to leave me, and I was alone. I wandered over to stand before Madam Jumel's portrait. . . . And here, I leaned forward and whispered to her, and I said: "Won't you *please* return it? . . . My mother wore it. Won't you, *please*?"

And then I went out and turned toward home. I saw the blind man again, but no one followed me. I went up in the elevator with Mr. Kempwood, and I was so glad.

"Any more home runs?" he asked. I shook my head.

"And how does New York please you?" he asked further.

And to that I replied that it was all right, but made an involved living, since my aunt insisted on my changing my clothes all the way through every day, and eating in a different dress at night. I said it was simpler at home, where you dressed for dinner when you got up. I told him it left you more time for

fishing and baseball and the more serious things of life. He laughed, and then looked suspicious.

"Young woman," he said, "that country bloom doesn't hide a brain-picker, does it?"

And I didn't understand him then, but he explained. It seemed that Robert Louis Stevenson had lived on an island in the Pacific, and when someone had asked whether they dressed for dinner, he had said just as I did: "No, we dress when we get up."

I said I hadn't quoted, and that I hadn't read Stevenson, liking Alger best of anyone, but Mr. Kempwood said that "Treasure Island" couldn't be beaten and that he'd loan it to me, and then I found out what he meant by brain-picker. He meant someone who pikes. Evelyn reads book covers and reviews and then talks of the books as if she'd read them. I told Mr. Kempwood so. He said she wouldn't thank me for doing so, and then—it was our floor, and again he stepped out, waited until Jane opened the door, and then said good-night. And I remembered his smile, as I had the night before.

On a long hall table I found a letter from Bradly-dear, and I was *so* glad to see it! And it made me laugh, but felt ever so tight in my throat too. Here is what she wrote, or some of it:

> "DEAR NATALIE,
>
> "We miss you fierce. Willy Jepson run a nail in his foot and fell offa the back ruf. Don't you climb no fences at your aunt's or ride a cow if they keep one. Your uncle is deep in bugs and has a mess of them in my tubs, with netting over the top. And the Lord knows when I will get the wash to soak. We miss you."

There was a lot more. Bradly-dear had been fine about writing the news. I went to my room with it, sat down, and then got up and went over to Amy's, for my radiator had cooled off and I didn't know how to turn it on. It was not easy for me to ask servants to do things then; I had not learned how. . . . Well, I read that letter a great many times, and there was no one to interrupt me, and I was glad. Everyone but Evelyn was out, and she was lying down.

Somewhere I heard a clock strike seven and realized they would soon be in and that I must begin to change my clothes for dinner. I heard a little noise in my room, a little, scratching noise, and I got up and looked in, but no one was there. Then I heard a noise in Amy's room, but, going back there, I found that empty. I turned on all the lights and read Bradly-dear's letter again. . . . I felt curiously nervous and oppressed. Quite as if I were breathing something poisonous. . . . And my heart began to pump. I thought I was simply letting

myself be silly from nervousness. . . . “You silly thing!” I said scornfully. And I read the end of Mrs. Bradly’s letter. It said: “Now, dearie, I must stop. I love you and I pray God for your safety and happiness.” And then: “Yours sincerely, Mrs. G. N. Bradly.” . . . It helped me a lot, that about loving and praying. I looked at it, and then I *did* hear something; there was a step behind me and a voice, a high-pitched voice, said very slowly: “Do not turn. You will be sorry if you turn. Do *not turn*. . . .” I didn’t. I couldn’t. I was absolutely frozen. I felt something drop over my face, and then things began to swim and grow black. . . . I think I struggled a little and tried to scream, but I am not sure of anything but horror—and the horror I felt at that moment will live in my soul until I am an old, old woman, and am allowed to forget all the things that hurt me and to have another start.

CHAPTER VIII—AGAIN AWAKE

WHEN I was again aware of living I heard things hazily, quite as if there were a thick wall between me and the voices of the people who stood so anxiously bending over me.

"I tell you, Archie, the child was *strangled*," I heard Aunt Penelope say. "And Heaven only knows what may happen next, with all the Bolsheviki around—can't you do something (Amy, put down that revolver, you are driving me crazy!)—and Evelyn, right in the next room, hearing nothing. . . . And said she wasn't asleep. . . . Amy, if you don't sit down I will scream! And Ito, right in the pantry, by the fire-escape, on which he must have climbed (if it was a he), and how he got up I don't know. . . . And you say there's no danger, doctor? . . . The only child of my *dear* dead sister, and what will happen next? . . . The only thing, of course, is to remain *calm* (Amy, can't you stop wiggling? There *are* limits.), and I suppose to maintain calm is the only sensible proceeding—— *What was that?*" She screamed the last, and I sat up.

The doctor was almost rude about telling her to be quiet. And then he ordered them all out and sat down on the edge of my bed.

"Anyone you especially want to see?" he asked.

I said I didn't think so.

"Sure?" he asked.

"You'd better not sit with your back to the window," I advised. Then he took hold of my hand. "There is no danger in windows," he said in a level, awfully sure voice. "What hurt you won't hurt you again. . ." And he said it so that I believed him at the time.

"Now about someone to sit with you to-night. The ladies, it seems, all have engagements, and I've urged them to keep them. Thought the normal might give them a balance."

"Oh, I'll be all right," I answered. "Jane can look in once in a while." But without meaning to I looked at the window. The doctor frowned, and I was ashamed. I told him about how I had been chased and that that had upset me a little. And that I was usually brave. He said he thought I was splendid, and that he wasn't angry with me.

"Sam Kempwood who helped you out of that scrape?" he questioned.

I nodded.

“Bully chap,” he said. “I know him.”

I said I thought he was one of the nicest men that I’d ever met. That you could tell it.

“Suppose he comes up and plays nurse?” the doctor suggested.

I smiled. “That would be lovely,” I admitted after a long breath, for even then I really loved Mr. Kempwood, “but I am sure it will bore him. You see, I don’t know how to entertain people the way my cousin Evelyn does.”

But the doctor said that *I* was to be entertained, and that he’d stop at Mr. Kempwood’s on the way down. And then he wrapped me up in a pink comforter and carried me out to the living-room, where he put me on a wide lounge which stands before the fire.

“Now Hannah, or Molly, or whatever your name is,” he said to Jane, “you stay with this child until I come back.” And Jane did, but she wasn’t much help. She was so awfully frightened and kept jumping and looking around. . . . In just a few moments the bell rang, and I heard the men in the hall. . . . “Just a little while will change the trend and help her,” the doctor said. “The rest have cleared out and good riddance! Weren’t any good. . . . Awfully decent of you, Kempwood.”

“Not a bit of it,” said Mr. Kempwood; “hadn’t anything to do.”

“Well, don’t make a long business of it,” said the doctor; “just a few moments will help. The child’s evident admiration for you led me to think that you could help her most.” And then they stopped talking and tiptoed in. I smiled at Mr. Kempwood and tried to tell him how grateful I was to him for coming up, but it was not easy to talk.

“Never mind about that,” he said gently. And then he sat down by me, and showed me some pictures which I couldn’t see very well, because my sight was so blurred.

“Suppose,” he said, “we’re quiet——” And I nodded. And then he took hold of my hand and patted it, and it helped a great deal. And I don’t know how it happened, but, somehow, I was telling him how I had hated coming to New York, how I missed Uncle Frank and Bradly-dear, and about the cricket that stays in the earth for three years. Then my eyes filled—I could feel them—and I whispered: “It’s only been *three days*.”

“My *dear* child!” he answered, and I could see he was awfully sorry for me. He patted terribly hard. That helped too, but it made me smile. After that one tear slipped over the edge, and, because I hadn’t a handkerchief, he wiped it off with his. I thanked him very much, and then I said: “I don’t ever cry.”

“So I see,” he answered, and he smiled, but so gently that I didn’t mind.

I said: “I don’t really. That is, not when I’m well. I hadn’t before to-night for ages.”

“You didn’t to-night,” he answered, and so cheerfully. “ ‘One swallow doesn’t make a summer,’ so certainly one tear doesn’t make a cry!” And I was so glad he thought I hadn’t.

“When you want to cry hard,” I confided further, “swallowing very quickly again and again will stall it. It’s a great help——”

And he said: “You little *sport*!” And I began to feel happier. He looked at me so nicely, it warmed me up, and my throat began to feel better. I asked him when he had to go, and he said not until I was so sick of him that I would have Jane throw him out. Then again we were quiet.

“Look here,” he said after a few moments, “don’t you like baseball?”

I nodded as hard as my stiff throat would let me.

“Well,” he went on, “don’t you think your aunt would let you go to the big games with me next year?”

I sat up. “Oh,” I said, “if she *only* would!”

“We’ll see that she will. But that’s a long way off. We’ll have to have good times before *that*. Ever been to the Hippodrome?” I said I hadn’t, and he described it. I became very interested, for it sounded like a sort of glorified circus. I had to lie down again, for I began to feel dizzy and sick, but he went right on talking of it as he arranged the pillows for me and made me comfortable.

Then I thought of the bracelet and asked for Jane. Mr. Kempwood rang, and she came. I told her I wanted a white satin box that stood on my bureau, and asked her please to get it. When she brought it back I held it for several minutes without opening it, and then I shut my eyes and felt. The bracelet was there.

I put it on, and then after a little interval I told Mr. Kempwood the whole story. I couldn’t talk loudly, but he leaned over and got it all.

“Dear child,” he said, “that’s utter nonsense.”

I looked at it and shook my head.

“Give it to me,” he said; “I have a wall safe, and I’ll take charge of it for you.”

I shook my head. “You said you’d take me to the league games,” I answered. “I’m not going to run any risks!” And then we both laughed. He did some more urgings, but I did not give in, for I knew that it was my battle, and I meant to fight it out. I didn’t think I could ever hold up my head if I evaded it, and then—I couldn’t bear the idea of its hurting Mr. Kempwood. I told him so.

“And not entirely because of those games,” I admitted honestly, “but because I like you, a great deal.”

He answered me quickly. “Natalie,” he said (I had told him my name as I related the story of the bracelet), “let’s be friends. For I like you too, and,” he added after a pause, “a great deal.”

That began my friendship with Mr. Kempwood, which helped me in so many ways and came to mean so much.

CHAPTER IX—A STRANGE HAPPENING

A WEEK went by and not much happened. And, while I was not actively unhappy, I was never once happy. Amy had lots to do, and I didn't see her often, and of course Evelyn was hardly in at all, and, when she rarely was, she was too cross to talk to. I wondered about her, as I had about Uncle Archie—whether the return paid for what they both gave up? For Evelyn was tired and strained and losing all her sweetness, and Uncle Archie had lost all his talk. I came to feel that it wasn't worth while in either case.

I thought a great deal those days. Thought is almost forced upon you, if you aren't a social success, or can't play baseball. You see, in such case, there is nothing to divert you and keep you from reflection. So, I thought. I also wrote home often and sent Willy Jepson post-cards, because he sent me one of the gaol, on which he had written: "My room is marked with a cross." (There was a cross over the only window that is barred.) And he also sent me a picture of Miss Hooker, taken, I imagine, in 1892, on which he had written: "She has consented to be mine! Sweet love has bloomed within my heart at last!" But I knew he got that out of a book, because it didn't sound like Willy. Those, with a letter from Uncle Frank, which contained much information about the larvæ of the bee, cheered me greatly. The letter sounded so like Uncle Frank that all I had to do was to shut my eyes, and then I could hear him "Ho hum." And I did that quite a good deal as I re-read his letter.

That week was, I found afterward, a normal week for my aunt and cousins and uncle, but it seemed frightfully hurried to me. Everyone had decided that I had been choked and chloroformed by a sneak thief, and after uncle muttered about speaking to the building's owner about the fire-escapes, and aunt's warning Ito and Jane about the pantry window, and one of mine (which opens on an iron balcony, as does one of Amy's), everyone forgot the episode. It seemed Evelyn once lost a fur coat that way, and that upstairs thieving was not uncommon. But I knew they were wrong. However, nothing strengthened my belief until the event which came in the first part of the following week. But that comes later.

As I said, the week dragged by. I lived through it very slowly (it is strange how time is affected by the way YOU feel, isn't it?), and at last it was Friday.

My aunt was going out to a luncheon, and because I had been alone all morning and wanted company, I followed her to the hall, and there we found

Mr. Kempwood's letter.

"My dear," said Aunt Penelope, "what a stunning hand, and what a charming shade for letter paper. . . . For you. Do let's see whom it's from."

I opened it, feeling excited. It was from Mr. Kempwood, and he asked if I would come down and have tea with him at four o'clock on Saturday, and he said that if I liked we would afterward take a drive. My aunt said I most certainly could, and then she kissed me with unusual interest, and left. And I took the letter and read it three more times, especially the end, where he had written: "And it is with genuine pleasure and great pride, my dear Miss Natalie, that I sign myself your friend, Samuel Kempwood." I did like that!

Well, I went in my room, and thought about all the things I would wear, and I hoped so much that my aunt would let me wear my pink dress, but she didn't. However, I had such a good time that my disappointment was soon forgotten. I decided I would wear my jewellery, which consists of the Jumel bracelet and a ring with a silver skull on it which Willy Jepson gave me.

I thought my tam would be best for motoring, because it sticks on and Mr. Kempwood likes it. And I meant to accept that part of the invitation very hard, because I love it, and there never seems to be enough room in aunt's motor. Everyone is always sorry, but someone else always has to go. Amy has so many friends that it is difficult to pay them all sufficient attention. This week she took them motoring each morning—different sets—and deeply regretted she couldn't take me. But I understood how it was, and said so. I tried to make her just as comfortable as I could about it. They are all being very kind to me.

That night Evelyn had dinner at home; Uncle Archie was there too, and it might have been nice if they'd acted so. But aunt sighed a great deal and said Evelyn *needed* a new fur coat and that there was a beauty on Fifth Avenue for only twenty-two hundred (and she made a long lecture about getting good things when you bought, because they lasted and it really was an *economy*), and then Amy began to whine and say that if Evelyn had a new coat she didn't see why she, Amy, couldn't have one, and that she felt like a pauper when she went to school. I felt sorry for Uncle Archie. He didn't seem to mind, but I think it must have bothered him. After he said "Huh" a few times he turned to me and really spoke to me for the first time.

"What do *you* want?" he asked. "Must *want* something."

But I said I didn't. And I added that I was grateful for all the lovely things aunt had bought me. I told him that they were beautiful. He looked at me hard, said "Huh!" and went on eating.

Then I asked aunt if I could wear the pink dress to Mr. Kempwood's party.

"Mr. Kempwood's?" echoed Evelyn, and she did not seem pleased when

her mother told her about it. “I think that’s very *kind* of him,” she said, after her mother finished.

Uncle Archie went out after dinner, and Evelyn went to a dance with some friends at about nine; and Aunt Penelope, sighing and saying thank Heaven she actually had an evening free, wrote a lot of notes, and telephoned friends, making engagements for all the evenings of the next week.

Amy and I went to bed at nine-thirty because we are supposed to at nine. Amy sleeps with me now, because she thinks I may be frightened. At least, that is what she *says*, but I, privately, think she is scared to be alone. However, that is not vital. After we got in bed Amy told me that lots of men had proposed to Evelyn, but that she had “scorned them all.” However, she said that there was a man in the next house whom Evelyn really liked.

“She’s dippy about him,” Amy said. “You can see it. They both simper and act silly when they meet, and they have a basket strung between the houses on a wire (you know they’re ever so close), and they pass notes that way!”

“Honestly?” I said. It didn’t sound like Evelyn. She seems too hard for anything romantic.

“Honestly,” Amy assured me. “She doesn’t think anyone will notice the wire, and the basket is hidden under her window-box.”

“I see,” I said, and I did. There are flower-boxes on the outsides of a good many of the windows. It would be easy enough to manage to make one a garage for her basket mail-carrier, if she wanted to.

“She’d die if anyone knew it,” Amy confided. “It would fuss her. . . . I just can’t imagine Evelyn mooning around in the dark, waiting for that basket to slide across. I’m dying to get one of those notes.”

“Wouldn’t it be funny to fill that basket full of cold flour paste,” I said. “Just think how she’d jump, if she slid her hand in it—up to the wrist.”

“Wouldn’t she!” agreed Amy, and giggled. “But of course we mustn’t,” she added in a sobered tone.

“Of course not,” I said, adding: “She couldn’t tell on us, either.”

“No,” said Amy. “But we mustn’t let that influence us. Where could we get the paste?”

I suggested that we ask the cook to let us make candy Saturday night. Then we giggled a good deal. And after that Amy said “darn” awfully hard, and got out of bed growling and fussing terribly, for she’d forgotten to say her prayers.

The next morning when I got up I found my bracelet was gone, and I was upset by it, and disappointed, because I had wanted to wear it down to Mr. Kempwood’s. I decided to ask Madam Jumel to return it again, although the

recollection of the way it came back before made me so frightened that my palms grew damp, even though my hands were cold. But I did want it. Even at that time I had made up my mind I would win. For Madam Jumel had given it to us; it was ours, and she had no right to make everyone miserable.

So—at about three-thirty I went over to the Jumel Mansion. I asked which room Madam Jumel slept in, this time, and they told me. I went up to stand at the door. Some visitors went past me talking of the room where Lafayette had slept and of Washington's bedroom, but neither Washington nor Lafayette interested me that day.

"You know," I whispered, "it isn't *fair*. You gave it to her, and since you *did*——" And then I stopped, for one of the curators came by and heard me.

"Absorbing the habit from one of the old mistresses?" he asked. I didn't know what he meant, and he explained. It seemed Madam Jumel's mind had wavered as she grew older, and she did strange things, among them—talking to herself of the great people she had entertained and the power she had been.

"Absolutely mad," said the gentleman, whom I had come to know well in those few visits. "Why, she employed a lot of French refugees who were out of work and would take any—starving, I suppose—brought them up here, and drilled them as her army. Boys who were fishing on the other side of the river would look up to see the old woman heading a little crowd of ragged men, who carried sticks for guns. She always rode a horse, sitting erect, and now and again they said she would turn proudly to survey her troops. . . . She was a queer one. . . . They say"—he paused and looked in the room—"that she haunts this room. I don't believe in such things, but her relatives who lived here afterward (three families, they were) swore that she came back to rap so hard that the walls shook. . . . They all quarrelled, and none spoke to each other; but having no money, while they waited for the will to be settled, they lived here; the Nelson Chase family, the Will Chase family, and the Pérys. The Chases were her nephews, Mrs. Péry her niece. Mademoiselle Nitschke, the governess of small Mathilde Péry, did not believe in ghosts, but—one night even she was convinced. . . . You'll find all that story in a book called 'The Jumel Mansion,' which Mr. William Henry Shelton, whom you have seen here, wrote."

I hunted Mr. Shelton, and he showed me this. I won't quote it entire, but only in part. It is in his book, as Mademoiselle Nitschke told it.

"I came to live at the Mansion three years after Madam Jumel died, or about 1868. My room was on the third floor. . . . After a little time I was moved down to the Lafayette Room, to be nearer Mrs. Péry, who was in nightly terror of the ghost of Madam Jumel, which, she claimed, came with

terrible rappings between twelve and one o’clock, or about midnight.

“Mrs. Péry would come to my room in the night in great excitement to escape the ghost. . . . One night she insisted on my coming to their bedroom and awaiting the ghost. I had always told them there was no such thing as a ghost.

“On that particular night the trouble began as early as seven o’clock in the evening. They had just come up from supper when Mrs. Péry rushed into the hall, trembling with fright and calling: ‘Mademoiselle!’ . . . At about that same time, probably hearing cries, Mr. Péry came up the stairs from the kitchen where he had been toasting cheese. He disliked to sleep in the room in question, claiming that Madam Jumel had come to the side of his bed in white. . . .”

And she described it quite a while. Mademoiselle Nitschke said it was a very quiet September night and hardly a leaf stirred. . . . She said they all sat in absolute silence, and things seemed to grow even more still as midnight approached. . . . And when it came, a loud rap, such as a wooden mallet might make, came directly under Mr. Péry’s chair—“From which,” she said, “he leaped as if he had been shot. . . .” And I, for one, don’t blame him. . . . Well, then Mademoiselle, who must have been very brave, asked if Madam Jumel desired prayers said for her, and Madam replied with three knocks, which is knock-language for yes.

Mr. Shelton told me more. And I enjoyed it so much. But—I could not understand it, and it made me feel creepy. I think it is pleasanter not to believe in ghosts.

After this, since it was getting late, I went downstairs and stood before the portrait. And here I again asked for my bracelet. It seemed to me the portrait smiled—unpleasantly, but I suppose that was only my imagination. For when you are nervous, you cannot tell what you see, or what you don’t. And the real becomes hazy and the unreal real. I was glad to go to Mr. Kempwood’s. But I will tell about that later.

That night the bracelet came back.

Amy slept with me, and we were ready to sleep, having worked very hard to make flour paste of the right consistency. It had to be sloppy, and so that it wouldn’t harden when cold. We also had to arrange an inner holder for it, since the basket was not built to hold juice. We didn’t get started undressing until ten, and Jane, who is supposed to remind us of bedtime, became very disagreeable. But we ignored her and didn’t let her irritate us. We fixed a heavy paper inside to the basket and then poured the stuff in, and then Amy pulled it halfway out on the line, so that Evelyn would think he’d started

something. We put ice in it, and it began to feel far from pleasant. We both tried it. “Sort of like cold frogs—mashed,” said Amy, which was an admirable description.

Then after this we went to bed. We decided we needn’t stay awake, for we felt sure that Evelyn would yell. And she did, but that comes later.

I didn’t go to sleep early. I have not since the bracelet was first returned. And the consciousness that it might come back again, in the same way, made me lie awake and feel gaspy. So—when I heard a little noise I was not surprised. . . . Our door was open a little way, and there was a noise at this. . . . Then a scratching noise by my bedside (the bed head is by the door). . . . In the tiniest light something glittered and made a bright point SLOWLY MOVING ACROSS THE FLOOR. . . . I struggled up, and somehow found my searchlight. . . . Swallowing hard and feeling sick, I pressed it. The Jumel bracelet lay one yard inside the door on the floor. . . . It was the glitter on the gold that had let me see it, as it moved.

It had come back again.

Chapter X—What Mr. Kempwood Told Me

Mr. Kempwood's "rooms," as he called them, were lovely. And I had a fine time going around and looking at things. His furniture is more than pretty; it has a reason. Everything is either very comfortable, or very interesting. And it all makes you want to linger.

For instance, he opened a cabinette which honestly held interesting things, not like Aunt Penelope's, which has only six fancy fans and a lot of ancient scent-bottles and an autographed book of poems and such truck. His has really fascinating things in it, and it is, therefore, worth the dusting trouble. There were all sorts of books in it, written in different ways. I mean scrolls—simply yards of those, and an East Indian one written on reeds all strung together, and even one on a brick. We agreed that it would be frightful to have to scratch out a best seller with a chisel. He said, "Think how your wrist would feel by the time your hero gets his best girl!" and I agreed. That brick was Assyrian. Then he had little tiny gods that the Egyptians buried with people. And he even had the toilet things of an ancient queen, and it had a tweezers in it, which led me to believe that even then they pulled out the extra eyebrows and made them skinny and beautiful, as women do to-day.

Evelyn has a woman come to do it each week, if she can't get down to Elizabeth Varden's. And she squawls—there are no other words for this—while it is being done. But her eyebrows are arched and beautifully shaped. I told Mr. Kempwood how she yelled, as I suggested the eyebrow theory. He laughed a good deal and said maybe I was right. Then he said I really oughtn't to tell him things like that, and, although I didn't see why I shouldn't, I said I would not.

Then he asked me to sit down, and I did (and even I wanted to stay sitting, for his chairs are wonderfully sittable), after which he rang and we had tea, and since there were no plain bread and butter sandwiches I felt no obligation to eat any. I thanked Mr. Kempwood for omitting them, and I ate a good deal and enjoyed myself more than I have since reaching New York.

I told him a lot about Uncle Frank and Bradly-dear and even about Willy Jepson. And he asked me whether I thought I would marry Willy, and I said not if anyone else asked me. And then I had some more tea.

He asked me how old I was, at that point, and when I said sixteen, he was surprised. I don't seem it. I know that. . . . That is one reason Amy never has

room in the motor for me. I know I humiliate her by my lack of polish. Baseball doesn't develop much beside muscle and quickness and a certain sort of flash judgment, I have realized lately. But I shall acquire those other things in the three years, of which over a week has passed.

"Where's the bracelet to-day, Natalie?" Mr. Kempwood asked, after looking at my arms. . . . I wore a gray silk which has short sleeves. It has broad white cuffs and a big flaring white collar, and is pretty. . . . I replied that I thought I wouldn't wear it, for I knew no one would believe my story.

"I suppose you're interested in the Mansion?" he questioned further.

I said I was, decidedly.

"Know its history?" he asked.

"In a way," I answered. "But not as well as I shall. . . . History has never interested me. I didn't think things that happened to dead people vital, but lately——"

"Well," he said, "they may not be vital; nothing but food and sleep really is, you know. But the things that have happened are interesting, because they make you *think*. Beside making you realize what helped to form the great country in which you live. Perhaps you haven't *seen* History. Perhaps you've just said, 'In 1776 Washington occupied the Jumel Mansion for some time'; or, 'On Wednesday, July 3, 1833, Reverend Doctor Bogart married the celebrated Col. Burr and Madam Jumel, widow of the late Stephen Jumel,' instead of *seeing* Washington step out of that door and stand on that porch. . . . Probably he watched the burning of New York from there. (A great many people think Nathan Hale started it. New York was then in the hands of the British, and many thought burning it was the thing to do. There are a good many things about Nathan Hale's story that are still misty. . . .) You repeat dates about a wedding instead of *seeing* a queer old woman, rouged and smirking, come down the twisting stairs of the Jumel Mansion to meet her groom, who was a tired old man, poor and aware that a gay youth doesn't leave much precipitate for a comfortable old age. . . . He gained six thousand dollars by that marriage, and she—some more experience with the law, for she divorced him."

Mr. Kempwood stopped and asked if he might smoke. I said yes, and after he lit a long cigarette, which he put in an interesting holder, he went on with: "Can't you *see* the old lady and the old man being married? The ceremony took place in the small parlour at the left as one enters. . . . Probably some servants looked on. Perhaps the room was lit by candles, dozens of them, flickering high, then low, and casting shadows. . . . My, what a house, what memories she put in it." Mr. Kempwood paused, knocked off his ash, and then

said: “Do you know houses have souls? They have the thoughts that their owners attach to their walls. Haven’t you seen lovely houses and heard people say: ‘Horrible place; I hate going there. . . . They are all so sarcastic.’ You see—before one knows it—the house absorbs the spirit of the people who live in it, and one thinks of the *home* as horrible. Now, Madam Jumel (you won’t quite understand this, Natalie, and it’s difficult to explain) didn’t have much chance, and she wasn’t always good. In fact, she was far from it. And she came to this house, which had belonged to the Roger Morris family, who had kept it fine and splendid, and she turned it to a mad-house before she died, and left it in possession of three quarrelling sets of heirs, who dragged their claims through the courts for years and years, and whose descendants are still bickering. For those who had lost felt that they had been cheated, and so they kept on bickering.”

“Don’t you think that a man who evades fighting leaves a stain?” I asked.

“Roger Morris?” said Mr. Kempwood.

I nodded.

“Yes, but if the reasons for his not fighting were sufficient, his evading it was right. . . . You see, his wife’s family, the Philipse, and the Robinsons—I believe the Robinsons had a country place still in existence at Dobbs Ferry, that has staged some interesting history, too—they all owned property,” he went on, “and if Captain Morris had sided with the King, where his sympathies probably lay, his property and that of all his connection might have been burned by the ‘Liberty Boys.’ . . . He had a family and a wife to care for. The Beverly Robinsons and their clan were not used to poverty. He could not drag them to it. We’ll say he left for that reason.”

“Why did they burn houses?” I asked.

“Because they thought their owners sympathized with England. . . . They *must* have had a good time!” Mr. Kempwood stopped and shook his head. “Imagine,” he said, “a mob of a hundred men, all carrying sticks and throwing stones and some of them swinging tin lanterns—from which gleamed the feeble light of candles. Probably they catcalled, sang, and whistled as they tramped along the street, and little girls in long quilted skirts ran after them, and little boys—in homespun breeches—joined the moving throng, adding their shrill voices, whistles, sticks, and stones. Then perhaps they would pause before a house and call, ‘Master Benson, we’ll greet you immedjet’—and others, ‘Come forth, yuh dog!’ while the wag of the crowd would sing a song of King George. Then perhaps a window would slide up, and a man who wore a nightcap would stick a head out and ask for mercy. . . . But I doubt whether he got it, for crowds are cruel. . . . Perhaps his wife and little girls would come

out of the house, carrying what little they could, and crying. . . . And then the man, sullen and angered, would be put through a mock trial, for the benefit of the jeering crowd. . . . And back of him a house would blaze, and the things he had loved would vanish in smoke. . . . A fire looks pretty against a black night sky. The blazing red which vanishes in sullen smoke. . . . The light. . . . See it?”

I said I did.

“But they had to burn those houses, didn’t they?” I asked.

“No,” he answered; “George Washington didn’t want them to. They did more harm than good, for often they burned the houses of the innocent, and a mob spirit—uncontrolled—has no business in war. Anything is done better under direction of a man who sees things coolly and takes them quietly.”

I said I supposed this was so.

“What happened to the Jumel Mansion after the Roger Morris family left it?” I asked. “Did they come back?”

“No,” he answered. “The Philipse Manor was confiscated and sold with the Morris property, for these two families had gone back to England. . . . There was some mix-up about the income from the properties—war makes that, you know—and the heirs, I suppose, were glad to dispose of the place, for John Jacob Astor, seeing what is to-day called a ‘good buy,’ purchased the right of the heirs, with legal power to transfer, for twenty thousand pounds. . . . Later, the State of New York bought it from him for half a million dollars.

“From the close of the Revolution until Stephen Jumel bought the property, a period of nearly thirty years, the old house was, in turn, a humble farmhouse or an inn. . . . Stages began to go from Albany to New York in 1787, and of course they stopped at the inn. Changed horses, you know. . . . Can’t you see them dashing up in style, the whips cracking, the horses sweating, then the stop, and the ladies, all flounced and hooped of skirt, getting out to walk about and shake the stiffness from their bones? . . . Perhaps a gentleman would say, ‘Will madam do me the proud honour to sup with me?’ and perhaps they had fried chicken and mashed potato and pie—all on the table at once. And I’m sure the innkeeper’s wife frankly listened to their talk, for talk in those days took the place of newspapers, which even our country people get to-day. . . . Then after they’d ‘supped’ I think they’d go out and get in, the ladies most ‘genteel’ settling their skirts, and the gentlemen putting cushions back of them and murmuring something about the ‘glories of all blue skies paling beside the colour of their orbs.’ . . . They did it that way, in those days, Natalie,” Mr. Kempwood ended.

I said I knew it, but that I’d rather have a man say right out if he liked me,

that I preferred sensible frankness. Mr. Kempwood said he knew it and that he thought a man would try to be awfully square with me.

Then I said, “What next?” and he smiled and said:

“And—with a crack of a whip, they dashed off to New York, a large town, which lay some ten miles distant from the hamlet of Harlem Heights!”

“Did they go up to see the view, I wonder?”

Mr. Kempwood thought they did. . . . You can see *miles* from the little balcony at the top of the Jumel Mansion, and then, of course, further, for nothing was built up.

“Yes,” he said, “probably the beau bowed very low and said, ‘Will madam’—or mistress—‘honour me by going up the stairs to see the view from the top balcony, which is rumoured to be the most beauteous, and is of great renown?’ ”

And then we stood up and I put on my things. For we were going driving. We were through with history for that day. . . . But Mr. Kempwood had made me see it. . . . I could actually hear the creak of the old inn sign as it swung in the wind. . . . I could see the tired horses, and the little daughters of the innkeeper peeping around the big white posts. . . . For I am sure that they were bashful country children (quite like me) with no way to say what they felt. . . . Probably they were afraid of the grand ladies who travelled so “elegant” and who minced so daintily as they walked. And perhaps, as they sat around the fireplace at night, one would say: “Mother, I was in the room turning the loom and I heard the grand lady with the purple ostrich plumes talk. She was a-viewing the view. She said: ‘Laws, you bold man, I cannot believe one word you say!’ He said: ‘No rose in all of Heaven’s garden wears the bloom of your sweet cheek!’ What do you think of that, mother?” And then perhaps she would look in the fire and dream. . . . For even little country girls do that—if they can’t play baseball!

We had a lovely, lovely drive.

Mr. Kempwood was so kind to me, and he said he was going to take me every week. I could hardly believe it.

“I think you are *very* good to me,” I whispered. For I felt it so deeply that it was hard to say.

“I’m not,” he said. “I am being very good to myself. . . . I can’t tell you how much I enjoy this, Natalie. . . .”

I slipped my hand in his and squeezed it.

“Little person,” he said, “you *are* a dear!” And he smiled down at me, but he let go of my hand after two pats. Then, before I knew it, it was really late

and time to get ready for dinner.

“I hate leaving you!” I said, as we stood in our small outer hall. He thanked me and said he felt that way about me. “But,” he said, “we’ll have another ride soon, and I’ll see you within a few days.”

But I couldn’t believe this; it seemed too good. However, I saw him the next evening, or, as they say in the North, afternoon. It was at the Jumel Mansion. . . . And I was the direct cause of it all, which makes me feel dreadfully. But how could I tell that that would happen and that I would make him get hurt?

It was terrible, but I am so thankful that it was no worse. I think of that all the time—for, if Mr. Kempwood *had* been killed, there is a spot in my heart that would never have healed. But—he wasn’t!

Chapter XI—Strange Noises are Heard

Saturday night could not have been regarded as restful. In fact, a great many things happened beside the bracelet sliding in my room in that strange way. I managed to get up enough courage to get out of bed and put it away after an hour or so. When I at last did get to sleep, it was way past midnight, and I slept jerkily. Every once and again I would find myself sitting up, reaching for my flashlight and staring at that spot near my bed where the Jumel bracelet had lain. Then I would lie back, feeling sick, trembling and breathing hard. I couldn't seem to help this. At twelve-thirty Evelyn let out a terrible yell (there is no other word for this), and things began to move. Even Amy and I got up this time, feeling that we would not be suspected.

Aunt Penelope, with her hair done in a tight wad at the back of her head, was bending over Evelyn and saying: "Well, can't you *tell* me what upset you?" And Evelyn kept gasping: "No, no! . . . The hateful thing, he put—how could he—oh, how could he!" Then she stopped, surveyed her hand, and gasped some more.

"What did 'he put'?" Aunt Penelope questioned.

But Evelyn would only say, "Let me alone!" between asserting that she was *sure* she was going to have hysterics, and gasping. And she told her mother that that flour paste on her hand was Adonis Cream! And then she began to moan. We had not realized that she would blame him, and we began to feel worried.

Well, they got her feet in hot water, and Aunt Penelope held the smelling-salts under her nose, and even Uncle Archie joined the crowd. And I think it is the only time that I ever saw aunt with him when she didn't ask him for money.

"What's up?" he asked, looking at Evelyn, who had closed her eyes and was leaning back against the chair in a limp, sick way.

"If you can tell me," said Aunt Penelope irritably, "*I* will be grateful! I am *aroused* from my sleep by hearing Evelyn scream, and I get here and she won't explain, and——"

"Mother," gasped Evelyn, "if you keep this up I will have *hysterics*; I am in *no* mood to—bear it—*oh*, the *feeling*!"

"*Huh!*" grunted Uncle Archie, and paddled off to bed.

Then aunt told us to stay with Evelyn while she hunted the aromatic spirits of ammonia, and we settled down to listen to her gasp. We felt sorry, but it was sort of funny, and especially when she said: “Is nothing *true*, is nothing *sacred*?” And I suppose she meant that that basket should have been too hallowed to him to fill with flour paste. Amy giggled, and then said she felt nervous and that made it.

But Evelyn didn’t hear her, so it didn’t matter. She was too busy being dramatic. “To think,” she whispered, “that I believed him—thought it *real*!” And then, as they say in fiction, “she laughed hollowly.”

After this she calmed, and while we were waiting for Aunt Penelope’s return the noise came, a scratching noise on the window-sill in my room.

“*What’s that?*” Evelyn gasped, sitting up and quite forgetting to be limp.

“I don’t know,” I answered, but my heart began to pump, for I was afraid I did. I felt that it was connected with my bracelet, and I later found that I was right.

I stood up and tried to go to my room, but my knees didn’t work well. They seemed to think that they were castanets and that I wanted them to play a tune. I didn’t—but that didn’t influence them.

Amy began to cry.

“*Hush!*” said Evelyn, and she leaned forward, and in the stillness we listened. . . . There would be a scraping sound, then a lull, and then another long, grating, rasping sound. And on top of this suddenly there were two raps. . . . Somehow I reached the door which led to the small hall that connected the rooms, and from here I almost shouted: “*What do you want?*”

And then—after one rap and the splintering sound of wood—the noises stopped. I sank down in a chair by the door and bit my lips to steady them. When I looked at Amy she was biting too, but at her nails, and as if they must *all* be shortened just as far as possible in ten seconds. She looked terribly intent and funny. I saw that even then. Evelyn had got one foot out of the tub, and held it, dripping in mid-air. She had her left hand over her heart.

Then Aunt Penelope came back, looking as white as a sheet and carrying the bottle of ammonia upside down in one hand (uncorked too) and the ice-pick in the other.

“Did you *hear* it?” she whispered. And then she went over to Evelyn and said: “Drink this immediately! *Immediately!*” and gave her the ice-pick. But no one laughed.

Then there was an awful noise, and everyone screamed, but the voice of Uncle Archie was heard to say something that I cannot quote, and everyone

was reassured. He had only run into an onyx pedestal which has Leonardo da Vinci's or Raphael's (I've forgotten which) flying Mercury on it. He had encountered this in the dark.

In a moment he stood in the doorway, rubbing his shins and muttering.

"What's up?" he asked.

"If you will tell me!" rattled Aunt Penelope, so fast you could hardly hear her words, "I shall be grateful. . . . We must all be calm! (Amy, stop biting your nails! You drive me crazy!) I was in the pantry when *it* began—in Natalie's room, I think. . . . Evelyn, put your foot back in the tub; the water is dripping *all* over the rug. . . . And I heard it—and——"

"Hugh!" grunted Uncle Archie, and went toward my room. In it, we heard him turn on the lights and put up the window which opened on the small iron balcony, from which one can lower a fire-escape if necessary. Trembling, we followed him. Evelyn didn't even stop to wipe her feet. . . . And we saw that the window-sill was splintered and that there were deep dents in it, as if someone had pounded in a huge nail and then pulled it out.

"More thieving," said aunt. "We must be calm. . . . I am going to faint, I know I am. Evelyn, get your bedroom slippers. There seems to be no safety, no calm. But if you will just try to hold on to *control*——" And then somehow Amy got tangled up in the telephone cord and pulled the telephone from the table, and the table over with it, and aunt simply screamed.

Uncle Archie was tired. He said he was going to live at the club if things didn't change, and the frank way he talked diverted everyone for a few moments. Then, after a half-hour more everyone went to bed, but the lights were all left on and no one slept much. . . . Before I went to bed, I looked for the bracelet, which I was surprised to find undisturbed.

We had a very late breakfast the next morning, and we all had it together and really had a good time. Even Evelyn was pleasant, and it was the last time for ages that she was nice to me. . . . We had the Sunday papers to look at (Uncle Archie gets a great many), and we all had a section and commented on the pictures, and that made talk. . . . Evelyn became greatly interested in a group of pictures of some important Spanish people who had been visiting New York on some mission. Someone had taken them to see the Jumel Mansion, because of course it is a great show place; and outside of this a reporter had snapped them. I felt sure that Señorita Marguerita Angela Blanco y Chiappi was the little Spanish woman who had so greatly admired the Jumel bracelet and who had so extravagantly voiced her admiration in her liquid tongue. By her was a tall, very handsome man, who looked down, and he was a Cuban sugar king, it said under the picture. His name was Vicente Alcon y

Rodriguez. Evelyn and I decided he admired Marguerita a great deal. His look at her made the picture very interesting. Then of course there were two or three others, standing on the steps, and one walking toward the camera with one foot in mid-air, and a swinging arm blurred. That has to happen in every group photograph.

We fooled around this way until about a quarter of twelve, and then, because the day was lovely, Amy and I decided to take a walk, and Evelyn, who hadn't an engagement before three, said she'd go with us. So we all put on our outdoor things and started out. . . . Evelyn was just as pleasant as she could be, and we had a lovely time! And I can't think why she isn't that way always, since everyone likes her so much when she is kind. . . . But once in a while she was quiet and seemed absent-minded, and during one of these attacks Amy whispered: "We'll have to fix it. She thinks it was HIM."

I nodded. And I agreed. We really didn't want to hurt her or to make trouble. We only wanted to have a little fun. She does raise such Cain that it is hard not to frighten her if one has a good opportunity. And of course, if you have initiative, you cannot help making your opportunities.

The day, as I said, was lovely and made being out great fun. There was a high wind which swept your skirts around you, made you draw deep breaths, and fight to walk against it. Evelyn didn't like it so much, but Amy and I did, thoroughly. Then a great many men chased hats (and most of them were fat and bald), which added to the interest of the stroll, and we saw men taking photographs of people on the street. They go around doing this on Sundays and holidays, especially. Some of the people looked funny while they were being taken, and we enjoyed that, although of course we didn't let them see that we did.

After a long half-hour of this Evelyn said she was tired, and we turned toward home. At the corner we encountered Mr. Herbert Apthorpe, who is part owner of the basket. He fell into step with us. Evelyn icily presented him to me; he greeted me casually and then spoke to her.

"I hope you aren't tired after last night?" he said. Evelyn had gone to a party with him, and he referred to that, but she understood it in a different way.

"Of course I am tired," she replied. "It was the most horrible experience of my life!"

He looked baffled, as anyone would, and not exactly flattered. Although Amy and I were sorry, we couldn't help giggling, for it was so funny to see them. Evelyn glared at him, and he did nothing but swallow. He had been grinning at her in a silly way for a few moments after they met, sort of as if he didn't want to, but couldn't help it, and that made me agree with Amy about

their mutual interest. But soon his grin faded; I think he swallowed it. I never saw anyone do so much swallowing. His Adam's apple looked like a monkey on a stick.

"I never pretended that I could dance," he said stiffly. Evelyn ignored this. Then he looked at us, and I felt in his look a great lack of cordiality. I am sure he wished that we weren't there. But we were glad we were.

"I cannot see——" he said. "I do not understand——" And then Evelyn actually allowed herself a sneer.

"You alone," she said, "understand my horror of slimy things. You alone know about the receptacle . . ." (I suppose she thought "receptacle" would stall us, but it didn't) "and so," she finished coldly, "the rôle of innocent is absurd to assume."

"*Evelyn!*" he said, and the way he said it was really dramatic.

And then, her voice shaking, she ended with: "I am at loss to comprehend your ideas of *humour*, Mr. Apthorpe, and I must request that you do not ask me to comprehend any of your moods hereafter!" And then, with head held high, she swept into the door, and we followed her.

We were really proud to know her, for she had done it so beautifully. But we were sorry too, and decided to fix it up when we had time. However, the violets made it worse. I warned Amy against taking them, but she would, since they had an orchid in them, and she wanted to dazzle a girl she doesn't like but was going to take driving. However, that happened Monday.

At two on Sunday Mr. Kempwood sent me up a little ivory elephant that I had liked, to *keep*, and a magazine which he loaned me because it had some letters in it from Captain Roger Morris.

Mrs. Amherst Morris had written the article, and it appeared in the *Hertfordshire Magazine* for November, 1907.

In one letter he said:

> "God Almighty grant that some fortunate circumstance will happen to bring about a suspension of hostilities. As for myself, I breathe only: Peace I can have none until I am back with you. How much I miss you! Your repeated marks of tender love and esteem so daily occur to my mind that I am totally unhinged. Only imagine that I, who, as you well know, never thought myself so happy anywhere as under my own roof, have now no home, and am a wanderer from day to day."

And that did make me feel sorry for him! . . . I think his wife, who Mr.

Kempwood says was a famed beauty and a toast of that day (for men drank toasts to women then, if they liked them), must have been kind as well as pretty. For a man may love a woman first for the loveliness of her skin or her eyes or her hair, but he loves her long for only one thing, and that is the beauty of her spirit.

In another letter he called her his "Dearest Life," which I think must have gratified her, and in this he wrote:

> "My chief wish is to spend the remainder of my days with you, whose Prudency is my great comfort, and whose Kindness in sharing with patience and resignation those misfortunes which we have not brought upon ourselves, is never failing."

I was interested in those letters. I think the way they expressed themselves in other days is fascinating. And shows, perhaps more clearly than anything else, the changes that have come to men and women. . . . Mr. Vernon Castle's letters to his wife were not at all like that (Evelyn cut some of those out of a magazine), and I am quite sure if a man was in Captain Roger Morris' circumstances to-day he would write: "Dear old Girl, I do hope things will clear up in a hurry, for I would like to get home, you can bet;" or something like that. You cannot imagine the average New Yorker of to-day calling his wife "Dearest Life."

After I read the magazine, I decided I would go out again, for I have never got over the stuffy feeling that indoors gives me. I feel as if I am only half breathing. So I put on my things and started out.

In a queer way the Jumel Mansion beckoned to me. I felt as if I must go there. I suppose it is my nervous dread of what may happen next to my bracelet that almost *makes* me visit it, but anyway, whatever it is, when I walk I find myself turning toward it and, before I know it, *there*.

And when I first reached it I was so glad I had decided to go, for I found Mr. Kempwood coming up the long walk from Amsterdam Avenue, and he waved to me, and I waited.

I thanked him as hard as I could for the elephant. He told me that he had put a little charm on that elephant and that I was to keep it as long as I liked him; and when I stopped, I must return it, for in such case his wish—or charm—would have to break. I said it was mine for life, for I was sure I would always care for him and his friendship.

Very soberly he said: "Please do." And then, after a long breath (the wind was high again, and I suppose he felt it), he asked me where I was going. I told him to the Jumel Mansion, Washington's headquarters, and the Roger Morris

House.

He said I was a clever person to do it all at once, which was a joke, as they are all one. . . . “Suppose,” he said, “we sit down outside, or is it too cold for you?”

I replied that it wasn’t, and we climbed the high steps and settled on a green bench which faces the Jumel Mansion porch. . . . And Mr. Kempwood talked and made me see things.

“Look over there,” he said. I looked. I saw nothing until he spoke again and made me pretend, and suddenly I *seemed* to see. “There is an elegant carriage,” he said, “for ‘elegant’ is what they said in those days, but the horses’ heads droop, for they have come all the way from New York to enable the Charming Polly to see the spot where she will live. . . . She has got out. . . . ‘Roger,’ she says, ‘I think it is a grand site, and most beautiful we shall be situated!’ And he mutters, ‘Dearest heart of hearts,’ but under his breath, for Mrs. Robinson is with them.

“ ‘The river’s so calm flowing!’ Mary Philipse Morris, or the Charming Polly, continues. ‘But is it prudence for us to have two establishments, my husband?’

“ ‘Anything you wish, and that I can give you, is prudence,’ he responds gallantly. And Mrs. Beverly Robinson, who has overheard a bit of this, puts in with: ‘The air, my dear, for you and the children is worth a deal. . . . Often I have remarked to Beverly, since our living part time at Dobbs Ferry: “How did we stand the entire year within the strict confines of the crowded town?” ’”

I smiled at Mr. Kempwood and said I liked that, for I had, a lot.

“What did she have on?” I asked.

“Um——” he muttered, and frowned. “Stumped!” he confessed, and laughed. “I suppose she wore a cap?” he continued, “for they did at about twenty-seven in those days. And a sky-blue satin frock, all quilted and made very tight around the waist. Fitted, you know; low-necked and with a lace ruffle which fell over her shoulders? Would that do, Nat?”

I liked his calling me Nat. I told him so. It made me think of uncle, and I told him that too.

“Well,” he said, “I like your liking it, but I don’t like my reminding you of your uncle!” And then he poked around in the gravel at his feet with his cane. He seemed to be thinking pretty hard, and I didn’t interrupt him.

After a while he asked if I thought thirty-three very old, and I said I didn’t. Although I really did. But I judged he was thirty-three, and he is. However, I have come to know that age is misleading, for he is quite as young as I am

inside. The years have only added niceness to him.

After another silence, I asked him to go on, and he did.

“There’s a group on the porch,” he said, “and in front of this stands a man called Washington. He is staring off toward New York, which is a huge city of some thirty thousand souls. There is a tired sag to his shoulders, and discouragement shows in every line of his figure. . . . He rubs his hand across his eyes—see? Probably he hasn’t slept well, for worries will make even a good bed hard. . . . He has been made Commander-in-Chief of the Army recently. It seems John Adams urged this at the second Continental Congress in Philadelphia, in 1775.

“The way things are going makes him unhappy—nervous. . . . True, he had driven the British from Boston, which they had held about two years, and they were also whipped out of North and South Carolina. But now they are turning their attention to New York, the Hudson River, and Lake Champlain. . . . Washington has guessed that they hope to divide the North and the South, and so he has mustered troops and hurried them here. . . . It has been a military headquarters before, and so he does not have to ask permission for its use from Mrs. Roger Morris. That might embarrass him, for it was said that he once entertained rather tender sentiments toward that lady. . . . I wonder if he’s thinking of her now? Do you think so, Nat?”

Mr. Kempwood stared toward the porch, and I did too.

“If he is,” I said, “I hope his wife won’t know it, for she is probably worrying about him, and it would be discouraging to worry about a man who is romancing over a lost love!”

Mr. Kempwood agreed. “Forgotten Martha!” he said. “All apologies! He is thinking of her. . . . See him take a wallet out of his pocket and pretend to look at a map? Well, under that there’s a silhouette. He’s looking at that——”

I nodded, for I liked that better. “I’m sure he loved her,” I said. “Probably he looks back at his younger affair and says: ‘In truth, I was a young idiot, to think my heart did pound a merry tune for her, who now wears two chins where but one should be!’ ”

Mr. Kempwood liked that.

“What made him discouraged?” I asked; “anything in particular?”

“Yes,” answered Mr. Kempwood, “the day before some of his troops from Connecticut turned and fled in utter terror. The British had landed in New York, and our boys, hearing this, had let their imaginations get the best of them. . . . There were only sixty of the foe, but nothing could induce our poor soldiers to stand up to them. Horse-whippings (and they were whipped by everyone, from Washington down) had no effect; they simply turned and

fled. . . . You know," he said, with a meaning look at me, "imagination can make lots that isn't worth notice grow very gruesome!"

I smiled and nodded. Then I looked down at my bracelet.

"The battle of Harlem Heights came somewhere along there," he went on; "I don't know quite when. But our soldiers fought well, after that one day of fright, and redeemed themselves. . . . The British, after that, for a little space, took the affair as a joke. And when they started out to fight one day, blew bugles to indicate that it was in the nature of a hunt. . . . But they didn't do that more than once."

"Was General Washington here very long?" I asked, as I looked up at the porch and seemed to see him.

"No," Mr. Kempwood answered, "only thirty-three days. After that the British took possession. . . . When you think of what those old walls have seen and heard——" Mr. Kempwood paused. Then he stood up, smiled down at me, and I knew that history was over.

"My dear child," he said, "that breeze is too strong. I am sure that your tam will have rheumatism. I should feel so sorry if it grew stiff. I like to see it waving in the wind. . . . Shall we go in for a little while?"

I said I thought it would be fine, and we did.

As we stood before the portrait of Madam Jumel and her niece and nephew, I began to feel cold and frightened. Mr. Kempwood pointed out the break in the canvas, and I couldn't help feeling a little scornful toward the boy.

"Weak," I said. Mr. Kempwood, like most people, misunderstood my meaning. He thought I meant because he had let himself be married at fifteen—to a woman who only wanted his money. He was paid for that, poor boy, in more than unhappiness, for Madam Jumel disinherited him. And she sewed a black patch over his face too, saying that he had placed it there by hurting his character.

Again, as I looked, she seemed to smile. I became frightfully, absurdly, frightened, and I slipped the bracelet from my arm. "She does not want me to have it!" I whispered.

Mr. Kempwood laughed at me, and even ridiculed me a little, but it did not help. Then he took the bracelet and slipped it in his pocket. I let him have it until I was myself again, and then I took it back. We were alone in a little back room at that time, looking up at a high-set cupboard, which Mr. Kempwood thought had once held much good English ale. And he said he wished some of it would come back to haunt its home of long before, since he was getting tired of Bevo.

“I’m ashamed,” I said; “give me the bracelet!” And he clasped it on, and said: “Now, dear child, no more nonsense!” But he was so gentle about this that it was not a scolding. After that he said, “By George!” and looked at his watch. “Dinner engagement,” he added quickly, “and a half-hour over-due. . . . Good-bye, Nat. I’ll see you Monday or Tuesday—want to take you to the Hippodrome——” But he saw me before that, and he did not keep the dinner engagement. . . . He couldn’t, for he was unconscious—at that time, I thought dead!

Chapter XII—What Happened

For a few minutes after Mr. Kempwood left, I moved around looking at the Napoleon relics, which, of course, are fascinating. Some people think that Stephen Jumel bought these from Royalty itself, but others think that they came to Madam Jumel and were by way of wiping out an indebtedness. . . . Madam Jumel lived in Paris between 1819 and 1826, and during those years the cousin of the Empress Josephine, who was Madame la Comtesse de la Pagerie, made her home with the Jumels, and moved with them from house to house as they did—seeming one of the family—part of the establishment. I think she was not well off and had to accept much from the Jumels for which she could make no return. So, when Madam Jumel came back to America the Comtesse settled in snuff-boxes, vases, shoe-buckles, lockets, and dear knows what all. And I think Madam Jumel probably made a good bargain, for she was the sort who could do that. It is said that the things that she brought to the United States were valued at twenty-five thousand dollars, which strengthens the fact that she must have got them without money output, for at that time Stephen Jumel was in pecuniary straits and probably a sum of that size would have been difficult for him to spare for such purpose.

I loved looking at them and thinking of how the Empress Josephine might have had this or that small box upon her dressing-table. And it always gives me a curious feeling. I think old things are much more interesting because of the people who have touched them, and I have often thought that if you could touch one of these things and close your eyes you might drift off into a dream that would take you into another time, but I suppose that is silly.

After I had moved around for perhaps seven or eight minutes I heard a small boy call to another. “Come out here!” he screamed in a high soprano. “There’s a man biffed on the bean, and *mebbe* he’s dead!”

And how people moved! I didn’t immediately. I couldn’t, for I remembered my giving Mr. Kempwood the bracelet, and I *knew* what had happened. I felt sick, and swallowed hard, although I hadn’t any more spit than usual. But that is the way that fright made me feel. . . . It was the worst I had ever felt. . . . Somehow I hurried toward the door with the crowd, and I then did the second cowardly thing which hurt one of my friends who cares for the Mansion, I slipped off my bracelet and handed it to him.

“Until I come back——” I whispered, after a gasp. He nodded and put it in

his pocket. I suppose he thought I was afraid of sneak thieves in the mob which had collected. Then I pushed through the door. . . . All the excitement was back of the Mansion where—Mr. Kempwood lay on the ground—absolutely white and with his eyes closed, and people were bending over him. I began to sob, although I didn't cry any tears at all.

"Let me through," I said, as I tried to get past the circle which had formed. "I know him. . . . I love him. . . . He has been good to me, and he is my friend!" And then, somehow I had reached him and was on my knees beside him, holding one of his cold, stiff hands between both of mine.

"Is he dead?" I whispered to one of the policemen.

"Stunned," he answered. For a moment I held his hand tightly pressed against my heart, and then I began to sob harder than ever. . . . I think the relief that comes with good news often makes you more upset than the bad and hurts more. I don't know why this is, but it is so. . . . After a few moments a policeman asked me where he lived, and I told him.

Someone offered a motor, and they began to lift Mr. Kempwood. Another officer had detained some people and was questioning them. "Weren't you here?" he asked of a heavy old Italian woman who had been sitting on a bench, but she only shook her head, blinked and muttered: "Non parlo la Inglesa, parlo Italiano solamente!" And someone said she had been sleeping, but the officer looked doubtful.

"Nevertheless," he said, "we will take you along," and I, in that moment, saw that she did understand, for in her eyes was a sudden glint of terror. It faded soon, and she replaced it with a vacant look, but—I had caught the other. I think she had *seen*.

"She knows," I began to say, when suddenly everything was forgotten, for, from the Jumel Mansion came a cry which began loudly and faded to a horrible silence, and the cry was for help. . . . Of course, the officers ran, and somehow—the old Italian woman slipped away. I had seen her the moment before, but when I turned back to look after Mr. Kempwood, I found only the old blind man coming up the side steps to the garden, shuffling, shambling up, with his cane feeling the way. He and I and a doctor were alone.

"The old Italian woman has gone," I said, "and I think she knew——"

"Don't think so," said the doctor as he moved Mr. Kempwood's head and felt the back of it. . . . "Couldn't speak English; she was frightened. When the men come back we can get someone to help us lift him in a motor. He's going to come around all right, but that was a blow. . . . Right over the back of the head. You say he lives near here?" I nodded, and then someone came back and helped us lift Mr. Kempwood in a motor.

“What happened in there?” I asked unsteadily, as we moved toward the gate and down the steps.

“One of the guards knocked senseless,” he answered. “Over the back of the head—like this. Busy day for excitement around here—there you are. He *is* a weight. . . . The guard isn’t hurt badly and nothing broken, but the glass over the little case that held the bracelet is cracked.”

I nodded, feeling more sick and faint than ever, and then we turned toward home. The doctor held up Mr. Kempwood, who was beginning to groan, and I held his cane and said my prayers hard. . . . For I felt that it was all my fault. And that is a terrible feeling. . . .

Somehow, I got through the next hour. I will never know how. . . . They settled Mr. Kempwood, told me he wasn’t going to die and would truly be all right, and I left. Of course, I went back to the Jumel Mansion. I had to.

Here I found the sort of let down that you always find after excitement. Everyone was limp and sat down whenever possible. One of the women told me about it.

“I was in the back room,” she said. “Mr. Kelsey had just come in and shown me your bracelet. He whispered to me: ‘Think I’ll put it up in the cupboard, then if she comes back for it when I’m not here, you can give it to her——’ I nodded, thinking that a safe place. . . . That high cupboard, you know.”

I did. It had always fascinated me. It seemed big enough for a spy to hide in, and I wondered whether one ever had hidden there. . . .

“He put it there,” she went on, “and then went back to the front room. I went to the window and looked out at the crowd which had collected about your friend Mr. Kempwood, and then I heard Mr. Kelsey’s cry. . . . I suppose I was slow about reaching him; you know how your knees act and how fright sometimes slows actions, for before I reached him I heard the blow which I found afterward had been directed at the bracelet case, and when I reached him he was not alone. . . . The old blind man who is around here so much was with him. . . . He was standing in the doorway, saying, ‘Someone is hurt. . . . Someone is hurt. Will no one come to help?’ and there were tears on his cheeks. . . . It, added to all the rest, was almost the last straw.”

“I saw him in the garden before I left,” I said, “and he was all right then.”

“You couldn’t have,” she contradicted; “he was here the entire time. Someone took him off and started him toward Amsterdam Avenue, and that was ten minutes after the whole affair had quieted down.”

“But,” I said, and with some heat, “I *did* see him. I *really* did.”

“How could you,” she asked, “if he was here?”

I shook my head and gave it up. She was unconvinced, I could see. Probably thinking that the excitement had made me incapable of realizing what I had really seen or when I had seen it. But I had seen him in the garden. I knew that!

“Well,” I said, “that isn’t vital. You said Mr. Kelsey isn’t badly hurt?”

Again she assured me that he wasn’t, and I was greatly relieved. Then she gave me the bracelet. I snapped it on, and left. As I went out, I paused before the portrait, for it did seem as if what Madam Jumel saw from that had an effect on events; made them—rather—horrible ones.

I couldn’t speak, for there were people in the hall, but I bared my arm and thought very hard: “I have it back. If anyone must be hurt I must be the person, for it is mine, and hereafter I will keep the responsibility.” And after that—I turned toward home.

I stopped at Mr. Kempwood’s going up, and I found that he was conscious and wanted to see me. I was very glad to see him. . . . I couldn’t speak at all, but simply clung to his hand. However, he seemed to understand, so it was all right.

“Sit down, Miss Natalie Randolph Page,” he ordered, and a servant slid a chair near his bed, and I did. Then the man left, and we were alone.

“You know it was my fault,” I said, “because I gave you that bracelet.” And then I had to stop speaking. That made me dreadfully ashamed. I had to look down, too, because I didn’t want him to see that my eyes were full of tears. . . . Once I never cried! . . . But the whole affair was making me jumpy and unlike my old self. And Mr. Kempwood’s being hurt had almost made me sick.

“Look here, Nat,” he said, turning over very carefully so that he faced me, “we’re friends, aren’t we?”

I nodded, just as hard as I could, for emphasis. For various reasons, I decided I would not speak just then. I was afraid my voice would behave as Willy Jepson’s used to when he was fourteen. He himself never knew whether it was going to sound like Hamlet, in the soliloquy, or Miss Hooker when she saw a fuzzy caterpillar; and those ranges differ widely.

“Well, if we’re friends,” went on Mr. Kempwood, “whatever bothers you must bother me. I want it to.”

I shook my head. “Oh *no*!” I said.

He nodded, then stopped (I think it hurt), and said, “Oh *yes*!” just the way I said “Oh no!” I laughed a little, and then I wiped my eyes. “When I thought

you were dead——!” I said.

“Go on,” he ordered. “What happened? Did you mind it, or wonder whether you had enough of your allowance left for a nice wreath? Honestly, confess your thought!” All over again, I choked up. “My dear,” he said suddenly (I think he saw how I felt), “I’m not going to leave life. I love it too much. . . . Especially since we’ve been friends. Why, I’d hang on to it now, with both hands, and I’d like to see anyone make me let it go! Nat, I’m going to stick around, and by the time you’re twenty we’ll be the best friends going. . . . I’ve planned my campaign; you’re helpless.”

I smiled at him and explained how much he had helped me in New York, and how different he had made it all seem. Of course, I told him that my aunt, uncle, and cousins were kind to me (for they *are*), but I said once in a while I was a little lonely, and when I thought of New York without him I almost fainted. And I explained about how I had felt when I thought he was dead. Especially about the swallowing so much when there was nothing to swallow and no occasion for doing it. And I added that lots of times in the dentist’s chair when I needed to swallow, *dreadfully*, I couldn’t, and that it was strange how emotions affected you. He listened attentively and agreed with me about the last.

Then he asked if I had been carrying his cane around all day, and I looked and found I had! I was surprised! I must have taken it to the Jumel Mansion, back, and even up to aunt’s. I clung to it without thinking, because I was so upset, I suppose.

“You don’t need it,” he said, with a flicker of hurt going across his face.

“No,” I answered. And I did wish I were tactful, but I never know quite what to say beside the truth, which makes me clumsy.

“And you care an awful lot about men who go in for athletics, don’t you?” he asked. “They seem *men* to you?”

I think he imagined that our friendship couldn’t be as deep because I liked outdoor things and his lameness kept him from enjoying them. But—it was deeper; for while I knew all he missed, I also saw all he gained—from pain, or whatever it is, that makes some people, who aren’t strong in all ways, nicer.

“I like you best this way,” I said, and very awkwardly, I’m afraid, but Mr. Kempwood always seems to understand. “I’m sorry you have to carry it,” I went on, “but I think it has made you nicer and kinder. If I were ever very unhappy, or needed help, I would come to you.” And then I stood up, for I thought it was time to go.

“You can leave my cane by the bedside,” he said. “I find I don’t dislike it—quite so much as I thought. . . .” Then his voice changed and became

everyday, and he said: “Good-bye, child. You’re not going to be nervous?”

I promised him I wouldn’t and waved at him from the doorway.

I went up to our floor feeling much better. Everyone was out, and I decided to dress because Evelyn was to have guests, and she had said that Amy and I might appear for a little while, if we liked. On my bureau I found a note. It was scrawled hurriedly as before and had the same initials under it, and it said: “Don’t wear the duplicate of my bracelet to-day. I will see that something unpleasant happens if you do!—E. J.”

Chapter XIII—Blue Monday

Everything started wrong Monday morning when Amy found that Evelyn was going to return some violets Mr. Apthorpe sent her.

"It's disgusting," she said, "for they have an orchid in them." And then she stood looking out of the window and tapping on the glass with her finger-tips.

"Going to rain all day," she said next. "I know it will; slow rains like this always do. And I haven't a decent thing for fall wear. . . . Look how the leaves are blowing—must have come for blocks. It's a horrid time!" And then she sat down and stared dismally ahead of her. I felt like that too, for the day was depressing, and the happenings of the afternoon before had left me feeling fearful of what might come next.

It had all been reasoned out that a pair of thieves had worked together, and that one, finding Mr. Kempwood alone, had thought what his pockets might hold worth the risk of holding him up. And—the empty Jumel Mansion had afforded another opportunity. It was all reasoned out, as I said, and sounded well, but—I didn't believe it. I knew it was connected with my bracelet. There were too many signs that pointed to this. I was absolutely sure.

"I've never had any orchids," said Amy after a few moments, "and mother didn't let me have any summer furs. And sometimes I don't know what life *has* held for me—*except pain* and *going without*." Then she fumbled for a handkerchief.

"Consider," she said oratorically, after she had wiped her eyes, "how I could *use* that orchid. Here, I am taking Gladys Howell to Bertha Clay's little party this afternoon (Bertha asked me to stop for her), and I could so easily use it to impress them. I have never liked them because they have constantly impressed upon me that they were older. I think an orchid mashed in a lot of violets would make them sit up and respect me!"

I agreed with her.

"Do you think Evelyn would give them to you?" I asked. "Maybe she could tell him she wouldn't accept them, but that you would."

"That's *like* you," said Amy, and almost sneered, so I realized that my suggestion wasn't a good one. We were quiet after that, for I didn't know what to say, and Amy didn't want to talk.

The direction of the rain had changed, and it began to fall more quickly,

beating a little, sombre tune upon the window as it fell. . . . The ivy on the house next door was dripping, and the leaves hung their heads. And here and there were thin spots where the arms of the vines stood out boldly against the bricks. . . . Fall had come, I could see. . . . Down below, the pavements would be sticky with rain and dust together making a paste; and here and there a leaf would glue itself tight to the walk, its colours spoiled by the city dirt it had caught after it fell.

I knew what would be happening at home. . . . Every little lane would have a bonfire after dark, and the sparks from those would fly against the first, gray night sky. . . . Then the girls and boys would come out and all play hide-and-seek all over the town and even down by the river in the lumber. . . . And the air would be cool and make you want to run. And the leaves would rustle in every gutter, for there are so many trees that, even with sweeping up and burning the leaves constantly, there are always more—more and more. . . . And the crowd would roast apples and corn, and the creek is lovely in the late afternoons, echoing as it does all the red and golden world. . . . We always had paper chases in the fall, too, and that was great fun because the paper would get lost in the leaves and the trail was easily lost. . . . Sitting there, in that hot, stuffy apartment, I saw it all, and I seemed to smell the burning leaves and the odour of baking apples, and hear the snap of chestnuts as they opened in the heat. . . . And oh, how I wanted it! I wanted to go home and play ball in the middle of the street; to see Miss Hooker mincing along and hear her call: “Natalie, aren’t you *ashamed* to play ball—a great girl like you!” . . . To go home way after supper-time, so hungry that I ached under my belt, and to find that Bradly-dear had made fresh doughnuts, and that Uncle Frank had all three pairs of glasses on his forehead—and was hunting them all so that he could look more closely at a cocoon he had just found. . . . Oh, I wanted it! I think I would have been utterly miserable, but Amy diverted me.

“Going to take them,” she said, standing up. “Evelyn will never know, and he won’t go rooting around in a returned box. If he has any sense of fitness, he will fling it from him with a curse and bury his head in his arms!”

I knew Amy had read that somewhere, because it wasn’t her style, but I didn’t say I knew it.

“Wouldn’t he?” she questioned.

I said I supposed he would.

“Well, then, what’s the use of those violets and that orchid *rotting*?” she asked; and she acted exactly as if I were opposing her, although I was not. Often, I have found, people do this when they want to convince themselves. They shout at you, as if you, instead of their conscience, were objecting.

I said there wasn't any.

"I *hate* waste," she stated loudly and stood up. "And hasn't the Government preached against waste for ages? Orchids are much more valuable than flour!"

I knew that, and said so.

Then she confided that the box was in the hall, waiting for Ito to take it down, and that Evelyn had put a note inside. Amy said she was going to take the note out, slip it under the cord, and weight the box with something light so that its emptiness wouldn't be suspicious. Then she left, to return in a moment, looking very satisfied.

"Put an old pair of stockings in it," she said. "Evelyn had thrown them in the waste basket because they had a run up the back, and it feels just right when you lift it. Ito took the flowers and put them in the pantry refrigerator and said he wouldn't speak of them after I gave him fifty cents. I hated that, but when you consider—an orchid and violets are cheap at fifty cents."

After that she was quite cheered up, and I became so too. We decided we must right the wrong we had done, and fix up Evelyn's and Mr. Apthorpe's quarrel. And it seemed quite safe to blame it on Jane, but it wasn't. . . . We took a piece of paper out of the waste basket, and Amy wrote: "I did it. I put the paste in the basket as a joke. I beg forgiveness.—Jane."

I said that wasn't like Jane. And we compromised on "I done it. I put that there paste in the basket and kindly ask your pardon.—Jane." And we giggled quite a little over doing it. Then we took it to Evelyn's room and put it back of the hair receiver.

"Suppose she speaks to Jane?" I asked. Amy looked annoyed.

"You have more sensible suggestions that make trouble——!" she complained, but she wrote this addition: "If this is as much as spoke of, I shall leave!" And she said that she was glad I'd thought of it. . . . "They always mention leaving," she said. "It's as much a part of modern servants as their uniforms. It gives just *the* touch."

And then, feeling very clever, we went to the living-room, where we had lunch on a little table before the fire. There was a man in the dining-room arranging for new hangings, and I was glad, for eating on the small table was fun and cosy. That part of the day was nice.

We talked to Ito as he served, and told him how tired we got of nourishing food, and asked him if there wasn't something sweet in the kitchen, beside the blanc-mange which aunt had ordered for us. He thought so and vanished, to return with fruit cake and meringues, which had nothing to go in them, but which we accepted with gratitude. Altogether it was a charming hour.

Amy grew confidential. I suppose the fire-light and the closed-in feeling that the rain pattering on the windows gave us made that; and she told me of her ambitions. She is going to marry a millionaire who worships the ground she walks on, and live on Fifth Avenue in the biggest house there, and have Henry Hutt paint her portrait, because she loves his kind of art. And she said her husband would have her portrait in a little room all lined with pink velvet and put violets under it (the portrait, not the velvet) every day. She has it all arranged. He is to be a broker, and after coming home from down-town he will go in that room, which Amy calls his "Heart Sanctuary," and kneel before her picture. I asked why he didn't kneel before *her*, and she said she'd be off playing auction or at the matinée. Then she ate her third meringue and stared absently into the fire.

"Life is what you make it," she said; and then: "He is going to wear a checked suit and a red tie."

I couldn't see him kneeling in that pink room in that rig, but I didn't say anything.

"What are you going to do with your future?" she questioned, after an interval of silence.

I told her I only asked to be allowed to climb fences and ride and fish, and stay at home in Queensburg. Then I realized I had not been tactful, and tried to fix it up, but I couldn't, and our nice time was spoiled. Amy told me that I was frightfully gauche and embarrassed her and Evelyn a lot, and as for my staying at home—it was only kindness of them to take me out of it! And then she spoke of my new clothes, which I did not think was nice, and told me just how much Aunt Penelope had paid for them. I felt myself growing white, as you do when you are very hurt. And I told her I would some day pay for those clothes, after which she stopped speaking and looked embarrassed.

"Don't worry about that," she said in a moment. "Mother expected to have to do that for you. She said she knew your things would be frightful."

I thought of Mrs. Bradly's making them; and all the weariness of the rain and the many miles which lay between me and Queensburg sunk into my heart and ached. I felt miserable.

"Mother is going to speak to you," Amy went on. "She hasn't any time before Wednesday morning, but she has you marked for then. I saw it on her pad; 'Natalie ten' is on it. She is going to ask you to be more careful of your conversational topics. I suppose you know you didn't make a hit yesterday?"

I hadn't supposed I had, but I didn't know I'd done anything very wrong. I said I was sorry if I had.

"You should be," said Amy. "That description of how wasps laid eggs

annoyed Evelyn. Someone else was talking about the Russian arts, and you came in with that, and it sounded—queer. Egg-laying is not a subject for afternoon teas, anyway.”

I didn’t see why not, but I didn’t say so. What I did say was that I was sorry I had annoyed Evelyn, and that some day, in some way, I would pay them back all I was costing them. Then I stood up and said I thought I would go off and rest for a little while. My voice sounded heavy and dull, as voices do when someone has put out all your inside fire with the cold douche of their disapproval. Amy shrugged her shoulders and didn’t reply, and I went to my room.

Here I sat down and thought—sort of miserably. We had had lights on in the drawing-room, and the fire had cheered, but my room, unlit, was gray and seemed chilly in spite of being really warm. Then I tried to write Uncle Frank and Bradly-dear, but I couldn’t. As I tore up what I had written and turned away from my small desk, my attention was caught by a movement at the window. I saw the inner drapery ripple and—that someone was hidden behind it!

I got up, shaking horribly and went to the hall to call Ito. He was slow to answer my ring, and when he at last did it was no wonder that the curtain hid nothing.

“Wind?” he said. I shook my head. Then he looked around thoroughly, but nothing could be seen. “Wind,” he said, and this time as a statement, but I was not convinced, although I let him think I was. . . . I heard Amy dressing in the adjoining room, and I was glad she hadn’t heard the noise or what it was about. I asked Ito not to tell her, and then, because I did not want to talk to her just then, put on a plain gray sailor, a long coat, and my overshoes, and started out.

The rain had almost stopped and was beginning to be a mist. I didn’t put up my umbrella, but let it blow against my cheeks, and it helped me. After I had walked eight or nine blocks I began to feel better.

I did not think Amy had been kind, but I began to realize that her lack of it was not all her fault. No one had ever seemed to have time to teach her the rules—the rules that make you take a beating without noise, and make you treat the visiting team as if they were Royalty, and make you shoulder your own mistakes. They would have taught her to stand up to punishment, even if it wasn’t hers, and bear this, unless the other fellow was big enough to speak—and she would have learned that it isn’t decent to give a person things and then speak of the cost.

Mrs. Bradly and Uncle Frank and baseball taught me those things. And with all my heart I am grateful that I have learned them. For although knowing

how to enter a room is nice, knowing how to be square is of most importance, and I am sure it should come first.

I walked a long way. The streets were more empty than usual, and I liked that. . . . The gray skylights caught in the wet pavements, which reflected everything, and it was pretty. . . . I began to feel very much better. On my way home I found a woman selling violets, and I bought a little bouquet for Mr. Kempwood. It took all of two dollars which Uncle Frank had sent me, but I was so glad to spend it that way.

I stopped at Mr. Kempwood's going up. Evelyn had just driven up in a motor, but she was with friends whom I didn't know, so I didn't wait. I don't think, to be honest, that she wanted me to, for she only looked quickly at me and my violets, gave a casual wave, and turned back to speak to the group in the car.

Mr. Kempwood had not gone down-town and was glad to see me, and I took off my coat and sat down with him before a fire. It seemed hot, as indoors so often does after you have been walking fast in the rain. I felt my cheeks grow warm. He was very glad to get the violets and put them in a little glass basket that shimmered with hundreds of colours. He said they were positively the nicest violets he had ever had, and I could see that he really liked my bringing them to him. I hadn't dreamed that it would please him so much, and I began to be honestly happy.

After a while, without his knowing why I asked it, I asked if he thought the mention of how a certain sort of wasp laid eggs was wrong. And I told him about how they did it, mentioning Uncle Frank with pride. Uncle Frank, of course, has taught me all I know of insect life.

It seems this sort of wasp lays her eggs in the back of caterpillars (the shaved varieties), and they hatch there and eat the caterpillar, who dies, which I think is sad, but clever of the wasp. And I told him that I had heard of a country girl telling this story at a tea and embarrassing people to whom she was related, and why shouldn't she, and was it terrible? And didn't he feel sorry for the caterpillar?

He answered at length. He said that it was perfect rot for anyone to be offended by that, and why should they be? He grew quite angry. "The world," he said, "is full of fools, Nat. You couldn't say anything unpleasant, my dear. It isn't in you!"

I didn't want him to know it was I, and I thought I had fixed it so he wouldn't, but he is very clever!

"You can say anything," he went on, "if you look at it in the bright, true light of decency and speak of it—aloud."

I nodded, my eyes on him. “I know,” I agreed.

“My dear, I know you do,” he said, then asked if he might smoke, and lit a cigarette. “I think that’s an interesting story,” he continued, after a few puffs, “and I’ll admit it’s clever of Mrs. Wasp, but pretty hard on the amiable caterpillar. Think of being out for a stroll and having a day nursery grafted on you! And then consider finding yourself a boarding-house and—on top of that—being asked to supply meals at all hours! I don’t blame the old boy for kicking off. It would be simply *too* much!”

I wondered how he could protect himself, and Mr. Kempwood said he shouldn’t have shaved. He said shaving made men lots of trouble, anyway, and if this fellow had been wise and grown a Van Dyke on his back, all troubles with the adopted family would have been avoided.

Then I said I must go, and stood up. “Do you think,” I asked, “that Madam Jumel ever had a servant who grew blind? Or did anyone who was ever blind love her very much?”

“I heard,” said Mr. Kempwood, “that one of those French refugees went blind and that she let him stay around the place, but don’t know how much truth there is in it. Someone who had known the coachman’s son said that this old chap used to sit out near the back door and sing peasant songs of his part of France and that he worshipped old Madam Jumel. . . . I think perhaps he missed Royalty and that she seemed that to him. . . . Anyway, it is said that he swore he would do anything for her that she asked, and that—blind or not—he would accomplish what he set out to do.”

I was interested, and it was as I supposed.

“Why did you ask?” he questioned.

“Some day perhaps I’ll tell you,” I responded, “but not now——” And then I left. As I started for my walk that day I had passed the blind man, and for a space, in one empty street, he had followed me. And as I returned I found him sitting huddled up in a little dry spot near the basement entrance of our building. I meant to keep the bracelet. It was mine. But—keeping it was beginning to be a terror-striking matter. . . . I thought of it, fearfully, I will confess, as I went up to our apartment, but once there all thoughts of Madam Jumel’s servant, Madam Jumel, and my bracelet fled. For Evelyn stood in the centre of the hall orating to Aunt Penelope. She held an empty box in one hand and the note Amy and I had written and signed with Jane’s name in the other. And I then felt the bluest spot in all that blue Monday.

Chapter XIV—Evelyn Blames Me

"She did it," said Evelyn shrilly, as I stepped through the door. "I saw her carrying them. She even had the assurance to smile at me and wave! And as to this"—she waved the note—"that is only what I would expect from a prying, thieving chit who has had no upbringing, and who is suddenly thrown among people of cultivation. I——" She stopped, looked at the empty box, and choked.

Aunt Penelope, who was looking awfully baffled, stooped to pick up one of the stockings that had fallen from the box. "What is this?" she asked in a sort of vacant tone, and the question, and all that tangled in its answer, evidently enraged Evelyn, for she almost exploded with rage.

"What is it?" she echoed. "*What is it!* Ask *her*!" She pointed at me. "Ever since she came," she went on, "I have been bothered. Amy never thought of doing a thing until she appeared. Amy was always——"

But she stopped, for at that moment Amy came in and diverted the talk.

"Do you know anything about this, Amy?" asked Aunt Penelope.

Amy looked at the box and then at me. "No," she answered.

"Why should she?" asked Evelyn. "I told you I saw the violets. I suppose she took them to Mr. Kempwood; she's insane about him. . . . Silly little thing! . . . I hope you will make it understood, mother, that if another thing like this happens she will be shipped to her backwoods town—to stay."

"I didn't do it," I said, but my voice shook, and even to myself it did not sound convincing.

"Didn't do it!" said Evelyn, and she laughed unpleasantly.

"Where did you get the violets?" asked Aunt Penelope.

I told her, and I looked at Amy, but her face was hard, and she answered none of the appeal I sent her for help. And at that moment I began to hate her for a cheat.

"She has helped herself to my bracelet too," Evelyn accused. "For two days it was gone, and when it came back there was a dent in it."

"I didn't," I whispered. "I honestly didn't." But no one believed me.

"Have you any ideas about who made off with the violets?" asked aunt. "Who took the bracelet?"

I said I had. And she asked who it was, and I said I'd rather not tell. Then there was a deep, unpleasant silence, and during this everyone looked at me.

"We will have to have a very serious talk," Aunt Penelope said to me. "I think, Natalie, you have allowed yourself to forget what you owe us, the debt our hospitality has laid on you."

I contested, as politely as I knew how, that I had not. And I added that I had had nothing to do with the violet theft, whatever else I was mixed up in.

"Do you mean to tell me," demanded Evelyn, waving the note we wrote, "that Amy had a thing to do with this? I can't believe it. You didn't, did you, Amy?"

And again Amy said "No."

"It is too childish for her," Evelyn continued triumphantly. "She plays as good a game of bridge as I do, mother, and she wouldn't stoop to this sort of action. That we leave to people who accept everything and give nothing but trouble."

"In some way," I said, "I am going to pay you for everything"—and I could feel myself growing steadily more white, for I was furiously angry—"and I am going home," I added, "home where truth is believed and I am trusted." Then I looked at Amy.

"I will take some blame about the paste," I said.

"Indeed?" said Evelyn coolly, her eyebrows raised. "Why accept any, since lying doesn't seem to trouble you?"

I didn't answer, and Aunt Penelope ran her hand over her forehead and said, "Dear, dear!" in a tried, worried way. Then the door-bell rang, and Aunt Penelope, Evelyn, and Amy all became quite everyday and tried to look usual. I stood silent and ignored as Jane admitted Mr. Herbert Apthorpe.

He said "Evelyn!" quite sharply and held out his hands. You could see he cared for her and was glad things were fixed, as I suspect they were, and I think Evelyn was glad too, although she didn't show it so plainly. She only said: "Oh, Herbert! Nice of you to come to see us. . . . Let's go in the living-room. I believe there's a fire there. . . ."

At that moment Jane summoned Aunt Penelope to the telephone, and Amy, quite naturally, disappeared. I went down to see Mr. Kempwood, for I was going to borrow the fares to go home. But he persuaded me not to go, and in this way, after I had told him as much as I dared, without squealing on Amy.

"My dear," he said, "if Washington had not fought out the battle of Harlem Heights, New York might be a British Possession to-day. But courage and staying there saved the country and won a battle. Just in that way a man has to

fight his battles through; he owes that to his soul. After he has won—or tried to—going is another matter. But you are not guilty; your battle has just begun, and I think you ought to stay here until you can leave without the shadow of suspicion hurting you. Hoist your flag, wave it hard, and stick!”

I drew a deep breath. “If you think so, I will,” I said.

Then he cheered me a great deal by saying, “This is simply *rotten*!” and, “What’s the matter with them?” I shook my head. After that I stood up.

“I must go,” I said, “and change my clothes for dinner. Aunt Penelope cannot excuse lateness.”

But I need not have hurried, for I had my dinner in my room. It was part of my punishment, and everything was cold, but I didn’t mind. I wasn’t very hungry. After I finished eating I wrote Uncle Frank, but it wasn’t a good letter. I told him about school starting the next week, spoke about the weather, and a little, but not much, about missing him (I didn’t dare tell him how much I really did, for I knew it would make him unhappy), and then I told him I looked at the bug quite a good deal, which was true; and after I finished the letter I got the little bug, put it on my desk and studied it, and what it meant, for quite a long while. And I think it helped me. I didn’t feel any happier from this, but I felt more courage. For if a mere bug could stand being entombed for three years so that it might finally blossom out with wings and a song, I thought I could.

Just as I got up to put it on my bureau, I heard a noise at the window. I drew a very deep breath and then stopped breathing entirely for a minute, after which I decided I would go to see what was happening. For what Mr. Kempwood had said about battles made me want to fight mine very bravely. And I did laugh when I got there, for on top of a broom and a floor-mop which had been lashed together to make height, was a package. It was tied there, and down below, poking this up, was Mr. Kempwood.

He did a stage whisper, which I heard clearly.

“Your room?” he said. “I never dreamed it!” But he had known, for I told him I slept over the little room which he used for an office. “Unlash the ballast, Juliet!” he commanded, and I did. Then I said: “I *wish* I could come down!” He said he wished so too, smiled and waved at me, and I said I’d send him a note a little later on a string. Then I went inside and undid the package. It held a wonderful box of candy with enough pink ribbon on it for two chemises, a copy of “Little Women,” and a dear little box with an ivory kitten perched on top. Inside of this he had a rhyme. It said:

"This Thomas Cat, the mop-post brings,
Is well bred, calm, and never sings
Upon a fence at night.
The box he guards is for Nat's rings,
Cuff buttons, studs, and other things
(Keeps them from dust and sight).
And if, my dear, life cruel stings,
Remember S. K.'s friendship clings
To you, all right!"

Well, I liked that, and it cheered me up. And below that I found a little wad of paper which was twisted about a silver ring; it was a lovely ring! The silver was so prettily fashioned and held the amethyst so beautifully, and on this paper was a line which said: "There's a wish on this. Put it on and see if it won't come true. I hope it will fit." And it did. I was excited and really happy! It was just like Christmas! Then I sat down and wrote Mr. Kempwood and ate candy as I did it. Life looked so much brighter! I told him so, and how happy he'd made me. Then I lowered this by a corset lace, which was the only convenient lowering device that I could find, and waited. He answered my note promptly, and he said:

"DEAR NAT,

"Your note made me very happy. I'd give my entire apartment and its contents, any day, to get a thank you note like yours! I know things will smooth out soon; they can't help it. And meanwhile, if 'a feller needs a friend' she has it, can't help having it, in the apartment below.

"Please sleep well to-night, small girl, for we are going to the Hippodrome to-morrow afternoon at 2.0. Now aren't we?

"Until then,

"S. K."

I sent down one more note before I went to bed. And because he had signed himself "S. K." I called him that. Mr. Kempwood seemed too cold for the way I liked him. So I wrote: "I would love to go, dear S. K." And I added: "*Thank you for everything!*"

And then I went to bed, wearing my new ring and thinking a great deal about Mr. Kempwood and the Hippodrome. And I almost forgot the happenings of that afternoon, which at the time had hurt fearfully.

Chapter XV—What Occurred

Christmas-time in New York is simply gorgeous, and I loved it. And it was then that all the intense excitement started and that people began to understand what had made me nervous; but I must tell what happened before the holidays came. For a good many things occurred which proved to be notes in the chord of the big mystery.

Once more my bracelet disappeared and reappeared, as it had before—at night. And this time the scratching woke me from a sound sleep, and, as before, I saw a tiny point of light caught in the gold, and in this way watched it creep about a foot inside of the room by my bed and then stop. And this time, after it had rested for a moment, it moved again with a jerk, for about two inches. Then, very quietly, the door at the head of my bed closed, and I heard the click of the door-knob, after which the key fell from the lock and clattered loudly on the floor. . . .

I lay there shaking and gasping, and wishing that even Amy were with me. But Amy and I were not good friends at that time. . . . Well, that night I got up, switched on my lights, and picked up the bracelet. I tried to be a sport, and so I said, "Hello; glad to see you back!" but my voice wasn't the sort that should have gone with those words. Then I put the bracelet up and was just about to turn off the lights when I heard my door open perhaps an inch and close quickly. And I turned in time to see a hand reach in to get the flashlight which lay on the table by my bed.

Shakily I said, "*Who is that?*" but no one answered.

And I went to the door and looked out, but no one was in sight. . . . From down the hall I could hear Uncle Archie snoring, and then Amy coughed. Nothing was the matter with them. I closed my door and locked it, although I did not see what good locks would be against a force of the sort I was meeting. But—it seemed safer.

Every sound from the street rose to bother me and make me think that there was something outside the door. Every creak in the furniture made me jump. I sat huddled up in a big chair, warmly wrapped in a blanket, but shaking as if I had two hundred and nine chills all at once. And every once in a while I would think I heard a footstep in the hall.

"If this goes on," I thought, "I do not see how I can *stand* it." And at that time I decided to give up the bracelet and have peace. For everything looks

blacker at night, and in those dark hours it is easy to give up and let yourself be beaten.

A half an hour after that, perhaps, I heard the beginning of day in the whir of motors, and nothing ever sounded so good to me. I wanted light, most terribly.

And as all things that seem as far away as graduation, or your first low-necked dress, or your first train, it eventually came, and then I lay down, and slept.

When I got up the next morning Aunt Penelope was nice to me for the first time since she thought I'd stolen Evelyn's violets. That is, I mean she felt like being kind. Before, she had been elaborately polite, and as just as she could possibly be, but I felt that this was because she would be uncomfortable if she weren't, not because her instincts pointed my way with gentleness. And I was so glad that I had to swallow a great many times as fast as possible, and couldn't say good-morning to Uncle Archie, who got in with his greeting first and "Huh-ed" at me twice before I could respond.

"My dear child," said Aunt Penelope, "are you ill?"

I said I was all right, I guessed, but that I hadn't slept very well.

"Come here," she said.

I did.

She took my hands in hers and then laid a hand on my cheek. "Hot," she said. "Suppose we stay home from school to-day?"

I nodded.

"And do a little petting of ourselves?" she went on.

I said I thought that would be nice.

"Amy will take a note to Miss Gardner," Aunt Penelope continued, "and we'll be cosily fixed at home and have Doctor Vance come in." And then she looked at me searchingly, patted my hand and sent me to my place. I didn't eat much, I didn't feel like it and I was too busy thinking, for I had decided, with daylight, that I would not give up. Uncle Archie got up, before we had finished, as he always does, and as he went by my place laid five dollars by it. I did think that was dear of him.

I asked if I might be excused, and followed him to the hall and here I thanked him. He grunted and looked over my head, and you can imagine my surprise when he said, "Guess you haven't been very happy, lately, have you?"

I replied that I supposed it was my fault if I had not been, and then (I don't know what made me, for I had become used to having people think wrong of me) I added, "*I did not take those violets.*"

“Huh——” he grunted.

“I don’t care enough for them,” I went on. “I prefer daisies to orchids, just as I prefer fishing to *thé dansants*.”

“Fishing,” said Uncle Archie, and he stared down at the surface of the hall table, which shines highly where it isn’t covered with a lovely piece of brocade. “I used to fish,” he said, “but my soul—that was a long time ago!” and he sighed. I got the impression that he had liked it lots, and I think it seemed to him as if it had happened a long time past in his life and that he had grown away from it in spirit too, and somehow couldn’t go back. I felt very sorry for him.

When I went back to the dining-room I found Evelyn just trailing in, wearing a négligé and looking pretty, but tired. She was fretful about a frock that had not come when she expected it and sat toying with her breakfast and complaining about everything. And as always, when she began this, Amy started to say that *she* had nothing to wear, and that her clothes were the worst looking in school and that she was ashamed to go. And then she began to cry.

I was disgusted, and I thought Evelyn ought to be ashamed to start it, for bad temper is just as catching as measles or mumps, and anyone who gives it to the public should be punished in some way.

Aunt looked tried.

“What *is* the matter with you?” she asked. “I never sit down that you and Amy don’t ask for something, and I’m sure I don’t see where you got that habit——”

(I almost smiled at that.) Then she looked at a little tiny diamond-trimmed wrist-watch she wears, spoke sharply to Amy of the time, added a word about her own engagements, and both she and Amy left. Evelyn and I, who had not finished eating, were alone.

And I did an awful thing, but it was a satisfaction. I told Evelyn just what I thought of her. She started it.

“What is the matter with *people*?” she said. “Sometimes they’re simply on edge. . . . Here I come in, make a calm statement about needing frocks, and Amy begins to cry. . . . Anyone can see that I need more than a child of her age does. . . .”

“People are all pigs,” I said, “and want more than they have and more and more and more, and that is the reason you’re so unhappy. You started the bad temper,” I continued (it really was interesting, for she had let her mouth open in astonishment, and astonishment evidently relaxed the spring, for it stayed so), “and then—you wonder what made it. Any girl like Amy looks up to an older sister, and when the older sister complains the entire time, why—she

does too! And that's the reason," I stated with entire frankness, "that you're going to miss happiness. You think frocks and having things makes it—well, things and frocks don't. Responsibility and love and giving make a return, and they only. . . . Look here," I paused for a moment, and then went on, "Amy adores you, she patterns herself over you; therefore she is beginning to be cross to aunt and never to say a decent thing at home and to complain *all the time*. That's what she sees in *you*——"

Evelyn stood up.

"And," I hurried on before she could break in, "she will miss real love, as you will, because real love hasn't enough money for motors and frocks and all she wants. And I think real love is lucky, for all he would get would be a request for more money, complaints and no consideration. Look at Uncle Archie," I added, and I went on at length about his caring for fishing and never doing it and how he never sat down to a meal without a request of some sort, from one of them, for money.

"That whole business has soured this family," I said, "and I am glad you are not going to let it sour another—since money is evidently most important to you."

Then I left. Evelyn had plenty of time to speak, but she didn't; and what is more she didn't speak about it later, or tell Aunt Penelope of what I had done. I know it was frightful of me, but, as I said, it was a satisfaction, for I had come in the library one afternoon hunting a book and found Evelyn and Mr. Apthorpe sitting there before a fire. The heavy rugs muffled my footsteps and before I could speak and let them know I was there, I heard, "Four thousand—oh, Herbert, I don't see how *we* could. I love you, but how *could* we manage on that!" And he hadn't come to call since, so I knew how it ended.

That was what made me so mad—to see her throw away that chance (for it was a big one if she did care) because of greed.

Several weeks went by after that and everyone but Evelyn was nicer to me. She wasn't unpleasant, but she didn't notice me. The Doctor said I was a little nervously upset, and that commanded Amy's respect and made the girls in school splendid to me. Hardly a day went by that I didn't get gum-drops or a French pastry or have someone offer to let me wear their violets for a half-hour. I liked that. And more for the spirit than for the benefits which I received from it.

Mr. Kempwood was splendid to me all that time and took me for lots of nice drives and to the theatre several times. We became better and better friends, and he began to seem less old and more "S. K.," a chum.

One night he sent a new servant up to ask if I cared to go walking with him

before dinner. I was in the dining-room helping Ito serve aunt's friends who had been playing auction and were ready to be tea-ed up. When I hunted the man to give him my answer I couldn't find him, until, looking down the long hall which leads toward the sleeping-rooms, I saw him step from my room.

"I beg pardon," he said, as he reached me, "but I heard a window go up in that room, and then a heavy tool drop. It sounded like a sneak thief and I went to see. . . . The window was open, miss, and there is a bit of wood broken from the sill. I beg pardon if I did wrong, but there seemed to be no one about but the party of ladies and I thought immediate action necessary."

I said it was all right and thanked him. And I found something he had not seen—and that was that the lock of the window was broken.

Someone had been there, and with intent fixed that window so it could be opened. It was the one which led out on the little iron grilled balcony. That was the night I set the trap. If I recall correctly, it was the night before Thanksgiving. But that doesn't matter. What does matter was that five people wore bandages on their right hands the next day—so—how could I tell who had found the trap?

Nothing seemed to work out as I hoped it would, everything only made more confusion; and I felt—Madam Jumel smile!

Chapter XVI—All Sorts of Bruises

S. K. suggested the trap and I think he did not really believe that my bracelet was ever stolen, but thought that I imagined it was, because I was at that time half sick from nervous upset, which was not extraordinary, considering everything.

"Put a mouse-trap in the box," he suggested, "and then, when you hear it shoot, you can get up and chase Madam Jumel's ghost with a hair brush or a shoe tree."

I said he was a silly thing and ignored the chase suggestion. But, on the way home I stopped at a small grocery and bought a mouse-trap, and S. K., laughing quite a little, paid for it. Then he asked me how he was to settle with the landlord that month, muttered a good deal about extravagant women, and went on to say that we could easily locate the thief, by the mouse-trap which would be clamped on his first finger.

"And," he said, "if the thief is sufficiently prominent, he will start a style and everyone will be wearing them. Your aunt will be saying, 'My dear, I've mislaid my mouse-trap and I'm *late* now! Where *ever* can it be!' " And we both laughed for half a block. It sounds silly, but S. K. imitates beautifully and I could just see Aunt Penelope running all over, hunting her mouse-trap, while Jane stood around holding her furs; and Ito and Amy helped hunt, and everyone got excited and hot; for that's the way she does lose things and find them.

S. K. and I had been walking in the first snow-fall, which was a feathery, dry affair that clung and didn't melt. It was really too cold to snow at all, and the gray sky that was full of it had a hard time letting it down to earth through the intense dry cold that made a wall. Your cheeks stung and grew pink and the flakes caught in your hair and on your clothes. S. K. said that snow was becoming to me and that I should always wear it and I replied that I would be charmed to in July.

Then he said, "My dear, you're growing up. Your answers are becoming too quick and clever for a sixteen-year-old chit. I won't have it."

"Seventeen," I responded.

He asked when and I told him that morning at four or thereabouts, for that was the hour at which I was presented to society, according to Mrs. Bradly,

who has often told me what Chloe told her of the event. My mother was very pleased with me then and happy that my father had a daughter. When someone said, “Your eyes, Nelly, and your beautiful shade of hair!” she whispered, “That’ll please Carter, for he *seems* to like that sort!”

“You’re a mean girl,” said S. K., and he meant it. I apologized.

“Would have had a party for you,” he went on. “The mention in the social column would have read: ‘Mr. Samuel Kempwood entertained for Miss Natalie Page at his apartment—and so on.’ Then, ‘Among those present were Miss Natalie Page and Mr. Kempwood. The refreshments were charming, and Mr. Kempwood almost managed to save one slice of the cake for his consumption, but the onslaught of——’ ”

I said he was unkind. Then we walked in haughty silence for another half-block.

“Look here,” he said, after a side look at me, “pretty soon, in two or three years, you’ll be coming out. Then—think of the young idiots with down on their upper lips who will fall for you. Nat, I predict it, and—suppose you fell for one of *them*?”

“Well, what of it?” I asked. I enjoyed it because I thought he was thinking how he’d miss our friendship. It gave me a new, queer feeling, which I suppose was power.

“Won’t have it,” said S. K. irritably.

“*Really?*” I said.

“Well, I won’t,” he said again. And he frowned and didn’t look at me. I melted. I care for him awfully and I can’t tease him long. For the sentence that always goes with the slipper and spanks is awfully true when I hurt S. K.

I slipped my arm through his and squeezed it tight against me. “Don’t you know,” I said, “that I’ll never like anyone as well as I do you, S. K. dear?” And I went on to tell him of all he’d done for me, how he’d saved me from running away from the firing-line, and made the firing-line a very pleasant place—in spots, and how much his teaching me history and helping me with my studies had helped, and how greatly his different interests had developed me. And I ended with: “If I ever do marry, you can pick out my husband.”

He fumbled for my hand, closed his around it hard, shook it, and said, with a funny little tight laugh: “It’s a go!” And then he was most awfully jolly, in a sort of excited way. I didn’t understand it then, but I liked him even more than usual, and so enjoyed the afternoon.

We had come from the Jumel Mansion, where we had seen General Washington. That is, we pretended we did. I often went to the Jumel Mansion,

and S. K. sometimes went with me. I was glad, for he helped to make it, and the people who had lived in it, real to me. I had a paper to write about New York at the time of the fire, its life, development, and so on, and of course Washington came in it, and S. K.'s imagination made it get the Freshman prize. I felt mean about taking it, although he said what I had put in was original and not from him.

When I told our English teacher that Mr. Kempwood had helped me by talking facts to me, Amy was in the room, and that night she said: "You always try to be truthful, don't you?"

I said, "Yes," without looking at her.

Then she looked at the ring S. K. had given me, which I wear all the time. (Aunt Penelope said I could keep it because he was so much older.) "Do you think men like truthful girls?" Amy asked next. Her voice was small. I said I thought they did.

"How do they know you're not truthful?" she asked next.

"How do you know there's a drop of ink in a glass of water?" I counter-questioned.

"Do you think it shows?" she asked slowly.

I said I felt sure that it did.

"How?" she asked.

"By the loss of faith in those to whom you have lied," I answered. I hated to hurt her, but I thought she deserved it, and it was the truth. I had lost faith in her, and after that occurrence about the violets I could not trust her.

"It isn't the first little lie," I said, "that counts so much; by that you only hurt yourself. But it's the ripples from it that make the cruelness. You see, you take the trust out of the hearts of your friends, and for a substitute you give four words."

"What are those?" asked Amy, fingering the fringe that hung from her overskirt.

"You Can't Trust Her," I said. Then Amy picked up a copy of *Vogue* and pretended to look at it, and I turned the pages of the *London Sporting and Dramatic News*, which is not so entirely given to lingerie and portraits of Lady Something. I like pictures of dogs because I know their points, and I found a double page of setters, which I studied with interest.

I think Amy tried to say that she was sorry about her lies, but I think she couldn't. And I'm glad she didn't, for I would have had to tell her that the only way to right a wrong is to try to undo it, and she wasn't ready to do that at that time. That took a long thinking to accomplish, and a place in the centre of the

stage.

But, to go back to the afternoon of mouse-traps and General Washington study, as I said, we visited the Mansion; and “Washington’s Headquarters” it was, most truly, that day.

“Do you smell something good?” asked S. K., as we stood in the hall. I shook my head.

“Stupid-nosed girl!” he said. “A huge cut of beef is roasting before the basement fireplace. It is on a spit, and it is being turned now and again by a fat, hot cook. There’s chatter below stairs. For this night President Washington is to give a large dinner party, and the house which was once Roger Morris’, and is now but a farmhouse, is to hold American celebrities. . . . Listen to the clatter on the stairs; it is a waiter in a blue satin coat and white satin breeches. He is carrying wine-glasses, because those were the good old days before anybody thought Loganberry was good for anything but painting the barn.

“Listen,” said S. K. I did, and then, in a loud voice, he said: “By King George’s beaten rascals, I’ve forgot the serviettes!”

And I seemed to see the waiter say this and hear him clatter toward a high dresser which held the linens. . . . S. K. told me about how they set the table, and he told me the date of this dinner, which was July 10, 1790. And then I had a list of the guests, who were President Washington’s Cabinet “and Ladies”: John and Abigail Adams, the Vice-President and his wife; Thomas Jefferson, the Secretary of State; Henry Knox, Secretary of War, and his wife; and Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, and his wife.

“I am glad to see Alexander Hamilton,” said S. K., squinting in the room (we pretended, of course, that their ghosts were back a-dining), “for he has done so much for America. He it was who saw that the United States must have a central power and central Government. (My, how the individual States did disagree after the war, how their trade restrictions did hamper and hurt the bigger trades and the good of the country!) He it was who got up the Constitution; and Mr. Jefferson, who sits across the table, the Declaration of Independence. Pretty nice things both of them, you know!”

I agreed.

“President Washington is speaking,” said S. K. “He has just told the servant to be lighter on his heavy-soled shoes (this in an aside), and then, as a good host, quickly diverts attention by mentioning a recollection. . . . ‘To think,’ he says, ‘that in September, 1776, I watched from this point the burning of the city of New York. It was an awesome and most fearful sight!’ (He pauses; I think he gives thanks that all the horrors of war are past.)

“ ‘And how many houses were burned, if it pleases you to make reply to a

foolish woman's question?' This from Mrs. Knox. President Washington says that it pleases him 'most mightily' to answer whatsoever question Mrs. Knox may ask him, and replies that one thousand houses went in that terrible affair, and that that number was a fourth of the city's mansions.

" 'So vast a place,' says Mrs. Hamilton. 'I am wellnigh distracted when I wander the crowded streets, thinking I may never return from whence I started!' 'We are growing,' says Thomas Jefferson. 'Our United States population is nearing three million nine hundred thousand, and New York now boasts high of its last census, which states that thirty-three thousand live within its confines.' "

I laughed, and S. K. smiled.

"To think of it," I said, and then asked what New York's population is now, and S. K. told me that in 1910 it was four million seven hundred and sixty-six thousand, and that New York State held over nine million souls.

Then S. K. told me that Hamilton was buried in Trinity Churchyard, and that Trinity Church was caught in the big fire, and rebuilt twice since, but that St. Paul's had been saved. He told me he'd take me to both places some day.

Then we started home, and I set my trap and got into riding things, for I had begun in the latter part of September to ride each day. I wondered about wearing my bracelet and decided not to. I remember I put it in the bottom drawer of my bureau under a clean petticoat and a crêpe de chine chemise. Then I started out.

A crowd from school ride together, and with us is a man who cares for us. I don't like going their pace, and so I was almost relieved when my mount bolted and got ahead of them. The day was lowering and, although the sort I liked, not, I imagine, a general favourite, for the drive was almost empty. My horse did not throw me, but a man who pretended to stop him pulled him cruelly, made him dance, and the mock-hero, while pretending to help me, pulled me off my saddle. I was thrown on the ground until I was dizzy, and then I felt hands on my arms, and heard someone whisper: "Where's the bracelet?" The crowd drew near at that moment, the man accepted thanks, and before I could speak or detain him was gone.

"Stop him!" I shouted. "Stop him!"

But the policeman who had drawn near soothed me with "He don't want no thanks, little lady. He just wanted to do you a good turn, and Lord knows what would of happened if he hadn't stepped out!"

"Has he gone?" I asked miserably.

"Sure!" said the officer, smiling. I suppose he thought I was a sentimental young person and wanted to call him "my hero!" I didn't; I wanted to have him

gaoled!

Shaking a good deal, I remounted and rode on. I decided I would finish my ride, although I was bruised and frightened. It was no ghost that had pulled me from that horse. I felt the impression of his fingers for hours afterward, and they were strong and real.

I went to bed soon after dinner that night, and at about nine Jane brought me in a huge box, all covered with white tissue and wide pink ribbons. It looked very festive, and I could hardly wait to get it open and when I did—well, it was just like S. K. That is all I can say about it and—enough!

It was a birthday cake with tiny pink candles all over it, and even a box of matches lying by the side, ready to do the work. Under this was a card, and it held S. K.'s wishes, written in a dear way, which made me very happy.

I couldn't cut that birthday cake alone and eat a piece; I wouldn't have enjoyed it. And so, in spite of Evelyn's coolness to me, I went to her room, where she was confined with a cold.

"Evelyn," I said, "it's my birthday, and S. K. sent me a cake. I would love bringing it over here and eating it with you—if you wouldn't mind?" She didn't speak. I felt sorry for her, for since Mr. Apthorpe stopped coming she has not looked happy, although she has not been so sharp or complained so much.

Suddenly I heard myself say: "I am sorry I said all that; I had no business to. You are all being very kind to me and giving me so much that I should never think of your lacks."

"Oh, that's all right," she said. And then—in a lower voice: "You know it was true."

I shook my head. "Not lately," I added to the shake. And then I again asked if I might bring over the cake, and she said yes. So I went back, got into a heavier bath-robe, lit all the candles, and triumphantly carried it to Evelyn's room.

Then I thought of Uncle Archie, found he was home, and we sent an invitation to him. He came sauntering in after several moments, looked at the cake, grunted "Huh! Where'd you get it?" and sat down. And I never, up to that time, had such a good time in that apartment. That began them.

We laughed, and Uncle Archie talked, and it was all as jolly and cosy as could be. I curled up on a window seat near the radiator, Uncle Archie sat down before Evelyn's dressing-table and actually pretended to do his hair (he hasn't any), and Evelyn sat up in bed and laughed—between blowing her nose. And we laughed and talked and ate cake and looked at the flickering pink tapers a-top my cake.

After a half-hour of this Uncle Archie stood up. “Father,” Evelyn said, with a little hesitation and some embarrassment, “I wish you’d come again—like this. I promise never to ask you for a thing in this room!”

He put his big hand on her head and said, “When I can, I like you to ask me. It’s only when I can’t that it hurts.” And before me I saw those two people run up the curtains that hid their souls, and begin to understand each other. Evelyn looked up at him, and suddenly she held the back of his fat, pudgy hand against her cheek.

“Father,” she said, “I hope that perhaps we can come to be pretty good friends.”

He grunted and left. But I knew he felt a lot and didn’t dare to do more than grunt, and after he went Evelyn blew her nose very hard. Then she lay back and silently we watched the little flames of the candles.

“People are such fools,” she whispered. I nodded, still staring at the points of light. I had looked at them so long that they almost hypnotized me. It was really difficult to look away.

She spoke abruptly next, and loud. “You were right,” she said, “in what you said that day. I have been fretful and cross and my standards have been wrong. And—all the wrongness of them is hurting me now. . . .” Then, with gaps and funny interludes of the old, critical, little part of Evelyn, she told me that Herbert Apthorpe didn’t like her any more, that he had been hurt by her not being willing to marry him because she considered him poor, and that he hadn’t answered a note in which she said she was sorry.

“I saw him,” she ended, “last week with Charlotte Brush, I suppose——” Then her voice trailed off as she stared up at the ceiling. Her arms were above her head and her hair spread all over the pillow in heavy chestnut waves.

“He must care,” I said, getting up and coming over to sit on the bed.

“Why?” she asked.

“Because you are so beautiful,” I answered, “and your spirit would be too, if you’d let it. You are dear when you want to be.”

“Do you think so?” she asked with interest, as she turned her eyes on me. I was afraid she would be annoyed, but she wasn’t.

“Why lately,” I said, “no one could have been more lovely——”

“Not to you,” she answered.

I said I didn’t blame her, that I had been presuming and I knew it. For I had.

“You helped me,” she said, and then she began to cry. “I am going to do

my best," she whimpered, between really big sobs, "and be nice at home anyway—but I wish—I wish I had had sense enough to measure when——" She didn't finish, but I knew what she meant. I put my arms around her and she sat up and let her head rest on my shoulder.

"You'll get this cold," she whispered, after her sobs had a little quieted. I said I didn't care. And then she kissed me. And I knew we were friends for always; the sort of friends that are tight enough to scrap and stand it, disagree and love.

After a little while more I left, because we both began to be embarrassed from the manner in which we had revealed what was way inside. . . . I went to bed thinking of families and of how often they neglect opportunities to know and love each other. I thought of Uncle Archie and Evelyn and then I thought how lucky I had been, for ever since I was three Uncle Frank had loved me, ever so hard; sometimes very absently, to be sure, but I always knew he cared and I think he knew I did. Before I slept, he always came in to sit on the edge of my bed and once and again he'd forget why and then he'd say, "Ho hum, what am I here for?"

And I'd say, "Good-night, Uncle Frank."

Then he'd say, "Ho hum! To be sure!" and add "Good-night." Then from the doorway he would say, "Ho hum, I love you," and I would whisper, most always very sleepily, "I love you——" and I drifted away on that.

When I was tiny, Chloe began to send me to sleep with the remembrance that I loved someone and someone loved me, and I did it to Uncle Frank when I came, and that started it. . . . Perhaps some people might have thought it funny to hear a bent-shouldered man with a long beard say, "Ho hum. . . . I love you," but it was never funny to me.

I will always see him outlined against the light from the hall—and silhouetted in that way in my door, and when I do, I hear his voice telling a sleepy little child that she was loved. And I know it was not funny. It was beautiful.

Chapter XVII—Who Caught the Mouse-Trap?

The night after my birthday party, at which the hostess was clothed in pink pyjamas and a coral bath-robe and one of her guests wore a crêpe de chine nighty, I slept badly. In the first place I was bruised and sore from my fall and in the second, frankly frightened. I kept imagining that I heard things, as you do when the lights are out and the world is still outside. My furniture creaked as the damp, night air crept in. A board snapped, then my radiator clanked. I used my flashlight about two hundred and eight times and then, ashamed of myself, lay back and decided I would go to sleep and not be silly. And I did go to sleep.

When I awoke it was quieter than ever and very still, but I knew by the goose-flesh, hot-and-cold, choked sensation I had, that I had been awakened by something foreign, perhaps a noise that should not have been, and that I was not alone. I lay shaking, but with my eyes closed, and then I felt a light flash across my face. I stirred, sighed as you do when half-awake, and turned. Then I heard footsteps near my bureau and a gently, sliding noise which was the drawer being pulled out. I stealthily reached for my night light, but it had been set off the table on the floor—put of my reach. And my flashlight was gone.

I did some quick thinking; in fact I don't know how I got all the reasoning I did in those few minutes, but somehow it went in. I reasoned that if I called I would be hurt before anyone could reach me, and that I had no chance to get up and get out of the room—alive. And I decided that if the bracelet was the only thing wanted, I would not be hurt if I kept quiet; so I adopted the policy of possums and lots of the little grapevine insects that look so much like twigs or a bit of leaf—and lay still.

I heard the trap snap and a muttered word that is absolutely unquotable, and I had to smile, even then! And I was fearfully frightened—almost sick from fright to be truthful. Then I turned again and sighed and I *heard* the man, woman, or whatever it was, grow quiet. Absolutely *heard* he, she, or it, hold its breath, wait in suspense, and the silence of the moment was louder than lots of noises. It simply throbbed.

Then there was a soft noise and I saw a dark form in front of the window, heard a scratch of a heel going over the sill and something scratch. I coughed, there was a quick movement from the window, and I knew I was alone. It was

a cloudy night, with the air still threatening snow and the court is dusky even in daytime, so I could not even get an outline of the intruder, which I wanted and so greatly needed.

I heard a scuffle outside, as if someone were sliding down against bricks, and then there was silence, throbbing silence once more, which seemed loud as it so often does at night. . . . I lay very still for several moments, perhaps it was many minutes; I don't know, for I was sick and shaking and I imagine half-fainting, because the bed seemed to be floating. Even then, I was ashamed of myself for my lack of courage. When I at last got my nerve back, I sat up, wiped my forehead, which was wet, mopped off my cold, damp palms, and felt around for my night light. I found it, about a yard from my bed, and after I set it back I lit it and looked around. Nothing was disturbed, but I found that the trap was gone.

"Well," I thought, "I have you now——" and I stood looking down at the empty box, and smiling—but I missed it. Something was disturbed. A piece of wood was torn from the window-sill, a great piece which had been started in a jag by the holes made that night of the rappings, and on the remaining splinters of this was a piece of cloth, quite evidently torn from clothing.

"If I were only a Sherlock!" I thought, as I held it. I didn't dream it would ever really help, but I put great faith in the scar that a trap would leave.

After that I went over to sleep with Amy. She moved as I crawled in by her, but didn't wake. I was glad that I didn't disturb her, for she had been to a party the night before which lasted longer than my birthday affair.

In the morning Amy got up without waking me and at ten aunt came in to sit down on the bed.

"Didn't sleep very well?" she asked, eyeing me quite anxiously, I thought.

I said I hadn't, very.

"Um——" she mused, and then: "Well, we'll have a nice breakfast in bed after you've been in the tub. Use those bath salts the doctor gave you, dear—very relaxing. And I'll hunt something for you to read." She was very nice to me and I did so appreciate it.

"Evelyn wanted you to go driving with her; she's decided to go out to-day; but I wouldn't let her call you. Got up and had breakfast with her father this morning for some reason. Usually we don't see her before ten on Sundays, but the young mind is a riddle. . . . Do you think you can go to sleep again after breakfast?"

I said I'd try.

"I'll send Jane in to get you a fresh nightdress and to help you bathe," said

aunt as she stood up, and then she patted my cheek, murmured something of an engagement, and left. When Jane came in I nearly fainted. She had her right hand done up, and she told me she had run an ice-pick into her second finger and that it “hurt something fierce.” I thought she was pretty cool about it, for at that time I was sure it was Jane.

“Didn’t know the cook let you touch the refrigerator,” I said, as I kicked off my slippers and stepped in the tub.

Jane, who was picking up my nighty, explained that the cook had been out and that she was entertaining a “gentleman friend,” who had brought a bottle of beer with him. And that sounded queer to me. It isn’t just the thing one would pick out for an offering to Love, and besides it is not as common as it once was.

“He’s lucky to have it,” I said, and then: “Do you like ice in beer? I didn’t know people usually put it in that.”

Jane grew pink and she looked at me appealingly. I couldn’t soften, for I knew I must get whatever clues I could.

“Some people likes it in,” she said lamely and then went to get me a fresh nightdress and a négligé of Amy’s that Aunt Penelope had told her to let me wear.

She brushed my hair and tied it with great bows of wide pink ribbon and then tucked me into bed.

“Jane,” I said, “haven’t I always been good to you? I’ve tried to be.”

“You always have been, miss,” she answered. “You have a pleasant way with yuh, and Ito and me is always saying how different you are from Miss Evelyn and——”

“Never mind about that,” I said. “But if you ever wanted anything very much I hope you would come to me and ask for it—or tell me about it—instead of borrowing whatever you liked for especial occasions.”

“That’s what maw always called it,” she said, “just borrowing. She took in elegant washes and we kids wore them clothes regular. We certainly missed maw when she died!”

Jane wiped her eyes, and although I felt sorry for her I did want to smile. She *mixed* things so.

“Did you like the bracelet,” I asked boldly, “and simply want to wear it occasionally—borrow it?”

“What bracelet?” she asked, but she coloured hotly. I gave up. I’d tried to give her a chance, but I saw she wasn’t ready to surrender without war. After a few more moments of puttering and making me comfortable, she left and I lay

thinking how it could be solved. Then Ito came in with a wicker breakfast tray which stood on little legs, and on this was a pink china breakfast set which was cheerful and easy to eat from. Ito had put a rose between the folds of my napkin and I was pleased.

“That is so pretty, Ito!” I said. “I wasn’t very hungry, but I am now——” and then I stopped, my eyes glued to his hand, the right one, which was bandaged. I gasped.

“You’ve hurt yourself?” I asked.

Ito grinned widely. “Everybody have bandage,” he remarked pleasantly. “Jane have ice-pick in finger, I sharp knife for benefit of steak and make mistakes in direction. Everybody stabbed to bleed.”

I giggled a little, it seemed so funny. “Who else?” I asked in despair.

“Miss Evelyn shut hand in motor door, it smash open,” he went on. “Mr. Kempwood new servant hurt hand to cut on bottle that is fall to floor and break. All is hospital.”

I said I was sorry for them, but started laughing. Ito joined me, and just at that moment Evelyn appeared “Have you seen Amy?” she asked. I said I hadn’t.

“Had to go to the doctor’s the minute she got up,” Evelyn explained. “She didn’t say a word to anyone about it, but was awfully game. It seems she got up to close a window last night—the wind was frightful, you know—and she was half asleep, I imagine, and fumbled it, for the window came down on her fingers and she was really hurt. . . . What, your hand too, Ito?” And she began to laugh with us.

But no one had the full appreciation of the joke that I had. It really was funny, although it did disturb me. I began to believe it was Jane. But I looked at the sample of cloth that had caught on my window-sill and wondered why Jane would wear that sort of a suit at night, and why she would go out on the balcony when she might have left more easily by my door? For while the balcony does lead past Amy’s room to the pantry window, my door is the first on the hall which belongs to the sleeping part of the apartment, and to leave by that would mean running no risks of encountering anyone’s wakefulness on return. I remembered the scratching noise and wondered whether I had heard it—what it meant? But I wasn’t to know for some time after that.

The next week was quiet, but the week after——! Words fail! There should be one word that implies hair standing on end, cold chills, shaking knees, goose-flesh, and a heart going about twenty-seven thousand hard whacks to the minute. I could use that word. I really *could*, and—I need it!

Chapter XVIII—Heart Affairs

About that time things began to stir for Christmas. Packages came in at all hours, and it was understood that they weren't even to be felt, and that only the person to whom they were addressed could open them. The weather man was evidently in a good humour, for he predicted "dry, fair weather with light south winds," and, of course, almost the greatest blizzard that New York had ever known appeared to make the landscape match those snow-scene Christmas-cards with shiny silver on them that drops off. And we had a splendid time.

The shops were simply gorgeous with their red and green decorations, and people carried packages, looked tired, but smiled. It was the greatest fun in the world to go out on Saturday mornings and scrunch through the snow to the subway, and then delve into the crowds, who laughed and pushed and hurried with such good nature. Amy and I could hardly wait for school to close. And in school notes simply flew, all of them containing confidences about the furs the writer hoped to get, or the ostrich-feather fan she *knew* she was going to get, having seen the long package on the hall table.

Aunt Penelope told us to make notes of what we wanted, and it was what we did the Saturday afternoon I met Mr. Apthorpe. Evelyn, who had not been awfully well since she had that bad cold, sat in the living-room with Amy and me, and we were enjoying being together.

"I am going to ask for a Russian sable coat," said Amy, who was sucking the point of her pencil and looking down at the pad she held, "because I think it is a duty to look for the best. Some poet—I've forgotten who—said: 'Hitch your waggon to a star.' "

Evelyn said that one would be a falling star.

"But perhaps you could persuade father that I *need* one," Amy went on. "You have a tactful way and seem to be very chummy with him lately."

"Oh, Baby!" said Evelyn (Baby is the family pet name for Amy), "you should be ashamed of yourself! Why don't you give father a Christmas present of not asking for the impossible and not whining for what he can't give you?"

Amy's face was a study in amazement. "But you——" she said.

"Have reformed," said Evelyn, and then she went back to her lists. She was working hard, figuring out how little she dared give people who had entertained her. Amy looked at her, then she scribbled a note and passed it to

me, pretending it was a list of girls in our school that we were going to ask to tea during the holidays.

“She is mourning for Herbert,” she had written. I nodded and felt ever so sorry for Evelyn. She had been very kind and unnatural for ever so long, and it was plain that something had made a big dent in her feelings. She was ashamed of the way she had let sharpness grow on her, you could see that, and I think she was going through a lot in realizing how unpleasant she had often been, and trying not to be so any more. In a way, any reform is an operation, for you yourself cut out something that was wrong and didn’t belong in you, and even a skilled surgeon hurts you when he cuts off anything that shouldn’t grow on you. I know, for I had a wart removed. My simile is somewhat mixed, but I still shine most brilliantly in athletics. I became right forward and captain of our basket-ball team after one game, but that is beside the point.

After we had written our lists and had had tea and discussed where the tree should be set, I said I wanted to go walking, and asked if anyone else did, and, after they refused, I started out. It was lots of fun to walk, because a little thaw had made a sheet of ice over everything, and going was a difficult matter. You had to slide on every little incline, and I stood in our apartment-house door for quite a while watching those who strolled and—slipped. They would mince along and then—zip! They’d go for perhaps five feet and end up by doing a bunny-hug to a tree that stands by the alleyway gate. And as I stepped forth, I, too, slid and—into Mr. Herbert Apthorpe. He tried to steady me, almost lost his balance, and then we laughed.

“I’m Evelyn’s cousin,” I said, as I walked by him (I made his direction mine); “I suppose you’ve forgotten me.”

He said he hadn’t, to be polite, but I knew he had.

“We were speaking of you to-day,” I went on. “Evelyn hasn’t been well, and she said she wished you would come up.” I stole a side look at him and saw that his face looked stiff and that his eyes were steadily fixed ahead. He didn’t look encouraging.

“I am flattered,” he said; and the way he said it made the snow-banks warm little nesting-places in comparison.

I knew he wasn’t at all flattered, but just said so to let me know he wasn’t. I tried a little more finesse, and it didn’t work, and then—I dropped tact, which has never done a thing for me but make me trip, and relied on crude truth.

“Didn’t you like Evelyn?” I asked. I was sure he did, or I wouldn’t have said what I then did.

“Very charming girl,” he said stiffly.

“Then why do you hurt her?” I asked. He looked at me after that.

“What?” he asked. I repeated my question. And he echoed it in a vacant way, only putting “I” in place of “you.”

“You do,” I assured him.

Then he spoke, quickly, to the point, and in a way that left no doubt as to how he felt. “She turned me off,” he said, “because I hadn’t enough money. Left me in no doubt about how she felt and how much she valued what I offered her. That didn’t seem to count. The fact that my salary is modest did.” And after that he walked so fast that I almost had to run to keep up with him.

“If she were sick,” I said, “wouldn’t you stick to her, help her—do anything you could for her?”

I think he considered me an interfering chit, as I was, and hated me; but he couldn’t very well strangle me, and I could walk quite as fast as he, so he replied, crisply, coolly, as before, but replied: “Since it interests you,” he answered, “certainly.”

Then I explained that she was sick. I said she had lived in a place where money was thought most important, and among people who attached a false value to it. And I said that that had made her sick mentally and that he should give her a chance and help her through that quite as he would through anything that made her body as miserable. He stopped and faced me.

“She is changing,” I said. “She is sorry, and she has cried before me about you.”

He caught his breath and then said: “Oh, my *dear*!” But he wasn’t speaking to me, I knew, but to Evelyn.

“She’s at home,” I went on, “and alone, or will be, since you can order Amy off. And she will love seeing you. She has cared so much that I think that has kept her from getting over this cold. I know it.”

He didn’t speak, but gripped my hand, and then he turned and hurried back toward the place where we had met. And I knew where he went from there, before I got home, and Amy told me about it.

I went on feeling sort of silly. The whole thing had taken lots of nerve, and if I hadn’t cared so much for Evelyn I never would have done it. I hate explaining what I think about the values of love and things. It makes me feel wishy-washy. So I was glad to be diverted by meeting S. K. He was in his car, and leaned out and told me to get off the grass!

“Can’t you see the signs?” he asked, as I turned to see where the loud order came from.

“Get in here,” he ordered next, and then his chauffeur, who grins and seems more human than other people’s chauffeurs, helped me across the snow-

bank, and I was by S. K. He asked me if I'd minded the heat, and how many vanity cases I expected Santa to give me, and then he said he had got me a present and that I'd better sit tight or he'd give it to the janitor.

I looked at his chauffeur's uniform and asked him where he got his servants' duds.

"Rogers Peet," he replied. "Why?"

"You are too young to know, S. K.," I replied. "All of them—Debson's too?"

"All of them," he answered.

I had found out one more thing. "How did your man cut himself?" I asked next.

"On a piece of Baron Stiegel glass, worse luck," S. K. answered. I felt sorry, for that glass was manufactured by Baron Stiegel way back, ages ago. He lived in South-Eastern Pennsylvania, and the glass is interesting from the historic as well as artistic viewpoint. S. K. has lots of things of that sort that are interesting as well as beautiful.

"If you'll go riding, we won't go home," said S. K. next.

I said I would go, and we turned toward Riverside Drive, which was lovelier than ever with the snow weighting down the boughs of the trees, and the banks of the Hudson glittering like white mountains across the way. Little tots, many of whom wore red coats, made bright spots in the snow, and their nurses added the black lines that have to be to make a perfect poster. I loved it and so did S. K.

Huge motors, with beautiful women in them, rolled softly with and by us, and some of the windows of the houses and apartments were beginning to be bright with early lights. We were quiet because it made you feel that way.

"I love this," I whispered.

"My dear," S. K. answered, "I do too." Then he looked down at me, and I was warmed by the feeling that he liked me a great deal. He had begun, even at that time, to be quite as much a part of my life as Uncle Frank, who, in his funny, forgetting way, has been both mother and father to me ever since I can remember.

"Next summer," said S. K., "I am going to Southampton when your aunt does, and I shall return to town when she does."

"Uncle Archie may be jealous," I answered, smiling.

S. K. started to speak, then stopped, rubbed his hands together, looked away from me, and frowned. I looked at the beautiful houses, the crowds, and the passing cars. The little stretch of park, the wonderful apartments, and the

well-dressed people, made a picture, a picture of happiest, smoothest-living New York. It was pleasant to look on.

“Suppose,” suggested S. K., “we go in up here and have tea? I imagine you’ve had it once, but I also suppose that hasn’t dimmed your bright young appetite.”

I giggled, for it hadn’t. And after we had driven some distance more, we turned in a big house that is set high on a lot of ground where you can get very good tea and wonderful things to eat between drinks. We had scones, and marmalade, and little cakes that were about as big as big candies and which, like those, came in cases. I ate quite a lot. S. K. telephoned aunt about where I was, and we lingered.

I grew confidential after I ate, and told S. K. about Evelyn and Mr. Apthorpe. I hoped he would think it was all right, and he did. He said he wished someone would Cook Tour his affairs like that, and something honestly hurt under my left ribs.

“Yours?” I said, before I knew that I was going to speak.

“Think I’m too old?” he asked, in a queer, tight way.

I said it wasn’t that, and then I told the truth. “I suppose,” I said, “I am a pig, but I would feel awfully if you got married. I don’t know how I could stand it, S. K. I am awfully used to you and your friendship.”

He leaned across the table, covered my hand with his, squeezed it in a way that reassured me, and said: “I promise I won’t get married until you say I can. How about that? You know I am to choose your husband, so your having a little say is only fair.”

I laughed, for I’d forgotten about that.

Then S. K. said: “I beg pardon, Nat; I seem to have borrowed your hand. Perhaps you’ll want it to-morrow.” After which he folded my fingers up and laid my hand in my lap. I love his nonsense.

We had a good time, and he told me about Madam Jumel’s marriage. The talk had run in that direction, and that, I suppose, started it. . . . It seemed that she was a great flirt, and I think M. Jumel did not think she would make a good wife, for although he made love to her, S. K. said, he did not ask her to marry him. But on one occasion, when Stephen Jumel returned to his home after a little absence, he found that Eliza Bowen was ill and, the doctor said, dying. He went to her bedside, where the lady besought him to marry her. S. K. didn’t tell me why she wanted to be married so much, but I suppose she wanted “ ‘Mrs.’ on her tombstone,” as we say in Queensburg. Anyway, M. Jumel was so touched that the priest then and there married them, and—the next day Eliza Bowen Jumel arose from her bed, and went driving in high state. She wasn’t

really sick at all!

“What do you think of that, Nat?” S. K. asked.

I said I didn’t think it was entirely upright.

“Right, my dear,” said S. K., reaching for a buttered scone, and then he went on to tell me how she had robbed Stephen Jumel, who, during his absence abroad, had given her power to administer his affairs. And how, when he came back, he found himself a poor old man and a dependent. I said it was sad, and I hated Madam Jumel’s being buried by one of the most beautiful drives in all America, and having a splendid monument (we had seen it before we had tea), while her husband’s grave is in one corner of a little churchyard, neglected and worn, and so hurt by time that only “Stephen” is left to remind one of a name that once was famous. Heavy trucks lumber by that spot, and very poor people hurry past, while their children, half clothed and hungry, scream over their games, which must be played on the kerb.

“S. K.,” I said, “I wish it might have been different.”

“He bought that plot,” S. K. answered, “when he married Eliza Bowen. You would not understand, but she had done things that made good people distrust her. You know, hard as it may seem, Nat, you usually give yourself the dose that makes the pain.”

I knew that, and said so.

Then I asked why people, such great people, should have come to visit a woman who was not all that she should have been.

S. K. said they didn’t, and that the tales of her entertaining were largely fictitious—meaning made up. He said that during the time the Bonapartes were in America she was abroad, so that plainly she did not entertain them; and in other cases dates prove the same tale. Abroad, he said, it was different. That broken French from an American was quaint, while bad English from an American was common, and made the speaker so. And he said that some of her little girl phrases, which were not nice, had clung to her, and, with what people knew of her here, spoiled her chances for social success. He said her own niece, who lived with her, said she never entertained the Bonapartes, and was much alone. But—she kept a table with glass and bits of silver on it, spread, she said, as it had been for the dinner she gave to Joseph Bonaparte.

Then S. K. asked me if I’d ever read “Great Expectations,” and told me of an old woman in there whose lover had failed to appear at the wedding, and how she wore her wedding clothes for years after and let the wedding feast stay on the table untouched.

“Rodents crawled from the cake,” said S. K., “dust lay on all the china, cobwebs hung from the candlesticks, and—she waited. And I think Dickens

visited America before he wrote this. Do you suppose he saw Madam Jumel's table and got his idea there?"

I said I didn't know, but it interested me a lot.

Then, because it was getting late, we had to start off. I didn't want to go because I'd had a good time with S. K. and hated to end it. I always do have a good time when I'm with him, and I always hate to have to stop!

Chapter XIX—Two Surprises

The week before Christmas was packed tight with hurry, tired bones, fun, and, for me, a short worry and two surprises, one of which made my disquiet. And the week after held indigestion, more tired bones, more fun, and one surprise. And they each held a mysterious happening which no one could explain. The second of these being so serious that my stories of hearing things at night were at last taken seriously. Even the rappings which they had all heard had not made them see that anything out of the ordinary was really happening, until the after-Christmas affair convinced them. Feeling this, I had given up speaking of what occurred to bother me.

It was like telling of the huge fish you HONESTLY really almost landed, and then having the listener say: "Oh yes. But I suppose he got away?" and—smile. It shut you up. It was that way with my affairs.

After Evelyn began to say, "How many brigands slept on the balcony last night, Natalie?" or, "I heard strange noises at five this morning. It *might* have been the milkman, but Natalie seems to think it was a thug who came in to steal her flashlight!"

Perhaps I would say: "It *was* gone!" and then everyone would laugh, for of course they thought I had mislaid it; and naturally thought so, since a real thief is rarely satisfied with one flashlight costing a dollar and forty cents. Just as I decided to stop assuring them that something was happening (it seemed futile to keep up—they *wouldn't* believe me) Evelyn stopped teasing me. I think Doctor Vance's saying I wasn't especially well made that. And I was glad to have it cease. It wasn't a joke to me!

As I said, the week before Christmas was a hurried time. Aunt, Evelyn, and Amy gave lots of people presents and I helped them wrap them up. It was great fun. The red and green tissues, the beautiful ribbons and the cunning stickers made things so pretty that you never thought of the bother. But I will acknowledge that I tired of the flavour of the stickers, which was assertive and clung. I believe any stationery house would make a *fortune* if they manufactured Christmas seals that tasted as nice as they look.

I said so to S. K. one afternoon a few days before Christmas. He had come up and we were in the library. Amy was playing the victrola, between going to the hall to inspect the packages which kept arriving so steadily; Evelyn was writing thank you notes for things she *hadn't received*! She said she always

did, because it saved the bother after Christmas, when parties were scheduled for almost every minute; and that it was quite simple since all you had to do was to say: “Your beautiful gift means so *much* to me, and I shall always treasure it.” But Amy told me one year Aunt Penelope mailed these before Evelyn knew it and a lot of the thanked people hadn’t come across. Naturally it was awkward and took a great deal of talented explaining.

But, to go back to that afternoon. S. K. said: “That’s one thing you haven’t tried—glue.” And I knew he meant putting it in the bracelet box. He smiled at me in a teasing way after that, for even he didn’t take me seriously then.

“No,” I answered, “but I will, or something better for leaving a trail. It’s a good idea.” I was really taken with it and decided upon red paint, as I tied up a set of bridge scores that Aunt Penelope was going to send to a cousin of hers who lives miles from nowhere on a Western farm.

Then I attacked a lot of nut bowls and crackers that Evelyn had got at a bargain from a gift shop. Amy tried to crack a peanut with the crackers, and even its fragile shell was not dented, but Evelyn explained that “It was *the thought*” that counted. Personally, I decided that the kind of thoughts one would have on using those things would count against you—if Heaven’s Gate Keeper were listening, but I didn’t say so.

“Got sixteen of those last Christmas,” said S. K.

“I had planned to give you one!” I gasped, and I really did it well.

“My dear,” he said, growing quite excited, “you know I was joking. I should love having you give me one! I’m simply a stupid fool, that’s all and ——” And then I laughed, and Evelyn, who had stopped writing to listen, did too, for she had helped me get my present for S. K.

“Come here, you humbug!” he ordered. I came. He reached up and pulled me down on the lounge beside him, very hard. “What’ll I do to her, Miss Evelyn?” he asked, as he frowned down on me.

Evelyn said I was hopeless and that she thought nothing short of arsenic, and a large dose of that, would have any effect.

“Oh, well, we’ll let her live a small while longer,” he temporized, and I slipped my hand in his because I am always a little sorry when I tease him, although it is fun to do. “I’ll tell you,” he went on. “We’ll have bread and butter, and that ONLY, with tea for a month.”

“Then I won’t come down and have tea with you,” I replied, “for I can get that kind of a hand-out here.”

“So, you slangy young thing, I am loved for my food?” he asked. He looked quizzical, but I thought he wondered, and of course I told him I loved

him for himself. Evelyn was amused, which was silly of her, because it was nothing to be flippant about.

“Shall I leave the room?” she asked, in an attempt to be funny. And then, for the first time, I realized that S. K. was not so much older than I, after all, and that perhaps he, as well as other people, might not understand. He had seemed like Uncle Frank, or Bradly-dear; like someone who belonged to me, and to whom I belonged. I had adopted him into the family-side of my heart because he had been so good to me, and of course for the same reason I loved him. But I wondered then, whether my saying so sounded silly, and it made me grow pink and look down.

But S. K. helped me out as he always does.

“No,” he answered, and I felt that he was looking at me and in a very kind way, “that is not the kind of love Nat means. Hers has a sort of small girl, open-air, baseball flavour that is attractive, but—not right for a flirtation. When she learns the other sort, you may leave the room—and quickly, please!”

Evelyn laughed, and went on scribbling. I could see that her remark had been idle, and that she thought S. K.’s was too, but I looked up. S. K. was looking down at me and I felt frightened and very happy, and quite hot but a little chilly; and I began, right then, to know that I did care a great, great deal for S. K. and that—he cared for me.

I didn’t need the thing he blurted out in a whisper, to be sure. For his eyes had said it. What sounded as if it were shaken from him was: “My dearest?” and it came as a question, and after it he bit his lips, grew slowly red and looked away. I knew he was sorry he had spoken, and I was sorry too, for it frightened me, and because I did not know what to do.

I got up and began to wrap up Christmas things and S. K. did not watch me as he usually does, but looked into the fire.

“Thought you were going to punish her,” said Evelyn in that level voice which people use when they’re writing hard or playing the piano softly.

“Decided it was futile,” he answered; and I saw that he was upset too, for he spoke stiffly. And then, after refusing tea and making a light mention of an engagement, he left. And I went on wrapping up packages, but my hands shook.

“Why didn’t you see him out?” Evelyn asked.

I replied that Ito was in the hall and that I didn’t see any reason for doing so.

Then Amy came in and said that Herbert was coming, and that meant that

she and I had to get out. For ever since that afternoon that I bumped into him while attempting to walk, he and Evelyn have been discussing inner draperies and how to keep cooks, and the right proportion for a rent, and where to live, for they got engaged that day. Amy told me about it. She said it was dramatic and exceedingly interesting, but that they ordered her off just when she most wanted to stay.

It seemed he bolted in the room, and two feet from Evelyn paused. Amy said he was absolutely white and spoke in a deep, shaken voice. She really described it beautifully. He said: "*You have been ill!*"

And she said: "Oh, *Herbert*," and began to cry. Then she stretched a hand out to him, and he put his arms around her and said: "My *darling!*" Amy, who had been sitting in a high-backed Italian chair, naturally got up to look over it, and then Evelyn ordered her off. She whispered: "Please, Amy—go——" and Amy felt that she had to. But she was annoyed at Evelyn, for she wasn't bothering anyone, and she said it was better than movies or the theatre, for she knew the principal characters, and she said that they were acting wonderfully.

But, to go back; after I left them that afternoon I went to my room. Amy had to do some telephoning and stopped outside of the library door to do it. She said she liked that telephone better, but I think she did it because it annoys Evelyn. Of course the most loving sisters occasionally positively work to think up ways of annoying one another; it belongs to them just as much as does taking each other's clothes, or borrowing hats.

In my room I sat down by the window and I did not light the lights. . . . I wanted to think and in the half-light it seemed easier for the sort of reverie in which I was going to indulge. For, if you can understand it, I was frightened. I loved S. K., I knew that; but I didn't want to plan a house as Evelyn and Herbert were and to have people go off to leave us alone to do it. Sometimes Herbert kisses Evelyn when they are alone, I am quite sure of it, for I heard Evelyn say: "Don't, dear—someone is coming," as I came in one day. And Amy assured me that that was a part of being engaged. I can't quite explain, because I am stupid about making words carry my thoughts, but at that moment I very much wanted to be back in Queensburg, playing ball, walking, or riding. I wanted Willy to say, "Come out and play catch, Nat!" and not to be worried about things that loomed ahead, things that I was afraid must come before I was ready for them. . . . But—curiously, with all that fear, I had that happy but sad, and lovely but hurting sensation that neither Bradly-dear nor Uncle Frank had ever had. I think my mother would have understood it, and I know she could have helped me. I tried to shut my eyes and pretend she could talk to me, but it only left me a little choked and wanting her fearfully. I think, perhaps, if she had been there, that I would have put my head down on her

shoulder and cried—although I never do cry—and that she would have said, “My dear little girl! My baby!” which is strange, since I cannot remember a word of hers and possibly she never did call me “My dear little girl,” or “My baby.”

After a while Amy came rustling in to show me a new frock, and made a good deal of noise and turned on all the lights, which helped me. And then I got dressed for the evening, and we heard Uncle Archie come in.

“I am going to take Evelyn’s place with him,” Amy said piously as she looked at her back in a cheval glass. “Evelyn has absorbed *all* his attention recently, but I’m going to cut her out. I think he’s a dear.”

I agreed with her.

“And I think it looks so sweet to see a father and daughter devotedly attached,” said Amy. Again I agreed and loudly, for I thought Uncle Archie would be pleased by her paying him attention, as he was by Evelyn’s doing so, and I knew that Amy had to limelight herself before she enjoyed doing anything kind. She had to occupy the centre of the stage. She’s built that way. That is really the reason she confessed about the violets, but that comes later.

There were guests at dinner, and Ito spilled soup, but otherwise it was uneventful. And afterward Amy went out to a little party to which I had not been asked, Evelyn went out with Mr. Apthorpe, aunt and her guests played cards in the living-room and I went to mine again—to write letters.

I thought writing to Uncle Frank would help me, but it didn’t. I knew that if I had wanted advice, he probably would tell me how long a grasshopper woos its mate before marriage, instead of talking to me about mine. I love him, but his soul is steeped in bugs. The person I wanted to ask help from was S. K., but doing so seemed odd under the circumstances.

At nine I heard a noise, a funny noise. I got up and turned off my light and waited. After a few moments I heard a scrape on the side of the building and I turned on the electrics suddenly. At that, something slid down against the outside wall. I heard it. Whatever it was had slipped down the side of the house, scraping all the way. I again turned out the lights and going to the window peered out. In the dim light of the court seeing was difficult, but I did manage to make out a black mass on S. K.’s balcony and then I heard a window slide up and this disappeared. And, without picking up a scarf or a wrap, I hurried out, ran down the balcony until I reached the fire-escapes, which are in front of the main hall windows and are always well illuminated by them. I ran down these, and it seemed like old times, for the going was not steady. Of course, the rail was just a rod, the building was high and the steps steep. I realized that New York had tamed me, for by the time I reached S. K.’s

window I was glad to stop.

Here I kicked a hole through the window-pane, knocked out the glass and entered. S. K.'s man was evidently washing up things, for he came toward me with a towel and a glass in one hand.

Panting a little, I told him I'd seen a man go in the office window. S. K. has a sort of office in the room that corresponds to mine in his apartment. Debson immediately put down the glass, told me to be quiet, settled his shoulders, and began the hunt. He was brave, but I could see that he was frightened, for he was white.

He whispered a direction for me to the library, and there I went. I tiptoed, quite naturally, and S. K. was surprised to see me.

"Nat!" he gasped, and then he stopped, for I gestured for silence, just as hard as I could. . . . To make a long story short, there was no one, and I suppose both those men thought I was crazy, and S. K. had to get a new glass for that window I kicked in. But he was nice about that.

"I did see someone come in here," I said lamely.

"Did you hear anything, Debson?" S. K. asked. Debson shook his head.

"Not since Maggie left, at least, sir," he qualified. "She went to the balcony to shake a duster, I think, sir, although I am not sure."

"That was probably it," said S. K. He dismissed Debson and then said: "Sit down, Nat." And I did. Then he told me that he thought it was fine and brave of me, and that he appreciated it, although my going without a wrap worried him, and my Paul Revereing it down a fire-escape was a dangerous practice for night—or any other time, for that matter. And I promised him I wouldn't do it again, unless there was a fire.

Then S. K. said: "Nat, can you stay a little while? I want to talk to you."

I said I could, and he asked me to come over and sit by him on a wide davenport which stands before his big fireplace.

"I'm sorry," he said, "that you know it, because I didn't mean to tell you."

"Oh, that's all right," I answered, although it wasn't; I was frightened and unhappy all over again, and my heart was pumping fearfully.

"No," he answered, "it is not all right. It is all wrong. You are seventeen, and two or three good-time, free years are ahead of you—must be ahead of you. I wouldn't for the world disturb your peace, make you think of anything that would turn you older. I love having you frankly friendly, treating me as a chum. I am afraid I have spoiled things."

I said he hadn't, although he really had.

“But you were disturbed by the way I looked at you,” he went on; “what I said. I didn’t mean to, Nat. It shot out. . . . I was weak at that moment, but I promise I won’t be again. I assure you, you needn’t be worried about it,” he ended stiffly. “I will never bother you with it. In fact, now it would be as unsatisfactory to me as it would be to you.”

That was a very cool statement for S. K. I didn’t understand it, and it hurt. And that and the feeling that perhaps our tight friendship was gone made me ache. Then I looked at him and saw that he felt badly too. He smiled as our eyes met, but not happily.

“I had planned this very differently,” he said. “We were going to be better friends all the time, you know, and then one day, when you were several years older and a little tired of a world that held only parties and fluffy frocks, I would tell you that I had liked you ever since you were a school-going youngster, and I liked to dream that you would find that I had come to mean something in your heart and that——” And then S. K. stopped abruptly and said: “Nat, I shouldn’t be allowed loose.”

I said: “Oh yes you should, S. K.!” And I found the greatest cure for a heartache, and that is finding someone you love suffering from the same thing. I immediately quite forgot mine and thought of S. K.’s. And I did something then that sounds silly, but which wasn’t, and didn’t seem so at the time. I moved closer to S. K. and rested my cheek against his coat-sleeve. He fumbled for my hand, and when he found it I squeezed his hard.

He said I was a “ripping little pal,” and his voice was not awfully steady, and so I think he really thought so. And in that position, where I did not have to meet his eyes, and yet where I was strengthened by his touch—for it did strengthen me—I told him how I felt.

“S. K. dear,” I whispered, “I want some more baseball, and not to *have* to think of love and such stuff.”

“I know, dear,” he answered.

And then I said: “This afternoon I felt as I did before I did my first really high dive. Wasn’t that silly? For there’s nothing to be frightened about.”

“Not a thing, dear,” he replied.

And then I told him about wanting my mother, and the garden, and how it made me feel, and that I had felt that way when I began to realize that afternoon how much I cared for him. And then he sat up suddenly, and I did too.

“Care?” he echoed. “Oh, my dear child!”

I said: “Of course.” A clock somewhere struck ten, and I stood up.

“You’re only seventeen,” said S. K., and somewhat wistfully. I knew why he said it; he was afraid my feeling for him was what Amy would call a “case,” but it wasn’t. I knew that even then.

“True,” I agreed, and smiled up at him. He drew a long breath, started to speak, stopped quickly, and went to hunt a mandarin coat for me to wear going upstairs, since the halls were draughty. He helped me into it, made me go over and look at myself in a long glass, called me Miss Tsing, and then said the last word about what had happened—that is, the last word about it for a good while.

“Pals again?” he asked.

I put out my hand, and we shook hard. “*Truly*,” I answered, and then we went upward.

“Why couldn’t we drive down Fifth Avenue to-morrow afternoon?” he asked, as we paused in our outer hall. “The excitement would be interesting to look at, with everything at its height.”

I said I thought it would be fine.

“We might go in to Mary Elizabeth’s,” he went on. “I’ll telephone her to beat up some extra waffle batter; that is, if you think you can go.” He was teasing me, and it was just like old times. I didn’t feel at all as I had before I went down. And it was silly of me to feel that way, anyway; for he is S. K., and I should have known that he wouldn’t, or couldn’t, hurt me. I went to sleep, slept well, and was untroubled by noises.

When I got up the next morning Aunt Penelope said, “Thank Heaven you look as if you felt well. I’ll need your help. This will be an awful day; it always is. . . . There are so many things to do that I don’t know *where* to start. . . . Ito, was that the bell? Yes, it was—what was it?” and then she stopped, and I looked up and gave a little cry, for Uncle Frank stood in the doorway, peering over his glasses at me and blinking.

“Ho hum——” he said. “Couldn’t keep away! Couldn’t keep away! Ho hum——” I didn’t speak. I only hugged him.

Chapter XX—Christmas Fun

Aunt Penelope was right—the day before Christmas was an awful day for hurry. Everyone simply flew, and almost every six seconds Amy would come in to tell of someone she'd forgotten to remember, Ito would appear to say that someone was wanted by someone at the telephone, and Evelyn would say: "Another pot of poinsettias and ferns. Where *shall* I tell Jane to put it?" There were lots of roses too, and they made the whole place fragrant and beautiful.

In the hall there were millions of packages, unopened cards on a tray, and messenger boys waiting for someone to sign their books. I loved it all, and having Uncle Frank there made it perfect. He kept wandering around saying "Ho hum" and hunting his spectacles, which had all gradually climbed up on his forehead. And he gave the touch of home that I had needed. It is curious, but I have found that you never realize how very much you have missed anyone until you have them near again and *don't* miss them.

Lunch was a hurried affair, but at this meal Aunt Penelope became coherent long enough to suggest that I ask Mr. Kempwood up for the celebration and opening of presents, which was to be at eight o'clock, after an early dinner. I said I would love to, and I immediately telephoned him about it, and asked if he would take Uncle Frank that afternoon too. He said he would be charmed to do so, and at five we started for a drive.

Going was great fun, for there was so much excitement. All the shop windows were blazing, and people seemed happy. They always do at Christmas-time; I think even mean spirits warm up and stop refrigerating anything they touch after December twenty-third. But, unfortunately, they begin being mean again about January third or fourth. I have always had the feeling that perhaps the Christmas bills made their pessimism return, for bills are depressing to even a constitutionally happy individual.

But, to get on, we had tea, and I made mine a little heavy, because I really hadn't had much lunch, and altogether enjoyed myself. Uncle Frank and S. K. got along beautifully and did most of the talking. Because I was hungry, I occupied myself with eating and listening.

"Doubtless that young person will take you to the Jumel Mansion," said S. K., with a nod toward me and a smile for me.

Uncle Frank nodded.

“Audubon lived near here,” he said after he stood up and slipped out of his coat. “Wonderful man, ho hum.”

“Yes,” agreed S. K., and then slowly smiled, and as if he couldn’t help it. I do too, for Uncle Frank had a string of tinsel tied around his collar and under his chin in a great bow.

I pulled it off and showed it to him, and he explained. He had been helping Evelyn and Herbert trim the tree before we started out, and Amy had given him that four-in-hand. Then he put his hand in his pocket and brought out a bit of a broken glass ball, and then, very carefully, the rest.

“Dearest,” I said, “you will cut yourself!” But he didn’t.

“Must have slipped it in there, thinking it was my handkerchief,” he explained, “then hung my handkerchief on the tree!”

S. K. said it was easy to do those things, and then he smiled at me, and I answered it, for I could see that he liked Uncle Frank and understood him. After we finished eating, S. K. bought me a tiny Santa Claus about an inch long and pinned it on my lapel, and I bought him one and pinned it on his, and Uncle Frank stood looking on and blinking. Then we pushed through the crowd and started on. And being out was gorgeous. I hated going in, but of course we had to, for dinner was to be served very promptly at seven.

The attitude of suspense in the apartment was thrilling. The curtains that frame the living-room doors were drawn across them, and from behind them someone was tacking something up. Greens trailed over pictures, and holly bloomed in jardinières. Corners were lit by all sorts of flowers, and the air smelled like a hothouse.

Aunt Penelope, looking very tired, but happy, met me and told me to make haste about dressing, and I went toward my room. Here, I prepared to bathe, first getting out all the prettiest things I owned and laying them on the bed, for I did want to look very gay. I decided on my pink dress, for it is the most beautiful one I have, and because I thought it would look nice with a bouquet of tiny roses which I found waiting me on my return. S. K. had sent them and they were dear.

Then I began to slip from my clothes, and as I unclasped my bracelet I decided I had been silly about the whole affair and that I probably imagined a good deal of it. For nothing but the noise against the wall and the black form on S. K.’s balcony had occurred to disquiet me during that last week. I opened the drawer to put the bracelet away while I bathed, for I am careful of where I leave it, and when I opened its box I found a note. This was written on brown butcher’s paper, and it was a little hard to make out. It said:

> “Natalie Page is ordered to leave her bracelet under a stone which lies beneath the first bush to the right of the side entrance of the Jumel Mansion. This must be done at five o’clock on December 28 without fail. If she comes alone and tells no one, no harm will come to her, but if she speaks of this misfortune will follow quickly and in the worst form. All will be well if instructions are absolutely obeyed, and if not, great suffering and unhappiness are bound to occur. Be wise! Take warning!”

After I read it I put it down. Then I read it again, as I sat on the edge of my bed (my knees shook), and then I wondered how the person who warned me had got it in my bracelet box without anyone’s knowing it? and then—I stood up, clasped the bracelet on, because I thought my arm was the safest place to leave it, and went to get my bath. I hurried because aunt doesn’t like people’s being late. I decided I would forget the affair for this one evening, if I could. And—begin to consider what I would do the next day.

When I was dressed, and I will acknowledge I looked as nice as I can, I hurried toward the hall, where I found S. K. (aunt had asked him to come up to dinner), Amy, who was fox-trotting with Herbert, Evelyn, who was sorting packages, and uncle, who was helping her take them to the living-room.

I sat down on a long chest which came from Holland and is beautifully carved, and S. K. sat down beside me. I told him I loved the baby roses, and he said that I looked very nice. Then he said he wished he could fox-trot with me, and I told him I liked sitting out with him better. I am very sorry that he feels badly about being lame. I think that if people who have deformities would realize that people like the deformities because of *them*, they would get on better. Just the sight of S. K.’s cane always makes me feel well, because it belongs to him. Awkwardly, I told him this, and he said I had made him a Christmas present of a new viewpoint which he liked and which would help him. Then he looked at me carefully and said: “Small girl, what’s worrying you?”

I replied that nothing was; he called me a cheerful prevaricator, and then Ito announced dinner, and we went in. It was positively the nicest meal I ever ate in Uncle Archie’s dining-room, and the food had nothing to do with its seeming so, but the little Santas which stood at each place and the verses on the place-cards and the laughter and talk did.

Then we got up. Uncle Archie disappeared to light the candles on the tree; we were signalled and filed in. It was a pretty tree, and opening things was the greatest fun, and we had jokes among the gifts too. Everyone gave Uncle Frank worsted spiders, papier-mâché bugs, or crêpe paper butterflies. Evelyn

had got a doll's coat for Amy made of fur, and they gave me a toy pistol and a trap. Uncle Archie's joke was a bottle of "Seven Sutherland Sisters" hair tonic and a switch, because he has hardly any hair. There were lots of others too, and a great many beautiful things. Quite everyone talked at once, paper rustled and grew to great heaps on the floor, ribbons tangled around your ankles as you stepped, and it was—just the way Christmas always is.

I had some lovely things given me. Aunt gave me a tiny string of corals because I am dark and she thought they would look well on me, and Uncle Archie a book that he had selected himself, which made me very happy. Evelyn and Amy gave me charming things to wear—handkerchiefs, silk underthings, and so on—and Uncle Frank a book on the development of bills in the wild fowl of South Africa.

"Very interesting subject," he said, peering at me over his glasses (one pair was actually on his nose!). "Plate seventy-two—ho hum—let me see it." I passed it to him, and he went off in a corner near the victrola and read it all the evening. Amy ran that all the time and with a loud needle. I think it bothered Uncle Frank, although he didn't seem to realize it, but every once and again he would shake his head, as you do when you get water in your ears while swimming.

S. K. grinned at this a good deal, and very tenderly at me. "You little peach!" he said, and I loved it, although I had to protest that I did enjoy having that book and that it would mean a lot to me. S. K. had heard me thank uncle, and I had been extremely exuberant, because Amy had drawn near, looked at it, and said, "Oh——" in a kind of an "Is-*that*-all" manner, and I was afraid Uncle Frank might be hurt.

"Of course you liked it," said S. K.; "you would, Nat, I swear——" But he stopped, and I don't know what he was going to swear. He only shook his head, covered my hand with his, and squeezed it.

"It's all right for a pal to tell you he likes you, isn't it?" he asked.

I said it was and that he'd better, then aunt brought up a tiny package, and it was marked from S. K., and I was surprised, for I had supposed the tiny roses were my present from him. I explained this as I unwrapped it, and when I did—well, I couldn't speak; I just held it and looked until tears made things waver, and then I began to do my champion quick-swallowing trick.

Everyone stood around and asked to look at it, and I let them, but I didn't let go of it, and Aunt Penelope frankly wiped her eyes. "Just like her, dear," she said, "and your good friend 'S. K.' had it painted from a tiny photograph I had. Come here, Frank, and see this miniature of Nelly. . . . Mr. Kempwood had it made for Natalie. . . . It's on ivory and is simply exquisite. . . ." Then

aunt turned to me and said: “You haven’t thanked him, dear.” She did it very gently, for I think she saw how greatly I cared for it.

“Yes, she has!” said S. K.

But I hadn’t, and I didn’t know how ever to do it. Something—I suppose a very full heart—made me turn to S. K., slip my arm around his neck, pull his face down, and kiss him. “I hope,” I said, “that you won’t mind, for that is the only way I know how to show you. I *can’t* say it.” And then I asked aunt if that was all right, and she said it was, and blew her nose and cried a little more, and Evelyn put her arm around me, and I allowed Uncle Frank to take possession of the miniature, and he stood holding that in one hand and my book on duck bills in the other, and—blinking awfully hard.

“Come,” said Amy loudly, “this *won’t* do; everyone is threatening weeps! And—it’s Christmas Eve!” So I put the miniature on the middle of a big table in its little case, and joined whatever went on. But I went back to the table very often to look at it.

Amy was right about it; everyone had been upset, even S. K., which was queer, for he didn’t know my mother. But when I looked at him, after I’d thanked him, I saw that his eyes, too, were full of tears. And he didn’t talk very much for the rest of the evening.

But he was so kind to me that I knew he knew I was grateful, even if I couldn’t say so properly, and that my lack of words was not what was making him quiet.

Chapter XXI—S. K. forces My Confidence

It was a lovely Christmas Eve, and a lovely Christmas. Everyone was so happy that it seemed like a new family. Even Uncle Archie talked! . . . The day after Christmas, S. K. made me tell him about the letter. I never knew he could be so firm, and for the first and last time I felt the difference in our ages.

"Something is worrying you," he said, "and if you don't tell me I shall go to your aunt and tell her to investigate. And if I know that lady, she can."

"S. K.," I begged, "*please*."

But he was not softened. "Come on, Nat. No foolishness," he said, and almost sternly. "Something worrying you about the bracelet?"

I nodded, and then, somehow, the story came out.

I gave him the letter, the little bit of cloth that had been left on my window-sill, and the notes that were signed E. J. He felt badly that I had borne it alone and called himself all sorts of names for taking it so lightly.

"Dear child," he said, "why didn't you show me these things before?"

"You said I was foolish, that there were no such things as ghosts," I answered.

"There aren't. Someone's playing a joke on you. . . . And it will stop. I will see that it is stopped, and the person shall be punished."

I told him his chin stuck out two inches farther when he was fierce, but he didn't laugh at my joke.

"And you weren't imagining when you told me that someone had felt for your bracelet when you fell from your horse on Riverside Drive?"

I said, "Of course not," and quite indignantly. Then I began to see that they had all thought I was hysterical and silly and made up these tales from the creakings of floors and lost flashlights.

"I haven't told them anything recently," I said, "because they laughed. But the trap did catch someone, S. K. I did not mislay it afterward; I heard it snap, and that was the night this piece of cloth was torn from his or her clothes. And sometimes the bracelet comes back. It slides in——"

"How?" he asked.

I told him.

"Why didn't you tell them, here?" he questioned.

I said it had annoyed aunt and that she had asked me not to think of it, since it was clearly impossible and a half-dream of mine, and not to mention it to Amy.

“And you didn’t believe me either,” I said. “Not that I blame you; it did sound crazy, but there simply wasn’t anyone to tell.”

“I shall never forgive myself for this,” he said, “never. . . . That I should fail you——” Then he shook his shoulders, frowned, and went on with: “There must be some explanation, and we will have it. That bracelet walking in by itself is clearly impossible, and its leaving the same way too——”

“But the ghost that Mademoiselle Nitschke heard?” I questioned.

“My dear,” he said, “there were three quarrelling families under one roof. Don’t you think it natural that one, if he could disturb the other, would try to do so? Why Will Chase, or the other one, could have thought of a thousand ways to make rappings and so frighten the Pérys out of their wits. And if he or the other one—frightened them so that they would leave the old place, so much to the good. One less family to disagree with, more room. Can’t you see it? . . . We’ll say that one of the Chase men went out at twelve and threw a ball against the wall of the Pérys’ room, then say he crept inside, took a heavy cane on which he tied a pad, so that the ceiling wouldn’t be marred, stepped up on a chair, and whanged that. . . . Then—Mr. Péry leaps from his chair in fright. Mr. Chase goes on pounding as a smile gradually widens on his face; someone above speaks, the Chase individual can hear the voice since the doors are open, and, although it was a mansion for that day, it is not a great house for to-day. The sounds easily carry, and especially since it is night and a ‘calm September one, in which hardly a leaf stirred.’ He pounds three times, and up above three quaking people think a question is answered and that a ghost walks and thumps. . . . Why, there would be countless ways for him to make noises that would frighten the Pérys into hysteria, and as for Madam Jumel clothed in white coming to anyone’s bedside—well, anyone can wear a long white robe, and faces cannot be seen in the dark.”

“Do you think that that was it?” I asked, a good deal relieved.

“I certainly do, Nat,” he replied. “Usually things of that sort have the most simple explanations. And this matter must have too. Now to-night you are going to bring that bracelet down to me.”

I said: “Oh *no!*”

“Or let me take it now,” he went on. “I have a wall safe, you know, and I imagine it won’t be bothered there.”

I protested for several minutes, but at length I had to give in.

“I’ll bring it down to you later,” I temporized.

“Honestly?” he said.

I said, “Honestly,” and I meant to, since S. K. wanted me to. Then, because he had come in for only a second after the matinée (Amy, Uncle Frank, and I had gone with him and had a beautiful time), he went, and we sat down before the living-room fire and talked.

At six the bell rang and Ito admitted that man to whom I had talked on the diner. He made a great deal of noise in the hall, and I heard him tell Ito that the “little lady” had told him to look her up. And then he asked Ito if I wasn’t “some looker” and added that the apartment was “a spiffy roost,” and I began to worry, because I knew aunt would not like him. I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t want to hurt his feelings, and I didn’t want to annoy her.

Ito showed him in, and he settled before the fire. He talked a great deal and in a carrying tone, while Amy put her chin higher and higher in the air, and uncle looked over his glasses. Then aunt came in, talked to Mr. Bilkins, for such was his name, and told him that she was sorry I must be excused, but that I was going out, and so—she stood up after that, and he did too, and then Ito took possession of him and he was shunted out.

I felt sorry for him, sorry for myself; and for Aunt Penelope, for she felt that I had disgraced her. I knew that her standards were wrong when she thought that loud voices and too much slang made a person “impossible”—that is, that they would be wrong, if the person’s spirit was splendid and only the trimmings were off—but I did not know about this man’s spirit. I only knew that I had asked him to my aunt’s house before I knew much about the world’s ways of doing things, and that it was not wise or sensible to do. I said I was very sorry, but she couldn’t get over it, and Ito had to bring her smelling-salts, and a fan, although the room was not over warm.

“Some toney joint,” she kept muttering between sniffs of her salts, which was a quotation from Mr. Bilkins. Then she asked me never, never, never to do such a thing again, and I said I wouldn’t. After which I went to my room, for the atmosphere was not congenial. I noticed Uncle Frank as I left the room. He was deep in that book he had given me, and I envied him, and I wished I could forget myself through bugs, or anything. Someone—I don’t know who—said, “Collect something, it doesn’t matter what,” and I think that someone was thinking of the forgetting possibilities which come through a hobby. For the happiest person has moments when he needs something to make him forget unhappiness.

In my room I considered the bracelet affair and decided I COULD NOT risk S. K.’s being hurt. For, when aunt and the rest are put out with me, I realize how much I depend on him. I wondered what I would do if he were hurt, or killed;

whom I would turn to if I had done something impossible and needed cheering.

I studied it a long time, and then I went down to S. K.

“My soul!” he said, “what a long face the bracelet leads us to wear!”

“Oh, S. K.,” I answered, “I don’t want to give it to you!”

Then he said: “What nonsense! . . .” Just at that moment his man told him that someone wanted to speak with him at the telephone; he excused himself, and I had a chance to think. It did not seem to me that I *could* let him run that risk. I opened the case, looked down at the bracelet, and considered it. Then I heard S. K. coming back, quickly moved, snapped the case shut, tied it with the ribbon, and said: “Here.” My voice was not usual.

“So she thinks I am going to be killed, does she?” asked S. K.

“Don’t,” I begged, and then I stood up, for it was getting late, and I was still in day things, and Amy and I were to go to see a friend after dinner. I saw him put it in his wall safe, shook hands, asked him please not to bother to come up with me, and ran off.

I found Amy using my dressing-table because it has a better light than hers.

“Mother is frightfully shocked,” she said. “I think that man upset her fearfully, Natalie. I think it was the *strangest* thing for you to do——” Her voice trailed off and she turned to see how her hair looked at the back.

“I didn’t know at that time,” I began, but she cut me short.

“She wonders how many more people you talked to,” she went on, “and she *hopes* that this Mr. Stilkins, or whatever his name was, isn’t a sample of them all. How did you start it, anyway? . . . I knew that cooks did that sort of thing, but I never knew how they began it.”

I saw that she was feeling disagreeable, and attributed it to too much candy, but this reasoning did not diminish my wish to thump her. This was strong. But—I tried to hold my temper and explain.

“Don’t bother,” she said right in the middle of my words. “I’m not really interested.” And then she began to hum and, doing this, left the room. I did hate her. I think that is the meanest feminine trick of all, that humming after you’ve made the other person mad. If I had my way I’d make that a criminal offence.

I slammed things a little after she left, which is my way of showing temper, and then I forgot it all, for Uncle Frank asked if he might come in. He wanted to read aloud a few pages about how the aigrette makes her nest and takes care of her young.

After he finished he said: “And every time a woman wears them she leaves

a mother bird dead and little ones starving. Ho hum—don't—think—it's—worth it."

I said I didn't either. I never had, and I have wondered how women could, but I think perhaps it is because they don't imagine. A great many troubles are made that way, simply because someone fails to realize how the other person (or aigrette) will feel from something that they themselves say (or wear).

Amy was bad tempered all evening. She called me her "country cousin" in public, which wasn't polite, and told how I had got tangled up in the silver at first. She brought it in nicely, and people laughed, but I did not think it was kind. Then she sulked all the way going home, and only spoke when we were a block from the door.

"Some people like admiration and *work* for it," she said. "I, myself, don't." And then I realized that it was not too much candy, but jealousy, and that even the calling of this man who did not attract me had impressed Amy.

"I don't care for it," I answered shortly.

"Oh no!" she agreed, and too loudly. "I *realize* you don't!"

I gave up and resorted to silence. No one can do anything with Amy when she feels that way. And we parted with cool good-nights.

The next morning something happened that was funny. Another person came to ask for me. Amy heard Ito admit him and told Ito to let him wait in the hall.

"So many *strange* people coming, Ito," she said loudly (I heard this afterward); "I think it would be wisest to let him wait in the hall."

Then I was called and I faced—Willy Jepson.

"Hello, Nat," he said loudly. "I'm going to Columbia, starting this term. Wouldn't let your uncle tell you. How are you?"

I said I was well.

"You're looking it," he asserted, and I could see that he was impressed with my clothes. Then we went into the library, and I could see that Amy liked Willy's looks, but evidently he did not like hers.

"Have you met before?" I asked, for Amy was smiling so widely that I thought they had.

"No," answered Willy, "your cousin told the Jap to let me wait in the hall—and so I heard her voice, but we have not met." Willy was insulted by that. He told me so afterward.

"Nat," he said, "all the instincts of a Southern gentleman were outraged in me by that order. I, the son of Colonel Jepson of Queensburg, Virginia, am not

used to waiting in halls!” Willy has quite a little dignity when he wants to use it, and, like all Southern men, puts out his chest a tiny bit when he speaks of the fact that he *is* a Southerner. To be just, Amy did not understand how frightful he thought it was, but in our town anyone but a nigger is asked in, and warmly welcomed. Even Mr. Bilkins would have stopped for supper with anyone of our first families. We are built that way and the North is not, that is all.

Amy smiled at Willy and asked him to come over and sit with her beside the fire. He complied rather stiffly.

“I’ve heard of you,” she said. “Natalie has told me so many things about how you two played around together——” And that seemed funny, because she never would listen when I started, but I didn’t correct her. Willy said: “Indeed, Miss James?” But you could tell it was just something to say.

Then the bell rang, and Ito appeared, to give me a message.

Mr. Kempwood, it seemed, asked if I would come down immediately? The matter was urgent. I excused myself and, wondering, hurried to S. K.’s rooms. I thought it was strange that he hadn’t gone to business, strange that he had sent for me instead of coming up.

He himself admitted me, and his face was worried. He did not smile.

“Nat,” he said, “I have bad news. The bracelet is gone. Come in. This is the way that things were found this morning——”

I followed him and looked. The door of the wall safe was open, and papers were strewn across the floor. Near a window was the box of yellowed satin, which had always held my bracelet. This was wide open, the lid torn from the back, and empty.

I could hardly speak, but I clutched S. K.’s arm and whispered: “You were not hurt?”

“No, my dear, but——” he answered. I could see that the bracelet loss bothered him.

“Sit down,” I said, “I want to talk.” He did, and I settled too. “S. K.,” I began, “I want to tell you something. I know where that bracelet is——”

He leaned forward, and I told him.

Chapter XXII—Detective Work

It was on my arm. When I rolled up my sleeve, S. K. gasped.

"I'll give up," he said. "There *is* something supernatural about it!"

"No," I replied, trying to quote from him, "there is always some logical and sane explanation of things of this sort. You see, I put it there."

He said, "You little devil!" and then he smiled unwillingly. "Think you're funny, don't you?" he continued.

I said I hoped so, for I was trying to be, and then I told him why I had deceived him; about Mr. Bilkins, and how, if he were not around, there would be no one to smooth things if they were rough. And I added that I couldn't possibly spare him, that anxiety would have kept me awake all that night, and that I was sorry I fibbed.

"You're forgiven," he answered. "I like the story—especially the last part. . . . But—what gets me is the fact that I put off seeing a detective until this morning, when last night might have got the chap."

"S. K.," I said loudly, "I beg you not to get one, because that note said that if I told I'd be hurt. If you have the slightest regard for my feelings, you will do nothing, and let events care for themselves. In fact, I forbid your doing so, and it is, after all, my matter." I ended this coolly and as if I meant it. Then I stood up, rubbed my hand across my forehead, and said: "I've got to get out in the fresh air. Can't we motor?"

He said we could, and he was very baffled and upset by my manner, which was not natural.

"You're upset by this," he said, as he buttoned my coat for me, "and I simply won't have it. You shan't be made nervous and jumpy, and I——"

"You will not do anything I ask you *not* to, I presume?" I questioned, turning to him.

"But Nat——" he protested.

"S. K.," I said, "if you do, it will end our friendship—that is all."

He said, "Well, I'll be *darned!*" and followed me out. S. K.'s man was in the hall dusting some old brasses that S. K. had picked up in the little hill towns of Italy, and I was not surprised. S. K. was annoyed, for he likes the work of his establishment to go on when no one is around.

In the outer hall I paused. I said I wanted a drink, and we went in again. Debson wasn't in the hall, and I wouldn't let S. K. ring. "I'll go to the kitchen ——" I said, and, as he protested, I ran out. Ito was there, talking to Debson. I was not surprised at that either.

Then I went back, and we went driving.

"I didn't mean to speak that way, but I had to," I explained after we started. "You see, your man was listening. I found Ito in the kitchen, and both Debson and Ito wear duds that come from Rogers Peet, and last week I went in there and matched the sample, and it came from one of their suits. . . . It was quite easy to match, for it has a purple cast and the weave is unusually tight."

"Ito!" said S. K.

"Possibly," I replied, "but I don't believe it. . . . You engaged this man just after I was so annoyed and troubled by being followed, and when I saw the blind man so often. That ceased, and someone began to creep in my room—get in somehow—at night."

"I will never forgive myself——" said S. K., through set teeth.

"Don't worry; it's over," I answered. "All we have to do now is to arrange to bag him or them, and that ought to be simple. If I go in with you, when we return, and tell you where I am going to hide it to-night, we'll catch him, she, or them; I know it!"

S. K. thought it was a good idea, but we stopped to see a man who is noted for solving crimes and finding who did them. In his office we made all plans, and then we started on.

"Better have lunch with me," said S. K., and then, for the first time, I remembered Willy. S. K. was not pleased to hear that he had come. He acted quite peevish, and I was surprised.

"Why does he come here?" he asked. "Lots of good Southern colleges. All you people are always talking about the supremacy of the South, and then you lope off and leave it——"

"But if I hadn't——" I put in.

"That," he said sharply, "is quite different. Don't be silly, Nat. . . . How old is this young pup?"

I told him.

"And I suppose very handsome?" he questioned further.

I admitted it.

"And has already asked you to marry him? . . . Should be *locked up*. . . . Like to *thrash* him!"

“Why, S. K.,” I protested. “I don’t think you’re nice. I’m very fond of Willy!” And for two blocks we didn’t say a word.

“Can’t you see,” he explained after that long silence, “that no man has any right to bother a youngster, or ask her to marry him, no matter how much he wants to, until she’s past the doll’s stage? . . . Here you are, having tea in the nursery, and he butts in where angels would bare their heads, and says you can ‘*have* him,’ if I recollect correctly. ‘Have him!’ My heavens!”

I was mad. I have not played dolls for years, and I never had tea in the nursery, because we hadn’t any; I always ate with Uncle Frank. I maintained a frigid silence. And then I made talk, deliberately manufactured the article on coldly impersonal lines, while S. K. glared ahead and answered in monosyllables.

“I believe that there is a tablet on the wall of one of the buildings of Columbia, which asserts that the Battle of Harlem Heights was enacted on that spot,” I said. “I’d like to see it.”

“No doubt,” said S. K.

I didn’t know what he meant by that, but he meant something, for his tone was full of implications.

“Perhaps Willy will take me down,” I went on.

“Possibly,” said S. K. dryly.

“He admires Hamilton,” I continued, “and I must take him to the Metropolitan to see that portrait that was painted by Trumbull. What made Burr challenge Hamilton?”

“Political jealousy.”

“Really?” I said.

“Um,” grunted S. K.

“What year did Burr kill Alexander Hamilton?” I questioned further.

“1804.”

“Why,” I exclaimed, “that was the year the Jumels were married. Wasn’t that strange—I mean, considering that she married Aaron Burr later?”

“Yes.”

“It was a terrible thing for Burr to do, wasn’t it?” I said, and then I added that I was glad duelling had gone out of style and wasn’t allowed any more.

“If some of to-day’s politicians would shoot each other,” said S. K., “it would be a great thing for the country, and I don’t see how they *could* hit the wrong man.”

That was the longest speech he made all the way home. Something had

made him very cross and pessimistic. I gave up trying to make talk and absorbed and made use of the prevailing silence. That worried S. K., who, I think, didn't want to share the silence that he was using for an umbrella to cover his grouch. He looked at me several times as we whirled upstairs, but I pretended I was completely absorbed in the little iron plack that says the elevator is inspected by inspectors every two weeks. But of course I was not deeply interested in it, having almost learned it by heart when riding in the elevator with people at whom I didn't want to stare.

In S. K.'s apartment we began to disagree about getting a detective once more, for that was the plan. S. K. really did it well. He walked up and down, using his cane very heavily, and once and again almost thumping with it.

"But I tell you, Nat," he shouted, "this has *got* to be stopped!"

"Let it go a day or so, S. K.," I pleaded. "I ask only that—and then, if things don't calm, you may do as you like. . . . But—because of that note I *beg* that you let it go for a couple of days, anyway. *Please*, S. K.!" I entreated, and really I made my voice shake.

After ten minutes of my nervous insistence he gave in. Then he sat down on the arm of a chair which faced me, and said: "Where are you going to put it to-night?"

"I don't know," I answered. "But I'll hide it somewhere. There are plenty of places, and I'm not afraid. I thought perhaps I'd slip out the bottom drawer of the tall high-boy and put it on the floor, under that."

"Um," mused S. K. "Not bad. No one would think of looking there!"

"I thought not," I agreed complacently.

Then he rang for Debson, and he came in and told us what he had heard in the night. And he did it well. I wondered whether I was all wrong, as I looked at him and heard his explanations. Then I thought of Jane's confusion and the extreme doubt about anyone's icing beer. The whole thing was confusing.

After that, I went off. I asked S. K. not to bother to come up with me, and I did it coldly, for he had been unpleasant. But he came.

"What was the matter?" I asked, as we waited for the door to open. He didn't fence. He is always honest.

"I've been fiendishly cross, haven't I?" he questioned, instead of answering.

"Not fiendishly cross," I said, "but sulky." And I went on to say that I cared too much for him to ever purposely hurt him, and that if I had I was sorry.

"Will you forgive me, Nat?" he asked stiffly.

“There’s nothing to forgive,” I said, “but I hate having you not like me.”

“Not *like* you?” he echoed. “Not *like* you!” And then he laughed, but not very happily. But I didn’t know what had troubled him until later.

When I got in I found that Willy had gone and Amy was telling Aunt Penelope how nice he was. Evelyn was a little amused at Amy’s description, but that didn’t bother Amy. She raved on in the most elaborate way.

“He must have been a *dear* little boy,” she said sentimentally.

“He wasn’t,” I responded truthfully. “He always had three teeth out and his pockets full of frogs’ legs and garter snakes.”

Evelyn shuddered, but Amy chose to dress this with romance.

“How *brave*,” she said, “how manly!”

Then I went to the door, closed it, asked them to be quiet and not to let out any surprised exclamations. After which I told them what had happened and what was to happen.

Aunt Penelope had been gluing numbers on records, and had kept a firm clutch on one of these. “Be calm, girls,” she warned, as I finished; “we must be calm!” And then she tried to blow her nose on the record and fan herself with the handkerchief which she held in her other hand. Amy kept looking back of her as if she expected someone to steal up and thump her at any moment, and Evelyn tried to darn the darning-egg, while the stocking which should have been over it lay at her feet.

“And the plan?” said Aunt Penelope, as she carefully put the paste-brush in the ink.

“The plan,” I said, “is to be worked out this evening. Two gentlemen, Mr. Grange and Mr. Thompson (business friends of Uncle Archie, for Ito’s benefit), are coming up to play cards. We will play in here—until something happens; an absorbing game will keep anyone up, you know, and I am to stuff a bolster for my bed.”

“Oh, isn’t this *thrilling*?” said Amy. “And to think that all this has been going on and no one knew it. . . . *What was that?*”

“My darning-egg,” responded Evelyn with a glare toward Amy, “and if you can tell me why you have to shout and scare everyone out of their senses when anything drops—— Mother, do you realize that you are putting ‘The New Republic’ among the Galli Curci records? . . . I see you have it neatly numbered.”

“So I have,” said Aunt Penelope, “but be calm, Evelyn, be calm. We must all be calm! Here, dear,” and she handed Evelyn an incense-burner, under the impression that it was her darning-egg. They were excited.

Then I warned them about showing disquiet, after which I opened the door. Ito was on his knees, picking up rose petals from the floor. The table on which the vase of them had stood was by the library door. I wondered. Anything like that made speculation.

“What are you doing here, Ito?” asked aunt. He opened his hand and showed her the result of his labours.

“To be sure!” she said, looking nervously behind her, and then, lunch being on, we went out and pretended to eat. Amy said she had asked Willy to come back that evening. I was glad, for Uncle Frank was to go at seven something, and Willy, as a piece of home, would help over his leaving and the coming strain.

“Herbert will be here,” said Evelyn when Ito was in the kitchen and we were alone. Then she looked at the centre-piece with a sort of moony expression that made her look half-witted. You could see that it was true love.

“He always is,” said Amy. Then she spilled salt and had about ten thousand spasms. “Bad luck,” she said. “Oh, *dear*!”

“A nonsensical superstition!” said Aunt Penelope sharply, “but throw it over your shoulder. Amy, *if you kick the table again you may go to your room*!”

Then the telephone rang, and aunt pretended it was Uncle Archie. “Your father says some friends of his are coming up to play cards,” she announced as she returned. “He suggested that we ask Mr. Kempwood to make a fourth.”

“When?” Evelyn asked.

“After dinner,” replied Aunt Penelope, as she settled. Ito had heard, and after he left the room we heard voices from the kitchen. The door swung; I heard Jane’s voice very clearly, and it said: “To-night?”

Somehow we got through the afternoon, but not happily. Everyone jerked and jumped and said, “*Did you hear that?* What *was* it?” if a hair as much as stirred. Amy said she would feel much better when Willy came in, and Evelyn said: “I *wish* Herbert would hurry!”

I dressed at seven, and after I’d got along to the hair-doing stage, ran up my shade and my window a little way, as if I felt that the room was close. Then, after looking around, I put my bracelet under the bottom drawer of the tall high-boy. And after I did so I heard the tiniest noise on the balcony.

Then I slipped from my kimono, put on my frock, hooked it, closed my window, and left. Dinner was a very exciting affair, but it didn’t compare with the developments of the later evening. Those—oh, my! Again I need that word that hasn’t yet been made—the one that means fear in all its various forms.

Everyone was frightened, even the detectives; I know it.

Chapter XXIII—Waiting for the Human Mouse

After dinner I sat down to read, Amy and Willy played double Canfield, Evelyn and Herbert went off to the little drawing-room to talk about their house, Aunt Penelope ran the victrola, and Uncle Archie, S. K., and our two guests played auction. They put up quite a heavy stake on it, criticized each other's plays after each hand, and acted as people do when they are playing cards for pleasure.

Ito came in with a tray of glasses and some sort of light Italian wine, and then he left, and it began to get late. Of course, Willy didn't know about it, and at ten he left.

I went with him to the hall, and he told me how insulted he had been by Amy that morning, but that he felt that there were possibilities in her and that he was going to try to develop them.

Then he coughed and said: "You know that offer of mine?"

I said I recalled it.

"Well," he went on, "it is good. No Southern gentleman ever forgets his honour, but we were both young. You know darned well, Nat, that I'll go through with it if I *have* to, but I think you'd be a better pitcher than a wife!"

Everybody had annoyed me that day, Uncle Frank had just left, and saying good-bye to him was hard, and I was excited over the mystery, so I spoke frankly, to be truthful. I almost shouted, "I wouldn't *have* you!" and then I turned and saw S. K. coming towards us. He was going down to get a piece of Japanese carving that aunt wanted to see, but he let Willy start before he did.

"Did you hear that?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, "thank Heaven I did! . . . Nat, I'm a fool, but that chap's coming upset me. You see, my conscience keeps me from entering the race just now. His evidently does not."

I explained and put him right on that. "And anyway," I added, "there wouldn't be any race."

"Dear child," he said, "if I dared let myself believe you! But," he continued, with a change in tone, "that is a tabooed subject. Some day, if it is true, you'll prove it. Now, won't you?" He looked down at me ever so anxiously, and I laughed up at him. I felt exceedingly light-hearted since the weight of his disapproval was removed. That had really bothered me.

“The subject,” I said, “is tabooed!”

He put his hands on my shoulders, shook me gently, told me I was a “dear scamp,” and started off. The minute after he got outside the lights went out, and I never in all my life have heard anything like the noise that followed! Evelyn and Herbert rushed out of the little drawing-room and fell over a pedestal. Amy fell over a chair that had a pile of records on it, and those tipped off and clattered as they went to pieces on the bare floor. Someone knocked over the card-table, and someone else the chair that held the tray of glasses; Aunt Penelope screamed, and Uncle Archie said things that I cannot quote, repeating them at intervals, in this manner:

“What the blank do you think you’re doing!” or, “Penelope, shut up that blank noise!” He became frightfully natural, as people do in crises, and added considerably to the confusion.

When the lights came on again the detectives looked very silly. One of them said something about hoping “it” would never get out. Then Ito was summoned and asked what had happened to the lights.

“Not can say,” he replied, with a lift of his shoulders.

Then I went to my room, looked for my bracelet, and found it was gone. Everything moved after that. Ito, Jane, and the cook were ordered to the library, where for the first and last time they sat in state; S. K. and his man were sent for, and enough moves to satisfy even Douglas Fairbanks were packed into the next few minutes.

“What was this fellow doing when you went down?” the detective asked of S. K. He looked at Debson.

“I don’t know,” S. K. answered. “I didn’t go down. I heard the noise and tried to get back.”

“How about the outside men?” the detective went on; and I then found that there had been other people on guard—these watching outside. Someone went down and returned with a crest-fallen, baffled air.

“Saw nothing,” he said, “but this fellow”—looking at Debson—“went down the stairs after the lights went out.”

Then Ito spoke. “He has habit,” he explained, “of spending evening with Jane, when Mr. Kempwood suspect him to be answering door-bell, it was therefore that I remove light plug to delay Mr. Kempwood and cover retreat of Debson, since we are friends.”

“That is true,” said Jane, beginning to cry, “and I hope, sir, that you’ll not blame him, since it is my fault and——”

“That’ll do,” someone said, and she relapsed into very moist-sounding

sniffs. I don't know how the "servant class," as aunt calls them, manage to sniff like that, for theirs is a pervasive, far-carrying sniff. But I notice that they always employ it when they are thinking of leaving, and perhaps strength comes from constant practice.

"Suppose we go down and search," said Amy. "Probably he's"—she pointed to S. K.'s man—"hidden it."

I never saw such a look of outraged innocence as that man wore. "If there is any doubt," he said, "I will request a search. I am honest."

"Was there a blind man around?" I asked. "Did you hear of him downstairs?"

The man whom I asked—the man who had been outside—said there was. "But," he said, "I am afraid you won't make a detective, miss. He has been watched; he has not moved, and, since this affair, he has been searched."

"Where was he sitting?" I asked.

"Come to think of it," said one of the men, "I think he was sitting by a window that leads to the coal cellars."

"They got in coal to-day," I said. "I heard it go in. Possibly the inner window was not replaced. If the grating only was locked, my bracelet would go through that."

Then I saw Debson move. And he spoke quickly, and in doing so made me sure that he was guilty.

"As I said, I am honest," he began, voice shaking. "I love this girl"—he pointed to Jane—"but, if you want my opinion, you will not have to go as far as the basement to find the bracelet."

"What leads you to say that?" asked the man who was putting the questions. He asked it sternly.

"My conscience," replied S. K.'s servant, "and a sudden recollection of having seen it on her arm one night when I took her to the Clover Leaf Social Club ball. I afterward saw it on Miss Page's arm when she was having tea with Mr. Kempwood."

Jane cried harder than ever. "Just onct," she gasped, "and, honest to Gawd, I never done it again——"

But no one was convinced. I felt sure that Jane was being truthful, but I think I was alone in this. Then, after dividing the men and leaving the suspects guarded, a party was sent to the basements. I went with them, and I—found my bracelet.

It was wrapped in a piece of burlap and a string was tied to it.

“Lowered from my window to the blind man,” I said, as I triumphantly undid it. The man who had told me I was not a detective told me he would give me a job any day. I did feel proud. Then we started upstairs once again, and I heard how the bracelet had come back. Evelyn did it, and, after she finished, Herbert put his arm around her, which proved to me that he does really care deeply.

“There’s no mystery about that bracelet disappearing and reappearing,” she said suddenly and stridently, when I was being questioned about that. “I have—until recently—cared a good deal about *things*, possessions, and, in this—my bracelet—I thought I had something that was unique, individual. When Natalie appeared with the real mate, it completely outshone mine and annoyed me frightfully. I began to warn her not to wear it, with hastily scribbled small notes which I left out. She ignored these. I therefore put it where she could not wear it. That is, I locked it in my jewel-case. When I felt that I must return it, I did so at night. Sometimes when I went in, she stirred, and I, wanting her to think the affair supernatural and not to have her connect it with me, began to send it back at the end of my riding-crop. I’d put the handle against the bracelet and shove it in the room just as far as I could reach; I don’t know how many times I did it. That is what she means when she said it ‘crept in by itself.’ . . . Naturally she didn’t see my crop, which is dark.”

“I only saw the glitter of the gold,” I said, “and I didn’t know *you* didn’t want me to wear it. If I had, of course I wouldn’t have done so.”

“It seemed a joke then,” she went on. “I didn’t think at first that Natalie could misunderstand, and then—well, I was annoyed with her and I let it go on. It was a form of ‘getting even.’ I even tried to frighten her once or twice. One night I stole her flashlight; she saw my hand and was frightened, I think, for she called. When I began to care more for you, Natalie,” she continued in a different tone, and speaking directly to me, “I was sorry, but—somehow—I couldn’t say so. And because you’d stopped telling of things that occurred to bother you, I thought you weren’t frightened any more. I know it was contemptible. I hope you can forgive me.”

Of course I said I did and I cared a lot for her and that it didn’t matter.

“Didn’t you know your cousin’s writing?” asked one of the men. I shook my head.

“Perhaps it looked different in pencil,” I explained, “and I suppose I never had even noticed it in ink. Then I was so sure those notes came from Madam Jumel. Her initials and Evelyn’s are the same and——” Then I paused, but they made me go on, and I had to tell of our family misfortunes which had, to some minds, been twisted about that bracelet.

Then Amy, who had had to be silent, and who had seen how gentle Herbert had been with Evelyn after her confession, put in. I like Amy most of the time, and we are good friends, but I knew she made her confession hoping that she would be thought noble and so that she would be noticed.

“I stole those violets,” she said, standing up. “I myself, under the lure of an orchid and a wish to snub some of my most intimate friends, put those stockings in the box that went back to Herbert!” Then she glared up at the ceiling and clasped her hands. It was a pose she got from Nazimova, but it didn’t look the way it did under Nazimova’s touch.

Aunt Penelope snapped at her so hard that I felt sorry for her. “You were a little sneak,” she said, “to let all of us punish your cousin for weeks for something that *you* did. Sit down and be quiet or leave the room.”

“I only ask for forgiveness,” Amy went on sadly, “and that will bring me peace. How could I know, when I inserted those worn-out yellow socks of Evelyn’s, that I was to wreck the happiness of a care-free, girlish heart?”

The detectives laughed, but S. K. glared at her, and he muttered something about hoping people wouldn’t believe everything they heard hereafter!

“Am I forgiven?” asked Amy. She made her voice tremble beautifully. She had learned to from those singing lesson records that you can buy now.

I said she was, of course, and S. K. grunted. And then he put his arm around me. It seemed to be catching.

“I am going to take care of you after this,” he said through set teeth. “I have adopted you for the present. Understand? No more of *that* sort of nonsense shall occur!”

“How about those noises outside—those noises that were heard on the balcony?” someone asked.

Jane got in her innings then, and I imagine that Debson was sorry he’d mentioned having seen her wear my bracelet.

“He come up to see me that way,” she said; “time and again he done it. He had a long stick with a hook on top that he jabbed in a window-sill or over the balcony rail, and then he come up, hand over hand. . . . He *said* he done a turn one year in vaudeville and that that was in his bill——” And then she laughed shortly.

“Is true,” said Ito. “Greatly we laugh when he approach in climb manner. It was in dark of court. No one have opportunity to see. We encourage him to arrive so like monkey. I think he plan to come in such manners so that we in back of apartment hear scrape noises. Jane will think he visit me, I think he visit Jane, meanwhile he inspect and salute Jumel bracelet.”

“Why did you want it?” asked the detective.

Debson said he did not, loudly protesting his innocence until one of our visiting gentlemen went forward, slapped his pockets, and then began to unload them. He found all sorts of interesting things. An implement that is called a “jimmy,” that is, I believe, largely used in burglaries; a pistol; S. K.’s best cuff links; and—most important—a ball of twine, and that matched the piece that I found tied to the bracelet. He had to give in, and when he saw that protests amounted to nothing he talked frankly.

“I thought I was safe,” said Debson, after his conviction was achieved. “No one up *here* believed the kid, and almost every night I prowled around somewhere, and during the day too. After I was thick with these two”—he motioned to Ito and Jane—“why, it looked as exciting as a Sunday-school picnic. To be sure, I hadn’t located the right bracelet (she had a way of hiding it), but I could get into her room any time I wanted to. One afternoon I walked in and busted the lock of the window, and no one said nothing. I thought I had it all fixed and that my hunting was over, for just to-day *he* promised not to kick up a search until she wanted it. And I believed it. I believed it!” After that he looked at us and laughed, laughed in a silent, sneering way, but I felt that his own failure was what made his unhappy mirth; his own failure and his being caught by such a simple trap.

“Why did you want it?” asked Uncle Archie. “The thing isn’t worth enough for all the trouble you gave it.”

“Is that so, brother?” said the man, who as a servant had had the most quiet voice and repressed manner. “Just go ask Vicente Alcon y Rodriguez! That boy’s a little Sugar King, and he makes enough to sweeten several lives. *He* offered me twenty-five thousand if I could get the Jumel bracelet or its mate for him and get it down to the monkey zone. And now—yuh got me—what you going to do with me?” He snarled this.

“We’ll give you a nice chance to rest,” answered one of the men pleasantly, and, taking handcuffs from his pocket, snapped them on the man who had made me so much trouble, and all the mystery.

“I wonder why the Sugar King wanted it?” I asked as the men went off, taking Debson between them.

“I’ll find out,” S. K. answered. And he did.

Chapter XXIV—What made the Chase

To quote S. K., it had an entirely "sane and logical" explanation, and it was started by that little fellow who wears wings, carries a quiver, is talked of and felt often, but is never seen—except on Valentines. And of course you know whom I mean. His name comes from an old monk, which is strange, I think. S. K. said it was not. He said that everybody has their monastery garden where they, quite alone, make the prettiest rhymes to love. And he explained further that when you try to say them aloud, in the fumbling words of men, they will not echo even half of what is felt.

All this discussion came because of the date, which was February fourteenth. Much had happened since Christmas week, and this day we all sat in the living-room reviewing things.

Evelyn was hemming napkins, and Herbert sat on a foot-rest at her feet, muttering things like "*Beautiful* hands!" or "Did she prick her *sweet* finger!" which everybody heard, but had to pretend they didn't. (That's a funny sentence, but I haven't time to alter it.) Amy and Willy were doing a picture puzzle, S. K. was sitting idle, and I was trying to address post-cards to people at home. Personally, I don't like them, but the people to whom I was going to send them did. I could take part in all the talk, inasmuch as I only wrote, "Wish you were here," and, "This is a picture of Grant's tomb," or, "The Woolworth Tower," or whatever it was. Of course, it said what the picture was, in print; but people always do explain again in writing on post-cards, I suppose because it fills up space. Even real writers always use a great deal of explaining to do that, I have noticed.

Willy would leave the table now and again to read my messages, all of which were almost the same, in a different voice. He made it deeply dramatic, or Miss Hooper-high, and Amy giggled awfully. She laughs at anything he says; and he says she has more perception and appreciation of true humour than any woman he has ever met—which is what men always do say when women laugh at their jokes.

The fifth time he made a tour to the desk he picked up a card I had addressed to Colonel Sephus I. Lemley, who did detective work in Baltimore in 1892. He has been resting since then, and his wife takes in sewing. He explained that the business world was not a fit place for a Southern gentleman. Willy told about how he acts when he gets drunk. On one occasion he painted

the entire house with apple butter (his wife had just made five crocks), and it was in fly season, too. And on another he sawed out the lower panel of the front door, and then he got down on his hands and knees and stuck his head through the hole and barked at everyone who passed. That was really very funny, because he has a little goatee which wags when he talks, and to see his head, topped by a wide-brimmed felt hat, and bottomed by wiggling fluff, to see this sticking through a hole in the door and hear him say, “Bow, wow!” in a high falsetto, was enough to make you yell. For three days he honestly thought he was Miss Hooper’s dog, Rover. His wife was visiting in a near town. When she is at home she tactfully restrains him, with a broom, the neighbours say, and it is noticeable that he stands in front of the Mansion House after these attacks, instead of occupying one of the rocking-chairs which trail all over the porch and half across the sidewalk.

But to get back. After Willy told of him, he said he should have been on the job. And I agreed. “No six weeks to find out what started it, if Sephus had humped!” he stated, surely. I nodded, for Colonel Lemley’s own tales of his achievements made Sherlock Holmes’ affairs look as exciting as the woven mats you do in the first year of school.

After I wrote for perhaps fifteen more minutes I finished my work and went over to sit by S. K., who was on the davenport before the fire. I had on a lovely bunch of violets he had sent me, and I was enjoying them a lot, also the prospect for the evening, which was a theatre party, which S. K. was giving because Evelyn and Herbert are engaged. People seem to do things like that for engaged people, quite as if they need cheering up. And I was to wear a new dress, which was pink and fluffy and, I must admit, becoming.

“You are going to sit next to me, to-night,” said S. K.

I said I hoped so, and then I was quiet, for I was thinking how very much S. K. had done to make my New York life happy and to smooth out, and erase, my troubles.

The bracelet business had made me half sick. It had been so crawly. And it all happened because a little coquette, who was the Spanish girl we saw photographed in the Sunday paper, and the one who muttered pretty Spanish admirations over the bracelet (one of the people who stays at the Mansion told me of those), had made her lover a test. I think she did it in joke, but he took it seriously because he was so very much in love. Of course, he was Vicente Alcon y Rodriguez, and it happened this way:

He had met her somewhere on a business trip. I suppose he had letters of introduction which admitted him almost anywhere, since he has a great deal of money and is of great importance in the business world of Cuba. And, like a

good many Latin men, he fell in love with her immediately, and wildly so. He called her “orange blossom,” and “white, sweet heart of the rose” (that is, in notes), and he threatened to kill himself if she didn’t love him, but he didn’t. And she didn’t love him; she only laughed. That is, at first.

I think she was capricious and liked to feel her power, for she played with him. One day being kind, and the next day scorning, as only her race can scorn. . . . S. K. told me the story, and he put in trimmings, as he always does. And I am repeating in part from the tale that he related. . . .

Each day this man who had so much money—but not the love he wanted more than all of the world—would send her mountains of flowers, or a strange string of beads, or candied fruits from the Orient, or candies from our States. S. K. said he was a good lover, and he sounded so. I became very much interested, and I did not see how Marguerita Angela Blanco y Chiappi could help liking it, but sometimes she didn’t. One morning she threw all of his flowers out on the street, and then she called to him (he was lurking around on the other side of the way; they act that way more there than here), and she said: “The scent in all of its heaviness is wearisome!” And rumour states that he tore his hair, but I think S. K. put that in for a nice touch, because he had it clipped so short I don’t see how he could get a decent hold.

Well, things went on in that way. She would soften, only to harden. And he would become elated, only to taste the depth of despair. It was very romantic. And then—Marguerita’s father had a mission to perform in the United States; she came along, and of course Vicente Alcon y Rodriguez trailed at a respectful distance (but he didn’t stay so), which is the paper-chase manner in which some South American and Cuban courtships come off.

Their pictures were taken together at the Jumel Mansion, and so evidently she was a little kinder to him then. And that was the day she paused before the bracelet and said, “Es incomparable lindo y yo lo deseo!” and she said it with hunger floating on her liquid voice.

“Would that I could give it to you!” whispered Vicente Alcon y Rodriguez.

“You can give me nothing I want!” he was answered, and after this pleasant speech the little señorita shrugged her shoulders.

S. K. said he clenched his hands, glared ahead, and then said: “A copy? A good copy, Fairest Angel of Heaven?”

And she said, “A copy? Bah!” and her lips curled. I didn’t see why he loved her after that, but S. K. said she stimulated his interest by acting that way. But that I wasn’t to try it on him, since his interest didn’t need stimulating. Then Marguerita looked mischievous and said: “The man who would get for me this original, I would give the gift of my love. . . . But it is a

poor thing, my little heart, and perhaps not worth the effort to get?”

He said: “You cast me to the depths. . . . How can I live? . . . For this, you ask the impossible!”

And again she shrugged her shoulders.

“Why ask the possible?” she said, “since that I could get myself?” Then S. K. said Vicente went out, sat down on the green bench that faces the side gate, held his head in his hands, and stared unseeingly at the gravel at his feet. He said they both enjoyed acting that way and being miserable, as a good many people do.

And Marguerita laughed in her tinkling way, not seeming to care how unhappy she had made him. Just before they started back to The Biltmore, he spoke to her again. “You meant that?” he said fiercely.

“But certainly,” she replied. “I have said, my heart in exchange for that bracelet!” And then they all got in motors and started off for lunch.

Well, Vicente was determined to get that bracelet, and he set out to do it. Somehow he got into communication with Debson, offered him twenty-five thousand dollars if he got the bracelet and delivered it into his, Vicente Alcon y Rodriguez’s hands, and then he sailed off on another chase, for Marguerita and her papa had started home again.

So much is simple, and the rest is only the result of the start.

Debson heard me tell the tale of my bracelet that day I first visited the Mansion. Getting the one in the case was not an easy affair, for the place is well guarded, and so—he naturally decided to get mine. It was he who chased me, dodging behind things when I turned, and even sitting on the kerb at the last with his cup for pennies, and telling me that he was blind! . . . He had, of course, visited the Mansion often in different disguise, hoping each time to have the opportunity. And, of course, he began to lurk around our apartment-house after he knew what was in my possession.

He had a brother who worked with him; they had an idea that confusion of evidence made evidence weak, and so there were two blind men around the Mansion that Sunday, and no two people agreed about where they had seen the shambling figure. It wasn’t a bad idea, for during the investigation of that particular event the police had been so tried by different stories of where people had seen this old man that they brushed aside any mention of him, and muttered of “crowd hysteria.” It was the brother of Debson who knocked S. K. down because he had seen me give the bracelet into S. K.’s keeping. It was he who was the old Italian woman that day and who suddenly shed his shawl and skirts and was again the blind man shuffling up the steps. That was after he stuffed his woman-duds in a basket of soiled clothes which some neglectful

small boy had left for a moment on the sidewalk while he went up to join the crowd around Sammy.

That was clever, I think, for when the washwoman returned the things washed, the Italian garb was probably sent back to her with a word that it did not belong in that particular laundry, and she, the washwoman, was, I suppose, glad enough to keep the garments and say no more.

Meanwhile, that same afternoon, Debson had seen me give the bracelet to the keeper—probably he peered through a window, or half hid behind a big pillar outside—and it was he who attacked him, after the crowd had gone out to see what had happened to S. K.; and he who, with tears running down his face, called for help—since getting away was dangerous. It all seems very simple—now—and makes us seem great fools.

When S. K. advertised for a servant, Debson applied for the position, and fortune favoured him, since I often went to see S. K. and talked all my troubles over with him.

He used a long rod with a hook on top of it to get upstairs, since the back entrances were too public for his late night visits, and he could come in this way under the dark of the court. For people kept their shades down in their court windows. Other windows are too close to do otherwise. He made those tapping noises that night everyone was frightened and Uncle Archie fell over the pedestal, and it was only coincidence that made them tap in three in that way.

He also made violent love to Jane, thinking perhaps that he could get her help, or that in that way his visits to our apartment would be accounted for. But it was not my bracelet, but Evelyn's, she wore that night he took her to the ball. And she wore it because he had talked so much of how greatly a bracelet "enhanced the fair roundness of a woman's arm. . . ." Jane admitted that statement "got her," and it must have, for she remembered it absolutely correctly. Evelyn at that time sometimes substituted her bracelet for mine, because the Tiffany mark made her story of its being real a lie; and she, at that time, wanted the real one.

Jane told me lots about it. "It was that romantic, miss," she said, "to hear a tap, and then to lean from the window, and to see him coming hand over hand up that there rod with the hook on top. And it used to turn me sick like, to think that he might fall, but he never did—worse luck!" And then she sniffed.

He had a very hard time, for I hid my bracelet often and Evelyn took it too, and it seemed that every time he called it was out. . . . Of course, he had come up that night that we had the detectives waiting, for he thought it was his last chance, and of course it was he whom I followed down the fire-escape. He

expected to bag the bracelet easily that night that he was caught. He was going to get it in some way, and he had been sure that would be easy; then lower it to his brother, who would, if possible, take it off; if not, throw it, as he did, in the coal cellar.

I found out everything and began to believe S. K.'s remark about sanity and logical reasons for all events. I even found out about Jane's blushes and the ice-pick. It seemed she used to give Debson suppers when he came up, and she gave him a very nice grape juice that aunt had got for Evelyn. It was that that made her so anxious to speak of thefts as borrowing. . . . And again there was coincidence in the hurt hands. All but Debson's had happened from innocent causes. His came from my mouse-trap, but to throw people off the scent he deliberately broke that Stiegel glass.

Of course, I was shadowed and followed, and it was Debson's brother who pulled me from my mount on Riverside Drive. . . . Two men who are very intent on getting anything can think lots of ways to get it, and—twenty-five thousand dollars is quite an incentive. I felt sorry for the men—I couldn't help it—and for Vicente Alcon y Rodriguez, for I was afraid Marguerita would never marry him.

I wrote Señor Vicente Alcon y Rodriguez and told him how sorry I was and that I would give him my bracelet if my mother had not owned and worn it, and that I hoped perhaps Señorita Blanco y Chiappi could get one made like it. And I explained about how nice Evelyn's was. I really wanted to send my bracelet to Señor Alcon y Rodriguez, but S. K., who occasionally gives me orders quite as if he had every right to, would not permit it.

"Nonsense!" he said. "She's only tiring him out. After he begins to gasp and shows signs of giving up, she'll pull him in the boat. I know 'em!" which I considered cynical. But she did. Just that very thing happened, and I got a piece of wedding cake. They were married January twentieth after an engagement of two days. He answered my note most courteously and apologized at length. And she added a little line.

"I have capitulated," she acknowledged, in a very shaded, elaborate writing. "It is useless to allow innocent childs to be stabbed in back because of my light mention of a bracelet, and because of his great urgency I have achieved for myself the married state. We are happy and wish you the same."

And then she said she kissed my feet, which is very polite Spanish, and signed herself undyingly and affectionately mine.

Señor Vicente gave S. K.'s words backing when he wrote: "I was willing to give up. All was despair. I vowed I would not request again, when lo! she softened and turned to me the glory of her love."

I was glad it ended that way.

“What are you thinking of?” asked S. K. that afternoon of February fourteenth when we were all together and yet—all sort of paired off in the living-room. I told him.

“You like to see people love the people who love them,” I said. “Now Evelyn has answered the right call, and I think Amy is going to.”

“Pshaw!” said S. K. “You don’t mean those kids——” He didn’t finish his sentence, but he meant that Amy and Willy weren’t old enough to do anything but all the latest waltz and fox steps.

“I’m sure they’re going to throw into it,” I said. “Somehow—I feel it. They slam each other now, and disagree terribly, but he has unexpected moments of patience with her, and when he has those I can see that he likes her lots.”

“What sort?” asked S. K., looking at them. They were doing a one-step, and Amy said Willy did it all wrong, and Willy said no Northerner could dance. What with the victrola and their quarrelling, we could shout anything and not be heard.

I told him. “He is trying to explain baseball to her,” I said, “since you said you’d take us all to all the games. And after he finished yesterday she said: ‘I don’t think it’s *polite* or nice for the man with the stick to wave it in front of the man with the little thing like a dish-drain over his face!’ She saw a game last year, and that’s all she got out of it!” And I went on to explain how well Willy played and how he would usually greet that sort of a remark.

S. K. laughed and after a little more watching them agreed.

“Then,” I went on, “I asked her last night whether she was going to marry the broker, and she clasped her hands, stared ahead, and whispered: ‘*What a child I was!*’ ”

S. K. laughed some more. Then he sobered.

“So,” he said, “you like to see the ‘fellow get the girl’?”

I said I thought everyone was disappointed in books or life, if he didn’t.

Then he mentioned a subject that he hadn’t touched for ages and didn’t mean to then. I think it slipped out. And I found I didn’t mind, but really liked it.

“Do you think,” he asked in an undertone, “that this fellow is going to get her?”

“Oh, S. K.,” I answered, as I slipped my hand in his, “I *know* he is! And you do too! How *can* you help it?”

“Dear child!” said S. K. “My *dear* child!” He said it in that tight way in

which people speak when they care very much, and he pressed my hand between both of his.

“What are you talking of over there?” asked Evelyn, looking up from her work. And I gave an answer which did not surprise her, for everyone did talk of them a great deal—if not exactly the sort S. K. and I had touched that day.

“We’re discussing mysteries,” said I.

“Right,” added S. K., looking down at me. And then Ito came in, trundling a tea-waggon ahead of him. I saw that he had Aunt Penelope’s best service on it, little cakes in paper cases, and big pink roses on the napkins. It looked pretty, festive and good.

“It is day of love,” said Ito. “We have fancy tea!”

THE END

NOVELS BY
KATHARINE HAVILAND
TAYLOR

Natalie Page
Stanley Johns’ Wife
Yellow Soap
Tony

HODDER AND
STOUGHTON
Ltd., London

Transcriber’s Notes:

Spelling and hyphenation have been left as in the original. A few obvious typesetting errors have been corrected without note.

[The end of *Natalie Page* by Katharine Haviland Taylor]