



URSULA'S
FRESHMAN

ANNA DWARIN RAY

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Ray, Anna Chapin

Ursala's Freshman

Received

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Date 1903

Repl.

Vols. _____

Call No. _____

Place Boston

Publisher Little, Brown

Source

English

Author
Title

Edition

No. of Copies

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Dec. 1, 1903.



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URSULA'S FRESHMAN

THE "TEDDY" BOOKS

By ANNA CHAPIN RAY

TEDDY : HER BOOK

PHEBE : HER PROFESSION

TEDDY : HER DAUGHTER

NATHALIE'S CHUM

URSULA'S FRESHMAN



Ursula's Freshman

BY
ANNA CHAPIN RAY

*Author of "Teddy, Her Book," "Phebe, Her Profession,"
"Nathalie's Chum," "The Dominant Strain," etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY
HARRIET ROOSEVELT RICHARDS

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1903

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Published, October, 1903

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Ursula's Freshman

CHAPTER ONE

“SHE will be with me, all winter.”

Mrs. Gifford Barrett, born Phebe McAlister, raised her brows in polite interrogation. Then she tried to turn her attention to the silk on the counter before her.

“Yes. She is named for me, you see; and I have never really done anything to recognize her. It will be a fine thing for her, and I can do it now, better than later on. And yet, it is going to be a great care, this taking charge of an unformed girl.”

“You may find her a most enjoyable addition to your family, Mrs. Myers. How much did you say this is?” Mrs. Barrett turned to the salesman, with the evident intention of ending the conversation.

Her companion refused to take the hint.

“Buying gowns, the very week you are back from Europe?” she inquired gayly.

Mrs. Barrett shuddered a little at the idea of her own rather majestic proportions clad in the violent Prussian blue under her hand.

"No; merely pillows for Rex's room."

"I remember. He goes into Yale, this fall. John will enter, next year. He is to take his final examinations, the week he is sixteen."

Mrs. Barrett parried the thrust indifferently.

"Yes, and my lazy boy is nineteen. But he was too energetic to devote himself to his books as closely as your John has done. Both Mr. Barrett and I have cared more for a sound body and steady nerves than for too close sticking to books."

"Oh, John is perfectly healthy. His looks are deceptive, and he is never very exuberant."

"And is his cousin like him? You said she was your brother's daughter, I think."

Mrs. Myers shrugged her shoulders ever so slightly.

"It is quite impossible to tell what she may be. She is utterly untrained, I suppose, for she has spent all her life in a scrap of an Iowa town, and a minister with a large family can't give too much time to any one child. However, if she is tractable, I can put up with a good deal of crudeness at the start, and John's influence over her will be very helpful," Mrs. Myers answered as

blandly as if her maternal care were not seeking to create the worst incipient prig upon Manhattan Island.

“Is she younger than he?”

“Only a month; but the different training will count in his favor. He is so mature and reliable.”

Mrs. Barrett let the silk drop from her hand.

“Ten yards, please,” she said abruptly.

Far back in the salesman's eyes there came the suspicion of a twinkle. This was by no means the first silk he had sold to Mrs. Barrett, and he knew her ways of giving vent to her exasperation. Mrs. Myers babbled on, quite unaware of the fact that she was hopelessly antagonizing the woman with whom for years she had been trying to be upon familiar terms.

Again she ignored the obvious hint that she should take her departure.

“Does your son go away soon?” she asked, while she lingered as if attracted by the folds of silk on which her hand was resting.

“Yale opens, a week from Thursday. We are going up, Monday.” Mrs. Barrett laid the last coin down on the counter with a vicious slap. Mrs. Myers was not of her carefully chosen world.

“We?”

"Yes. I am going up to help settle his room, and Mrs. Farrington is to meet me there. We shall get things to rights, while Rex is taking his examinations." Mrs. Barrett's tone was as impersonal as if she had been reciting her catechism.

Mrs. Myers shook her head doubtfully.

"I should never dare do that with John. He would not do as good work in his examinations, if he knew I was waiting for him in his room. But Rex isn't as nervous as John."

"I don't propose to wait for Rex, anyway. My function is to work," Mrs. Barrett responded grimly.

"It amounts to the same thing."

"Not always." She turned to the salesman. "No; I will take it with me. I am in a great hurry, this morning."

Mrs. Myers looked at her regretfully.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Barrett," she said, with a caressing accent on the first syllable. "If I find that my new charge is too much for me, I shall come to you for advice. They say you've made a great success of the Arterburn girl."

Mrs. Barrett forgot her haste and faced about swiftly.

"Miss Arterburn and her brother are most charming additions to our circle of friends, Mrs.

Myers; and it has been a great delight to us to have them with us, this last year."

"I've no doubt of it," Mrs. Myers assented meekly. "I only hope I shall be able to say as much of my young niece."

"I trust you may. Good-morning." And Mrs. Barrett walked away with the stride of an offended goddess in the skirts of a London tailor.

And, meanwhile, the young niece was sitting on her own back steps, shelling beans for dinner.

It was a week, now, since the monotony of Ursula Thain's life had been broken by the coming of a crested, cream-colored letter from New York. Up to that time, in her girlish mind, Aunt Ursula's name had stood for a vision compounded from the belated fashion plates of the passing years, and for the motive power of occasional trunks that came to her mother, stuffed with costly flimsiness which was wholly unsuited to their simple surroundings. Mr. Thain was unworldly and of lofty ideals; yet even he never failed to speak with a certain pride of his older sister who had married a rising young broker. With the passing of the years, the broker had risen to a height of prosperity which Mr. Thain, in his quiet environment, was unable to realize. To him and indirectly to his family, Sister Ursula was still the pretty daughter of a coun-

try pastor, who had married well and lived in an apartment near Stuyvesant Square. She had changed her address since then, but the new street and number carried no meaning to her brother's mind.

And now, all at once, it had been decided that Ursula Thain was to spend the winter with her aunt in New York.

"But we can't let her go. I need her," Mrs. Thain had protested.

Ursula, listening, held her breath. It was not that she was disloyal to her home; but few girls of fifteen could ignore the charm of a life that overflowed with ruffles of green chiffon and petticoats of greenish-gray silk. Ursula's best petticoat was of black cashmere, cut down from one of her mother's gowns. And New York was a huge city, fifty, sixty, ninety times as large as Lucretia. The very thought was alluring; but she pulled her mind away from it abruptly.

"It is altogether too good an opportunity to be lost," her father was saying, in what she called his "and-finally-brethren" tone. "She needs better schools; she needs to see what the world is like. It isn't as if she were going among strangers. Ursula is my only sister; she can do for the child what we can never hope to do. No wonder she wants to see her niece and namesake."

"But how will she go?" Mrs. Thain interrupted practically.

The good minister looked startled. He was never quite prepared to have his wife pull him out of a reverie by one of her matter-of-fact questions.

"Why—in the cars, I suppose," he replied vaguely, his mind still intent upon his sister's present and his child's future.

"Naturally. It would take rather too long for her to walk, and automobiles are expensive. But she can't go alone," his wife said dryly.

"It is possible that I could go with her. I—I have been thinking for some time that I ought to go East and get into touch with some of our men there. There's a convention in Boston, the first week in October, and it might be a help—it couldn't help being a help to me to go there." He paused irresolutely. Then he added, with sudden decision, "Anyway, the child must go. We can't afford to refuse Ursula's generous offer."

His wife started to speak, glanced down at her shabby gown, around at the plain room, then up at her husband's animated face, the mobile face of a dreamer and an enthusiast. Then, for the dozenth time, she turned her back upon the hopes that went with a certain little hoard, scrimped

here and there from the narrow margins of the housekeeping allowance. Rising, she crossed the room and laid her hand on his shoulder.

“It will be just what you need, Irving,” she said heartily. “You will preach all the better for a bit of change and holiday, and you will come back with any number of fresh ideas about your parish work. Of course, I shall miss the child; but it would be wrong to allow her to lose the chance. How soon do you think you ought to start?”

And Ursula Thain, true child of such parents, caught her breath as she listened. It was one thing to see New York and its glories; it was quite another to turn her back for a year upon her dreamy father, her steadfast mother and the tribe of younger children that crammed the little house to overflowing. The rival claims were strong and equally matched. Left to herself, she never could have chosen between them.

That was a week ago. Now the beans fell mechanically from her slender brown fingers, while she stared out across the prairie with unseeing brown eyes. It was Tuesday noon. On the following Thursday, she and her father were to start upon their journey eastward, and, for the moment, Ursula's thoughts were as intent

upon the journey as upon the unknown life which awaited her at her journey's end. New York was a mere name to her, although she had spent much time, the past week, in staring at certain pictures in a bound volume of *Harper's Weekly* that one of her girl friends had lent her for her enlightenment. She had tried to grasp their meaning, and she had failed. Did her Aunt Ursula live in a house twenty-two stories high, and wear a gown which stopped short at her shoulder-blades? Did she customarily adorn her head, like an Indian on a penny, with a tuft of feathers? Ursula was open to conviction; but she felt that she must draw the line at something. She would wait and see for herself. But the journey was something more tangible. Two trains east and two trains west passed through Lucretia daily, and Ursula had even made occasional expeditions by rail to Jenkinton, the county town ten miles away. But New York was much, much farther. The prairie grew dim before her thoughtful eyes.

"Hurry, Ursula! It is time the beans were cooking. You know dinner will have to be early, if we go to Jenkinton, this afternoon."

In her haste to conceal her emotion, Ursula mistook a bean-pod for her handkerchief. The scratch across her lids acted as a counter-irritant,

and she dismissed her tears together with her dreams.

Her mother's face was thoughtful as she put the beans on to boil, and the thought was not all for the stove in front of her. However, experience had taught Mrs. Thain that reverie had no place in her life, that, for her, thought and work must go hand in hand. She crossed the room, took up her rolling-pin, then called to her daughter who had gone back to her seat on the steps.

"Come here, Ursula. I want to talk with you."

For some moments after the girl had seated herself at her mother's elbow, the pin rolled and whacked unceasingly.

"I don't know how I am going to spare you, child," Mrs. Thain said abruptly, at last. "A year is a long time, and I've come to depend on you a good deal."

Something unusual in the tone struck Ursula. She looked up to see two heavy tears clinging to her mother's lashes. The unwonted sight brought the lump back into her own throat, and she had a momentary longing to throw herself into her mother's arms; but Mrs. Thain was unduly tall and angular, and the rolling-pin was busy again. It was the frequent case: the mother arms were

too full to give the invitation dictated by the hungry mother heart.

"I'm—I'm willing to stay at home, if you need me, mother," Ursula faltered mendaciously.

"No; you're not. If you are, I'm not willing you should. It's not that I really need you, either, though you are a splendid hand with the children, and you do save me a good many steps. But Mary can help me about as much, only I can't talk things over with her. She is too young to plan and contrive with me, as you do."

"I wonder if I really ought to go," Ursula said thoughtfully.

Her mother turned on her with a swift gleam of hope in her eyes.

"Don't you want to go, Ursula?"

"I do, and then I don't. It is going to be fun to see New York and to go visiting for a whole year, and to have this long journey with father; but then again I just can't bear to leave you and Molly and the children. I want you, and I want New York; and the two wants are in such a tangle that I can't unsnarl them. What shall I do, mother?" She looked up despairingly from the horns of this, her first dilemma.

The rolling-pin flew to and fro busily; then with a flap and a tuck the pie was covered and in the oven, before Mrs. Thain spoke again.

“Ursula,” she said, with a slow accent which betrayed the fact that, for her, life was too busy for many endearments; “you have been a great comfort sometimes. You are steady and reliable, and I shall miss you; but I think I am glad you are going. Don’t anticipate it too much, though. It is hard to transplant things, whether they are bean-stalks or girls, and have them keep on growing straight. Generally they have a hitch, to show where they strike the new soil. You will like the new soil; but there will be days when you will feel as if your roots would never get used to it, and it will take all your grit not to be discouraged. But remember this: your father loves your Aunt Ursula with all his heart, and he still thinks of her as the same girl he knew in the old home. Men don’t make allowance for change as women do, and I imagine he will be some surprised, when he sees her. But be careful what you write home; your father hurts easily, and he takes his hurts to heart more than some people do.”

Ursula looked terrified.

“Will—will Aunt Ursula be hateful to me?” she asked slowly.

“Not according to her lights; but her lights are electricity, ours are sunshine,” Mrs. Thain answered, with one of the phrases which came

but rarely nowadays to explain why her husband had fallen in love with her, twenty years before. "She will finish you, as she calls it; but it doesn't do much good to put a high polish on to an imperfect grain. Remember that, Ursula. Money is good, and so are manners; but you can be just as much of a lady shelling beans for dinner as you can going out to walk with a maid and trailing a poodle along behind you. If you've got brains and common sense and a good heart, the rest will come of itself."

"But Aunt Ursula has those things and a lot of others besides," Ursula protested, in loyal support of her unknown aunt.

"Maybe. Maybe not. She's got the brains and the good heart, but I'm not so sure of the common sense," Mrs. Thain retorted, with a swift recollection of the green chiffon frills stowed away in the garret. "Anyway, child, make the best of your good times. You've had a good start, and I think we can count on you not to go far wrong, as long as you don't get your head turned with so many new notions. And when you get homesick, don't give up and write home. Shut your teeth together, and remember mother, and stick it out till you feel better." She stooped to kiss the unsteady lips. Then she added, "Now run away and take the scraps to the pig, and then

get ready for dinner. We must hurry, if we are to get that new suit. Your father insists upon it that your aunt expects to buy your new clothes in New York; but I'm not going to have my child go to her aunt, needing to have a new dress, the first minute she gets there."

CHAPTER TWO

“SHE is the last person I would trust with the care of a growing girl.”

“Oh, I think she will feed her properly.”

“Don't be flippant, Ted.” Mrs. Barrett spoke with some asperity. “It isn't a case merely of Mellin's Food and a good dressmaker; though I am willing to admit that those small items do count for something. Still, they are items.”

“You speak with authority, considering that your experience is limited ——”

“To chaperoning one girl for ten months? Mayhap. But I was the power behind the throne for ever so long before that, and even you will admit that Nathalie is a success.”

“Modesty was never one of your failings, Babe. In this case, though, you have some reason to be proud, for Nathalie shows good training. When Giff's music and money fail, I advise you to start a dame school and instruct the rising generation in the three M's: manners, morals and mending.”

At her sister's bantering tone, Mrs. Barrett

gave a hostile sniff. Then her keen eyes softened.

"Don't make fun of me, Ted. I like healthy, useful girls, and I get on with them. Let me have my playthings, as long as I don't hurt them. Nathalie is a dear child, and has been a great comfort to me, the past ten months."

"Comfort, you pampered worlding! For what do you need comforting? Giff breathes for you, and Rex adores you."

Mrs. Barrett laughed outright.

"My language was more sentimental than my mood, Ted. Rex pronounces Nathalie a brick. Do you prefer that phrase?"

Mrs. Gifford Barrett and Mrs. William Farrington were basking in the September sunshine which flooded a ragged point of rocks that juts out into Long Island Sound. Behind them were the huddled cottages of a summer colony, over their heads was one stunted, misshapen cedar, before their eyes was the blue water of the Sound, backed by the bluer line of the Island, twenty miles away. On another point of rocks, fifty feet distant, a scarlet parasol was tilting this way and that in the hands of the boy who was laying down the law to his girl companion.

For a few minutes, the silence between the sis-

ters was unbroken. Then Mrs. Barrett turned suddenly.

"Ted, it is rather good to see you again. You understand some things better than most people."

It was not exuberant praise; but Mrs. Farrington did understand.

"When did you see Mrs. Myers?" she asked, after another interval.

"I met her at Lord and Taylor's, the day after we landed. I was waiting for some one to wait on me; she, apparently, was waiting for me to be waited upon. I do wish the wrong people wouldn't like me."

Mrs. Farrington ignored the plaint.

"What is the cause of her sudden hospitality?"

"I can't imagine. She says that the girl is named for her, that she has never done anything for her and — Then she giggled a little, and added that it might be more convenient to have her now than later."

"Before there is any need of bringing her out," Mrs. Farrington commented shrewdly.

"Yes, youthfulness comes cheap. And she will be a good companion for John. Teddy, I don't like that boy."

"Why not?"

"Chiefly because he is smarter than Rex," she acknowledged.

Mrs. Farrington shook her head.

"It depends upon what you mean by smartness. Book-learning isn't everything; Rex knows a few things that even Homer never dreamed of. They may not make the same showing on an examination paper; but they are vastly more useful in the long run. A little knowledge of the comparative values of things will keep him steady, when classics and conic sections fail."

"I am glad you think so, for I confess that I hate to leave the boy, to-morrow."

"It's good for him. You can't keep him a child forever."

"I know that; but he is lazy and needs me to prod him along, and he never knows enough to put on warmer undershirts, when the mornings are frosty. It will be a miracle if he escapes either conditions or consumption."

Mrs. Farrington laughed.

"It is a mystery to me, Babe, how you ever have managed to bring up two older boys, and have so much strength left to worry over Rex."

"Oh, I let them bring themselves up, while I was taking care of Rex," Mrs. Barrett returned tranquilly. "Anyway, I haven't spoiled him. He's a man, every inch of him. But it is time

that he and Nathalie were starting, if we're to get back in season to dress for dinner."

The scarlet parasol waved an answer to her call, as the boy and girl scrambled to their feet. For a moment, they stood silhouetted against the blue water, while they stared out across the golden sunset to a group of distant sails. Mrs. Barrett, however, was heedless of their gesture of admiration. Instead of the glistening sea and the shining sails, she was watching the tall, slender boy and the energetic girl with hair the color of the sunset. In dress and manner and gesture, both were marked with the simplicity of gentle birth and good breeding; under the sunburn of their recent sea voyage, their faces were comely with health and good temper. Mrs. Barrett watched them, and told herself that they were good to watch. Then the pride died out of her face, and her eyes danced with mirth.

Unnoticed by either of the sisters, their solitude had been invaded and, as they turned around, their eyes fell upon another pair of people perched on a rock close at hand. The neighborhood of a famous university sees many a quaint figure prowling about in search of interesting points of observation. Sooner or later, the whole world passes in review before the town pump on the New Haven green; and the

residents of the staid old city grow indifferent to the endless procession of educational pilgrims. However, rarely even the town pump has seen a more unworldly pair of people than the man and the girl who were sitting hand in hand on the rocks, absorbed in eager conversation.

Mrs. Barrett's eyes were quick and keen. It needed no second glance to show her the man's shiny black clothes, ample in the region of the shoulder-blades and knees, scant at the wrists and ankles, his collar which seemed constructed with the sole idea of showing off his Adam's apple, his limp black tie and the Phi Beta Kappa charm that dangled from his black mohair watch-guard. The face was thin and worn; but the eyes were alert. One hand was in the clasp of the girl at his side; the other held the handle of a battered tin skillet, evidently rescued from the 'long-shore rubbish, dripping with the salty water which was slowly draining from the dozen clams in the bottom.

The girl had certain possibilities of beauty. Her features were good, her complexion clear and her hair and eyes were bright brown. Fate had intended her for a pretty girl; but the hand of Fate had been paralyzed by the stronger hand of some one who was not only color-blind, but a worshiper as well at the shrine of the service-

able. The supple, firm lines and the clear tints were disguised by a coat and skirt of the most uncompromising shade of biddy-brown, which suggested in their shaping the same architect that had created the man's clothing. Under the open jacket was a tight bodice of magenta flannel decorated with bars of black velvet and further beautified with a pale blue ribbon at the throat. Three pink roses adorned the brown sailor hat, and the gloves were of gray cotton, with an elastic band in lieu of buttons. Mrs. Barrett glanced backwards towards Nathalie's rough blue skirt and crisp white waist. Then she turned whimsically to her sister.

"It takes all sorts to make a world," she murmured; "but even my zeal would ooze out before that damsel. I wish I could lay my hands on the miscreant who invented that particular shade of brown dye."

"Sterling qualities and a sense of high art don't always go hand in hand in this world," Mrs. Farrington returned. "But what eyes the man had, Babe!"

"I didn't get above his collar," Mrs. Barrett answered gloomily, as she led the way back to the car.

But the car was slow to appear. When at last it started towards the city again, the man and

the girl were in it and seated opposite to Mrs. Barrett who eyed them askance in the intervals of her talk with the others.

"Oh, I'm glad we are going back again," the girl said eagerly, as the car moved off.

"Don't you like the sea?"

She shook her head.

"It's not so good as the city. I like the stir and the seeing new people."

"But the sun on the waves, and the splash against the rocks, and the white sails!" the man urged, peering into the skillet which he still carried in his hand.

The girl laughed, showing her small, even teeth and a dimple in her right cheek.

"But they aren't in there, father. And what would mother say, if she could see the mud on your shoes and your cuffs all soaking wet?"

He glanced anxiously at his demoralized clothing, and changed the position of the skillet that was leaking lazily down his trouser-leg. Then his eyes brightened.

"She would say it was worth something to turn into a child again. I used to dig clams, the summer I was eleven, and I've never seen the salt water since then. By George, child, it would make a boy of me, if I were to spend a summer by the sea!"

The girl's eyes widened. She had never before heard her father use so near an approach to profanity; neither had she seen him so reckless in the matter of his cuffs. In the recesses of her heart, she rejoiced that the next day would see them safely on their way to New York.

"And so you like the cities best," her father was saying. "You have seen a good many of them on the way east. Can you remember them all?"

This was the signal for the review lesson in geography which must be recited at least twice a day, and the girl answered to it promptly.

"Cedar Rapids, Burlington, Chicago, Cleveland." Then she broke off abruptly. "Why didn't you go to Yale, father?"

"I couldn't afford it."

"But you went to college."

"Yes. To Dartmouth."

"You could afford that."

"It is a little college, and it doesn't cost so much," he explained.

"Was it as good?"

"N-no."

"Then why didn't you come to Yale?"

"Your grandfather was a poor minister, dear."

"But you earned the money, yourself. I've heard you say so, any number of times."

The man's mind flashed backwards over dreary years of toiling and scrimping.

"Yes," he assented.

The girl's lips straightened.

"Then why didn't you earn more?" she demanded, with the uncompromising bluntness of youth. "If I were going to do it, I wouldn't stop till I had the very best college in the country. I don't want any half-way things. And yet, you know more than any other man I have ever seen," she added thoughtfully, as she tucked her baggy gray glove into the hollow of his elbow. "I suppose that's just the You of it. Wherever you went, you'd come out ahead."

The man looked down at her and smiled. For a moment, there lay between them the blissful silence of perfect good-fellowship. Then the girl spoke again.

"Father, isn't that a student over there?"

Her father's eyes twinkled, as he saw Rex's ears turn rosy red.

"What makes you think so?"

"The way he wears his cap, and he looks so sort of used to things. I shouldn't wonder if he was a senior." And she lapsed into silent study of Rex Barrett, quite unconscious of the smothered mirth of the girl in the blue skirt, who had been watching her with merry, mocking eyes.

The car was whirring along above the tiny mallow-circled lake, before the girl spoke again. This time, the brown eyes were sorrowful.

"A week from to-night is going to be our last night together for a whole year," she said slowly.

"Yes." The man tried to speak briskly. "And then I shall hurry home to see what mother has been doing without us, and your good times will begin."

"Perhaps they will end," she suggested.

"Not homesick already, child?"

"No; only a great deal scared. I feel as if I were stepping off from the end of something, and didn't know where I might land," she returned. "And then I have had such a perfect time with you, all this week. I never had such a good time before, nor saw so many new things."

"But you are going to keep on seeing new things."

"Not with you. That makes a difference."

"They used to say Sister Ursula and I were a good deal alike," he said thoughtfully.

"I hope so; then I sha'n't be afraid of her. Of course I want to go there, and I want her to like me. I don't want to be invited company; I'd like best to be just one of the family and not have her make any extra fuss for me." Then the

young face grew earnest. "She is your only sister, father, and she hasn't any daughter of her own. While I stay with her, I'd love to be just like a daughter to her. But what do you suppose she will say, when she sees me?"

What Aunt Ursula did say was both orthodox and adequate. Then she fled to her own room, beckoned her husband to follow her, and locked the door noiselessly.

"Henry!" she whispered then. "Henry!" And then, "Henry Myers, what in the world am I to do with that Object?"

CHAPTER THREE

INASMUCH as Providence had ordained that young John Myers should be apparently too indifferent even to be snobbish, Mrs. Myers promptly ordained that her young son should be detailed to show his uncle the sights of the town. Accordingly, the country minister and the city boy inspected all things from the Aquarium to the Éden Musèe, and from the Éden Musèe to the uttermost confines of Bronx Park. The boy was taciturn and lacked all enthusiasm, yet his uncle was not sorry that John, rather than Mrs. Myers, was to be his companion. For some reason, he felt more at ease in the presence of his nephew's manifest boredom than in that of his sister's sprightly enthusiasm.

For sixteen years, the brother and sister had never met. The brother was too poor to take so long a journey; the sister was always too busy. They had exchanged occasional letters, however, and the tone of the letters had altered but little. Mr. Thain had looked for no disloyalty; in consequence, he had found none. On his own side,

he had remained true to the ideal which, long since, he had formed of his sister. Now that at last they were face to face, he was unable to tell just wherein she differed from that ideal, yet the difference was there, and it irked him. For some inexplicable reason, he was not quite at ease in her society.

"I really think I am very generous," Mrs. Myers said, as her guests sat down to dinner, the night of their arrival. "I am going to let John have the fun of prowling about with his uncle. John is an affectionate boy, Irving. You don't know how he has counted on your being here." She paused to give her son a smile bright enough to temper the strictness of the commands which she had laid upon him, while his uncle was removing the dust of his journey. "And so I shall let him have the good of you, the next few days, and Ursula and I will play by ourselves."

And Ursula, wide-eyed and rather homesick, smiled faintly in assent, as she stared from her gorgeous little aunt to the evening clothes of her uncle whose black coat was as shiny as that of her father, although from a different reason. Then she roused herself.

"No, thank you, ma'am," she said to the trim damsel who stood at her elbow to offer her a plate.

Her aunt's brows rose and fell again, only for a fraction of an inch; but Ursula saw them, saw the answering rise of the corners of her uncle's mouth. Then she saw nothing more until, after a moment of salty misery, she resolutely dabbed her napkin across her eyes, choked down her sobs and devoted herself to her dinner which she accepted in detail and with stony indifference, though she only nibbled at the unknown delicacies which, as she afterwards confided to her father, were very messy.

At nine o'clock, Ursula dutifully accepted her aunt's suggestion of bedtime. However, when Mr. Thain went to his room, two hours later, he found a doleful little figure huddled into a chair behind his bed.

"Ursula?" he said in surprise.

In another minute, her head was on his shoulder; her sobs came, unchecked, and her tears completed the wilting of his home-laundered collar. The storm lasted only for a minute or two. Then Ursula regained her self-control as swiftly as she had lost it. She straightened up and pushed back her dark hair, ruffled by her father's caressing hand.

"I think I hate my Aunt Ursula," she said slowly. "She's not a bit like you, nor like anybody else that I ever set eyes on. She had no

business to laugh at me. How could I know she kept a hired girl just to hand things round? I thought she was somebody visiting here that was late to dinner—that is, as much as I thought anything at all.”

Mr. Thain tried to stem the tide of her words.

“I shouldn’t mind, dear. It was a very simple mistake.”

Ursula raised her head haughtily.

“It’s not the mistake. I don’t mind that one bit. It was her laughing at me before them all, when I’d only just come. I never can like her, and I never will like her. I’m so angry that I’m mad and, what’s more, I won’t stay here a day longer than you do.”

For his only reply, Mr. Thain raised his head and looked steadily at his tempestuous young daughter. Ursula had met that look before, and she hastened to amend the form of her words.

“Or, if I do, I’ll teach her to know a lady when she sees one,” she added vindictively.

“I hope you will,” was her father’s quiet answer, and it was not until some time after they had kissed each other good-night that Ursula began to suspect the full import of his words.

If Ursula had counted too literally upon her aunt’s suggestion that they were to go out together, the next morning, she was doomed to

disappointment. Her face was a little wishful, as she stared out of the front window at the retreating backs of her father and her cousin; but she resigned herself to waiting until her own summons came. It was long in coming; but at last she heard her aunt's voice,—

“Now, Ursula?”

She started alertly. Then her face fell, for Mrs. Myers led the way, not to the street, but to her own room where the next half-hour was given up to a tape measure and a memorandum book. Then Mrs. Myers rose.

“That's all, child. Now take good care of yourself, and don't get homesick,” she said, with a pecking kiss on the girl's forehead. “You'll find some new books on the library table, and I'll be back by lunch-time.”

“But ——” Ursula's eyes spoke the request which her lips were too well-trained to utter.

Mrs. Myers's glance rested for an instant upon the brown skirt and magenta bodice, and her shoulders drew together ever so slightly. Then she smiled and shook her head.

“I want you to rest, this morning, child, for you must be very tired with your long journey. This afternoon, we are going out together, and you must keep fresh for that. Your father only has a week here, so the poor man must keep

moving; but you have all winter ahead of you, so you can take your own time. Good-bye, child. You'd much better go down to the library and amuse yourself there."

And Ursula, after she had restored order to that carefully-packed wardrobe which her aunt had tossed about so recklessly, accepted the advice and went down-stairs. As she had hung up her two or three gowns and smoothed the roses in her hat, she had decided that her aunt was a queer sort of hostess, and had sternly resolved that she would not touch a single book, all that morning. Unfortunately, her resolve concerned itself with such shabby black volumes as formed the body of her father's library at home, and it was not proof against the enticing array of green and gold books that she found awaiting her. Ursula fell upon the nearest story with the appetite of a healthy girl, and she looked up in astonishment, when her aunt appeared in the doorway to mention that luncheon was ready. She dropped her book and came forward with the first touch of naturalness that her aunt had seen, and in return Ursula discovered in her aunt's eyes the first suggestion of any natural liking for her self-imposed charge.

"Come up-stairs, Ursula," her aunt said, as they left the table.

Ursula's glance moved after her father to the door of the library; then, reluctantly, she followed Mrs. Myers back to her room. On the threshold she halted, astonished, for the bed was heaped with clothing, and three or four hats lay on the dressing-table.

"I had two or three things of a kind sent up, so I could see what looked best on you," her aunt observed in a matter-of-course tone, much as Mrs. Thain might have alluded to sample cakes of laundry soap or boxes of matches. "We'll pick out a couple of these, and then we can get the other things at our leisure."

"Yes, only——" Ursula gasped a little as she looked down at her bunchy skirt, and her color came. She and her mother had given much thought and, it seemed to them, an undue allowance of money to the choice of that costume. The bodice had been of home construction; but the jacket and skirt had come from the show window of the best department store in Jenkinton, the best, because it chanced to be the only one.

Mrs. Myers interpreted aright the glance and the flush, and she spoke with unwonted tact.

"You'll need more gowns here, Ursula, than you did at home, you know."

And, independent though she was, Ursula

yielded. There followed an exciting hour of the slipping on and off of softer, daintier fabrics than Ursula had ever known, of turning this way and that, of walking up and down before her aunt's critical gaze. At last, Mrs. Myers breathed a sigh of complete satisfaction.

"Once more across the room. Now turn slowly. Yes, I thought that would be the very thing. Later, you'll need a brown fur collar. You will walk better by and by, too. Can't you forget that you have any knees?"

"Ma'am?" Ursula faltered in surprise.

"I beg your pardon, Aunt Ursula," her aunt corrected gently.

"Wha-at?" The syllable was very broad and flat, for Ursula began to have fears lest her aunt was mentally deranged.

Mrs. Myers drew a long breath, and eyed this incorrigible young person cornerwise to see if her impertinence were intentional, or merely the result of accident. After she had halted for a time between the two opinions, she decided to leave that matter in abeyance and, rising, she led the way to the tall mirror in her own room.

"There! What do you think of that?" she demanded triumphantly.

Ursula looked, her eyes widening, her color deepening, her whole face brightening with

pleasure at the sight. It was all very simple: a skirt and jacket of the darkest possible shade of brown, a blouse of the same color barred with threads of tawny yellow, and a dark brown felt hat bound with the breast of a golden pheasant. There was not a fold of trimming, not a line of ornamentation such as Ursula had known and loved from her childhood. Nevertheless, as she stared back at her own reflection, she told herself that it was good, infinitely better, even, than the ornate magenta bodice. In some vague fashion, it reminded her of the blue-skirted girl she had seen in the car. She sighed contentedly. Then she gave voice to her content.

"Well!" she said slowly, as she turned this way and that. "Well! I always supposed I was yellow and dumpy. This doesn't make me look so a bit."

Her aunt smiled.

"And we will keep the blue for best, and the broad black hat," she said, while she untied the blue satin ribbon on Ursula's hair and replaced it with a black bow. "The other things may as well go back, this afternoon."

"For best?"

"Yes. You will need this to put right on, every day."

"But I've my light brown one, the one that I

just took off; and there's the green for mornings."

For the space of five minutes, Mrs. Myers's face became as inexpressive as a blank wall, as red as the bricks of which the wall was constructed. Then she smiled again.

"Do you know what I think would be a very nice thing for you to do?"

"What's that?" Ursula demanded suspiciously.

"Send back those to Molly." Mrs. Myers's tone was velvet-like in its smoothness. "They would be—nice for you to have, of course; but you won't really need them, with these two new ones."

"Then why don't you send back the new ones?" Ursula asked sharply, with a swift recollection of her lessons in Virgil. Those silk-lined jacket sleeves might, for all she knew, be as stuffed with treachery as was the wooden steed of Troy.

Mrs. Myers was politic.

"Aren't you to be my adopted daughter for a year; and don't mothers always buy pretty gowns for their daughters?"

"Yes. My mother did." Ursula's accent was uncompromising, and Mrs. Myers began to fear lest her niece shared Mrs. Thain's color-blindness.

"But why won't you let me do it, too?"

"Because you say, yourself, that I don't need so many clothes."

Mrs. Myers felt that she had been caught in her own trap, and she was forced to pause and seek for a way out. She feared to antagonize the girl at the start, since she was well acquainted with the temper of the Thains and with their pride.

"Perhaps I ought to have said that you don't need just the same kind of clothes," she suggested.

"Why not?"

"You will go out more, for one thing."

"I've my brown coat."

"Yes; but isn't this prettier?" Gently she turned Ursula towards the mirror; but her very gentleness went against the girl's grain. It was the gentleness of infinite patience, not of love.

There was no answer. Mrs. Myers picked up the magenta bodice and held it between Ursula and the mirror.

"Which is prettier?" she repeated.

The girl frowned. Then she answered honestly,—

"This is."

"Then why not send the other things to Molly, and keep these?"

"I don't think it's right."

"Not if Molly needs them, and you don't?"

"Maybe I shall need them; maybe Molly doesn't. Molly has things of her own." For the moment, it was Mrs. Thain who was speaking through the lips of her daughter.

"But you are to have these new ones anyway," Mrs. Myers said rebukingly. "You ought to be willing to let Molly have the ones you can't use."

"Why can't I use them?" Ursula's tone was haughty.

"Because——" Mrs. Myers saw the critical moment approaching fast; but she was powerless to avoid it. "Because—they—are not quite—suitable."

With an angry wrench Ursula pulled off the new jacket and threw it on the bed where it lay with its arms outstretched as if praying to be taken up again. The hat followed it. Then, with flashing eyes, the girl turned upon Mrs. Myers.

"I know what you mean now," she said fiercely. "You mean they aren't genteel enough for you. I don't know as they are. I don't know as I am, myself; but I can't help it. You ran the risk of all that, when you asked me to come here. You might have known. I know what my mother paid for that suit of mine; I



know that she went without some things she wanted, so she could give it to me. If you think that, after all that, just as soon as I get here and get hold of something a little finer, I'm going to do it up in a bundle and send it back to her and tell her it's not good enough to wear, why, you're very much mistaken, and you may as well know it first as last."

Burning with anger, with injured pride and with loyalty to her mother, Ursula had neglected to take into account the open door and her own rising voice. Still facing the mirror, she raised her eyes to see, over her own shoulder, the gentle, anxious face of her father side by side with her angry one.

"Ursula!" he said quietly. And then, "Ursula, I think you would better pick up your hat and coat, and carry them into your own room."

CHAPTER FOUR

“**B**UT why not, I should like to know?” Ursula demanded.

“Because I don’t care to,” John Myers replied primly.

“But why don’t you care?” Ursula persisted.

“I don’t know. I suppose because it makes you get all heated up and untidy.”

Ursula’s step lost its rhythmic beat, as she eyed her young cousin askance.

“And you call yourself a boy?” The accent was provokingly deliberate.

“Of course. Why not?”

“Because you aren’t. You’re nothing but an old maid. The idea of not liking baseball! It’s such fun!”

“How do you know?”

“For the simple reason that I used to play with my little brothers and their friends, when there weren’t enough boys. You ought to see some of the strikes I’ve made!” Ursula swung an imaginary bat in a swift, sure arc before her.

John glanced apprehensively over his shoulder.

"Won't—won't you drop your parcel?" he asked suggestively.

"My——? Oh, my bundle? Well, what of it? I can pick it up again," she responded in blithe unconsciousness of the shivers which were coursing up and down the decorous spine of her cousin. "And the sliding bases!"

If she expected her cousin to smile in sympathy with her own jolly laugh, she was disappointed. Instead, he merely inquired,—

"And did your mother let you?"

"I never asked her; I just did it," Ursula returned tranquilly. "She wouldn't have minded, though; only once, when I tried to make a base, and tore out all the front of my skirt on a snaggy rock, she made me mend it, myself."

"Don't you like to sew?"

The vehemence of her answer nearly took his breath away.

"No; I hate it." Then she laughed. "But she didn't ask me, any more than I asked her if I might play ball. I had torn it, and she said I must mend it. I'm sure that was fair enough. The worst of it was, the gown was faded, and I only had some new cloth to mend it with, so, all that year, I had to wear the skirt with a great patch of another color, all over the front breadth."

This was within the limits of John's understanding, and he said sympathetically,—

“Why didn't you get another dress?”

Ursula flushed; then she shrugged her shoulders.

“Where I came from, new clothes don't grow on bushes.”

“They don't here. I wish they did, and I'd go out picking, every morning. But you're the first girl I ever heard of that played ball.”

“And you are the first boy I ever heard of that didn't,” she retorted.

There was a scornful cadence to the words, and it exasperated him.

“I don't see that there's any reason I should,” he said morosely. “I just don't care for it; that's all.”

“What do you care for?”

“Books.”

“To read, or to study?”

“Both.”

“Honestly?”

“Yes.”

She looked at him for a minute; then she lifted her chin and puckered her lips, as if to crowd her laugh back into her swelling cheeks. At last it burst out, hearty and ringing.

“Oh, don't!” John protested hastily.

"Don't what?"

"Don't be so noisy on the street. Mother wouldn't like it at all."

Ursula's step lagged again as, with dimpling cheeks and mocking eyes, she surveyed her cousin.

"I said you were an old maid; but that wasn't nearly strong enough. You're a mummy."

"I don't think you're very polite," he returned. "Next time, I won't invite you to go to walk with me."

"You didn't, this time. I invited myself," she replied composedly.

Even the patience of a mummy has its limits, and John's bad temper was refreshingly boylike and normal, as he snapped,—

"Well, I didn't want you, and I wish you hadn't come."

Without moving her head, she turned her brown eyes towards his determined profile.

"Truthfully, Jackie?"

"You bet I do!"

The answer was scarcely that of conventional courtesy; yet Ursula liked the lapse from decorum. Nevertheless, she felt that he needed a rebuke, and she gave it to him in one of his own favorite phrases.

"Oh, John, you shouldn't. You know Aunt Ursula wouldn't like you to say *you bet*."

Her irony escaped him.

"Maybe she wouldn't," he muttered; "but you're enough to make a saint swear."

For the moment, Ursula's amusement led her to forget her rôle of injured propriety, and she answered promptly,—

"Then you're no saint, for *bet* certainly isn't swearing."

John opened his lips; then prudently he refrained from uttering the thoughts that moved him. They walked on in silence, he determined, she amused. At the end of the second block, she glanced at him furtively, then edged a trifle nearer to his side. Her eyes were gleaming; but her accent was pathetic.

"You aren't going to be cross to me; are you, Cousin Jackie?"

As a matter of principle, John disapproved of Ursula; nevertheless, for some inscrutable cause, he liked to hear her call him Jackie, perhaps because it was the first time in his life that he had ever been called anything but respectable, formal John. Moreover, he was dimly aware that, in spite of her idiosyncrasies, his young cousin was fast becoming a most presentable young person, and that she added a flavor of piquancy to the humdrum decorum of their family life.

It was five weeks, now, since Ursula had seen,

through tear-dim eyes, her father's train move away from the station at Forty-Second Street. She had come out of the station, not caring especially whether she found her way into her aunt's carriage or into the nearest subway excavation. She was alone, stranded, unhappy. Nothing mattered much now. For two or three days, the transplanted life drooped visibly. Then Ursula's temperament and training reasserted themselves. Sulking in corners never did any good. She would shut her teeth and make the best of things. Nevertheless, the quaint, gossipful letters she sent home were blistered and blotted here and there, though not a word of discontent came from her pen. Ursula had seen with her own eyes that her father would be hurt by any criticism of his lady sister whose patronizing attitude towards himself he was too simple-hearted to understand.

Ursula, for her part, was shrewd; moreover, she was free from all preconceived notions. She weighed the Myers family in the same balance she would have used for any strangers. She decided that Mr. Myers was as futile in his domestic relations as he was successful in the business world. Mrs. Myers was more of a problem, for she was strong of character, and her standards were unlike any with which the girl had ever be-

fore come in contact. She was uniformly kind and generous, lax of discipline, and critical of all points of manner and speech. But, to Ursula's mind, John Myers was a constant source of fun, and she made the most of him.

Of course, he resented her teasing; of course, he rebelled, when she waved aside his pompous young opinions. He thought her bumptious and intolerable; nevertheless, he took the same pleasure in her society that one gets from biting tentatively upon an aching tooth. On one occasion, he had criticized her until she had taken vengeance by ignoring his existence for some days. He was careful never to repeat the experiment. Now, accordingly, he yielded to her cajolery.

"Not if you behave yourself."

"I will be good," she said meekly. "It's such a bother to keep fighting, all the time, and you're the only person I know in New York."

"What about my father and mother?" he asked literally.

"Oh, I mean person young enough to fight with. And there's no variety in fighting with you; you always go at it in just the same way. Why, at home Irving was only twelve, and I could get lots more bites out of him than I can out of you. You're like a cow with only one horn."

Ursula's metaphor was neither unmixed nor complimentary, and it nettled her companion. She chose to disregard his annoyance, however, and she nonchalantly changed the subject.

"Who is Nathalie Arterburn?"

"Why?"

"Your mother is everlastingly quoting her, and I get so tired of her that I'd like never to hear her name again."

"There are others," John observed dryly.

"Who is she, anyway?"

"She is a girl from the country ——"

"Just like me," Ursula interpolated; "so you needn't take that top-loftical tone, when you talk to me about her."

John shut his mouth tightly, resolving that wild horses should not drag it open again.

"Well, go on," Ursula commanded.

"I thought you didn't like what I was saying."

"I didn't like the way you were saying it; but that's no reason you should turn into an oyster. She is a girl from the country ——"

"That the Gifford Barretts took up, a year or so ago."

"Who are the Gifford Barretts?"

"Great swells, who live on the top of things."

"Friends of yours?" she asked shrewdly.

"N-not exactly."

"But I thought you were on the top of things," Ursula said a little mercilessly.

"So we are. We know the Barretts, of course, only we aren't at all intimate."

"Hm! But I suppose you'd like to be. Is that it?"

"I don't care about it. Kingsley Barrett, that is, Rex, is a perfect dunce."

"Then what makes Aunt Ursula want you to know him, when you get into Yale?"

"I don't know." His accent was that of utter indifference.

"To hear her talk, you'd think he was the only boy in this city," Ursula commented reflectively. "And I do get tired of hearing about this Nathalie Arterburn. Is she nice?"

"I've never spoken to her. She and Rex are great cronies, and she was abroad with the Barretts, last year. Mr. Barrett is a composer."

"I wasn't asking about the Barretts. I was asking about Nathalie Arterburn. Is she pretty?"

"Stunning!" Again the inherent boyishness came uppermost, and again Ursula approved of her cousin.

"How old is she?"

"Seventeen or eighteen, I should say."

“Does Aunt Ursula know her?”

“No; but I suppose she knows the brother. He was named for my father.”

The idea caught Ursula's fancy, and she laughed.

“He was named for Uncle Henry, and I was named for Aunt Ursula. What relation does that make him to me, I wonder?”

Once more John turned literal.

“He is no relation. His father and mine went to school together at Exeter.”

“I know that,” Ursula said impatiently; “but, if he is named for a man, and I am named for that man's wife, there must be some sort of a relationship between us. Here we are at the Art Museum. Let's come in and take a look at your friends, the other mummies.”

John demurred; but Ursula had her way. Her innate love of the beautiful, starved for fifteen years, had already learned to feast upon the contents of the Museum, and she snatched a half-hour there, whenever she chanced to be in its vicinity. Once inside the turnstiles, she wandered about, according to the whim of the moment, now poring over the cases of antique lace, now delighting in the Oriental potteries, now strolling along the galleries of paintings, exulting in the wondrous colors with a catholic

joy which embraced all things from Raphael to Monet, from Van Dyck to Meissonier. To-day, however, she steadfastly turned her back upon these temptations, and with unerring step led the way to the hall where the mummies repose beneath their shining glass. Beside a portly Rameses, she paused and beckoned her companion to her side.

“Now, John, come and see your friend. He is very respectable, almost as respectable as you are. He doesn't look as if he had ever been shocked in his life, and yet his knees are a little bit baggy. Yours wouldn't be, if you were in a glass case.”

“Oh, keep still!” John protested. “You aren't funny, Ursula, so what is the use of thinking you are? He is dead, and it's horrid to make fun of him.”

She felt the rebuke more than he had intended, and she flushed hotly. Then she laughed.

“I'm wasting all my sermon on you, Jackie; but you'd better take it to heart. No matter how precise and respectable you are, there'll be a wrinkle somewhere or other. But, if you don't love the mummies, let's go up into the Franklin room and look at Fifth Cousin Ben's picture on the plates.”

With more gentleness than was her wont, she moved off at her cousin's side. The two young people never looked better than when they were together. Totally unlike, each acted as foil to the other, the boy a tall, pale blond, heavy-lidded and with the appearance of almost aggressive refinement of face and bearing, the girl slender and brown and dainty, her step alert, her eyes flashing with merriment. John's calmness amounted to languor; Ursula was an embodied tempest. They were bound to strike fire continually; but, as a rule, the sparks died out upon the air, and through constant friction they were slowly working their way down to a basis of good understanding, of mutual tolerance. Five weeks before, Ursula would not have accepted her cousin's rebuke. The weeks had taught her that his faults were largely faults of training, that at heart the boy was of good material.

As they passed along through gallery after gallery, loitering here, halting there, Ursula caught sight of a young girl standing before a row of Dutch paintings. At first Ursula's eyes, attracted by the fluffy golden hair which stood out in sharp contrast to the dull background, rested upon her indifferently. Then, as the girl turned her face in the direction of their echoing steps, their eyes met, and Ursula gave a half

smile of recognition. It was the girl she had seen in the street car, dressed now in green from head to foot, yet unmistakably the girl in the blue skirt, and, to Ursula's eyes, looking as comely and happy and altogether attractive as ever.

At Ursula's start of recognition, she slightly raised her yellow brows in surprise, and turned away. It was impossible that in the brown-gowned girl, as dainty and trim as herself, she could recognize the bunched child whose hideous clothing had roused both her repulsion and her pity.

Ursula's face had fallen, and she dejectedly followed her cousin out of the gallery. There was no especial reason that the girl should have recognized her; yet Ursula, loyal to the memory of that yellow hair, would have given much for the sake of a smile in answer to her own. Vaguely disappointed, she was silent for a time. Then, as they turned to leave the Franklin room, she broke the silence.

"Did you notice that girl we passed?"

"Which girl?"

"The one in green, with yellow hair."

"Yes."

"Who is she?"

"How should I know?"

She saw he was bent upon teasing her, and her reiterated question was a little impatient.

"You do know. Who is she, Jack?"

"What makes you want to know?"

"Because I've seen her before."

"Where?"

"In a New Haven street car, the day before I came here. I should know her again in Egypt."

"Don't be too sure. You may not strike Egypt, the same season."

"Do stop teasing," she begged him. "Who is she, Jack?"

"She is Nathalie Arterburn."

"Oh-h!" It was a long-drawn syllable. "Why didn't you tell me?"

John smiled down on her patronizingly.

"Because you had just said you were so tired of her that you never wanted to hear her name again."

CHAPTER FIVE

IN one of the smallest apartments to be found in the city of New York, Harry Arterburn sat frowning into his coffee cup. From across the table his sister watched him, half in anxiety, half in amusement.

"How often must I tell you, Hal," she said at length; "that it is extremely unbecoming to you to scowl so? I do wish you would relieve my feelings by telling me which is bad, your coffee or your correspondence."

His face cleared a little, as it never failed to do at his sister's bidding.

"It's this confounded letter. I don't know what to do about it," he answered.

"What is it?"

He tossed it across the table with such unerring aim that it fell exactly into her saucer of oatmeal. She picked it up, dripping, and pointed rebukingly to the milky crest on the flap of the envelope.

"How can you have so little respect for aristocracy, Harry? This ought to be handed

about on a silver salver by a man in buttons."

"What shall we do about it, Nathalie?"

His tone showed that he was really disturbed, and without more ado she opened the letter in her hand. She read it from end to end. Then she raised her eyes to his.

"What shall we do?" he repeated.

"Don't," she advised him quietly.

"What do you mean?"

Her reply came promptly.

"Better is a dinner of Bent biscuit and sage cheese where independence is, than peacocks and cream with Mrs. Myers."

"Then you think?"

"That, as Rex says, it's up to her. When we first came here, she never came near us. I don't know that I care to go to her now."

Harry Arterburn's laugh cleared the frown from his face and showed him for what he really was, an uncommonly attractive man of the later twenties.

"No especial use in getting spunky about it, chum," he admonished her.

"Of course not. She isn't worth the trouble. Still, she might have helped us a good deal, two years ago."

"She did get the apartment for us."

“ Yes ; but she never came near it, when once we were inside it. Before I knew Mrs. Barrett, I should have been so glad to know her. Now I don't care.”

Harry stirred his coffee thoughtfully.

“ I'm not so sure she could have helped us,” he said slowly.

“ Mrs. Barrett did.”

“ Mrs. Barrett could ; she is more human. But, from all I hear, I don't believe Mrs. Myers belongs to our kind of people.”

“ I should hope not,” Nathalie said flatly. “ I never saw her but once, and that was from afar ; but then she seemed to me to be nothing but clothes and manners. Both were exquisite ; but they wouldn't be very filling for a steady diet.”

“ But we aren't asked to eat her clothes, or even her manners. It is a dinner we are talking about,” her brother suggested.

“ What do you think about it, Harry ? ”

“ I don't quite know. Mr. Myers was an old chum of father's, and, for his sake, I don't want to be rude.”

Nathalie bent forward, clasped her hands above her plate and rested her chin upon them.

“ Oh, Hal, why did you ever happen to have such a colossal conscience ? ” she said regretfully.

"If you put it on that ground, I suppose we shall have to go. For my part, though, I'd rather starve."

Behind his glasses, Harry Arterburn's blue eyes twinkled mischievously.

"Possibly she intends it as a welcome home, chum."

"If she does, it's a trifle belated," Nathalie retorted, while she gave him his second cup of coffee. Then she referred to the letter which still lay open before her. "What do you suppose she means by her especial reason for wishing to see you?"

"It passes my comprehension. Then shall I write her that we will go?"

"Yes, I suppose so; but you might add a postscript that it is usually polite to call first."

"She probably regards you as too young to receive calls," Harry suggested unkindly.

"Then I am too young to go out to dinner. That's a good idea, Hal. You can put me to by-low, before you start."

"No need. She expressly states that it will be early, and with no other guests." He rose from the table. "Shall I order anything, to-day, Nathalie?"

"No. We've plenty of everything for the present."

He looked at her admiringly.

"How do you make things last so long, Nathalie?"

"Ask Mrs. Barrett. She taught me to plan. I want to be thrifty; it is the only condition that let me come back here. Do I really add so very much to your bills, Hal?"

"No. Even if you did, though, I couldn't get on without you. Who else would poke the fire with me, and gossip at bedtime?"

"Nobody, if I could get here. But, Harry——" She hesitated a little.

"Well, dear?"

"Do you find it so very hard to get on without the Rex money?" she asked anxiously. "I know you miss it. Can you get through without it?"

He nodded reassuringly.

"We were inside our allowance, last month. It wasn't much, to be sure; but it was inside. Of course I should like it, if I could get another pupil. I have all my mornings free, and I might just as well give some of my spare time to teaching."

"If you don't work too hard. But it is early in the season, and there is plenty of time yet for you to hear of somebody who needs cramming," she returned, with the cheery optimism which

made her such a tonic to her less hopeful brother.

Now he smiled at her across the dismantled table.

"You are a comfort, chum," he said heartily.

Left to herself, Nathalie began to gather up the cups, preparatory to her dish-washing. There was an attractive daintiness about the way in which she handled the silver and china, and even the dishpan and the long, soft towels. It showed that the girl was a born housekeeper; and she went about her homely task with apparent enjoyment. The fact was that Nathalie Arterburn had never outgrown her childish love of a baby-house, and, to her mind, this wee apartment was nothing more nor less than a baby-house on an exaggerated scale, her life with her brother only a prolonged play-day.

Left an orphan in her childhood, she had been sent to her father's sister in Maine, until such time as her older brother could finish his study in Germany, and come back to America to make a home for his young brothers and sisters. As Nathalie had said, that morning, Harry Arterburn owned a conscience; and he had come to New York, just two years before, fully resolved to fulfil the expressed wish of his father, that the little family should be held together. The

children were young and not too ready to yield obedience to the brother whose eight years of college and university life had left him almost a stranger to them. His salary as instructor at the university, even eked out by the slight income from his father's estate and by his tutorship to Rex Barrett, had been sorely strained by the demands of city rents and markets; and the boy of twenty-six had all but broken down under the load. Two tonics had upheld him: the loyal love of Nathalie whose girlish ideals centered in her new-found brother, and the generous friendship of the Barretts and their kin.

It was Mrs. Barrett who had taken them off to Quantuck, the summer before they went abroad; it was Mr. Barrett who had asked both Arterburns to go to Europe with them, and it was Mrs. Barrett's nephew who had influence in such high places that Harry Arterburn had been given leave of absence for ten months of foreign study. The trip had been one long dream of delight to both brother and sister, and Mrs. Barrett had forestalled any anxiety for the future, which might have hurried the awakening. It was by her advice that the three younger children were allowed to remain in Vermont with the old cousin who had been Harry's housekeeper, the winter before. The country life was as much

more wholesome for them as it was less expensive; Cousin Eudora Evelina was a good cook and, left to herself, an excellent disciplinarian; and Harry, after one last tussle with his conscience, yielded to a plan which was so obviously an improvement upon the one which he had attempted to put into operation. From the first, there was no question of separating Harry and Nathalie. Parted, they would have been as useful as the separate blades of a pair of scissors; each would rust for want of the other. Accordingly, early October had found them settled in their tiny new apartment, with Mrs. Barrett within easy reach, to serve as adviser or chaperon in case of need.

Over her five little rooms, Nathalie reigned supreme as hostess, cook and housemaid. She had thrown herself into her new routine with a zeal which had seemed to Mrs. Barrett too great to be lasting; but, as week after week went by, Nathalie's pleasure and pride in her housekeeping showed no signs of waning. The simple meals were prompt and daintily served; and Nathalie worked all the flour off her moulding board and clarified her kettle of fat as thriftily as her own grandmother might have done.

As a matter of necessity, they breakfasted chiefly upon cereals, and their soup and pudding

rarely occurred upon the same day. However, granted that the cereal is just salt enough, and the beefsteak and potatoes done to a turn and scalding hot, one is bound not to starve. For the rest, Nathalie saw to it that her linen was spotless, that the middle of her table was never empty of its posy, and that domestic worries, no matter how insistent, should have no place in their table-talk. What wonder that Harry, as he seated himself opposite her bright face, should have preferred his home table to the ambrosia of Olympus? Moreover, no matter what happened earlier in the day, there was one custom which never changed. That was the good-night talk beside the dying fire.

People, looking on, pitied the brother and sister for their lives of scrimping and of hard work; but Nathalie and Harry Arterburn needed no pity. They had learned the important secret of how to be happy upon nothing particular a year.

That same night at dinner, Mrs. Myers glanced up from her salad.

"I had a letter from Mr. Arterburn, to-day, Ursula."

"Who is he?" Ursula asked indifferently.

"He is Nathalie Arterburn's brother."

In the depths of Ursula's brown eyes there

came a spark of merriment; but it failed to catch the attention of her aunt.

“Who is she?”

Mrs. Myers fell into the trap.

“She? I have told you about her, Ursula. She is the young girl that Mrs. Gifford Barrett took abroad, last year.”

Ursula had a naughty desire to continue the conversation by asking who was Mrs. Gifford Barrett; but she prudently reflected that her aunt was scarcely a legitimate object of her teasing, so she merely said,—

“I remember now.”

Then she went on with her dinner.

Mrs. Myers felt herself becoming piqued. She had not expected to have her great news received so indifferently.

“But you don't ask me what he said,” she continued, after a pause.

It was a plain statement of an indubitable fact, and neither John nor Ursula felt called upon to deny it.

There was another pause. Then Mrs. Myers made her announcement which all of a sudden seemed rather tame.

“They are coming to dinner, next Thursday.”

“Oh, bother!” Ursula said explosively.

“Ursula!” her aunt remonstrated.

"Well, I can't help it. John had promised to take me up to Bronx Park, that afternoon."

"But I have asked them partly on your account, Ursula. Besides, *bother* is a very coarse word."

Ursula flushed scarlet. Until she came to New York, she had never been accused of coarseness, and now the accusation hurt her.

"I'm sorry. I won't say it again," she said shortly. "But I thought you didn't know the Arterburns."

The shot, though unintentional, went home, and Mrs. Myers reddened. Then she began to defend herself.

"I don't know them; but it is high time that I did, for Mr. Arterburn is named for your Uncle Henry. I fully intended to call on them, when they first came to New York; but I never seemed to get to it. Now that I have an adopted daughter," she looked down at Ursula with the little smile which now and then softened her face; "now that you are here with us, it seems an especially good chance to get acquainted with Nathalie."

Ursula saw the smile; but she hardened her obstreperous young heart. Upon more than one occasion since her coming to New York, her aunt had shown herself to be very worldly, and Ursula

shrewdly suspected that this was some new phase of her worldliness. She was too young to see deeply into things, and she failed to realize that, like John's priggishness, her aunt's ambition was only skin deep, that it covered a truly kind heart, and that, even yet, it might yield to the womanliness hidden underneath.

Meanwhile, Mr. Myers had roused himself from the abstraction in which he usually wrapped himself at meal-times.

"Did you say something about Arterburn?" he inquired.

"Yes. I have asked him and his sister to dine here, next Thursday."

Her husband looked at her keenly.

"They won't come."

"What makes you think so?"

"The Arterburns are a proud race, and you have never called on them."

Once more she defended herself.

"But I hunted cheap apartments for them, all over Harlem."

"Yes, and it was a bore, I know. You saved me a good deal of care, Ursula; and I appreciated it. But I did hope you would call."

"On that old Panjandrum of a cousin?" she asked, as, in spite of herself, she laughed at the idea.

"No; on them all, just to see that they were

comfortable. It would have been neighborly, and their father was my schoolboy chum," her husband answered, with a sudden wave of loyalty for his old-time mate.

Again his wife's face softened. Though she was the dominant spirit in the home, she was intensely fond of her dapper little husband.

"I am sorry, dear. I didn't know you cared so much. But it may not be too late now for me to redeem my reputation. Mr. Arterburn has accepted my invitation."

"I am glad of it." Mr. Myers spoke with unwonted heartiness. "I was afraid they would stand on ceremony, and I shall like to have Jack Arterburn's children in my home."

Ursula looked up with sudden interest.

"Was that where John got his name?" she asked eagerly.

"Yes."

She turned to John.

"How funny that you never told me!" she exclaimed.

"I never knew it, myself, till now," he answered.

Ursula laid down her fork and folded her hands.

"Well!" she said deliberately. "If this isn't a situation!"

CHAPTER SIX

“**W**HEREFORE this elegance?” Mrs. Barrett demanded, as she entered the Arterburn apartment, a few days later.

Nathalie stepped into the middle of the floor, and slowly revolved before the eyes of her guest.

“What do you think of my new clothes?” she asked complacently.

Mrs. Barrett stared approvingly at the dull rose-colored gown, relieved here and there with touches of black and white.

“It is perfect. I congratulate you on your dressmaker. But aren’t you getting extravagant?”

Nathalie laughed.

“Extravagance is a sin, Mrs. Barrett, and I am never sinful. This cloth was a bargain-counter remnant, and it cost the whole sum of twenty-nine cents a yard. I never could have afforded it at thirty, you know. It was a tight fit to get it out, and every particle of trimming covers a piecing. The velvet came from my blue gown, and the white is a fragment of Peggy’s old sash.”

Mrs. Barrett shook her head.

"Don't tell it abroad, Nathalie; it would be like a cook's analyzing a soup. It always spoils my relish to hear of the individual carrots and turnips. It is the same with your gown; it is positively Parisian, so who cares from what rag-bag you culled the fragments?"

"I am so glad you like it," the girl said, with honest pride in her achievement. "It is simple; but I truly think it is rather becoming."

"It's not so simple. You look as if you were dressed for a dinner party, at the very least."

"So I am," Nathalie answered blandly.

"Where, I should like to know; and how dare you accept invitations without your lawful chaperon?"

Nathalie made a little grimace of disgust.

"I was perfectly convinced that my lawful chaperon wouldn't care for the honor of even being invited."

"What is it, Nathalie?" Mrs. Barrett looked a little disturbed.

The girl's eyes danced with merriment, as she replied demurely,—

"I am going to dine with Mrs. Henry Myers."

"Nathalie Arterburn!" Mrs. Barrett's back stiffened, as she spoke, and the angle of her chin went up by at least thirty degrees.

"Yes, ma'am."

"What for?" Mrs. Barrett asked explosively.

"Because she invited us."

"Suppose she did?" Mrs. Barrett demanded, in a second explosion.

Nathalie laughed. Then, regardless of her gown, she dropped on the floor at Mrs. Barrett's feet, and nestled against her side.

"You see, it's this way," she said confidentially; "she wrote to Harry and invited us, almost a week ago. I was down on the idea of going; but Harry has some sort of a crotchet in his dear old brain about Mr. Myers's being a friend of our father, and all that. It seems to me it has outlawed, by this time; but you know Hal. He lives just to carry out papa's wishes. I admire him for it; but this is one of the times when I think he overdoes the matter. I don't want to go, Mrs. Barrett; but Hal would do almost anything in the world for me, and once in a while it is only fair I should give in to him."

Mrs. Barrett bent over to change the shape of the bow in Nathalie's hair. Then she gave the hair an approving pat.

"I think you are perfectly right, Nathalie. Personally, I'd like to abolish the woman; but I know I'm not fair to her. There is nothing bad

about her; it is only that she hasn't learned to stand down on her heels, socially speaking."

"I really don't see why she should ask us now, though," Nathalie said reflectively. "Do you suppose it has taken her two whole years to decide whether we were worth knowing?"

"It wouldn't be a bit unlike her," Mrs. Barrett answered viciously. "But there may be some reason in it, after all. She has a young niece spending the winter with her."

A sudden thought dawned upon Nathalie.

"I wonder if that could be the girl I saw with John Myers, a week or two ago."

"Possibly. What was she like?"

"Brown as a little gipsy, and wonderfully pretty. I stared at her as hard as I dared, for I wondered what sort of a girl would take to Pettijohn Myers."

Mrs. Barrett laughed.

"Rex must have taught you that name, I know. But I can't fancy his taking to anything so frivolous as a girl, least of all a pretty one. He must have been inspired by a whiff of cousinly duty."

"He didn't look it. I never saw him appear so alive and human. It was becoming to him, too. Really, he wasn't horrid in the least."

"That is enthusiastic praise, Nathalie. Per-

haps your dinner may not be horrid in the least, either. Here comes Harry, and I must go." She lingered, however, to exchange a cordial greeting with the young man, as he entered.

"How goes it?"

He answered with the equally Teuton idiom,—
"Wholly good." Then he lapsed into New York vernacular. "Everything is flourishing, Mrs. Barrett. I never lived better in my life, and Nathalie and I are as jolly as grigs."

"What is a grig?" she challenged him.

"How should I know? I never saw one. I always associate them, though, with the Quantuck ticks. What do you think of our dinner, to-night?"

"I am too astonished to think," she answered bluntly.

"So am I." Then his laugh died away, and his blue eyes met the guest's eyes steadily. "I don't want to go, Mrs. Barrett; and I know there is no real reason that I should. Still, I have an idea that, if my father were alive, he would tell me I could yield a point now and then, for the sake of old traditions."

Ursula, meanwhile, was in a state of excitement. Her one glimpse of the girl in the blue skirt, as she had mentally dubbed Nathalie Arterburn, had made a much more vivid impression

upon her than she had realized at the time. She had thought back to her again and again, and now she could not fail to regard it as an interesting experience to meet her again face to face. She was undeniably excited. Moreover, while she was dressing, her excitement seemed to impart itself to her comb which jerked her long brown hair viciously and then flew out of her hand and across the room to scatter its teeth along the floor. It even extended to the hooks of her gown, which malignly refused to associate themselves with their own eyes, however often she renewed the attempt to conquer them. It assailed her shoe-laces and her string of gold beads. Accordingly, Nathalie's feet were on the front steps, when Ursula, flushed and warm from her exertions, scurried down the stairs and joined her aunt in the parlor. Mrs. Myers surveyed her with a hasty glance which, nevertheless, took in every furbelow and every flaw in her costume.

"Ye-es, that will do," she commented. "Pull the front of your skirt a very little to the right. Shake out your handkerchief and be sure, if you tuck it into your belt, to tuck it in, corners up. Did you think to put on the stockings with the blue clocks?"

With a swift gesture, Ursula pulled up her skirt to show a pair of trim, blue-clocked ankles,

and her aunt nodded in reply, as she moved across the room to greet her guests.

Ursula followed her rather shyly. All at once she felt young and almost shabby in the presence of the good-looking man in his eight-year-old evening clothes, and of the tall girl whose gown had cost nearly one tenth as much as her own. She dismissed with astonishing swiftness her cherished plan of recalling herself to Nathalie's memory, and her cheeks burned hotly at the thought of the inussy roses on her old brown hat. Mrs. Myers, looking on, longed to goad her niece into some sort of presence of mind; but the Arterburns were less critical. They saw no reason that, at fifteen, Ursula Thain should have the social ease of a girl in her second season.

"I wonder if you were as homesick as I was, after I came to New York," Nathalie said, when the two girls were at last settled down together in a corner, after dinner.

Ursula cast a hasty glance at her aunt who was fully absorbed in making herself agreeable to Harry Arterburn. Nathalie interpreted the glance, and laughed.

"Evidently you were. It is to be hoped that you are recovering."

"Yes." Ursula's tone was a little dubious.

"It is horrid; isn't it? I went through it, myself."

"I don't see what made you homesick. You had your family."

"Sometimes a ready-made family is worse than none," Nathalie replied quaintly. "You feel as if you belonged to them; but you don't know just where you ought to join on. Besides, I was from the country, and very raw."

"And I was from Iowa; that's both country and West, my aunt says," Ursula said rather deprecatingly.

But Nathalie objected.

"I like to be from the country. Just as soon as Harry can afford it, we are going back there, to live on a farm and keep pigs."

Ursula stared in astonishment at the dainty-looking girl at her side.

"Miss Arterburn!"

"Don't call me Miss Arterburn. I'm just Nathalie. I am only two years older than you are."

There was a matter-of-fact frankness about the girl which delighted Ursula, and she moved her chair a trifle nearer to the one in which the guest was sitting.

"All right, if you really want me to. But I was just saying ——"

"About pigs?" struck in Nathalie.

"Yes. Did you ever see any?"

"See any!" Nathalie's laugh was so infectious that Ursula joined in it. "Why, of course. Didn't you?"

Again Ursula glanced furtively at her aunt. Then she lowered her voice.

"I used to have to feed one at home. But I didn't suppose New York people knew about such things."

"They don't, unless they go into the country, summers." On her side, Nathalie was struggling to connect this pretty, elegantly-clothed child with the accessories of a pig-sty. "We don't have them in the parks, you see," she added vaguely.

"No; I suppose not. They aren't very pretty, and they aren't even wild beasts. I used to hate them, when I was at home, and to be ashamed of it, when my mother made me carry the scraps to them; but now, since I have been here," she glanced expressively around the immaculate, cream-colored room; "since I have been here, I have almost wished I could meet a pig in the street, once in a while. It would seem sort of good to hear him grunt."

A whole allegory was hidden in the girlish speech; but Nathalie Arterburn was no dullard.

"You'll have to come to see me, some day," she said, with a quick wave of liking for the girl beside her. "I housekeep for my brother, and I know you will like to see my funny little pantry. My whole kitchen isn't as large as the pantry in the house where I lived in Chesterton; but I have great fun in it."

"Do you ever cook things, yourself?"

"Of course I do. There's nobody else to do it."

Ursula's chair slid a few inches nearer.

"I can make four sorts of muffins," she observed suggestively.

"Muffins are my weak spot. Come over, some day, to give me a lesson, and then stay to lunch and eat them up, in case they don't turn out well. But, after all, it is great fun to live here. Don't you think so?"

"I like it better than I did at first," Ursula answered honestly. "It was dreadful when my father left me, for I had to get acquainted with everybody, and learn all sorts of new ways. And then I missed the children."

"How many were there?"

"Seven."

"Younger than you?"

"Yes. One misses them, you see."

Nathalie laughed at the pensive tone.

"I should think it might be a good miss. There are three little ones in our family, and they generally manage to keep the house turned upside down."

"Then seven ought to turn it clear over and leave it right side up again," Ursula responded loyally. "But I did miss them."

"Like the pigs?" Nathalie asked, laughing.

"Worse, for I didn't have to feed them. But there's John, here."

"Ye-es." Nathalie's accent was doubtful, as she glanced at the boy who, finding his conversation superfluous, had subsided into a serious-looking book.

"He really is a great deal nicer than he looks," Ursula reassured her, with a frankness which was rather alarming. To be sure, it was the first time in nearly two months that she had talked to a girl of her own age. In itself, the experience was exhilarating, and from the start she had felt sure of Nathalie's sympathetic liking. "When he gets waked up, he is as lively as anybody."

Nathalie's thoughts flew seventy miles to the eastward to Kingsley Barrett, just going home from his glee club rehearsal.

"Does he wake up often?" she queried half involuntarily.

Ursula's brown eyes snapped.

"You needn't say impolite things about my cousin," she said haughtily.

"I beg your pardon. I spoke without thinking," Nathalie answered, in real contrition.

"You shouldn't be thinking such things, and I like Jack," Ursula went on, with more loyalty than logic.

From across the room, Mrs. Myers's eye was upon them, and she saw that something was amiss.

"Ursula, haven't you monopolized Miss Nathalie quite long enough?" she inquired, with a warning smile at her niece who had relapsed into a silence closely akin to a fit of the sulks.

It was Nathalie who rose. In her heart of hearts, she liked and admired this pretty, high-spirited girl who allowed no one but herself to abuse her own relatives. Nevertheless, she was only human, and she could not refrain from the temptation to get in the last word with telling effect. With provoking deliberation, she shook out her rose-colored skirt and brushed from her forehead an imaginary lock of her yellow hair. Then she sauntered across the room and stood resting her arms on the back of her brother's chair. Mrs. Myers looked up at her approvingly.

"And what have you two children been talk-

ing about?" she asked, in her most caressing tones.

A sudden naughty light flashed into Nathalie's eyes.

"Pigs," she answered gently, yet in a voice which could be heard throughout the room.

The next minute, the hot blood rushed into her cheeks for, from the corner by the drop-light, there fell upon her ears an unmistakable boyish snicker.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AT breakfast, the next morning, Mrs. Myers played the trump card which she had been holding in reserve, ever since she had received Mr. Thain's letter accepting her invitation to Ursula. For reasons of her own, however, she chose to wait until her husband had left the table. As soon as she heard the click of the front door, she turned to Ursula.

"Ursula, Mr. Arterburn and I had quite a long talk about you, last night."

Ursula looked up sharply. Then she feigned indifference, and dropped her eyes to her plate. She had no intention of gratifying her aunt by any manifestation of curiosity, that morning, for, in her girlish heart, her Aunt Ursula was in deep disgrace. It had been most unfair to invite the peerless Nathalie Arterburn to dinner, merely for the sake of instituting comparisons between that same Nathalie Arterburn and a certain countrified little girl named Ursula Thain.

For a long half-hour after the Arterburns

had gone away, Ursula had sat listening to these comparisons, while she had twisted her fingers and bitten her lips, that the physical pain might serve as a counter-irritant, and so keep her from showing her resentment. At last, however, she had been able to hold her peace no longer. She had sprung from her chair, with flashing eyes.

“Suppose I did cross my feet? So did she! I saw her! And she bit her bread, too; she took a whole horseshoe out of it. Besides, she is older than I am, and lots and lots prettier, and she has lived here longer, and has been to Europe, besides. There’s no reason she shouldn’t know about things. There’s no reason she should be shy. She doesn’t have somebody to peck at her, day in and day out, and fret because she doesn’t toe a chalk line, and scold because she talks soprano once in a while. At home, I wasn’t shy. I was as good as anybody in town, and I only wish I were back there.”

If Ursula had looked at her aunt, just then, she would have been startled at the pain in Mrs. Myers’s face. However, Ursula was staring haughtily over the top of her aunt’s head, while she waited for the reply that did not come. Then she turned away, clattered up the stairs to her room and cried herself to sleep.

She had felt a certain reaction, while she was

dressing, the next morning. Her aunt was annoying; but she was generous and kindly and, if the accounts could be balanced, Ursula already owed her enough in the way of good times and pretty clothes to atone for a steady stream of criticism which should flow from early dawn to dewy eve. In her heart, the girl knew this. Moreover, she was anxious to improve, to win her aunt's full approval; and this very anxiety made her the more sensitive to her aunt's criticism. Homesick as she was still at times, she had no especial wish to go home. Her new life was undeniably easier and more interesting than any she had known till then, and she was pluckily resolved upon staying where she was and seeing the game played out. In her saner moments, she knew that she owed everything to her aunt, even the right to criticize; nevertheless, it was not in the nature of hot-headed fifteen to accept the criticism and offer no remonstrance. She knotted her hair ribbon defiantly, and went to breakfast, her nose in the air.

Once at the table, she had found it hard to reconcile the demands of offended dignity and the claims of a healthy appetite. Both had suffered by the time Mr. Myers had gone, and, when John pushed back his chair from the table, she started to follow him.

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"Wait a little, Ursula," Mrs. Myers said quietly. "I want to talk with you."

Ursula's lips straightened defiantly; but she dared not disobey. She folded her hands and awaited her aunt's pleasure.

With perfect deliberation, Mrs. Myers finished her breakfast. Then suddenly she turned to her niece.

"Ursula child, what makes you dislike me?"

Ursula gasped at the unexpectedness of the attack. In her place, nine girls out of ten would have denied the dislike; but Ursula never fibbed. She felt that she was cornered; but that fact, according to her code, could never justify her in an untruth. She hesitated a little; then she answered with perfect honesty, —

"Because I know you don't like me, and, no matter how hard I try, I can't seem to suit you."

"If I don't like you, what do you think was the reason I invited you to come here?" Mrs. Myers asked slowly.

"I don't know. I supposed at first it was because you thought it would be nice to have me here," Ursula answered just as slowly.

"And so it is."

"Then you take funny ways of showing it," the girl flashed hotly.

"How do you mean?"

"You never act as if you cared for me, and you don't do a thing but criticize me."

Her aunt interrupted.

"Never mind now about the caring for you; but for whose sake is it that I criticize you?"

Ursula carefully erected a tunnel among the ruins on her plate. Then she topped the tunnel with a potato-skin tower.

"Yours, I suppose," she said a little sulkily, at length.

"Does your being a polite, well-bred girl make as much difference to me as it does to you?"

"Yes, if you have to introduce me to people as your niece." A bread-crust train slid through the tunnel.

In spite of herself, Mrs. Myers smiled.

"One is responsible for choosing her friends, not her relatives," she quoted. "Of course, I am glad and proud, when you appear at your best; but, after all, it makes a good deal more difference to you than it does to me."

"But if I'm contented, what's the use of fussing?" Ursula asked gruffly.

"None. But are you contented?"

"I was, till I came here."

"Always?"

"Yes. That is," she glanced over her shoulder to assure herself that the maid was still in the

room ; " that is, except when I had to feed the pig."

Mrs. Myers stiffened a little. However, Ursula had not been the one to learn all the lessons of the past few weeks, and Mrs. Myers rallied swiftly.

"There might be worse things than feeding pigs, Ursula. Where you lived, everybody had them, and ——"

"No," the girl contradicted mutinously ; "there weren't but two in town, ours and Deacon Banister's."

Mrs. Myers ignored the interruption.

"It was proper that you should have some duties at home. In such a large family, everybody must help, and somebody must do the disagreeables. Here it is different, and your duties are different ; but it is just as much your place to do them."

"Nobody else ever told me I shirked my duty," Ursula muttered ; "and I don't see how I've shirked it now."

"It depends upon what you call your duty."

"Making my own bed, and keeping my room picked up," Ursula answered, with dogged literalness.

"That's only a small part of it, child." There was a little pause ; then Mrs. Myers left her

place at the head of the table and, taking the chair next Ursula's, rested her hand and arm across the girl's shoulder. "Ursula, what did you come here for?" she asked gently.

"Because you sent for me."

"Was that the only reason?"

"No. My father wanted me to come."

"Why?"

"He thought it would be good for me, and he said I would be happy with you." All at once the girl's lip quivered. "He said that you were ever so much like him."

"And you think I'm not?"

All the determination had gone out of Ursula's accent; it was only dreary, as she answered,—

"Not the least bit in the world."

Under some conditions, Mrs. Myers would have been flattered at the statement of utter unlikeness between her dainty self and the shabby Iowa minister. Now, however, she admitted to herself that there might be at least two sets of standards in the world. Mrs. Myers was worldly; yet she held fast to her own ideals, and her ideals were a good deal more all-round than they generally were supposed to be. During the week he had spent with her, she had been mortified, several times, by the discovery that her simple-minded brother was her superior both in

brains and breeding. She had lived in the heart of the world, he in the edge of the wilderness; nevertheless, she was honest enough to admit to herself that in many ways he was more than her equal. Apparently his daughter had admitted it, too.

"Ursula," she said, looking straight into the girl's eyes which were glittering defiantly through their tears; "years ago, your father and I loved each other so dearly that we felt nobody else counted for much. That was in the little house at home, where my girlhood was as simple as yours has been. Then he went away to college, and I was married to your Uncle Henry. Your uncle has been prosperous, and I have been very happy with him. Once in a while, though, I have wished that I had had the chance, when I was a girl, to see a little more of the world. It would have fitted me better for being what I am now, the wife of a very rich man. And it was just on that account that I sent for you to come here."

"I'm not going to be the wife of a very rich man," Ursula interrupted, as Mrs. Myers paused. "I'm going to teach school, when I grow up."

"Very likely. It is too soon to tell. But, no matter what you are, isn't it going to be a help to you to have had this winter in New York, to

learn to meet people, and talk, and to speak and move like a well-born lady?"

"It may help; but it isn't everything," the girl said shrewdly.

"No; I didn't say it was. It helps, though. Didn't you like Nathalie Arterburn?"

"Yes." The answer was rather grudging.

"And wouldn't you like to be like her?"

"I couldn't, if I tried. It comes natural to her to be pretty and proper; it doesn't to me. If I'd been born in New York and educated in Paris, I never could be like her, so what's the use of trying? If that is what you are after, you might as well give up and send me home, first as last."

"Ursula, has it ever occurred to you that I like to have you with me?"

"I don't see why."

"Because your father and I were so intimate. We have married and drifted far apart; but when I saw him, it all came back to me. We can't go back now and be children together; but he has been willing to lend me his daughter for a little while, and I want to make her happy and contented here. How can I do it?"

Ursula met her aunt's eyes squarely.

"By liking me a little bit."

"I do like you, child."

“By acting, once in a while, as if I suited you, and, when I don’t, by giving me the benefit of the doubt, and believing that I am trying to be somewhere near proper. I do try, Aunt Ursula ; but it never seems to do much good. It doesn’t come natural to me, as it does to John and to that Nathalie Arterburn. It’s all new to me, newer than you have any idea, and I forget one thing while I am remembering another. Then you all look cross-eyed at me, and I get mad. You don’t know how mad I get. If I dared spit it out to somebody, it would be some comfort ; but I don’t. I hold in and in and in, just as long as I can ; then it all comes out in a lump, and you think I am a great deal worse than I really am. But, Aunt Ursula ——”

“Yes ?”

“It’s all so different. I was scolded at home when I needed it, and that was good and often, too. But then, in between the scoldings, my father used to pet me and cuddle me and play with me. That was his way. It isn’t yours. I don’t believe you ever scolded Jack in his life. Probably he didn’t need it ; he was born a goody boy. But you never pet him, either. Once in a while you tell him how good he is, just as you told me that I acted all right at dinner, the night the rector was here. But that’s not it

at all. I don't want to be praised ; I just want to be liked a little, and then the scoldings can take care of themselves."

Hot-tempered, yet pleading, Ursula, as she sat there, was wonderfully like the boy her father had been. The throbbing voice and the blazing eyes so at war with each other were carrying Mrs. Myers backward to her half-forgotten girlhood. Bending down, she kissed the girl with a sudden wave of affection which was half for Ursula Thain, half for the memory of the boyhood of Ursula Thain's father. Love can be smothered, but it rarely dies.

When Ursula and her aunt rose from the table, half an hour later, the lashes of them both were wet, and Ursula's hand was tucked through her aunt's arm just as, weeks before, she had been used to tuck it into the hollow of her father's elbow. Misunderstandings inevitably would arise later on ; jarring notes inevitably would be struck. Nevertheless, for the first time in their acquaintance, the woman and the girl had looked down, each into the heart of the other, and each had found the sight true and womanly and sweet.

"We must let Maggie have the dining-room," Mrs. Myers said at length. "Come into the library, child, and I'll tell you about my new plan for you."

But already Harry Arterburn had confided this plan to his sister, and had been hotly opposed.

"Harry Arterburn, not really!" she had protested.

"Really and truly, chum. I thought you would be pleased."

"She won't fit in with me, and she will spoil all my fun with you, and she'll be a grand nuisance." Nathalie ended with a vigorous climax.

Harry looked a little disturbed.

"I am sorry, Nathalie. I never thought of your objecting, and I couldn't see any way out of it."

"Tell her not to come."

"We can't afford to."

"Then tell her to come along, and let me keep out of the way," Nathalie suggested hopefully.

Harry shook his head.

"That would spoil Mrs. Myers's plan. She feels that Ursula needs to know girls."

"I'm not girls; I am in the singular number. If she needs girls, why doesn't she go to school?"

"Her aunt wants her to have a tutor. And I have really needed a pupil, now that Rex is off my hands."

Nathalie gave a worried sigh.

"Oh, it is so horrible to be poor, Harry! It is a shame for you to have to mix up with all sorts of people, and work so hard."

"But it was only a few days ago that you were wishing I could find another pupil."

"Yes, I know; but I supposed he would be a boy."

"I thought you liked Ursula," he urged, as he watched the downcast face of his sister.

"I did. She is a spitfire; but I liked her in spite of it," Nathalie assented honestly.

"And you asked her to come here, for I heard you."

"Yes, I did," Nathalie assented again.

"Then why don't you want me to tutor her?" he asked, with masculine obtuseness.

"Because — Stop laughing at me, Harry Arterburn! Because she is as pretty as she can be, and I don't want another girl around in my way."

Her brother surveyed her in astonishment.

"Jealous, Nathalie?"

"Yes, I am," she said tempestuously. "I've had you all to myself, and I don't propose to have another girl coming into this house and spoiling all my fun. If you want to tutor her, and I suppose you must, why can't you go to her house, and let me work by myself?"

Harry waited until she came to a full stop. Then he said quietly,—

“I am sorry, chum; but I am afraid we can't help ourselves. It is only for two hours a day, and it means twelve hundred a year.”

She saw the worried look in his blue eyes, and she relented swiftly.

“Hal, I am a wretch to make a fuss; but I have had such good times, working with you. Truly, I didn't mean to be selfish. When will she begin?”

“Next Monday.”

“Friday, Saturday, Sunday,” Nathalie counted. “Only three more days! What made Mrs. Myers think of such a thing, I wonder. Did you have any idea of it?”

“Not until after dinner, last night. It rather took my breath away; but I can see her side of it. She wants the girl taught, and she doesn't care to tie her down into a school. She had heard that I was keeping the care of your lessons and, naturally, she thought I could be bribed to take charge of another girl.”

Nathalie looked up at him steadily.

“Do you honestly like it, Hal, like it down in the very tip bottom of your soul?”

“No,” he confessed. “I would rather have a boy at a thousand a year than a girl at twelve hundred.”

"What did you think of Mrs. Myers?"

"That she is not nearly so bad as I expected."

"Perhaps she has experienced a change of heart," Nathalie suggested. "Well," she rose as she spoke, and clasped her hands at the back of her fluffy hair; "there is one thing about it: we aren't likely to be studying the same things, so at least we shan't have to do our lessons out of the same book, and I can turn my back upon her, if I choose."

But in both of these statements, the fact belied the prediction. At the end of the first week, Nathalie had lost all desire to turn her back upon the tempestuous, lovable little companion who had been thrust upon her so abruptly. At the end of the second week, she found herself watching for Ursula's coming, impatient if she were late, or if she failed to appear. They clashed occasionally; but, even in the clashes, their friendship rang true. Moreover, Nathalie quickly discovered that, in the matter of lessons, the fifteen-year-old girl was no mean match for herself. It was not for nothing that the worn Phi Beta Kappa charm had hung for all these years from Mr. Thain's shabby watch-guard. A man of scholarly tastes, he had found it his greatest pleasure to train the mind of his oldest child. It was not so much that she had been educated, as that

she had grown up in the middle of a well-chosen, well-thumbed library, and had taken her bedtime stories from Ovid and the Odyssey, rather than from Mother Goose. Study came to her as naturally as housekeeping had come to Nathalie, and from the start Harry Arterburn found it a close race between his two girl pupils.

CHAPTER EIGHT

“THERE!” Nathalie paused in breathless triumph. “Now don’t you feel exactly as if you were flying?”

John made a hasty snatch at his soft gray hat. As he did so, Nathalie noted with approval that his gloves matched the hat to a shade. Whatever his other failings, John Myers was always irreproachable in his dress.

“My hat does,” he answered her, as he tucked it under his arm for safe-keeping. “I would rather it waited until I was ready to start, too. Isn’t it a little gusty up here?”

But Nathalie, secure in her four hat-pins and her brimless toque, scorned the suggestion. Instead of heeding it, she turned to Ursula.

“Half the people in New York have never been up here, and they have no idea what they lose. Dr. Holden used to say that, whenever he had a conceited fit, he came here, and it always taught him that he didn’t amount to much, after all.”

“Dr. Holden?” Ursula said interrogatively.

"Yes. He is Mrs. Barrett's nephew, and the largest man I ever saw."

"Larger than Mr. Barrett?" John asked literally.

Nathalie frowned.

"I don't mean that. You can't measure Dr. Holden by a tape line; but he is a man who, no matter how great the need for him may be, is always large enough to fill it."

"Here in New York?" Ursula asked idly, with her eyes fixed on the picture before her.

"Yes, and everywhere else. He lives in the city; but he is on all sorts of committees and commissions and things for all over the state. He is a young man, too, just Hal's age. I mean that literally, for they are twins."

"What brought you up here, in the first place?" Ursula inquired, as soon as Nathalie paused. To her mind, Dr. Holden was a veteran, too elderly to be at all interesting, and she saw no need of prolonging the subject.

"Rex brought me. He was ill for a long time after I knew him, and couldn't walk much. After he was stronger, we used to explore the whole city, until we knew it by heart. We generally took a car down town, and then started out for a penny walk. It was good fun, too, heads right, tails left, at every corner, and it

took us into the queerest places. Once it took us into Mott Street, and we were so frightened that we scurried off as fast as we could, and never thought of our penny again until we were safe in Fifth Avenue."

John looked interested.

"What is the matter with Mott Street?" he asked.

Nathalie shook her yellow head.

"That is another proof of what I was saying. New Yorkers don't half know New York. Mott Street is in Chinatown, and it's not always a pleasant spot for a stroll. I never saw it but that once; but I often used to go down into Hester Street."

John's face looked as if he longed to make inquiries concerning Hester Street, also, but dared not show his ignorance. Ursula, however, had no such scruples.

"Where is that?" she demanded.

Nathalie's pointing finger turned to the northeast.

"Down there, away behind those horrid Castoria signs. That is where the tenements are thickest, and where the children swarm all over the streets. It used to be a wonder to me that any of them came out alive; but they seem as thrifty as a crop of young pusley."

"And you have been there?"

"Once a week always, until I went abroad. I used to go with Mrs. Ainslee, Mrs. Barrett's niece; but now that she has a baby of her own, she can't go nearly so often. We'll go home, that way."

"Is it safe?" Ursula questioned rather doubtfully.

Nathalie's laugh rang out blithely.

"They don't eat up people, here in New York, Ursula, and, as long as you go straight ahead and pay attention to your own affairs, they don't take much notice of you."

"But you don't go alone; do you?" she persisted.

Nathalie turned to the boy beside her, with a little bow which brought the color into his cheeks.

"I am not going alone now. John will look out for us, I know."

And John, nodding his assent, in that same instant swore allegiance to this first girl who had ever cared to place herself under his masculine protection. Moreover, he resolved to show himself worthy of the trust.

"Never mind that now," Nathalie added. "I brought you here to look at the view, not to study geography. We went a good way in

Europe to see things not half so wonderful as this."

Nathalie spoke truthfully, for they stood at the apex of the huge arch of the Brooklyn bridge, midway between the towers which rose far above them, carrying on their buttressed crests the graceful lines of the cables. Around them spread the vast panorama of Greater New York, with Murray Hill in the northern distance and the ragged sky-line of lower Broadway close at hand. Behind them were the heights of Brooklyn; under their feet, East River whose rough gray surface was cut here and there and across and across with the whitening trails of countless ferry boats. Over their heads arched an indigo sky, and from above the hills behind the Narrows came the level shafts of winter sunshine that lighted the torch in Liberty's hand, gilded the dome of the World building and turned to sulphur-yellow the heavy columns of smoke rolling sluggishly upward from the chimneys at their feet.

Ursula drew a long breath of sheer delight.

"Why doesn't somebody paint it?" she asked.

"Too near home," John answered scornfully. "If it were Venice or the Nile, everybody would be after it. Things close at home don't count."

"Then why don't the Venetians come here?" Ursula demanded.

Her cousin laughed.

"The Nihilists do," he replied.

And Nathalie, listening, asked herself whether, after all, Kingsley Barrett had been quite fair in his sweeping condemnation of Pettijohn Myers. Perhaps the boy was not altogether a dunce.

It was the first time that Nathalie had come into really close contact with her boy companion, for, on the night when she and Harry had dined in the Myers home, as if by mutual consent, she and John had remained as nearly as possible upon opposite sides of the room. John was proud, and had no mind to bear the snubbing which might be in store for him unless he kept his distance; Nathalie was too utterly indifferent to him even to feel any curiosity regarding him. Their hands had touched and their eyes had met, at meeting and at parting; otherwise, had it not been for John's one giggle, Nathalie would have been quite oblivious of the fact that there was a boy in the room. In spite of herself, she had liked the giggle, even though it might have been in part at her expense. At least, it showed her that the boy was alive and owned a sense of fun; and hitherto she had not given him credit even for so much.

However, by this time, Ursula and Nathalie had become close friends. Their friendship was partly the result of chance, partly of propinquity; but in part it came from a certain likeness in their traits and training. Heretofore, Nathalie had made no real friends in New York, outside the Barrett family, and Kingsley Barrett's going away to Yale had left a large vacancy in her very small world. In a sense, Nathalie cared for no friend but her brother; yet her healthy girlhood demanded the outlet of a companion of her own age, and Ursula Thain supplied that outlet. As a matter of course, the two girls, suddenly thrust into each other's company during the larger part of every morning, were bound either to be close friends, or to hate each other cordially. For a few days, they had met each other with their nerves on edge. Then, mercifully for Harry Arterburn's peace of mind, they had abruptly decided to be good friends. Ursula was jealously admiring; Nathalie was tolerant; both girls had been trained to simple and thrifty habits, to the point of view which led to sensible living, while circumstances had made Ursula seem so much older than she was in reality that in many respects the difference between them was one of years, not of actual fact.

Nathalie enjoyed the friendship with certain limitations; Ursula enjoyed it absolutely; John Myers enjoyed it not at all. In fact, he was rather inclined to resent the cavalier fashion in which his cousin shunted him off on a side track and left him lying there, while she departed in search of Nathalie. Ursula's alternate teasing and cajolery had been adding a new spice to John's life of late, and he was of no mind to go back to his old-time tasteless existence. He had begun to form the habit of neglecting his books for his cousin. Now that his cousin had taken to neglecting him, he turned back to his books, merely to find that they had lost much of their savor. At first he was surprised at the discovery, then disgusted. At last he unbent his dignity to the point of expressing to Ursula his wish that she should give him the first place in her plans. Then he experienced a second wave of surprise and disgust. For the first time in his life, John Myers was finding his wish inadequate for the ruling of all things within the Myers home. Ursula merely laughed, nodded, and went her way.

At length, one evening, the worm turned.

"Now look here," he protested wrathfully; "where does my chance come in? It's Nathalie this, and Nathalie that; but you've been promis-

ing for more than a month to go to the Natural History Museum with me."

"But I don't like your old bones and bugs and things," Ursula objected, with a grimace of disgust.

"How do you know? You never saw any."

"Yes, I saw a horse's skeleton once, and it was hideous. Oh, Jackie, what a skeleton you'd make; you have such lovely, even teeth!"

But John frowned on her digression.

"Go with me, to-morrow, Ursula."

"What for?"

"Because I want you."

"But I thought you didn't like girls."

"I don't; but that doesn't signify. You are half boy. You promised, you know."

"Did I?" Ursula said thoughtfully. "It must have been a good while ago, Jackie, for I can't seem to remember."

He thought he discerned signs of yielding in her tone.

"But you'll go?"

"Sorry, Jack; but I can't."

"Why not?"

"I'm going to walk with Nathalie."

"Then take me with you," he demanded.

Ursula raised her brows.

"But that would make two girls, and you say you can't stand even one."

He smiled again.

"No matter. I'll risk it."

Ursula meditated aloud.

"You'll spoil all the fun; boys do. And you'll get tired, and fret to go home. And Nathalie probably won't want you around."

John flushed hotly.

"Did she ever say so?"

"No. Not just that."

"What did she say?"

"Oh, lots of things."

"About me?"

"N-no." Ursula looked up at him out of the corners of her eyes. "No; I don't think I ever heard her mention you, one way or the other." Then she relented. "You will be dreadfully in the way, Jack; but I suppose, if you're so very anxious, I can ask her if she minds having you go with us, just this once."

And Nathalie, who had chanced to be in a particularly gracious mood, had been so far from minding that she had taken the cousins upon one of her own favorite walks, the footpath over the Brooklyn bridge. Moreover, although at the start she had taken care to fortify herself with Ursula placed between herself and John, by the

time they halted on the crest of the arch, Nathalie had been sauntering along contentedly, with one of the cousins upon either hand.

As they came out through the crowded western approach to the bridge, Nathalie turned sharply to the eastward at a pace which, it must be confessed, taxed to the uttermost John's powers of endurance; but when she came at length into the district which goes to Seward Park for its breathing room, her step lagged a little, and she began tossing merry greetings upon this side and that. Ursula was already staring about her in frank curiosity; but John shrugged his shoulders in frank disgust, and stalked along at her side, his eyes fixed on vacancy and his neat gloves in the clean recesses of his side pockets. Hygiene to the contrary, however, at the end of the first block, he decided to breathe by means of his mouth alone. At the end of the second block, he turned upon Nathalie the stony eye of disfavor.

"What do you propose to do with those—those br—youngsters?"

Nathalie glanced down at the strings of children that hung, like parti-colored kite-tails, from either thumb. Then she glanced up at John's delicate face and immaculate garb.

"Can't you take a few of them in tow?" she questioned demurely. "They get so little fun

out of life, and they do so love to hold hands, as they call it."

"Thanks, no. I prefer to keep clean."

"So would they, if they had the chance," Nathalie retorted.

"They don't look it; but I'll give them the benefit of the doubt, if you'll only come along."

John was rapidly growing masterful, and Ursula nudged his ribs while she cast an affrighted look at Nathalie who did not appear to be in the least disturbed. It was not the first time she had taken spotless strangers into Hester Street. She knew all their symptoms by heart and, moreover, she rejoiced in the more acute of these symptoms. There was another silence, of amusement to Nathalie, of physical and mental agony to John. Then he demanded,—

"Are your friends going to escort you all the way home?"

"Oh, no; they will begin to drop off very soon," she answered blithely.

John Myers was a peaceful boy, yet now he began to wish that the dropping off of their escort might be in the figurative sense which presages the need of an undertaker. The little knot of children was swelling fast, and they surrounded Nathalie like a swarm of bees, crowding and jostling John, treading over his polished

shoes with their muddy bare feet, and filling his ears with their shrill, discordant jabbering. Little by little, he found himself included in their demonstrations of affection towards Nathalie; but he was so far from being pleased by the attention that, when one small and unwashed urchin seized him by his coat, he promptly detached the little paw, with the sharp order,—

“Hands off, youngster!”

Instantly the child rushed to the gutter for a handful of mud which fell full in the crown of John's gray hat. Other mud followed, and yet more, and then a little stone, aimed by some reckless child hand, swept into the midst of the group. In another instant, the scrimmage would have been general, had it not been that the stone passed John by and landed full in the face of the first little aggressor. There was a hush; then, before the tumult could arise again, before even Nathalie could stir, John Myers, immaculate no longer, was sitting on the curbstone, his feet in the gutter, while he wiped away the line that reddened and reddened yet again across the cheek of the urchin on his knee.

“I wouldn't cry, youngster,” he explained to his patient kindly. “It won't hurt but a minute, and then you'll forget all about it. Shut

your teeth and—and count forty-one, and then see if it doesn't feel better."

But it did not feel better, and in his woe the child twisted his grimy legs into strange knots over John's knees, and the child's mates, crowding around to offer sympathy, splashed to and fro in the gutter and added their share to the ruin which their friend had wrought. Nevertheless, the boy's sobs were yielding to consolation. John's grip was comforting; John's voice in his ears was full of encouragement and, for the first time in his desolate little life, the child knew what it was to be held tenderly and with affection. For a moment, he struggled with his sobs, held them back manfully and then, when once more they would have their way, he nuzzled his bullet-like little head, mud and cut and all, into the front of John's flawless necktie and there, hidden from view, wailed out all his misery and all his gratitude.

The sobs died away into silence, and the crowd died away on the trail of a hurdy-gurdy. John rose. Then he essayed to shake himself. Then he looked at his girl companions with a shamefaced smile.

"I couldn't let the little dago bleed to death," he said apologetically.

"No," Nathalie assented.

John gave a furtive rub at his sodden knees.

"And it really was a beastly cut," he urged.

"Yes," Nathalie assented again.

"Of course, he didn't deserve it; but he was such a little fellow," John added, while he glanced reproachfully at his left shoe on whose shiny top the print of five bare toes was distinctly visible.

"Yes."

John felt that Nathalie's replies were becoming monotonous. He could not know that she dared not trust her voice to say more, and he resented her apparent indifference to his plight. The silence deepened.

"Oh, but I say now," he burst out at length; "how am I going to get you two girls home?"

"We passed some cross-town cars in Canal Street," Ursula suggested.

"Yes; but I can't go with you."

"Why not?" Nathalie demanded suddenly.

For his only answer, he dropped his arms to his sides and turned himself completely around, just once and very slowly. It was eloquent, and Nathalie felt her voice going once more. However, she had a shrewd suspicion that John Myers, in his present state of evolution, could never appreciate a joke of which

he himself was the point, and she steadied her voice again.

"If Ursula and I don't mind it, why should you? For my part, I am glad to be seen with a man who has the grit to be a gentleman."

He flushed at her praise; but, instead of accepting it, he attempted to turn it off with a laugh at her expense.

"But you said that nobody would pay any attention to us."

Nathalie's lip curled ever so slightly.

"I said if we went ahead and paid attention to our own affairs."

"I did," he answered defensively. "Aren't my clothes my own affair?"

Nathalie's comprehensive glance took him in, in all his details from his necktie to his knees. Then she shook her head gravely.

"Apparently not," she answered. "You seem to have given yourself wholly to the masses."

But, underneath her mockery, her voice had the ring of hearty approval.

CHAPTER NINE

GREAT was the indignation and consternation in the Myers dining-room, that night, when Ursula, between her giggles, recounted the tale of John's misadventures. Her aunt and uncle were already at the table when she entered the room, and her aunt was tapping the tablecloth a little impatiently. Promptness at meals was one of the initial clauses of Mrs. Myers's creed.

"You are late, Ursula," she announced, as Ursula's forward toe rested upon the threshold.

It was one of Ursula's principles never to answer the statement of an undeniable truth, when that truth was put forward to serve as argument or rebuke. Answers, she reasoned, led to other statements, and those to needless discussion, and Ursula hated discussion. Accordingly, she slid into her seat at the table, and picked up her soup spoon.

Mrs. Myers renewed the charge.

"Didn't you know you were going to be late?"

"Yes, Aunt Ursula."

"Then why didn't you hurry?"

Ursula's lips puckered into a smile.

"Circumstances prevented," she answered demurely.

Her aunt laid down her spoon and folded her hands before her empty plate, in token of the fact that she was waiting patiently for her niece to catch up. Ursula took the hint, attempted to gulp her soup too hastily, burned herself, choked and then retired, disgraced, into the folds of her napkin.

"I should advise you, another time, to be mistress of circumstances," Mrs. Myers observed majestically, as soon as she could be heard above the coughing.

"Where is John?" Mr. Myers interrupted.

"He is—getting himself clean," Ursula responded irrepressibly, for the whole situation was proving too much for her gravity.

"Ursula!"

"Yes, ma'am. But truly I wasn't to blame."

"But what is John really doing?" Mr. Myers demanded.

To the manifest horror of her aunt, Ursula leaned back in her chair and laughed till the tears came.

"I told you before," she gasped. "He is getting himself clean enough so he can come to the table."

Mrs. Myers looked puzzled, annoyed, indignant. Then she turned to the maid.

"Maggie, go up to Mr. John's room and ask him to come down at once, no matter what he is doing. Tell him I wish to speak to him immediately, and he is to come down just as he is."

The click of the maid's heels could be heard ascending the stairway. Then it descended again, and, when it descended, it was accompanied by a curious padding sound that came nearer the dining-room door. Ursula glanced up expectantly. Then she covered her face with her napkin and gave way to her mirth.

Startled at the unexpected and imperative summons, John had made no delay in obeying his mother's behest. He had appeared upon the threshold, not his accustomed orderly self, but a ruffled vision in his stocking feet and long blue bathrobe, a vision which trailed behind it a muddy coat held by one sodden sleeve. His hair was awry, and his eyes were anxious as they roved from his mother's set face to Ursula, buried in her napkin.

"What is it?" he asked hurriedly. "Is somebody ill? Is Ursula having a fit?"

Before his mother could frame a suitable response, Ursula had uncovered one eye.



"Oh, Jack!" she gasped. Then she buried her face in her napkin once more.

Mrs. Myers began to feel that, in some mysterious fashion, her dignity was being assailed, and she resented it, as one always resents being on the outskirts of a joke.

"Be still, Ursula! John, what has happened to you?"

Her tone, sharp at first, softened on the last words, and she looked anxiously at her son. He reddened, partly at her question, partly at the consciousness of his attire which was manifestly unsuitable for an evening dinner. One hand jerked the coat out of sight behind him; the other gripped the bathrobe into still closer folds in front.

"We went to walk, and I had some mud splashed on me," he explained vaguely.

His mother started up in alarm.

"Tell me, John, were you run over?" she cried. "Were you badly hurt?"

But John already had fled in the direction of the stairway, with an agility which ought to have reassured his mother as to his physical condition. Mrs. Myers stared after him, until the last blue fold had vanished around the corner of the upper landing. Then she turned back to Ursula.

"Oh, Ursula," she said reproachfully; "how could you let him?"

Ursula stared back at her aunt in open-eyed amazement.

"Let him? I didn't have anything to do with it."

"But you were with him."

"Yes, of course."

"Then you shouldn't have let him be so reckless. John is too delicate to run any risks."

Ursula essayed to reason with her aunt.

"But he wasn't reckless, and there wasn't any risk, anyway."

"Where were you when it happened?"

"In Hester Street."

"Where is that, I should like to know?"

"Oh, over there in that funny corner beyond Second Avenue," Ursula replied as airily as if she had been familiar from her babyhood with that vague region generally known as the East Side.

"Ursula Thain! What took you into that dreadful part of the city? No nice girl is ever seen there."

"There were two seen there, to-day," Ursula returned defiantly.

"Who?"

"Ursula Thain and Nathalie Arterburn."

Mrs. Myers frowned.

"Did Nathalie Arterburn go there with you?"

"Yes, she took us." Ursula nonchalantly attacked her roast beef.

"What would Mrs. Barrett have said!"

"It was Mrs. Barrett's niece who took her, in the first place."

Mr. Myers glanced up, as he spoke with the dignity which he assumed at times,—

"Ursula, the East Side is no place for children, at least, for children by themselves, without any older people. John should have known better, for he has lived in the city all his life. You were not at all to blame; you couldn't be expected to know what places were unfit for you to explore. But now I wish you to make me a promise and to keep it. As long as you are in New York, you are not to go into any such places again, unless your aunt or I am with you."

"I won't," Ursula promised readily enough, for she was fast growing to like her taciturn uncle. "But how can I tell what such places are?"

"Come to the library, after dinner, and I will show you," he answered kindly. "For the sake of your father, child, as well as for your own, we

want to keep you out of harm's way. And now what was it that happened to John?"

Sobered by his rebuke, Ursula began the story gravely enough; but, as she went on, her mirth came uppermost once more until, by the time she had finished, her uncle was laughing in sympathy with her merriment.

"It might have ended more seriously," he said at last; "but fortunately no harm was done. I don't want you repeating the experiment; but I have an idea that, for the once, it won't hurt the boy to see the rougher side of things. He certainly showed himself a decent sort of fellow in the end."

Then he checked himself, for John had just come into the room, as immaculate as ever, but looking uncommonly alert and energetic. He laughed at his father's last words.

"No especial honor to me, though," he said jovially. "I had never been in a street fight before, and I must confess that I rather enjoyed the new experience."

He recurred to the subject, the next day, when he and Ursula were starting on their long-deferred trip to the Museum of Natural History. Ursula had consented with unwonted docility to his suggestion that they should go, that afternoon. For some unexplained cause, she had

never liked her cousin so well, nor been so ready to fall in with his plans and wishes, as since she had seen him sitting on the muddy curbstone, advising the child in his arms to stop crying and count forty-one. The sight had suggested to her the possibility of as yet unsounded depths to her cousin's philosophy.

John had come in from school, that noon, to find Ursula busy in his room with hammer and nails.

"What the mischief are you doing?" he asked in surprise.

She pointed to the inky map of New York which she was fastening to the closet door.

"I'm establishing a dead-line for the protection of your clothes. When you enter that great black space, you'll go alone, and in jumper and overalls."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. This is the twin to a map your father marked for me. He put a line all around this part of the city, and he says we aren't to go there, unless he tells us we can. I made your map blacker than mine, though, for I thought you needed a warning more than I did."

"Did you tell Nathalie?" he asked abruptly.

"About what?"

"That we couldn't have free range?"

"Yes."

"Didn't she laugh?"

Ursula faced him sharply.

"No, she didn't; but suppose she did? Your father doesn't say *must* very often. When he does, I propose to mind him, and to have you mind him, too."

"Don't I always mind him?"

"Yes, after a fashion."

"What sort of a fashion?" he demanded.

"A fashion I wasn't allowed to use," she retorted. "When he tells you to do something, you generally do it; but you do it in such a bored, condescending sort of way that, for all the respect there is in it, you might about as well leave it undone."

"Did you always mind your father?" he questioned keenly.

For a moment, Ursula's eyes drooped. Then she raised them again.

"Not always," she confessed. "Not as often as I wish now I had done. But, at least, I treated his opinions as if they were important enough to make me mad, and I don't know but there's something in that."

Mild sunshine had given place to cold, snapping weather, as the two cousins turned into the park, the next day. Ursula gave a little cry of delight.

"Oh, glorious!" she exclaimed. "This is the first bit of ice I have seen, this year."

Before her cousin could stop her, she had darted forward in a quick, short run, and gone sliding away along the narrow strip of ice that bordered the walk. John started to remonstrate; then he stayed his speech. According to his code, it was a totally unorthodox proceeding upon Ursula's part; yet most things were forgivable in a pretty girl, and Ursula certainly did look very pretty, as she turned and came sliding back to him, with her brown eyes sparkling above the fluffy brown fur of her collar. She read his silent disapproval, however, and, coming closer to his side, she tucked her hand through the curve of his elbow.

"Shocked again, Jackie?" she asked composedly. "I really couldn't help it, and I need something as an offset to the bones, you know."

John felt that it was likewise unorthodox to be walking arm in arm with his cousin. Nevertheless, he neglected to shake off the muscular little hand that rested so firmly on his sleeve.

"I am getting used to being shocked," he returned philosophically. "It is a whole education in itself to learn to keep up with you."

"Does that mean that I am fast?" she queried gayly.

The laugh died out of John's eyes, and he looked down at her gravely.

"Not the least bit in the world," he answered, and his voice had an accent which was quite new to Ursula.

They walked on in silence for a time, while each, for some unexplained reason, was thinking steadily of the other. Then John spoke from the very midst of his thinking.

"Do you suppose he really would have cared about yesterday, Ursula?"

"Who?" she questioned blankly.

"Your father."

Ursula's face sobered.

"I don't know. I hope not. Of course, I shall write to him about it."

"If you do, you'd better tell him I was the one to blame," her cousin said bluntly.

"But you weren't; at least, not for our going there in the first place. That did itself."

John went on with his own train of thought.

"And yet, I don't know as I want your father to think I am getting you into scrapes. What is the use of telling him?"

Ursula's hand dropped from his elbow.

"But I tell my father everything."

"What's the use?"

"There isn't any use, I suppose," she said

tartly. "But don't you ever do anything just for the sake of doing it, without thinking whether it is of use or not?"

"Yes, sometimes."

"Well, this is one of the times," she retorted. "I've told him things, all my life."

"Because he makes you?"

"No; because he always understands."

"More than your mother?" John asked curiously.

"Yes, she reasons things out in time; but my father never has to reason. He knows, himself," Ursula answered, with fine discrimination.

"Do you know," John went on reflectively; "you always talk as if you and your father were the best chums in the world."

"Well, we are."

"How funny!" John's accent was meditative.

"It isn't funny at all," Ursula contradicted him. "It is sober, serious earnest."

"How queer, then, if you must have the proper word!"

"It's not queer in the least. Everybody's father is."

"Mine isn't."

"And whose fault is it, I'd like to know?"

"I don't know as it's anybody's fault. It just is."

"It is your own fault, too. You go your own way alone, and let him pay the bills."

"He's busy. He doesn't want me around in the way."

"Did you ever give him a chance to find out?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Well, I suppose not, then, if what I have seen since I came, is any sample. You let your mother fuss over you and spoil you like a poodle dog; but ——"

"Oh, look here now!" John protested hotly.

However, Ursula swept on,—

"You know she does, and you let her, and, what's worse, you like it. But as far as your father is concerned, you might as well have a tin bank. You never act as if you cared what he did, or if he were tired, or if his business was bad or good. I don't believe you have been in his office a dozen times, this last year."

"Why, of course not."

"Well, you ought to. You ought to act as if you cared about the things he cares about. He isn't going to talk to you about your things, unless you talk to him about his. My father and I talk over everything, from his sermons to my best gown. I used to make doll clothes in a corner of the study; and then, if I had been very

quiet and not dropped the scissors, when his sermon was done, he used to tell me stories out of Homer and Judges."

Her face was brilliant with her enthusiasm, her eyes like stars. John came out of his meditation, and surveyed her admiringly.

"By Jove, Ursula," he said; "you look as if you were talking about Achilles himself."

Her eyes softened, as there came before her mind the picture of her father, shabby, unworldly, yet a gentleman who, she told herself, was fit to sit at kingly tables.

"No," she answered slowly; "only of Gideon."

CHAPTER TEN

“ I USED to say I hated tripe worse than any-
thing else in this world,” Ursula solilo-
quized ; “ but I honestly think I hate English
history worse. I never can remember which
Henry did which, nor whether the Chartists had
anything to do with Magna Charta. Yes, Jack.
Were you saying things to me ? ”

“ I should say so. My throat is husky with
my efforts to arouse you. ”

Ursula went to the head of the stairs. Then
she shook her head at him in mock disapproval.

“ Oh, Jackie, how you are deteriorating !
Tempus fuit. ”

“ *Tempus fuit* what ? ” he demanded.

“ *Tempus fuit* that you wouldn't have sat on
the newel post and shouted at the top of your
lungs. Why didn't you come to my door and
tap, like a gentleman ? ”

“ I did once, the day after you came, and you
roared at me so that I had to leave off tapping
and use all my fingers to stuff into my ears, ” he an-
swered unconcernedly. “ What are you doing ? ”

"Wishing that Mr. Arterburn would choke to death on his own English histories."

"I thought you liked him."

"So I do. That doesn't signify that I like all his bad habits, though. It is one thing to like a man; it's quite another matter to like his history lessons. I wish he would confine himself to Greek."

"Why don't you tell him to go slow?"

"For the simple reason that Nathalie Arterburn is two years older than I am."

"What does that have to do with it?"

Ursula eyed her cousin despairingly.

"Pettijohn Myers, you haven't the spunk of a mouse," she said at length.

He dismounted from the newel post, and stood facing her.

"Who taught you that name?" he asked indignantly.

"Nathalie Arterburn."

"How did she know it?"

"She said Rex Barrett used to call you so."

"Well, you ought to be ashamed of yourself for using it," he returned hotly.

Ursula's voice took on an accent of injured innocence.

"I'm sure it is a good name."

"Good enough, only there's no sense in it."

The extreme tip of her tongue showed itself between her teeth. Then she laughed.

"Don't be too sure of that. When you're nice, and you can be very nice, you know, when you are nice, you're Jackie; but, once in a while, you're nothing in this world but Pettijohn Myers."

With a bound, he passed her, as she still sat on the topmost stair, went into his own room and banged the door behind him. Secure in the knowledge that her aunt was out making calls, Ursula followed him and began drubbing on the door.

"Pettijohn Myers!" she called.

No answer.

"John!"

No answer.

"Cousin Jack!"

Still no answer.

"Jackie?" Her dancing eyes mocked at her own pleading voice.

"Wha' do you want?" The answer was gruff, and apparently it consisted of but one polysyllabic word; nevertheless, it was an answer.

"I want you."

"What for?"

"Because you want me."

"But I don't."

"Then what did you call me for, and disturb me when I was trying to mind my book?" By this time, her accent was rebuking.

The door banged open, and John stood on the threshold.

"Oh, confound you!" he protested. "Why can't you ever let a fellow alone?"

"Because I'm lonesome, and I want you, Jackie. Come and play with me."

"I'll be hanged if I do; you're entirely too saucy. There are some things no fellow will stand." And the door banged shut again.

Ursula promptly converted the door into an organ and played *Georgia* on it, using the upper panels as manuals, the lower ones as pedals. Her warlike strains were appropriate, yet they did not prove alluring and John, within, was ominously silent, so she abandoned her assault and philosophically took herself out for a walk.

She came to dinner, flushed and contented with life. She had been seized with a sudden inspiration which had led her to walk down to meet her uncle, and his manifest pleasure in the little attention had caused her to forget John entirely. When she appeared at the table, however, she was astonished to find that John's face was still averted from her. Accordingly, she

talked at him, all dinner time, with the discouraging result that, by the time dinner was over, John's face was more averted from her than ever.

Mrs. Myers and her husband went to the theatre, that evening. As soon as Ursula heard the front door close upon them, she started in search of John, with the full intention of fighting it out with him and reëstablishing some sort of a peace. Ursula had no love of an armed neutrality. Her code demanded war to the knife and no quarter, followed by a full surrender upon one side or the other. Furthermore, she preferred that hers should rarely be the side to surrender.

However, her search for John proved unavailing. He had removed himself directly after dinner; and Ursula's first thought was that he had gone away out of the house. Nevertheless, the girl was a born strategist. She went to the rack, counted over the tale of his various hats and discovered that none was missing. Next she betook herself to the street and reconnoitred the situation. In John's room, the lights were burning brightly. She nodded to herself and went in pursuit of one of the maids.

"Tell Mr. John he is wanted in the parlor, please," she ordered. "He is in his room. You needn't say who it is that wants him."

The maid hesitated, for she suspected that mischief was on foot; but John was rather unpopular with the servants who one and all adored Ursula, so she went to summon the youthful master of the house.

When, after an interval, the youthful master of the house put in an appearance, it was obvious that he expected to find a guest awaiting him. This was shown partly by the very manifest prinking which had occupied the interval, partly by the cordial smile that lighted his face, when he entered the room. As she heard his step come nearer, Ursula glanced up languidly from her book. No guest was in sight, and John was peering into the corners of the large room.

"Who is here?" he demanded.

"I am."

"Who else?"

"Nobody."

"Maggie told me somebody wanted to see me."

"Well, sit down, then."

"But who wants me?"

"I do."

John stared indignantly at her for a minute.

"Oh, fudge!" he remarked. Then he swung around on his heel.

Ursula thought that her prey was about to escape her, and she straightened up in her chair.

"Come back here, Jack," she ordered him.

To her surprise, he obeyed her.

"Sit down."

His obedience stopped short at her second order.

"Well, stand up, then; but you'd better take it easy, while you can."

"What do you want?" he asked sharply.

"To talk to you."

"Talk away, then, and hurry up about it."

"I want to know what makes you so cross to me."

"I'm not cross."

"Yes, you are; you're savage as a meat ax, and thorny as a hedgepig. You were cross, this afternoon, and, at dinner, you wouldn't speak to me, and now you look as if you would like to eat me up. I don't think it is a very good way to treat company."

John listened patiently, until she was through with her arraignment. Then he asked,—

"Is that all?"

"No. I forgot to say that you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

He looked at her meditatively for a minute.

"So ought you," he responded then.

Ursula leaned back in her deep chair and watched her cousin from under her lowered

lashes. It seemed to her that she had never before seen him look one half so well. His new clothes, donned for the mythical guest, were as becoming to him as was the spot of angry scarlet that burned in either cheek. As she studied him, she half relented. Then her heart hardened. Ursula was in a perverse mood, that night; and, moreover, she had decided that John must be disciplined.

“What have I done?” she asked innocently.

“Been beastly rude.”

“How?”

“You called me Pettijohn Myers, for one thing,” he said resentfully.

Her long lashes drooped yet a little lower. Then she drawled,—

“Yes, I suppose it is always mean to twit on facts.”

In her idler moments, Ursula had long been wondering what her cousin would be like, if once he were thoroughly roused. Now her curiosity was answered. For a minute, John stared down at her with blazing eyes.

“Oh, you hateful little ——” Then swiftly he checked himself. “If that is all, I think I’ll go.”

The color had died out of his face, and his lips were shut tight together, as he turned to leave the room. Reckless as she generally was, Ursula

was frightened at his evident anger, and she swiftly realized that, without John's companionship, life in the Myers home would be a dreary experience. She sprang up, ran after him and caught him by the hand, just as he reached the stairs.

"Jack, don't go! I was only teasing."

"Sometimes teasing can go too far," he said stiffly.

"Truly, I didn't mean it, Jackie," she begged him.

"But it hurts, just the same." He started to go up the stairs.

All at once, Ursula knew that she was standing on the edge of a crisis. It had not occurred to her that, down in his secret heart, John might not be proud of some of his more salient characteristics. Now her womanly instinct warned her truly that, if once she let her cousin go away to think over their quarrel, she might as well bid good-bye to any hope of keeping on with their friendship. Now or never was the time for peace.

Putting forth all her strength, she half led, half pushed John back into the parlor and forced him to sit down on a sofa. Then, still holding his hand, she dropped down at his side.

"Jack, you've got to listen to me," she said

tempestuously. "I was only just trying to tease you. I never supposed you would take it in earnest. We used to tease each other all the time, at home, the whole lot of us, and nobody ever thought of caring. We knew just what it all amounted to, and I supposed you knew it, too. I never thought you would turn peppery over a little thing like that."

"It doesn't strike me that it was such a very little thing," he returned, as he tried to pull his hand away from her strong, nervous fingers.

She held on resolutely.

"Jack, are you really and truly and honestly mad at me?" she asked.

"Yes, I am." The answer was full of boyish dignity, and again Ursula's heart smote her.

"I am sorry. I can't say more than that."

"No."

"But I do wish you would tell me what you are mad at," she went on, after a pause.

"A good many things."

"Oh, dear, I can't see what," she broke out, half penitently, half resentfully.

"For calling me Pettijohn Myers, for one thing."

She looked at him impatiently.

"Jack, what do you care? Everybody gets nicknamed, sooner or later. At home, I was

Snubby Thain, all over the school, just on account of my nose; but I didn't care a row of pins about it."

"I am glad you didn't. I do care. That's the difference."

Ursula dropped his hand.

"Well, then I must say I am glad we are different," she said hotly. Then, as he made a move as if to rise, she seized his hand again. "But Pettijohn isn't a bad name. You oughtn't to mind it."

Suddenly he freed himself and, rising, tramped the length of the room and back again. Then he faced her.

"I don't mind the name; it's what it stands for. It is no fun to know that one isn't popular."

"How do you know it?" she demanded.

"All sorts of ways. By their calling me Pettijohn, for one thing."

"Nicknames don't count."

"It depends on whether they use them to your face, or behind your back," he answered moodily.

"What makes you think you aren't popular?"

"I don't think it; I know it. A fellow always knows when he isn't liked."

"Get yourself liked, then," she said dauntlessly.

"I can't. I've tried it, after a fashion; but I

won't toady, and I have about given it up. I mean not to act as if I cared, and one can bluff out most things; but it is a little too much, when it comes inside one's own house."

"What comes?" Ursula asked blankly.

"The Pettijohn, and all that."

"But, Jackie, don't be so silly," she remonstrated. "I only called you that in fun, because Nathalie said it was your school nickname."

"Yes, and Rex Barrett gave it to me."

"Well, suppose he did? He hasn't the sole right to its use; has he?"

"No; but —— Confound it! Can't you see that the fellows wouldn't use it as they do, if they liked me?"

"How do you know they don't like you?"

"Watch them and see."

"Why don't they like you?" she went on remorselessly, for she saw that her cousin was really in trouble, and she resolved to do her best to get to the bottom of that trouble. Then she pulled aside her skirts invitingly. "Sit down here, like a dear old boy, and tell me all about it."

It was a girlish face that looked up at him; but the tone was maternal, and it soothed to some extent the boy's irritation. Nevertheless, his dignity demanded a final remonstrance.

"I do wish you would attend to your own affairs," he grumbled.

However, he took possession of the sofa corner at her side.

She let him sit there while the silence grew irksome to him. Then she said abruptly,—

"Jack, I don't want to be a bore; but I do wish you would tell me what all this nonsense is, about the boys not liking you."

He had thought she had abandoned the subject, and her sudden return to it took him by surprise. His surprise led him into a frankness which astonished even himself.

"I don't know as I blame them. In their places, I shouldn't like the fellow I seem to be. I can't help it; it really isn't my fault. I can't keep my mother from saying things and mooning about me, as if I were the prince of milksops. I hate it; but the hating it doesn't do any good. She says things, and the fellows get hold of them, and of course they think I'm a fool. And then I do hate baseball and those things, and I like to have an occasional shampoo. And I honestly like to study."

"You make yourself out a desperate case, Jackie," Ursula said, as he paused for breath.

"But it is a fact. It has gone about among the fellows that I'm a sissy, and they take it for

granted that the story is true, and let me alone. I pretend I don't care. I don't, much ; but once in a while I hear the things they say behind my back, and it makes me furious. You know, yourself, there's not a word of truth in them ; now don't you ?”

Ursula flinched at the direct question. She scorned fibbing ; but just now she did wish that the truth were a shade less brutal.

“Don't you ?” John demanded again, as he saw her hesitate.

She raised her eyes to his.

“Jackie,” she said honestly ; “ you mustn't be too wrathful at me, when I say that, when I first came here, you did seem to me deadly decorous. Wait ! I said ‘when I first came here.’ That doesn't mean now, for, the longer I know you, the more I am finding out that you are a good deal of a boy. I'm not quite sure I could get on without you, Jack, even if I do tease the life out of you. But, when I came here, I had been used to boys that lived out of doors, that played ball and went fishing barefoot, that built snow forts and fought in them, too, that didn't have a decent suit of clothes more than once in three or four years. They were most mortally nice boys, too ; and some of them knew as much about books as you do. Then I came here, and found

you always spick and span, always with a book and never with a bat; and Aunt Ursula told me you were refined and delicate and—well, you looked it. You do look it, Jackie; but it's only skin deep."

"But I can't help my looks," he protested. "You don't want me to go dirty; do you?"

In spite of herself, Ursula laughed at his tone.

"You couldn't, if you tried. It wouldn't stick to you. Still, you needn't be too finicky."

John's chin rested on his hands, his elbows on his knees, and he was scowling at the floor.

"I don't know but I am priggish, Ursula. It comes of being an only son, I suppose."

"It comes more from having a mother who thinks nothing is quite good enough for you," Ursula responded uncompromisingly. "She would like to keep you in cotton wool under a glass cover; but it's not according to a state of natur'. You're a boy, just an ordinary boy; and she may as well find it out and face the fact, first as last."

"Do you know," John's tone was thoughtful; "it hasn't been half bad, your being here, Ursula. You've stirred up things and made no end of a row; but, after all, I believe I should miss you, if you went away."

Once more Ursula touched his hand.

"Ditto, Jackie," she said gravely.

Suddenly she rose and faced him.

"Jack, now see here! Granted that your—well, your prigginess—is only skin deep, and you are all right underneath, how are we going to make the boys see it as we do?"

"We can't. Still, it is something to have you admit it."

Ursula frowned.

"Precious little. They've got to admit it, too. Likewise, you've got to improve, yourself. There's room for it. But about the boys: they must come here more."

"They won't."

"They will, if we ask them. Your mother won't mind; will she?"

"No; she would have a party, every week, if I asked her."

Ursula shook her head.

"Parties aren't of any use. What you want is to have a few of the boys get a trick of running in here. Who is the head one?"

"I'm not sure. Rex Barrett used to be."

"But he wasn't in school."

"No; but just the same he ruled all the fellows who count for anything. He was the first one——"

"To call you Pettijohn? Well, let him be the first one to call you something else."

"How are you going to do it?"

"The easiest thing in the world. He is coming home, next week."

"What of it?"

"Ask your mother to have him and Nathalie here to dinner."

"He won't come."

"Why not?"

"He's an awful snob."

Ursula frowned again. Upon certain points she was obdurate.

"What of that? That doesn't make any difference with us Thains. Besides, he will do whatever Nathalie Arterburn says, and I know she likes you."

"She never saw me but once."

"Stop interrupting. She liked you then. If your mother invites them, they'll come. If they once get here, I'll see to it that——" she dropped her downright tone, and cocked her eyes at him saucily; "that Rex Barrett wants to come again. Trust me for that." There was the shortest possible pause. Then her voice grew gentle once more. "Are you very, very wrathful at me now, Jackie?"

CHAPTER ELEVEN

URSULA THAIN was neither mouse nor man, yet it came to pass that her best-laid plans did "gang aglae." The way of it was this.

It had been the easiest thing in the world for Ursula to gain her aunt's consent to her suggestion that Nathalie Arterburn and Kingsley Barrett should be bidden to dinner. The matter was settled over the cereal, the next morning at breakfast. Two hours later, Ursula started for the Arterburns', sure of an easy victory all along the line.

To her surprise, she found Nathalie a little hostile to the idea.

"I'll come," she said promptly. "I'd like to. I had a good time before, and I liked John immensely, the day we went to walk. But truly, Ursula, I can't promise for Rex. He doesn't ask me about his invitations."

"He will about this one, though," Ursula predicted confidently. "If he does, I want you to coax him to come."

"But I don't see why I should. He is only to be at home for three weeks and he has any number of friends."

Ursula dropped her voice impressively, as she answered,—

"That is just the point. John hasn't."

"I'm sorry," Nathalie said politely. "Still, I really don't see what Rex can do about it."

"Don't you?" Ursula bit her lip thoughtfully for a minute; then she told over to Nathalie certain parts of her talk with John, the evening before.

Nathalie listened intently.

"What night did you say?" she asked at length.

"When does he get here?"

"Rex? Next Wednesday."

"Saturday, then."

"Well," Nathalie said slowly. "I'll do the very best I can."

Wednesday noon brought Kingsley Barrett home. Over the lunch table, he submitted to the adulations of his parents. Then he betook himself in search of Nathalie Arterburn. He found her, washing dishes, and he promptly settled his tall person on the table in the diminutive kitchen, where he swung his heels and recounted to his hostess the latest tidings from the class.

They had not met since Thanksgiving, and there was much to be told.

At length Nathalie shook out her dishcloth with a sigh of relief, and hung up her apron.

"There!" she said. "That is done, at last, so now you can come into the parlor and let me look at you."

Obediently he followed her into the parlor, where he sent the shades whirring up to the top of the windows, placed himself in the strong sunshine and smilingly awaited her approval. In her secret heart, she gave it unreservedly, for, while he was by no means handsome, he was goodly to look upon. Nevertheless, though her eyes rested on him with perfect satisfaction, she felt that it was not seemly for her to express that satisfaction.

"Your necktie is shocking," she said.

"The latest thing from Chase's, ma'am."

"No matter. It isn't becoming, and I don't especially like the collar."

His smile broadened.

"Sorry. What about me, myself?"

She laughed and shook her head.

"The same old sixpence. I'm not sure, though, that I'd care to change it for a brand-new shilling."

His laugh echoed her own.

"And we've three whole weeks to racket around in. Won't it seem good? We'll start in right now. You and Mr. Arterburn are to do dinner and the theatre with us, to-night. How is the dear old fellow?"

"Thriving and almost getting fat. He has a new pupil, and we are living on the fleshpots, nowadays."

"Oh, yes, I remember. The mater did write to me about it. It's a country cousin of Petti-john Myers; isn't it?"

"Yes. We do lessons together. I'm a formative influence."

"She must be in a bad way, then. Is she very awful?"

She repelled the suggestion proudly.

"Hal doesn't take awful pupils."

Kingsley settled himself in the largest chair which the room afforded. Even then, he overflowed the chair.

"He took me," he observed tranquilly.

"Yes, and you half killed him. But Ursula isn't like you. She is really a very bright girl. You can see for yourself, though. You and I are to eat dinner with her, next Saturday."

"The deuce we are!" Kingsley sat up abruptly.

Nathalie leaned back in her chair and spoke with a matter-of-course indifference.

"Yes, I accepted for us both. I couldn't well get out of it, and I knew you would stand by me."

"Not if the court knows herself," Kingsley replied energetically.

"But she is pretty."

"He isn't."

"Who is *He*?"

"Pettijohn Myers."

"But I shall talk to him. You can play the agreeable to her, and, as I say, she is very pretty."

"Don't care."

"And she knows how to dress."

"Let her."

"And we needn't stay so very late."

"You bet we won't! We'll go away, just a few minutes before we get there," Kingsley responded.

Nathalie shook her yellow head at him disapprovingly.

"Rex, you must go, there's a good boy. I have promised, and I can't go alone."

Kingsley was on his legs, by this time. No man, not even a student, attempts to refuse a woman's request, while he is seated.

"Now look here, Nathalie," he protested; "I'll do a good deal for you. I have done some

of it already. I've lugged charity bundles down town in New York for you; and I have hunted slums in London with you. Once upon a time, I even toted a mongrel cur the length and breadth of Fifth Avenue in your behalf. I have done all that; but I must draw the line somewhere. I will not go with you to gnaw any bones provided by Pettijohn Myers."

A mocking dimple showed itself in Nathalie's cheek. Kingsley was very large, very impressive; but she had heard him protest before.

"Rex," she said severely; "you were always a snob; but you ought to have learned better by this time. What has your college life done for you, if it hasn't taught you not to be snobbish?"

"It has taught me to loathe prigs and to abhor grinds," he answered calmly. "Pettijohn Myers is both."

Nathalie rose, as if to end the discussion.

"Pettijohn Myers is not half bad, and he has a cousin who is really worth seeing. It won't last very long, anyway, and I have promised for us both. You may as well give in gracefully, for you are going."

Kingsley surveyed her from the lofty summit of his academic dignity.

"Oh, by Jove, Nathalie, you ——"

But she interrupted him saucily.

“And please do wear some other kind of a necktie. I should hate to have you appear in that hangman’s knot. You never could live it down.”

Twilight falls early in December, and by five o’clock of the next Saturday afternoon, the Myers house was lighted for the coming guests. Ursula took one last look at the rooms, inspected the American Beauty roses for the dinner table, and then went to her room to dress for the great event.

It must be confessed that, by this time, Ursula’s dressing was a longer operation than it had been in Lucretia. An injudicious aunt and a large plate-glass mirror had been unknown quantities in the little Iowa parsonage, and both of them of late had been suggesting to Ursula that not only was she pretty, but that even a pretty girl could be improved by careful dressing. Moreover, it was much more interesting work to dress, now that one’s toilet accessories were of ivory and decorated with one’s own monogram in great black letters. Ursula took to luxury, as a duck takes to water, naturally and with swiftness.

To-night, she was wearing a new gown for the first time. It had only come home, late that afternoon, and Ursula, as she hooked and buttoned and tied herself into it and then turned herself this way and that, could not help wishing

that her mother and Molly could see her in her finery. Poor Molly! Molly's winter gown was one of her own, hemmed up to fit the shorter legs of its new wearer. It was very much trimmed, too, and the lines all ran round and round, as if to emphasize the pudgy curves of a growing girl.

Ursula patted her well-fitting shoulders contentedly, and her lip curled a little, at the thought of that dowdy, over-trimmed gown which was doomed to pass on down the line of young Thains from Molly to Baby Jane. Then she rebuked herself sharply. More loving thought had gone into those patient stitches than into all the new gowns she had had since she came to New York.

Abruptly she pulled open a bureau drawer and took out a box. Inside the box was another of yellowing white paper, shiny and with silver edges. She opened the inner box and lifted out a thin, old-fashioned locket hanging from a slender chain. For one minute, she held it undecidedly. Then she took off her gold beads, clasped the chain around her neck and, bending her head, rubbed the locket caressingly against her cheek.

Five minutes later, she followed her aunt down-stairs.

"Come here, Ursula," Mrs. Myers called. "I want to see your gown."

Ursula presented herself, smiling, and waited for approval. According to her custom, her aunt looked her over in detail; but, this time, she began at her feet.

"You changed your shoes? That's right. Your skirt hangs beautifully. Viger always succeeds there. It is good shape over the hips, too. Those new sleeves are certainly very pretty. I think I'll have some of them. And your—— What in the world have you strung around your neck?"

"It's my locket."

"I should call it a tin plate. Where did you ever get it?"

Ursula's eyes flashed ominously; but she only said,—

"My mother gave it to me. It is one my father gave her, when they were engaged. It has both their pictures in it."

"It looks as if it might hold the whole family. Let me see it. Well, run and take it off."

"But I'm going to wear it."

Her aunt laughed gently.

"Oh, no; I wouldn't."

"I want to."

"You can't wear that thing, Ursula. It is a perfect cartwheel. You look as if you were wearing a breastplate."

Ursula undertook to argue with her aunt.

"It was my mother's, and she gave it to me."

"That may be; but she didn't expect you to wear it."

"Yes, she did. She said I could wear it sometimes, when I needed to dress up."

Mrs. Myers winced at the closing phrase.

"Nice people never dress up, Ursula."

"Why not? I'm dressed up now," she answered rebelliously.

"No; you are dressed."

"Of course I am. I should hope I wasn't undressed," Ursula responded, with some spirit.

Mrs. Myers waived that question and returned to the first issue.

"You'd better take the locket off now, Ursula."

"I told you I was going to wear it. It was my mother's, and she gave it to me to wear when I was dressed up. It was the only piece of jewelry she had, except her cameo bracelet, and she said I was too young for that," Ursula explained hotly.

"I am glad she had so much sense," Mrs.

Myers answered a little rashly, for she had scant respect for the taste of her sister-in-law.

"What do you mean by that?" Ursula demanded.

"I mean that your mother has lived out of the world for so long that she doesn't know just what is proper or suitable for you here. That locket is entirely unsuitable for a girl like you to wear."

"I can't help that."

"And it spoils your gown."

"Let it."

"And young girls should never wear lockets."

"I am going to wear this. My mother said I might."

"Ursula!" Mrs. Myers spoke with decision, for her patience was exhausted. In her eyes, the locket was as preposterous as it was unsuited to the neck of a schoolgirl, and she was determined that no Kingsley Barrett should ever look upon such a hideous adjunct to the pretty toilet of her pretty niece.

Ursula answered flatly, for she too was becoming reckless.

"What, ma'am?"

"Go to your room at once and take off the locket. I wish you to obey me, and to obey me

promptly, for it is almost time that Nathalie and her friend were here."

It was the first time she had ever spoken to Ursula in that tone, and the girl resented it bitterly. The blood rushed to her face, and a little angry shiver ran across her shoulders; but she controlled herself and turned away, her eyes blazing, her chin in the air, furious, dauntless, but wounded to the quick. She crossed the room and went up the stairs with steady deliberation. Once inside her room, however, she rushed across the floor and cast herself down upon the foot of her bed.

The pink roses on the walls had faced no such storm before. It came in gusts, and the girl writhed with their fury. It was cruel, she told herself, to grudge her this one bit of sentiment, to speak of her mother with this scorn, to tie her down by the laws of a life which, for the moment, she hated with all the fervor of her passionate little nature. Rising on her elbow, she opened the locket and looked long at the faces within, at her mother, quiet and steadfast even in her girl-ishness, at her father whose young eyes looked back at her with a fire like that which was burning in her own. She covered the faces with hasty, nervous kisses; yet the sight of them took away somewhat of the bitterness from her crying,



and left in its place an utter homesickness. She had been so happy at home. The old life had been pinched and meagre; yet in a sense it was fuller than any she had known in New York. Her mother might be ignorant of the ways of the world; but at least she did know the ways which led to healthy living. And her face, in spite of the wrinkles, was so good to look into. Ursula buried her own face in her arms once more, quite regardless of the fact that her puffy new sleeves were all crushed and spotted with her tears.

Vaguely and as if in a dream, she heard the bell ring, and then the voices in the hall; but she was too exhausted with crying, too utterly wretched to heed them. She roused herself, however, when there came a rap upon her door.

"Miss Ursula," Maggie was saying; "Mrs. Myers says that Miss Arterburn is here, and that you are to come down at once."

Unbeknown to herself, the maid's voice echoed something of the sharpness which had rung in the tone of her mistress, when the order had been given. It struck Ursula like a knife, and it cut away all her coming gentleness. She sprang up angrily, took one or two turns up and down the room, then paused before her mirror and stared at herself, at her swollen face, at her

crushed and tear-stained gown. For a moment, the tears hung on her lashes again; then the lips beneath shut together in a resolute line, and she began untying, unbuttoning and unhooking herself with a steely determination.

Down-stairs in the parlor, her aunt was fast becoming nervous, as moment after moment passed by, and no Ursula appeared. Nathalie, dainty as ever in her same rose-colored gown, was chattering gayly to John who was manifestly at his best, that night. Mrs. Myers herself was trying to entertain Kingsley Barrett, and she was fully aware that her young guest was feeling himself badly bored. The Kingsley Barrett who had sat upon Nathalie Arterburn's kitchen table was quite another Kingsley from the youth who occupied Mrs. Myers's cream-colored satin chair and wrapped himself in the mantle of his freshman dignity. He was perfectly polite, also perfectly inaccessible. Mrs. Myers wondered impatiently if her niece had fallen asleep.

At last Ursula's step was heard on the stairs, and four pairs of eyes sought the door expectantly. The next instant, four pairs of lungs gasped, and the eyes widened in consternation.

With her cheeks blazing, her eyes shining like incandescent lights and her lips shut firmly together, Ursula stood on the parlor threshold.

Above her bunchy brown skirt was a vivid magenta bodice, crossed with lines of rusty black velvet. A blue satin ribbon was around her neck, and on the front of the magenta bodice, like a huge and fishy eye, gleamed a thin locket of pale, old-fashioned gold.

CHAPTER TWELVE

NOTWITHSTANDING the fact that lessons had been abandoned during the holidays, the next Monday morning found Ursula on her way to the Arterburns' apartment. Half a block from the door, she met Nathalie and her brother.

"Oh, you are just going out!" she exclaimed in obvious disappointment.

"Not for very long. I must go down town with Harry; but I'm not going to stay," Nathalie answered. "If you aren't in a hurry, why don't you take my key, and go in and wait till I get back?"

"I don't know," Ursula said hesitatingly. "Are you sure you won't hurry back on my account?"

"I can't. We have an engagement with Dr. Holden, and we must keep it, of course. It won't take very long, though."

"I'll wait, then. I did want to see you so much." Ursula's voice broke on the last words.

Harry Arterburn laughed a little, as they passed on out of hearing.

"Poor little tornado! She looks as if she had had a hard time, the last day or two."

"She had a hard time, that night," Nathalie responded feelingly. "Mrs. Myers, without making the least social break, contrived to impress upon us all that Ursula was to be sent to Coventry."

"How did Ursula go through it?"

"With splendid grit. She was perfectly polite to her aunt; but she didn't give in one inch to her. I really think she wasn't half so frightened as I was."

Harry shook his head in dissent.

"You can't always tell about Ursula Thain. In a way, she is a little tempest; but she has great self-control. She is a queer compound; but she has good stuff in her. What set her off, in the first place?"

"I haven't any idea. Neither had John. I asked him, and he showed that he wasn't fibbing, when he said he didn't know. I think she will tell me, this morning. She generally does tell me things, and this is the first chance she has had. But, Harry, such a picture as she was!"

"I can imagine."

"No; you can't. You can't have any idea of

those preposterous clothes. Outside of a nightmare, you never saw the like of them. And yet it seems to me I saw that same combination of colors once before. But do you realize that I had coaxed Rex Barrett to go, on the plea that she was pretty and well-dressed enough to pay for seeing?"

"What did Rex do?"

Nathalie laughed at the memory.

"I never shall forget the way he looked, when she came in, with her face swollen and red as a lobster. She must have been crying her eyes out, up-stairs. You see, it was ages before she came down. I talked to John, and Mrs. Myers tried to talk to Rex. She tried so hard that she disgusted him, and he behaved like a bored clam, sat up straight and stiff with his chin hooked over the edge of his tall collar, and wouldn't say anything. I knew he was hating her, for she kept saying things were 'nice'; and I did wish Ursula would hurry up."

"And, when she did come, you wished she had stayed away?" her brother suggested.

"No; for then the fun began. When she first came in sight, Rex was so astonished that his eyes fairly goggled at her. But Mrs. Myers began snubbing her as soon as she appeared; and Rex, in sheer contradictiousness and just to spite

Mrs. Myers, began to play the agreeable to Ursula. He treated her as if she had been Cinderella herself, till I was half jealous of her. You know he always could be perfectly fascinating when he chose, and he has ever so many new airs and graces, since he came home, this time."

"How did Mrs. Myers take it?"

"She appeared to think that Rex was doing it all to spare her feelings, so, the more he devoted himself to Ursula, the more she smiled on him and snubbed her, and that made Rex all the more killing in his manners. I did so wish you were there to see it all; it was like being the one person in the audience at a really good theatre. I wanted somebody to hit elbows with."

"What did Rex say afterwards?"

"That was the strangest part of the whole," Nathalie answered reflectively. "He just didn't seem to want to say anything about it. He talked about football, all the way home."

"Hm!" Harry commented thoughtfully. "That fellow is a gentleman."

"I could have told you that before," his sister answered quickly.

They were in the car and half way down town, before they spoke again. Then Nathalie broke the long pause.

"Hal, I do wish you would talk to Ursula."

"I? What for?"

"Because there isn't anybody else. I don't think Ursula is quite happy here, for all she is so full of fun. She has days when she is as homesick as she can be, and I know she misses her father. She has told me so."

Harry Arterburn looked at his sister's intent face, and smiled.

"But really I'm not quite ready to take the place of a father to her, chum."

"No; and yet you might. She needs some older person to talk things over with, and she hasn't anybody. I'm not old enough, and her aunt doesn't understand things."

"What about her uncle?"

Nathalie dismissed Mr. Myers with a shrug of her shoulders.

"Oh, he is too busy, making money."

"Or losing it," Harry suggested carelessly.

"What do you mean?"

Instantly he repented his ill-considered words.

"Don't speak of it please, Nathalie," he said quickly. "It may be nothing at all. I have happened to hear a rumor that Myers and Heath are getting a little shaky; but I had no business to mention it."

"Oh, I hope not. It would be horrid for such people to go poor; they wouldn't have any sense

about getting used to it. But Ursula has been trained to another kind of living."

"Yes. The Thains evidently cared more for books and brains than for gowns and goodies, and I can see that her aunt's point of view might be irritating to her. Still, the girl has no right to accept so much from Mrs. Myers, and then turn defiant in the middle of it."

"That's just what I want you to say to her," Nathalie assented gravely. "Some one really ought to do it, and there isn't anybody else."

"I wish Mrs. Barrett would take her in hand."

"So do I; but I haven't any idea that she will. Mrs. Barrett isn't sufficiently devoted to Mrs. Myers to care much about knowing Mrs. Myers's poor relations."

"Steady, Nathalie!" her brother advised her. "We aren't in a position to talk about poor relations, and Mrs. Barrett has done everything for us."

Ursula, meanwhile, before the Arterburns' glowing grate, was forgetting her woes and her worries over a book. The woes were none the less real, however, nor the worries less insistent. The past thirty-six hours had been hours of wretchedness to Ursula Thain. The nervous reaction from her passionate outburst had left her feeling homesick, forlorn and physically ex-

hausted; and it had taken all her courage to go through the evening without breaking down. Again and again she longed for the time when her guests should say good-night; yet the misery of entertaining them had been only a prelude to the misery which had followed when her aunt, with merciless frankness, had explained to her how she had looked as she had entered the room. Mrs. Myers was mistress of her temper, but not of her sarcasm, and Ursula had writhed in spirit under her rebukes. As a matter of course, she had cried herself to sleep, that night; but sleep cures many sorrows, and Ursula, had appeared at breakfast, the next morning, fully expecting to be received as cordially as if nothing unseemly had occurred. Instead of that, she had been met with coldness upon all sides. Mrs. Myers was still rather indignant at her niece, and, under his mother's eye, John dared make no overtures of friendship. As soon as breakfast was over, he went in pursuit of his cousin; but Ursula, in bitter resentment, had taken herself out of the way, and he saw her no more until time for lunch.

Ursula thought over a good many things, as she sat in her room, that Sunday morning, with the open locket before her. Twice she began a letter to her parents, telling them the whole

story and demanding to be taken home. Twice she destroyed the half-written letter. Three months before this time, her mother had predicted just such a day as this, and had bidden her, when that day came, to shut her teeth and remember mother and stick it out till she felt better. The memory called for more looking at the locket and more tears, and so the morning had dragged away.

As she had left the dining-room after a stiff and silent lunch, John had caught her hand in a grip which left her fingers aching for an hour afterwards. The grip was consoling and, for some illogical reason, it changed her point of view and made her wonder for the first time whether she herself might not have been a little bit to blame. As her aunt's guest, perhaps she might have accepted in silence her aunt's advice concerning a small matter of dress. And had not her intended revenge upon her aunt acted like a boomerang and humiliated herself? She had promised John that, once Kingsley Barrett was in the house, she would see to it that he wished to come again. And how had she kept her promise? She blushed hotly at the memory of the tall, keen-eyed freshman who had treated her hideous self with such absolute respect. Then, all at once, she made up her mind to pour

the whole story into Nathalie Arterburn's ears, and to ask for her sympathy and counsel.

Just as she paused to turn a leaf, the bell whirred violently. Ursula hesitated for a moment; then, as she reflected that she was in possession of Nathalie's latchkey, she decided that Nathalie had come home and that it would be well to let her into the apartment. Dropping her book, she rose and opened the door, with an eager,—

“Oh, I began to think you never would come!”

Then she drew back in astonishment, for her eyes rested, not upon the Nathalie Arterburn whom she had expected; but on the Kingsley Barrett whom she had been seeking to dismiss from her mind.

On his own side, Kingsley was scarcely less surprised. In spite of his evident enjoyment of the situation, the Saturday evening before, he had felt no especial æsthetic pleasure in the badly-dressed girl with the tear-stained face, and he had constituted himself her champion, as Nathalie had surmised, merely in a spirit of opposition to Mrs. Myers. He had liked Ursula's grit and her independence. Otherwise he had scarcely bestowed upon her a second thought. Frumpy brown-haired girls were to be seen, any

day; he preferred Nathalie Arterburn's golden hair and dainty habits.

He too had expected to see Nathalie, when the door opened. Instead of that, he saw a slender girlish figure dressed by some artist hand, and a brilliant girlish face above a loosened collar of fluffy brown fur. From under the brim of a broad brown hat, two brown eyes smiled up at him with evident recognition; but there was no answering recognition in Kingsley Barrett's eyes, as they stared down at the girl before him.

The girl's smile faded.

"Mr. Rex Barrett, I think?" she said interrogatively.

"Yes. Is Miss Arterburn at home?"

"I am expecting her, every minute. Will you come in and wait?"

Clothes make the man, likewise the woman. Kingsley Barrett was cudgelling his brains for the name of the girl. Both her voice and her eyes were familiar, and she knew him. Where could he have met this irreproachable maiden; and how, once having met her, could he have forgotten her again?

"I think you'd better wait. It won't be long now," she was adding.

And Kingsley, determined to find out who she

was, walked into the parlor, hat in hand, and established himself in his favorite chair.

"Have you seen Miss Arterburn, this morning?" he asked.

"Yes, I met her just outside the door, and she gave me the key to come in and wait. She and her brother had an engagement with Dr. Holden."

"Queer thing Mac didn't tell me!" Kingsley soliloquized.

"I beg your pardon?"

"I just came from Dr. Holden's office, and he didn't say anything about it. He might have known I would be coming here," Kingsley explained.

It seemed to Ursula that the explanation needed no comment, and the silence between them broadened. Kingsley would have liked to break it; but he dared make no leading remark, lest it should betray his ignorance in regard to his companion's identity.

"It's a superb sort of day," he observed tentatively at length.

"Very," Ursula assented.

"Have you ——" He interrupted himself with a sudden fit of coughing.

Ursula waited.

"Well?" she asked politely, after an interval.

"Have you—er—been skating, this winter?" Kingsley asked desperately.

"No. My cousin is to take me, to-morrow."

"Cousin? Now who the deuce has a cousin?" Kingsley queried blankly of himself. Then he went on, "It was fine skating at New Haven, when I left. You've been there; haven't you?"

The question appeared to amuse her.

"Been there! I should think I had. That was the first place that I ever saw you."

Kingsley looked slightly abashed.

"Of course. How stupid of me to forget it!"

"Did you remember it, too?"

"Do you suppose I forget things of that kind?" he asked tactfully. "Not even a freshman does that."

Ursula laughed again.

"Did you ever know that I took you for a senior?"

"By Jove, no! That must have been before you danced with me, though."

She looked up at him keenly.

"When did I dance with you?"

It occurred to Kingsley that his companion's chaff was taking a curious form. However, he had no intention of carrying off the situation up to this point, merely in order to ruin it now.

"Why—that first time I saw you, of course."

Ursula's mouth puckered ominously.

"I don't know how it is with you, Mr. Barrett; but, as a rule, I don't dance in street cars with strange young men."

Kingsley stared at her for a moment, still puzzling over the familiar voice. Then, leaning back in his chair, he burst out into a jovial laugh.

"Well, I've given myself away, this time," he said. "I may as well 'fess up to it that I don't have any idea who you are. I thought I could bluff it out till Nathalie came; but I have spoiled all that now."

She looked up at him, half in amusement, half in offended vanity.

"Your memory isn't very long, then. I am Ursula Thain."

If Ursula had attempted to pass herself off for the late Queen Victoria of England, Kingsley could have been no more surprised. He rallied swiftly, however.

"Then I am no end glad I met you again," he said heartily, and with an utter truthfulness whose meaning Ursula would have been at a loss to fathom.

"If that means you had a good time, I am very glad," she answered demurely.

"Of course I had a good time. Didn't you?"

"No," she replied bluntly. "Horrid."

"I am sorry. You didn't look it."

"Then my looks belied me, bad as they were," she answered a little aggressively.

Kingsley watched her in amusement. Her beauty and her daintiness, coupled with her intrepid frankness, were interesting to him, and he began to wonder what she would say next. After a slight pause, she solved the problem rather unsatisfactorily by changing the subject.

"Isn't Nathalie a wonderful girl? Doesn't she ever make you wish you were just like her?"

Kingsley's voice was grave; but his gray eyes twinkled, as he answered,—

"I never pine for impossible things, Miss Ursula."

"I do. I'd like to be exactly like Nathalie; but it's no use. We are as different as a sweet apple and—a red pepper. I wonder if she ever gets real downright, tearing angry. I don't believe she does."

Kingsley searched the recesses of his memory.

"I never saw her do it."

"That's where she has the advantage. Most people do. Even Jack loses his temper, once in a while."

"Jack?"

"Yes, my cousin."

"Oh, Petti——" Kingsley checked himself abruptly; but he was too late.

"Yes, my cousin, Jack Myers," Ursula said severely. "I am very fond of him. Don't you like him?"

"Yes. He is a good boy," Kingsley answered, with the face of one who has been forced to swallow a tablespoonful of molasses.

Ursula noted the tone; but scorned to notice it.

"I am so glad to hear you say so," she said sweetly. "He is a dear boy, even if he is a frightful tease. He keeps the house stirring, all day long, and I don't know how I could bear to be away from home, if it were not for him."

"Yes?" Kingsley longed to ask her for further particulars concerning this vivacious John Myers. "You are great chums, I suppose?"

Ursula laughed. Her eyes were dancing now, and, quite unconsciously, she was looking her very best. Again Kingsley sought to connect her with the tear-stained, magenta vision of the previous Saturday evening, and with that other vision the memory of which had flashed into his mind as he beheld her, a vision of a bunched girl and a thin-faced man with lambent eyes, a Phi Beta Kappa charm and a tin skillet partially filled with dripping clams.

"Jack and I do everything together," Ursula was saying. "He gets me into all sorts of mischief now and then, for I am only a country girl and a Westerner at that, and I don't know the ways of the place, as he does."

"Are you from the West?"

"From Lucretia, Iowa."

Kingsley gave a swift glance at her, covering her from head to heel.

"You aren't like any Western girl I ever saw."

She laughed again.

"There are all kinds there, just as there are here; and there are all sorts of grades of the West. Iowa isn't Idaho." Then she rose. "I really think I'd better not wait any longer," she said. "Please tell Nathalie that I had to go. Perhaps you would be willing to do my errand for me. Jack and I are planning to come here to play cards, some night this week. Ask her to send me word, please, what night she wants us."

Kingsley held out his hand in farewell.

"It takes four to play most games."

She smiled saucily up at him.

"Perhaps Mr. Arterburn won't be too busy."

"But he will, I know. I'll tell you what, Miss Ursula; I'll do your errand on condition that you will let me come, too."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

ON the last night of Kingsley Barrett's holidays, the unexpected happened. Mrs. Gifford Barrett invited to dine with her, that night, the two Arterburns, Ursula Thain and John Myers; and, in consequence of that invitation, Mrs. Myers grew at least two inches in her own estimation of her own social stature.

"Don't do it, unless you want to, mater," Kingsley advised, while he put his elbows on the table and blinked at her over his clenched fists.

"I can't say that life will be a desert unto me, without the Myers contingent," his mother responded, as she poured out his coffee. "Still, I really can't see how I can help asking them."

Kingsley stirred his coffee thoughtfully.

"Nobody makes you," he observed at length.

"Yes, you and Nathalie do. Oh, that my enemies should be of my household! Rex, you are a good boy; but you have contrived to upset all my long-cherished theories."

"As to what?"

"An abiding horror of Mrs. Myers. She buzzes me like a piece of plush."

Mr. Barrett looked up from his paper.

"What now, Babe?" he asked.

"I am about to sacrifice myself upon the altar of maternal duty. Your son has been playing with that preposterous Myers lad. He is not a boy; he's a lad," Mrs. Barrett added viciously.

"In the vernacular of your son, he is a sad lad," Mr. Barrett said, laughing. "I am sorry that your son has such lowly tastes; but what of it?"

"Nothing; only that, if your son will accept Myers invitations, the Myers contingent must at least have the chance to decline a Barrett invitation."

"Apparently neither one of you is willing to acknowledge me," Kingsley observed plaintively.

"Of course not, when you choose such companions. I don't wish you to be dissipated and take to strong drinks; but Pettijohn Myers is nothing," Mrs. Barrett waved her spoon in the air; "nothing but postum cereal."

"Yes." Kingsley spoke meditatively.

"And I have noticed that you generally have had an appetite for black coffee, twice a day. When did you develop your fondness for gruel?"

"Don't worry, mater. Gruel is good for the

nerves. But for a fact, now, Pettijohn Myers has got a good deal of the Jack in him; and, what is more to the purpose, Pettijack Myers has a stunningly pretty cousin."

"Oh, I begin to understand now," Mr. Barrett said thoughtfully.

"I don't, then," Mrs. Barrett interposed. "According to Nathalie, I saw the girl once."

"Up at New Haven," Kingsley admitted. "I remember it; but that was before she had been introduced to a tailor. Of course, I haven't any use for home-made girls."

His mother shook her head at him.

"Please to remember that I manufactured the gown I wore to the opera, last night," she reminded him.

Kingsley smiled in full approval.

"Oh yes; you!" he answered, and his mother felt that life could hold for her few sweeter compliments than the one veiled in those three words.

It had been agreed that Ursula and her cousin should call for the Arterburns, on the night of the dinner; and, promptly at the moment, Nathalie heard the bell.

"I am so glad you are early," she said, as she opened the door. "Harry will be ready in a minute, and then I'm going to suggest our walk-

ing down town. We have plenty of time, and Hal has been working until he is tired out. The walk will set him up wonderfully. Shall you mind so very much?"

"Not a bit. It is a glorious night, cold and so windy that Jack and I ran races all the way over, because it was easier to run ahead of the wind than to hold back against it," Ursula answered, while she walked into the parlor and seated herself, blissfully unconscious of the fact that her hat was much awry.

Nathalie straightened it for her.

"You look like a small gipsy," she suggested. "Take off your coat and let me see your gown. It appears to be another new one."

"It is new. Isn't it pretty?" Ursula said with frank pleasure, as she slid out of the dark coat that came to her ankles.

Nathalie gave an adjusting pat or two to the dainty green gown, simple and girlish, yet showing in its every fold that it was the work of an expert.

"It is lovely," she said, with a little accent of regret. "I wonder how it would feel to have gowns like that."

"It feels exactly like being a wax doll that somebody dresses and undresses, whenever she feels like it," Ursula answered. "I love pretty

clothes; but I'm not sure I care so much for them, now that all anybody has to do about them is to pay the bill. Yours is as pretty as mine, and it counts for a great deal more." And she smiled approvingly at Nathalie's rose-colored gown which was bound to do faithful service on many an occasion yet to come.

But John interrupted.

"If that is the way you feel about it, Ursula, I'll tell my mother not to pay the bills at all," he suggested amicably, quite unaware of the fact that already Mrs. Myers's dressmaker's bill was some months in arrears.

To Ursula's supreme satisfaction, when they started for their long walk, she found that John and Nathalie had fallen into step ahead, leaving her to follow with Harry Arterburn. Ursula respected her uncle, and she liked John; but Harry Arterburn she had admitted to her girlish holy of holies, where he occupied a pedestal at the right hand of the one upon which she had placed her father. Suddenly confronted with the question why she admired him so much, she would have been somewhat at a loss to put her reasons into words. He was an earnest, matter-of-fact sort of man, not especially handsome and with the simple manners of a child. Nevertheless, as she met his steady, clear eyes, as she saw

the close-shut lips, firm, yet showing in their curves every passing mood of fun or anxiety, rebuke or tenderness, Ursula trusted him with the unerring instinct of healthy-minded girlhood. Moreover, her loyalty kept pace with her admiration and her trust. In all her New York life, Harry Arterburn was the one person who was immune from Ursula Thain's teasing.

"Lessons, to-morrow," he reminded her laughingly, as they turned their faces to the southward.

"Alas, yes! I wish somebody would decide that I know enough now for all practical purposes," she sighed.

"It depends upon the purposes. What are you going to do next, after this year is over?"

"Live on the memory of it," she answered quaintly.

"Have you enjoyed it so much?"

"Yes, immensely; then again, not at all."

"Does that mean, according to whether it is holiday time or not?" he inquired.

"It depends upon whether I fight with my aunt, or not," she responded, with unexpected candor.

Heretofore, it had been only by way of his sister that Harry had become aware of any friction between Mrs. Myers and her niece. Now, all at once, he discovered that it was not of the

nature of outspoken fifteen to clothe family skeletons with the padding of polite society. Ursula's statement left him mentally gasping for breath and endeavoring to think what he would better say about it all. He could neither approve, nor, if she continued the subject, could he ignore her hostile attitude towards her hostess. And yet, he was a man under thirty, and he had known this tempestuous damsel but two short months.

He temporized.

"But I suppose you do dislike to go back to work again," he said guardedly.

"I don't like the work itself as well as I like the way I do it," she responded graciously. "I have enjoyed these holidays, though. We have had a glorious time, the four of us."

"And to-night ends it."

She gave a little sigh.

"Yes, we go out in a blaze of glory. Aunt Ursula is tickled to pieces over this affair."

Under cover of the darkness, Harry smiled at the lapse from New York idiom. Then he said gravely,—

"Why should she care?"

"Because she has been fishing for this, ever since I came," Ursula answered recklessly.

Harry recalled Nathalie's suggestion that he

should talk to Ursula for her sins, and he felt that his time was come. Unconsciously, however, his heart warmed towards the pretty little sinner who paraded all her vices so unreservedly. Whatever Ursula Thain's other iniquities might be, at least there was nothing underhanded about her walk or her conversation. Such as she was, she invariably showed herself; and she was wonderfully winning and lovable, even in her naughtiness. He hesitated how best to soften his rebuke.

Ursula read his hesitation.

"Now there's something you don't like," she said shrewdly. "What is it?"

"What makes you think so?"

"The way you drew your breath in through your teeth. I've learned it, from the times when I don't know my history lessons," she responded.

Her companion made a mental note of one more peculiarity which he must abolish.

"Well, what is the trouble?" Ursula queried impatiently.

A good deal to her surprise, he neither laughed, nor denied that there was trouble. Instead, he said gravely,—

"Ursula, I am quite an old fellow, and perhaps I am getting to be a bit of a foggy in my notions. Shall you be very cross at me, if I give

you the same kind of a lecture I should give Nathalie?"

Her step quickened a little; then it slowed down again, and she answered with unwonted gentleness,—

"No. Go on."

"It is none of my affair really," he said, with an accent of apology in his even voice; "but, if I were in your place, I don't believe I would care to talk about my aunt quite so frankly to strangers."

"But you aren't a stranger," she interposed, and he was surprised at the sharp note of pain in her voice.

"Not to you," he answered; "but I am to your aunt. It doesn't seem quite fair to be talking her over with me."

"I thought you'd be interested." Her tone was still a little aggrieved. "You've always acted as if you liked to hear about my things. I am sorry if I've bored you."

By the glare of a street light, he could see that her figure had stiffened with resentment, that her chin had lifted itself and set with rigid defiance. He hastened to explain himself.

"It's not that I am bored. I like to hear all about Lucretia; but it's different with your aunt. You don't like her, and ——"

"I like her sometimes; and then again, sometimes she does make me very cross," Ursula corrected him.

He ignored the interruption.

"And you are not quite fair to her. Besides, haven't you ever heard that it isn't good manners for one woman to run down another, when she is talking to a man?"

She relented visibly at his use of the word *woman*.

"No; I never did. I don't see why," she replied thoughtfully.

"Petty convention," he suggested.

But again she interrupted.

"Oh, don't you begin that! Aunt Ursula does nothing but talk about convention this, and convention that, till you would think she was a federated-club Seven Day Baptist. I never heard anything about convention at home. We just tried to be polite and mind our own concerns, and let the rest take care of itself."

Harry smiled. Then he delivered his carefully-aimed shot.

"That is about all that is necessary. But does it strike you that it is quite polite to take favors from your aunt, and then say unpleasant things about her, outside?"

The shot told.

"She needn't be so cranky, then," Ursula said restively.

"But that is a part of her."

Ursula turned on him quickly.

"You think so, too, then?" she asked.

He parried her question.

"I am only judging by what you have told me. Now see here, Ursula, all this is none of my business. Your aunt hires me to cram Greek and history and things into your head, not to teach you manners. Still, I have gone so far now, I am going to finish up the matter. At one time or another, you have told me a good deal about yourself, about your old home, and about your new one, too. By your own story, you are having ever so many things here that you never even heard of, when you were at home; and it is your aunt who is giving them to you. Now, even if she is critical, even if she does care about some things you and I think aren't worth the counting, oughtn't you to put up with it and keep still, or else say once for all that you won't take any more of her favors? It isn't a thoroughbred dog that gobbles up the bone, and then snaps at the hand that held it out."

Her silence lasted for so long he feared that she was seriously angry with him. Even then, however, he could not bring himself

to regret his plain words, once they were spoken.

“And, from all I have heard of your father,” he added at length; “I think he would be surprised to find his daughter anything but a thoroughbred.”

“I know that,” she said swiftly, yet with no trace of anger in her tone. “He has done all he can to make me so; and, if I’m not, it isn’t his fault. I didn’t mean to be so horrid about Aunt Ursula; but I just didn’t think. You see, she fusses at me until I am half wild; and, before I know it, I’ve tried to get even with her. When I get furious at her, I seem to forget that she is giving me things, the whole time, and trying to improve my manners and my morals according to her own pattern. She is very well-meaning, Mr. Arterburn, and she gives me more things than I know what to do with. I never thought how greedy I seemed, to be snatching at all I could get, without any thanks to speak of. I truly will try to be more decent about it, and not fight her, nor say mean things about her, either.”

“Thank you,” he answered briefly.

“For what?”

“For taking my little lecture without getting angry at it.”

“I shouldn’t call it such a very little lecture,”

she said whimsically. "It was a good large one; but I think perhaps I deserved it. Besides," her voice grew wishful and altogether winning; "besides, I liked it, after a fashion. Except for my father, nobody ever talked to me like that, before; and now and then one needs a little help." And, turning, she suddenly held out her hand in token of perfect understanding and friendship.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

“**J**ACKIE, my dear boy, do you realize that my days here are numbered?” Ursula inquired pensively, one evening in early May.

“Meaning —— ?” John queried.

“Fifty-seven and a half. I am to start for Lucretia on the first of July.”

John lowered his book and stared at her.

“What nonsense are you talking ?”

“No nonsense at all. I am going.”

“But you aren’t. You were asked for a year, and your time isn’t up till the first of October. After that, you can do as you please, for I shall be in Yale, and it won’t make any especial difference to me whether you are here, or in Lucretia, or in Libonia.”

Ursula laughed.

“It will to me, though.”

“You don’t count in this matter,” John retorted. “Mother hasn’t any idea of your going now.”

“But she has, then. She and Uncle Henry were discussing it, last night, when I went into

the library. She is talking about going home with me, and stopping for a few days."

"What about me?" John asked rather wishfully.

"You are to go to the farm, and she will meet you there. Isn't it fun that you and Nathalie are to be neighbors, all summer long?"

"I didn't know we were."

"Yes, her small brothers and sisters live with an old cousin in Northford, and she is to spend the summer with them. Mr. Arterburn will be there, part of the time, too. Don't you believe I shall be homesick for you all?"

"Come with us, then."

"Can't. I tell you I am to start for Lucretia on the morning of the first of July."

"Ursula," John looked at her keenly; "I don't think you want to go home."

"I don't know whether I do, or not," she answered honestly. "I have been very homesick here; but I shall miss some things, when I go away."

"What things?" He looked expectant.

Ursula smiled sedately.

"Oh, late breakfasts, and tailor gowns, and the not having to carry the table scraps out to the pig."

"And me?" he suggested.

"Yes, a little." Then the merriment left her face. "Jackie, it would have been a sorry time for me, if you hadn't been in the house." She hesitated a little. "But, Jack, it is very hard to balance it all up. I have had a fine time here; and you don't know much about the other side, the rough and tumble of a large family in a little house, and the squinting at all sides of a penny, before you dare spend it. It may be healthy; but it isn't fun. Still, father is there, and mother. If I could only have them, next door, I could be happy here until the end of time."

"Have you ever seen Uncle Steve?"

"No." Ursula's tone was rather indifferent, for this younger brother of her father was merely a name to her.

"You needn't be so sniffy about him, then. He is a good deal like your father, in some ways."

Ursula shook her head.

"Jack, nobody is quite like my father. He is—he is the only man alive I would take a scolding from, and not get furious at him. That is——" She halted, as her thoughts flew backward to one winter night when Harry Arterburn had rebuked her with a kindly justice which she could not resent.

"Wait till you see Uncle Steve," John advised her.

“But I’m not likely to see him. I’m not to be in Northford.”

“Don’t be too sure of that. I have an idea that, when it comes to the point, my mother won’t let you go. She likes you a good deal better than she cares to admit, young woman, and she isn’t going to enjoy losing us both at the same time.”

“That is why she is sending me off, three months ahead,” Ursula suggested. “Then she’ll get over pining for me, just in time to begin work on you. However, I am not so sure that she will pine.”

They lapsed into silence, each one busy with his study for the next day, for John was working hard to be ready for his finals in June, and Ursula was doing her best to convince Harry Arterburn that two years’ seniority was not always an advantage, where lessons were concerned. From the start, she had determined not to be a drag upon Nathalie, and she had succeeded to the point that Nathalie had never been forced to work harder than during this winter of association with a girl many months younger than herself and a stranger to the discipline gained by good schools and much travel. Even Harry Arterburn, doubtful though he might have been at first, was forced to admit that the experiment had been altogether

a success, as much for Nathalie as for Ursula. Without Ursula, Nathalie's life would have been thrown too entirely among older people. Her responsibilities and her efficient meeting of them would have been prone to make her lose her girlishness. Under these conditions, nothing could have been more healthful for her than her constant association with a girl like Ursula, bright, energetic and invariably in the superlative degree of comparison, whatever was the nature of her mood. Ursula roused Nathalie; Nathalie steadied Ursula. They were like the acid and the metals of an electric battery, totally unlike, and each necessary for the full development of a perfect current.

Suddenly John looked up again from his book.

"Ursula, you are a girl and ought to notice things. What is the matter with my father?"

"Why?" she asked, with apparent indifference.

"He doesn't seem like himself."

"How do you mean?"

"He doesn't say anything, for one thing. He acts, all the time, as if something were worrying him."

"He never talks much, you know."

"But this is different. He seems dull, or worried, or ill. Haven't you noticed it?" he asked impatiently.

"Yes, I have," she confessed reluctantly. "He hasn't been right, all this spring."

"What is it, do you suppose?"

"I don't know. I have wondered about it a good deal; but he isn't the same man he was, when I came. I can't really put my finger on the difference; but it is there."

"Is it worry, or not being well?"

"I can't tell. It may be a little of both. He says he isn't sleeping, and that is enough to make him look badly. I wouldn't worry about him, Jackie, for it may be nothing, after all."

"But it is something," he persisted anxiously. "You have noticed it, too, and I have been seeing it, all the spring. It would be awful, if my father should go to pieces."

Ursula laughed encouragingly.

"People don't go to pieces, just because they aren't quite well, Jackie."

"People in Wall Street do."

"Not always. Most likely he has what my mother used to call 'spring fever.' A bitter tonic and some rest would set him up again. I suppose Wall Street people get tired, just the same as Lucretia people do."

"Not in the same way, though."

"Perhaps not. Still, there's no use in worrying. Your mother isn't at all anxious, Jack."

"I wish she would be a little more so," he said restlessly.

"What's the use? Men don't like to be fussed at; and, when she thinks you aren't well, she fusses herself half to death," Ursula said bluntly. "You don't mind it; but it would drive Uncle Henry wild."

John flushed.

"Perhaps I mind it more than I like to tell," he answered. "Sometimes it is easier to put up with things than it is to fight them."

Turning around in her deep chair, Ursula looked at her cousin with an approving smile.

"Jack," she observed slowly; "I am gradually coming to the conclusion that there is more to you than I used to suppose there was."

"That isn't an overpowering compliment," he retorted. "It's double-ended and heads two ways. Still, I am thankful for so much. But about my father?"

"Well?"

John put his elbows on the table and rested his chin in his cupped palms.

"Ursula, I can't help thinking that there is something a good deal wrong. My father thinks so, too; but I don't know what it is. You know my mother has been saying, all winter long, that she wanted to go abroad, this summer. I sup-

pose that may have been the reason she has planned to have you go home in July, instead of staying out the year. Now, as a general thing, whatever my mother wants, she gets; but she isn't going to get this. She hinted and then she teased; but, only a week ago, I heard my father tell her flatly that she couldn't go to Europe, this year. Now what does that mean?"

Ursula stared thoughtfully into the fire.

"John, I honestly don't know," she said, at length. "It may mean money; it may mean that he isn't well and wants to have her with him."

"But she is going to the farm."

"Yes, and he is going, too."

"No; he isn't."

It was Ursula's turn to stare.

"Why not?"

"He never does. Didn't you know that?"

"I never asked. I took it for granted that, if she went, he went, too."

"He can't leave the office for so long. He runs up for a Sunday, now and then."

"Then why doesn't Aunt Ursula stay in town?" Ursula asked sharply.

"She never could stand it here, all summer long."

"Why not?"

"It's fearfully hot. You've no idea how these white streets bake and throw back the sun."

Ursula's mind moved swiftly westward to the thought of the prairies, white-hot under a noon-day sun, of her father and mother walking across them side by side, bound upon some parish errand.

"But your father stands it."

"He is used to it. Besides, he has to be here."

Ursula rose, turned about sharply and stood facing her cousin.

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander," she said tersely; "only this is the other way about."

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing much, only this: when I get a husband of my own, if I ever do get one, I'll stay by him. You won't find me sitting in the shade in the mountains, all summer long, and leaving him at home to fry in his office, while he earns enough money to pay my board bills. It is horrid, utterly horrid; and I never would have thought it of Aunt Ursula." And she stalked away out of the room and put herself to bed, leaving John to digest at his leisure her old-fashioned and unfashionable theories.

She referred the matter to Nathalie, the next day. Long before this, it had become her cus-

tom to lay such debatable points before one or both of the Arterburns, and to accept just so much of their judgment as coincided with her own views. If they disagreed with her, she usually pondered upon their beliefs and rejected them ; but, without her suspecting it in the least, their more guarded judgment tempered her aggressive point of view. This rarely affected the case at issue ; but, later on, it rendered her less intolerant. Moreover, like most philosophers, she winnowed her opinions by airing them.

“Don't hurry home,” Nathalie had said, when the lessons were ended. “Mrs. Barrett is coming to dinner, to-night, and I must create a pudding. Stay and talk to me, while I do it.”

“And make you forget your sugar and mislay your eggs?” Ursula queried. “My mother always sent us out of the kitchen, when she was doing company cooking.”

“So should I, if there were a dozen of you, all talking at once. I don't mind you, though,” Nathalie said, as she tied on a broad apron and armed herself with an egg-beater.

Ursula dropped into a chair beside the kitchen table.

“I love to watch you ; your housework always seems like play,” she observed thoughtfully.

Nathalie took her up quickly.

"So is all work, if you like it and are strong enough."

"I never used to like housework," Ursula answered. "Till I came here, it seemed horrid drudgery; but now once in a while I wish that I dared go into the kitchen at Aunt Ursula's. Her housekeeping goes of itself, and now and then I believe I should like to see the machinery."

"Well, watch it now," Nathalie advised her, while she clattered a spoon. "My housekeeping is nearly all machinery; but I don't mind it, as long as I am chief engineer."

"Let me help." Ursula possessed herself of a bowl and the egg-beater. "Nathalie," she said abruptly, after an interval of toil; "what do you think of wives going off to keep cool, and leaving their husbands at home to roast?"

"Is it a conundrum with a catch in it?" Nathalie asked. "I never guess those things."

"No; there's no conundrum about it; it is just fact."

"Then I think they all would better buy some palm-leaf fans, and stick it out together."

Ursula frowned.

"I wasn't joking."

"Neither was I."

"Then what do you really think?"

"Just what I said."

"Did you suppose nice people did it?"

"That depends on what you mean by *nice*."

"People like Aunt Ursula, then."

"She is just the kind. Your mother doesn't do it, and my mother didn't; but most of the rich women here do."

"Does Mrs. Barrett?"

"No; but she doesn't have rich ways."

Ursula looked up in surprise.

"Is she—stingy?" she asked.

Nathalie laughed until she dropped her spoon.

"No. When Mrs. Barrett turns stingy, the moon will be green cheese, and the stars little round Edams. She has everything in the world that she wants, and she gives away more than she uses for herself. She makes her own gowns because she likes to do it, and then she gives her dressmaker-money to run a tiny little day nursery. That's the way she does things. But she hasn't any of the showy ways of very rich people. She and Mr. Barrett trot around together as if they had eighty dollars, not eighty thousand."

"I wish Aunt Ursula did."

Nathalie raised her yellow brows.

"Perhaps your uncle doesn't care to have her."

"He does, then. I know it, because he likes me to meet him, when he comes home at night."

Jack and I drop in at the office, once or twice a month, too, and he always is glad to see us. If he isn't too busy, he shows us things, the ticker and all that. Once we tried to get Aunt Ursula to go with us; but she was too tired." Ursula pounded away at her eggs vigorously for another minute or two. Then she laughed. "We had such fun, one day. Aunt Ursula was going to a luncheon and, in the hall, that morning, Uncle Henry told Jack to bring me down to the office at one. We went down, and he took us out to lunch at the queerest French restaurant away down town. You never would have known Uncle Henry, that noon. He was just like a boy. It was one of the best times I have had since I came to New York."

Nathalie's face clouded a little. Only that morning, she and Harry had sat long over their simple breakfast, discussing certain new rumors which had come to Harry's ears concerning the affairs of Myers and Heath. The spring had been a season of unsteadiness in the Wall Street world, and already one or two failures had resulted. Until lately, Mr. Myers had had the reputation of being a conservative business man; yet his scale of domestic living had increased with scant regard for possible bad times. Careful observers were already taking into account

the recent sprinkling of gray in his dark brown hair, the tight shutting of his jaw and the two perpendicular lines between his eyebrows. It affected their judgment not one whit that Mrs. Myers was manifestly as care-free as ever.

Nathalie started to speak ; then she hesitated. She knew that she had no right to criticize Ursula's aunt, least of all to Ursula's aunt's critical niece.

"What do you honestly think about it?" Ursula demanded again.

Nathalie added the finishing touches to her pudding, and slid the pudding into the oven. Then she turned around.

"I truthfully don't know what to say, nor how to say it, Ursula. I'm not married, and I'm not a very rich woman with a great many engagements to keep. They say society women work a good deal harder than business men. I'm not either one, so I can't judge. But then, neither are you. Perhaps that is just where your chance lies. If your uncle is lonely and your aunt is busy, why can't you and Jack make things jolly for him, and so help along both sides of it?"

"Yes ; but what about the leaving him alone, this summer ?"

"I'm not a society woman, and I can't tell

what they ought to do. I generally mean to stick to Hal."

"And next year, when I'm gone, and Jack is in Yale?" Ursula persisted.

Nathalie opened the oven door, and peered in at her pudding.

"'Sufficient unto the day,'" she quoted gravely. "You have almost two months, before you go home. If I were in your place, I would see what I could do in that time, and let next fall take care of itself."

But not even Nathalie could foresee the way in which the coming autumn would adjust the course of events to suit its own convenience.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A WHISTLE, asthmatic, raucous, long-drawn, broke in upon the slumbers of Mrs. Myers. Drowsily she opened her eyes and looked about her with the vague wonder that always accompanies an awakening in strange surroundings. Little by little her glance gathered focus and took a sharp survey of her quarters. Then she shuddered, buried her face in the whitey-gray shadow of the sheet and lay still. By degrees, however, curiosity reasserted itself, and she pulled down the sheet to look about her again.

The room was small, and the broken-backed ceiling slanted down at such an angle as to imperil the brains of any one who sat up abruptly at the back side of the bed. The bedstead itself was of some nameless species of brown wood, and it consisted of an infinite number of rods and bars differing in size, but all fluted with the same exasperating regularity which adorns a home-made wedding cake. The rest of the furniture was painted in pale greenish blue, stenciled with bunches of deep pink roses. Red

ribbons tied back the muslin curtains, and the wall was covered with a brownish trellis supporting a browner vine which bore, by some botanical freak, the leaves and blossoms of a gigantic breed of English violets. The bureau was littered with silver-backed brushes and silver-topped bottles, and a heap of lace-trimmed ruffles lay across a chair by the bedside.

Mrs. Myers's glance roamed hither and thither. Then she yawned wearily, looked at her watch and prodded the pillow in the vain hope of subduing a few of its more aggressive promontories. The whistle ceased, apparently for want of breath, for it died away with a whispered gurgle; but it was useless for Mrs. Myers to try to go to sleep again. The rooms on two sides of her were already humming with childish voices, and, from below, the clatter of plates and the beat of the chopping-knife within kept disjointed time with the beat of the hatchet in the woodshed outside. With one last, protesting yawn, Mrs. Myers slid out of bed and went to the windows to look out.

It had been too dark, when Mrs. Myers had reached Lucretia, the night before, for her to discover that the story-and-a-half parsonage stood close to the narrow street and next to the church which, painted the same uncompromising shade

of yellow as the house, was constructed on the architectural lines of an oil can mounted on the end of a shoe-box. There was no especial reason that the road should have been so narrow. Opposite the church was the one store which Lucretia supported; otherwise there was nothing beyond the farther sidewalk but a stretch of open prairie which apparently extended, an uninhabited plain, to the uttermost confines of the next county but one.

Mrs. Myers stared out across the dusty, deserted street, over the treeless prairie, already scorching under the fierce July sun, then down into the little front yard where innumerable Thains of assorted sizes were playing some modern variant of the old-time hopscotch. As she watched the leisurely progress of the game, the smile on her lips tempered the disgust in her eyes. That chubby, dark-eyed youngster in the baggy trousers was wonderfully like his father at the same age; and the sister a size larger than himself reminded her of her own girlhood at the pinafore and pigtail stage of existence. Then she shivered again, as she tried to fancy the horror of living in such a wilderness.

Mrs. Thain was putting the breakfast on the table, as her sister-in-law entered the room, half an hour later. Mrs. Thain was dressed in a gray

calico wrapper, spotless, but of the epoch which wore crinoline in the tops of its sleeves. Mrs. Myers had put on a crisp white lawn which had gone straight from her dressmaker to her trunk. The clothes were no more unlike, however, than were the women who wore them.

"I hope you slept well," Mrs. Thain said hospitably.

Mrs. Myers thought of the pillow, and commended her soul to the mercy of the recording angel.

"Very," she answered politely.

"I am glad of that. I was afraid the children would disturb you. They were up early, for they couldn't wait to see Ursula. They have missed her more than I thought they would."

"I don't wonder," Mrs. Myers said heartily.

Mrs. Thain unbent.

"Ursula is a good girl," she responded. "She has always been a comfort to us, and her letters have done us good, all the year. She has been happy with you."

Mrs. Myers laid her white, beringed hand on top of the hard red fingers that held the coffee-pot.

"I am glad to hear you say so. She has brightened our home, and been a good companion for John. Next year, I shall miss her as much as you have done, this year."

Gently, but steadily Mrs. Thain withdrew her hand.

"I guess not. You aren't her own mother."

"I feel almost as if I were."

"But it isn't the real thing. It's one's own child that counts for the most. Ursula is a good girl, even if she is quick-tempered."

"I hope you will find her improved," Mrs. Myers said, with a little dignity.

"It's too soon to tell. She is prettier, and she wears better clothes; but she looks to me just about the same Ursula that went away. Still, I don't believe you have hurt her any, and, at her age, that's about the same thing as saying you've helped her. Girls don't stand still, as a rule. It's up or down with them, and it isn't always easy to be sure it's up."

It must be confessed that Mrs. Thain had awaited with no little anxiety the coming of her daughter. Ursula's letters had suggested no change in the girl's love for her home. Nevertheless, Mrs. Thain was well aware that there was some risk in the experiment of moving a young girl into luxurious surroundings for a year, and then bringing her back to take up her simpler life anew. After the glare and glamour of the Myers home, it was an open question whether or not the Lucretia household would

seem undesirably mean and shabby in comparison. Mrs. Thain, as she paced the platform of the station at her husband's side, felt her heart beat with a painful swiftness, while she waited for the train to whistle at the crossing, two miles down the road.

She was still too intent upon scanning the windows of the day coaches, to pay any heed to the sleepers at the rear of the train, and she missed the silver-born servility of the porter who was helping two women to step down from the car. The next minute, she heard the well-remembered voice,—

“Oh, father! Father dear!” And the voice broke into a sob of sheer happiness, as Mr. Thain's arms met around his daughter, quite regardless of the probable price of the simple panama hat which, between them, they were crushing so recklessly.

Then, as Mrs. Thain submitted to the same tempestuous embrace, she dismissed at least a fraction of her anxiety. The one winter had not sufficed to alienate Ursula entirely from her old home. However, while she was getting breakfast, the next morning, Mrs. Thain's doubts came back upon her; but they were promptly removed again. Ten minutes after her mother had entered the kitchen, Ursula, fresh and dainty in a

pink cotton gown, came running down the stairs.

"Oh, it does seem so good to be at home," she said blithely. "Now what shall I do first?"

Her mother smiled grimly.

"Well, I never supposed you'd be down so early, the first morning you were at home," she said, by way of salutation.

"The very time I don't want to lie abed. I'm going to help you get breakfast. There now, look glad to see me, for I know you are so glad you want to stand on your head in a corner." She caught her mother by the chin and looked straight into her eyes. "Aren't you glad, mother?" she added gravely.

And Mrs. Thain made answer just as gravely,—

"The Lord knows I am, Ursula."

For the next week, Mrs. Thain watched her daughter with anxiety, Mr. Thain with open idolatry. Then, one night, they sat and talked her over together, and they both agreed that Ursula had come back to them, quite unspoiled. Moreover, they resolved that no power on earth should make them give her up again, a resolution which was no sooner made than it was broken.

It had been agreed that Mrs. Myers was to stay with them for ten days; and for ten days, accordingly, the Thain family feasted and held

holiday. The guest, when she chose, could show infinite tact in adjusting herself to new surroundings, and just now she did choose. Not even Mrs. Barrett could have criticized the easy, off-hand way in which she entered into the simple life of the parsonage, petting and playing with the children and talking with Mrs. Thain of all manner of household economies, the very names of whose details came back to her but slowly from out the long-forgotten past. In a sense, she enjoyed it all, as one enjoys exploring a new country. Nevertheless, it palled upon her in time, and she thought longingly of New York and of Blowmedowne Farm where her son was awaiting her.

But although the thrifty wife and the healthy, roistering children now and then ceased to interest her, never for one moment was she bored or unhappy in the society of her brother. For the time being, they both had forgotten the years and the circumstances which had caused them to drift apart, and they had dropped back into the old, old intimacy of their younger days. Dismissing all thought of criticism, each had looked only for good in the other, and each had found only what he sought. Yet, in spite of his narrower life and opportunity, the brother was the dominating spirit; and, in his presence, his

sister lost much of her worldliness, and did her best to conform to his higher ideal of all that a woman could become.

On the last morning of her visit, she knocked at his study door.

"Come," he bade her.

She sat down beside him at the table, an open letter in her hand.

"Are you too busy to talk, Irving?" she asked.

Still leaning on his elbow, he turned to face her.

"It is almost our last chance, Ursula," he said, with a smile. "I couldn't be too busy to make the most of it."

As she met his eyes, she forgot her errand.

"Irving, it has been very good for me to have been here."

"I am glad. We all have enjoyed it."

"So have I. But I meant something more than just the enjoyment of it. It has taken me backwards to the old days at home. It has made me feel younger, more human."

"Did you need that?" he asked, smiling again.

She answered him unsmilingly.

"Yes, more than you know. Perhaps you do know, though. You must have felt it, when you were in New York, that I wasn't the same

Ursula. Irving, I love my life; I love its comforts and its ways. It keeps me busy and contented and interested; but it does make me a little hard. Once in a while, it seems to me that I am only a cog in a great social machine, that I am losing something for the sake of being a cog, and that, after all, the machine would go on just as well without me. And yet, I can't seem to make up my mind to get out of it and let it go on without me." She frowned intently at the row of little pleats she was laying in the dingy table cover.

"I think I understand how it might be," her brother said slowly. "Still, you have your husband and John."

"Yes, in a way. But Henry is another cog, only his machine is financial, not social. We turn around side by side; there's no friction, because we never really touch each other. I admire him and love him; but I can't get at him, as I used to do. Sometimes I am half afraid I bore him; and yet he loves me as he loves his own life, and he knows I love him. Irving, I actually didn't realize how apart we have grown, until I came here and found you and Alice grinding along together and sharing everything from your income to your worries. I love my home just as it is; but I truly believe I would be willing to live in a

three-room tenement, if Henry would let me lay out his clean cuffs for him and read him my grocery accounts. We care for each other as we always did; but the romance is nearly all gone out of us."

"Whose fault is it, Ursula?"

She looked up sharply.

"Nobody's. At least, neither of us. It is the fault of modern life, when servants and electricity take the place of all the good old home ways."

He bent forward and laid his hand on hers.

"My dear old girl, I live in the wilderness; but I think I understand. But there is John."

Her face changed.

"Yes, there's John. For years, he has been the one softening spot in my life. I have held on to him and made a baby of him, until I almost succeeded in spoiling him entirely. I knew that he was growing priggish; but I could not bear to give him up and let him grow away from me, for fear that spot would harden, too, and shut me up in myself all over. Ursula helped me there. She was so healthy and energetic that she undid some of the harm I was doing; and John is turning into a normal boy without losing any of his finer side. He grows more manly; but he is just as loving as ever."

"But, as Ursula says, the Pettijohn is turning into Pettijack," he suggested.

"Yes. I wish you could see him now. I think you would like him."

"I liked him before," her brother interrupted. "He was a quiet fellow; but now and then he showed there was more to him than appeared on the surface."

"I am glad you saw it." Then her face grew sad. "But, Irving, I am worried about Henry."

"What about him?"

"He isn't well, and he is worrying about something, his business probably. I wish I dared talk to him about it."

"Why don't you?"

She sighed wearily.

"It is too long since I have done such a thing for me to begin again now."

"Try it," he advised her.

"I am afraid of saying the wrong thing, of making him think I am meddling, or that I distrust him. Until I came out here, it never occurred to me, even, that I could speak to him about it. Since I came, I have tried to think how to say it; but it is of no use."

Mr. Thain raised his eyes until they rested straight on the eyes of his sister.

"I think it is always of use," he said quietly.

"That's what the marriage service meant, when you assented to it."

She bit her lip for a moment. When it was quite steady again, she answered him.

"I will try, Irving. Perhaps the fault has been partly of my own making."

The silence between them lasted for a long time; but it was a silence which went far to seal their renewed intimacy. At length, Mrs. Myers brushed her fingers across her eyes and turned to the letter.

"You have helped me in words, Irving," she said. "Now will you help me in deeds?"

"Of course," he answered heartily.

"Don't pledge yourself too soon," she warned him; "for I am going to ask for one of your dearest possessions."

His face fell, for he suspected her meaning.

"What is it?" he asked uneasily.

"May I take Ursula back with me for just one more year?"

"Oh, don't ask me!" he burst out.

"I know I am selfish, Irving; but we want her so much. I felt as if I couldn't give her up. John will go into Yale in the fall, and our home will be so lonely, with no young life in it. To-day, I have a letter from Henry, begging me to

bring the child back with me. Read it, and see for yourself."

Mr. Thain read the letter slowly, read between the lines the insistent note of the busy man, hungry for affection, who had come to depend upon the demonstrative love of his tempestuous young niece. It took a scant five minutes to read; but the time was long enough for Mr. Thain to fight a winning battle against himself. Then he gave back the letter.

"If her mother is willing," he said slowly; "I am ready to give my consent."

But there was an unwonted flush about his thin temples and, after Mrs. Myers had left the room, he paced the floor for a long half-hour.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

“ ‘ *Jolly good song !*
Jolly well sung ! ’

GO it again, Fizzums.”
But Fizzums protested.

“ Mr. Wex Barrett, you mustn’t jounce me up and down so hard. It shakes my feet all up into my mouf, and makes me uncomfytable.”

“ Then sing it again,” Kingsley urged.

“ I sha’n’t not,” Fizzums answered, in unconscious imitation of the vernacular of Mr. Henry James. “ It is only a Sunday song, and it isn’t Sunday now.”

“ Then what made you sing it ? ”

“ To see if I could meremember it. Cousin Vedowa told me not to forget it.”

“ The way you forgot me ? ” Kingsley suggested unkindly, for, on his arrival, the day before, he had been chagrined to have Fizzums receive him as a total stranger.

But Fizzums took it upon himself to explain.

“ I didn’t even meremember Nathalie, and she’s my sister, so how could I meremember you ? It

was two years ago, and you were all speckly on your cheeks then. I remembered the speckles, and so I forgot 'twas you, when you didn't have 'em any more."

"Oh, thanks awfully. You mean I have grown so good-looking you didn't recognize me. Well, where are you going with that basket of apples?"

"Down to Mrs. Myers's house."

"Does Mrs. Myers like apples?"

"No; but her cow does," Fizzums answered unexpectedly.

"And she asked you to bring her some?"

"Cows can't talk any."

Kingsley looked abashed at the slur upon his rhetoric.

"I meant Mrs. Myers."

"And I meant the cow," Fizzums replied, with infinite dignity.

"I see. And so you feed her?"

"Yes. She's all tied up in the barn, and she gets lonesome for the other cows, so I fought I would take her a basket of apples."

Kingsley glanced down at the knotty, gnarly windfalls.

"Well, look out you don't make her sick."

"I couldn't. She's sick now," Fizzums responded.

"Then I'd advise you to let her alone."

Fizzums put down the heavy basket and stood rubbing his chubby arms, while he proceeded to argue the question.

"If you was a cow, Mr. Wex Barrett, and couldn't go outdoors 'cause you weren't well and mustn't get your feet wet, wouldn't you be glad if somebody bwrought you some nice fresh apple-sauce in a bowl with a napkin over it? Well, vat's what I'm doing."

Kingsley shook his head in despair of comprehending the situation.

"You don't look it. But come ahead, youngster."

"I ain't youngster, and where to?" Fizzums inquired elliptically.

"To ask Mrs. Myers if you can feed her cow some hot apple dumplings."

Fizzums pursed up his lips thoughtfully.

"Are you going, too?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"To see the people."

"Do you know Mrs. Myers?"

"Of course I do. Are you coming?"

"Yes." Fizzums spoke with sudden animation. "You can carry the basket, then, Mr. Wex Barrett; only you must give it to me, just



as soon as we get in sight of the house." And, leaving Kingsley to follow with his burden, he led the way as fast as his stout little legs would carry him.

Turning at a sharp angle from the smooth country road, they entered a long lane where the ruts were buried deep in grass and where the trees, birch and beech and butternut, interlaced their branches overhead, leaving the sunlight to sift through them in flickering patches which only served to enhance the green coolness beneath. Squirrels, red and gray, skittered through the branches and mocked defiance at the woodpeckers, and, from a distant patch of ferns, there rose the dull drumming of a startled partridge.

At a bend of the lane where the trees opened out for a little grassy lawn, they met Ursula coming towards them, and Kingsley set down his basket in order to give her both his hands.

"By Jove, you look like a veritable wood-nymph," he said admiringly, as his eyes mounted from her pale green gown to her shining braids of brown hair.

"I feel like one here. Isn't it pretty? But I was just coming to see if you were really here."

"I really am. What's more, you'll have to put up with me for three weeks, unless Sister Eudora Evelina fires me out," he responded.

"Cousin Vedowa is afraid of fire," Fizzums observed in an aggrieved aside which no one heeded. "She tooked all the matches out of my pockets, and then she spanked me awful."

Ursula had fallen into step at Kingsley's side.

"I can stand it, if you can," she answered. "But where is Nathalie?"

"Writing some letters for Hal. He is all tired out, and she is playing secretary for him. She sent me over to hunt you up, and she said she would be along in time to take me home to lunch. How is Pettijack?"

Ursula laughed.

"Use that name to his face, if you dare."

"I did, when I wrote to him about the room, and, when he answered, he signed himself the same way. That's where you lose, Miss Lucretia."

She made a wry face at the name.

"Then I'll keep on playing 'till I win, Mr. Eli. But I neglected to answer your question. Jack is reposing on the knoll, while the dog digs out a woodchuck."

"That's Nicodemus," Fizzums explained suddenly, for he began to feel himself ignored and left out of the conversation.

"Nicodemus? I thought he was dead."

"He was very much alive, half an hour ago,

when I found him trying to bury one of the kittens in the pansy bed."

"But how did he come here?"

Again Fizzums sought to explain.

"Cousin Vedowa tooked him to scare away bugaboos; but, one day, he ated up Cousin Vedowa's best Sunday hat. It was all over fevvers, and it made him sick; but it made her cwooss. It's worse to be cwooss than to be sick. One hurts your body, and the other hurts your soul. Cousin Vedowa's soul must have ached awful. She didn't love Nicodemus any more, and so she gave him to Uncle Steve to dig woodchucks with."

Leaving Fizzums and his basket in charge of one of the men at the barn, Kingsley stopped at the house long enough to shake hands with Mrs. Myers. Then he departed with Ursula in search of the knoll and John. They found the knoll; but the boy had disappeared.

"What's your hurry?" Kingsley asked, as Ursula turned to retrace her steps. "Give a fellow time to look at the view, now he's here."

Obediently she dropped down on the short, crisp turf at his feet.

"I thought you wanted to find Jack."

"Much better to let Jack find us," he returned, as he settled his long length beside her.

"It is twice as much work, no, four times as much for us to find him as for him to find us."

"How do you make that out?" she asked, laughing.

"It's twice as much work for two to do a thing as for one to do it; and it is twice as much work to hunt for an object half the size of another. Twice two are four," he answered composedly. Then he rolled over and rested on his elbow. "Jove, this is pretty!" he said, half to himself.

Kingsley spoke truthfully, for the knoll was the real glory of all Blowmedowne Farm. It was merely a sharp little hillock springing from the midst of an open pasture, dotted here and there with silver-green mulleins like huge velvet rosettes set against the short green turf. Behind it, the mountain rose sharply, its wall of solid trees broken only by the house and its broad lawn; but before it there opened out a long strip of valley where the blue Connecticut wound away and away between the notches of the hills, down to the distant sea. And always, at the southern end of the picture, the blue lines of Ascutney showed themselves, the crowning beauty of the whole.

Suddenly Kingsley sat up and faced Ursula again.

"Mighty good idea your coming back east!"

"I'm glad you think so."

"Of course. Don't you?"

She picked a mullein leaf and slowly tore the velvety surface across and across.

"Naturally, or I shouldn't have come."

"It will make a lot of difference to Nathalie and Mr. Arterburn, to say nothing of all the rest of us," he went on.

There was the least possible hesitation in the busy hands.

"Nathalie, yes. But I don't suppose Mr. Arterburn cares much, one way or the other."

"Not even to keep a pupil?" he inquired jestingly.

Her cheeks flushed angrily.

"That shows you don't know Mr. Arterburn."

"I was only joking."

"There are some subjects that are beyond a joke," she said shortly. "Mr. Arterburn is a gentleman, and, what's more, he isn't greedy."

"That's where you tell the truth," he assented. "Nobody likes Harry Arterburn better than I do. I have reason to. I wish he were a stronger fellow, though. Some day, he will go to pieces."

"What do you mean?" Ursula asked sharply.

"What I say. He works hard enough for three or four men, and it is all head work, too.

Mac Holden told him, two years ago, that he must go slow; but he is at it faster than ever. I haven't seen him since Easter till last night, and I should hardly have known him."

"It's those children," Ursula said, as, with a vicious sweep of her hand, she flung the scraps of mullein from her lap.

"It's the need for money, more," Kingsley answered gloomily. "Money is an awful bore, anyhow. If you don't have it, you need it. If you do, you worry for fear you may lose it all."

Ursula ruthlessly interrupted his philosophizing.

"It is those children," she asserted again. "They are enough to try the patience of a saint, even of a saint like Harry Arterburn. Fizzums is bad enough. He spends every other day in solitary confinement for some prank he has played, the day before; but even he isn't a circumstance to Ralph and Peggy. As nearly as I can discover, they have spent the whole year in squabbling, and have saved up all their telltale complaints to pour into Mr. Arterburn's ears. They want this, and they must do that, and they fret about the other thing, until he is half worn out."

Impatiently Kingsley sent a stone crashing down the hillside to frighten the cows grazing below.

"Ralph isn't a bad fellow," he said; "but I detest Peggy. What is more, she returns the compliment with energy."

"You'd better thank Providence for so much. At least, that keeps her from being under your feet, the whole time," Ursula responded. "Jack hates her, too. He told her, the other day, that he would set Nicodemus on her, if she didn't go home and stay there."

"Pettijack has good sense. She is a most undesirable young person." Then he put his hands to his mouth. "Oh, Nathalie!" he shouted, as he caught sight of two bare yellow heads coming towards them.

It was John who answered.

"Well, you are a great fellow," he said, as he dropped down beside Kingsley.

"There appears to be a pair of us. But what's the matter now?"

"Nathalie said you had come down to see me."

"Well, here I am."

"Maybe; but you don't appear to have had any overpowering desire to find me."

"Don't let your temper get frazzled at the ends, Pettijack," Kingsley advised him tranquilly. "We found your trail here, and, not seeing you, we naturally inferred that you and Nicodemus had gone inside the hole to have a

game of romps with the woodchuck. Hullo, Nicodemus, you brute! Come along and shake hands with an old-time friend."

But Nicodemus sulkily withdrew himself to the pile of fresh earth beside the woodchuck hole, and prepared to renew his excavations.

"Has anybody seen Fizzums?" Nathalie inquired anxiously.

"Yes, he was sitting on the pigpen fence, armed with an old umbrella and a basket of sour apples. The last I saw of him, he was preparing to make things merry for the pigs," John reassured her. "How is Yale, Rex?"

"Blooming, and bluer than indigo."

"Anybody dead?"

"No; with loyalty, not grief. Likewise, after the fashion of Fizzums with the pigs, it is preparing to make things merry for the freshmen, next fall."

"You were a freshman once, yourself," Nathalie reminded him.

"Was I? It is so long since that I can't seem to remember. Besides, in my very first week, didn't Ursula lustily and aloud proclaim that I looked like a senior? Ursula, my admiration for you dates from that hour. I always recognize a girl of discreet understanding, when I see one."

"I should know better, another time," she answered him. "By the time you are a senior, you probably will be fresher than you are now. You aren't a fair test, either. You had some older brothers to teach you the traditions of the place."

"And, by Jove, that's an advantage, too," he said, with sudden seriousness. "Some of the freshmen do make awful cads of themselves. They come from away, and they don't know anything about college, and they think it is funny to live in a perpetual row. They aren't the best fellows, by any means, and there aren't many of them; but they manage to keep themselves before the public till the whole class gets credit for their foolery. Every year, there's a set of fellows that appear to think they are the first and only freshmen who ever entered Yale."

"Take warning, Jack," Ursula admonished him. "Hear the words of the sophomore, and consider yourself wise."

But Kingsley shook his head.

"Anyhow, even if you do laugh, wisdom lies that way. I had a senior brother, and he gave me some mighty good points that I propose to pass on to Pettijack. There's fun enough going, all over the campus, without a fellow's constantly running up against the police, because he is hunt-

ing for more. A cad is a cad, inside a university or out."

Nathalie nodded energetic approval.

"You're all right, Rex. I've heard Harry say the same thing. I'll say *Amen* to your sermon, no matter how often you preach it."

"I don't want to preach," he returned, a little abashed by her word; "but there's no Bae-decker's Guide to Yale, and lots of fellows, every year, run aground for lack of a little friendly steering from one of the older men. Moreover, once they are down, they aren't condemned one bit harder by the faculty than they are by the best men of their own class. That's all; but I have been there and seen."

Ursula brushed away the sand from the flying paws of Nicodemus, and smoothed down her gown.

"You've right on your side, Rex," she said then. "I think I am willing to trust Jackie to your fostering care. You probably will haze him; but you will pour good advice into his ears, between whiles. And now, if you have finished your sermon, suppose we consider how we can amuse ourselves for the next three weeks."

"But I want a share in that discussion."

Ursula turned around eagerly at sound of the new voice.

"Uncle Steve! I was wishing you would come. Have you met Mr. Barrett?"

Kingsley turned a little indifferently. The next instant, he was on his feet, hat in hand. He had heard of Mr. Stephen Thain as a country farmer who managed Blowmedowne for his sister and occupied a part of the house during her absence; he met Mr. Stephen Thain as he would have met one of his father's New York friends. A later acquaintance proved that his first instinct had been a correct one, for, underneath the blue overalls, there was a finished gentleman. Mr. Thain's hands were slim and nervous, his gray eyes steady, his accent free from any twang.

Deliberately he pushed Nicodemus aside and seated himself on the mound of earth, facing the group.

"This is a great chance for me," he said, with a twinkle in his eyes that harmonized with the ring of his voice. "I don't often have a chance to explore the country with four new people, and I mean to make the most of it. How soon can you be ready to start?"

Ursula rose.

"Soon enough to get home in time to start again," she answered definitely.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

IT was only the next morning that Harry Arterburn came tramping down the lane at a great pace. Ursula, on the broad veranda, saw him from afar, and waved her hand in welcome. He ignored the greeting.

"Have you seen Fizzums?" he asked abruptly, as soon as he was near enough to make himself heard.

"No." Ursula's accent was rising, the accent of optimism.

Harry came up the steps two at a time, and sat down on the rail. As she saw his pallor and heard his quick, short breathing, Ursula told herself that something was seriously amiss.

"Where can he be?" he said anxiously.

"Really, I haven't seen him since yesterday morning. Is he lost?"

"We can't find him anywhere. We have been hunting, for an hour. He came down, early this morning, and Cousin Eudora saw him going towards the barn. None of the men have seen him; but he didn't come back to breakfast."

"Our barn, or yours?"

"Ours. Joe and Mike were both there, milking; but they haven't seen anything of him."

"Try our barn, then," Ursula suggested practically. "He spends half his time at Uncle Steve's heels. He may be in the harness-room with him now."

Bareheaded and in her fresh white gown, she led the way to the huge barns, up into the empty harness-room, down between the dusty, fragrant mows, and on into the long cowhouse where the tawny Jerseys stood in their stanchions, philosophically chewing their cuds until such time as they should be turned out again into the dewy pasture. The whole place echoed with her calls; but no childish voice came in answer.

Out in front of the barn, Ursula paused.

"Let me see," she said thoughtfully. "He prowls all over the upper pasture. What if you look up there?"

Harry took a step or two forward; then he turned.

"Aren't you coming, too?"

For an instant, Ursula glanced downward at the dainty gown and French slippers which she had donned in honor of a promised call from Kingsley. Then she looked up at Harry's expectant, anxious face.

"Of course I am coming. I know the pasture better than you do, for it is one of my favorite places, and I have explored it, from one end to the other. Jack and I were there, only day before yesterday; and we found Fizzums sitting on a rock at the very top of the pasture, playing hunter, with a black stump for a bear and a cornstalk for a gun. He probably is there now."

Harry smiled down at her gratefully. He felt an irresistible longing to pat the shining brown hair that was moving along beside his shoulder. Ursula seemed to him only a child; but, with a half smile, he admitted to himself the childish pique with which she would receive any such demonstration on his part. Instead, he contented himself with saying,—

"You are a comforting sort of girl, Ursula. Sure you don't mind the climb?"

In her secret heart, she did mind it exceedingly, for the morning was a sultry one, and, moreover, she was remote from the source of new slippers. Nevertheless, it sufficed for her that it was Harry Arterburn who was in such evident trouble, and she answered gayly,—

"Do I ever mind a walk? Come; this is the way."

She accepted the needless steadying of his hand across the brook where the turfy edges

were punctured with round black holes made by the hoofs of drinking cattle. Then she led the way alertly up the stony slope, through the thick dark shadow of the pine grove and out upon the open hillside of the upper pasture. Up and up they followed the trail, past sweetbriar bushes, past patches of sweet fern, past great gray boulders, each set in its encircling wreath of clustering brakes. Now and then they halted to call and call again; then they went forward swiftly, with Ursula too far in the lead to see the growing whiteness of her companion's face.

At the summit, however, even she paused for breath, while Harry came forward to her side. They stood there together for a few minutes, alternately calling and looking about them, not at the view which opened out grandly before them to the very foothills of the White Mountains, but over the pasture at their feet, questioning every rock and boulder to see whether it might be the hiding-place of the chubby little figure they had sought so far in vain. At last, Harry turned away.

"He's not there," he said. "What is over beyond those trees?"

Already Ursula had started down the trail.

"Oh, nobody ever goes over there," she an-

swered carelessly. "It's only the Bottomless Pool."

"The what?" Harry asked sharply.

"The Bottomless Pool. You know every well-regulated farm owns one. But he isn't over there. It is all fenced off, and nobody goes near it, once a year. Where are you going?"

"To the pool."

"There's no use."

"Perhaps not. Still, I know Fizzums."

She followed him closely. No longer had she any cause to take thought for her slippers which already were hopeless wrecks. But Harry was in the lead now, and even Ursula, strong and lithe as a girl could be, was hard pressed to keep up with his rapid pace. They were dropping a little behind the crest of the hill that blotted the view from sight; but, over the tree-tops before them, the blue peak of Ascutney shot upward, boldly outlined against the paler blue of the sky. They halted at the fence which shut in the still black pool. Then Harry turned away.

"Nothing here," he said briefly.

"Wait!" Ursula's tone was sharp with fear. "What's that?"

His glance followed her pointing finger. Then, for his only answer, he vaulted the fence and stooped to pick up the little handkerchief, smudgy

and knotted at the corners, one of which was marked with a single letter.

“It’s—it’s——” The words came thickly from his tongue. Then suddenly he dropped on the long, rank grass which edged the pool.

For the moment, Ursula could not have felt more absolutely alone with Harry, had they been sole survivors of a shipwreck on the edge of the Antarctic Continent. It was the first time she had seen any one lose consciousness, and she had no restoratives at hand, even if she had known how to use them. Out of sight and sound of the house, she could call no one to her aid, and she dared not leave Harry alone, so perilously near the edge of that black, still, stagnant pool. The terror of her position swept over her and shook her healthy nerves. Then she gripped her courage fast with both hands, and tried to think what she ought to do, in the face of such a crisis.

There was a long sound of tearing, as she forced her way between the wires of the high fence; then she stumbled over a sharp stone which cut away the whole side of one of her slippers. Too intent upon her work to heed tearing or cuts, however, she reached Harry’s side and bent over him in increasing alarm. Only his breath, which came at intervals in short, jerking gasps, showed her that life was still in his keep-

ing. How long it would remain in his keeping, she was afraid to ask herself. Then it was that, for the first time in their friendship, Ursula Thain realized the place which Harry Arterburn had come to fill in her girlish life. Child as she was, she realized it then; but it was not until years afterwards that, looking backward, she understood what might have been the meaning of that hour.

She could do but little. Gently she moved him until he lay more comfortably; she loosened the clothing at his neck and put water on his face, shuddering slightly as the lifeless drops touched the equally lifeless forehead. Then, with one lingering look along the path they had come, she sat down beside him to wait. For what she was waiting, she could not tell.

It seemed to her that the moments dragged on endlessly. Slowly the sun swept up across the sky until it found a gap in the trees through which it could stare remorselessly down into the still, white face. The jersey cows, long since turned out from the barn, sauntered up to the fence and peered through it at her, nuzzling and jostling each other to make sure of getting the best point for observation. At length, Nicodemus, always a tramp by nature, came jogging along the path on his daily tour of inspection. The sight brought Ursula a certain courage. It was

possible that Nicodemus might have a human companion. It was also possible that, lacking a companion, he might be sent galloping off in search of help, like the fabled dogs of the Saint Bernard. She waited a moment to assure herself that he was alone. Then she softly called him to her side.

Nicodemus heard the voice and paused, with his ears and his left forefoot raised, to discover whence it came. She repeated the call, and there was a sudden scattering of the cows, as the dog dashed in among them, slid under the fence and, with a joyous yelp, plumped himself into her lap and fell to licking her face in a perfect frenzy of devotion.

"Nicodemus!" she ordered him. "Nicodemus, go find massa and bring him here."

With an answering plunge, Nicodemus sprang upward with his forepaws on her shoulders, and began pressing damp kisses into the hollow of her ear.

"Oh, Nicodemus, you stupid! Go find somebody. Rats! Nicodemus, sic' 'em!"

Without an instant's hesitation, Nicodemus leaped down, and began digging an imaginary woodchuck from under Harry Arterburn's left hip. Ursula sprang to catch him; but his stumpy tail eluded her grasp, and his active little paws

were hard at work. It proved to be good work, too. The steady *jog, jog*, against Harry's side slowly sent some message to the dulled brain. He stirred a little and opened his eyes.

Joy brought swift inspiration to Ursula. The energetic paws of Nicodemus had pulled Harry's coat aside until she could see a note-book and the end of a pencil in his breast pocket. She took them, tore out a leaf and wrote a few words. Then she took off the white ribbon that belted her gown, tied the note into it and tied the ribbon around the neck of Nicodemus who showed his masculine love of finery by standing motionless to be adorned. Then she bent over the dog and kissed him between his tattered ears.

"I'm sorry, Nicodemus dear," she said softly; "but it is the only way. Now—— Go home!"

There was a swift, sharp blow, a yelp of pain, and then Nicodemus, white bow and all, went scudding up the path and vanished over the crest of the hill, while Ursula settled herself for the little time of waiting which must remain to her.

It proved to be a long time of waiting, however, for Nicodemus brought no answering message. Slowly Harry's full consciousness came back to him, and his color changed from bluish gray to the more normal tint of healthy manhood; but it was long before he could sit up,

longer still before, leaning on Ursula's strong young arm, he could attempt the difficult walk back to the house. Kingsley saw them coming, and met them at the barn.

"What has happened?" he asked abruptly.

"Mr. Arterburn felt faint; he went up the hill too fast," Ursula answered for him, hoping to forestall any reference to Fizzums, for she saw from Kingsley's face that the passing hours had brought no news of the child.

Her care was in vain.

"Rex," Harry spoke with perfect quiet; "I am afraid Fizzums has fallen into the pond on the hill. We found his handkerchief close beside it, inside the fence. Will you get the men to go up there? I am afraid I——"

"Steady." Kingsley's voice was low and level, and he slipped his arm around the burden which was fast becoming too heavy for Ursula's strength. "That's all right; come right over against me. Now we'll put you on Mrs. Myers's couch, and then I'll see about things for you. I don't think the little chap is drowned. Most likely it is a false alarm; but I'll go up and look the ground over. Here we are. Now stretch yourself out, while Ursula gets you something to put a little life into you. Jack, will you go down to the house and ask Nathalie to come over?"

Tell her there's nothing to worry about. Take care of yourself, Hal. I'll bring you some good news before long." And he swung himself over the veranda rail, and went striding away out of sight.

In the late twilight, he joined Nathalie who was sitting in the doorway, holding her throbbing head between her hands. Harry had fallen asleep at last ; she could do nothing more but sit there, and watch the darkness creep down from the hillsides and up from the distant river, the pitiless darkness which would mark the passing of the last day of the life of Fizzums. For Harry's sake, the girl had kept up bravely. Now that she was free to give way to her sorrow, the tears refused to come at her bidding. She sat there, stunned and apathetic, until Kingsley dropped down beside her.

"I have good news for you," he said.

She started up.

"Fizzums?"

"No. I'm sorry, Nathalie; but it's not that. It is only that Mac Holden will be here at nine, to-night."

"Rex! You dear old comfort!" Her voice broke.

"Of course I'm a comfort," he answered cheerily. "You can't get on without me, you

know. I wired Mac, this noon, when Hal came home, for I thought he would better have somebody look him over. I had great luck, too. I caught Mac just as he and Aunt Ted were leaving Boston for Halifax, and they'll be here, to-night."

"She is coming, too?"

"Yes, I thought she'd better. Mrs. Myers will take them in. I'm going over, in a few minutes, to tell her to get the rooms ready. She won't mind, and this house is full."

Nathalie's lower lip quivered.

"It is the first good news I have heard, to-day. I can bear it better, with Dr. Holden here. But, Rex, what could I do without you?"

With the touch of an older brother, he drew her over against his shoulder.

"Let it cry itself out, Nathalie," he said gently. "It's got to come; but—I'm so sorry."

"But it is both Fizzums and Hal," she said at length. "This morning, I should have said that one alone would kill me; but here I am, with Fizzums gone, and Hal just coming back from the other edge of things. Rex, Harry mustn't be ill."

"Trust Mac," he advised her.

She raised her head.

"I do."

The dusk gathered fast and faster, while they sat there in silence. Then, all of a sudden, they sprang up. Out from the open barn door there sauntered a chubby little figure who paused, just across the threshold, to stretch himself and give a mighty yawn. By his side trudged Nicodemus from whose neck dangled the sodden ends of a much-chewed white satin ribbon.

“Fizzums!”

“What?” The voice expressed bland content.

“Where have you been?”

“In the barn.”

“All day?”

“Yes.”

“What have you been doing?”

Fizzums wriggled out of Nathalie's embrace.

“I went out, early this morning, to play 'Lijah in the Wilderness in the hay, and see if the wavens would come. I tooked some cookie, so, if they didn't, I wouldn't be hungry. Nobody came, so I ated the cookie, and bimeby I went asleep. Nicodemus came; but he wasn't a waven. He went asleep, too, just like me, and we've only just awaked up.”

“But we thought you were drowned.”

“Where?” Fizzums spoke with sudden interest.

"Up in the pool on the hill."

"Hh! I wouldn't go vere. Vere's a bogey-man lives inside it."

"But they found your handkerchief close beside it."

"Oh, yes, I merember now. I went up to take some cucumbers to the bogey-man, and mine handkerfins was all mixed up with the cucumbers, so I frowed it away. It wasn't a very big one, and it had a hole in it, too."

Nathalie dropped his hand and turned towards the house.

"Where are you going?" Fizzums inquired.

"To tell Harry that you have come. Your running away has made poor Harry very ill, Fizzums."

"I'm sorry," Fizzums said affably. "I didn't know it. Now, if you please, I think I'd like mine dinner."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

UTTERLY exhausted by the exciting events of the day, Ursula had gone to bed at dusk, and was just preparing to cry herself to sleep, when she heard John come leaping up the stairs, two steps at a time. The next instant, two lusty fists descended upon her door.

“Wake up, Ursula! Fizzums has come back.”

“Jack!”

“Yes, he’s been doing Elijah under the juniper tree, only he overslept himself and missed the ravens, so he came home ravenous. That’s a borrowed pun; but no matter.”

Ursula struggled into a wrapper and joined him in the hall.

“Little wretch! And how is Mr. Arterburn?”

“Better, Rex said. He just came over to tell us about Fizzums, and that Dr. Holden and Mrs. Farrington will be here, to-night.”

Ursula drew a long breath.

“I am so glad. They all think that Dr. Holden can raise the dead; and then he has

known about these turns of Mr. Arterburn, before now."

John sat down beside her on the top stair.

"From all I hear, you must have acted up like a good fellow, Ursula."

"I don't see how."

"Not losing your head, and all that."

She laughed scornfully.

"Only idiots do that. Besides, I didn't have head enough to do me any good. I had never seen anybody like that before, and I didn't know a solitary thing to do."

"But you did it."

"Yes, I just sat there and watched him, and wondered if somebody would ever come. Oh, Jackie, it was horrible. I was sure he was going to die there alone, and I didn't dare leave him, within three feet of the pool, for fear he would move and roll down into it. It seemed to me I sat there about seventeen years."

"By the way," John inquired suddenly; "where did Nicodemus get his white ribbon? Rex says Nathalie insists upon it that it is your belt."

"Nicodemus? Did he go home, after all?"

"He came home just now with Fizzums, and he had on a tag end of a huge white satin bow. We hadn't heard of any wedding where he had been

asked to officiate, and Fizzums says he doesn't know where the bow came from."

"Oh, Jack!" And Ursula burst out laughing nervously. "That Nicodemus! He came up to me, by the pool, and I tried to send him home. At first, he thought I meant woodchucks, and he half undermined Mr. Arterburn. Then I wrote a note and tied it to him with my belt, and thumped him as hard as I could. He started for home, and that was the last I saw of him."

"And the last you'll see of your note," John predicted, quite unaware of the fact that, years after, the tattered scrawl would come to light from the depths of one of Harry's pockets. "Next time you want a trusty messenger, Ursula, I would pass Nicodemus by and take a cow. But Rex told mother that Mr. Arterburn is worrying about you. It seems that he asked you to go with him, because he felt queer and didn't dare go alone; and now he is afraid that it will lay you up."

Ursula smiled a little unsteadily.

"Nonsense, Jackie! I don't lay up as easily as all that, and I am glad I could be the one to go, only really I didn't do anything at all. But, ever since I came to New York, Mr. Arterburn and you have been my truest friends. Perhaps some day I shall get a chance to show you, too,

that I appreciate it." Then she rose and stood with her hand resting on his shoulder. "Good-night, Jackie, and don't let anything bad happen to you. I never could bear that." And she turned and went back to her room.

Early the next morning, she sat on the steps of the veranda, rebuking the faithless Nicodemus. Under her caustic tongue, Nicodemus was fast losing his perkiness; but Ursula was as fresh and unruffled as if she had devoted the previous day to a veranda chair and a soothing book.

"Oh, you untrusty servant!" she was saying, as she set the dog up in front of her and steadied him by his forepaws. "Sit and think of your sins. Aren't you ashamed of yourself for—— No! Sit up! You can do it, when there's a biscuit in sight. Who ate up a note, like a horrid, dissipated little postman?"

As Nicodemus vainly sought to bury his face in the palm of her admonishing hand, Ursula heard a low laugh behind her. Letting Nicodemus topple over and go sprawling down the steps, she rose to greet the guest.

"Is it Dr. Holden? How is Mr. Arterburn?"

For an instant, their eyes met with full approval on both sides. She saw a tall, broad-shouldered man with thick yellow hair and keen

blue eyes. He looked down on a pretty, eager face where, for the moment, all the brilliancy had given place to wishfulness.

"Yes, I am Dr. Holden, and I suspect that you are Miss Ursula Thain."

"And Mr. Arterburn?" she demanded.

"Much better, this morning."

"Have you been over there so early?"

"It's not so early, and doctors haven't any especial hours, you know. Besides, Mr. Arterburn is one of my best friends."

"I think he's mine, too," Ursula said slowly.

He looked down at her with the grave, intent smile which seemed characteristic of him.

"Yes, he told me you proved it, yesterday."

"But I didn't do anything."

"There wasn't much that you could do. You had no stimulants, and it wasn't safe to leave him, to get any. Some girls would have gone rushing away in search of help. It was so much better that you didn't. But he told me to find out how you are, this morning."

She brushed his words aside impatiently.

"Nothing ever hurts me. What made him faint away?"

Dr. Holden hesitated. Then suddenly he realized that it was safe to trust the girl before him.

"His heart isn't quite right," he answered briefly. "It is better not to say much about it; but it hasn't been right, for a good while. All winter long, he has worked too hard. I thought he would come out of it without any sharp attack; but his anxiety about Fizzums, and his climbing the hill too fast——"

"Was I to blame?" she interrupted.

"You?"

"Yes. I went ahead." Her voice vibrated with sudden fear.

Dr. Holden's smile was reassuring.

"It wouldn't have made any difference, if you had been dragging him back. When it comes to a question of those children, Harry Arterburn never thinks of himself."

"I'd like to choke that Fizzums," Ursula muttered vengefully.

To her surprise, Dr. Holden burst out laughing.

"I—— Well, I wish he could get a change of heart," he answered.

"Now, Mac, changes of heart don't grow on bargain counters, and you were an imp once, yourself."

He turned with a boyish eagerness.

"Aunt Ted! Up so early?"

"Yes. I wanted to hear from Hal." Mrs. Farrington came slowly forward and rested her

hands on Ursula's shoulders. "And this is Ursula Thain? I saw you once, child, just about a year ago. I have always remembered you, too, you and your father."

Ursula looked up expectantly into the womanly face before her.

"I think I know when," she answered, with a little tinge of shyness.

"At New Haven? Yes. And I never forgot it, because you and your father were on such intimate terms. I liked to watch you, for my father and I have been just such friends. Is he well?"

Ursula's face lighted.

"Isn't he fine?" she burst out with the enthusiasm of a child, quite forgetful that she was talking to one of the foremost novelists of the day, a woman in whose presence her elegant little aunt looked like an overdressed doll. "But what do you suppose we all would have said, that day, if anybody had told us that, within the year, I should have been up here with you and Nathalie and Rex?"

Mrs. Farrington laughed at the girlish question.

"Chance does strange things. At least, I am grateful to it for bringing me into such a lovely place. Is Harry going to be well enough so you can leave him, to-day, Mac?"

Dr. Holden looked a little troubled.

"I don't want to part company, Aunt Ted; but I would like to watch him, for a few days. Do you mind?"

"I don't mind anything, dear boy. I'll run over to Jackson and spend a few days with Allyn and Cicely, and you can pick me up there. As long as we get our trip in the end, I don't care how long you delay it."

However, at the breakfast table, Mrs. Myers protested vehemently. Mrs. Farrington demurred, then yielded, and John and Ursula retired from the dining-room to mingle their prayers that Harry Arterburn's convalescence might be a slow one. It was no trivial blessing to be for a week in the same house with Mrs. Theodora McAlister Farrington, to say nothing of her nephew and namesake, Dr. McAlister Holden.

"Do you know, Mac, I have rather enjoyed the visit," Mrs. Farrington said, as they walked down the lane in the twilight, one night. "Mrs. Myers has been perfect in her hospitality, and I like her so much better than I expected. Your Aunt Babe hasn't been quite fair to her, and then my experience with her husband wasn't altogether reassuring."

Dr. Holden's laugh startled a squirrel from a

stone by the roadside, and sent him scampering away in search of shelter.

"Do you mean the time he brayed himself into the middle of your dinner party?" he asked.

"Yes, and the time he took me for a penny-dreadful woman. Jack asked me, last night, if I had ever met his father."

"What did you tell him?"

"The truth; but I edited it, and then I changed the subject. Mac, that's a fine boy."

Dr. Holden assented with unexpected fervor.

"He is. I have been watching him, and he's as sound as a nut. He will be a good friend for Rex, too. I wish they were in the same class."

"Don't worry about that," Mrs. Farrington returned philosophically. "You are quite likely to get your wish, for Rex is so lazy that he may be dropped, any day."

They walked on in silence for a time. At length Dr. Holden spoke, and the words came with some difficulty.

"Aunt Ted?"

"Well, Mac?" she asked, as he came to a full stop.

The difficulty seemed to increase.

"Aunt Ted," he said at length; "my mother is in Montana, and I think, as long as she isn't here, I'd like to have a talk with you."

Mrs. Farrington stretched out her hand to his.

"Thank you, my dear boy. Shall we sit down here for a little while?"

He nodded, and they took their places on a rough board seat under a beech-tree. Around them, already the white birches were growing misty in the twilight; from above their heads sounded the last good-nights of the drowsy birds.

"Well, Mac, what is it all about?" she asked, after a long interval.

"It is about a good many things," he answered. "One of them is Harry Arterburn."

"Isn't he coming out all right?" Mrs. Farrington asked quickly.

"Coming out, yes; all right, no. He isn't going to be an invalid, by any means; but he will never be a really strong man. With care, he may outgrow this heart trouble, even now; but overwork and any excitement are going to bring on these attacks, and every attack will make his outgrowing it a little less likely."

Mrs. Farrington stared gravely at the yellow head beside her. She could not see the eyes, for Dr. Holden was bending forward, watching the figures he was tracing in the earth of the pathway.

"It is a dreary outlook, Mac," she said regretfully. "Is there any remedy?"

He shook his head.

"I can't see much. It is a hard case, where a man needs nothing but rest and freedom from care, and can't take either. He won't save himself in the least. He loves work for the mere pleasure of getting it done; but, even if he didn't, he couldn't afford to stop. He is in an endless treadmill, with those children goading on and on. Sometimes it's an awfully cruel world, Aunt Ted. The worst of it is, there's no way of evening things up. My profession is bringing me in four times as much as I need; but I can't share it with Harry Arterburn. I can only stand by, and see him working himself to death for the lack of something I have and don't need."

The words had a ring of desperation and, as he looked up at her, Mrs. Farrington was surprised to see something glitter on his long yellow lashes.

"And then there's Nathalie," he went on swiftly. "The time has come when she must be told about this trouble, so that she can be on her guard, and guard Hal from all the worry that she can. Do you realize what it is to put such a strain on a girl of her age? She will have no one back of her, and she adores Hal. I must warn her. It is necessary that she should know;

but do you wonder I shrink from telling her?"

"You are sure it is necessary?"

"Yes, if there's to be any chance of a cure. It is the one hope that, by sparing him in every possible way, he may in time outgrow it. It largely depends on her pluck and endurance; but I have seen worse cases than Harry Arterburn's pull out of it. I only hope he may."

"Do you know, Mac," Mrs. Farrington said thoughtfully; "I sometimes think you love Harry Arterburn best of all your patients."

Suddenly he rose and stood in the path, facing her.

"No, Aunt Ted. That is the real thing I wanted to say to you. I love Nathalie better."

"Mac! My dear boy!"

"I thought perhaps you would have seen it," he said steadily. "It is nothing new. Two years ago, when she was only a child, I knew the hope for the sake of which I was willing to work and wait. She is older now, eighteen, and things are going to bear down on her hard, for the next few years. Aunt Ted, do you think it is too soon?"

Putting out both hands, she took his two hands and drew him down beside her.

"Mac," she said, as she looked straight into

his eyes ; " before I advise you, tell me one thing truly. Are you saying this because you care for Nathalie Arterburn, or because you love Nathalie Arterburn's brother ? "

The blue eyes met her eyes gravely, unflinchingly.

" Aunt Ted, I should be a brute, if I married a girl I didn't love, just out of pity for her brother. "

" Then my blessing go with you, dear boy ! " she said slowly. " She is a superb girl, and deserves even you. "

" And you think mother —— "

" We none of us could ask anything better, Mac. When you are ready, let me write to your mother. "

" You always have spoiled me, Aunt Ted, " he said gratefully. " And you don't think she is too young ? "

" I am not sure what to say, Mac, " she said, after a pause. " As a rule, I don't believe in a girl's marrying so young ; but Nathalie is in some ways very mature, and the case is a little unusual. As you say, there is no one back of her, and the time has come when she needs some one to hold her up. "

" Of course, " he said quietly ; " I have no reason to count too much on the future. I may

find that she does not care for me, after all."

Mrs. Farrington's eyes rested proudly on the manlike face, while her mind swept backward over the times she had watched him and Nathalie together.

"I think she does, Mac."

The color rushed hotly upwards across his cheeks and brow.

"I hope so," he said briefly. "I have done my best to have it so."

"Harry will be happy about it," Mrs. Farrington suggested.

"Yes," he assented; "I think he will. We are close friends, and I know he has worried about Nathalie."

"Mac! Does he know his danger?"

"Yes, at its worst. He has faced it like a man, and put his house in order; but he means to fight like a hero for every chance that he can get."

"The dear fellow!"

Dr. Holden's smile was very sad.

"He has known, for more than two years, that things weren't straight with him; but he begged me to keep still about it. He has talked to me again and again about Nathalie; but she was so young that I felt it wasn't fair to her, to tell him

all I was hoping. Now, Aunt Ted, I think the time has come."

Under cover of the growing darkness, her hand shut over his.

"Yes, Mac, I think it has. And, if everything comes out as you wish it, say to the dear girl that Aunt Ted is ready to stand, as far as can be, in the mother's place."

"Thank you, Aunt Ted; it's like you." Then he rose and stood before her, drawn to his fullest height. "To-morrow," he added slowly; "I must tell her about Hal; but, before I speak of him, I shall have asked Nathalie Arterburn to be my wife."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

“OH, Jackie, why is it necessary for one weary head to have twenty pillows to rest on?” Ursula protested, while she stitched away diligently at the huge white seal she was embroidering on a square of blue satin.

“Because the head is so full of wisdom that no one pillow will support it,” he replied tranquilly. “How many does this make, really?”

“Fourteen. They are horridly monotonous, too, nothing but this everlasting blue and white. Don’t you think a crimson one would set the others off, or else an orange and black?”

“It would set itself off, out of the window,” he returned. “You’d better not waste your work. Fourteen blue ones will do for a starter. Most likely Jack Dorrien will have a few.”

“Are you going to put out a Jack of Hearts for a door-plate?” she inquired, while she threaded a needle. “It seems to me I would have had names enough to go round.”

“Never you mind the name. Jack is a good fellow.”

"I am much more interested in knowing whether he has good taste," Ursula interrupted loftily. "You are going to have such a sweet room that I hope he won't put any trash into it."

"He's safe. His father is an artist."

Ursula shook her head.

"All the more dangerous. Mr. Dorrien is an impressionist, and Jack may fill up the walls with stuff his father can't sell. Still, you can rise triumphant, for you have that French poster that Nathalie gave you. I don't wish to be critical, Jack, and I suppose it is choice; but it looks to me as if it had been washed and boiled, without its being fast color."

"You're nothing but a Vandal," he answered. "You'd like a whole menagerie of Barye beasts in plaster."

"I know that. They're neat, and they don't fade. I wanted you to get a plain couch cover, instead of that thunder-and-lightning Indian blanket. If it had been made here in New York, Jack, you'd say it was hideous. Why didn't you get one of Miss Eudora's drawn-in rugs, if you are after primitive American art? She had a beautiful one of cattails and poppies growing out of an indigo lawn. It would have added ever so much to your room."

"I'll leave it for yours. Where is mother?"

"Packing curtains and such stuff. She told me to tell you that the man was coming at ten, to do the pictures. Oh, Jack, whatever shall I do, when your room is a wilderness?"

"Go and irrigate it with your tears," he suggested.

"I shall. I am going to be so lonely. I can't even have Nathalie any more. Whenever I go there, Dr. Holden is either just going out, or just coming in, and I do detest having a man always under foot." The silk broke under Ursula's energetic fingers.

"How is Mr. Arterburn?"

"Growing stronger, every day. He really begins to look as he did, when I first saw him. He will be ready for work, next week."

"But not for you."

She shook her head.

"Alas, no. I am doomed to school. I sha'n't like it half so well, and, besides, I shall miss seeing him, every day."

John raised his brows.

"I thought you detested having a man always under foot," he reminded her unkindly.

"Don't sit on my work-basket," she remonstrated hastily. "I do. Still, there is a difference in men, and I know that Dr. Holden is neglecting his patients, just for the sake of

mooning around with Nathalie Arterburn. I am disappointed in Nathalie, anyway. I never had supposed she was that kind of a girl."

"Wait till your own turn comes!"

Ursula frowned.

"It won't," she said shortly.

"Don't be too sure. When it does, may I be there to see!"

"All right; only don't forget your spectacles. You will be so old, you can't see without them. But, Jack, I really can't believe that you are going so soon."

"To-morrow noon," he assured her. "Never mind, though; you and mother will be up there, until Monday."

"Yes. It is a year ago this week that I first saw the place," Ursula said thoughtfully. "I didn't suppose then that I should ever be helping a freshman to settle his room; but then, I used to think that freshmen were superior beings. It is going to be a pretty room, Jackie; but I wish it were ten times as much so."

It was a pretty room when, three days later, Mrs. Myers and Ursula straightened their aching backs and looked about them. It was by no means orthodox to turn the picture hanging into a maternal function, but Mrs. Myers had insisted, and John had let her have her way.

Even better than his mother, he had realized that this was the last time she was to assume full right to order his possessions. He could never retrace the steps that led out of his boyhood.

"It is entirely too good a room for a pair of freshmen," Ursula said, as she studied Nathalie's poster which held the place of honor on the southern wall. "Jack Dorrien knows more girls than our Jack does, and they make his side of the room look rather like a junk shop, with their assorted contributions. Jackie's side is perfect. Those two old prints and the Hermes are almost too much riches for one wall. How do you like it, Jackie?" she added, as the door opened, and John appeared.

"Good; but you look utterly tired out."

"We are somewhat tuckered, as Miss Eudora has it; but we are so pleased with ourselves that it will untuck us. We are ready to abdicate in your favor."

"You deserve a rest. What are you going to do?"

"Your mother is going to the hotel for a nap. I am going in search of a mouthful of fresh air."

"It will take a lot," John observed. "Let's go hunt clams."

Her face lighted.

"Jack, an inspiration! We'll go down to the place where father and I were, last year."

"That's what I meant. Do you know where it was?"

"I can find it again. Are you sure you don't need me, Aunt Ursula?"

"Yes. I'll finish tying these curtains; then I will go over to the hotel. Aren't you too dusty to go, as you are?"

"No. I'll brush off the worst of it," Ursula answered tranquilly.

Her aunt looked at her with some degree of doubt.

"Well, perhaps it won't show. Be sure you bring her back in time to dress for dinner, John."

"Sure. Sorry you're too tired to go with us." And the door shut behind them, leaving Mrs. Myers to complete her task alone.

When all was done, she dropped into a chair and regarded her work contentedly. There was good reason, moreover, for her contentment. Since the early months of her married life, Mrs. Myers had known no such happy time as that summer had brought her. Even now she was unable to understand how it had come to pass that of late she and her husband had become so much more intimate than ever, how she had

coaxed him into taking more frequent holidays at Blowmedowne, and why it was that, twice that summer, it had been imperative that she should run down to the city to spend a week with him in the deserted house. On the second of those occasions, too, she had lured Dr. Holden into dining with her, and she had been willing to sit silent and leave to her husband the full enjoyment of their guest. A year before, she would have kept the conversational ball entirely within her grasp.

John, too, was a just cause for much pride. It was something for a boy to take the last of his final examinations on his sixteenth birthday, and to come out from them, without a condition. It was still more to come out from them, untainted by conceit or prigginess. Her only child was going far towards the fulfilment of all her dreams for him, and, for them all, the future was full of promise. She glanced up to the wall above the desk where, as John had insisted, hung the narrow frame that held the trio of home pictures, Ursula, her husband and, in the middle, her dainty little self, dressed in one of the evening gowns which her boy liked so well.

"Yes, I ought to be so happy," she said to herself. "I am happy, too, very happy; only—this is the first giving up of my boy."

"But it seems ages on ages ago," Ursula said, an hour later, as she and John scrambled over the rocks and sat down by the lonely cedar tree.

"You are sure it is the same place?"

"Yes. My father sat just where you are, and I was here. I wish he were with me now."

"Much obliged."

"Oh, there's plenty of room for three. Some day, Jackie, I hope you will know him. It is my dream to have us all live near each other."

"I am afraid you will find it hard to make connections. But I did see him, you know."

"For a week. Besides, you have improved since then. But isn't it strange, Jack? I feel so much nearer him here than I ever do in New York."

"Because you didn't have on your company manners here," John suggested.

"Possibly. And Mrs. Barrett and Mrs. Farrington were over there," Ursula tossed a horseshoe crab towards a ledge close by; "and, clear out there, Nathalie and Rex were. Don't you wish they were there now?"

"Thanks; but I think I prefer this, if you don't mind," Kingsley's voice remarked in their ears. "How do, Ursula? Howdy, Pettijack? I just dropped in at Pierson, and found your mother bathed in tears."



John started up in alarm.

"What has happened?"

"Nothing; only general misery at the prospect of losing her first-born into the ravenous maw of the world. I chirked her up by informing her that you weren't worth fussing about, and that most likely the world would ship you back to her as damaged goods. I took her over to the hotel, and she rewarded my efforts at consolation by telling me you had gone clamming. I immediately headed for this spot, for I knew Ursula would want to see the place where first we met."

"Yes," she assented pitilessly. "I wanted to see it in its natural beauty, without any jarring details."

"I'm no jarring detail. I'm a sophomore, and an integral part of Yale."

"When did you come?"

"This noon. I came in from Quantuck, yesterday, took the Fall River boat to New York and spent just an hour at the house, pulling summer clothes out of my trunk and stuffing winter ones in. You just ought to see the way I left my room! It will give the mater an ague fit, when she gets home."

"When does she come?"

"In about three weeks. She and the Farring-

tons and the Ainslees are going to stay till they get frozen out, and Mac is going to take Nathalie over for a week."

"What about Mr. Arterburn?" Ursula asked jealously.

"He will live on faith and fried eels at a restaurant."

"Not if my mother knows herself," John interposed. "He can eat at our house. I'll mention it to her, to-night."

"That's a good scheme," Kingsley said approvingly. "It will keep Hal from forgetting that he owns an inner man, and it will also suggest to your mother that you aren't the only youth worth the feeding. But you've a great room, Pettijack. It is one of the best in Pierson."

"Of course. So am I," John answered serenely.

"Well, then see to it that your room isn't better than your company. If I were you, I'd write on the door 'No Admittance to Sports and Grinds.' Then you would have a happy medium. Where do you eat?"

"Commons."

"All right. See you don't spill things. They really ought to furnish high chairs and tin trays for the freshmen. I wish I were settled, Ursula;

I'd like Mrs. Myers to bring you over to the room; but it's mostly a mess of packing boxes. You'll have to wait till you come up for the game."

"What game?"

Kingsley eyed her despairingly.

"Ursula! Had you ever happened to hear that Yale and Harvard sometimes kick each other, and, incidentally, a football? Well, that game. It is here, this fall, and you are coming."

"How do you know?"

"Because the mater is going to bring you and Nathalie to see it."

"And Dr. Holden?"

Kingsley shook his head in scorn.

"Sorry a bit of Mac will she ask. He's an old man, too old for our crowd, even if he did have the cheek to get himself engaged to Nathalie. No; it is my show, all mine. I shall take you; Pettijack will take Nathalie; and the mater will take herself along, as a peace offering to Mother Grundy. Pettijack, do you realize that you are a man now, and that an engaged girl can't be seen in public with you, unless she lugs a chaperon along in her other hand? It's a great thing to arrive at man's estate; but now and then it is mighty inconvenient."

"It is also inconvenient to watch the sun set-

ting, and to know that Jack promised to get me back in time to prink for dinner," Ursula reminded him.

Kingsley straightened up from the comfortable spot where he had been stretched out at full length at her feet.

"Then I should advise you to be at it," he said unceremoniously. "Your gown is so dusty that it makes me feel sneezish, and you are going to have company to dinner, too."

"Who?"

"In the language of the immortal Fizzums, mineself. Your aunt invited me to come and show Pettijack how to eat like a man and a student. No more pap boats for you, Pettijack. It will be grilled bones from this day forward."

John had already risen; but Ursula lingered, staring out with grave eyes at the trio of lighthouses and the gleaming waves beyond.

"He would have been so happy here, this afternoon," she said slowly. "Jack, you can't be thankful enough to have your father within easy reach."

John's eyes suddenly grew as grave as her own.

"I know that, Ursula," he answered.

But Kingsley heaved a portentous sigh.

"And mine is grinding out a sonata beside the

shore of the loud-roaring deep at Quantuck, with four hours of solid seasickness between him and his son. He's a nice gentleman and a great composer; but a precious poor sailor. Ten minutes in that boat on the sand over there would do for him completely." Then he bent over and offered his hand to Ursula. "If we must go, we must," he said regretfully; "but let us hope we can sit together on these rocks, this time next year."

But the next year held in its keeping other plans for some of them.

CHAPTER TWENTY

SWIFTLY and smoothly the train was sliding along through grove and field and suburban village, laying down the miles behind it with a speed so great as to have outrun all suggestion of hurry. Nevertheless, to John Myers, sitting up straight and rigid in the forward car, it seemed that the ride to New York was taking two hundred hours instead of its allotted two. To his impatient mind, the engineer was running in perpetual fear of a hot box, and he sought to measure his advance by counting the hurried views of the Sound which dotted off the weary miles.

That had been his leisure day of all the week. Directly after lunch, he had gone back to his room to brush up one of his lessons, before getting off his mid-week letter home. On the way, he had stopped at the post-office to find one of Ursula's bulky scrawls awaiting him and, once in his room, he had cast himself down on the window seat to decipher it at his ease. As he had stopped to turn one of the later pages, he

had caught sight of Kingsley Barrett who was coming down the street at a pace quite remarkable for a person of his leisurely habits. The window flew open, and John leaned out.

"Oh, Rex! Coming up?"

Kingsley glanced upward; but there was no trace of his customary joviality in his face.

"I am coming. Is Dorrien there?"

"No. He has recitation, this hour."

"All right. I wanted to see you alone."

It took a most undue space of time for Kingsley to mount the one flight of stairs, and his step dragged perceptibly, as he entered the room.

"What do you want?" John asked lazily, without stirring from his place by the window.

"I was after you." Kingsley crossed to the table and began fumbling with the papers there.

"Well, here I am."

Kingsley waited a moment in silence. Then he faced about.

"The fact is, I've something beastly to tell you."

John laughed easily.

"What's the row? Have you flunked some more examinations, or has the Dean been calling you down?"

"It's not that. It is from home."

John looked a trifle anxious.

"Anything wrong? I had a letter from Ursula, just now, and she saw your mother, only Monday."

Kingsley bit his lip irresolutely.

"It's not at my home; it's yours. I've just had a telegram from Mac Holden, saying your father is ill, nothing dangerous; but he thinks you would better run down to see how he is."

John sat up straight. His face was white to the roots of his hair, and a bluish ring outlined his mouth; but he spoke steadily.

"Have you the telegram here?"

Kingsley handed it to him in silence. In silence he read it, once, twice, three times. Then he looked at his watch.

"I can just catch the two-thirty train," he said briefly. "Tell Dorrien, please. And—I'm obliged to you for coming over, you know."

That was all. The next he realized, he was counting the glimpses of the blue Sound, which marked his endless progress towards home. Ursula met him on the threshold, and from her eyes he read that his worst fear was not fulfilled.

"Aunt Ursula and the nurse are with him," she said, as she softly closed the door. "I have been watching for you to come. I thought you would be on this train."

"What is it?" he asked.

She slid her arm around his shoulders, until it rested across the back of his neck, and, for some reason, John made no effort to withdraw himself from her girlish caress.

"The real danger is over, Jackie. I am telling you the honest truth. He had an ill turn in his office, this morning. They telephoned to Aunt Ursula, and she telephoned to Dr. Holden. I went with her, and we were all there at about the same minute. Dr. Holden says it came near being apoplexy; but he just escaped it. They brought him home at noon, and then Dr. Holden sent for you. Aunt Ursula misses you so much that we all thought you'd better run down for a day or two."

"And you say that the danger is over?"

"Yes, anyway for the present. Dr. Holden says he will come out all right."

"Can I go to him?"

"Not just yet. He is quiet, and they hope he will drop to sleep. Aunt Ursula asked me to tell you that she will come down as soon as she can. But, oh, Jackie!"

For the first time since he had come into the house, John looked squarely at his cousin. In the early dusk, her face showed white and wan, and her dark eyes seemed to glitter out at him from darker shadows.

"Ursula! What is it?" he asked again, with recurrent fear. "You look ——"

She interrupted him hastily.

"As if I were tired? I am, Jackie; but it is so good to see you that I don't mind. It has been a hard day for us all, you know."

"But if my father is better?" he said, with boyish optimism.

"Yes; but one doesn't get over such a fright in an hour."

"And how did mother stand it?"

"Wonderfully. She was quiet and steady. She hasn't cried a tear; but it has taken all her courage to go through it."

"Was he all right, this morning?" John asked, as he gently let her arm drop, while he took off his overcoat.

"As well as he has been, for ever so long. You know we worried about him in the spring. This has been coming on for a good while, we think now; and nobody—and we didn't realize how serious it was." She straightened her lips into a hard, firm line. Then she said bravely, "Come, Jack, there's a fire in the library, and I know you are tired and want to be made comf'y." And she held out her hand to him invitingly.

He took her hand and slipped it through his

arm, wondering a little, as he did so, that her fingers were so cold.

In the library, the lights were burning cozily and a bright fire glowed in the grate. Everything looked strangely natural: the vase of roses that always stood on the mantel, the low step-ladder before the long lines of books, and his father's easy chair drawn up beside the reading-lamp on the table. John's face brightened, as he saw all the well-remembered details of the luxurious room. He had not thought of being home-sick; nevertheless, home was an infinitely more attractive place than his rather cramped quarters in Pierson. He dropped down into his accustomed seat by the fire and, from sheer force of habit, he bent forward to pick up the poker. Then he glanced up at his cousin.

"Oh, but it's good to be here again! Sit down, Ursula, and let's pretend that I've never been away."

Already, under the influence of her good news from his father, he was reacting from the strain of the past three hours. She shrank from the unconscious content in his tone; nevertheless, she came forward to his side.

"It has been terribly lonely without you, Jackie. We all have missed you. Sometimes I

think that, for all he is so silent, Uncle Henry has missed you most of us all."

"But you say he has been fairly well, till this morning?"

"Ye-es." The word lengthened doubtfully. "At least, he has seemed so."

"I wonder what brought this on." John spoke thoughtfully.

Nervously Ursula's hands closed on the arms of her chair. As yet her task was not all done. In some respects, the hardest of it all was yet before her. Nevertheless, some one must do it, and, in pity for her aunt, Ursula had offered to be that some one.

"They think it was partly from business worry," she answered slowly.

"Yes," John said, with his eyes fixed on the fire. "I thought he was worrying about things, away back last spring. You know I told you that something was wrong, when he wouldn't let mother go to Europe."

"I wonder if she isn't glad now that she gave it up," Ursula said impetuously.

"Because they had such good times, last summer? I should think she would be. I never saw them hang together more. As a rule, they went their own ways. Do you suppose she knew about this?"

"Oh, no," Ursula answered hastily. Then she checked herself. "Knew about what?"

"That he was worrying?"

"No; not to think much about it. At least, that's what I should judge from what she said to me, to-day."

Again John bent forward, this time to prod the fire.

"Strange what should have brought this on, to-day."

There was no answer, and he looked up at Ursula, at first inquiringly, then with dawning suspicion.

"Was there any especial thing, to-day, that caused it?" he asked sharply.

For a moment, her courage failed her.

"Yes—that is—things are always up and down in Wall Street, you know—and ——"

"And?" The word was plainly interrogative.

"And I suppose to-day was one of the most uneven days," she concluded lamely.

With steady deliberation, John put the poker back into its stand; then he rose and faced Ursula.

"Something is wrong," he said briefly; "and you are keeping something back from me. What is it?"

She bit her lip. Before she could rally and

meet his question, he had followed it up with another.

“Ursula, has my father been losing money?”

“Yes.”

“Is it his own, or somebody else’s?” he asked in the same steady, determined manner.

Her eyes flashed indignantly.

“How dare you ask such a question of your own father?” she demanded.

He drew a long breath of relief.

“Because I wanted to know the very worst. I can stand anything now; but don’t, in mercy’s name, keep anything back.” For the moment, it was a man who was speaking. “Has he lost much?”

“Yes.”

“How much?”

Again she faltered.

“How much?” he repeated. “There is no kindness in making me drag it out of you, a word at a time. How much has he lost?”

“Everything.” Suddenly she rose and stood beside him. “Jackie, it couldn’t be much worse. It has been coming for a year. Things were running backwards, and he couldn’t seem to find what was making all the trouble. Still, he thought he could go through it, without its doing any lasting harm; but, to-day, he missed one of

the clerks, Mr. Mitchell, and when they came to look at his books, they found out where all the trouble came from. Jack, that man has been stealing, for more than a year; his going now is the end of everything."

"Who found it out?"

"Uncle Henry. He took the books and called one of the other clerks, and went into the inside office. When the clerk called, they found Uncle Henry lying with his head on the table, and they sent for us."

"And it takes it all?" The boy spoke drearily.

"Yes, even the house. Jack, I wish I could comfort you. It wouldn't be so hard for me. I am used to scrimping; but I can't think of you as being poor."

He flinched at the word.

"Don't call it that, Ursula. There must be something."

She shook her head.

"Not much. Jackie, it kills me to tell you this; but Aunt Ursula couldn't, and so I had to. Can't you see how sorry I am for you and for all the change it will make in your plans?"

Her head had been resting against his shoulder; but now he turned to face her.

"Ursula," he said slowly; "don't worry about

me. I can stand it, for I am young enough to start all over again. It won't hurt me; but—my poor father!”

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

“JUDAS PRIEST! What are you doing?” Kingsley demanded, as he came into John’s room in Pierson, a week later.

John looked down at him from the step-ladder where he was standing to take down the Hermes.

“Packing,” he answered briefly.

“Looks to me a good deal more as if you were unpacking, as far as your wall is concerned. Are you preparing to move?”

“That’s just what I’m doing.”

Kingsley’s face expressed commiseration.

“What’s the matter? Have you and Dorrien had a row?”

“Of course not. Nobody could row with old Dorrien. He’s a good fellow.”

“Then what’s the cause of this ’ruction?”

With the Hermes clasped in the hollow of his right arm, John deliberately came down from the ladder.

“I’m going up into Whalley Place,” he said, when he was once more on the ground.

Kingsley dropped down on the couch and

stared at his friend in utter stupefaction.

"You!" he ejaculated.

"Yes. Why not?"

"That's where the long-haired grinds fatten and thrive. If you go there, you'll turn into another just like them. If you can't study enough here in Pierson, then go decently up town, not into the suburbs of Westville. What's the trouble? Is there too much larking around here, and does it interfere with your scholastic pursuits?"

"No; I could study at Poli's, if it were necessary. But I can't afford this room."

"How long since?" Kingsley asked jocosely.

John looked at him in surprise.

"Hasn't your mother written you?"

"Written me nothing. Is something wrong at your house?"

"My father has failed. That was what made him ill," John explained concisely.

"Pettijack! An up and down failure?"

"As bad as it can be. The house must go. I'm to finish out my term here, the year, if nothing comes up to give me a chance in business; but I can't keep the room."

"What about Dorrien?"

"The best fellow living. He will find some-

body else, Bertie Drummond, probably, and let me out now."

"He is good. Now come and bunk in with me for a while," Kingsley suggested.

John shook his head.

"Two not allowed in single rooms. Besides, I should disgrace you. I'm going in for self-help, and all that sort of thing. If I stay on for the year, I've got it all to do."

"As how?"

John's teeth shut hard together.

"Beggars mustn't be choosers. I'm going to wait on table, up in Wall Street."

"Oh, say now!" Kingsley protested. "That's awful! Isn't there anything else?"

"Not just now. Later, I am going to try for some tutoring; but it is too soon to get much of that."

"In what?"

"Greek, mostly. You know I'm doing sophomore work in that."

Kingsley clasped his hands piously.

"Glory be! I flunked Greek, last June, and I haven't done a thing but wonder where I'd get a tutor that could understand my peculiar temperament. Pettijack, if you love me, begin work on me, to-morrow."

John looked at him suspiciously.

"Sure you aren't doing it to help me out?" he demanded.

"Ask the Dean. He won't lie, even for sweet charity's sake. Oh-h-h!" Kingsley gave a sigh of relief. "It's a good day's work I have done, this morning. How is your father?"

"Better. Dr. Holden has done wonders for him, and he has come up faster than we had any idea he could."

"What about Ursula?"

John had mounted the step-ladder again, and was just reaching up to unhook a picture. At the question, he turned fully around.

"Rex," he said slowly; "that cousin of mine is heroic."

But Ursula, playing cribbage with her uncle in the library, would have been the first one to deny the truth of the word. To her mind, there had been no chance for heroism in the quiet acceptance of unavoidable and unexpected conditions, especially when those conditions were affecting others rather than herself. For the sake of her aunt and uncle, she could have cried aloud with pity. It was no easy thing for them, after years of growing prosperity when money had been forthcoming for their fast-increasing wishes, to face a future which would be barren of luxury, almost destitute of comforts. As

Nathalie had said, months before, poverty was far harder for the rich than for the poor. The needful scrimping which maddens the one, becomes second nature to the other, and one rarely rebels at the facts of his second nature. Mrs. Thain would have considered as opulent the annual pittance at which Mrs. Myers was already shuddering. Nevertheless, the house must go, and with it the greater part of the furniture. It would help to pay the many debts, and, moreover, it would be manifestly unsuitable in the simpler home which they were soon to find.

Already that home had been a source of much discussion, a discussion in which Mr. Myers had insisted upon taking his own part. He had rallied with surprising swiftness from this first illness of his life, and he faced the future bravely, borne up by the knowledge that the failure had been none of his own making, and by the unswerving loyalty of his wife.

"Henry," she had said quietly, as she bent over him, the morning after the crisis had come; "I am not worrying in the least. As long as you are coming out of this so well, the rest doesn't count for much. We have had our good times and made the very most of them. We aren't old people yet, by any means, and perhaps

it may not hurt us a bit to try a little simpler way of living."

"But ——" he said slowly.

She interrupted him.

"There aren't any *buts*. I have been spoiled long enough; it is time I took a little of the care. Hurry to grow strong, dear, and then we'll have great times, planning things. It will be like a second honeymoon."

She kept up that attitude before the faces of her husband and son. Once and once only Ursula, coming suddenly into her aunt's room, found Mrs. Myers sobbing as if her heart would break; but, as a rule, such hours came only when the house was quiet for the night. By day, she faced the future dauntlessly, and sought, by an increasing daintiness, to draw attention from the heavy shadows that lay about her eyes.

Of John's going back to Yale, there had been no question. His strong opposition to the idea had been overruled, and it was decided that, at least for the present, he should keep on with his college work. He had been sent away, protesting to the last; but it was only Ursula who knew of the boyish determination which was to lead to his talk with Kingsley. She had listened to him in silence, until he had ended the explanation of his plan.

"Jackie," she said then; "I am proud of you. I knew you had it all in you; but I didn't think it would come out so soon. It is going to be a horrid thing to do; but it won't hurt you in the end. Grinding never does. It only shows you what you amount to, yourself, and who your real friends are. But—I do wish I could be there to talk things over with you and coddle you up now and then. You know you would like to have me."

John was never demonstrative; few boys were less so. Now, however, he bent over Ursula's chair and touched her cheek with his own. Then, as if ashamed of even this betrayal of feeling, he straightened up abruptly.

"Doesn't it prove it, that you are the only person I have told about this thing?" he asked. Then he glanced up, as his mother appeared in the doorway.

"Come into the library, children," she said. "We must talk things over, to-night; and, if John goes, in the morning, we want to see as much of him as we can now."

"Yes, we'll come." And John went forward and drew her hand through his arm. "You're a good deal of a mother," he said approvingly.

For an instant, her voice broke.

"Oh, John, I wish I were! I wish I always had been! But, after a fashion, I have tried."

In the library, Ursula settled herself comfortably at her uncle's feet, and awaited the beginning of the serious talk which she felt sure was bound to follow. As for her own part in it, her mind had been made up, a week before.

"We have been planning where to go, John," Mrs. Myers said, when she and her son were seated on the sofa in the corner of the room. "We mean to go out of the house before Christmas; earlier than that, if any one wants to take it off our hands. That gives us about six weeks, and there is a great deal to be done."

"And you are sending me off, where I can't help," he rebuked her.

"Never mind that now. We decided that it was best, and we'd better not discuss it again. But, about the new home; shall it be home, or boarding?"

"What do you mean?"

"Shall we take a little apartment and keep a few of the old home things; or shall we decide to let everything go, and board? If we board, we can do it more comfortably, perhaps; but there will be no home about it. Which do you prefer?"

"I'm not the one to decide," he answered.

"Yes. At least, you ought to be consulted. It will be your home, too."

"It will be easier for you, if we board," he said regretfully.

"And lonelier," she answered quickly.

"Could we—could you keep house?"

"Yes, simply and with one maid. But, John, it wouldn't be like any living you have ever known. The rooms would be tucked-up, and the maid wouldn't be like the trained servants we have always had. It is only fair to tell you this."

"I know; but it would be home," he said bluntly. "What does father say?"

"He feels as you do. Still, I want you to see all sides of the matter. When you think of housekeeping, you mustn't expect it to be like the way we have done things, nor like the way the Barretts live. We should have to work hard and live simply and count the cost of things down to the last cent."

He faced her proudly.

"Who cares? As long as we have each other and Ursula, the rest doesn't count."

"But we aren't going to have Ursula much longer, John."

"All the year."

"Not now."

"Why not?"

Ursula, meanwhile, had been talking with her

uncle. Now, as she caught her name, she listened for the next words.

"Why not?" John repeated.

She turned around and faced the sofa.

"Not what, Jackie?"

"Why aren't you going to stay out your year?"

"But I am."

"Mother says you aren't."

"Then 'mother' has made a mistake," she answered quietly.

"Ursula dear," Mrs. Myers interposed; "it is very hard to tell you this; but Mr. Heath is going to start for Omaha, next week, and I am going to send you home in his care."

"I should like to know the reason," she said, still quietly.

"Because we can't make it pleasant for you any longer; because of this change of things, dear."

"All the more reason I should stay. You borrowed me for a year, you know. It hurts me to be sent home, before the year is over."

"Don't make it any harder for me, child," her aunt begged her. "It breaks my heart to give you up."

Ursula rose to her feet. Her hand rested on her uncle's shoulder, and through his wadded

housecoat, he could feel the hand shake a little; but the voice was quite steady and even.

"I am glad to hear you say that, Aunt Ursula," she said gently; "because I am going to stay here, this winter. No. Listen! For more than a year, you have been doing everything for me; and I haven't always been half grateful enough about it, either. Now I have a chance to do a little something for you. In all this breaking up and moving, I know I can help you. I've been trained to work; I've been taught to be poor, and not to mind the scrimping. It is a great deal easier for me than it is going to be for you. I'm young, and strong as I can be. It is good for me to work, and they don't need me at home. I'm going to stay with you, this winter, and help in the new housekeeping. I am as good as any maid you can get, I know; and you know you can't get along without me."

It seemed to John that he held his breath for an apparently endless interval, while he waited for his mother's reply. It came at last, however.

"No, Ursula, I'm afraid I can't."

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

“G IFF, I have experienced religion.”

Mr. Barrett looked up from an inky score.

“St. Swithin’s rainbow! You don’t mean it?”

“I do.”

“Do you feel ill anywhere?” he asked anxiously.

“No; only the painful consciousness of conscience. It will pass off.”

“What have you done, Babe?”

“Guess!” she said tragically.

“Don’t sit on my *maestoso*. Those heavy chords take any amount of ink, and they will ruin your back breadths. What is it?”

“I have invited a Thanksgiving dinner party.”

“Don’t you always?”

“Yes; but not of this ilk. I have been out in the highways and hedges, and they’re all coming.”

“So much the better.”

“Yes; but they won’t jibe.”

"Meaning mock?"

"No; hitch together. Don't criticize my language, in the face of such a combination."

Her husband laughed, while he meditatively inked the fingers of her hand, as it lay on the table beside him.

"Who is it, Babe?"

"Well, I'll tell you. It's Rex."

"Naturally. Who else?"

Mrs. Barrett counted rapidly.

"And Paul and Lyn, and Ted and Billy, and the Ainslees, and Mac, and the Arterburns, of course."

"Well, that's all right. They fit admirably."

"Yes; but you haven't heard the worst. Now brace yourself for a shock. I've asked the whole platoon of Myerses."

Mr. Barrett's jaw dropped.

"Babe!"

"Yes, the whole b'ilin' of them," she reiterated grimly.

"Mrs. Myers?"

"Yes."

"And Mr. Myers?"

"Yes."

"But Teddy is coming."

"Let her come!" Mrs. Barrett said recklessly.

"But won't it be rather trying for them both?"

Mrs. Barrett looked at her husband rebukingly.

"Now, Giff, let bygones be bygones. You haven't much to say, for your own past is rather murky. Mr. Myers did appear, unbidden and on all fours, at Teddy's dinner party; but I know somebody else who ran into a lone woman and knocked her off her bicycle, and then ended by stealing her skull."

"The only time I ever made you lose your head," he commented gravely. "But about the Myers faction."

"Well?"

"What made you ask them?"

"Because they are having a hard time of it, and making the best of bad things most heroically; because this is the first Thanksgiving since the downfall, and it will be dreary enough at best; because benevolence leads to sanctification, and I propose to get sanctified, some way or other. Giff, if you don't like it, you can eat at second table."

"Oh, I like it," he returned tranquilly. "I was only a little surprised because I thought that, on one or two occasions, I had heard you mention that you ——"

"Detested Mrs. Myers," his wife supplemented coolly. "Well, I do. At least, I did. From all I hear now, though, I think I rather admire the woman. She may not be agreeable; but she is gritty enough to make up, and that little Ursula is superb."

"It was a bad break-up. I wonder if there were any fragments left," Mr. Barrett said reflectively.

"Not many. He had been running too close to the wind, and that clerk of his capsized him."

"What is he going to do?"

"Nothing for a month, Mac says. Then he will go hunting for a position. Awful, at his age!"

Mr. Barrett impaled a scrap of music paper on the end of his pen, and twirled it thoughtfully in the ink.

"Billy Farrington's manager is going to take an invalid wife to Europe," he observed.

"Giff! The very thing!"

"Of course, it may not—— Where are you going?"

"To write to Billy." And the door shut behind her, leaving Mr. Barrett to make a futile effort to sort out his themes and his episodes once more.

Three days later, one of the rooms in Vander-

bilt was filled to overflowing, and Kingsley pervaded all things, with a jovial smile on his face and a platter of cold chicken in his hands.

"Everything is so cramming full that I thought it would be much better to have lunch here," he said, as he settled his mother in the easiest chair the room afforded, and then helped Ursula to spring up on the high window seat. "It isn't a great spread you'll get; but it will carry you as far as the field, and your enthusiasm will do the rest."

"Who will win, Rex?" Nathalie asked from the other window, where she was ensconced with John beside her and a half-dozen sophomores at her feet.

"The idea of asking, when you are a guest of the victorious side!"

"It isn't victorious yet."

"It's going to be, though. Whose flowers are you wearing?"

She blushed a little, as she buried her nose in the great bunch of violets she wore.

"Mac's, of course. You didn't send me any."

"No," Kingsley answered calmly. "A fellow doesn't waste flowers on an engaged cousin. I sent mine to Ursula."

She nodded up at him.

"And they are beauties, too. What is it, Nathalie?"

"That is the room over beyond the arch——"

"The third window on the ground floor, that Mac had in his sophomore year." Kingsley completed her sentence for her. "Never mind now, Nathalie. Mac isn't here, and this is Rex's party."

"Where is your room now, Jack?" Ursula asked.

"A mile or so over the top of Dwight Hall," he answered.

"That sounds as if it were among the angels; but it's only among the ranks of the grinds," Kingsley commented. "It is a horrid region; but he has a mighty pretty room up there. We're going to drop in on him for tea, after the game."

In her enthusiasm, Ursula nearly tumbled off the window seat.

"Oh, Jackie, I'm so glad! You didn't tell us."

"Steady!" Kingsley cautioned her, as he deftly caught her fork and roll with the same hand.

"Never mind. But Aunt Ursula will be so glad to know just how you are settled and all that. Why didn't you tell us?"

"It's Rex's planning, to-day," John said; but Kingsley interrupted him.

"Don't tell them that I wanted to get out of having them come back here. Now, mater, if you're refreshed enough to renew your duties, you might summon your charges, and we'll start for the field."

By dint of many pennies and much persuasion, Kingsley had succeeded in getting a carriage, and the driver was already waiting for them in front of the Vanderbilt Arch. Five minutes later, they were picking their way along the street which was packed with dozens of carriages, with scores of swarming street cars and with hundreds of pedestrians, a mighty stream of humanity all flowing westward to empty into the grand stands on Yale Field. Blue bunting arched the streets and dangled from the windows, crimson and blue flags and favors were on all sides and pretty girls were everywhere.

Kingsley surveyed the two faces before him, the blond and the brown; then he nodded approvingly at his mother.

"Mighty good scheme, your coming up, mater!" he observed. "It isn't often a freshman like Pettijack has a chance to go to a game in such company."

From his seat on the box, John glanced down over his shoulder.

"That's where you're right, Rex," he returned

quickly. "Mrs. Barrett is a guest worth the having."

"Thank you for the compliment, Jack," she answered, with sudden gravity. "We chaperons appreciate such things now and then." And, as she left the carriage, it was she, not Nathalie, who walked away at John's side.

"I believe I am perfectly content," Ursula remarked blissfully, two hours later.

The game had been played out, a close fight to the finish, and the blue was triumphant, with a record of neither broken bones nor tricky plays. At its close, the red flags had vanished from sight, as if by magic, and the field had turned to a mass of blue bunting, while the crowd cheered itself hoarse, and the band, far away up at the head of the field, pounded out *Bright College Years* as if its staid leader had gone mad with delight. Then the move came again, and slowly the vast stream of humanity began flowing back to the city where it broke into different courses and melted away for another year.

Up in one of the side streets, half a mile from the campus, the carriage drew up at a plain little brick house, and John sprang down to open the door. The hallway was not especially inviting, and the stairs were narrow and not too well

lighted. At the top, John threw open another door, and stood aside to let his guests pass into the room.

"Here I am," he said briefly.

The room was small, and its two windows looked out over a cheery array of back yards. The carpet was shabby and the paper on the walls bore the marks of many an occupant in the past. Nevertheless, a chafing dish stood ready on the battered table, and the setting sun shone across the room to rest upon the Hermes and, below it, the narrow frame holding the trio of home pictures, Ursula, Mr. Myers and, between, the dainty little mother smiling down at them, in all the glory of a Paris frock.

"Really, he is making no end of a success as a tutor," Kingsley explained to his mother, while they waited for the oysters to cook. "His getting me through my examination was a good advertisement for him. The fellows knew that, after that, he could tackle anything; and now he is getting all he can do."

"Are you making your fortune, Jack?" Mrs. Barrett asked, from the couch where she was spreading bread and butter for the feast.

"Endlessly. Look at my necktie," he advised her gravely. "Really, though, I shall give up the table, after the holidays, and give all my

time to tutoring. It's not such a grind, either; and I rather like the fun of laying down the law to the sophomores, once in a while."

Ursula looked up abruptly.

"I'm going to tell tales," she announced. "Mrs. Barrett, that boy sent home his last month's allowance, and told his father he thought he wouldn't need to have any more sent to him."

Nathalie rose, waving her brimming teacup.

"Here's to Pettijack Myers!" she proclaimed.

But it was Kingsley who added,—

"Yes, and here's to Pettijack's cousin!"

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