

**WELLS
CAROLYN**

PATTY'S
SUCCESS

Carolyn Wells
Patty's Success

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=36323348

Patty's Success:

Содержание

CHAPTER I	4
CHAPTER II	16
CHAPTER III	27
CHAPTER IV	38
CHAPTER V	50
CHAPTER VI	62
CHAPTER VII	72
CHAPTER VIII	85
CHAPTER IX	97
CHAPTER X	109
CHAPTER XI	121
CHAPTER XII	133
CHAPTER XIII	143
CHAPTER XIV	155
CHAPTER XV	166
CHAPTER XVI	178
CHAPTER XVII	190
CHAPTER XVIII	201
CHAPTER XIX	212
CHAPTER XX	223

Carolyn Wells

Patty's Success

CHAPTER I

WELCOME HOME

"I do think waiting for a steamer is the horriddest, pokiest performance in the world! You never know when they're coming, no matter how much they sight them and signal them and wireless them!"

Mrs. Allen was not pettish, and she spoke half laughingly, but she was wearied with her long wait for the *Mauretania*, in which she expected her daughter, Nan, and, incidentally, Mr. Fairfield and Patty.

"There, there, my dear," said her husband, soothingly, "I think it will soon arrive now."

"I think so, too," declared Kenneth Harper, who was looking down the river through field-glasses. "I'm just sure I see that whale of a boat in the dim distance, and I think I see Patty's yellow head sticking over the bow."

"Do you?" cried Mrs. Allen eagerly; "do you see Nan?"

"I'm not positive that I do, but we soon shall know, for that's surely the *Mauretania*."

It surely was, and though the last quarter hour of waiting seemed longer than all the rest, at last the big ship was in front of them, and swinging around in midstream. They could see the Fairfields clearly now, but not being within hearing distance, they could only express their welcome by frantic wavings of hands, handkerchiefs, and flags. But at last the gangplank was put in place, and at last the Fairfields crossed it, and then an enthusiastic and somewhat incoherent scene of reunion followed.

Beside Mr. and Mrs. Allen and Kenneth Harper, Roger and Elise Farrington were there to meet the home-comers, and the young people seized on Patty as if they would never let her go again.

“My! but you’ve grown!” said Kenneth, looking at her admiringly; “I mean you’re grown-up looking, older, you know.”

“I’m only a year older,” returned Patty, laughing, “and you’re that, yourself!”

“Why, so I am. But you’ve changed somehow,—I don’t know just how.”

Honest Kenneth looked so puzzled that Elise laughed at him and said:

“Nonsense, Ken, it’s her clothes. She has a foreign effect, but it will soon wear off in New York. I *am* glad to see you again, Patty; we didn’t think it would be so long when we parted in Paris last Spring.”

“No, indeed; and I’m glad to be home again, though I have had a terribly good time. Now, I suppose we must see about our

luggage.”

“Yes,” said Roger, “you’ll be sorry you brought so many fine clothes when you have to pay duty on them.”

“Well, duty first, and pleasure afterward,” said Kenneth. “Come on, Patty, I’ll help you.”

“Oh, dear,” said Mrs. Allen, “must we wait for all this custom-house botheration? I’m so tired of waiting.”

“No, you needn’t,” said Mr. Fairfield, kindly. “You and Nan and Mr. Allen jump in a taxicab and go home. I’ll keep Patty with me, and any other of the young people who care to stay, and we’ll settle matters here in short order.”

The young people all cared to stay, and though they had to wait some time, when at last they did get a customs inspector he proved to be both courteous and expeditious.

“Oh, don’t spoil my best hat!” cried Patty, in dismay, as he laid thoughtless hands on a befeathered creation.

“That I won’t, ma’am,” was the hearty response, and the hat was laid back in its box as carefully as an infant in its cradle. “I have ladies in my own family, ma’am, and I know just how you feel about it.”

“I’m perfectly willing to declare all my dutiable goods,” went on Patty, “but I do hate to have my nice things all tumbled up.”

“Quite right, ma’am, quite right,” amiably agreed the inspector, who had fallen a victim to Patty’s pretty face and bright smiles.

“Well, you did get through easily, Patty,” said Elise, after it

was over and the trunks despatched by express. "When we came home, mother was half a day fussing over customs."

"It's Patty's winning ways as does it," said Kenneth. "She hypnotised that fat inspector with a mere glance of her eye."

"Nonsense!" said Patty, laughing; "it's an easy trick. They're always nice and kind if you jolly them a little bit."

"Jolly me," said Kenneth, "and see how nice and kind I'll be."

"You're kind enough as you are," returned Patty. "If you were any kinder, I'd be overwhelmed with obligations. But how are we all going to get into this taxicab? Five into one won't go."

"That's easy," said Roger. "I'll perch outside with the chauffeur."

"No, let me," said Kenneth.

But after a good-natured controversy, Roger won the day, and climbed into the front seat. Mr. Fairfield, Kenneth, and the two girls settled themselves inside, and off they started for the Fairfields' home in Seventy-second street.

"I don't see much change in the old town," remarked Patty, as they neared the Flatiron.

"You don't, eh?" observed Kenneth. "Well, there's the Metropolitan tower,—I guess you'll say that's pretty fine, if you have seen the Campanile in Venice."

"But I didn't," returned Patty. "I was too late for the old one and too soon for the new. But is this a Campanile, father? What is a Campanile, pure and simple?"

"A Campanile ought always to be pure and simple, of line,"

said Mr. Fairfield; “but if you mean what is it specifically, it’s a bell tower. Listen, you’ll hear the quarter-hour now.”

“Oh, what lovely chimes!” cried Patty. “Let’s move, father, and take a house beneath the shadow of a great clock.”

“I’ve moved enough for a while, my child; if I once get seated at my own fireside, I shall stay there.”

“How Christmassy things look,” went on Patty, gazing out of the cab window. “It’s only the middle of December, but the streets are crowded and there are holly wreaths in some of the windows.”

“You won’t have to buy many Christmas presents, will you, Patty?” said Elise. “I suppose you brought home enough Italian trinkets to supply all your friends.”

“Yes, we did,” laughed Patty. “I daresay my friends will get tired of busts of Dante, and models of the Forum.”

“Don’t give those to me. If you have a Roman scarf nobody else wants, I’ll thank you kindly.”

“All right, Elise; I’ll remember that. And if I haven’t, I daresay I can buy one in the New York shops.”

“Wicked girl! Don’t attempt any such deception on your tried and true friend. Oh, Patty, do you remember the day we got lost in Paris?”

And then the two girls plunged into a flood of reminiscences that lasted all the way home.

“Come in? of course we’ll come in!” said Roger, as he assisted them from the cab, and Patty graciously invited him. “That’s what

we're here for! We're all coming in, and if we're heartily urged, we may stay to dinner."

In reality, Mrs. Allen, who was temporarily hostess in her daughter's house, had invited Kenneth and the two Farringtons to dine, in order to make a gay home-coming for Patty.

Very cosy and attractive the house looked, as, after more than a year's absence, Patty once again stepped inside. It had been closed while Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield were away, but a few days before their return, Mrs. Allen, Nan's mother, had come over from Philadelphia and opened the house and made it cheery and livable. A bright fire glowed in the library, flowers were all about, and holly-wreaths hung in the windows.

"It's good to be home again," said Patty, as she sank into an easy-chair and threw aside her furs.

"It's good to have you here," responded Elise. "I've missed you terribly."

"Me, too," said Roger, while Kenneth added, "So say we all of us."

Always a favourite, wherever she went, Patty was specially beloved by her young friends in New York, and so the reunion was a happy one to all concerned.

Before dinner was announced, Patty flew up to her own room to change her travelling costume for a pretty little house-dress.

"Come on, Elise," she said, and soon the two girls were cosily chatting in Patty's dressing-room.

"You look so different with your hair done up," said Elise.

“Weren’t you sorry to give up hair-ribbons?”

“Yes, I was; I hate to feel grown-up. Just think, I’ll be nineteen next May.”

“Well, May’s a long way off yet. It’s only December now. What are you going to do on Christmas, Patty?”

“I don’t know. Nan hasn’t planned yet. She waited to see her mother first. But I know Mrs. Allen will invite us to Philadelphia to spend Christmas with her.”

“You don’t want to go, do you? Can’t you spend Christmas with me, instead?”

“Oh, I’d love to, Elise! It would be lots more fun. We’ll ask father to-night. How are all the girls?”

“They’re all well, and crazy to see you. Hilda is making you the loveliest Christmas present you ever saw. But, of course, I promised not to tell you about it.”

“No, don’t tell me; I’d rather be surprised. Come on, I’m ready; let’s go down and talk to the boys.”

Patty had done up her pretty hair in the prevailing fashion of the day; but though the soft braids encircled her head, many little golden curls escaped and made a soft outline round her face. Her frock, of pale rose colour, had a collarless lace yoke, and was very becoming.

“You can wear any colour, Patty,” declared Elise. “Of course, blue is yours, by right, but you’re dear in that pinky thing.”

“Ah, sweet chub, I hoped I should be dear to thee in any old thing,” remarked Patty, as, slipping her arm through that of Elise,

the two girls went downstairs.

“Ha, Patty resplendent!” exclaimed Roger, as they entered the library. “Don’t you dare to be a grown-up young lady, Patty Fairfield, or I shall cut your acquaintance.”

“Not I! Don’t be alarmed, Roger. I am still childlike and bland.”

“Your cousin Ethelyn is going to make her *début* next week. I have a bid to the ceremonies.”

“Yes, so have I. Well, let her ‘come out,’ if she likes. I prefer to ‘stay in’ for another year, anyway.”

“So do I,” said Elise. “Mother says I ought to come out next winter, but I’m not bothering about it yet.”

“Let’s have a good time this winter, then,” said Kenneth, “while we’re all children. If you girls come out next winter, you’ll be so gay with dances and parties, I can’t play with you at all.”

“All right,” agreed Patty. “But have you time to play, yourself, Ken? I thought you were fearfully busy absorbing the laws of the United States.”

“Oh, I do have to hammer at that all day, and some evenings, too. But it’s an unwritten law that a fellow must have some fun; so I’ll take an afternoon off now and then, to come round and tease you girls.”

Then dinner was announced and, following their elders, the young people went out to the dining-room.

“Oh, how pretty!” cried Patty, as she saw the table, for the decoration, though simple, was most effective.

Along the centre of the white cloth, lay a long bed of holly leaves, on which the word "Welcome" was outlined in holly berries.

There were no other flowers, and the glossy green and vivid scarlet made a charming centrepiece, surrounded, as it was, by dainty silver, glass, and china.

"It's good to be here once more," said Nan, as she took her place at the head of her own table.

"Right you are," said Mr. Fairfield, as he sat opposite her. "Mother Allen, it was kind of you to arrange this hearty Welcome Home for us."

"It doesn't half express my joy at having you here again," said Mrs. Allen, as she looked affectionately at her daughter.

Then the conversation turned upon Christmas and Christmas plans.

"I must have Nan with me at Christmas," said Mrs. Allen. "And I shall count on Fred, also, of course. Patty, dear, I want you, too, if you care to come; but—"

"Oh, Mrs. Allen," broke in Elise, "divide the family with me, won't you? If you have Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield, won't you let me take Patty?"

As Elise had hinted this to Mrs. Allen while they were at the steamer dock waiting for Patty, the good lady was not greatly surprised. And she knew that Patty would prefer to be in New York with her young friends, rather than in Philadelphia.

So it was settled that Patty should spend Christmas with Elise,

much to the joy of both girls, and also to the satisfaction of the two boys.

“We’ll have a gay old time,” said Roger. “We’ll have a tree and a dance and a boar’s head,—whatever that thing is,—I never did know.”

“I don’t know either,” confessed Patty; “but we’ll find out. For we must have all the modern improvements.”

“I shouldn’t call a boar’s head a modern improvement,” said Mr. Fairfield, smiling.

“But ours will be,” said saucy Patty, “for it will be such an improvement on the sort they used to have. And we’ll have carols and waits—”

“What are waits?” said Elise.

“Why, waits,” said Patty, “don’t you know what waits are? Why, they’re just *waits*.”

“Oh, yes,” said Elise, “*now* I understand *perfectly*! You explain things so clearly, Patty!”

“Yes, doesn’t she!” agreed Kenneth. “Never mind, Elise, I’ll be a wait and show you.”

“Do,” said Elise, “I’d much rather see than be one. Just think, Patty, Christmas is only ten days off! Can you be ready?”

“Oh, yes,” said Patty, smiling. “Why, I could get ready for two Christmases in ten days.”

“Wonderful girl!” commented Roger. “I thought ladies were always behind time with their Christmas preparations. I thought they always said, ‘It doesn’t seem *possible* Christmas is so near!’

and things like that.”

“I haven’t half my presents ready,” said Kenneth, in an exaggerated feminine voice. “I haven’t finished that pink pincushion for Sadie, nor the blue bedroom slippers for Bella.”

Roger took the cue.

“Nor I,” he said, also mimicking a fussy, womanish manner. “But I never get into the spirit of the thing until near Christmas Day. Then I run round and try to do everything at once.”

“Do you tie up your presents in tissue paper and holly-ribbon?” asked Kenneth, turning to Roger as if in earnest.

“Oh, yes; and I stick on those foolish little seals, and holly tags. Anything to make it fussy and fluttery.”

“Gracious,” said Patty, “that reminds me. I suppose I must get that holly ribbon and tissue paper flummery. I forgot all about it. What do they use this year, Elise? White tissue paper?”

“No, red. It’s so nice and cheery.”

“Yes,” said Roger. “Most Christmas presents need a cheery paper. It counteracts the depressing effect of an unwelcome gift.”

“Don’t pay any attention to him,” said Elise, “he’s putting on airs. He thinks it’s funny to talk like that, but you just ought to see him on Christmas! He simply adores his presents, and fairly gloats over every one!”

“Sure I do!” said Roger, heartily. “But when you get a purple necktie, or a hand-crocheted watch-chain, it’s nice to have a cheery red paper round it.”

“Well, I have a lovely present for you,” said Patty, “but I shall

take the precaution of wrapping it in red paper.”

CHAPTER II

AN ADVANCE CHRISTMAS GIFT

The ten days before Christmas flew by like Bandersnatches. Patty had a long list of friends to whom she wanted to give presents, and though she had brought home a lot of what Kenneth called “foreign junk,” she had no notion of giving it all away.

Of course, the lovely fans, beads, and scarves she brought made lovely gifts for the girls, and the little curios and souvenirs were all right for the boys, but there were so many friends, and her relatives beside, that she soon realised she would have little left for herself. And, though unselfish, she did want to retain some mementos of her foreign trip.

So shopping was necessary, and nearly every day she went with Nan or Elise to buy the Christmas wares that the city shops displayed.

“And I do think,” she said, “that things are just as pretty and just as cheap here as over there.”

“Some things,” agreed Nan.

“Yes; I mean just the regular wares. Of course, for Roman silks and Florentine mosaics it’s better to shop where they grow. What’s father going to give me, Nan?”

“Inquisitive creature! I shouldn’t tell you if I knew, but as I don’t know, and he doesn’t either, I may as well tell you that he’d

be glad of a hint. What would you like?"

"Honestly, I don't know of a thing! Isn't it awful to have everything you want?"

"You're a contented little girl, Patty. And that's a noble trait, I admit. But just at Christmas time it's trying. Now, if you only wanted a watch, or a diamond ring, or some trifle like that, I'd be glad to give your father a hint."

"Thank you, stepmamma," said Patty, smiling; "but I have a watch, and I'm too young for diamonds. I can't help it if I'm amply supplied with this world's goods. And think of the lots of gifts I'll get, anyway! Perhaps father'd better just give me the money and let me put it in the bank against a rainy day."

"Why, Patty, you're not getting mercenary, I hope! What do you want of money in the bank?"

Patty looked earnest.

"No, I don't think I'm mercenary," she said, slowly, "but, Nan, you never know what may happen. Suppose father should lose all his money."

"Nonsense! he can't do that. It's most carefully invested, and you know, Patty, he thinks of retiring from business in a year or two more."

"I know it," said Patty, with a little sigh. "I know we're rich. Not wealthy, like the Farringtons, but plenty rich enough. Only, you often hear of rich men losing their money, and sometimes I think I ought to save up some."

"Goosie!" said Nan, smiling fondly at her; "don't bother your

curly head about such things before it's necessary."

"All right, then, I won't," said Patty, shaking the curly head and smiling back.

That afternoon she went to see Clementine Morse. Clementine had called one day when Patty was not at home, so this was the first time the girls had met since Patty's return.

The maid asked Patty to go right up to Clementine's own room, and there Patty found her friend surrounded by what looked like a whirlwind of rainbow-coloured rags.

On tables, chairs, and even on the floor, were scraps and bits of silks, satins, ribbons, and laces, and in a low chair sat Clementine, sewing rapidly, as if for dear life.

But at sight of Patty, she jumped up, upsetting her work-basket, and flew to greet her guest.

"You dear thing!" she cried, as she embraced her; "I was so sorry not to see you when I called. I should have come again, but I'm so rushed with Christmas work, that I can't go anywhere until Christmas is over. Do take off your things and sit down, and don't mind if I go on sewing, will you? I can talk just as well, you know."

"Apparently you can!" said Patty, laughing, for as she chatted, Clementine had already resumed her work, and her fingers flew nimbly along the satin seams. "What *are* you doing?"

"Dressing dolls," said Clementine, as she threaded her needle; "and I've forty-five still to do,—but their underclothing is done, so it's only a matter of frocks, and some hats. Did you have a

good time in Europe?”

Clementine talked very fast, apparently to keep time with her flying fingers, and as Patty picked up a lot of dry goods in order that she might occupy the chair they were in, her hostess rattled on.

“How did you like Venice? Was it lovely by moonlight? Oh, would you put this scarlet velvet on the spangled lace,—or save it for this white chiffon?”

“Clementine! do keep still a minute!” cried Patty; “you’ll drive me frantic! What *are* you doing with all these dolls?”

“Dressing them. How did you like Paris? Was it very gay? And was London smoky,—foggy, I mean?”

“Yes; everything was gay or smoky or lovely by moonlight, or just what it ought to be. Now tell me *why* you dress four hundred million dolls all at once.”

“Oh, they’re for the Sunshine Babies. Was Naples very dirty? How did you like—”

“Clementine, you leave the map of Europe alone. I’m talking now! What are Sunshine Babies?”

“Why, the babies that the Sunshine Society gives a Christmas to. And there’s oceans of babies, and they all want dolls,—I guess the boys must like dolls, too, they want so many. And, oh, Patty, they’re the dearest little things,—the babies, I mean,—and I just *love* to dress dolls for them. I’d rather do it than to make presents for my rich friends.”

Suddenly Patty felt a great wave of self-compunction. She

had planned and prepared gifts for all her friends, and for most of her relatives, but for the poor she had done nothing! To charity she had given no thought! And at Christmas, when all the world should feel the spirit of good will to men, she had utterly neglected to remember those less fortunate than herself.

“What’s the matter?” said Clementine, dismayed by Patty’s expression of remorse.

“I’m a pig!” said Patty; “there’s no other word for such a horrid thing as I am! Why, Clementine, I’ve made presents for nearly everybody I know, and I haven’t done a thing for charity! Did you ever know such an ungrateful wretch?”

“Oh, it isn’t too late, yet,” said Clementine, not quite understanding why Patty was so serious about it; “here, help me sew these.”

She tossed her some tiny satin sleeves, already cut and basted, and offered a furnished work-basket.

“Deed I will!” said Patty, and in a few moments she too was sewing, as deftly, if not quite so rapidly, as Clementine.

“You see, Clem,” she went on, “I’ve been so busy ever since I came home, that I simply forgot the poor people. And now it’s too late.”

“It’s too late to make things,” agreed Clementine, “but not too late to buy them.”

“But I’ve spent all my Christmas money,” said Patty, contritely. “Father gives me a liberal allowance, and then extra, for Christmas money. And it’s just about all gone, and I hate to

ask him for more.”

“Well, never mind, Patsy, you can make up for it next year. And if you help me dress these dolls, that will square up your conscience.”

“No, it won’t. But I’ll find a way to do something, somehow. Are these Sunshine people all babies?”

“Oh, no; the society helps all sorts of poor people, children and grown-ups too. Mother is one of the directors, and we do a lot of this doll-dressing every year.”

“Well, I’ll help you a while this afternoon, but I won’t have another chance. You see just about every moment is taken up from now till Christmas.”

“You’re going to the Farringtons’, aren’t you?”

“Yes, for three or four days, while Nan and father are in Philadelphia at Nan’s mother’s. You’re coming to the Christmas Eve dance, of course?”

“Yes, indeed. It’s to be a lovely party. The Farringtons always have such beautiful entertainments. Now, Patty, do tell me about your trip.”

So Patty told many tales of her stay in Paris and in England, and of her pleasure trip through Italy, and as she talked, her fingers flew, and she had soon completed three doll dresses, that were quite as pretty and well-made as Clementine’s.

“Now, I must go,” she said, at last. “I’m glad to have been of a little help, and next year I’ll help you a lot. Though, I suppose your Sunshine Babies *could* have dolls when it isn’t Christmas.”

“Oh, yes; these are for their Tree, you know.”

“Well, Clem, if I should have some money left me unexpectedly, is it too late to buy some toys for the Tree?”

“I don’t know,” said Clementine, “but we can ask mother. She’ll know.”

They found Mrs. Morse in her sitting-room, tying up parcels and addressing them.

Patty soon discovered that these were all charitable gifts, and not presents to Mrs. Morse’s own friends.

“I’m so glad I came here to-day,” she said, after the welcoming greetings were over, “for it has roused my charitable instincts. I am quite sure, Mrs. Morse, I can send some toys for your society’s tree, if you want them.”

“Want them? Indeed we do! Why, Patty, there are forty little boys who want drums or trumpets and we can only give them candy and an orange. It’s harder than you’d think to get subscriptions to our funds at Christmas time, and though we’ve dolls enough, we do so want toys for the boys.”

“Well, I’ll send you some, Mrs. Morse. I’ll send them to-morrow. Do you care what they are?”

“No, indeed. Drums, or balls, or tin carts,—anything that a boy-child can play with.”

“Well, you may depend on me for the forty,” said Patty, smiling, for she had formed a sudden, secret resolve.

“Why, Patty, dear, how kind of you! I am so glad, for those children were on my mind, and I’ve already asked every one I

know to give to our fund. You are a generous little girl, and I know it will gladden your own heart as well as the children's."

Patty ran away, and all the way home her heart was full of her project.

"If he will only consent," she thought. "If not, I don't know how I shall keep my promise. Oh, well, I know I can coax him to say yes."

After dinner that evening, Patty put her plan into action.

"Father Fairfield," she said, "what are you going to give me for a Christmas gift?"

"Well, PATTYKINS, that's not considered a correct question in polite society."

"Then let's be impolite, just for this once. Do tell me, daddy."

"You embarrass me exceedingly, young lady," said Mr. Fairfield, smiling at her, "for, to tell you the truth, I haven't bought you anything."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" exclaimed Patty, "for, father, I want to ask you a great favour. Won't you give me the money instead, and let me spend it as I like?"

"That would be a funny Christmas gift. I thought you liked some pretty trinket, tied up in holly paper and red ribbons and Santa Claus seals, and served to you on a silver salver."

"Well, I do, from other people. But from you, I just want the money that my present would cost, and—I want it now!"

"Bless my soul! She wants it now! Why, Patsy, what are you going to do? Buy stock?"

“No, but I do want it, father. Won’t you give it to me, and I’ll tell you afterward what I’m going to do with it.”

“I’ll tell you now,” said Nan, smiling at the pair. “She’s going to put it in the bank, because she’s afraid she’ll be poor some day.”

“I don’t wonder you think that, stepmotherly,” said Patty, her eyes twinkling at Nan, “for I did tell you so. But since then I’ve changed my mind, and though I want my present from father in cash, I’m going to spend it before Christmas, and not put it in the bank at all.”

“Well, you are a weathercock, Patty. But before morning you will have changed your mind again!”

“No, indeedy! It’s made up to stay this time. So give me the money like a duck of a daddy, won’t you?”

Patty was very wheedlesome, as she caressed her father’s cheek, and smiled into his eyes.

“Well, as you don’t often make a serious request, and as you seem to be in dead earnest this time, I rather think I shall have to say yes.”

“Oh, you dear, good, lovely father!” cried Patty, embracing him. “Will you give it to me now, and how much will it be?”

“Patty,” said Nan, laughing, “you’re positively sordid! I never saw you so greedy for money before.”

Patty laughed outright. Now that she had gained her point she felt in gay spirits.

“Friends,” she said, “you see before you a pauper,—a penniless pauper! Therefore, and because of which, and by

reason of the fact that I am in immediate need of money, I stoop to this means of obtaining it, and, as aforesaid, I'd like it now!"

She held out her rosy palm to her father, and stood waiting expectantly.

"Only one hand!" exclaimed Mr. Fairfield, in surprise. "I thought such a grasping young woman would expect both hands filled."

"All right," said Patty, and she promptly extended her other palm, too.

Putting both his hands in his pockets, Mr. Fairfield drew them out again, and then laid a ten-dollar goldpiece on each of Patty's outstretched palms.

"Oh, you dear daddy!" she cried, as she clasped the gold in her fingers; "you lovely parent! This is the nicest Christmas gift I ever had, and now I'll tell you all about it."

So she told them, quite seriously, how she had really forgotten to give the poor and the suffering any share of her own Christmas cheer, and how this was the only way she could think of to remedy her neglect.

"And it's so lovely," she concluded; "for there are forty little boy-children. And with this money I can get them each a fifty-cent present."

"So you can," said Nan. "I'll go with you to-morrow to select them. And if we can get some cheaper than fifty cents, and I think we can, you'll have a little left for extras."

"That's so," agreed Patty. "They often have lovely toys

for about thirty-nine cents, and I could get some marbles or something to fill up.”

“To fill up what?” asked her father.

“Oh, to fill up the tree. Or I’ll get some ornaments, or some tinsel to decorate it. Oh, father, you are so good to me! This is a lovely Christmas present.”

CHAPTER III

THE DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Mr. Fairfield's gift to his wife was a beautiful motor-car, and as they were going away for the holiday, he presented it to her the day before Christmas.

It was practically a gift to Patty as well, for the whole family could enjoy it.

"It's perfectly lovely," said Nan, as they all started out for a little spin, to try it. "I've had so much trouble of late with taxicabs, that it's a genuine comfort to have my own car at my beck and call. It's a lovely car, Fred, and Patty and I shall just about live in it."

"I want you to enjoy it," returned Mr. Fairfield, "and you may have every confidence in the chauffeur. He's most highly recommended by a man I know well, and he's both careful and skilful."

"A nice-mannered man, too," observed Patty. "I like his looks, and his mode of address. But if this car is partly my present, then I ought not to have had that gold money to buy drums with."

"Oh, yes, you ought," said her father. "That was your individual gift. In this car you and Nan are partners. By the way, Puss, did you ever get your forty drums? I didn't hear about them."

“You’re lucky that you didn’t hear them,” laughed Patty. “Yes, I did get them,—not all drums, some other toys,—and I took them down to the Sunshine place yesterday. I went with Mrs. Morse and Clementine. You know the kiddywids had their Christmas tree, the little poor children, and such a noise you never heard! They yelled and shouted for glee, and they banged drums and tooted horns, and then they sang songs, and I think I never knew such a noisy celebration, even on the fourth of July.”

“And were they glad to get your gifts?”

“Oh, yes, indeed! Why, just think, father, the little girls all had dolls, but if I hadn’t taken the gifts for the boys, they would only have had candy or an orange. Next Christmas I’m going to do more for them.”

“I’m glad to see your charitable spirit waking up, Patty-girl. I don’t want you to be a mere social butterfly. But, you know, you needn’t wait for Christmas to make the poor babies happy.”

“No; I know it, daddy, dear; and after Christmas is over, I’m going to try to do some good in the world.”

“Now, Patty,” said Nan, “don’t you go in for settlement work, and that sort of thing. I won’t let you. You’re not strong enough for it.”

“I don’t know exactly what settlement work is,” said Patty, “but I do know I’m not going to be a mere butterfly. I’m going to accomplish something worth while.”

“Well, wait till the holiday season is over,” advised Mr. Fairfield. “You’ve made forty boys happy, now turn your

attention to making your family and friends happy. What are you going to give your poor old father for a Christmas gift, I should like to know.”

“I haven’t any such relative as you describe,” returned Patty, smiling at him affectionately. “I have a young and handsome father, and I think he seems to be rather a rich gentleman. Also I have a gift awaiting him at home, and I think we’d better be going there.”

“I do, too,” said Nan. “We’ve none too much time to get our luncheon and go to the train. Oh! what a comfort it will be to go to the train in our own motor-car.”

“Yes,” said Patty, “and then Miller can come back and take me over to Elise’s.”

So home they went, and had their own little Christmas celebration, before they went their separate ways.

“This is a make-believe Christmas feast,” said Patty, as they sat at their own luncheon table.

She had placed a sprig of holly at each plate, and a vase of poinsettia blossoms graced the centre of the table.

“This ox-tail soup is in place of the boar’s head,” she went on, gaily; “and I know we are going to have chicken croquettes, which we will pretend are the roast turkey. And then we’ll have our presents, as I know you two will fly for your train as soon as you leave the table.”

So Patty gave Nan her present, which was a lovely white couch pillow of lace and embroidery. And Nan gave Patty a picture to

hang in her own room. It was a beautiful water-colour, a Venetian scene, and Patty was delighted with it.

Then Patty gave her father a gold penholder, which she had had made expressly for him, and engraved with his name.

“Why, that’s fine, Pattykins!” he exclaimed. “I can only write poems with a pen like that. It’s not made for business letters, I’m sure.”

“Of course it isn’t,” said Patty, gaily; “it’s to keep on your desk in the library here at home. And you must use it just for social correspondence or—”

“Or to sign checks for us,” suggested Nan, smiling.

“That’s just what I’ll do with it,” declared Mr. Fairfield. “It’s a gem of a pen; Patty, you know my weakness for fine desk appointments, don’t you?”

Nan gave her husband a watch fob, on which hung a locket containing a miniature of her own sweet face. Neither Patty nor her father had seen this before, as Nan had been careful to keep the matter secret in order to surprise them.

It was a real work of art, and so winsome was the pictured face that Patty cried out in admiration: “What a stunner you are, Nan! I didn’t realise you were so good-looking,—but it’s exactly like you.”

“That’s a mixed-up compliment, Patty,” laughed Nan, “but I’ll surmise that you mean well.”

“I do so! I think it’s a lovely picture of a lovely lady! There, how’s that?”

“Much better,” said Nan, as Patty caught her round the shoulders and kissed her affectionately.

“Give me the lady,” said Mr. Fairfield, taking Nan into his own arms. “As the portrait is a gift to me, I will kiss her for it, myself.”

“Do,” said Patty, “but if you give her more than three kisses, you’ll lose your train; it’s getting pretty late.”

“Is it?” cried Mr. Fairfield. “Then, Jane, bring in those two boxes I left in your charge, will you?”

“Yes, sir,” cried the waitress, and, leaving the room, she returned in a moment with two large white boxes.

“These are Christmas gifts to the two loveliest ladies I know,” said Mr. Fairfield, gallantly tendering a box to each.

“But I’ve had my Christmas gift from you!” exclaimed Patty, and “So have I!” cried Nan.

“Nevertheless these are laid at your feet,” said Mr. Fairfield, calmly depositing the boxes on the floor in front of them.

“Oh, well, we may as well see what they are,” said Patty, untying the white ribbons that fastened her box.

Nan did likewise, and in a moment they were both rapturously exclaiming over two sets of white furs that nestled in billows of white tissue paper.

Nan’s furs were ermine, and Patty’s were soft, fluffy, white fox, and so beautiful were they that the two recipients donned them at once, and posed side by side before the mirror, admiring themselves and each other. Then, with a simultaneous impulse

they turned to thank the donor, and Mr. Fairfield found himself suddenly entangled in four arms and two boas, while two immense muffs met at the back of his neck and enveloped his head and ears.

“Have mercy!” he cried; “come one at a time, can’t you? Yes, yes, I’m glad you’re pleased, but do get this fur out of my mouth! I feel as if I were attacked by polar bears!”

“Oh, Fathery Fairfield,” Patty cried, “you are the dearest thing in the world! How *did* you know I wanted furs? And white fox, of all things! And ermine for Nan! Oh, but you *are* a good gentleman! Isn’t he, stepmother?”

“He’ll do,” said Nan, smiling roguishly at her husband, who, somehow, seemed satisfied with this faint praise.

“Now, scamper, Nan-girl,” he cried, “if you would see your mother to-day, you must leave here in less than an hour. Can you be ready?”

“I can’t, but I will,” replied Nan, gaily, as she ran away to prepare for her journey.

Patty, too, went to her room to get ready for her visit at the Farringtons’. She was to stay three days, and as there were several parties planned for her entertainment, she packed a small trunk with several of her prettiest gowns. Also, she had a suitcase full of gifts for the Christmas tree, which was to be part of the festivities.

She bade her parents good-by when they started, and watched the new motor-car disappear round the corner, then returned to

her own preparations.

“I do have lovely things,” she thought to herself, as she folded her dainty garments and laid them in their places.

Then she glanced again at her new furs.

“I have too much,” she thought; “it isn’t fair for one girl to have so much, when so many poor people have nothing. I wonder what I ought to do about it.”

Poor Patty was confronting the problem that has troubled and baffled so many honest hearts, but the more she thought about it, the more it seemed insoluble.

“At any rate, it would be absurd to give my white furs, or my chiffon frocks to poor people,” she concluded, “for they couldn’t use them. Well, after the holidays, I’m going to see what I can do. But now, I must hurry, or I’ll be late.”

An hour or two later, she found herself in the Farringtons’ home.

“What lovely furs, Patty,” exclaimed Mrs. Farrington, “and how well they suit you!”

They were extremely becoming, and Patty’s pretty face, with its soft colour and smiling eyes, rose like a flower from the white fur at her throat.

“Yes, aren’t they beautiful?” Patty responded. “Father just gave them to me, and I’m so pleased with them.”

“And well you may be. Now, you girls run away and play, for I’ve a thousand things to do.”

Indeed, Mrs. Farrington was in a whirlpool of presents that

she was both sending and receiving. Maids and footmen were running hither and thither, bringing messages or carrying out orders, and as the whole house was full of warmth and light, and the spicy fragrance of Christmas greens, Patty fairly revelled in the pleasant atmosphere.

She was of a nature very susceptible to surroundings. Like a cat, she loved to bask in warm sunshine, or in a luxurious, softly-furnished place. Moreover, she was fond of Elise, and so looked forward to her three days' visit with glad anticipation.

After Patty had laid aside her things, the two girls sat down to chat in the big hall on the second floor of the mansion. A wood-fire was blazing, and soft, red-shaded lights cast a delightful glow.

"Elise," said Patty, somewhat suddenly, "don't you think we have too much riches and things?"

Elise stared at her.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

Patty laughed at her friend's blank expression, but she went on.

"I mean just what I say. Of course, you have lots more riches and things than I have; but I think we all have too much when we think of the poor people who haven't any."

"Oh, you mean Socialism," exclaimed Elise, suddenly enlightened.

"No, I don't mean Socialism. I mean plain, every-day charity. Don't you think we ought to give away more?"

"Why, yes, if you like," said Elise, who was greatly puzzled. "Do you want me to subscribe to some charity? I will."

“Well, perhaps I’ll hold you to that,” said Patty, slowly; “for after the holidays I’m going to try to do something in the matter. I don’t know just what; I haven’t thought it out yet. But I’m not going to be what my father calls a ‘mere social butterfly,’ and I don’t believe you want to, either.”

“No, I don’t; but do leave it all till after the holidays, Patty, for now I want you to help me with some Christmas presents.”

Elise looked so worried and so beseeching that Patty laughed. Then she kissed her, and said: “All right, Lisa mine. Command me. My services are at your disposal.”

So the girls went up to the Sun Parlour, where Elise had all her choicest belongings, and where she now had her array of Christmas gifts.

The room was entirely of glass, and by a careful arrangement of double panes and concealed heat-pipes, was made comfortable even in the coldest weather. Flowers and plants were round the sides; birds in gilt cages sang and twittered; and gilt wicker furniture gave the place a dainty French effect that was charming. On the tables were strewn Christmas gifts of all sorts.

“I’m just tying up the last ones,” said Elise. “Don’t be afraid to look; yours is safely hidden away. Now, here’s what I want to know.”

She picked up a gold seal ring, which, however, had no crest or monogram cut on it,—and a bronze paper cutter.

“They’re lovely,” said Patty, as she looked at them. “Who catches these?”

“That’s just what I don’t know. I bought the ring for Roger and the paper cutter for Kenneth Harper; he’s coming to-night. But I’d like to change them about and give the ring to Ken, and the paper knife to Roger. Would you?”

“No, I wouldn’t,” said Patty, bluntly. “Why do you want to do such a thing?”

“The ring is much the handsomer gift,” said Elise, who had turned a trifle pink.

“Of course it is,” said Patty, “and that’s why you should give it to your brother. It’s too personal a gift to give to a boy friend.”

“That’s what I was afraid of,” said Elise, with a little sigh. “But Roger won’t care for it at all, and Kenneth would like it heaps.”

“*Because* you gave it to him?” asked Patty, quickly.

“Oh, I don’t know. Yes, perhaps so.”

“Nonsense, Elise! You’re too young to give rings to young men.”

“Ken isn’t a young man, he’s only a boy.”

“Well, he’s over twenty-one; and anyway, I know it wouldn’t be right for you to give him a ring. Your mother wouldn’t like it at all.”

“Oh, she wouldn’t care.”

“Well, she ought to, and I think she would. Now, don’t be silly; give the ring to Roger, and if you want something grander than this bronze jig for Ken, get him a book. As handsome a book as you choose; but a book. Or something that’s impersonal. Not a ring or a watch-fob, or anything like that.”

“But he gave you a necklace,—the day we sailed for Paris.”

“Fiddle-de-dee! It was only a locket, with the merest thread of a gold chain; and anyway, I never wore it but once or twice.”

“Well, you oughtn’t to have accepted it, if a personal gift is so reprehensible.”

“Elise, you’re a goose!” said Patty, losing her patience at last. “A gift like that is not in very good taste from a boy to a girl; but from a girl to a boy, it’s very much worse. And, anyway, it was different in my case; for Ken and I are old friends, which you and he are not. And, beside, father knew about it, and he said as a parting keepsake it was all right. But at a Christmas tree, in your own house,—Elise, you’ll make a great mistake if you give Kenneth Harper a seal ring.”

“All right, Patty, you know I always do just as you say, so I’ll give it to Roger.”

Patty knew she had judged rightly in the matter, but she also knew that Elise was greatly disappointed at her decision.

She had already noticed that Elise liked handsome Kenneth, but if she did, that was only an added reason why she should not make him a present of a ring.

“She ought to have had more sense!” Patty said to herself, indignantly. “And I’m sorry if she’s sorry; but I couldn’t let her do such a foolish thing!”

CHAPTER IV

A SPLENDID TREE

The Christmas Eve dinner was set for an early hour, that the younger Farrington children might take part in the festivities.

Beside Elise and Roger, there were two younger girls, Louise and Hester, and Bobby, aged ten.

When Patty went down to the drawing-room, she found these three eager with anticipation of the Christmas frolic about to begin.

Kenneth Harper was there too, but there were no other guests, as this evening was to be a family celebration. Soon the other members of the household appeared, and then dinner was announced, and they all went to the dining-room.

Mr. Farrington offered his arm to Patty, and escorted her out first, as guest of honour. Mrs. Farrington followed with Kenneth, and then the five Farrington children came out less formally.

A burst of applause greeted their first sight of the dinner table. It was indeed a Christmas feast to the eye as well as to the palate.

In the centre of the table was a Christmas tree, decorated with tinsel and gay ornaments, and lighted by tiny electric bulbs.

At each plate also, was a tiny Christmas tree, whose box-shaped standards bore the names of the diners.

“Here’s mine!” cried Bobby, as he slid into his chair. “Oh,

what a jolly dinner!”

On the little place trees hung nuts and bonbons which were to be eaten, “at the pleasure of the performer,” as Roger expressed it.

The table was also decked with holly and red ribbons, and the various viands, as they were served, were shaped or decorated in keeping with the occasion.

The Farrington household was conducted on a most elaborate plan, and their dinners were usually very formal and conventional. But to-night was an exception, and, save for the solemn butler and grave footmen, everybody in the room was bubbling over with laughter and merriment.

“I’m not hungry any more,” declared Bobby, after he had done full justice to several courses; “let’s hurry up, and have the tree.”

“Wait, Bobs,” advised Hester; “we haven’t had the ice cream yet.”

“Oh, that’s so,” said Bobby; “can’t we have it now, mother, and skip these flummerydiddles?”

He looked scornfully at the dainty salad that had just been placed before him, but Mrs. Farrington only smiled, not caring to remind him of the laws of table etiquette on a festive occasion.

“Have patience, Bobby, dear,” she said; “the ice cream will come next; and, too, you know the longer the dinner, the later you can sit up.”

“That’s so!” agreed Bobby. “My, but Christmas Eve is fun! Wish I could sit up late every night.”

“But it wouldn’t be Christmas Eve every night,” said Patty, smiling at the chubby-faced boy.

“That’s so! Neither no more it wouldn’t! Well, I wish it was Christmas Eve every night, then!”

“That’s right,” laughed Patty. “Make a good big wish while you’re about it.”

Then the ice cream was served and of course it was in shapes of Christmas trees, and Santa Clauses, and sprigs of holly, and Christmas bells, and Patty’s portion was a lovely spray of mistletoe bough.

“Ho, ho!” laughed Kenneth, seeing it across the table; “another good chance lost! You know the penalty, Patty, if you’re caught under the mistletoe. But of course if you eat mistletoe, the charm fails.”

“I’m willing it should,” said Patty, as she took up her spoon. “I’m not pining for a rustic swain to kiss me ’neath the mistletoe bough.”

Patty looked very roguish and provoking as she said this, and Mr. Farrington said, gallantly:

“Ah, no, perhaps not. But the swains are doing the pining, without doubt.”

Now Roger sat on the other side of Patty, and as his father finished speaking, he said, apparently apropos of nothing:

“Mother, are these your Spode plates, or are they Cauldon ware?”

“They’re Spode, Roger; why do you want to know? Are you

suddenly becoming interested in China?"

"Yes," he replied; "are you sure, mother, these are Spode?"

He lifted the handsome plate in front of him, and gazed intently at the mark on its under side, as he held it just above the level of his eyes.

"Be careful, Roger, you'll spill your ice cream," admonished his father.

"No, I won't, sir," he said, as he replaced his plate. "But I never saw Spode with this decoration before. Let me look at yours, Patty."

He took up Patty's plate of ice cream, and lifting it quite high studied the stamp on that.

Suddenly he moved it, until the dish of mistletoe ice cream was directly over Patty's head.

"Fairly caught!" he cried; "under the mistletoe!" And before Patty caught the jest, Roger had kissed her pretty pink cheek, and then calmly restored her plate of ice cream to its place in front of her.

"You villain!" she cried, glaring at him, and pretending to be greatly offended, but smiling in spite of herself at his clever ruse.

"Good for you, my boy!" cried Mr. Farrington, clapping his hands. "I wish I had thought of that myself. But it's a game that won't work twice."

"Indeed it won't!" said Patty, "I'll take care of that!" and she began to eat her mistletoe ice cream in proof of her words.

"It never can happen again," said Kenneth, in sad tones, as he

watched the “mistletoe” disappear. “But I’ll not give up all hope. It’s still Christmas Eve, and there are other mistletoes and other manners.”

“And other girls,” said Patty, glancing mischievously at Elise.

“Yes, there are four of us,” said Louise, so innocently that they all laughed.

“All right, Louise,” said Kenneth, “you find a nice, big spray of mistletoe, after dinner, and wear it in that big topknot bow of yours, and I’ll promise to kiss you on both cheeks.”

But Louise was too shy to respond to this repartee, and she dropped her eyes in confusion.

“Now,” said Mrs. Farrington, as she rose from the table, “we’ll have our Christmas Waits sing carols, and then we’ll have our tree.”

The children understood this, and Hester and Bobby at once ran out of the room. A few moments later they returned, dressed in trailing white robes, like surplices, and before they reached the drawing-room, their childish voices could be heard singing old-fashioned carols.

They had been well trained, and sang very prettily, and as they appeared in the doorway, Patty could scarcely believe that these demure little white-robed figures were the two merry children.

After two or three carols by the “Waits,” the whole party joined in a Christmas chorus, and Patty’s clear soprano rang out sweetly in the harmony.

“What a lovely voice you have, Patty, dear,” said Mrs.

Farrington, as the song was done; "it has improved greatly since I heard you last. Are you taking lessons?"

"I shall, Mrs. Farrington, after we get fairly settled. Father wants me to begin as soon as he can find the right teacher."

"Yes, indeed; you must do so. It would be a shame not to cultivate such a talent as that."

"You *have* improved, Patty!" declared Kenneth. "My! but your voice is stunning. I expect we'll see you on the concert stage yet."

"More likely on a Fifth Avenue stage," said Patty, laughing.

"Now for the tree!" exclaimed Bobby, who had thrown aside his white robe, and was ready for the fun to begin.

The tree had been set up in the indoor tennis-court, which was in the Casino.

This Casino, practically another house, opened from the great hall of the Farrington mansion, and its various apartments were devoted to different sorts of amusements.

The tennis court made a fine setting for the Christmas celebration, and had been carefully prepared for the great event.

The floor was covered with white canton flannel, so arranged over slight ridges and hummocks that it looked exactly like a field of drifted snow.

The tree, at the end of the room, was the largest that could be obtained, and was loaded with beautiful ornaments and decorations, and glittering with electric lights of all colours.

Patty had seen many Christmas trees, but never such a large

or splendid one, and it almost took her breath away.

“I didn’t know trees ever grew so big,” she said. “How *did* you get it into the house?”

“It *was* difficult,” said Mr. Farrington. “I had to engineer the job myself. But Bobby asked for a big tree, and as the children are growing up so fast, I wanted to humour him.”

As Patty had often said, “for a millionaire, Mr. Farrington was the kindest man she ever knew.”

Though wealthy, he had no desire for display or ostentatious extravagance, but he loved to please his children, and was sufficiently rewarded by their enjoyment of the pleasures he provided.

Now, he was as frankly delighted with Bobby’s enthusiasm as Bobby was with his tree.

“Come on, old chappie,” he cried; “you shall be Santa Claus, and distribute the gifts.”

Meantime, the older ones were admiring the decorations of the room. Round the walls were smaller evergreen trees of varying heights, giving the effect of a clearing in a grove of evergreens. The ceiling had been draped across with dark blue material, and was studded with stars, made of tiny electric lights.

Bunches and wreaths of holly, tied with red ribbons, gave a touch of colour to the general effect, and in one corner beneath a green arched bower, a chime of bells pealed softly at intervals.

Altogether, the whole place breathed the very spirit of Christmas, and so perfect were the appointments, that no false

note marred the harmony of it all.

“Now for the presents!” cried Bobby. “Oh, daddy, there’s my ’lectric railroad! Won’t you other people wait till I see how it works?”

The others all laughed at the eager, apologetic little face, as Bobby found it impossible to curb his impatience to see his new toy.

It was indeed a fine electric railway, and every one became interested as Mr. Farrington began to take it from its box and put the parts together.

“This is the way it goes, dad,” said Roger, kneeling on the floor beside his father.

“No, this way,” said Kenneth, as he adjusted some of the parts.

Quite content to wait for their gifts, Mrs. Farrington and the girls stood round watching the proceedings with interest, and soon Patty and Elise were down on the floor, too, breathlessly waiting the completion of the structure, and cheering gaily as the first train went successfully round the long track. Other trains followed, switches were set, signals opened or closed, bridges crossed, and all the manœuvres of a real railroad repeated in miniature.

“I haven’t had so much fun since I was a kid,” said Kenneth, rising from the floor and mopping his heated brow with his handkerchief.

“Nor I!” declared Mr. Farrington. “I’d rather rig up that toy for that boy of mine than—than to own a real railroad!”

“I believe you would!” said his wife, laughing. “And now, suppose you see what Santa Claus has for the rest of us.”

“Father’s all in,” said Roger. “You sit on that heap of snow, dad, and Kenneth and I will unload these groaning branches.”

Bobby was too absorbed in his cars to think of anything else, so the little girls acted as messengers to distribute the gifts from the tree.

And this performance was a lengthy one.

Parcel after parcel, daintily wrapped and tied, was given to Patty, and, of course, the Farringtons had many more.

But Patty had a great quantity, for knowing where she was to spend her Christmas, all her young friends had sent gifts to her at the Farringtons’, and the accumulation was almost as great as Elise’s.

“I’m helpless,” said Patty, as she sat with her lap full of gifts, boxes and papers strewn all about her on the floor, and Louise or Hester still bringing her more parcels.

“Let me help you,” said Kenneth, as he picked up a lot of her belongings.

As he was only a dinner guest, of course Kenneth had no such array of gifts, though the Farringtons had given him some pretty trifles, and Patty gave him a charming little Tanagra statuette she had brought from Florence.

“See what Elise gave me,” he remarked, as he showed the bronze paper-knife. “Jolly, isn’t it?”

“Yes, indeed,” returned Patty, relieved to see that Elise had

not given him the ring after all. "It'll be fine to cut your briefs when you're a real out-and-out lawyer. What are briefs, anyway?"

"Little girls shouldn't use words of which they don't know the meaning," said Kenneth, reprovingly.

"Well, anyway, if they're brief enough, they won't need cutting," returned Patty, saucily, and then returned to the opening of her own presents.

She had pretty little gifts from Hilda Henderson, Lorraine Hamilton, Clementine Morse, and many of the other girls, some of whom she had not seen since her return to New York.

"Isn't it lovely to have so many friends?" said she, looking over her pile of gifts at Kenneth.

"Do you love them all?" he asked, smiling back at her happy face.

"Oh, indeed I do. Not exactly because they've given me all these pretty things, for I love the girls just as much in the summer time as at Christmas. But because they're my friends, and so,— I love them."

"Boys are your friends, too," suggested Kenneth.

"Of course they are!" Patty agreed; "and I love them, too. I guess I love everybody."

"Rather a big order," said Roger, coming up just then. "Loving everybody, you can't give a very large portion to each one."

"No," said Patty, pretending to look downcast. "Now, isn't that *too* bad! Well, never mind, I've plenty of gratitude to go round, anyway. And I offer you a big share of that, Roger, for this silver

box.”

“Do you like it? Oh, please like it, Patty.”

“Of course I do; it’s exquisite workmanship, and I shall use it for,—well, it seems most too prosaic,—but it’s exactly the right shape and size for hairpins!”

“Then use it for ’em! Why not?” cried Roger, evidently pleased that Patty could find a use for his gift.

“And see what Ken gave me,” went on Patty, as she held up a small crystal ball. “I’ve long wanted a crystal, and this is a beauty.”

“What’s it for?” asked Roger, curiously; “it looks like a marble.”

“Marble, indeed! Why, Roger, it’s a crystal, a Japanese rock crystal.”

“Isn’t it glass?”

“No, ignorant one! ’Tis not glass, but a curio of rare and occult value. In it I read the future, the past, and the present.”

“Yes, it is a present, I know,” said Roger, and in the laugh at this sally the subject was dropped, but Roger secretly vowed to look up the subject of crystals and find out why Patty was so pleased with a marble.

“Elise is simply snowed under,” said Kenneth, as they heard rapturous exclamations from the other side of the room, where Elise was examining her gifts.

“Think of it!” cried Patty; “she had everything a girl could possibly want yesterday, and now to-day she has a few bushels

more!”

It was literally true. Getting free, somehow, of her own impedimenta, Patty ran over to see Elise’s things.

“You look like a fancy bazaar gone to smash,” she declared, as she saw Elise in the midst of her Christmas portion.

“I feel like an International Exhibition,” returned Elise. “I’ve gifts from all parts of the known world!”

“And unknown!” said Kenneth, picking up various gimcracks of whose name or use he had no idea.

“But this is what I like best,” she went on, smiling at Kenneth, as she held up the dainty little card-case he had given her. “I shall use this only when calling on my dearest friends.”

“Good for you!” he returned. “Glad you like it. And as I know you’ve lots of dearest friends, I’ll promise, when it’s worn out, to give you another.”

Elise looked a trifle disappointed at this offhand response to her more earnest speech, but she only smiled gaily, and turned the subject.

CHAPTER V

SKATING AND DANCING

“Kenneth thinks an awful lot of you, Patty,” said Elise, as, after the Christmas party was all over, the girls were indulging in a good-night chat.

“Pooh,” said Patty, who, in kimono and bedroom slippers, nestled in a big easy-chair in front of the wood-fire in Elise’s dressing-room. “I’ve known Ken for years, and we do think a lot of each other. But you needn’t take that tone, Elise. It’s a boy and girl chumminess, and you know it. Why, Ken doesn’t think any more of me than Roger does.”

“Oh, Roger! Why, he’s perfectly gone on you. He worships the ground you walk on. Surely, Patty, you’ve noticed Roger’s devotion.”

“What’s the matter with you, Elise? Where’d you get these crazy notions about devotion and worship? If you’ll excuse my French,—you make me tired!”

“Don’t you like to have the boys devoted to you, Patty?”

“No, I don’t! I like their jolly friendship, of course. I like to talk to Ken and Roger, or to Clifford Morse, or any of the boys of our set; but as for *devotion*, I don’t see any.”

“None so blind as those who won’t see,” said Elise, who had finished brushing her hair, and now sank down on an ottoman

by Patty's side.

"Well, then, I'll stay blind, for I don't want to see devoted swains worshipping the Persian rugs I walk on! Though if you mean these beautiful rugs that are on all the floors of your house, Elise, I don't know that I blame the swains so much. By the way, I suppose some of them are 'prayer rugs' anyway, so that makes it all the more appropriate."

"Oh, Patty, you're such a silly! You're not like other girls."

"You surprise me, Elise! Also you flatter me! I had an idea I belonged to the common herd."

"Patty, *will* you be serious? Roger is terribly in love with you."

"Really, Elise? How interesting! Now, what would you do in a case like that?"

"I'd consider it seriously, at any rate."

Patty put one finger to her forehead, frowned deeply, and gazed into the fire for fully half a minute. Then she said:

"I've considered, Elise, and all I can think of is the 'Cow who considered very well and gave the piper a penny.' Do you suppose Roger would care for a penny?"

"He would, if you gave it to him," returned Elise, who was almost petulant at Patty's continued raillery.

"Then he shall have it! Rich as the Farringtons are, if the son of the house wants a penny of my fortune, it shall not be denied him!"

Patty had risen, and was stalking up and down the room with jerky strides, and dramatic waving of her arms. Her golden hair

hung in a curly cloud over her blue silk kimono, and her voice thrilled with a tragic intensity, though, of course, exaggerated to a ludicrous degree.

Having finished her speech, Patty retained her dramatic pose, and glared at Elise like a very young and pretty Lady Macbeth.

“Oh, Patty,” cried Elise, forgetting the subject in hand, “you ought to be an actress! Do you know, you were quite stunning when you flung yourself round so. And, Patty, with your voice,—your singing voice, I mean,—you ought to go on the stage! *Do*, will you, Patty? I’d love to see you an opera singer!”

“Elise, you’re crazy to-night! Suppose I should go on the stage, what would become of all these devoted swains who are worshipping my footsteps?”

“Bother the swains! Patty, my heart is set upon it. You must be an actress. I mean a really nice, gentle, refined one, like Maude Adams, or Eleanor Robson. Oh, they are so sweet! and such noble, grand women.”

“Elise, you have lovely ambitions for your friends. What about yourself? Won’t you be a circus-rider, dear? I want you to be as ambitious for you as you are for me.”

“Patty, stop your fooling. I was quite in earnest.”

“Then you’d better begin fooling. It’s more sensible than your earnestness. Now, I’m going to run away to bed and leave you to dream that you’re a circus-rider, whizzing round a ring on a snow-white Arab steed. Good-night, girlie.”

Alone in her room, Patty smiled to herself at Elise’s

foolishness. And yet, though she had no desire to be an actress, Patty had sometimes dreamed of herself as a concert singer, enchanting her audiences with her clear, sweet voice, which was fine and true, if not great. She was ambitious, though as yet not definitely so, and Elise's words had roused a dormant desire to be or to do something worth while, and not, as she thought to herself, be a mere social butterfly.

Then she smiled again as she thought of Elise's talk about Ken and Roger.

But here no answering chord was touched. As chums, she thoroughly liked both boys, but the thought of any more serious liking only roused a feeling of amusement in her mind.

"Perhaps I may be glad to have somebody in love with me some day," she thought; "but it will be many years from now, and meantime I want to do a whole lot of things that are really worth doing."

Then, with a whimsical thought that to sleep was the thing most worth doing at the present moment, Patty tumbled into the soft, white nest prepared for her and was soon sound asleep.

Christmas Day was one of the finest. No snow, but a clear, cold, bracing air, that was exhilarating to breathe.

"Skating this afternoon?" said Roger, after the Merry Christmas greetings had been exchanged.

"Yes, indeed," cried Patty and Elise in one breath.

"Let's get up a party, shall us?" went on Roger, "and skate till dusk, and then all come back here and have tea under the

Christmas tree?"

"Lovely!" cried Elise, but Patty hesitated.

"You know we have the dance on for to-night," she said.

Patty was not robust, and continuous exertions often tired her. Nan had cautioned her not to attempt too much gaiety during this visit, and she wanted to rest before the evening's dance.

"Oh, pshaw!" said Elise, "there'll be lots of time. The dance won't begin till nine, anyway."

So Patty agreed, and Roger went off to invite his skating party by telephone.

He secured Kenneth, and the two Morses, and then he hung up the receiver.

"That's enough," he declared. "I don't like a big skating party. Slip away, girls, and get your bonnets and shawls; the car'll be here in half an hour."

The girls went off to dress, and Patty viewed her new skating costume with decided approval.

It was all of white. A white cloth frock, with short skirt; white broadcloth coat and a Russian turban of white cloth and fur; long white leather leggings, and her Christmas furs, which added a charming touch to the costume.

As being more comfortable for skating, she had returned to her former mode of hair-dressing, and so two big white ribbon bows bloomed at the back of her head. These, and the short skirt, quite took away Patty's grown-up air, and made her seem a little girl again.

“Hello, Baby,” said Roger, as he saw her come downstairs, with rosy cheeks and eyes sparkling with pleasurable anticipation, for Patty loved to skate.

“Mam-ma!” said Patty, putting her finger in her mouth, and assuming a vacant, babyish stare.

Roger laughed at her foolishness, and then Elise came along and they all went out to the car.

Elise’s suit was of crimson cloth, bordered with dark fur, and as a consequence the two girls together made a pretty picture.

“You’re such a comfort, Patty,” Elise said, as they climbed into the big car. “You always dress just right to harmonise with my clothes.”

“Sure you do!” said Roger, looking at the two girls admiringly. “No fellow on the ice will escort such beautiful ladies as I have in my charge. Now, we’ll pick up Ken and the Morses, and then make a dash for the Pole.”

They reached the Park by three o’clock, so had nearly two hours of skating before the dusk fell.

Patty was a superior skater, and so were most of the others, for Roger had chosen his party with care.

“Skate with me, Patty, will you?” said Roger, just at the same moment that Kenneth said, “Of course you’ll skate with me, Patty.”

Patty looked at both boys with a comical smile. “Thank you,” she said; “but I always like to pick out my own escort.” Then, turning to Clifford Morse, she said:

“Skate with me, won’t you, Cliff? We’re a good team.”

“We are that!” he replied, greatly pleased, if a little surprised at Patty’s invitation.

Kenneth and Roger grinned at each other, and then turned quickly to the other girls, who had not heard the little parley.

Of course Roger skated with Clementine Morse, and Kenneth with Elise, which arrangement quite satisfied the dark-eyed beauty.

“You look like Little Red Riding-hood,” said Kenneth, as they started off, with long, gliding strokes.

“Don’t be a wolf, and eat me up,” laughed Elise, for Kenneth had fur on his cap and overcoat, and with his big fur gloves, seemed almost like some big, good-natured animal.

“You skate beautifully, Elise,” said Kenneth, “and all you girls do. Look at Clementine; isn’t she graceful?”

“Yes,” agreed Elise, “and so is Patty.”

“Patty,” echoed Kenneth. “She is a poem on ice!”

She was, and Elise knew it, but a naughty little jealousy burned in her heart at Ken’s words.

She bravely tried to down it, however, and said: “Yes, she is. She’s a poem in every way.”

“Well, I don’t know about that. In some ways she’s more of a jolly, merry jingle.”

“A nonsense rhyme,” suggested Elise, falling in with his metaphor.

“Yes; how quick you are to see what I mean. Now, Clementine

is a lyric,—she glides so gracefully along.”

“And I?” asked Elise, laughing at his witty characterisation.

“You? Well, I can’t judge unless I see you. Skate off by yourself.”

Elise did so, and Kenneth watched the scarlet-clad figure gracefully pirouetting and skilfully executing difficult steps.

“Well?” she said, as she returned to him, and again they joined hands and glided along in unison.

“Well, you’re delightful on ice. You’re a will o’ the wisp.”

“But I want to be a poem of some sort. The other girls are.”

Kenneth smiled at the pretty, anxious face.

“You are a poem. You’re one of those little French forms. A virelay or a triolet.”

Elise was a little uncertain as to what these were, exactly, but she resolved to look them up as soon as she reached home. At any rate, she knew Kenneth meant to be complimentary, and she smiled with pleasure.

Then the others joined them and they all skated together for a time, and then the sun set, and Roger said they must go home.

He was a most reliable boy, and always took charge of their little expeditions or outings. Elise never thought of questioning his authority, so again they all bundled into the car, and started homeward.

“I ought to go right home,” said Clementine.

“Oh, come round for a cup of Christmas tea,” said Roger, “and I’ll take you home in half an hour.”

So the Morses consented, and the six merry young people had tea under the Christmas tree, and told stories by the firelight, and laughed and chatted until Clementine declared she must go, or she'd never get back in time for the dance.

“What are you going to wear, Patsy?” asked Elise, as they went upstairs, arm in arm.

“I’ve a new frock, of course. Did you think I’d come to your dance in one I’d worn before? Nay, I hold Miss Farrington in too high esteem for that!”

“Well, scurry into it, for I’m crazy to see it. If it’s prettier than mine, I won’t let you go down to the ballroom!”

“It won’t be,” returned Patty; “don’t worry about that!”

But when the two girls were dressed, Patty’s frock, though not so expensive, was quite as attractive as Elise’s.

Patty’s was of apricot-coloured satin, veiled all over with a delicate thin material of the same shade. A pearl trimming encircled the slightly low-cut throat and the short sleeves. It was very becoming to pretty Patty, and she knew herself that she had never looked better.

Elise’s gown was of white silk, draped with silvered lace. It was lovely, and suited Elise’s dark hair and eyes, and really both girls were pictures. But Patty’s face was sunny and happy, while Elise’s red mouth drooped in a little curve of discontent.

The girl was discontented by nature, and though she had everything that heart could wish, she was never brimming over with content and happiness, as Patty always was.

The dance was in the tennis court, where a smooth crash had replaced the snowy floor of the Christmas Eve celebration. The Christmas tree still stood there, as it formed a beautiful decoration for that end of the ballroom.

It was not a large party, for Mrs. Farrington would not allow Elise to act like a young lady out in society. About thirty young people were asked, and the hours were from nine till twelve.

But the music was of the finest, and as Patty's favourite amusement was dancing, she had a most enjoyable time.

An exquisite dancer, she was, of course, besieged by partners, but in her merry, wholehearted way, she treated them all alike, showing favouritism to none, and dancing with less desirable partners as pleasantly and happily as with those she liked better.

Roger grumbled at this.

"You're wasted on a fellow like Harry Barr," he said, as he and Patty started for a turn. "He dances like a grain-thresher, and yet you bob along with him as smilingly as if you were dancing with a decent tripper."

"Why not?" returned Patty; "he's pleasant and kind. He doesn't *talk* like a grain-thresher, and he can't help his dancing. Or rather, his lack of it, for you can't call those gymnastics of his dancing. Oh, Roger, there's Mr. Hepworth!"

Sure enough, Mr. Hepworth had just come in, and as Patty spoke, he caught her eye and smiled.

She smiled back, and when the dance was over asked Roger to take her to him.

“Old Hepworth?” said Roger, in surprise. “You can’t waste time on him, Patty; your dance card is full, you know.”

“I don’t care, I must just speak to him. I haven’t seen him since I came home. Whoever belongs to my next dance can wait a few minutes.”

“All right; come on, then.” Roger led her across the room, and with a smiling face, and in tones of glad welcome, she said:

“Oh, Mr. Hepworth, how do you do?”

“Patty!” he exclaimed, taking her hands in his. “I’m so glad to see you again.”

There was a thrill in his voice that startled her, but she only said, “And so am I glad to see you. Why haven’t you been to call on me?”

“I’ve just returned from a Southern trip. Only reached New York to-night,—and here I am.”

“Here I am, too, but I can’t talk to you now. My programme is full, and I make it a point always to keep my engagements.”

“Not one dance left?” said Mr. Hepworth, looking over the scribbled card.

“Not one! I’m so sorry,—but, of course, I didn’t know you were coming.”

“Of course not. Run along now, and enjoy yourself, and I’ll call on you, if I may, some time when you are at home.”

“Yes, do,” said Patty, realising that Mr. Hepworth was the same kind, thoughtful friend he had always been.

“I wonder why I’m so glad to see him,” she thought to herself,

as she walked away with her new partner; “but I am, all the same.”

CHAPTER VI

A FAIR PROPOSITION

It was on the afternoon of New Year's Day that Mr. Hepworth came to call on Patty. She was at home again, having returned from her visit to Elise a few days after Christmas.

"You know I am old-fashioned," he said, as he greeted the Fairfield family, and joined their circle round the library fire. "But I don't suppose you thought I was quite so old-fashioned as to make calls on New Year's Day. However, I'm not quite doing that, as this is the only call I shall make to-day."

"We're glad to see you any day in the year," said Nan, cordially, and Patty added:

"Indeed we are. I've been wondering why you didn't come round."

"Busy," said Mr. Hepworth, smiling at her. "An artist's life is not a leisure one."

"Is anybody's now-a-days?" asked Mr. Fairfield. "The tendency of the age is to rush and hurry all the time. What a contrast to a hundred years ago!"

"And a good contrast, too," declared Nan. "If the world still jogged along at a hundred years ago rate, we would have no motor-cars, no aëroplanes, no—"

"No North Pole," suggested her husband. "True enough, Nan,

to accomplish things we must be busy.”

“I want to get busy,” said Patty. “No, I don’t mean that for slang,”—as her father looked at her reprovingly,—“but I want to do something that is really worth while.”

“The usual ambition of extreme youth,” said Mr. Hepworth, looking at her kindly, if quizzically. “Do you want to reform the world, and in what way?”

“Not exactly reform it,” said Patty, smiling back at him; “reform has such a serious sound. But I do want to make it brighter and better.”

“That’s a good phrase, too,” observed Mr. Hepworth, still teasingly. “But, Patty, you do make the world brighter and better, just by being in it.”

“That’s too easy; and, anyway, I expect to remain in it for some several years yet; and I want to do something beside just *be*.”

“Ah, well, you can doubtless find some outlet for your enthusiasms.”

“What she really wants,” said her father, “is to be an operatic star.”

“And sing into phonographs,” added Nan, mischievously.

“Yes,” smiled Patty, “and have my picture in the backs of magazines!”

“That’s right,” said Mr. Hepworth, “aim high, while you’re about it.”

“I can aim high enough,” returned Patty, “but I’m not sure I can sing high enough.”

“Oh, you only need to come high enough, to be an operatic star,” said Mr. Hepworth, who was in merry mood to-day.

“But, seriously,” said Patty, who was in earnest mood, “I do want to do good. I don’t mean in a public way, but in a charity way.”

“Oh, soup-kitchens and bread-lines?”

“No; not exactly. I mean to help people who have no sweetness and light in their lives.”

“Oh, Patty,” groaned Nan, “if you’re on that tack, you’re hopeless. What have you been reading? ‘The Young Maiden’s Own Ruskin,’ or ‘Look Up and Not Down?’”

“And lend a ten,” supplemented Mr. Fairfield.

“You needn’t laugh,” began Patty, pouting a little. Then she laughed herself, and went on: “Yes, you may laugh if you want to,—I know I sound ridiculous. But I tell you, people, I’m going to make good!”

“You may make good,” said her father, “but you’ll never be good until you stop using slang. How often, my daughter, have I told you—”

“Oh, cut it out, daddy,” said Patty, dimpling with laughter, for she knew her occasional slang phrases amused her father, even though they annoyed him. “If you’ll help me ‘do noble things, not dream them all day long,’ I’ll promise to talk only in purest English undefiled.”

“Goodness, Patty!” said Nan, “you’re a walking cyclopædia of poetical quotations to-day.”

“And you’re a running commentary on them,” returned Patty, promptly, which remark sent Mr. Hepworth off in peals of laughter.

“Oh, Patty!” he exclaimed, “I’m afraid you’re going to grow up clever! That would be fatal to your ambition! Be good, sweet child, and let who will be clever. Nobody can be both.”

“I can,” declared Patty; “I’ll show you Missouri people yet!”

Mr. Fairfield groaned at this new burst of slang, but Mr. Hepworth only laughed.

“She’ll get over it,” he said. “A few years of these ‘noble aims’ of hers will make her so serious-minded that she won’t even see the meaning of a slang phrase. Though, I must admit, I think some of them very apt, myself.”

“They sure are!” said irrepressible Patty, giggling at her father’s frown.

“But I’ll tell you one thing,” went on Mr. Hepworth: “Whatever line you decide upon, let it be something that needs no training. I mean, if you choose to go in for organised charity or settlement work, well and good. But don’t attempt Red Cross nursing or kindergarten teaching, or anything that requires technical knowledge. For in these days, only trained labour succeeds, and only expert, at that.”

“Oh, pshaw,” said Patty; “I don’t mean to earn money. Though if I wanted to, I’m sure I could. Why, if I *had* to earn my own living, I could do it as easy as anything!”

“I’m not so sure of that,” said Mr. Hepworth, gravely. “It isn’t

so easy for a young woman to earn her living without a technical education in some line.”

“Well, Patty, you’ll never have to earn your own living,” said her father, smiling; “so don’t worry about that. But I agree with our friend, that you couldn’t do it, if you did have to.”

“That sounds so Irish, daddy, that I think it’s as bad as slang. However, I see you are all of unsympathetic nature, so I won’t confide in you further as to my aims or ambitions.”

“I haven’t noticed any confidences yet,” murmured Nan; “only appeals for help.”

Patty gave her a withering glance.

“The subject is dropped,” she said; “let us now talk about the weather.”

“No,” said Hepworth; “let me tell you a story. Let me tell you of a girl I met down South, who, if she only had Patty’s determination and force of character, might achieve success, and even renown.”

“Do tell us about her,” said Nan, for Mr. Hepworth was always an interesting talker.

“She lives in Virginia, and her name is Christine Farley. A friend of mine, down there, asked me to look at some of her drawings, and I saw at once that the girl has real talent, if not genius.”

“Of course you would know,” said Nan, for Mr. Hepworth himself was a portrait painter of high repute.

“Yes, she really has done some remarkable work. But she is

poor and lives in a small country town. She has already learned all the local teachers can give her, and needs the technical training of a good art school. With a year of such training she could easily become, I am sure, a successful illustrator. At least, after a year's study, I know she could get good work to do, and then she would rapidly become known."

"Can't she manage to do this, in some way?" asked Mr. Fairfield.

"No; she is ambitious in her work, but in no other way. She is shy and timid; a country girl, inexperienced in the ways of the world, ignorant of city life, and desperately afraid of New York, which to her is a name for all unknown terrors."

"Goose!" said Patty. "Oh, I'm sorry for her, of course; but as an American girl, she ought to have more spunk."

"Southern girls don't have spunk, Patty," said her father, with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"Don't they! Well, I guess I ought to know! I'm a Southern girl, myself. At least, I was until I was fourteen."

"Perhaps you've achieved your spunk since you came North, then," said Hepworth; "for I agree with your father, Southern girls do not have much energy of character. At least, Miss Farley hasn't. She's about nineteen or twenty, but she's as childish as a girl of fourteen,—except in her work; there she excels any one of her age I've ever known."

"Can nothing be done in the matter?" asked Nan.

"I don't know. I'm told they're very proud people, and would

not accept charity. Of course she never can earn anything by her work if she stays at home; and as she can't get away, it seems to be a deadlock."

"I'd like to help her," said Patty, slowly. "I do think she ought to have ingenuity enough to help herself, but if she hasn't, I'd like to help her."

"How can you?" asked Nan.

"I don't know. But the way to find out how to do things is to do them."

"Oh, dear," moaned Mr. Hepworth, in mock despair. "I said I feared you were clever. Don't say those things, Patty, you'll ruin your reputation as a beauty."

"Pooh!" said Patty, who sometimes didn't know whether Mr. Hepworth was teasing her or not, "that isn't a clever thing to say."

"Well, if you don't mean it for an epigram, I'll forgive you,—but don't let it happen again. Now, as to Christine Farley. I'll let you be clever for once, if you'll turn your cleverness to devising some way to aid her to an art education. Can you think of any way?"

"I can think of dozens," returned Patty, "but the only thing to do is for her to come to New York, get a scholarship at the Art School, and then board in a hall bedroom,—art students always do that,—and they have jolly good times with chafing dishes and palette knives, and such things. I've read about 'em."

"Yes," said Mr. Hepworth, "but how is she to pay the board for the hall bedroom? They are really quite poor, I'm told."

“Well!” said Patty, scornfully, “anybody,—the merest infant,—could earn enough money outside class hours to pay a small sum like that, I should hope! Why, how much would such board cost?”

“Patty, child,” said her father, “you don’t know much of social economics, do you? I fancy the young woman could board properly for about twelve or fifteen dollars a week; eh, Hepworth?”

“Yes; I daresay fifteen dollars a week would cover her expenses, including her art materials. Of course this would mean literally the ‘hall bedroom’ in a very modest boarding-house.”

“Well!” went on Patty, “and do you mean to say that this girl couldn’t earn fifteen dollars a week, and attend her classes, too?”

“I mean to say just that,” said Mr. Hepworth, seriously.

“I agree with you,” said Nan. “Why, I couldn’t earn fifteen dollars a week, and stay at home from the classes.”

“Oh, Nan!” cried Patty, “you could! I’m sure you could! Why, I’ll bet I could earn fifteen dollars a week, and have plenty of time left for my practising, my club meetings, motoring, skating, and all the things I want to do beside. Fifteen dollars a week is *nothing!*”

“Gently, gently, my girl,” said her father, for Patty’s cheeks were pink with the earnestness of her argument. “Fifteen dollars a week seems nothing to you, because you have all the money you want. But where is your sense of proportion? Your idea of relative values? The value of fifteen dollars handed out to you

willingly by a loving father, or the value of fifteen dollars earned from a grudging employer, are totally different matters.”

“I don’t care,” said Patty. “I know I could earn that much a week, and I believe this other girl could do so, if she had somebody to make her think she could.”

“There’s a good deal in that,” said Hepworth, thoughtfully. “Miss Farley does need somebody to make her think she can do things. But the life of an art student is a busy one, and I’m sure she couldn’t earn much money while she’s studying.”

“But fifteen dollars a week isn’t much,” persisted Patty. “Anybody could earn that.”

“Look here, Puss,” said her father: “sometimes you show a bravery of assertion that ought to be put to the test. Now I’ll make a proposition to you in the presence of these two witnesses. If you’ll earn fifteen dollars in one week,—any week,—I’ll agree to pay the board of this Miss Farley in New York, for a year, while she pursues her art studies.”

“Oh, father, will you?” cried Patty. “What a duck you are! Of course I can earn the money, easily.”

“Wait a moment; there are conditions, or rather stipulations. You must not do anything unbecoming a quiet, refined girl,—but I know you wouldn’t do that, anyway. You must not engage in any pursuit that keeps you away from your home after five o’clock in the afternoon—”

“Oh,” interrupted Patty, “I don’t propose to go out washing! I shall do light work of some sort at home. But never you mind

what I do,—of course it will be nothing you could possibly object to,—I'll earn fifteen dollars in less than a week."

"A week, though, is the proposition. When you bring me fifteen dollars, earned by yourself, unassisted, in the space of seven days, I'll carry out my part of the bargain."

"But the girl won't accept it," said Patty, regretfully.

"I'm trusting to your tact, and Nan's, to offer the opportunity to her in such a way that she will accept it. Couldn't that be done, Hepworth?"

"Why, yes; I daresay it could be managed. And you are very generous, Mr. Fairfield, but I can't say I have much hope of Patty's success."

"Patty's success' is always a foregone conclusion," said that young woman, saucily; "and now, at last, I have an aim in life! I shall begin to-morrow,—and we'll see!"

The others laughed, for no one could take pretty Patty very seriously, except herself.

"But don't tell anybody," she added, as the doorbell rang.

They all promised they wouldn't, and then Elise and Roger came in to bring New Year's greetings, and the conversation took a lighter and merrier turn.

CHAPTER VII

DEPARTMENT G

Alone in her own room that same night, Patty thought out her great project. She was not at all doubtful of her success, she was only choosing among the various methods of earning money that occurred to her.

All were easy, and some of them even seemed delightful occupations.

“Father is an angel,” she thought to herself; “a big, splendid angel. He knew I could do my part easily enough, and he only made it a stipulation because he didn’t want to shoulder the whole affair outright. He wanted me to feel I had a hand in it. He’s so tactful and dear. Well, I’ll do my part so well, he’ll have nothing to complain of. Then I’ll get Nan to write to the girl, and invite her here for a few days or a week. Then I rather guess we can gently persuade her to accept the goods the gods provide.”

Considering the matter as settled, Patty went to sleep and dreamed happily of her coming triumphs as a wage-earner.

“Do you go to business to-day, Miss Fairfield?” asked her father, at the breakfast table.

“Yes, Mr. Fairfield. That is, I shall occupy myself with my— with my occupation.”

“Indeed! that is logical, at any rate. Would it be indiscreet to

inquire the nature of said occupation?"

"It would be not only indiscreet, but useless, for I decline to tell. But it is work I shall do at home. I've no desire to enter an office. And, you don't need a stenographer, anyway, do you?"

"No, and if I did, I shouldn't take you. You're too young and too self-assured,—not desirable traits in office work."

"I may get over them both," said Patty, smiling at him.

"You probably will," said Nan, "before you've succeeded in this ridiculous scheme you've undertaken."

"Now, Nannikins, don't desert Mr. Micawber in that cruel fashion," Patty flung back, gaily; "the game's never out till it's played out, you know; and this game isn't even yet begun."

"You'll be played out before the game is," said her father.

"Oh, daddy, I'm 'fraid that's slang! I am truly 'fraid so!"

"Well, mind now, Puss; you're not to tire yourself too much. Remember when you 'most worked yourself to death, at your Commencement celebration."

"Yes, but I've had a lot of experience since that. And I'm much weller and stronger."

"Yes, you're well; but you're not of a very strong constitution, and never will be. So remember, and don't overdo."

"Not I. I can earn fifteen dollars a week, and more too, I know, without overdoing myself."

"Good-by, then; I must be off. I'll hear to-night the report of your first day's work."

The family separated, and Patty ran singing away to make her

preparations for the campaign.

“What *are* you doing?” asked Nan, as she went rummaging in the linen closet.

“Nothing naughty,” replied Patty, giggling. “Curb your curiosity, stepmotherly, for it won’t be gratified.”

Nan laughed and went away, and Patty proceeded to select certain very pretty embroidered doilies and centrepieces,—two of each.

These she laid carefully in a flat box, which she tied up into a neat parcel. Then she put on her plainest cloth suit, and a small, dark hat, and was ready to start.

“Nan,” she said, looking in at the library door, “what time do you want the motor?”

“Oh, about eleven or twelve. Keep it as long as you like.”

“It’s only ten now. I’ll be back in less than an hour, I’m sure. Good-by.”

“Good-by,” returned Nan. “Good luck to you!”

She thought Patty’s scheme ridiculous, but harmless, for she knew the girl well enough to know she wouldn’t do anything that might lead her into an unpleasant position; but she feared that her boundless enthusiasm would urge her on beyond the bounds of her nervous strength.

Though soundly healthy, Patty was high-strung, and stopped at no amount of exertion to attain a desired end. More than once this nervous energy of hers had caused physical collapse, which was what Nan feared for her now.

But Patty feared nothing for herself, and going out to the waiting motor-car, she gave the chauffeur an address down in the lower part of Broadway.

It was so unusual, that Miller hesitated a moment and then said, deferentially: "This is 'way downtown, Miss Patty; are you sure the number is right?"

"Yes; that's all right," she returned, smiling; "go ahead."

So he went ahead, and after a long ride southward, the car stopped in the crowded mercantile portion of lower Broadway.

Patty got out, and looked a little apprehensively at the unfamiliar surroundings. "Wait for me," she said to Miller, and then turned determinedly to the door.

Yes, the number was right. There was the sign, "Monongahela Art Embroidery Company," on the window. Patty opened the big door, and went in.

She had fancied it would be like the shops to which she was accustomed, where polite floor-walkers stepped up and asked her wishes, but it was not at all like that.

It was more like a large warehouse. Partitions that rose only part way to the ceiling divided off small rooms or departments, all of which were piled high with boxes or crates. The aisles between these were narrow, and the whole place was rather dark. Moreover, there seemed to be nobody about.

Patty sat down in a chair and waited a few moments, but no one appeared, so she got up again.

"Here's where I need my pluck," she said to herself, not

frightened, but wondering at the situation. "I'll go ahead, but I feel like Alice in Wonderland. I know I'll fall into a treacle well."

She traversed half the length of the long building, when she saw a man, writing in one of the small compartments.

He looked up at her, and then, apparently without interest in her presence there, resumed his work.

Patty was a little annoyed at what she thought discourtesy, and said:

"I've come to answer your advertisement."

"Fourth floor," said the man, indicating the direction by pointing his penholder across the room, but not looking up.

"Thank you," said Patty, in a tone intended to rebuke his own lack of manners.

But he only went on writing, and she turned to look for the elevator.

She could see none, however, so she walked on, thinking how like a maze was this succession of small rooms and little cross aisles. When she saw another man writing in another coop, she said politely:

"Will you please direct me to the elevator?"

"What?" said the man, looking at her.

Patty repeated her request.

"Ain't none," he said. "Want work?"

Though unpolished, he was not rude, and after a moment's hesitation, Patty said, "Yes, I do."

"Have to hoof it, then. Three flights up; Department G."

“All right,” said Patty, whose spirits always rose when she encountered difficulties. She saw the staircase, now; a rough, wooden structure of unplanned boards, and no balusters. But she trudged up the long flight hopefully.

The next floor seemed to be full of whirring looms, and the noise was, as Patty described it afterward, like the buzzing of a billion bees! But, asking no further directions, she ascended the next staircase and the next, until she found herself on the fourth floor.

Several people were bustling about here, all seeming to be very busy and preoccupied.

“Where is Department G?” she inquired of a man hurrying by.

“Ask at the desk,” he replied, without pausing.

This was ambiguous, as there were more than a score of desks about, each tenanted by a busy man, more often than not accompanied by a stenographer.

“Oh, dear, what a place!” thought Patty. No one would attend to her wants; no one seemed to notice her. She believed she could stand there all day if she chose, without being spoken to.

Clearly, she must take the initiative.

She saw a pleasant-faced woman at a desk, and decided to address her.

“Where is Department G, please?” she asked.

“G?” said the woman, looking blank.

“Yes, G. The man downstairs told me it was on the fourth floor. Isn’t this the fourth floor?”

“Yes, it is.”

“Then, where is Department G?”

“G?”

“Yes, G!”

“I don’t know, I’m sure.”

“Who does know?”

“I don’t know.”

The absurdity of this conversation made Patty smile, which seemed to irritate the other.

“I can’t help it if I don’t know,” she snapped out. “I’m new here, myself; only came yesterday. I don’t know where G is, I’m sure.”

“Excuse me,” said Patty, sorry that she had smiled, and she turned away.

She caught a red-headed boy, as he passed, whistling, and said:

“Do *you* know where Department G is?”

“Sure!” said the boy, grinning at her. “Sashay straight acrost de room. Pipe de guy wit’ de goggles?”

“Thank you,” said Patty, restraining her desire to smile at the funny little chap.

She went over to the desk indicated. The man seated there looked at her over his glasses, and said:

“To embroider?”

“Yes,” said Patty.

“Take a chair. Wait a few moments. I’m busy.”

Relieved at having reached her goal, Patty sat down in the

chair indicated and waited. She waited five minutes and then ten, and then fifteen.

The man was busy; there was no doubt of that. He dashed off memoranda, gave them to messengers, telephoned, whisked drawers open and shut, and seemed to be in a very whirl of business.

As there was no indication of a cessation, Patty grew impatient, at last, and said:

“Can you attend to my business soon? If not, I’ll call some other day.”

“Yes,” said the man, passing his hand across his brow a little wearily. He looked tired, and overworked, and Patty felt sorry for him.

But he whirled round in his office chair and asked her quite civilly what she wanted.

“You advertised for embroiderers,” began Patty, feeling rather small and worthless, “so I came—”

“Yes, yes,” said the man, as she paused. “Can you embroider? We use only the best. Have you samples of your work?”

“I have,” said Patty, beginning to untie her box.

But her fingers trembled, and she couldn’t unknot the cord.

The man took it from her, not rudely, but as if every moment were precious. Deftly he opened the parcel, and gave a quick glance at Patty’s exquisite needlework on the doilies and centrepieces she had brought.

“Do it yourself?” he asked, already closing the box again.

“Yes, of course,” said Patty, indignant at the implication.

“No offence; that’s all right. Your work goes. Report at Department B. Good-day.”

He handed her the box, whirled round to his desk, and was immediately at his work again.

Patty realised she was dismissed, and, taking her box, she started for the stairs.

She passed the red-headed boy again, and feeling almost as if she were meeting an old friend in a strange land, she said: “Where is Department B?”

“Caught on, didjer?” he grinned. “Good fer youse! B, first floor,—that way.”

He pointed a grimy finger in the direction she should take, and went on, whistling. Down the three flights of stairs went Patty, and thanks to the clarity of the red-headed one’s direction, she soon found Department B.

This was in charge of a sharp-faced woman, rather past middle age.

“Sent by Mr. Myers?” she inquired, looking at Patty coldly.

“I was sent by the man in Department G,” returned Patty. “He said my work would do, and that I was to report to you.”

“All right; how much do you want?” said the woman.

“How much do you pay?” returned Patty.

“Don’t be impertinent, miss! I mean how much work do you want?”

“Oh,” said Patty, who was quite innocent of any intent to

offend. "Why, I want enough to last a week."

"Well, that depends on how fast you work," said the woman, speaking with some asperity. "Come now, do you want a dozen, or two dozen, or what?"

Patty was strongly tempted to say: "What, thank you!" but she refrained, knowing it was no occasion for foolery.

"I don't know till I see them," she replied. "Are they elaborate pieces?"

"Here they are," said the woman, taking some pieces of work from a box. Her tone seemed to imply that she was conferring an enormous favour on Patty by showing them.

They were rather large centrepieces, all of the same pattern, which was stamped, but not embroidered.

"There's a lot of work on those," remarked Patty.

"Oh, you *are* green!" said the woman. She jerked out another similar centrepiece, on which a small section, perhaps one-eighth of the whole, was worked in silks.

"This is what you're to do," she explained, in a tired, cross voice. "You work this corner, and that's all."

"Who works the rest?" asked Patty, amazed at this plan.

"Why, the buyer. We sell these to the shops; they sell them to people who use this finished corner as a guide to do the rest of the piece. Can't you understand?"

"Yes, I can, now that you explain it," returned Patty. "Then if I take a dozen, I'm to work just that little corner on each one; is that it?"

“That’s it,” said the woman, wearily, as if she were making the explanation for the thousandth time,—as she probably was.

“You can take this as a guide for yourself,” she went on, a little more kindly, “and here’s the silks. Did you say a dozen?”

“Wait a minute,” said Patty; “how much do you pay?”

“Five dollars.”

“A piece, I suppose. Yes, I’ll take a dozen.” The woman gave a hard little laugh.

“Five dollars a piece!” she said. “Not much! We pay five dollars a dozen.”

“A dozen? Five dollars for all that work! Why, each of those corners is as much work as a whole doily.”

“Yes, just about; do you work fast?”

“Yes; pretty fast.”

Patty was doing some mental calculation. Three dozen of those pieces meant an interminable lot of work. But it also meant fifteen dollars, and Patty’s spirit was now fully roused.

“I’ll take three dozen,” she said, decidedly; “and I’ll bring them back, finished, a week from to-day.”

“My, you must be a swift worker,” said the woman, in a disinterested voice.

She was already sorting out silks, as with a practised hand, and making all into a parcel.

Patty was about to offer her a visiting card, as she assumed she must give her address, when the woman said:

“Eighteen dollars, please.”

“What?” said Patty. “What for?”

“Security. You don’t suppose we let everybody walk off with our materials, and never come back, do you?”

“Do you doubt my honesty?” said Patty, haughtily.

“Don’t doubt anybody’s honesty,” was the reply. “Some folks don’t have any to doubt. But it’s the rule of the house. Six dollars a dozen is the deposit price for that pattern.”

“But eighteen dollars is more than you’re going to pay me for the work,” said Patty.

“Yes,” said the woman, “but can’t you understand? This is a deposit to protect ourselves if you never return, or if you spoil the work. If you bring it back in satisfactory condition, at the appointed time, we return your deposit, and pay you the price agreed upon for the work.”

“Oh, I see,” said Patty, taking out her purse. “And it does seem fair. But isn’t it hard for poor girls to put up that deposit?”

“Yes, it is.” The woman’s face softened a little. “But they get it back,—if they do the work right.”

“And suppose I bring it back unfinished, or only part done?”

“If what you do is done right, you’ll get paid. And if the pieces you don’t do are unsoiled and in good condition, we redeem them. But if you care for steady work here, you’d better not take more’n you can accomplish.”

“Thank you,” said Patty, slowly. “I’ll keep the three dozen. Good-morning.”

“Good-day,” said the woman, curtly, and turned away with a

tired sigh.

Patty went out to the street, and found Miller looking exceedingly anxious about the prolonged absence of his young mistress.

A look of relief overspread his face as she appeared, and when she got into the car and said: "Home, Miller," he started with an air of decided satisfaction.

CHAPTER VIII

EMBROIDERED BLOSSOMS

It was after twelve o'clock when Patty reached home, and she found Nan, with her wraps on, rather anxiously awaiting her.

"Patty! Wherever have you been all this time?" she cried, as Patty came in with her big bundle.

"Laying the foundations of my great career; and, oh, Nan, it was pretty awful! I'm in for it, I can tell you!"

"What a goose you are!" But Nan smiled affectionately at the rosy, excited face of her stepdaughter.

"Well, I'm going out on a short errand, Patty. I'll be home to luncheon at one, and then you must tell me all about it."

Patty ran up to her own room, and, flinging off her hat and coat, sat down to open her bundle of work.

It was appalling. The portion to be embroidered looked larger than it had done in the shop, and the pattern was one of the most intricate and elaborate she had ever seen.

"Thank goodness, they're all alike," thought poor Patty. "After I do one, the others will be easier."

She flew for her embroidery hoops and work-basket, and began at once on one of the centrepieces.

The pattern was a floral design, tied with bow-knots and interlaced with a conventional lattice-work. The shading of the

blossoms was complicated, and showed many shades of each colour. The bow-knots were of a solid colour, but required close, fine stitches of a tedious nature, while the lattice-work part seemed to present an interminable task.

Patty was a skilful embroiderer, and realised at her first glance that she had a fearful amount of work before her.

But as yet she was undismayed, and cheerfully started in on the flowers.

She selected the right silks, cut the skeins neatly, and put them in thread papers.

“For,” she thought, “if I allow my silks to get tangled or mixed up, it will delay me, of course.”

At one o'clock, Nan came to her room.

“Didn't you hear the luncheon gong?” she said.

“No,” replied Patty, looking up. “Is it one o'clock already?”

“For goodness' sake, gracious' sake, Patty! What *are* you doing? Is *that* your 'occupation'?”

“Yes,” said Patty, proudly displaying a wild rose, beautifully worked, and carefully tinted. “Don't I do it nicely?”

“Indeed you do! Your embroidery is always exquisite. But are you going to work that whole centrepiece?”

“No, only a section,—see, just this much.”

Patty indicated the portion she was to work, but she didn't say that she had thirty-five more, carefully laid away in a box, to do within the week.

“Well,” agreed Nan, “that's not such a terrific task. But will

they give you fifteen dollars for that piece?"

"No," said Patty, smiling a little grimly; "but there are others."

"Oho! A lot of them! A dozen, I suppose. They always give out work by dozens. Well, girlie, I don't want to be discouraging, but you can't do a dozen in a week. Come on down to luncheon."

At the table, Patty gave Nan a graphic description of her morning's experiences.

Though more or less shocked at the whole performance, Nan couldn't help laughing at Patty's dramatic recital, and the way in which she mimicked the various people.

"And yet, Nan," she said, "it's really pathetic; they all seemed so busy and so tired. The woman who gave me the work was like a machine,—as if she just fed out centrepieces to people who came for them. I'm sure she hasn't smiled for fourteen years. The only gay one in the place was the red-headed boy; and he talked such fearful slang it cured me of ever using it again! Father will be glad of that, anyway. Hereafter I shall converse in Henry James diction. Why, Nan, he said, 'Pipe de guy wit' de goggles!'"

"What did he mean?" asked Nan, puzzled.

"Oh, he meant, 'observe the gentleman wearing spectacles.'"

"How did you know?"

"Intuition, I suppose. And then, he pointed to the man in question."

"Patty, you'll get more slangy still, if you go among such people."

"No, I won't. There's no cure like an awful example. Watch

the elegance of my conversation from now on. And besides, Nan, you mustn't act as if I associated with them socially. I assure you I was quite the haughty lady. But that slangy boy was an angel unawares. I'd probably be there yet but for his kindly aid."

"Well, I suppose you'll have to carry this absurd scheme through. And, Patty, I'll help you in any way I can. Don't you want me to wind silks, or something?"

"No, ducky stepmother of mine. The only way you can help is to head off callers. I can do the work if I can keep at it. But if the girls come bothering round, I'll never get it done. Now, this afternoon, I want to do a lot, so if any one asks for me, won't you gently but firmly refuse to let them see me? Make yourself so entertaining that they'll forget my existence."

"I'll try," said Nan, dubiously; "but if it's Elise or Clementine, they'll insist on seeing you."

"Let 'em insist. Tell 'em I have a sick headache,—for I feel sure I shall before the afternoon's over."

"Now, Patty, I won't have that sort of thing! You may work an hour or so, then you must rest, or go for a drive, or chat with the girls, or something."

"I will, other days, Nan. But to-day I want to put in the solid afternoon working, so I'll know how much I can accomplish."

"Have you really a dozen of those things to do, Patty?"

"Yes, I have." Patty didn't dare say she had three dozen. "And if I do well this afternoon, I can calculate how long the work will take. Oh, Nan, I do want to succeed. It isn't only the work, you

know, it's the principle. I hate to be baffled; and I *won't* be!"

A stubborn look came into Patty's pretty eyes,—a look which Nan knew well. A look which meant that the indomitable will might be broken but not bent, and that Patty would persevere in her chosen course until she conquered or was herself defeated.

So, after luncheon, she returned to her task, a little less certain of success than she had been, but no less persevering.

The work was agreeable to her. She loved to embroider, and the dainty design and exquisite colouring appealed to her æsthetic sense.

Had it been only one centrepiece, and had she not felt hurried, it would have been a happy outlook.

But as she carefully matched the shades of silk to the sample piece, she found that it took a great deal of time to get the tints exactly right.

"But that's only for the first one," she thought hopefully; "for all the others, I shall know just which silks to use. I'll lay them in order, so there'll be no doubt about it."

Her habits of method and system stood her in good stead now, and her skeins, carefully marked, were laid in order on her little work-table.

But though her fingers fairly flew, the pattern progressed slowly. She even allowed herself to leave long stitches on the wrong side,—a thing she never did in her own embroidery. She tried to do all the petals of one tint at once, to avoid delay of changing the silks. She used every effort to make "her head save

her hands,” but the result was that both head and hands became heated and nervous.

“This won’t do,” she said to herself, as the silk frazzled between her trembling fingers. “If I get nervous, I’ll never accomplish anything!”

She forced herself to be calm, and to move more slowly, but the mental strain of hurry, and the physical strain of eyes and muscles, made her jerky, and the stitches began to be less true and correct.

“I’ll be sensible,” she thought; “I’ll take ten minutes off and relax.”

She went downstairs, singing, and trying to assume a careless demeanour.

Going into Nan’s sitting-room, she said:

“Work’s going on finely. I came down for a glass of water, and to rest a minute. Any one been here?”

“No,” said Nan, pleasantly, pretending not to notice Patty’s flushed cheeks and tired eyes. Really, she had several times stolen on tiptoe to Patty’s door, and anxiously looked at her bending over her work. But Patty didn’t know this, and wise Nan concluded the time to speak was not yet.

“No, no one came in to disturb you, which is fortunate. You’re sensible, dear, to rest a bit. Jane will bring you some water. Polly want a cracker?”

“No, thank you; I’m not hungry. Nan, that’s awfully fine work.”

“Yes, I know it, Patsy. But remember, you don’t *have* to do it. Give the thing a fair trial, and if it doesn’t go easily, give it up and try something else.”

“It goes easily enough; it isn’t that. But you know yourself, you can’t do really good embroidery if you do it too rapidly.”

“Deed you can’t! But you do such wonderfully perfect work, that I should think you could afford to slight it a little, and still have it better than other people’s.”

“Nan, you’re such a comfort!” cried Patty, jumping up to embrace her stepmother. “You always say just the very right thing. Now, I’m going back to work. I feel all rested now, and I’m sure I can finish a lot to-day. Why, Nan Fairfield! for goodness’ sake! Is it really four o’clock?”

Patty had just noticed the time, and was aghast! Two solid hours she had worked, and only a small portion of one piece was done! She hadn’t dreamed the time had flown so, and thought it about three o’clock.

Slightly disheartened at this discovery, she went back to work. At first, the silks went smoothly enough, then hurry and close application brought on the fidgets again.

Before five o’clock, she had to turn on the electric lights, and then, to her dismay, the tints of the silks changed, and she couldn’t tell yellow from pink; or green from gray.

“Well,” she thought, “I’ll work the bow-knots. They’re of one solid colour, and it’s straight sailing.”

Straight sailing it was,—but very tedious. An untrue stitch

spoiled the smooth continuance of the embroidery that was to represent tied ribbon bows. An untrue stitch—and she made several—had to be picked out and done over, and this often meant frayed silk, or an unsightly needle hole in the linen.

Long before Patty thought it was time, the dressing-gong for dinner sounded.

She jumped, greatly surprised at the flight of time, but also relieved, that now she *must* lay aside her work. She longed to throw herself down on her couch and rest, but there was no time for that.

However, after she bathed and dressed, she felt refreshed, and it was a bright, merry-faced Patty who danced downstairs to greet her father.

If he thought her cheeks unusually pink, or her eyes nervously bright, he made no allusion to it.

“Well, Puss, how goes the ‘occupation’?” he said, patting her shoulder.

“It’s progressing, father,” she replied, “but if you’d just as leave, we won’t talk about it to-night. I’ll tell you all about it, after I finish it.”

“All right, Pattykins; we business people never like to ‘talk shop.’”

And then Mr. Fairfield, who had been somewhat enlightened by Nan as to how matters stood, chatted gaily of other things, and Patty forgot her troublesome work, and was quite her own gay, saucy self again.

Kenneth dropped in in the evening, to bring a song which he had promised Patty. They tried it over together, and then Patty said:

“Would you mind, Ken, if I ask you not to stay any longer, to-night? I’ve something I want to do, and—”

“Mind? Of course not. I rather fancy we’re good enough friends not to misunderstand each other. If you’ll let me come and make up my time some other night, I’ll skip out now, so quick you can’t see me fly!”

“All right,” said Patty, smiling at his hearty, chummy manner. “I do wish you would. I’m not often busy, as you know.”

“Course I know it. Good-night, lady, I’m going to leave you now,” and with a hearty handshake and a merry smile, Kenneth went away, and Patty went to her own room.

“I can work on that bow-knot part, to-night,” she said to herself; “and then to-morrow, I’ll get up early and do the rest of the flowers before breakfast.”

Her task had begun to look hopeless, but she was not yet ready to admit it, and she assured herself that, of course, the others would go much more rapidly than the first.

She took down her hair and braided it into a long pigtail; then she put on a comfortable kimono and sat down to work.

She stitched, and she stitched, and she stitched, at the monotonous over and over bow-knots. Doggedly she kept on, though her shoulders ached, her eyes smarted, and her fingers trembled.

With a kind of whimsical pathos, she repeated to herself Hood's "Song of the Shirt," and said, under her breath, "'Stitch, stitch, stitch, till the cock is crowing aloof,' or whatever it is!"

Then she saw by her watch that it was eleven o'clock.

"I'll just finish this bow," she thought, "and then, I'll stop."

But before the bow was finished, there was a tap at her door.

"Who's there?" said Patty, in a voice which carried no invitation to enter.

"It's us," said Nan, firmly, if ungrammatically, "and we're coming in!"

Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield entered, and Patty, trying to make the best of it, looked up and smiled.

"How do you do?" she said. "Take seats, won't you? I'm just amusing myself, you see."

But the tired voice had a quiver in it, for all at once Patty saw that she had failed. She had worked hard all the afternoon and evening, and had not finished one of her thirty-six pieces! It was this discovery that upset her, rather than the unexpected visit from her parents.

"Girlie, this won't do," began her father, in his kindest tones.

"I know it!" cried Patty, throwing down her work, and flinging herself into her father's arms. "I can't do it, daddy, I can't! I haven't done one yet, and I never can do thirty-six!"

"Thirty-six!" exclaimed Nan. "Patty, are you crazy?"

"I think I must have been," said Patty, laughing a little hysterically, as she took the great pile of centrepieces from a

wardrobe, and threw them into Nan's lap.

"But,—but you said a dozen!" said Nan, bewildered.

"Oh, no, I didn't," returned Patty. "*You* said, did I bring a dozen, and I said yes. Also, I brought two dozen more."

"To do in a week!" said Nan, in an awe struck voice.

"Yes, to do in a week!" said Patty, mimicking Nan's tones; and then they both laughed.

But Mr. Fairfield didn't laugh. His limited knowledge of embroidery made him ignorant of how much work "three dozen" might mean, but he knew the effect it had already had on Patty, and he knew it was time to interfere.

"My child—" he began, but Patty interrupted him.

"Don't waste words, daddy, dear," she said. "It's all over. I've tried and failed; but remember, this is only my first attempt."

The fact that she realised her failure was in a way a relief, for the strain of effort was over, and she could now see the absurdity of the task she had undertaken.

She had reached what some one has called "the peace of defeat," and her spirits reacted as after an escape from peril.

"I must have been crazy, Nan," she said, sitting down beside her on the couch. "Just think; I've worked about six hours, and I've done about half of one piece. And I brought thirty-six!"

This statement of the case gave Mr. Fairfield a clearer idea, and he laughed, too.

"No, Patty; I think I need say nothing more. I see you know when you're beaten, and I fancy you won't touch needle to that

pile of work again! I hope you can settle matters with your ‘employer’; if not, I’ll help you out. But I want to congratulate you on your pluck and perseverance, even if,—well, even if they were—”

“Crazy,” supplemented Patty.

CHAPTER IX

SLIPS AND SLEEVES

The next morning Nan went with Patty to take the centrepieces back to the embroidery company.

“I shall really like to see that woman,” said Nan, as they reached the shop.

“I’m sorry for her,” said Patty; “she’s so pathetically weary and hopeless-looking.”

So she was, and when Nan saw her, she felt sorry for her, too.

“Couldn’t work as fast as you thought?” she said to Patty, not unkindly, but with the hard smile that seemed to be permanently fastened to her face.

“No, I couldn’t,” confessed Patty. “I only worked part of one piece. I’ve brought all the rest back, in good order, and I want you to redeem them.”

In her mechanical way, the woman took the untouched centrepieces, looked at them critically, and laid them aside. Then she took up the piece Patty had worked on.

“I’ll have to deduct for this,” she said; “a dollar and a half.”

“What do you mean?” asked Nan, angry at what she considered gross injustice. “Miss Fairfield does not ask payment; she is giving you all that work.”

“She has spoiled this piece for our use. She works nicely

enough, but no two people work exactly alike, so no one else could now take this and complete the corner. So, you see the piece is valueless, and we must charge for it. Moreover, I should have to deduct fifty cents if it had been finished, because long stitches show on the wrong side.”

“And you don’t allow that?” said Nan.

“Never. We deduct for that, or for soiling the work, or for using wrong colours.”

“Well,” said Patty, “return me as much of my deposit as is due me, and we’ll consider the incident closed.”

Stolidly, the woman opened a drawer, counted out sixteen dollars and a half, and gave it to Patty, who said good-day, and stalked out of the shop.

Nan followed, and when they were seated in the motor-car, both broke into peals of laughter.

“Oh, Patty,” cried Nan, “what a financier you are! You nearly killed yourself working yesterday, and now you’ve paid a dollar and a half for the privilege!”

“Pooh!” said Patty. “Nothing of the sort. I paid a dollar and a half for some valuable experience, and I think I got it cheap enough!”

“Yes, I suppose you did. Well, what are you going to do next? For I know you well enough to know you’re not going to give up your scheme entirely.”

“Indeed I’m not! But to-day I’m going to frivol. I worked hard enough yesterday to deserve a rest, and I’m going to take it.

Come on, let's go somewhere nice to luncheon, and then go to a matinée; it's Wednesday."

"Very well; I think you do need recreation. I'll take you to Cherry's for luncheon, and then we'll go to see a comic opera, or some light comedy."

"You're a great comfort, Nan," said Patty. "You always do just the right thing. But you needn't think you can divert my mind to the extent of making me give up this plan of mine. For I won't do that."

"I know you won't. But next time do try something easier."

"I shall. I've already made up my mind what it's to be; and truly, it's dead easy."

"I thought your red-headed friend cured you of using slang," said Nan, smiling.

"I thought so, too," said Patty, with an air of innocent surprise. "Isn't it queer how one can be mistaken?"

True to her determination, Patty started out again the following morning to get an "occupation," as they all termed it.

Again Miller was amazed at the address given him, but he said nothing, and proceeded to drive Patty to it.

It was even less attractive than the former shop, being nothing more or less than an establishment where "white work" was given out.

"How many?" asked the woman in charge, and, profiting by past experience, Patty said:

"One dozen."

The woman took her name and address, in a quick, business-like way.

“One dollar a dozen,” she said. “Must be returned within the week. Deductions made for all imperfections.”

She handed Patty a large bundle done up in newspaper, and, with flaming cheeks, Patty walked out of the shop.

“Home, Miller,” she said, and though the man was too well trained to look surprised, he couldn’t keep an expression of astonishment out of his eyes when he saw Patty’s burden.

On the way home she opened the parcel.

There were in it twelve infants’ slips, of rather coarse muslin. They were cut out, but not basted.

Patty looked a little doubtful, then she thought:

“Oh, pshaw! It’s very different from that fine embroidery. I can swish these through the sewing-machine in no time at all.”

Reaching home, she threw the lap-robe over her bundle, and hurried into the house with it.

“Patty,” called Nan, as she whisked upstairs to her own room, “come here, won’t you?”

“Yes, in a minute,” Patty called back, flying on upstairs, and depositing the bundle in a wardrobe.

She locked the door, and hid the key, then went demurely downstairs.

“Occupation all right?” asked Nan, smiling.

“Yes,” said Patty, jauntily. “Good work this time; not so fine and fussy.”

“Well; I only wanted to tell you that Elise telephoned, and wants you to go to a concert with her this afternoon. I forget where it is; she said for you to call her up as soon as you came home.”

“All right, I will,” said Patty, and she went to the telephone at once.

“It’s a lovely concert, Nan,” she said, as she returned. “Jigamarigski is going to sing, and afterward I’m to go home with Elise to dinner, and they’ll bring me home. What shall I wear?”

“Wear your light green cloth suit, and your furs,” said Nan, after a moment’s consideration. “And your big white beaver hat. It’s too dressy an affair for your black hat.”

Apparently the “occupation” was forgotten, for during luncheon time, Patty chatted about the concert and other matters, and at two o’clock she went away.

“You look lovely,” said Nan, as, in her pretty cloth suit, and white hat and furs, Patty came to say good-by.

The concert proved most enjoyable. Dinner at the Farringtons’ was equally so, and when Patty reached home at about nine o’clock, she had much to tell Nan and her father, who were always glad to hear of her social pleasures.

“And the occupation?” asked Mr. Fairfield. “How is it progressing?”

“Nicely, thank you,” returned Patty. “I’ve picked an easy one this time. One has to learn, you know.”

Smiling, she went to her room that night, determined to attack

the work next morning and hurry it through.

But next morning came a note from Clementine, asking Patty to go to the photographer's with her at ten, and as Patty had promised to do this when called on, she didn't like to refuse.

"And, anyway," she thought, "a week is a week. Whatever day I begin this new work, I shall have a week from that day to earn the fifteen dollars in."

Then, that afternoon was so fine, she went for a motor-ride with Nan.

And the next day, some guests came to luncheon, and naturally, Patty couldn't absent herself without explanation.

And then came Sunday. And so it was Monday morning before Patty began her new work.

"Excuse me to any one who comes, Nan," she said, as she left the breakfast table. "I have to work to-day, and I mustn't be interrupted."

"Very well," said Nan. "I think, myself, it's time you began, if you're going to accomplish anything."

Armed with her pile of work, and her basket of sewing materials, Patty went up to the fourth floor, where a small room was set apart as a sewing-room. It was rarely used, save by the maids, for Nan was not fond of sewing; but there was a good sewing-machine there, and ample light and space.

Full of enthusiasm, Patty seated herself at the sewing-machine, and picked up the cut-out work.

"I'll be very systematic," she thought. "I'll do all the side seams

first; then all the hems; then I'll stitch up all the little sleeves at once."

The plan worked well. The simple little garments had but two seams, and setting the machine stitch rather long, Patty whizzed the little white slips through, one after the other, singing in time to her treadle.

"Oh, it's too easy!" she thought, as in a short time the twenty-four seams were neatly stitched.

"Now, for the hems."

These were a little more troublesome, as they had to be folded and basted; but still, it was an easy task, and Patty worked away like a busy bee.

"Now for the babykins' sleeves," she said, but just then the luncheon gong sounded.

"Not really!" cried Patty, aloud, as she glanced at her watch.

But in very truth it was one o'clock, and it was a thoughtful Patty who walked slowly downstairs.

"Nan," she exclaimed, "the trouble with an occupation is, that there's not time enough in a day, or a half-day, to do anything."

Nan nodded her head sagaciously.

"I've always noticed that," she said. "It's only when you're playing, that there's any time. If you try to work, there's no time at all."

"Not a bit!" echoed Patty, "and what there is, glides through your fingers before you know it."

She hurried through her luncheon, and returned to the sewing-

room. She was not tired, but there was a great deal yet to do.

The tiny sleeves she put through the machine, one after another, until she had twenty-four in a long chain, linked by a single stitch.

“Oh, method and system accomplish wonders,” she thought, as she snipped the sleeves apart, and rapidly folded hems round the little wrists.

But even with method and system, twenty-four is a large number, and as Patty turned the last hem, twilight fell, and she turned on the lights.

“Goodness, gracious!” she thought. “I’ve yet all these sleeves to set, and stitch in, and the fronts to finish off; and a buttonhole to work in each neckband.”

But it was only half-past four, and by half-past six they were all finished but the buttonholes.

And Patty was nearly finished, too!

She had not realised how physically tired she was. Running the sewing-machine all day was an unusual exertion, and when she reached her own room, with her arms full of the little white garments, she threw them on the bed, and threw herself on the couch, weary in every bone and muscle.

“Well, what luck?” said Nan, appearing at Patty’s doorway, herself all dressed for dinner.

“Oh, Nan,” cried Patty, laughing, “me legs is broke; and me arms is broke; and me back is broke. But I’m not nervous or worried, and I’m going to win out this time! But, Nan, I just *can’t*

go down to dinner. Send Jane up with a tray,—there's a dear. And tell father I'm all right, but I don't care to mingle in society to-night."

"Well, I'm glad you're in good spirits," said Nan, half annoyed, half laughing, as she saw the pile of white work on the bed.

"Run along, Nan, there's a good lady," said Patty, jumping up, and urging Nan out the door. "Skippy-skip, before father comes up to learn the latest news from the seat of war. Tell him everything is all right, and I'm earning my living with neatness and despatch, only working girls simply can't get into chiffons and dine with the 'quality.'"

Reassured by Patty's gay air, Nan went downstairs, laughing, and told her husband that she believed Patty would yet accomplish her project.

"These experiences will do her no harm," said Mr. Fairfield, after hearing Nan's story. "So long as she doesn't get nervous or mentally upset, we'll let her go on with her experiment. She's a peculiar nature, and has a wonderful amount of will-power for one so young."

"I've always heard you were called stubborn," said Nan, smiling, "though I've never seen it specially exemplified in your case."

"One doesn't need to be stubborn with such an angelic disposition as yours in the house," he returned, and Nan smiled happily, for she knew the words were lovingly in earnest.

Meantime, Patty was sitting luxuriously in a big easy-chair,

eating her dinner from the tray Jane had brought her.

“This is rather fun,” she thought; “and my, but running a sewing-machine does give one an appetite! I could eat two trays-full, I verily believe. Thank goodness, I’ve no more stitching to do.”

Having despatched her dinner, perhaps a trifle hastily, Patty reluctantly left her big easy-chair for a small rocker by the drop-light.

She wearily picked up a little gown, cut a buttonhole at the throat, and proceeded to work it. As she was so skilful at embroidery, of course this was easy work; but Patty was tired, and her fingers almost refused to push the needle through the cloth. About ten o’clock Nan came upstairs.

Patty was just sewing on the last button, the buttonholes being all done.

This fact made her jubilant.

“Nan!” she cried; “what *do* you think! I’ve made a whole dozen of these baby-slips to-day!”

“Patty! You don’t mean it! Why, my dear child, how could you?”

“On the machine. And they’re done neatly, aren’t they?”

“Yes, they are, indeed. But Patty—”

“What?”

“I hate to tell you,—but—”

“Oh, what is it, Nan? Is the material wrong side out?”

“No, you goosie, there’s no right or wrong side to cotton cloth,

but—”

“Well, tell me!”

“Every one of these little sleeves is made upside down!”

“Oh, Nan! It can’t be!”

“Yes, they are, dearie. See, this wider part should have been at the top.”

“Oh, Nan, what shall I do? I thought they were sort of flowing sleeves, you know. Kimono-shaped ones, I mean.”

“No; they’re set wrong. Oh, Patty, why didn’t you let me help you? But you told me to keep away.”

“Yes, I know I did. Now, I’ve spoiled the whole dozen! I like them just as well that way, myself, but I know they’ll ‘deduct’ for it.”

“Patty, I don’t think you ought to do ‘white work’ anyway. How much are they going to pay you?”

“A dollar a dozen.”

“And you’ve done a dozen in a day. That won’t bring you fifteen dollars in a week.”

“Well, I thought the second dozen would go faster, and it probably will. And, of course, I shan’t make that mistake with the sleeves again. Truly, Nan, it’s a heap easier than embroidery.”

“Well, don’t worry over it to-night,” said Nan, kissing her. “Take a hot bath and hop into bed. Perhaps you have found the right work after all.”

Nan didn’t really think she had, but Patty had begun to look worried, and Nan feared she wouldn’t be able to sleep.

But sleep she did, from sheer physical exhaustion.

And woke next morning, almost unable to move! Every muscle in her body was lame from her strenuous machine work. She couldn't rise from her bed, and could scarcely raise her head from the pillow.

When Catherine, Nan's maid, came to her room, Patty said, faintly:

"Ask Mrs. Fairfield to come up, please."

Nan came, and Patty looked at her comically, as she said:

"Nan, I'm vanquished, but not subdued. I'm just one mass of lameness and ache, but if you think I've given up my plan, you're greatly mistaken. However, I'm through with 'white work,' and I've sewed my last sew on a machine."

"Why, Patty girl, you're really ill," said Nan, sympathetically.

"No, I'm not! I'm perfectly well. Just a trifle lame from over-exercise yesterday. I'll stay in bed to-day, and Nan, dear, if you love me, take those slips back to the kind lady who let me have them to play with. Make her pay you a dollar for the dozen, and don't let her deduct more than a dollar for the upside-downness of the sleeves. Tell her they're prettier that way, anyway. And, Catharine, do please rub me with some healing lotion or something,—for I'm as lame as a jelly-fish!"

"Patty," said Nan, solemnly, "the occasion requires strong language. So I will remark in all seriousness, that, you do beat all!"

CHAPTER X

THE CLEVER GOLDFISH

FINANCIALLY, Patty came out just even on her 'white work,' for though the woman paid Nan the dollar for the dozen finished garments, she deducted the same amount for the wrongly placed sleeves.

She also grumbled at the long machine stitch Patty had used, but Nan's patience was exhausted, and giving the woman a calm stare, she walked out of the shop.

"It's perfectly awful," she said to Patty, when relating her adventure, "to think of the poor girls who are really trying to earn their living by white work. It's all very well for you, who are only experimenting, but suppose a real worker gets all her pay deducted!"

"There's hardly enough pay to pay for deducting it, anyway," said Patty. "Oh, Nan, it is dreadful! I suppose lots of poor girls who feel as tired and lame as I do this morning, have to go straight back to their sewing-machine and run it all day."

"Of course they do; and often they're of delicate constitutions, and insufficiently nourished."

"It makes me feel awful. Things are unevenly divided in this world, aren't they, Nan?"

"They are, my dear; but as that problem has baffled wiser

heads than yours, it's useless for you to worry over it. You can't reform the world."

"No; and I don't intend to try. But I can do something to help. I know I can. That's where people show their lack of a sense of proportion. I know I can't do anything for the world, as a world, but if I can help in a few individual cases, that will be my share. For instance, if I can help this Christine Farley to an art education, and so to a successful career, why that's so much to the good. And though father has set me a hard task to bring it about, I'm going to do it yet."

"Your father wouldn't have set you such a task if you hadn't declared it was no task at all! You said you could earn your living easily in a dozen different ways. Already you've discarded two."

"That leaves me ten!" said Patty, airily. "Ten ways of earning a living is a fair show. I can discard nine more and still have a chance."

"All right, Patsy. I'm glad you're not disheartened. And I suppose you are learning something of the conditions of our social economy."

"Gracious, Nan! How you *do* talk! Are you quite sure you know what you mean?"

"No, but I thought you would," said Nan, and with that parting shot, she left the room.

It was late in the afternoon before Patty dawdled downstairs. Her shoulders and the back of her neck still ached, but otherwise she felt all right again, and her spirits had risen

proportionately.

About four o'clock Kenneth called, bringing a mysterious burden, which he carried with great care.

He knew of Patty's scheme, and though he appreciated the nobility of her endeavour, he could not feel very sanguine hopes of her success.

"You're not cut out for a wage-earner, Patty," he had said to her; "it's like a butterfly making bread."

"But I don't want to be a butterfly," Patty had pouted.

"Oh, I don't mean butterfly,—as so many people do,—to represent a frivolous, useless person. I have a great respect for butterflies, myself. And you radiate the same effect of joy, happiness, gladness, and beauty, as a butterfly does when hovering around in the golden sunshine of a summer day."

"Why, Ken, I didn't know you were a poet. But you haven't proved your case."

"Yes, I have. It's your mission in life to be happy, and so to make others happy. This you can do without definite effort, so stick to your calling, and let the more prosaic people, the plodders,—earn wages."

"Let me earn the wages of my country, and I care not who makes it smile," Patty had rejoined, and there the subject had dropped.

To-day, when he arrived, carrying what was evidently something fragile, Patty greeted him gaily.

"I'm not working to-day," she said; "so you can stay 'most an

hour if you like.”

“Well, I will; and if you’ll wait till I set down this precious burden, I’ll shake hands with you. I come, like the Greeks, bearing gifts.”

“A gift? Oh, what is it? I’m crazy to see it.”

“Well, it’s a gift; but, incidentally, it’s a plan for wage-earning. If you really want to wage-earn, you may as well do it in an interesting way.”

“Yes,” said Patty, demurely, for she well knew he was up to some sort of foolery. “My attempts so far, though absorbing, were not really interesting.”

“Well, this is!” declared Kenneth, who was carefully taking the tissue papers from his gift, which proved to be a glass globe, containing two goldfish.

“They are Darby and Juliet,” he remarked, as he looked anxiously into the bowl. “I am so tired of hackneyed pairs of names, that I’ve varied these. But, won’t you send for some more water? I had to bring them with only a little, for fear I’d spill it, and they seem to have drunk it nearly all up.”

“Nonsense! they don’t drink the water; they only swim in it.”

“That’s the trouble. There isn’t enough for them to swim in. And yet there’s too much for them to drink.”

Patty rang for Jane, who then brought them a pitcher of ice water.

Kenneth poured it in, but at the sudden cold deluge, Darby and Juliet began to behave in an extraordinary manner. They

flew madly round and round the bowl, hitting each other, and breathing in gasps.

“The water’s too cold,” cried Patty.

“Of course it is,” said Kenneth; “get some hot water, won’t you?”

Patty ran herself for the hot water, and returned with a pitcher full.

“Don’t you want a little mustard?” she said, giggling. “I know they’ve taken cold. A hot mustard foot-bath is fine for colds.”

“And that is very odd, because they haven’t any feet,” quoted Kenneth, as he poured the hot water in very slowly.

“Do you want a bath thermometer?” went on Patty.

“No; when they stop wriggling it’s warm enough. There, now they’re all right.”

Kenneth set down the hot water pitcher and looked with pride on the two fish, who had certainly stopped wriggling.

“They’re awful quiet,” said Patty. “Are you sure they’re all right? I think you’ve boiled them.”

“Nothing of the sort. They like warmth, only it makes them sort of—”

“Dormant,” suggested Patty.

“Yes, clever child, dormant. And now while they sleep, I’ll tell you my plan. You see, these are extra intelligent goldfish,—especially Juliet, the one with a black spot on her shoulder. Well, you’ve only to train them a bit, and then give exhibitions of your trained goldfish! You’ve no idea what a hit it will make.”

“Kenneth, you’re a genius!” cried Patty, meeting his fun halfway. “It’s lots easier than white work. Come on, help me train them, won’t you? How do we begin?”

“They’re still sleepy,” said Kenneth, looking at the inert fish. “They need stirring up.”

“I’ll get a spoon,” said Patty, promptly.

“No, just waggle the water with your finger. They’ll come up.”

Patty waggled the water with her finger, but Darby only blinked at her, while Juliet flounced petulantly.

“She’s high-strung,” observed Kenneth, “and a trifle bad-tempered. But she won’t stand scolding. Let’s take her out and pet her a little.”

“How do you get her out? With a hook and line?”

“No, silly! You must be kind to them. Here, puss, puss, puss! Come, Jooly-ooly-et! Come!”

But Juliet haughtily ignored the invitation and huddled in the bottom of the bowl.

“Try this,” said Patty, running to the dining-room, and returning with a silver fish server.

This worked beautifully, and Kenneth scooped up Juliet, who lay quietly on the broad silver blade, blinking at them reproachfully.

“She’s hungry, Ken; see how she opens and shuts her mouth.”

“No; she’s trying to talk. I told you she was clever. I daresay you can teach her to sing. She looks just as you do when you take a high note.”

“You horrid boy! But she does, really. Anyway, let’s feed them. What do they eat?”

“I brought their food with me; it’s some patent stuff, very well advertised. Here, Julie!”

Gently slipping Juliet back into the water, Ken scattered some food on the surface.

Both fish rose to the occasion and greedily ate the floating particles.

“That’s the trouble,” said Ken. “They have no judgment. They overeat, and then they die of apoplexy. And, too, if they eat too much, you can’t train them to stand on their tails and beg.”

“Oh, will they learn to do that? And what else can we teach them?”

“Oh, anything acrobatic; trapeze work and that. But they’re sleepy now; you fed them too much for just an afternoon tea. Let’s leave them to their nap, and train them after they wake up.”

“All right; let’s sit down and talk seriously.”

“Patty, you’re always ready to talk seriously of late. That’s why I brought you some Nonsense Fish, to lighten your mood a little.”

“Don’t you worry about my mood, Ken; it’s light enough. But I want you to help me earn my living for a week. Will you?”

“That I will not! I’ll be no party to your foolishness.”

“Now, Ken,” went on Patty, for she knew his “bark was worse than his bite,” “I don’t want you to do anything much. But, in your law office, where you’re studying, aren’t there some papers I can copy, or something like that?”

“Patty, you’re a back number. That ‘copying’ that you mean is all out of date. In these days of typewriters and manifold thigamajigs, we lawyers don’t have much copying done by hand. Except, perhaps, engrossing. Can you do that?”

“How prettily you say ‘we lawyers,’” teased Patty.

“Of course I do. I’m getting in practice against the time it’ll be true. But if you really want to copy, buy a nice Spencerian Copy-book, and fill up its pages. It’ll be about as valuable as any other work of the sort.”

“Ken, you’re horrid. So unsympathetic.”

“I’m crool only to be kind! You must know, Patty, that copying is out of the question.”

“Well, never mind then; let’s talk of something else.”

“Let’s sit upon the ground and tell strange stories of the death of kings.”

“Oh, Ken, that reminds me. You know my crystal ball?”

“I do indeed; I selected it with utmost care.”

“Yes, it’s a gem. Perfectly flawless. Well, I’ll get it, and see if we can see things in it.”

Patty ran for her crystal, and returning to the library held it up to the fading sunlight, and tried to look into it.

“That isn’t the way, Patty; you have to lay it on black velvet, or something dark.”

“Oh, do you? Well, here’s a dark mat on this table. Try that.”

They gazed intently into the ball, and though they could see nothing, Patty felt a weird sense of uncanniness.

Ken laughed when she declared this, and said:

“Nothing in the world but suggestion. You think a Japanese crystal *ought* to make you feel supernatural, and so you imagine it does. But it doesn’t any such nonsense. Now, I’ll tell you why I like them. Only because they’re so flawlessly perfect. In shape, colour, texture,—if you can call it texture,—but I mean material or substance. There isn’t an attribute that they possess, except in perfection. That’s a great thing, Patty; and you can’t say it of anything else.”

“The stars,” said Patty, trying to look wise.

“Oh, pshaw! I mean things made by man.”

“Great pictures,” she suggested.

“Their perfection is a matter of opinion. One man deems a picture perfect, another man does not. But a crystal ball is indubitably perfect.”

“Indubitably is an awful big word,” said Patty. “I’m afraid of it.”

“Never mind,” said Kenneth, kindly, “I won’t let it hurt you.”

Then the doorbell rang, and in a moment in came Elise and Roger.

“Hello, Ken,” said Elise. “We came for Patty to go skating. Will you go, too?”

“I can’t go to-day,” said Patty, “I’m too tired. And it’s too late, anyway. You stay here, and we’ll have tea.”

“All right, I don’t care,” said Elise, taking off her furs.

The quartette gathered round the library fire, and Jane brought

in the tea things.

Patty made tea very prettily, for she excelled in domestic accomplishments, and as she handed Kenneth his cup, she said, roguishly, "There's a perfect cup of tea, I can assure you."

"Perfect tea, all right," returned Ken, sipping it, "but a cup of tea can't be a perfect thing, as it hasn't complete symmetry of form."

"What are you two talking about?" demanded Elise, who didn't want Ken and Patty to have secrets from which she was excluded.

"Speaking of crystal balls," said Patty, "I'll show you one, Elise; a big one, too! Get Darby and Juliet, won't you please, Ken?"

Kenneth obligingly brought the glass globe in from the dining-room, where they had left the goldfish to be by themselves.

"How jolly!" cried Elise. "And what lovely goldfish! These are the real Japanese ones, aren't they?"

"Yes," said Patty, smiling at Ken. "Being Japanese, they're perfect of their kind. Make them stand on their tails and beg, Kenneth."

"Oh, will they do that?" said Elise.

"Only on Wednesdays and Saturdays," said Kenneth, gravely. "And on Fridays they sing. To-day is their rest day."

"They look morbid," said Roger. "Shall I jolly them up a bit?"

"Let's give them tea," said Elise, tilting her spoon until a few drops fell into the water.

“You’ll make them nervous,” warned Patty, “and Juliet is high-strung, anyway.”

Then Nan came in from her afternoon’s round of calls, and then Mr. Fairfield arrived, and they too were called upon to make friends with Darby and Juliet.

“Goldfish always make me think of a story about Whistler,” said Mr. Fairfield. “It seems, Whistler once had a room in a house in Florence, directly over a person who had some pet goldfish in a bowl. Every pleasant day the bowl was set out on the balcony, which was exactly beneath Whistler’s balcony. For days he resisted the temptation to fish for them with a bent pin and a string; but at last he succumbed to his angling instincts, and caught them all. Then, remorseful at what he had done, he fried them to a fine golden brown, and returned them to their owner on a platter.”

“Ugh!” cried Nan, “what a horrid story! Why do they always tack unpleasant stories on poor old Whistler? Now, I know a lovely story about a goldfish, which I will relate. It is said to be the composition of a small Boston schoolchild.

“Oh, Robin, lovely goldfish!
Who taught you how to fly?
Who stuck the fur upon your breast?
'Twas God, 'twas God what done it.”

Isn’t that lovely?”

“It is, indeed,” agreed Kenneth. “If that’s Boston precocity,

it's more attractive than I thought.”

“But it doesn't rhyme,” said Elise.

“No,” said Patty; “that's the beauty of it. It's blank verse, as the greatest poetry often is. Don't go yet, Elise. Stay to dinner, can't you?”

“No, I can't stay to-night, Patty, dear. Will you go skating to-morrow?”

Patty hesitated. She wanted to go, but also she wanted to get at that “occupation” of hers, for she had a new one in view.

She was about to say she would go skating, however, when she saw a twinkle in her father's eye that made her change her mind.

“Can't, Elise,” she said. “I've an engagement to-morrow. Will telephone you some day when I can go.”

“Well, don't wait too long; the ice will be all gone.”

Then the young people went away, and Patty went thoughtfully upstairs to her room to dress for dinner.

CHAPTER XI

A BUSY MORNING

The next morning, Patty came down to breakfast, wearing a plain street costume, a small, but very well made hat, and a look of determination.

“Fresh start?” said her father, smiling kindly at her.

“Yes,” she replied; “and this time I conquer. I see success already perching on my banners.”

“Well, I don’t then!” declared Nan. “I see you coming home, not with your shield, but on it.”

“Now, don’t be a wet blanket and throw cold water on my plans,” said Patty, a little mixed in her metaphor, but smiling placidly at her stepmother. “This time it’s really a most sensible undertaking that I’m going to undertake.”

“Sounds as if you were going into the undertaking business,” said her father, “but I assume you don’t mean that.”

“No, I go into a pleasanter atmosphere than that suggests, and one in which I feel sure I can accomplish good work.”

“Well, Patty,” said Mr. Fairfield, “it’s lucky you’re of a sanguine temperament. I’m glad to see you’re not disheartened by failure.”

“Not I! To me a failure only means a more vigorous attempt next time. Now, Nan, I shall be away all day,—until about five

o'clock. Won't you play with Darby and Juliet a little, so they won't get lonesome?"

"Oh, yes; I'll amuse them. But, Patty, where are you going?"

"Never mind, pretty stepmotherly; don't ask questions, for they won't be answered. If all goes well, I'll tell you on my return."

Mr. Fairfield looked serious.

"Patty," he said, "you know you're not to do anything unbecoming or ridiculous. Don't you go and sell goods behind a counter, or anything extreme like that."

"No, sir; I won't. I promise not to put myself in the public eye in any such fashion. And you may trust me, father, not to do anything of which you'd disapprove, if you knew all about it."

"That's a good Patty-girl! Well, go ahead in your mad career, and if you keep your part of the bargain, I'll keep mine."

Patty started off, and this time she gave Miller an address not so far away as before. When he brought the motor-car to a standstill, before a fashionable millinery shop, he felt none of the surprise that he had when he took Patty to what he considered inappropriate places.

"Now, Miller," said Patty, as she got out of the car, "you are not to wait for me, but I want you to return here for me at five o'clock."

"Here, Miss Fairfield?"

"Yes; right here. Come exactly at five, and wait for me to come out."

"Yes, Miss Fairfield," said Miller, and Patty turned and

entered the shop.

"I'm 'most sorry I sent him away," she thought to herself, "for I may not want to stay. Well, I can go home in a street-car."

Though Patty's costume was plain and inconspicuous, it bore so evidently the stamp of taste and refinement, that the saleswoman who met her assumed she had come to buy a hat.

But it was early for fashionable ladies to be out shopping, so the rather supercilious young woman greeted Patty with a cautious air of reserve. It was so different from the effusive manner usually shown to Nan and Patty when they really went shopping, that Patty was secretly much amused. But as she was also secretly greatly embarrassed, it was with an uncertain air that she said:

"I am not shopping; I wish to see Madame Villard."

"Madame is not here. What can I do for you?"

"I have come in answer to her advertisement for an assistant milliner."

"Oh," said the young woman, raising her eyebrows, and at once showing an air of haughty condescension. "You should have asked for the forewoman, not Madame."

Patty's sense of humour got the better of her resentment, and it was with difficulty she repressed a smile, as she answered:

"Indeed? Well, it is not yet too late to correct my error. Will you show me to the forewoman?"

Patty's inflections were not in the least sarcastic, in fact her whole manner was gentle and gracious, but something in her

tone, perhaps the note of amusement, made the saleswoman look at her suddenly and sharply.

But Patty's face was demure and showed only a desire to be conducted to the right person.

"Come this way," said the young woman, shortly, and she led Patty, between some heavy curtains, to a back room.

"This is our forewoman, Miss O'Flynn," she said, as she ushered Patty into her presence.

Miss O'Flynn was an important looking woman who took in every detail of Patty's appearance in a series of careful and systematic glances.

She seemed puzzled at what she saw, and said, inquiringly:

"Miss—?"

"Miss Fairfield," said Patty, pleasantly, "and I have come in answer to your advertisement."

"For assistant milliner? You."

Miss O'Flynn was surprised out of her usual calm by the amazing proposition of the young stranger.

"Yes," said Patty, quite calm herself. "I can trim hats very prettily."

"Did you trim the one you have on?"

"Well, no," admitted Patty. "I brought this from Paris. But I am sure I can trim hats to suit you. May I try?"

"What experience have you had?"

"Well,—not any professional experience. You see, it is only recently that I have desired to earn my own living."

“Oh,—sudden reverses,” murmured Miss O’Flynn, thinking she had solved the problem. “Well, my dear, you have evidently been brought up a lady, so it will be hard for you to find work. I am sorry to say I cannot employ you, as I engage only skilled workwomen.”

“But trimming hats doesn’t require professional skill,” said Patty. “Only good taste and a,—a sort of knack at bows and things.”

Miss O’Flynn laughed.

“Everything requires professional skill,” she returned. “A course of training is necessary for any position.”

“But if you’d try me,” said Patty, quite unconscious that her tone was pleading. “Just give me a day’s trial, and if I don’t make good, you needn’t pay me anything.”

Miss O’Flynn was more puzzled than ever. Insistent though Patty was, it didn’t seem to her the insistence of a poor girl wanting to earn her bread; it was more like the determination of a wilful child to attain its desire.

So, moved rather by curiosity to see how it would turn out, than a belief in Patty’s ability, she said, coldly:

“I will do as you ask. You may go to the workroom for to-day; but on the understanding that unless you show unusual skill or aptitude to learn, you are not to be paid anything, nor are you to come to-morrow.”

“All right,” said Patty, smiling jubilantly at having received her opportunity, at least.

Miss O'Flynn took her to a workroom, where several girls were busily engaged in various sorts of millinery work.

"Sit here, Miss Fairfield," and Miss O'Flynn indicated a chair at one end of a long table. "You may line this hat."

Then she gave Patty an elaborate velvet hat, trimmed with feathers, and materials for sewing. She also gave her white silk for the lining of the hat, and a piece stamped with gilt letters, which Patty knew must be placed inside the crown.

It all seemed easy,—too easy, in fact, for Patty aspired to making velvet rosettes, and placing ostrich plumes.

But she knew she was being tested, and she set to work at her task with energy.

Though she had never lined a hat before, she knew in a general way how it should be done, and she tried to go about it with an air of experience. The other girls at the table cast furtive glances at her.

Though they were not rude, they showed that air of hostile criticism, so often shown by habitués to a newcomer, though based on nothing but prejudiced curiosity.

But as Patty began to cut the lining, she saw involuntary smiles spring to their faces. She knew that she must be cutting it wrongly, but it seemed to her the only way to cut it, so she went on.

The girls began to nudge each other, and to smile more openly, and, to her own chagrin, Patty felt her cheeks growing red with embarrassment.

She was tempted to speak pleasantly to them, and ask what her mistake was, but a strange notion of honesty forbade this.

She had said at home that she believed it would be possible for her to earn her living without special instruction, and it seemed to her, that if she now asked for advice it would be like getting special training, though in a small degree.

So she went calmly on with her work; cut and fitted the hat lining, and carefully sewed it in the hat.

Remembering that the stitch she used on her "white work" had been criticised as too long, she now was careful to take very short stitches, and she used her utmost endeavour to make her work neat and dainty.

Miss O'Flynn passed her chair two or three times while the work was in progress, but she made no comment of any sort.

It was perhaps eleven o'clock when Patty completed the task. Next time Miss O'Flynn came by her she handed her the hat with an unmistakable air of triumph.

"I've done it," Patty thought to herself, exultantly. "I've lined that hat, and, if I do say it that shouldn't, it's done perfectly; neat, smooth, and correct in every particular."

While Patty was indulging in these self-congratulatory thoughts, Miss O'Flynn took the hat from her hand. She gave it a quick glance, then she looked at Patty.

Had Patty looked more meek, had she seemed to await Miss O'Flynn's opinion of her work, the result might have been different.

But Patty's expression was so plainly that of a conquering hero, she showed so palpably her pride in her own achievement, that Miss O'Flynn's eyes narrowed, and her face hardened. Without a word to Patty, she handed the hat to a sad-eyed young woman at another table, and said:

"Line this hat, Miss Harrigan."

"Yes, ma'am," said the girl; and even as Patty watched her, she began to snip deftly at Patty's small, careful stitches, and in a few moments the lining was out, and the girl was shaping and cutting a new one, with a quick, sure touch, and with not so much as a glance in Patty's direction.

The other girls,—the ones at Patty's table,—looked horrified, but they did not look openly at Patty. Furtively, they darted glances at her from beneath half-closed lids, and then as furtively glanced at each other.

It all struck Patty humorously. To have her careful work discarded and snipped out, to be replaced by "skilled labour," seemed so funny that she wanted to laugh aloud.

But she was also deeply chagrined at her failure, and so it was an uncertain attitude of mind that showed upon her face as Miss O'Flynn again approached her.

Without making any reference to the work she had already done, Miss O'Flynn gave Patty a hat frame and some thick, soft satin.

"Cover the frame neatly, Miss Fairfield," was all she said, and walked away.

Patty understood.

It was her own independent and assured attitude that had led Miss O'Flynn to pursue this course. She didn't for a moment think that all beginners were treated like this. But she had asked to be given a fair trial—and she was getting it.

Moreover, she half suspected that Miss O'Flynn knew she was not really under the necessity of earning her own living.

Though wearing her plainest clothes, all the details of her costume betokened an affluence that couldn't be concealed.

Astute Patty began to think that Miss O'Flynn saw through her, and that she was cleverly getting even with her.

However, she took the hat frame and the satin, and set to work in thorough earnest. Though not poor, she could not have tried any harder to succeed had she been in direst want.

But as to her work, she was very much at sea.

She knew she had to get the satin on to the frame, without crease or wrinkle. She knew exactly how it ought to look when done, for she had a hat of that sort herself, and the material covered the foundation as creaselessly as paint.

"I'm sure it only needs gumption," thought Patty, hopefully. "Here's my real chance to prove that it doesn't need a series of lessons to get some satin smoothly on a crinoline frame. If I do it neatly, she won't ask some other girl to do it over."

Paying no attention to the covert glances of her companions, Patty set to work. She cut carefully, she fitted neatly; she pinned and she basted; she smoothed and she patted; and finally she

sewed, with tiny, close stitches, placed evenly and with great precision.

So absorbed did she become in her task that she failed to notice the departure of the others at noon. Alone she sat there at the table, snipping, sewing, pinning, and patting the somewhat refractory satin.

It was almost one o'clock when she finished, and looked up suddenly to see Miss O'Flynn standing watching her.

"Why are you doing this?" she said to Patty, as she took the hat from the girl's hands.

Patty sat up, all at once, conscious of great pain in the back of her neck, from her continued cramped position at work.

"Because I want to earn money," replied Patty, not pertly, but in a tone of obstinate intent. "Is it done right?"

Miss O'Flynn looked at Patty, with an air of kindness and willingness to help her.

"Tell me all about it," she said.

But Patty was in no mood for confidences, and with a shade of hauteur in her manner, she said again: "Is it done right? Does it suit you?"

At Patty's rejection of her advances, Miss O'Flynn also became reserved again, and said, simply: "I cannot use it."

"Why not?" demanded Patty. "It is covered smoothly and neatly. It shows no crease nor fold."

"It is not right," said Miss O'Flynn. "It is not done right, because you do not know how to do it. You have never been

taught how to cover hats or how to line them; consequently you cannot do them right.”

The other girls had gone to luncheon, so the two were alone in the room. Patty knew that Miss O’Flynn was telling her the truth, and yet she resented it. A red spot burned in each cheek as she answered:

“But the hat is covered perfectly. What matter, then, whether I have been taught or not?”

“Excuse me, it is *not* covered perfectly. The stitches are too small—”

“Too small!” exclaimed Patty. “Why, I didn’t know stitches could be too *small!*”

The other smiled. “That is my argument,” she said. “You *don’t know*. Of course stitches should be small for ordinary sewing, and for many sorts of work. But not for millinery. Here long stitches are wanted, but they must be rightly set,—not careless long stitches.”

“Why?” said Patty, somewhat subdued now.

“Because a better effect can be produced with long stitches. You see, your stitches are small and true, but every one shows. With a skilful long stitch, no stitch is seen at all. It is what we call a blind stitch, and can only be successfully done by skilled workers, who have been taught, and who have also had practice.”

Patty was silent a moment, then she said:

“Miss O’Flynn, we agreed that I was to have a day’s trial.”

“Yes, Miss Fairfield; I will stand by my word.”

“Then may I select my own work for the afternoon?”

“Yes,” said Miss O’Flynn, wondering whether, after all, this pretty, young girl could be a harmless lunatic.

“Then I want to trim hats. Make bows, you know; sew on flowers or feathers; or adjust lace. May I do such things as that?”

Miss O’Flynn hesitated.

“Yes,” she said, finally; “if you will be careful not to injure the materials. You see, if your work should have to be done over, I don’t want the materials spoiled.”

“I promise,” said Patty, slowly.

“But, first, will you not go out for your lunch?”

“No, thank you; I’m not hungry. Please bring me my work at once.”

CHAPTER XII

THREE HATS

But Miss O'Flynn sent Patty a cup of hot bouillon, and some biscuit, which she ate right there at her work-table.

And it was a kindly act, for, though Patty didn't realise it, she was really faint for want of food and also for fresh air.

The room, though large, had many occupants, and now the girls began to come back from their luncheon, and their chatter made Patty's head ache.

But she was doing some deep thinking. Her theories about unskilled labour had received a hard blow; and she was beginning to think her millinery efforts were not going to be successful.

"But I've a chance yet," she thought, as Miss O'Flynn came, bringing two hats, and a large box of handsome trimmings.

The other girls stared at this, for they knew that Patty's morning efforts had been far from successful.

But Patty only smiled at them in a pleasant, but impersonal manner, as she took up her new work.

Her confidence returned. She knew she could do what she was now about to attempt, for, added to her natural taste and love of colour, she had been critically interested in hats while in Paris, and while visiting her friend, Lady Kitty, who was especially extravagant in her millinery purchases.

After a period of thought, Patty decided on her scheme of trimming for the two hats before her, and then set blithely to work.

One was to be a simple style of decoration, the other, much more complicated. Taking up the elaborate one first, Patty went at it with energy, and with an assured touch, for she had the effect definitely pictured in her imagination and was sure she could materialise it.

And she did. After about two hours' hard work, Patty achieved a triumph. She held up the finished hat, and every girl at the table uttered an "ah!" of admiration at the beautiful sight.

Without response, other than a quiet smile, Patty took up the second hat. This was simple, but daring in its very simplicity. A black velvet Gainsborough, with broad, rolling brim. Patty turned it smartly up, at one side, and fastened it with a rosette of dull blue velvet and a silver buckle. Just then, Miss O'Flynn came in.

"Where did that hat come from?" she said, pointing to Patty's finished confection.

"I trimmed it," said Patty, nonchalantly. "Have you some silver hatpins, Miss O'Flynn?"

"You trimmed it!" exclaimed the forewoman, ignoring Patty's question, and taking up the trimmed hat.

"Yes; do you like it?"

"It's a marvel! It looks like a French hat. How did you know enough to trim it like this?"

"I thought it would look well that way."

“But these twists of velvet; they have a touch!”

“Yes?” said Patty, inwardly exultant, but outwardly calm.

“And now,” she went on, “this hat is of another type.”

“It’s not finished?” asked Miss O’Flynn, eyeing the hat in uncertainty, “and yet,—any other trimming would spoil its lines.”

“Just so,” said Patty, placidly. “You see, all it needs now, is two large silver hatpins, like this,—see.”

Patty pulled two hatpins from her own hat, which she still had on, and placed them carefully in the hat she held in her hand.

“These pins are too small,—but you see what I mean.”

Miss O’Flynn did see. She saw that two larger pins would finish the hat with just the right touch, while any other decoration would spoil it.

She looked at Patty curiously.

“You’re a genius, Miss Fairfield,” she said. “Will you trim another hat?”

“Yes,” said Patty, looking at her watch. “It’s only four o’clock. May I have an evening hat, please?”

“You may have whatever you like. Come and select for yourself.”

Patty went to the cases, and chose a large white beaver, with soft, broad brim.

“I will make you a picture hat, to put in your window,” she said, smiling.

She selected some trimmings and returned to her seat at the table.

It was rather more than half an hour later when she showed Miss O'Flynn her work.

"There's not much work on it," Patty said, slowly. "I spent the time thinking it out."

There was not much work on it, to be sure; and yet it was a hat of great distinction.

The white brim rolled slightly back, and where it touched the low crown it met two immense roses, one black and one of palest pink. Two slight sprays of foliage, made of black velvet leaves, nestled between the roses, and completed the trimming.

The roses were of abnormal size and great beauty, but it was the mode of their adjustment that secured the extremely *chic* effect.

Miss O'Flynn's eyes sparkled.

"It's a masterpiece," she said, clasping her hands in admiration. "You have trimmed hats before, Miss Fairfield?"

"No," said Patty, "but I always knew I could do it."

"Yes, you can," said Miss O'Flynn. "Will you come now, and talk to Madame?"

Ushered into the presence of Madame Villard, Patty suddenly experienced a revulsion of feeling.

Her triumph over Miss O'Flynn seemed small and petty. She was conscious of a revolt against the whole atmosphere of the place. The suavity of Miss O'Flynn's manner, the artificial grandeur of Madame Villard, filled her with aversion, and she wanted only to get away, and get back to her own home.

Not for any amount per week would she come again to this dreadful place.

She knew it was unreasonable; she knew that if she were to earn her living it could not be in a sheltered, luxurious home, but must, perforce, be in some unattractive workroom.

“But rather a department store,” thought poor Patty, “than in this place, with these overdressed, overmannered women, who ape fine ladies’ manners.”

Patty was overwrought and nervous. Her long, hard day had worn her out, and it was no wonder she felt a distaste for the whole thing.

“You are certainly clever,” said Madame Villard, patronisingly, as she looked at the hats Miss O’Flynn held up for her inspection. “I am glad to offer you a permanent position here. You will have to learn the rudiments of the work, as the most gifted genius should always be familiar with the foundations of his own art. Will you agree to come to me every day?”

Patty hesitated. She hated the thought of coming every day, even if but for a week. And yet, here was the opportunity she was in search of. Trimming hats was easy enough work; probably they wouldn’t make her learn lining and covering at once.

Then the thought occurred to her that it wouldn’t be honest to pretend she was coming regularly, when she meant to do so only for a week.

“Suppose I try it for a week,” she suggested. “Then if either of us wishes to do so, we can terminate the contract.”

“Very well,” said Madame, who thought to herself she could make this young genius trim a great many hats in a week. “Do you agree to that?”

“At what salary?” asked Patty, faintly, for she felt as if she were condemning herself to a week of torture.

“Well,” said Madame Villard, “as you are so ignorant of the work, I ought not to give you any recompense at all; but as you evince such an aptitude for trimming I am willing to say, five dollars a week.”

“Five dollars a week,” repeated Patty, slowly. “You ought to be ashamed of yourself!”

Patty did not mean to be rude or impertinent. Indeed, for the moment she was not even thinking of herself. She was thinking how a poor girl, who had her living to earn, would feel at an offer of five dollars for six long days of work in that dreadful atmosphere.

“I beg your pardon,” she said, mechanically, and she said it more because of Madame Villard’s look of amazement, than because of any regret at her own blunt speech. “I shouldn’t have spoken so frankly. But the compensation you offer is utterly inadequate.”

Patty glanced at her watch, and then began drawing on her gloves with an air of finality.

“But wait,—wait, Miss Fairfield,” exclaimed the Madame, who had no wish to let her new-found genius thus slip away from her. “I like your work. I may say I think it shows touches of

real talent. Also, you have unusually good taste. In view of these things, I will overlook still further your ignorance of the details of the work, and I will give you seven dollars a week.”

“Madame,” said Patty, “I am inexperienced in the matter of wages, but I feel sure that you either employ inferior workwomen or that you underpay them. I don’t know which, but I assure you that I could not think of accepting your offer of seven dollars a week.”

“Would you come for ten?” asked Madame Villard, eagerly.

“No,” said Patty, shortly.

“For twelve, then? This is my ultimate offer, and you would do well to consider it carefully. I have never paid so much to any workwoman, and I offer it to you only because I chance to like your style of work.”

“And that is your ultimate offer?” said Patty, looking at her squarely.

“Yes, and I am foolish to offer that; but, as we agreed, it is only for one week, and so—”

“Spare your arguments, madame; I do not accept your proposal. Twelve dollars a week is not enough. And now, I will bid you good-afternoon. Am I entitled to pay for my day’s work?”

With Patty’s final refusal, the manner of Madame Villard had changed. No longer placating and bland, she frowned angrily as she said:

“Pay, indeed! You should be charged for the materials you spoiled in your morning’s work.”

“But in the afternoon,” said Patty, “I trimmed three hats that will bring you big profits.”

“Nothing of the sort,” snapped Madame. “The hats you trimmed are nothing of any moment. Any of my girls could have done as well.”

“Then why don’t you pay them twelve dollars a week?” cried Patty, whose harassed nerves were making her irritable. “I will call our financial account even, but if any of your workwomen can trim hats that you like as well as those that I trimmed, I trust you will give them the salary you offered me. Good-afternoon.”

Patty bowed politely, and then, with a more kindly bow and smile to Miss O’Flynn, she went through the draperies, through the front salesroom, and out at the front door. The milliner and her forewoman followed her with a dignified slowness, but reached the window in time to see Patty get into an elaborately-appointed motor-car which rolled rapidly away.

“She’s one of those society women who spy out what wages we pay,” said Madame Villard, with conviction.

“She’s not old enough for that,” returned Miss O’Flynn, “but she’s not looking for real work, either. I can’t make her out.”

“Well, we have three stunning hats, anyway. Put them in the window to-morrow. And you may as well put Paris labels inside; they have an air of the real thing.”

That evening Patty regaled her parents with a truthful account of her day.

“I’m ‘foiled again!’” she said, laughing. “But the whole

performance was so funny I must tell you about it.”

“Couldn’t you have coaxed fifteen dollars a week out of her?” asked Mr. Fairfield, after Patty had told how Madame Villard’s price had gradually increased.

“Oh, father, I was so afraid she *would* say fifteen! Then I should have felt that I ought to go to her for a week; for I may not get another such chance. But I couldn’t live in that place a week, I *know* I couldn’t!”

“Why?” asked Nan, curiously.

“I don’t know exactly why,” returned Patty, thoughtfully. “But it’s mostly because it’s all so artificial and untrue. Miss O’Flynn talks as if she were a superior being; Madame Villard talks as if she were a Royal personage. They talk about their customers and each other in a sort of make-believe grandiose way, that is as sickening as it is absurd. I don’t know how to express it, but I’d rather work in a place where everybody is real, and claims only such honour and glory as absolutely belong to them. I hate pretence!”

“Good little Patty!” said her father, heartily; “I’m glad you do. Oh, I tell you, my girl, you’ll learn some valuable lessons, even if you don’t achieve your fifteen dollars.”

“But I shall do that, too, father. You needn’t think I’m conquered yet. Pooh! What’s three failures to a determined nature like mine?”

“What, indeed!” laughed Mr. Fairfield. “Go ahead, my plucky little heroine; you’ll strike it right yet.”

“I’m sure I shall,” declared Patty, with such a self-satisfied air of complacency that both her hearers laughed.

CHAPTER XIII

THE THURSDAY CLUB

As Patty was temporarily out of an "occupation," she went skating the next day with the Farringtons and Kenneth. Indeed, the four were so often together that they began to call themselves the Quartette.

After a jolly skate, which made their cheeks rosy, they all went back to Patty's, as they usually did after skating.

"I think you might come to my house, sometimes," said Elise.

"Oh, I have to go to Patty's to look after the goldfish," said Kenneth. "I thought Darby swam lame, the last time I saw him. Does he, Patty?"

"No, not now. But Juliet has a cold, and I'm afraid of rheumatism setting in."

"No," said Kenneth; "she's too young for rheumatism. But she may have 'housemaid's knee.' You must be very careful about draughts."

The goldfish were a never-failing source of fun for the Quartette. The fish themselves were quiet, inoffensive little creatures, but the ready imagination of the young people invested them with all sorts of strange qualities, both physical and mental.

"Juliet's still sulky about that thimble," said Roger, as they all looked into the fishes' globe. "I gave her Patty's thimble yesterday

to wear for a hat, and it didn't suit her at all."

"I should say not!" cried Patty. "She thought it was a helmet. You must take her for Joan of Arc."

"She didn't wear a helmet," said Elise, laughing.

"Well, she wore armour. They belong together. Anyway, Juliet doesn't know but that Joan of Arc wore a helmet."

"Oh, is that what made her so sulky?" said Roger. "Nice disposition, I must say."

"She's nervous," put in Kenneth, "and a little morbid, poor thing. Patty, I think a little iron in the water would do her good."

"Send for a flatiron, Patty," said Roger. "I know it would help her, if you set it carefully on top of her."

"I won't do it!" said Patty. "Poor Juliet is flat enough now. She doesn't eat enough to keep a bird alive. Let's go away and leave her to sleep. That will fatten her, maybe."

"Lullaby, Julie, in the fish-bowl," sang Roger.

"When the wind blows, the billows will roll," continued Elise, fanning the water in the globe with a newspaper.

"When the bowl breaks, the fishes will fall," contributed Patty, and Ken wound up by singing:

"And the Cat will eat Juliet, Darby, and all!"

"Oh, horrible!" cried Patty. "Indeed she won't! My beautiful pets shall never meet that cruel fate."

Leaving Juliet to her much needed nap, they all strolled into the library.

"Let's be a club," said Elise. "Just us four, you know."

“All right,” said Patty, who loved clubs. “What sort of a club?”

“Musical,” said Elise. “We all sing.”

“Musical clubs are foolish,” said Roger. “Let’s be a dramatic club.”

“Dramatic clubs are too much work,” said Patty; “and four isn’t enough for that, anyway. Let’s do good.”

“Oh, Patty,” groaned Kenneth, “you’re getting so eleemosynary there’s no fun in you!”

“Mercy, gracious!” cried Patty. “*What* was that fearful word you said, Ken? No! don’t say it over again! I can’t stand all of it at once!”

“Well, we have to stand you!” grumbled Kenneth, “and you’re *that* all the time, now. What foolishness are you going to fly at next, trying to earn a dishonest penny?”

“I’m thinking of going out as a cook,” said Patty, her eyes twinkling. “Cooking is the only thing I really know how to do. But I can do that.”

“You’ll be fine as cook,” said Roger. “May I come round Thursday afternoons and take you out?”

“I s’pose I’ll only have every other Thursday,” said Patty, demurely.

“And the other Thursday you won’t be there! But what about this club we’re organising?”

“Make it musical,” said Kenneth, “and then while one of us is playing or singing some classical selection, the others can indulge in merry conversation.”

“You may as well make it the Patty Club,” said Elise, “as I suppose it will always meet here.”

Though not really jealous of her friend’s popularity, Elise always resented the fact that the young people would rather be at Patty’s than at her own home.

The reason was, that the Fairfield house, though handsomely appointed, was not so formally grand as the Farringtons’, and there was always an atmosphere of cordiality and hospitality at Patty’s, while at Elise’s it was oppressively formal and dignified.

“Oh, pshaw,” said Patty, ignoring Elise’s unkind intent; “I won’t have you always here. We’ll take turns, of course.”

“All right,” said Elise; “every other week at my house and every other week here. But don’t you think we ought to have more than four members?”

“No, I don’t,” declared Kenneth, promptly. “And we don’t want any musical nonsense, or any dramatic foolishness, either. Let’s just have fun; if it’s pleasant weather, we’ll go skating, or sleighing, or motoring, or whatever you like; if it isn’t, we’ll stay indoors, or go to a matinée or concert, or something like that.”

“Lovely!” cried Elise. “But if we’re to go to matinées, we’ll have to meet Saturdays.”

“Or Wednesdays,” amended Patty. “Let’s meet Wednesdays. I ’most always have engagements on Saturdays.”

“All right; shall we call it the Wednesday Club, then?”

“No, Elise,” said Roger, gravely. “That’s too obvious; we will call it the Thursday Club, because we meet on Wednesday; see?”

“No, I don’t see,” said Elise, looking puzzled.

“Why,” explained Roger, “you see we’ll spend all day Thursday thinking over the good time we had on Wednesday!”

“But that isn’t the real reason,” said Patty, giggling. “The real reason we call it the Thursday Club is because it meets on Wednesday!”

“That’s it, Patsy!” said Ken, approvingly, for he and Patty had the same love for nonsense, though more practical Elise couldn’t always understand it.

“Well, then, the Thursday Club will meet here next Wednesday,” said Patty; “unless I am otherwise engaged.”

For she just happened to think, that on that day she might be again attempting to earn her fifteen dollars.

“What’s the Thursday Club? Mayn’t I belong?” said a pleasant voice, and Mr. Hepworth came in.

“Oh, how do you do?” cried Patty, jumping up, and offering both hands. “I’m so glad to see you. Do sit down.”

“I came round,” said Mr. Hepworth, after greeting the others, “in hopes I could corral a cup of tea. I thought you ran a five-o’clock tea-room.”

“We do,” said Patty, ringing a bell nearby. “That is, we always have tea when Nan is home; and we can just as well have it when she isn’t.”

“I suppose you young people don’t care for tea,” went on Mr. Hepworth, looking a little enviously at the merry group, who, indeed, didn’t care whether they had tea or not.

“Oh, yes, we do,” said Patty. “We love it. But we,—we just forgot it. We were so engrossed in organising a club.”

But the others did not follow up this conversational beginning, and even before the tea was brought, Elise said she must go.

“Nonsense!” said Patty; “don’t go yet.”

But Elise was decided, so away she went, and of course, Roger went too.

“And I’m going,” said Kenneth, as Patty, having followed Elise out into the hall, he joined them there.

“Oh; don’t you go, Ken,” said Patty.

“Yes, I’d rather. When Hepworth comes you get so grown-up all of a sudden. With your ‘Oh, how do you do?’ and your *tea*.”

Kenneth mimicked Patty’s voice, which did sound different when she spoke to Mr. Hepworth.

“Ken, you’re very unjust,” said Patty, her cheeks flushing; “of course I have to give Mr. Hepworth tea when he asks for it; and if I seem more ‘grown-up’ with him, it’s because he’s so much older than you are.”

“He is, indeed! About twelve years older! Too old to be your friend. He ought to be calling on Mrs. Fairfield.”

“He is. He calls on us both. I think you’re very silly!”

This conversation had been in undertones, while Elise was donning her hat and furs, and great was her curiosity when Patty turned from Kenneth, with an offended or hurt expression on her face.

“What’s the matter with you two?” she asked, bluntly.

“Nothing,” said Ken, looking humble. “Patty’s been begging me to be more polite to the goldfish.”

“Nonsense!” laughed Patty; “your manners are above reproach, Ken.”

“Thanks, fair lady,” he replied, with a Chesterfieldian bow, and then the three went away.

“Did I drive off your young friends, Patty?” said Mr. Hepworth, as she returned to the library, where Jane was already setting forth the tea things.

Patty was nonplussed. He certainly had driven them away, but she couldn’t exactly tell him so.

“You needn’t answer,” he said, laughing at her dismayed expression. “I am sorry they don’t like me, but until you show that you don’t, I shall continue to come here.”

“I hope you will,” said Patty, earnestly. “It isn’t that they don’t like you, Mr. Hepworth; it’s that they think you don’t like them.”

“What?”

“Oh, I don’t mean exactly that; but they think that you think they’re children,—almost, and you’re bored by them.”

“I’m not bored by you, and you’re a child,—almost.”

“Well, I don’t know how it is,” said Patty, throwing off all responsibility in the matter; “but I like them and I like you, and yet, I’d rather have you at different times.”

“Which do you like better?” asked Mr. Hepworth. He knew it was a foolish question, but it was uttered almost involuntarily.

“Them!” said Patty, but she gave him such a roguish smile as

she said it, that he almost thought she meant the opposite.

“Still,” she went on, with what was palpably a mock regret, “I shall have to put up with you for the present; so be as young as you can. How many lumps, please?”

“Two; you see I can be very young.”

“Yes,” said Patty, approvingly; “it is young to take two lumps. But now tell me something about Miss Farley. Have you heard from her or of her lately?”

“Yes, I have,” said Mr. Hepworth, as he stirred his tea. “That is, I’ve heard of her. My friend, down in Virginia, who knows Miss Farley, has sent me another of her sketches, and it proves more positively than ever that the girl has real genius. But, Patty, I want you to give up this scheme of yours to help her. It was good of your father to make the offer he did, but I don’t want you racing around to these dreadful places looking for work. I’m going to get some other people interested in Miss Farley, and I’m sure her art education can be managed in some way. I’d willingly subscribe the whole sum needed, myself, but it would be impossible to arrange it that way. She’d never accept it, if she knew; and it’s difficult to deceive her.”

Patty looked serious.

“I don’t wonder you think I can’t do what I set out to do,” she said slowly, “for I’ve made so many ridiculous failures already. But please don’t lose faith in me, yet. Give me one or two more chances.”

Mr. Hepworth looked kindly into Patty’s earnest eyes.

“Don’t take this thing too seriously,” he said.

“But I want to take it seriously. You think I’m a child,—a butterfly. I assure you I am neither.”

“I think you’re adorable, whatever you are!” was on the tip of Gilbert Hepworth’s tongue; but he did not say it.

Though he cared more for Patty than for anything on earth, he had vowed to himself the girl should never know it. He was thirty-five, and Patty but eighteen, and he knew that was too great a discrepancy in years for him ever to hope to win her affections.

So he contented himself with an occasional evening call, or once in a while dropping in at tea time, resolved never to show to Patty herself the high regard he had for her.

She had told him of her various unsuccessful attempts at “earning her living,” and he deeply regretted that he had been the means of bringing about the situation.

He did not share Mr. Fairfield’s opinion that the experience was a good one for Patty, and would broaden her views of humanity in general, and teach her a few worth-while lessons.

“Please give up the notion,” he urged, after they had talked the matter over.

“Indeed I won’t,” returned Patty. “At least, not until I’ve proved to my own satisfaction that my theories are wrong. And I don’t think yet that they are. I still believe I can earn fifteen dollars a week, without having had special training for any work. Surely I ought to have time to prove myself right.”

“Yes, you ought to have time,” said Mr. Hepworth, gently,

“but you ought not to do it at all. It’s an absurd proposition, the whole thing. And as I, unfortunately, brought it about, I want to ask you, please, to drop it.”

“No, sir!” said Patty, gravely, but wagging a roguish forefinger at him; “people can’t undo their mistakes so easily. If, as you say, you brought about this painful situation, then you must sit patiently by and watch me as I flounder about in the various sloughs of despond.”

“Oh, Patty, don’t! Please drop it all,—for my sake!”

Patty looked up in surprise at his earnest tones, but she only laughed gaily, and said:

“Nixy! Not I! Not by no means! But I’ll give in to this extent. I’ll agree not to make more than three more attempts. If I can’t succeed in three more efforts, I’ll give up the game, and confess myself a butterfly and an idiot.”

“The only symptoms of idiocy are shown in your making three more attempts,” said Mr. Hepworth, who was almost angry at Patty’s persistence.

“Oh, pooh! I probably shan’t make three more! I just somehow feel sure I’ll succeed the very next time.”

“A sanguine idiot is the most hopeless sort,” said Mr. Hepworth, with a resigned air. “May I ask what you intend to attempt next?”

“You may ask, but you can’t be answered, for I don’t yet know, myself. I’ve two or three tempting plans, but I don’t know which to choose. I’ve thought of taking a place as cook.”

“Patty! don’t you dare do such a thing! To think of you in a kitchen,—under orders! Oh, child, how *can* you?”

Patty laughed outright at Mr. Hepworth’s dismay.

“Cheer up!” she cried; “I didn’t mean it! But you think skilled labour is necessary, and truly, I’m skilled in cooking. I really am.”

“Yes, chafing-dish trifles; and fancy desserts.”

“Well, those are good things for a cook to know.”

“Patty, promise me you won’t take any sort of a servant’s position.”

“Oh, I can’t promise that. I fancy I’d make a rather good lady’s-maid or parlour-maid. But I promise you I won’t be a cook. Much as I like to fuss with a chafing-dish, I shouldn’t like to be kept in a kitchen and boil and roast things all the time.”

“I should say not! Well, since I can’t persuade you to give up your foolish notion, do go on, and get through with your three attempts as soon as possible. Remember, you’ve promised not more than three.”

“I promise,” said Patty, with much solemnity, and then Nan and Mr. Fairfield came in.

Mr. Hepworth appealed at once to Mr. Fairfield, telling him what he had already told Patty.

“Nonsense, Hepworth,” said Patty’s father, “I’m glad you started the ball rolling. It hasn’t done Patty a bit of harm, so far, and it will be an experience she’ll always remember. Let her go ahead; she can’t succeed, but she can have the satisfaction of knowing she tried.”

“I’m not so sure she can’t succeed,” said Nan, standing up for Patty, who looked a little crestfallen at the remarks of her father.

“Good for you, Nan!” cried Patty; “I’ll justify your faith in me yet. I know Mr. Hepworth thinks I’m good for nothing, but Daddy ought to know me better.”

Mr. Hepworth seemed not to notice this petulant outburst, and only said:

“Remember, you’ve promised to withdraw from the arena after three more conflicts.”

“They won’t be conflicts,” said Patty, “and there won’t be but one, anyway!”

“So much the better,” said Mr. Hepworth, calmly.

CHAPTER XIV

MRS. VAN REYPEN

It was about a week later. Nothing further had been said or done in the matter of Patty's "occupation," and Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield wondered what plan was slowly brewing under the mop of golden curls.

Mr. Hepworth began to hope his words had had an effect after all, and was about to lay the case of Miss Farley before some other true and tried friends.

But he had practically promised Patty to give her time for three more attempts; so he waited.

One day Patty came into the house just in time for luncheon. "Nan," she said, as they sat down at the table, "I've struck it right this time!"

"*In-deed!*" said Nan, raising her eyebrows, quizzically.

"Yes, I have! You needn't laugh like that."

"I didn't laugh."

"Yes, you did,—behind your eyes, but I saw you! Now, as I tell you, this time conquers!"

"Good for you, Patsy! Let me congratulate you. Let me do it now, lest I shouldn't be able to do it later."

"Huh! I thought you had faith in me."

"And so I have, Patty girl," said Nan, growing serious all at

once. "I truly have. Also, I'll help you, if I can."

"That's just it, Nan. You can help me this time, and I'm going to tell you all about it, before I start in."

"Going to tell me now?"

"Yes, because I go this afternoon."

"Go where?"

"That's just it. I go to take a position as a companion to an elderly lady. And I shall stay a week. I'll take some clothes in a suitcase, or small trunk, and after I'm gone, you must tell father, and make it all right with him."

"But, Patty, he said at the outset, you must be home by five o'clock every day, whatever you were doing."

"Yes; but that referred to occupations by the day. Now, that I've decided to take this sort of a position, which is really more appropriate to a lady of my 'social standing,' you must explain to him that I can't come home at five o'clock, because I have to stay all the time, nights and all."

"Patty, you're crazy!"

"No, I'm not. I'm determined; I'm even stubborn, if you like; but I'm *going*! So, that's settled. Now, you said you'd help me. Are you going to back out?"

"No; I'm not. But I can't approve of it."

"Oh, you can, if you try hard enough. Just think how much properer it is for me to be companion to a lovely lady in her own house, than to be racing around lower Broadway for patchwork!"

"That's so," said Nan, and then she realised that if she knew

where Patty was going, they could go and bring her home at any time, if Mr. Fairfield wished.

“Well,” she went on, “who’s your lovely lady?”

“Mrs. Van Reypen.”

“Patty Fairfield! Not *the* Mrs. Van Reypen?”

“Yes, the very one! Isn’t it gay? She’s a bit eccentric, and she advertised for a companion, saying the application must be a written one. So I pranced up to her house this morning, and secured the position.”

“But she said to apply by letter.”

“Yes; that’s why I went myself! I sent up my card, and a message that I had come in answer to her advertisement. She sent back word that I could go home and write to her. I said I’d write then and there. So I helped myself to her library desk, and wrote out a regular application. In less than five minutes, I was summoned to her august presence, and after looking me over, she engaged me at once. How’s that for quick action?”

“But does she know who you are?”

“Why, she knows my name, and that’s all.”

“But she’s a,—why, she’s sort of an institution.”

“Yes; I know she’s a public benefactor, and all that. But, really, she’s very interesting; though, I fancy she has a quick temper. However, we’ve made the agreement for a week. Then if either of us wants to back out, we’re at liberty to do so.”

“She was willing to arrange it that way?”

“She insisted on it. She never takes anybody until after a

week's trial."

"What are your duties?"

"Oh, almost nothing. I'm not a social secretary, or anything like that. Merely a companion, to be with her, and read to her occasionally, or perhaps sing to her, and go to drive with her,—and that's about all."

"No one else in the family?"

"I don't think so. She didn't speak of any one, except her secretary and servants. She's rather old-fashioned, and the house is dear. All crystal chandeliers, and old frescoed walls and ceilings, and elaborate door-frames. Why, Nan, it'll be fun to be there a week, and it's so,—well, so safe and pleasant, you know, and so correct and seemly. Why, if I really had to earn my own living, I couldn't do better than to be companion to Mrs. Van Reypen."

"No; I suppose not. What is the salary?"

"Ah, that's the beauty of it! It's just fifteen dollars a week. And as I get 'board and lodging' beside, I'm really doing better than I agreed to."

"I don't like it, Patty," said Nan, after a few moments' thought. "But it's better, in some ways, than the other things you've done. Go on, and I'll truly do all I can to talk your father into letting you stay there a week; but if he won't consent, I can't help it."

"Why, of course he'll consent, Nan, if you put it to him right. You can make him see anything as you see it, if you try. You know you can."

“Well, go ahead. I suppose a week will pass; and anyway, you’ll probably come flying home after a couple of days.”

“No; I’m going to stay the week, if it finishes me. I’m tired of defeats; this time I conquer. You may help me pack, if you like.”

“You won’t need many frocks, will you?” said Nan, as they went up to Patty’s room.

“No; just some light, dressy things for evening,—she’s rather formal,—and some plain morning gowns.”

Nan helped Patty with her selection, and a small trunk was filled with what they considered an appropriate wardrobe for a companion.

At about four o’clock Patty started, in the motor-car.

Mrs. Van Reypen received her pleasantly, and as they sat chatting over a cup of tea, Patty felt more like an honoured guest than a subordinate.

Then Mrs. Van Reypen dismissed her, saying:

“Go to your room now, my dear, and occupy yourself as you choose until dinner-time. Dinner is at seven. There will be no guests, but you will wear a light, pretty gown, if you please. I am punctilious in such matters.”

Patty went to her room, greatly pleased with the turn events had taken. She wished she could telephone home how pleasantly she was getting along; but she thought wiser not to do that so soon.

As it neared dinner-time, she put on one of her prettiest dresses, a light blue chiffon, with a touch of silver embroidery

round the half-low throat and short sleeves.

A few minutes before seven, she went slowly down the dark, old staircase, with its massive newels and balusters.

As she reached the middle steps, she observed an attractive, but bored-looking young man in the hall.

He had not noticed her light steps, and Patty paused a moment to look at him. As she stood, wondering who he might be, he chanced to turn, and saw her.

The young man ran his eyes swiftly, from the cloud of blue chiffon, up to the smiling face, with its crown of massed golden hair, which a saucy bow of blue ribbon did its best to hold in place.

His face promptly lost its bored expression, and with his hands still in his pockets, he involuntarily breathed a long, low whistle.

The sound seemed to bring back his lost wits, and quickly drawing his hands into view, he stepped forward, saying:

“I beg your pardon for that unconventional note of admiration, but I trust you will accept it as the tribute for which it was meant.”

This was an easy opening, and Patty was quite ready to respond gaily, when she suddenly remembered her position in the house and wondered if a companion ought to speak to a strange young man in the same language a young person in society might use.

“Thank you,” she said, uncertainly, and her shy hesitation completely captured the heart of Philip Van Reypen.

“Come on down; I won’t eat you,” he said, reassuringly. “You

are, I assume, a guest of my aunt's."

"I am Mrs. Van Reypen's companion," said Patty, but though she made the announcement demurely enough, the funny side of it all struck her so forcibly that she had difficulty to keep the corners of her mouth from showing her amusement.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the young man, "Aunty Van always is lucky! Now, I'm her nephew."

"Does that prove her good luck?" said Patty, unable to be prim in the face of this light gaiety.

"Yes, indeed! Come on down, and get acquainted, and you'll agree with me."

"I don't believe I ought to," said Patty, hesitatingly placing one little satin-slippered foot on the next step below, and then pausing again. "You see, I've never been a companion before, but I don't think it's right for me to precede Mrs. Van Reypen into the drawing-room."

"Ah, well, perhaps not. Stay on the stairs, then, if you think that's the proper place. I daresay it is,—I never was a companion, either; so I'm not sure. But sit down, won't you? I'll sit here, if I may."

Young Van Reypen dropped onto a stair a few steps below Patty, who sat down, too, feeling decidedly at her ease, for, upon occasion, a staircase was one of her favourite haunts.

"It's like a party," she said, smiling. "I love to sit on a staircase at a party, don't you?"

And so provocative of sociability did the staircase prove, that

when Mrs. Van Reyepen came down, in all the glory of her black velvet and old lace, she nearly tumbled over two chatting young people, who seemed to be very good friends.

“Philip! You here?” she exclaimed, and a casual observer would have said she was not too well pleased.

“Yes, Aunt Van; aren’t you as glad to see me as I am to see you? I’ve been making Miss Fairfield’s acquaintance. You may introduce us if you like, but it isn’t really necessary.”

“So it seems,” said the old lady, drily; “but as I have some regard for the conventions, I will present to you, Miss Fairfield, my scape-grace and ne’er-do-well nephew, Philip Van Reyepen.”

“What an awful reputation to live up to,” said Patty, smiling at the debonair Philip, who quite looked the part his aunt assigned to him.

“Awful, but not at all difficult,” he responded, gaily, and Patty followed as he escorted his aunt to the dining-room.

The little dinner-party was a gay one; Mrs. Van Reyepen became mildly amiable under the influence of the young people’s merry chatter, and Patty felt that so far, at least, a companion’s lot was not such a very unhappy one.

After dinner, however, the young man was sent peremptorily away. He begged to stay, but his aunt ordered him off, declaring that she had seen enough of him, and he was not to return for a week at least. Philip went away, sulkily, declaring that he would call the very next morning to inquire after his aunt’s health.

“I trust you are not flirtatiously inclined, Miss Fairfield,” said

Mrs. Van Reypen, as the two sat alone in the large and rather sombre drawing-room.

“I am not,” said Patty, honestly. “I like gay and merry conversation, but as your companion, I consider myself entirely at your orders, and have no mind to chatter if you do not wish me to do so.”

“That is right,” said Mrs. Van Reypen, approvingly. “You cannot have many friends in your present position, of course. And you must not feel flattered at Mr. Philip’s apparent admiration of you. He is a most impressionable youth, and is caught by every new face he sees.”

Patty smiled at the idea of her being unduly impressed by Mr. Van Reypen’s glances. She had given him no thought, save as a good-natured, well-bred young man.

But she pleasantly assured Mrs. Van Reypen that she would give her nephew no further consideration, and though Mrs. Van Reypen looked sharply at Patty’s face, she saw only an honest desire to please her employer.

The evening was long and uninteresting.

At Mrs. Van Reypen’s request, Patty read to her, and then sang for her.

But the lady was critical, and declared that the reading was too fast, and the singing too loud, so that when at last it was bedtime, Patty wondered whether she was giving satisfaction or not.

But she was engaged for a week, anyway, and whether satisfactory or not, Mrs. Van Reypen must keep her for that

length of time, and that was all Patty wanted.

She woke next morning with a pang of homesickness. It was a bit forlorn, to wake up as a hired companion, instead of as a beloved daughter in her own father's house.

But resolutely putting aside such thoughts, she forced herself to think of her good fortune in securing her present position.

"I'm glad I'm here!" she assured herself, as she dashed cold water into her suspiciously reddened eyes. "I know I shall have all sorts of odd and interesting adventures here; and I'm determined to be happy whatever happens. And, anyway, it will be over soon. A week isn't long."

Putting on a trim morning dress, of soft old rose cashmere, with a fine embroidered white yoke, she went sedately down to the breakfast room. She had been told to come to breakfast at nine o'clock, and the clock struck the hour just as she crossed the threshold.

Instead of her employer, she was astounded to see Philip Van Reypen calmly seated at the table.

"Jolly to see you again!" he cried, as he jumped up to greet her. "Just thought I'd run in for a bite of breakfast, and to inquire how Aunty Van's cold is."

"I didn't know she had a cold," said Patty, primly, trying to act as she thought a companion ought to act.

"Neither did I," said the irrepressible Philip. "But I didn't know but she might have caught one in the night. A germ flying in at the window, or something."

Mindful of Mrs. Van Reyepen's admonitions, Patty tried not to appear interested in the young man's remarks, but it was impossible to ignore the fact that he was interested in her.

She responded to his gay banter in monosyllables, and kept her dancing eyes veiled by their own long-fringed lids, but this only served to pique Philip's curiosity.

"I've a notion to spend the day here, with Aunty Van," he said, and then Patty glanced up at him in positive alarm.

"Don't!" she cried, and her face betokened a genuine distress.

"Why not?" said the surprised young man; "have you learned to dislike me so cordially already?"

Amiable Patty couldn't stand for this misinterpretation of her attitude, and her involuntary, smiling glance was a sufficient disclaimer.

But she was saved the necessity of a verbal reply, for just at that moment Mrs. Van Reyepen came into the room.

CHAPTER XV

PERSISTENT PHILIP

“Why, Philip!” Mrs. Van Reypen exclaimed; “you are indeed growing attentive to your aged aunt!”

“Middle-aged aunt!” he returned, gallantly; “and belonging to the early middle-ages at that! I told you I should call this morning, and I’d like another egg, please, aunty.”

“You may have all the eggs you want, but I am not at all pleased with your presence here after I expressly forbade it.”

“Oh, it isn’t a crime to call on one’s own aunt, is it?”

“It’s extremely rude. I have a busy day before me, and I don’t want a bothersome nephew around.”

Mrs. Van Reypen was exceedingly fond of Philip, and loved to have him at her house, but it was easy to be seen, now, that she considered him far too much interested in pretty Patty.

And partly because he was interested, and partly to tease his long-suffering aunt, the young man declared his intention of spending the day with them.

“I can’t have you, Philip,” said Mrs. Van Reypen, decidedly. “I want you to go away immediately after breakfast.”

“Just my luck!” grumbled her nephew. “I never can do anything I want to. Well, I’ll go downtown, but I’ll be back here to luncheon.”

“Don’t talk nonsense,” said Mrs. Van Reypen, shortly; “you’ll do nothing of the sort.”

The rest of the meal was not very enjoyable. Mrs. Van Reypen was clearly displeased at her nephew’s presence; Patty did not think it wise to take any active part in the conversation; and, though Philip was in gay spirits, it was not easy to be merry alone.

Patty couldn’t help smiling at his audacious speeches, but she kept her eyes down on her plate, and endeavoured to ignore the young man’s presence, for she knew this was what Mrs. Reypen wished her to do.

“Now you may go,” said the hostess, as Philip finished his egg. “I’d like to enjoy a cup of coffee in peace.”

“Oh, I’m peaceful!” declared Philip, crossing his hands on his breast and rolling up his eyes with an angelic expression.

“Good-by, Philip,” said his aunt, so icily that the young man rose from the table and stalked out of the room.

“Now,” said Mrs. Van Reypen, “we are rid of him.”

But in a few moments the smiling face again appeared at the door.

“I forgot to say good-by to Miss Fairfield,” he announced, cheerfully. “Mayn’t I do that, aunty?”

Mrs. Van Reypen gave an annoyed “Humph!” and Patty, taking her cue, bowed very coldly, and said “Good-morning, Mr. Van Reypen” in an utterly impersonal tone.

Philip chuckled, and went away, slamming the street door behind him, as a final annoyance to his aunt.

“You mustn’t think him a rude boy, Miss Fairfield,” she said. “But he delights to tease me, and unless I am positively cross to him he never lets up. But he is really devoted to me, and, I assure you, he scarcely noted your presence at all.”

“Of course not,” said Patty, with great difficulty restraining a burst of laughter. “No one could dream of Mr. Philip Van Reypen observing a companion.” Patty did not mean this for sarcasm; she desired only to set Mrs. Van Reypen’s mind at rest, and then the subject of Philip was dropped.

Soon after breakfast Mrs. Van Reypen conducted Patty to a pleasant morning room, and asked her to read the newspaper aloud.

“And do try to read slower,” she added. “I hate rapid gabbling.”

Patty had resolved not to take offence at the brusque remarks, which she knew would be hurled at her, so, somewhat meekly, she took up the paper and began.

It was a trying task. If she read an account of anything unpleasant she was peremptorily stopped; if the news was dry or prosy, that was also cut off short.

“Read me the fashion notes,” said Mrs. Van Reypen, at last.

So Patty read a whole page about the latest modes, and her hearer was greatly interested.

She then told Patty of some new gowns she was having made, and seemed pleased at Patty’s intelligent comments on them.

“Why, you have good taste!” she exclaimed, as if making a

surprising discovery. "I will take you with me this afternoon when I go to Madame Leval's to try on my gowns."

"Very well," said Patty. "And now, Mrs. Van Reypen, I'm sure there's nothing more of interest in the paper; what shall I do next?"

"Heavens! Miss Fairfield, don't ask such a question as that! You are here to entertain me. I am not to provide amusement for you! Why do you suppose I have you here, if not to make my time pass pleasantly?"

Patty was bewildered at this outburst. Though she knew her duties would be light, she supposed they would be clearly defined, and not left to her own invention.

But she was anxious to please, and she said, pleasantly:

"I think that's really what I meant, but I didn't express myself very well. And, you see, I don't yet quite know your tastes. Do you like fancy work? I know a lovely new crochet stitch I could show you."

"No; I hate crocheting. The wool gets all snarled up, and the pattern gets wrong every few stitches."

"Then we'll dismiss that. Do you like to play cards? I know cribbage, and some other games that two can play."

"No; I detest cards. I think it is very foolish to sit and fumble with bits of painted pasteboard!"

Poor Patty was at her wits' end. She had not expected to be a professional entertainer, and she didn't know what to suggest next.

She felt sure Mrs. Van Reypen wouldn't care to listen to any more reading just then. She hesitated to propose music, as it had not been very successful the night before. On a sudden impulse, she said:

“Do you like to see dancing? I can do some pretty fancy dances.”

It seemed an absurd thing to say, but Patty had ransacked her brain to think what professional entertainers did, and that was all she could think of, except recitations, and those she hated herself.

“Yes, I do!” cried Mrs. Van Reypen, so emphatically that Patty jumped. “I love to see dancing! If you can do it, which I doubt, I wish you would dance for me. And this evening we'll go to see that new dancer that the town is wild over. If you really can dance, you'll appreciate it as I do. To me dancing is a fine art, and should be considered so—but it rarely is. Do you require music?”

“Of course, I prefer it, but I can dance without.”

“We'll try it without, first; then, if I wish to, I'll ask Delia, my parlour-maid, to play for you. She plays fairly well. Or, if it suits me, I may play myself.”

Patty made no response to these suggestions, but followed Mrs. Van Reypen to the great drawing-room, at one end of which was a grand piano.

“Try it without music, first,” was the order, and Patty walked to the other end of the long room, while Mrs. Van Reypen seated herself on a sofa. Serenely conscious of her proficiency in the art, Patty felt no embarrassment, and, swaying gently, as if listening

to rhythm, she began a pretty little fancy dance that she had learned some years ago.

She danced beautifully, and she loved to dance, so she made a most effective picture, as she pirouetted back and forth, or from side to side of the long room.

“Beautiful!” said Mrs. Van Reypen, as Patty paused in front of her and bowed. “You are a charming dancer. I don’t know when I’ve enjoyed anything so much. Are you tired? Will you dance again?”

“I’m not at all tired,” said Patty. “I like to dance, and I’m very glad it pleases you.”

“Can you do a minuet?” asked the old lady, after Patty had finished another dance, a gay little Spanish fandango.

“Yes; but I like music for that.”

“Good! I will play myself.” With great dignity, Mrs. Van Reypen rose and walked to the piano.

Patty adjusted the music-stool for her, and she ran her delicate old fingers lightly over the keys.

“I’m sadly out of practice,” she said, “but I can play a tinkling minuet and you may dance to it.”

She began a melodious little air, and Patty, after listening a moment, nodded her head, and ran to take her place.

Mrs. Van Reypen was so seated at the piano that she could watch Patty’s dance, and in a moment the two were in harmony, and Patty was gliding and bowing in a charming minuet, while Mrs. Van Reypen played in perfect sympathy.

The dance was nearly over when Patty discovered the smiling face of Mr. Philip Van Reypen in the doorway.

His aunt could not see him, and Patty saw only his reflection in the mirror. He gave her a pleading glance, and put his finger on his lip, entreating her silence.

So she went on, without seeming to see him. But she wondered what his aunt would say after the dance was over.

Indeed, the funny side of the situation struck her so forcibly that she unconsciously smiled broadly at her own thoughts.

“That’s right,” said Mrs. Van Reypen, as the dancing and music both came to an end; “I am glad to see you smile as you dance. I have seen some dancers who look positively agonised as they do difficult steps.”

Patty smiled again, remembering that she had had a reason to smile as she danced, and she wondered why Philip didn’t appear.

But he didn’t, and, except that she had seen him so clearly in the mirror, and he had asked her, silently but unmistakably, not to divulge the fact of his presence, she would have thought she only imagined him there in the doorway.

“You dance wonderfully well,” went on Mrs. Van Reypen. “You have had very good training. I shall be glad to have you dance for me often. But—and please remember this—never when any one else is here. I wish you to dance for me only. If I have guests, or if my nephew is here, you are not to dance.”

This was almost too much for Patty’s gravity. For she well knew the old lady was foolishly alarmed lest her nephew should

fall in love with a humble “companion,” and, knowing that the said nephew had gleefully watched the dance, it was difficult not to show her amusement.

But she only said, “I will remember, Mrs. Van Reypen.” She couldn’t tell of the intruder after his frantic appeal to her for silence, so she determined to ignore the episode.

“Now, you may do as you like until luncheon time,” said Mrs. Van Reypen, “for I shall go to my room and lie down for a rest. My maid will attend me, so I will bid you adieu until one o’clock. Wander round the house if you choose. You will find much to interest you.”

“Right you are!” thought Patty to herself. “I don’t believe I’d have to wander far to find a jolly comrade to interest me!” But she well knew if Mr. Philip Van Reypen was still in the house, and if she should encounter him and chat with him, it would greatly enrage the old lady.

“And,” thought Patty, “since I’ve made good with my dancing it’s a shame to spoil my record by talking to Sir Philip. But he is pleasant.”

Determined to do her duty, she went straight to her own room, though tempted to “wander round the house.”

And sure enough, though she didn’t know it, Mr. Van Reypen was watching her from behind the drawing-room draperies. His face fell as he saw her go up the stairs, and, though he waited some time, she did not return.

“Saucy Puss!” he thought. “But I’ll have a chat with her yet.”

Going to the library he scribbled a note, and sent it by a servant to Miss Fairfield's room. The note said:

“Do come down and talk to a lonely, neglected waif, if only for a few minutes.

“P. V. R.”

Patty laughed as she read it, but she only said to the maid who brought it:

“Please say to Mr. Van Reypen that there is no answer.”

The maid departed, but, in less than ten minutes, returned with another note:

“You're afraid of Aunty Van! Come on. I will protect you. Just for a few moments' chat on the stairs.

“P. V. R.”

Again Patty sent the message, “There is no answer.”

Soon came a third note:

“I think you are horrid! And you don't dance prettily at all!”

“Oho!” thought Patty. “Getting saucy, is he?”

She made no response whatever to the maid this time, but she was not greatly surprised when another note came:

“If you don't come down, I'm going out to drown myself.

P.”

Patty began to be annoyed. The servants must think all this very strange, and yet surely she could not help it.

“Wait a moment, Delia,” she said. “Please say to Mr. Van

Reyphen that I will see him in the library, at once.”

After a moment she followed the maid downstairs, and went straight to the library, where the young man awaited her. His face lighted up with gladness, as he held out his hand.

“Forgive me if I was impertinent,” he said, with such a charming air of apology that Patty had to smile.

“I forgive the impertinence,” she returned, “but you are making real trouble for me.”

“What do you mean?” he cried, looking dismayed.

“I mean that I am your aunt’s companion, and trying to earn my living thereby. Now if you persist in secretly coming to the house,—pardon me if I am frank,—and if you persist in sending foolish notes to me, your aunt will not let me stay here, and I shall lose a good position through your unkindness.”

Patty was very much in earnest, and her words were sincere, but her innate sense of humour couldn’t fail to see the ridiculous side of it all, and the corners of her mouth dimpled though she kept her eyes resolutely cast down.

“It’s a shame the way she keeps you tied to her apron string,” he blurted out, uncertain whether Patty was coquetting, or really distressed.

“Not at all,” she replied. “I’m here to attend on her pleasure, and my place is by her side whenever she wants me there.”

“How can any one help wanting you there?” broke out Philip, so explosively that Patty, instead of being offended, burst into a ringing laugh.

“Oh, you are too funny!” she exclaimed. “Mrs. Van Reypen said you were given to saying things like that to everybody.”

“I don’t say them to everybody!”

“Yes, you do; your aunt says so. But now that you’ve said it to me, won’t you go away and stay away?”

“How long?”

Patty thought quickly. “Till next Friday—a week from to-day.”

“Oh, you want to get acclimatised, all by yourself!”

“Yes,” said Patty, demurely, “I do. And if you’ll only keep away,—you know your aunt asked you not to come back for a week,—if you’ll keep away till next Friday, I’ll never ask you another favour.”

“Huh! that’s no inducement. I love to have you ask me favours.”

“Well, then, I never shall if you don’t grant this first one.”

“And if I do?”

“If you do I’ll promise you almost anything you ask.”

“That’s a large order! Well, if I stay away from this house until you get solid with Aunty Van—”

“I said a week.”

“Well, to-day’s Friday. If I stay away a week will you persuade aunty to invite me to dinner next Friday night?”

“I will.”

“Can you persuade her to do that?”

“I’m sure I can by that time.”

Patty's eyes were dancing. She had come to Mrs. Van Reypen's on Thursday. She would, therefore, leave on Thursday, and she was sure that lady would have no objections to inviting her nephew to dinner after her "companion's" departure.

"Are you going to stay?" demanded Philip suspiciously.

"I'm here a week on trial," said Patty, demurely. "Your aunt needn't keep me longer if I don't suit her. And I know I won't suit her if she thinks I receive notes from her nephew."

"Oh, I see! You're here a week on trial, and if I am chummy with you Aunty Van won't keep you! Oh, yes! Why, of course! To be sure! Well, Miss Fairfield, I make this sacrifice for your benefit. I will keep away from here during your trial week. Then, in return, you promise to use your influence to get me an invitation to dine here next Friday."

"I do," returned Patty. "But do you need an invitation to a house where you seem to feel so much at home?"

"Only when you're in it," declared the young man, frankly. "I think Aunty Van fears I mean to kidnap you. I don't."

"I'm sure you don't," said Patty, flashing a smile at him. "I think we could be good friends, and I hope we shall be. But not until after next Friday."

CHAPTER XVI

AN INVITATION DECLINED

Philip Van Reypen went away, and his aunt never knew that he had been to her house on that occasion.

"I'm glad that boy has sense enough to keep away when I tell him to," she remarked at luncheon, and Patty hastily took a sip of water to hide her uncontrollable smile.

"Yes, he seems to obey you," she said, by way of being agreeable.

"He does. He's a good boy, but too impressionable. He's captivated by every girl he meets, so I warn you again, Miss Fairfield, not to notice his pretended interest in you."

Patty tossed her head a little haughtily.

"Do not be alarmed, Mrs. Van Reypen," she said, "I have no interest whatever in your nephew."

She was a little annoyed at the absurd speeches of the old lady, and determined to put a stop to them.

"I should hope not," was the reply. "A person in your position should not aspire to association with young gentlemen like my nephew."

Patty was really angry at this, but her common sense came to her aid. If she elected to play the part of a dependent, she must accept the consequences. But she allowed herself a pointed

rejoinder.

“Perhaps not,” she said. “Yet I suppose a companion of Mrs. Van Reyepen’s would meet only the best people.”

“That, of course. But you cannot meet them as an equal.”

“No,” agreed Patty, meekly. Then to herself she said: “Only a week of this! Only six days now.”

That afternoon they went to the dressmaker’s.

Patty put on a smart tailored costume, and almost regretted that she had left her white furs at home. But she and Nan had agreed that they were too elaborate for her use as a companion, so she wore a small neckpiece and muff of chinchilla. But it suited well her dark-blue cloth suit and plain but chic black velvet hat.

The dressmaker, an ultra-fashionable modiste, looked at Patty with interest, recognising in her costume the work of adept hands.

Moreover, Patty’s praise and criticism of Mrs. Van Reyepen’s new gowns showed her to be a young woman of taste and knowledge in such matters.

Both the modiste and her aristocratic patron were a little puzzled at Patty’s attitude, which, though modest and deferential, was yet sure and true in its judgments and opinions.

At last, when Mrs. Van Reyepen was undergoing some tedious fitting, Patty had an inspiration.

“May I be excused long enough to telephone?” she asked.

“Certainly,” said Mrs. Van Reyepen, who was in high good humour, because of her new finery. “Take all the time you like.”

Patty had noticed a telephone booth in the hall, and, shutting herself in it, she called up Nan.

By good fortune Nan was at home, and answered at once.

“Oh!” began Patty, giggling, “I’ve so much to tell you, and it’s all so funny, I can’t say a word. We’re at the dressmaker’s now, and I took this chance to call you up, because I won’t be overheard. Oh, Nan, it’s great fun!”

“Tell me the principal facts, Patty. And stop giggling. Is she kind to you? Is she patronising? Have you a pleasant room? Do you want to come home? Are you happy there?”

“Oh, Nan, wait a minute, for goodness’ sake! Yes, she’s patronising—she won’t let me speak to her grand nephew. Oh—I don’t mean her grand nephew! I mean her grand, gorgeous, extraordinary nephew. But I don’t care; I’ve no desire to speak to him.”

“Does he live there?”

“No; and never mind about him, anyway. How are you all? Is father well? Oh, Nan, it seems as if I’d been away from home a year! And what do you think? I have to dance for her to amuse her!”

“Patty! Not really? Well, you can do that all right.”

“Sure I can! Oh, she’s a peach! Don’t reprove my slang, Nan; I have to be so precise when I’m on duty. Well, I must say good-bye now. I’ll write you a long letter as soon as I get a chance. To-night we’re going to see Mlle. Thingamajig dance, and to-morrow night, to the opera. So you see I’m not dull.”

“Oh, Patty, I wish you’d drop it all and come home! I don’t like it, and Fred doesn’t either.”

“Tra-la-la! ’Twill all be over soon! Only six days more. Expect me home next Thursday afternoon. Love to all. Good-by. Patty!”

Patty hung up the receiver, for she knew if she talked any longer she’d get homesick. The sound of Nan’s familiar voice made her long for her home and her people. But Patty was plucky, and, also, she was doggedly determined to succeed this time.

So she went back to Mrs. Van Reypen with a placid countenance, and sat for an hour or more complimenting and admiring the costumes in process of construction.

Somehow the afternoon dragged itself away, and the evening, at the theatre, passed pleasantly enough.

But the succeeding days went slowly.

Mrs. Van Reypen was difficult to please. She was fretty, irritable, inconsequent, and unjust.

What suited her one day displeased her highly the next.

So long as Patty praised, complimented, and flattered her all went fairly well.

But if Patty inadvertently disagreed with her, or expressed a contrary opinion, there was a scene.

And again, if Patty seemed especially meek and mild Mrs. Van Reypen would say:

“Don’t sit there and assent to everything I say! Do have some mind of your own! Express an honest opinion, even though it

may differ from mine.”

Then, if Patty did this, it would bring down vials of wrath on her inoffensive head. Often she was at her wits' end to know what to say. But her sense of humour never deserted her, and if she said something, feeling sure she was going to get sorely berated for saying it, she was able to smile inwardly when the scathing retort was uttered.

Sunday was an especially hard day. It was stormy, so they could not go out.

So Mrs. Van Reypen bade Patty read sermons to her.

When Patty did so she either fell asleep and then, waking suddenly, declared that Patty had been skipping, or else she argued contrary to the doctrines expressed in the sermons and expected Patty to combat her arguments.

“I'm tired of hearing you read,” she said, at last. “You do read abominably. First you go along in staccato jerks, then you drone in a monotone. Philip is a fine reader. I love to hear Philip read. I wish he'd come in to-day. I wonder why he doesn't? Probably because you're here. He must have taken a violent dislike to you, Miss Fairfield.”

“Do you think so?” said Patty, almost choking with suppressed laughter at this version of Philip's attitude toward her.

“Yes, I'm sure he did. For usually he likes my companions—especially if they're pretty. And you're pretty, Miss Fairfield. Not the type I admire myself,—I prefer brunettes,—but still you are pretty in your own way.”

“Thank you,” said Patty, meekly.

“And you’re especially pretty when you dance. I wish you could dance for me now; but, of course, I wouldn’t let you dance on Sunday. That’s the worst of Sundays. There’s so little one can do.”

“Shall I sing hymns to you?” inquired Patty, gently, for she really felt sorry for the discontented old lady.

“Yes, if you like,” was the not very gracious rejoinder, and, without accompaniment, Patty sang the old, well-known hymns in her true, sweet voice.

The twilight was falling, and, as Patty’s soothing music continued, Mrs. Van Reypen fell asleep in her chair.

Exhausted by a really difficult day Patty also dropped into a doze, and the two slept peacefully in their chairs in front of the dying embers of the wood fire.

It was thus that Philip Van Reypen found them as he came softly in at five o’clock.

“Well, I’ll be excused,” he said, to himself, “if I ever saw anything to beat that!”

His gaze had wandered from his sleeping aunt to Patty, now sound asleep in a big armchair.

The crimson velvet made a perfect background for her golden curls, a bit tumbled by her afternoon exertions at being entertaining.

Her posture was one of graceful relaxation, and pretty Patty had never looked prettier than she did then, asleep in the faint

firelight.

“By Jove!” exclaimed the young man, but not aloud, “if that isn’t the prettiest sight ever. I believe there’s a tradition that one may kiss a lady whom one finds asleep in her chair, but I won’t. She’s a dear little girl, and she shan’t be teased.”

Then Mr. Philip Van Reypen deliberately, and noiselessly, lifted another large armchair and, carefully disposing his own goodly proportioned frame within it, proceeded to fall asleep himself—or if not really asleep, he gave an exceedingly good imitation of it.

Patty woke first. As she slowly opened her eyes she saw Philip dimly through the now rapidly gathering dusk.

Quick as a flash she took in the situation, and shut her eyes again, though not until Philip had seen her from beneath his own quivering lids.

After a time she peeped again.

“Why play hide-and-seek?” he whispered.

“What about your promise?” she returned, also under her breath.

“Had to come. Aunty telephoned for me.”

“Oh!”

Then Mrs. Van Reypen awoke.

“Who’s here?” she cried out. “Oh, Philip, you!”

She heartily kissed her nephew, and then rang for lights and tea.

“Miss Fairfield,” she said, not untimidly, but with decision,

“you are weary and I’m not surprised at it. Go to your room and rest until dinner time! I will send your tea to you there.”

“Yes, Mrs. Van Reypen,” said Patty, demurely, and, with a slight impersonal bow to Philip, she left the room.

“Oh, I say! Aunty Van!” exclaimed the young man, as Patty disappeared, “don’t send her away.”

“Be quiet, Philip,” said his aunt. “You know you don’t like her, and she needs a rest.”

“Don’t like her!” echoed Philip. “Does a cat like cream? Aunty Van, what’s the matter with you, anyway? Who is she?”

“She’s my companion,” was the stern response, “my hired companion, and I do not wish you to treat her as an equal.”

“Equal! She’s superior to anything I’ve ever seen yet.”

“Oh, you rogue! You say that, or its equivalent, about every girl you meet.”

“Pooh! Nonsense! But I say, aunty, she’ll come down to dinner, won’t she?”

“Yes—I suppose so. But mind now, Philip, you’re not to talk to her as if she were of your own class.”

“No’m; I won’t.”

Reassured by the knowledge that he should see her again, Philip was most affable and agreeable, and chatted with his aunt in a happy frame of mind.

Patty, exiled to her own room, decided to write to Nan.

She filled several sheets with accounts of her doings at Mrs. Van Reypen’s, and gloated over the fact that there were now but

four days of her week left.

“I shall win this time,” she wrote, “and, though life here is not a bed of roses, yet it is not so very bad, and when the week is over I shall look back at it with lots of funny thoughts. Oh, Nan, prepare a fatted calf for Thursday night, for I shall come home a veritable Prodigal Son! Of course, I don’t mean this literally; we have lovely things to eat here, but it’s ‘hame, hame, fain wad I be.’ I won’t write again, I’ll probably get no chance, but send Miller for me at four o’clock on Thursday afternoon.”

After writing the letter Patty felt less homesick. It seemed, somehow, to bring Thursday nearer, to write about it. She began to dress for dinner, and, in a spirit of mischief, she took pains to make a most fetching toilette.

Her frock was of white mousseline de soie that twinkled into foolish little ruffles all round the hem.

More tiny frills gambolled around the low-cut circular neck and nestled against Patty’s soft, round arms.

Her curly hair was parted, and massed low at the back of her neck, and behind one ear she tucked a half-blown pink rosebud.

The long, dreamy day had roused in Patty a contrary wilfulness, and she was quite ready for fun if any came her way.

At dinner Mrs. Van Reypen monopolised the conversation. She talked mostly to Philip, but occasionally addressed a remark to Patty. She was exceedingly polite to her, but made her feel that her share of the conversation must be formal and conventional. Then she would chatter to her nephew about matters unknown

to Patty, and then perhaps again throw an observation about the weather at her “companion.”

Patty accepted all this willingly enough, but Philip didn't.

He couldn't keep his eyes off Patty, who was looking her very prettiest, and whose own eyes, when she raised them, were full of smiles.

But in vain he endeavoured to make her talk to him.

Patty remembered Mrs. Van Reypen's injunctions, and, though her bewitching personality made such effort useless, she tried to be absolutely and uninterestingly silent.

“Aunt Van,” said Philip, at last, giving up his attempts to make Patty converse, “let's have a little theatre party to-morrow night. Shall us? I'll get a box, and if you and Miss Fairfield will go, I'll be delighted.”

“I'll go, with pleasure,” replied his aunt, “but Miss Fairfield will be obliged to decline. She has been out late too often since she has been here, and she needs rest. So invite the Delafields instead, and that will make a pleasant quartette.”

For an instant Patty was furiously angry at this summary disposal of herself, but when she saw Philip's face she almost screamed with laughter.

Crestfallen faintly expressed his appearance. He was crushed, and looked absolutely stunned.

“How he is under his aunt's thumb!” thought Patty, secretly disgusted at his lack of self-assertion, but she suddenly changed her mind.

“Thank you, Auntie Van,” she heard him saying, in a cool, determined voice, “but I prefer to choose my own guests. I do not care to ask the Delafields—unless you especially desire it. I am sorry Miss Fairfield cannot go, but I trust you will honour me with your presence.” Philip had scored.

Mrs. Van Reypen well knew if she went alone with her nephew, under such conditions, he would be sulky all the evening. Nor could she insist on having the Delafields asked after the way he had put it.

She then nobly endeavoured to undo the mischief she had wrought.

“No, Philip, I don’t care especially about the Delafields. And if Miss Fairfield thinks it will not tire her too much I shall be glad to have her accept your kindness.”

His kindness, indeed! Patty felt like saying, “Do you know I am Patricia Fairfield, and it is I who confer an honour when I accept an invitation?”

It wasn’t exactly pride, but Patty had been brought up in an atmosphere of somewhat old-fashioned chivalry, and it jarred on her sense of the fitness of things to have Philip’s invitation to her referred to as a “kindness.”

So she decided to take a stand herself.

“I thank you for your *kindness*, Mr. Van Reypen,” she said, with just the slightest emphasis on *kindness*, “but I cannot accept it. I quite agree with Mrs. Van Reypen that I need rest.”

The speech was absurd on the face of it, for Patty’s rosy,

dimpled cheeks and sparkling eyes betokened no weariness or lassitude.

But Mrs. Van Reypen accepted this evidence of the girl's obedience to her wishes, and said:

"You are right, Miss Fairfield, and my nephew will excuse you from his party."

Philip sent her a reproachful glance, and Patty dropped her eyes again, wishing dinner was over.

At last the ladies left the table, and Philip rose and held aside the portière while his aunt passed through.

As Patty followed, he detained her a moment, and whispered: "It is cruel of you to punish me for my aunt's unkindness."

"I can't help it," said Patty, and as her troubled eyes met his angry ones they both smiled, and peace was restored.

"After Friday," whispered Patty, as she went through the doorway.

"After Friday," he repeated, puzzled by her words, but reassured by her smiles.

And then Mrs. Van Reypen sent Patty to her room for the night, and when Philip came to the drawing-room he found he was destined to be entertained by his aunt alone.

"Of course," said Patty, to her own reflection in her mirror, "a companion can't expect to sit with 'the quality,' but it does seem a shame to dress up pretty like this and then be sent to bed at nine o'clock! Never mind, only three evenings more in this house, and then victory for Patty Fairfield!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

Patty adhered to her resolution not to go to the theatre on Monday night, but when she saw Mrs. Van Reypen and Philip start off she secretly regretted her decision.

She loved fun and gaiety, and it suddenly seemed to her that she had been foolishly sensitive about Mrs. Van Reypen's attitude toward her.

However, it couldn't be helped now, so she prepared to spend the evening reading in the library.

She would have liked to hold a long telephone conversation with Nan and her father, but she thought she had better not, for there were so many house servants on duty that a maid or a footman would be likely to overhear her.

She played the piano and sang a little, then she wandered about the large and lonely rooms. Patty was a sociable creature, and had never before spent an evening entirely alone, unless when engaged in some important and engrossing work.

But after a while the telephone rang, and when the parlour-maid told her the call was for her she flew to the instrument with glad anticipation.

"Hello!" she cried, and "Hello!" returned a familiar voice.

"Oh, Ken! of all people. How *did* you know I was here?"

“Oh, I found it out! How are you? May I come to see you?”

“No, indeed! I’m a companion. I’m not expected to have callers. But I’m glad to talk to you this way. I’m alone in the house, except for the servants.”

“Alone! Then let me come up for a few minutes, and chat.”

“No; Mrs. Van Reypen wouldn’t like it, I’m sure. But, oh, Ken, I’m making good this time! On Thursday the week will be up, and I’ll get my fifteen dollars. Isn’t that gay?”

“You’re a plucky girl, Patty, and I congratulate you. Is it very horrid?”

“No, it isn’t exactly horrid, but I’m fearfully homesick. But it’s only three more days now, and won’t I be glad to get home!”

“And we’ll be glad to have you. The goldfish are dull and moping, and we all want our Patty back again.”

“That’s nice of you. But, Ken, how did you know where to find me? I made Nan and father promise not to tell.”

“Well, I may as well confess: I basely worried it out of Miller. I asked him where he took you to last Thursday afternoon.”

“Oh! I meant to tell him not to tell, but I forgot it. Well, it doesn’t matter much, as you chanced to strike a time when I’m alone. But don’t call me up again. I’m not supposed to have any social acquaintances.”

“Good for you, Patty! If you play the game, play it well. I expect you’re a prim, demure companion as ever was.”

“Of course I am. And if the lady didn’t have such a fishy nephew I’d get along beautifully.”

“Oho! A nephew, eh? And he’s smitten with your charms, as they always are in novels.”

“Yes,” said Patty, in a simpering tone.

“Oh, yes! I can’t see you, but I know you have your finger in your mouth and your eyes shyly cast down.”

“You’re *so* clever!” murmured Patty, giggling. “But now you may go, Ken, for I don’t want to talk to you any more. Come round Thursday night, can’t you, and welcome me home?”

“Pooh, you’re late with your invitation. Mrs. Fairfield has already invited me to dinner that very evening.”

“Good! Well, good-by for now. I have reasons for wishing to discontinue this conversation.”

“And I have reasons for wishing to keep on. If you’re tired talking, sing to me.”

“‘Thou art so near and yet so far,’” hummed Patty, in her clear, sweet voice.

“No, don’t sing. Central will think you’re a concert. Well, good-by till Thursday.”

“Good-by,” said Patty, and hung up the receiver.

But she felt much more cheerful at having talked with Kenneth, and the coming days seemed easier to bear.

They proved, however, to be quite hard enough.

The very next day, when Patty went down to the breakfast room, determined to do her best to please Mrs. Van Reypen, she found that lady suffering from an attack of neuralgia.

Though not a serious one, it seriously affected her temper, and

she was cross and irritable to a degree that Patty had never seen equalled.

She snapped at the servants; she was short of speech to Patty; she found fault with everything, from the coffee to the cat.

After breakfast they went to the sunny, pleasant morning room, and Patty made up her mind to a hard day.

Then she had an inspiration. She remembered how susceptible Mrs. Van Reypen was to flattery, and she determined to see if large doses of it wouldn't cure her ill temper.

"How lovely your hair is," said Patty, apropos of nothing. "I do so admire white hair, and yours is so abundant and of such fine texture."

As she had hoped, Mrs. Van Reypen smiled in a pleased way.

"Ah, Miss Fairfield, you should have seen it when I was a girl. It was phenomenal. But of late years it has come out sadly."

"You still have quantities," said Patty, and very truthfully, too, "and its silvery whiteness is so becoming to your complexion."

"Do you think so?" said Mrs. Van Reypen, smiling most amiably. "I think it's much wiser not to colour one's hair, for now-a-days so many people turn gray quite young."

"Yes, they do. I've several friends with gray hair who are very young women indeed."

"Yes," agreed the other, comfortably, "white hair no longer indicates that a woman is advanced in years. You speak very sensibly, Miss Fairfield."

Patty smiled to herself at the success of her little ruse, "And,

after all," she thought, "I'm telling her only the truth. Her hair is lovely, and she may as well know I appreciate it."

"Have you ever tried," she went on, "wearing it in a coronet braid?"

"No; I've thought I should like to, but I've worn puffs so long I don't know how to change."

"Let me do it for you," said Patty. "I'm sure I could dress it to please you. At any rate, it would do no harm to try."

So up they went to Mrs. Van Reypen's dressing room, and Patty spent most of the morning trying and discussing different modes of hair-dressing.

Mrs. Van Reypen's maid was present, and she admired Patty's cleverness and deftness at the work.

"You have a touch," declared Mrs. Van Reypen, as she surveyed herself by the aid of a hand-mirror. "You're positively Frenchy in your touch. Where did you learn it? Have you ever been a lady's-maid?"

"No," said Patty, suppressing her smiles, "I never have. But I've spent a winter in Paris, and I picked up some French notions, I suppose."

"You certainly did. You are clever with your fingers, I can see that. Can you trim hats?"

"Yes, I can," said Patty, smiling to herself at the recollection of her experiences with Mme. Villard.

"Humph! You seem pretty sure of yourself. I wish you'd trim one for me, then; but I don't want you to spoil the materials."

"I'll do my best," said Patty, meekly, and Mrs. Van Reypen instructed her maid to bring out some boxes.

"This," she said, taking up a finished hat, "is one my milliner has just sent home, and I think it a fright. Now here's a last year's hat, but the plumes are lovely. If you could untrim this first one, and transfer these plumes, and then add these roses—what do you think?"

Secretly Patty thought the new hat was lovely just as it was, but her plan that morning was to humour the testy old lady and, if possible, make her forget her neuralgic pains.

So she took the hats, and sat down to rip and retrim them.

Meantime, Mrs. Van Reypen instructed her maid to practise dressing her hair in the fashion Patty had done it.

But the maid was not very deft in the art, and soon Patty heard Mrs. Van Reypen shrilly exclaiming:

"Stupid! Not that way! You have neither taste nor brains! Place the braid higher. No, not so high as that! Oh, you *are* an idiot!"

Deeming it best not to interfere, Patty went on with her work.

Also, Mrs. Van Reypen went on with her scolding, which so upset the long-suffering maid that she fell to weeping and thereby roused her mistress to still greater ire.

"Crying, are you!" she exclaimed. "If you had such a painful neck and shoulder as I have you well might cry. But to cry about nothing! Bah! Leave me, and do not return until you can be pleasant. Miss Fairfield, will you please finish putting up my

hair?”

Patty laid down her work, and did as she was requested. She was sorry for the maid and incensed at Mrs. Van Reypen's injustice and disagreeableness, but she felt intuitively that it was the best plan to be, herself, kind and affable.

“Oh, yes, I'll do it!” she said, pleasantly. “Your hat is almost finished, and we can try it on with your hair done this way. I'm sure the effect will be charming.”

Mollified at this, Mrs. Van Reypen smiled benignly on her companion, and also smiled admiringly at her own mirrored reflection.

“Now,” said Patty, as, a little later, she brought the completed hat for inspection, “I will try this on and see how it looks.”

Mrs. Van Reypen seated herself again in front of her dressing mirror, and with gestures worthy of Madame Villard herself, Patty placed the hat on her head.

“It's most becoming,” began Patty, when Mrs. Van Reypen interrupted her.

“Becoming?” she cried. “It is dreadful! It is *fearful*. It makes me look like an old woman!”

With an angry jerk she snatched the offending hat from her head and threw it across the room.

Patty was about to give a horrified exclamation when the funny side of it struck her, and she burst into laughter. Mrs. Van Reypen was really an elderly lady, and her angry surprise at being made to look like one seemed very funny to Patty.

But in a moment she understood the case.

She had thought the hat in question of too youthful a type for Mrs. Van Reypen, and in retrimming it had made it more subdued and of a quieter, more elderly fashion.

But she now realised that she had been expected to make it of even gayer effect than it had shown at first. This was an easy matter, and picking up the hat she straightened it out, and hastily catching up a bunch of pink roses and a glittering buckle, she said:

“Oh, it isn’t finished yet; these other trimmings I want to put in place while the hat is on your head.”

“Oh,” said Mrs. Van Reypen, only half-convinced.

But she sat down again, and Patty replaced the hat, and then adjusted the roses and the buckle, giving the whole a dainty, pretty effect, which though over-youthful, perhaps, was really very becoming to the fine-looking old lady.

“Charming!” she exclaimed, letting her recent display of bad temper go without apology. “I felt sure you could do it. This afternoon we will go out to the shops and buy some materials, and you shall make me another hat.”

They did so, and, though it meant an afternoon of rather strenuous shopping, Patty didn’t mind it much, for Mrs. Van Reypen couldn’t fly into a rage in the presence of the salespeople.

And so the days dragged by. Patty had hard work to keep her own temper when her employer was unreasonably cross and snappish, but she stuck to her plan of flattering her, and it worked

well more often than not.

Nor was she insincere. There were so many admirable qualities and traits of Mrs. Van Reypen that she really admired, it was easy enough to tell her so, and invariably the lady was pleased.

But she often broke out into foolish, unjustifiable rages, and then Patty had to wait meekly until they passed over.

But when, at last, Wednesday evening had gone by, and she went to her room, knowing it was the last night she should spend under that roof, she was glad indeed.

“Another week of this would give me nervous prostration!” she said to herself. “But to-morrow my week is up, and that means Success! I have really and truly succeeded in earning my own living for a week, and I’m glad and proud of it. I knew I should succeed, but I confess I didn’t think I’d score so many failures first. But perhaps that makes my success all the sweeter. Anyway, I’m jolly glad I’m going home to-morrow. Wow! but I’m homesick.”

Then she tumbled into bed, and soon forgot her homesickness in a sound, dreamless sleep.

Patty had been uncertain whether to tell Mrs. Van Reypen the true story of her week of companionship or not; but on Thursday morning she decided she would do so.

And, as it chanced, after breakfast Mrs. Van Reypen herself opened the way for Patty’s confidences.

“Miss Fairfield,” she said, as they sat down in the library, “you

know our trial week is up to-day.”

“Yes, Mrs. Van Reypen, and you remember that either of us has the privilege of terminating our engagement to-day.”

“I do remember, and, though I fear you will be greatly disappointed, I must tell you that I have decided that I cannot keep you as my companion.”

As Patty afterward told Nan, she was “struck all of a heap.”

She had been wondering how she should persuade Mrs. Van Reypen to let her go, and now the lady was voluntarily dismissing her! It was so sudden and so unexpected that Patty showed her surprise by her look of blank amazement.

“I knew you’d feel dreadful about it,” went on Mrs. Van Reypen, with real regret in her tone, “but I cannot help it. You are not, by nature, fitted for the position. You are—I don’t exactly know how to express it, but you are not of a subservient disposition.”

“No,” said Patty, “I’m not. But I have tried to do as you wanted me to.”

“Yes, I could see that. But you are too high-strung to be successful in a position of this kind. You should be more deferential in spirit as well as in manner. Do I make myself clear?”

“You do, Mrs. Van Reypen,” said Patty, smiling; “so clear that I am going to tell you the truth about this whole business. I’m not really obliged to earn my own living. I have a happy home and loving parents. My father, though not a millionaire, is wealthy

and generous enough to supply all my wants, and the reason I took this position with you is a special and peculiar one, which I will tell you about if you care to hear.”

“You sly puss!” cried Mrs. Van Reypen, with a smile that indicated relief rather than dismay at Patty’s revelation. “Then you’ve been only masquerading as a companion?”

“Yes,” said Patty, smiling back at her, “that’s about the size of it.”

CHAPTER XVIII

HOME AGAIN

After Patty had told Mrs. Van Reypen the whole story of her efforts to earn her living for a week, and why she had undertaken such a thing, she found herself occupying a changed place in that lady's regard.

"It was fine of you, perfectly fine!" Mrs. Van Reypen declared, "to sacrifice yourself, your tastes, and your time for a noble end like that."

"Don't praise me more than I deserve," said Patty, smiling. "I did begin the game with a charitable motive, but I thought it was going to be easy. When I found it difficult I fear I kept on rather from stubbornness than anything else."

"I don't call it stubbornness, Miss Fairfield; I call it commendable perseverance, and I'm glad you've told me your story. Of course, I wouldn't have wished you to tell me at first, for had I known it I wouldn't have taken you. But you have honestly tried to do your work well, and you succeeded as well as you could. But, as I told you, you are not made for that sort of thing. Your disposition is not that of a subordinate, and I am glad you do not really have to be one. You have earned your salary this week, however, and I gladly pay you the fifteen dollars we agreed upon."

Mrs. Van Reypen handed Patty the money, and as the girl took it she said, earnestly: "As you may well believe, Mrs. Van Reypen, this money means more to me than any I have ever before received in my life. It is the first I have ever earned by my own exertions, and, unless I meet with reverses of fortune, it will probably be the last. But, more than that, it proves my success in the somewhat doubtful enterprise I undertook and it assures a chance, at least, of another girl's success in life."

"I am greatly interested in your young art student," went on Mrs. Van Reypen. "Can you not bring her to see me when she comes, and perhaps I may be of use to her in some friendly way?"

"How good you are!" exclaimed Patty.

She was surprised at the complete change of demeanour in Mrs. Van Reypen, though of course she realised it was due to the fact that she was now looked upon as a social equal and not a dependent.

"It is all so uncertain yet," Patty went on. "I don't know exactly how we are to persuade the girl to come North at all. She is of a proud and sensitive nature that would reject anything like charity."

"Well, you will doubtless arrange the matter somehow, and when you do, remember that I shall be glad to help in any way I can."

"Thank you very much," said Patty. "It may be that you can indeed help us. And now, Mrs. Van Reypen, mayn't I read to you, or something? You know my week isn't up until this afternoon."

“Not literally, perhaps; but for the few hours that are left of your stay with me I shall look upon you as a guest, not a ‘companion.’ And as I always like to entertain my guests pleasantly, I shall, if you agree, telephone for Philip to come to luncheon with us.”

The old lady’s eyes twinkled at the idea of Philip’s surprise at the changed conditions, and Patty smiled, too, as she expressed her assent.

When Philip arrived he was, of course, amazed at his aunt’s demeanour. She not only seemed to approve of Miss Fairfield, but treated her as an honoured guest and seemed more than willing that Philip should chat socially with her. Soon she explained to him the cause of her sudden change of attitude.

Philip laughed heartily. “I suspected something of the sort,” he said. “Miss Fairfield didn’t strike me as being of the ‘thankful and willin’ to please’ variety. She tried her best, but her deference was forced and her meekness assumed.”

“But she did it well,” said Mrs. Van Reypen.

“Oh, yes; very well. Still I like her better in her natural rôle of society lady.”

“Oh, not that!” protested Patty. “I’m not really a society lady. In fact, I’m not ‘out’ yet. I’m just a New York girl.”

“Were you born here?” asked Mrs. Van Reypen.

“No,” said Patty, laughing; “I was born South, and I’ve only lived North about five years. One of those I’ve spent abroad, and one or two outside of New York. So when I say I’m a New York

girl I only mean that I live here now.”

“Mayn’t I come to see you?” asked Philip. “Where do you live?”

“I live on Seventy-second Street,” said Patty, “and you may come to tea some Wednesday if you like. That’s my mother’s ‘day,’ and I often receive with her.”

“I see you’re well brought up,” said Mrs. Van Reypen, nodding her head approvingly. “I’m a bit surprised though that your mother allowed you to undertake this escapade.”

“Well, you see, she’s my stepmother—she’s only six years older than I am. So she hasn’t much jurisdiction over me; and as for my father—well, really, I ran away!”

The luncheon was a merry feast, for Mrs. Van Reypen made a gala affair of it, and, though there were but the three at table, there was extra elaboration of viands and decorations.

Philip Van Reypen was in his gayest humour, and his aunt was beaming and affable.

So they were really sorry when it was time for Patty to say good-bye.

At four o’clock Miller came for her, and when Patty saw the familiar motor-car her homesickness came back like a big wave, and with farewells, speedy though cordial, she gladly let Philip hand her into the limousine.

“Home, Miller!” she said, with a glad ring in her voice, and then, with a final bow and smile to the Van Reypens, she started off.

“Discharged!” she thought, smiling to herself. “Didn’t give satisfaction! Too high-falutin to be a companion! Huh, Patty Fairfield, I don’t think you’re much of a success!”

She was talking to the reflection of herself in the small mirror opposite her face, but the happy and smiling countenance she saw there didn’t tally with her remarks. “Oh, well,” she thought, “I only agreed to earn my living for a week, and I’ve done it—I’ve done it!”

She opened her purse to make sure the precious fifteen dollars was still there, and she looked at it proudly. She had more money than that in another part of her purse, but no bills could ever look so valuable as the ten and five Mrs. Van Reypen had paid her.

At last she reached home, and as she ran up the steps the door flew open, and she saw Nan and her father, with smiling faces, awaiting her.

“Oh, people!” she cried. “Oh, you *dear* people!”

She flung herself indiscriminately into their open arms, embracing both at once.

Then she produced her precious bills, and, waving them aloft, cried:

“I’ve succeeded! I’ve really succeeded! Behold the proofs of Patty’s success!”

“Good for you, girlie!” cried her father. “You have succeeded, indeed! But don’t you ever dare cut up such a prank again!”

“No, don’t!” implored Nan. “I’ve had the most awful time the whole week! Every night Fred vowed he was going to bring you

home, and I had to beg him not to. I wanted you to win,—and I felt sure you would this time,—but you owe it to me. For if I hadn't worked so hard to prevent it your father would have gone after you long ago—”

“Good for you, Nan!” cried Patty. “You've been a trump! You've helped me through every time, in all my failures and in my one success. Oh, I've so much to tell you of my experiences! They were awfully funny.”

“They'll keep till later,” said Nan. “You must run and dress now; Ken and the Farringtons are coming to dinner to help us celebrate your success.”

So Patty went dancing away to her own room, singing gaily in her delight at being once more at home.

“Oh, you booful room!” she cried, aloud, as she reached her own door. “All full of pretty *homey* things, and fresh flowers, and my own dear books and pictures, and—and everything!”

She threw herself on the couch and kissed the very sofa cushions in her joy at seeing them again.

Then she made her toilette, and put on one of her prettiest and most becoming frocks.

“Oh, daddy, dear,” she cried, meeting him in the hall on her way down, “it has done me lots of good to be homeless for a week! I appreciate my own dear home so much more.”

“But you were away from it for a year.”

“Oh, that's different! Travelling or visiting is one thing, but working for your living is quite another! Oh, *don't* lose all your

fortune, will you, father? I don't want to have to go out into the cold world and earn my own support."

"Then it isn't as easy as you thought it was?"

"Oh, dear no! It isn't easy at all! It's dreadful! Every way I tried was worse than every other. But I succeeded, didn't I?"

"Yes, you did. You fulfilled your part of the contract, and when the time comes I'm ready to fulfil mine."

"We'll have to see Mr. Hepworth about that," replied Patty.

Then Kenneth and the two Farringtons came, and the wonderful fifteen dollars had to be shown to them, and they had to be told all about Patty's harrowing experiences.

"I'll never again express an opinion on matters I don't know anything about," declared Patty. "Just think! I only said I thought it would be *easy* to earn fifteen dollars a week, and look what I've been through in consequence! But I've won at last!"

"Plucky Patty!" said Kenneth, appreciatively. "I knew you'd win if it took all summer!"

"But it wasn't a complete triumph," confessed Patty, "for she wouldn't have kept me another week. She practically discharged me to-day."

"Fired?" cried Roger, in glee. "Fired from your last place! Wanted, a situation! Oh, Patty, you do beat all!"

Then Patty told them of her own surprise when Mrs. Van Reypen told her she would not do as a permanent companion, and they all laughed heartily at the funny description she gave of the scene.

“Never mind,” said her father, “you fulfilled the conditions. A week was the stipulated time, and nothing was said about your outlook for a second week.”

The next night Mr. Hepworth came, and the whole story was told over again to him. He didn't take it so lightly as the young people had done, but looked at Patty sympathetically, and said:

“Poor little girl, you did have a hard time, didn't you?”

“Yes, I did,” replied Patty, “though nobody else seems to realise that.”

The kindness in Mr. Hepworth's glance seemed to bring back to her all those long, lonely, weary hours, and she felt grateful that one, at least, understood what she had suffered.

“It was worth spending that awful week to achieve your purpose,” he went on, “but I well know how hard it was for a home-loving girl like you. And I fancy it was none too easy to find yourself at the beck and call of another woman.”

“No, it wasn't,” said Patty, surprised at his insight. “How did you know that?”

“Because you are an independent young person, and accustomed to ordering your own times and seasons. So I'm sure to be obedient to another's orders was somewhat galling.”

“It was *so!*” and Patty's emphatic nod of her head proved to Mr. Hepworth that he had struck a true chord.

“And now,” said Mr. Fairfield, “when can I make my offer good? How can we induce the rising young artist to come to the metropolis to seek fame and fortune?”

"It will be difficult," said Mr. Hepworth, "as she is not only proud and sensitive, but very shy. I think if Mrs. Fairfield would write one of her kind and tactful letters that Miss Farley would be persuaded by it."

"Why can't I write a kind and tactful letter?" asked Patty. "It's my picnic."

"You couldn't write a tactful letter to save your life," said Mr. Hepworth, looking at her with a grave smile.

Patty returned his look, and she wondered to herself why she wasn't angry with him for making such a speech.

But, as she well knew, when Mr. Hepworth made a seemingly rude speech it wasn't really rude, but it was usually true.

She knew herself she couldn't write such a letter as this occasion required, and she knew that Nan could. So she smiled meekly at Mr. Hepworth, and said:

"No, I couldn't. But Nan can be tactful to beat the band!"

"Oh, Patty!" said her father. "Did you talk like that to Mrs. Van Reypen? No wonder she discharged you!"

"No, I didn't, daddy; truly I didn't. I never used a word of slang that whole week, except one day when I talked to Nan over the telephone."

"Soon you'll be old enough to begin to think it's time to stop using it at all," observed Mr. Hepworth, and again Patty took his mild reproof in good part.

"Well, I'll write," said Nan. "Shall I ask Miss Farley to come to visit us? Won't she think that rather queer?"

“Don’t put it just that way,” advised Mr. Hepworth. “Say that you, as a friend of mine, are interested in her career. And say that if she will come to New York for a week and stay with you, you think you can help her make arrangements for a course in the Art School. Your own tact will dress up the idea so as to make it palatable to her pride.”

“Won’t it be fun?” exclaimed Patty. “It will be almost like adopting a sister. What is she like, Mr. Hepworth? Like me?”

“She is about as unlike you as it is possible for a girl to be. She is very slender, dark, and timid, with the air of a frightened animal.”

“I’ll scare her to death,” declared Patty, with conviction. “I’m sure I shall! I don’t mean on purpose, but I’m so—so *sudden*, you know.”

“Yes, you are,” agreed Mr. Hepworth, as he joined in the general laughter. “But that ‘suddenness’ of yours is a quality that I wish Miss Farley possessed. It is really a sort of brave impulse and quick determination that makes you dash into danger or enterprise of any kind.”

“And win!” added Patty saucily.

“Yes, and win—after a time.”

“Oh well,” she replied, tossing her head, “Mr. Bruce’s spider made seven attempts before he succeeded. So I think my record’s pretty fair.”

“I think so, too,” said Mr. Hepworth, heartily. “And I congratulate you on your plucky perseverance and your

indomitable will. You put up a brave fight, and you won. I know how you suffered under that petty tyranny, and your success in such circumstances was a triumph!”

“Thank you,” said Patty, greatly pleased at this sincere praise from one whom she so greatly respected. “It would have been harder still if I hadn’t had a good sense of humour. Lots of times when I wanted to cry I laughed instead.”

“Hurrah for you, Patty girl!” cried her father. “I’d rather you’d have a good sense of humour than a talent for spatter-work!”

“Oh, you back number!” exclaimed Patty. “They don’t do spatter-work now, daddy.”

“Well, china painting—or whatever the present fad is.”

But Mr. Hepworth seemed not to place so high a value on a sense of humour, for he said, gravely:

“I congratulate you on your steadfastness of purpose, which is one of the finest traits of your character.”

“Thank you,” said Patty, with dancing eyes. “You give it a nice name. But it is a family trait with us Fairfields, and has usually been called ‘stubbornness.’”

“Well,” supplemented her father, “I’m sure that’s just as good a name.”

CHAPTER XIX

CHRISTINE COMES

With her usual tact and cleverness, Nan managed the whole matter successfully. She wrote to the friends of Mr. Hepworth in the South who were interested in Miss Farley, and they persuaded the girl to go North for a week and see if she could see her way clear to staying there.

As it turned out, Miss Farley had some acquaintances in New York, and when their invitation was added to that of Mrs. Fairfield, she decided to make the trip.

Patty and Nan made ready for her with great care and kindness. A guest room was specially prepared for her use, and Patty adorned it with some of her own pet pictures, a few good casts, and certain bits of bric-à-brac that she thought would appeal to an "art student."

"If Mr. Hepworth hadn't said the girl had real talent I'd be hopeless of the whole thing," said Nan, "for I do think the most futile sort of young woman is the one who dabbles in Art, with a big A."

"Oh, Christine Farley isn't that sort," declared Patty. "I don't believe she wears her hair tumbling down and a Byron collar with a big, black ribbon bow at her throat. I used to see that sort copying in the art galleries in Paris, and they *are* hopeless. But

I imagine Miss Farley is a tidy little thing and her genius is too real for those near-art effects.”

“Well, then, I’ll put this photograph of the Hermes in here in place of this fiddle-de-dee Art Calendar. She’ll like it better.”

“Of course she will. And I’m going to put a pretty kimono and slippers in the wardrobe. Probably she won’t have pretty ones, and I know she’ll love ’em.”

“If you owned a white elephant, Patty, you’d get a kimono for it, wouldn’t you?”

“Course I would. I love kimonos—pretty ones. And besides, it would fit an elephant better than a Directoire gown would.”

“Patty! What a goose you are! There, now the room looks lovely! The flowers are just right—not too many and just in the right places.”

“Yes,” agreed Patty; “if she doesn’t like this room I wash my hands of her. But she will.”

And she did. When the small, shy Southern girl arrived that afternoon, and Patty herself showed her up to her room, she seemed to respond at once to the warm cosiness of the place.

“It’s just such a room as I’ve often imagined, but I’ve never seen,” she said, smiling round upon the dainty, attractive appointments.

“You dear!” cried Patty, throwing her arms round her guest and kissing her.

When she had first met Christine downstairs she was embarrassed herself at the Southern girl’s painful shyness.

When Miss Farley had tried to speak words of greeting a lump came into her throat and she couldn't speak at all.

To put her more at her ease Patty had led her at once upstairs, and now the presence of only warm-hearted Patty and the view of the welcoming room made her forget her embarrassment and seem more like her natural self.

"I cannot thank you," she began. "I am a bit bewildered by it all."

"Of course you are," said Patty, cheerily. "Don't bother about thanks. And don't feel shy. Let's pretend we've known each other for years—long enough to use first names. May I take your hat off, Christine?"

Tears sprang to Christine Farley's eyes at this whole-souled welcome, and she said:

"You make me ashamed of my stupid shyness. Really I'll try to overcome it—Patty."

And soon the two girls were chatting cosily and veritably as if they had been acquainted a long time.

Presently Nan came in. "If you prefer, Miss Farley," she said, "you needn't come down to dinner to-night. I'll have a tray sent up here. I know you're tired with your journey."

"No, thank you, Mrs. Fairfield; I'm not tired—and I think I'll go down."

The girl would have greatly preferred to accept the offer of dining in her own room, but she felt it her duty to conquer the absurd timidity which made her dread facing strangers at dinner.

"I'll be glad if you will," said Nan, simply. "Mr. Fairfield will like to welcome you, and Mr. Hepworth will be the only other guest. You are not afraid of him?"

"Oh, no," said Christine, her face lighting up at thought of her kind friend. "He has been so good to me. His criticisms of my work helped me more than any of my teachers'."

"Yes, he is an able artist and a man of true kindness and worth," agreed Nan. "Very well, Miss Farley, we dine at seven."

"Now, Nan," began Patty, smiling, "that's the wrong tone. We're going to make this girlie feel homelike and comfortable and omit all formality. We're going to call her by her first name, and we're going to treat her as one of ourselves. Now you just revise that little speech of 'We dine at seven, Miss Farley.'"

"All right," said Nan, quickly catching Patty's idea. "I'm glad to revise it. How's this? Dinner's at seven, Christine, but you hop into your clothes and come on down earlier."

"That's a lot better," said Patty, approvingly patting her stepmother's shoulder, while Christine Farley, who was all unaccustomed to this sort of raillery, looked on in admiration.

"You see," she said, "I've only very plain clothes. I'm not at all familiar with the ways of society, or even of well-to-do people."

"Oh, pooh!" said Patty, emphatically, if not very elegantly. "Don't you bother about that in this house. Trot out your frocks and I'll tell you what to put on."

After some consideration she selected a frock of that peculiar shade known as "ashes of roses." It was of soft merino and made

very simply, with long, straight lines.

“Do you like that?” said Christine, looking pleased. “That’s my newest one, and I designed it myself. See, I wear this with it.”

She took from her box a dull silver girdle and chatelaine of antique, carved silver, and a comb for her hair of similar style.

“Lovely!” cried Patty. “Oh, you’re an artist, all right! Dress your hair low—in a soft coil; but of course you know how to do that. I’ll send Louise to hook you up, and I’ll come back for you when I’m dressed. Good-by for now.”

Waving her hand gaily, laughing Patty ran away to her own room, and Christine sank down in a big chair to collect her senses.

It was all so new and strange to her. Brought up in the plainest circumstances, the warmth and light and fragrance of this home seemed to her like fairyland.

And Nan and Patty, in their gay moods and their happy self-assuredness, seemed as if of a different race of beings from herself.

“But I’ll learn it,” she thought, with a determination which she had rarely felt and scarce knew she possessed. Her nature was one that needed a spur or help from another, and then she was ready to do her part, too.

But she could not take the initiative. And now, realising the disinterested kindness of these good people, her sense of gratitude made her resolve to meet their kindness with appreciation.

“Yes,” she said to herself, as she deftly dressed her hair in front of the mirror, “I’ll conquer this silly timidity if it kills me! I’ll take Patty Fairfield for a model, and I’ll acquire that very same ease and grace that she has.”

Christine was imitative by nature, and it seemed to her now that she could never feel stupidly embarrassed again.

But after Patty came to take her downstairs, and as they neared the drawing-room door, the foolish shyness all returned, and she was white and trembling as she crossed the hall.

“Brace up,” whispered Patty, understanding, “you’re looking lovely, Christine. Now be gay and chattery.”

“Chattery,” indeed! Her tongue seemed paralysed, her very neck felt strained and stiff, and she stumbled over the rug in her effort to stop trembling. In her own room, alone with Patty and Nan, she had overcome this, but now, in the brilliantly lighted drawing-room and the presence of other people, the terrible timidity returned, and Christine made a most unsuccessful entrance.

But Mr. Fairfield ignored the girl’s embarrassment, and said, cordially but quietly: “How do you do, Miss Farley? I am very glad to welcome you here.”

His kind handclasp reassured her even more than his pleasant words, and then Mr. Hepworth greeted her.

“You did well to come,” he said. “I am glad to see you in New York at last.”

But Christine couldn’t recover herself, and so, as the kindest

thing to do, the rest rather let her alone and chatted on other subjects.

Gradually she grew less agitated, and as their merry chit-chat waxed gay and frivolous, her determination returned, that she, too, would acquire this accomplishment.

Then dinner was announced, and, though outwardly calm, the Southern girl was inwardly in great trepidation lest she commit some ignorant error in etiquette.

But she was of gentle birth and breeding, and innately refined, so she knew intuitively regarding all points, save perhaps some modern trifles of conventional usage.

Nan, who was watching her, though unobserved, led the conversation around to subjects in which Christine might be likely to be interested, and was rewarded at last by seeing the girl's face light up with an enjoyment unmarred by self-consciousness.

Gradually she was induced to take some part in their talk, and once she told an anecdote of her own experience without seeming aware of her unusual surroundings.

"She'll do," thought Patty. "It isn't ignorance or inexperience that's the greatest trouble; it's just ingrowing shyness, and she's got to get over it; I'll see that she does, too!"

Mr. Hepworth read Patty's unspoken thoughts in her eyes and nodded approval.

Patty nodded back with a dimpling smile, and Christine, seeing it, vowed afresh to gain the ability to do that sort of thing

herself.

For all Southern girls have a touch of the coquette in their natures, but poor Christine's was nearly choked out by the weeds of timidity and self-consciousness.

After dinner it was easier. They went to the cosy library, and the atmosphere seemed more informal.

Mr. Hepworth brought up the subject of Miss Farley's work, and she was persuaded to fetch some sketches to show them.

Though not able to appreciate the fine points of promise as Mr. Hepworth did, they were all greatly pleased with them, and Mr. Fairfield declared them wonderful.

In her own field Christine was fearless and quite sure of herself.

She talked intelligently about pictures, and many pleasant plans were made for taking her to see several collections then on exhibition, as well as to the Metropolitan and other art galleries.

Nan and Patty exchanged pleased glances as Christine talked eagerly, and with shining eyes and pink cheeks, about her own aims and ambitions.

Mr. Hepworth was responsive, and advised her on some minor points, but the great question of her art education in New York was not touched upon that first evening.

Christine had grown almost gay in her chatter, when Kenneth was announced. Like a sensitive plant at a human touch, she lost all her poise, her face turned white, and her lips quivered as she braced herself for the ordeal of meeting a stranger.

“Oh!” thought Patty, almost disgusted at this foolishness, “she is the limit!”

But Nan appreciated more truly the real state of the case, and knew that Christine had borne just about all she could, and that owing to physical fatigue and mental strain her nerves were just about ready to give way.

“How do you do, Kenneth?” said Nan, airily. “Too bad you didn’t come earlier. I am just taking our little guest away from this admiring crowd, who are tiring her all out with their admiration. She may just say ‘howdy’ to you, and then I’m going to carry her off. Miss Farley, this is our Kenneth—Mr. Harper.”

Stimulated by Nan’s support and by the sudden chance for release, Christine managed to acknowledge the introduction prettily enough, and then gladly let Nan take her upstairs to bed.

“I’m sorry I’m so horrid,” said the girl, as Nan helped her take off her gown.

“Nonsense!” replied Nan, cheerily. “You weren’t horrid a bit. You looked lovely and behaved like a little lady. Your nerves are overwrought, and I don’t wonder. Just tumble into bed, dearie, and forget everything in all the world, except that you’re among warm friends.”

Nan had most comforting ways, and soon Christine forgot her troubles in a happy sleep.

Meantime, Kenneth was admiring her sketches. “Whew!” he said, “she’s a genius all right. But such a shy little mouse never can succeed as an artist.”

“Yes, she will!” declared Patty. “Her shyness will wear off in New York. I’m going to eradicate it from her make-up somehow, and then we’re going to make a famous artist of her.”

“You can be a great help to her, Patty,” said Mr. Hepworth. “If any one makes Christine think she can do things, she can do them.”

“Yes, I see that already,” agreed Patty, “and I’m going to be the one to make her think she can do them.”

“Huh!” teased Kenneth. “You think you can make anybody think they think anything!”

“Sure!” said Patty, complacently.

“Well, don’t teach Miss Farley to talk slang,” said Mr. Fairfield, laughing, “for it would be too incongruous with that Madonna face of hers.”

“She is like a Madonna, isn’t she?” said Patty, thoughtfully. “I’ve been trying to think what her face reminded me of.”

“Yes, she is,” said Mr. Hepworth, “and as I feel pretty sure you can’t teach her to use slang, why don’t you take this occasion to discontinue the use of it yourself?”

“Can’t do it,” returned Patty. “There are times in my mad career when nothing expresses what I want to say so well as a mild bit of slang. I never say anything very dreadful.”

“Of course you don’t,” declared Kenneth, who loved to take Patty’s part against Mr. Hepworth. “Why, you wouldn’t be ‘Our Patty’ if you used only dictionary English. All the slang Miss Farley gets from you will do her good rather than harm. She

needs it in her make-up.”

“I agree with the spirit of that, if not the letter,” said Mr. Hepworth, kindly; and Patty said:

“Yes, she needs to be jollied; and, you take it from me, she’s going to get jollied!”

CHAPTER XX

A SATISFACTORY CONCLUSION

As Nan had surmised, Christine was worn out by her day of fatigue and excitement, and the next morning found her possessed of better mental poise and a more placid manner.

And as more days went by the girl improved greatly in demeanour and bearing, and lost, to a great degree, her look of startled fear and painful self-consciousness. Of course this was not accomplished completely, or all at once, but helped by the kind gentleness of Nan and affectionate chaffing of Patty, Christine grew more accustomed to the pleasant social atmosphere into which she had been so suddenly thrown.

They visited picture galleries and went to the shops, and went driving and motoring, and though Christine could not be persuaded to go to afternoon teas, or to formal luncheons, yet she enjoyed the pleasures she had and grew every day more at her ease in society.

Her own determination helped her greatly. She purposed to yet become as unaffected and un-self-conscious as Patty, and, though she knew she could never acquire Patty's inborn gaiety of spirit, she resolved to come as near to it as she could with her naturally quiet disposition.

The two girls became fast friends, and, after a few days, Patty

ventured to broach the subject of Christine's career.

To her surprise, Christine was quite ready to talk about it, and asked Patty's advice as to ways and means.

"I've already learned," she said, "that I have some talent and that I need the instruction and experience that I can get here and cannot get at home. When I once make up my mind to a thing I spare no effort to achieve it, and now I'm determined to get an art education by some manner or means!"

"Hooray for you!" cried Patty, for Christine's cheeks glowed and her eyes sparkled with the force of her speech. "That's the way to talk! Christine, you do me proud! Now, go on; what have you in mind? Tell your Aunt Patty all about it."

Christine smiled at Patty's funny little ways, but she went on bravely:

"I want to stay in New York for a year, at least. I'm afraid of it—desperately so. The very sound of the traffic scares me out of my wits. But I'm going to conquer that, and I'm going to conquer my shyness and timidity and all the foolish things that stand in my way."

"That's the ticket!" cried Patty, clapping her hands. "Good old Christine! Go in and win!"

"Wait a bit, Patty. That's all very well so far as determination and will are concerned. And I can do it. My will is strong, and I know I'm started now on the right track. But—there are many hard facts to face. There's a sordid side to the question that can't be solved by will-power and determination. Mr. Hepworth thinks

I can get a scholarship practically without cost; but, in addition to that, I have to pay my board, you know, and I have very little money. My dear old father can send me a small allowance, but we are a large family, and he is not rich. So I want to know if you think I could earn enough by some work outside my classes to pay my board—say, about fifteen dollars a week. Do you?”

Patty couldn't help it. This question from Christine was too much!

She was sitting on a couch, and she put her head down into a big, soft pillow, and shook with laughter. Did *she* think a girl could earn fifteen dollars a week? *Did* she, indeed? With a strange sound between a gurgle and a choke, she ran out of the room.

Not for worlds would she have Christine think she was laughing at her, so in a moment she had straightened her grinning face, smothered her giggles, and returned, saying:

“Excuse me, please; I had a sudden choking spell. What were you saying?”

“You poor dear! Mayn't I get you a glass of water?”

“No, thanks; I'm all right now. As to your question—no, Christine, I do *not* think you could earn fifteen dollars a week! No, nor fifteen cents a week, while you're occupied with your lessons.”

Christine looked aghast. “Oh, Patty!” she said. “Then what am I to do? I thought you'd say, yes, I could earn that sum easily.”

Again Patty wanted to laugh. A month ago she would have

said that very thing.

“Christine,” she said, gently, “listen to me. We Fairfields and Mr. Hepworth all take an interest in you and in your career. We all feel sure you will yet be a great artist. Of course, our belief is founded on Mr. Hepworth’s assertions, but we know he is capable of judging. Now you must have that year of study, and by that time Mr. Hepworth feels sure you can earn quite a lot of money by illustrating, and whatever he thinks goes!”

“Well,” said Christine, as Patty paused, uncertain how to proceed.

“Well, you see,” went on Patty, suddenly deciding that the plain, outspoken facts were best, “father has offered to pay your board for a year at some nice, pleasant boarding-house, and—Mercy! *What’s* the matter?”

For Christine had turned first a blazing, fiery red, and then as white as chalk, and seemed about to tumble off her chair.

“Brace up there!” cried Patty, shaking her by the shoulder. “Don’t you faint or do anything silly! I take it all back. Father wouldn’t do such a thing!”

“You misunderstand!” said Christine, smiling faintly through now rapidly falling tears. “I almost fainted from sheer gladness.”

“Oh! I thought you were angry and offended and insulted and mad as hops, and everything like that!”

“Oh, no!” cried the other. “Why, Patty, it isn’t charity; it’s great, big, splendid kindness, and it’s just a loan, you understand. I can pay it back in a couple of years after I once begin to earn

money. Patty, you don't know how sure I am of my own ability now that I understand my limitations. I can't explain it, but I see success ahead as surely as I see the blue sky out of that window!"

Christine gazed out of the window with rapt eyes, as if she saw visions of the fame and glory that were yet to be her portion.

"You duck!" cried Patty, embracing her. "You're just splendid! That's the loveliest way you could have taken father's offer. He is great, big, splendid kindness personified, and I'm so glad you see it."

That evening Mr. Fairfield ratified Patty's statements and definitely offered to pay Christine's board bills for a year.

To Patty's surprise, Christine showed no shyness or agitation as she answered him.

Only Nan understood that the girl's gratitude was too real and too deep for any troublesome self-consciousness to disturb it.

"Mr. Fairfield," she said, "I accept your offer with unspeakable thankfulness. It means my whole career, and I assure you I shall reach my goal. Of course, it is a financial loan, but after a year I shall be in a position to begin to pay it back, and it shall be promptly paid. Do not think I have unfounded faith in my success. I know what I already possess, and what more I need, and though my progress to fame may be slow, and take many long years, yet after a year's tuition I shall be able to command a comfortable income in return for my work."

Christine's eyes shone with earnestness and steadfast purpose, and her face seemed to be fairly transfigured. Hers was no idle

boasting. It was clear to be seen she spoke from a positive knowledge of herself, and indeed she only corroborated what Mr. Hepworth had said of her.

“Put it that way if you like,” said Mr. Fairfield, kindly; “we need not talk now about repayment. Just go ahead and find a cosy, pleasant abiding-place, and then, ho, for brushes and mahlstick! And hurrah for our artist!”

So genial were his words and manner that Christine caught his spirit of vivacity, and responded:

“Hurrah for the Fairfields!”

So it was all settled, and Mr. Hepworth was more than delighted when he learned all about it.

Patty gave a little afternoon tea for Christine the last day of her stay, and though Christine would have greatly preferred not to be present, she yielded to Patty’s entreaties and did her best to overcome her shyness and be a satisfactory “guest of honour.”

“She’s a beauty, isn’t she?” said Roger to Patty, as they stood looking at Christine while the tea was in progress.

“Yes,” said Patty, “when she is talking to her own sort of people. See, those are really big artists, and she isn’t a bit afraid or embarrassed. But put some society girls near her and she crumples all up.”

“She’ll get over it,” said Roger; “and I say, Patty, you did a big thing getting her here. For of course it’s all due to you and your plucky perseverance in that foolish scheme of earning your living.”

“Huh! it wasn’t foolish since it succeeded,” said Patty, airily.

“Well, the success isn’t foolish, but your first attempts were.”

“I don’t care; it was good experience. I learned a lot, and I’m not sorry for my part of it.”

“Not even the part that made you acquainted with me?” said a merry voice, and Patty turned to see Philip Van Reypen holding out a hand in greeting.

“No!” cried Patty, as she cordially shook hands with the young man. “No, *especially* not sorry for that part—for that was the Success!”

“I don’t want to be over-confident,” returned Philip, gaily, “but that sounds as if meeting me were the success!”

“That wasn’t what I meant,” said Patty, smiling and dimpling, “but it remains to be seen. Perhaps we can make that a success also.”

“Do let us try!” said Philip.