CAROLYN WELLS

PATTY'S MOTOR CAR

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Wells C.

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I
AFTERNOON TEA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"He couldn't."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Soon, Mr. Hepworth came, bringing Christine Farley.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Her clothes betokened her artistic tastes, and she never wore dresses of the fashionable type, but soft, clinging gowns in dull, pastel colours. A bit of old embroidery or unusual jewelry added an effective touch, and Christine always looked well dressed, though her clothes cost far less than Patty's. The two girls were absolutely unlike, and yet they were fast becoming great friends. But Christine possessed almost no sense of humour, and Patty feared she could never be really chummy with any one who lacked that.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Elise looked at Christine a little disdainfully.

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

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

"Nonsense!" cried Elise.

"But it is so, Miss Farley!" exclaimed Philip Van Reypen. "You've struck it! Look, people!"

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes, wasn't it?" agreed Patty. "I didn't know you had a bent for puzzles, Christine."

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

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

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

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

"In a little book of puzzles; I'm trying to guess them all."

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

"Ah, but my bookful isn't that kind. They're all of a catchy or difficult sort."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER II
AN ABLE HELPER

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

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

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

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

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

"Is it?" returned his hostess, innocently.

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

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

"Yes; but it may be warmer later."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What say you, Patty?" asked Nan.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I'm not going to do that, Daddy Fairfield; but I begin to think that what I am going to do is almost as hard. You see, this big company has issued a book of a hundred puzzles. Now, whoever

guesses all those puzzles correctly will get the prize. And, – the prize is a lovely electric runabout. And I want it!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"How many have you done?" asked Nan.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"So do I," said Nan. "That isn't like you, Fred, to express such an unfounded suspicion."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Patty! where did you learn all that jargon?"

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

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

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

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

"All right, then; right after dinner, we'll tackle that book of posers."

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

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

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

"Bolt it," he replied, promptly. "That's an old one."

"I ought to have guessed that myself," said Patty, "I'm so fond of slang."

"'Bolt it,' isn't exactly slang."

"No, – I s'pose not. It's just rude diction. Now, answer this. 'The poor have two, the rich have none. Schoolboys have several, you have one.'"

"Well, that's one of a class of puzzles to which the answer is usually some letter of the alphabet."

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

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

"No, I don't. I can't see any sense to it at all."

"Read it."

So Patty read aloud:

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

"And you don't know that?" asked Philip.

"No; the conditions are impossible."

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

"Pooh! I don't think that's very clever."

"Not modernly clever, but it's a good example of the old-time enigmas."

"Gracious! What a lot you know about puzzles. Have you always studied them."

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

"'What is it men and women all despise,
Yet one and all alike as highly prize?
What kings possess not; yet full sure am I
That for that luxury they often sigh.

What never was for sale; yet any day
The thrifty housewife will give some away
The farmer needs it for his growing corn.
The tired husbandman delights to own.
The very thing for any sick friend's room.
It coming, silent as Spring's early bloom.
A great, soft, yielding thing, that no one fears.
A tiny thing, oft wet with mother's tears.
A thing so holy that we often wear
It carefully hidden from the world's cold stare.'"

"Well," remarked Patty, complacently, as he finished reading, "I've guessed that."

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

"Why, it's An Old Shoe," said Patty, laughing. "See how it all fits in."

"Yes; it's rattling clever. I like that one. Did you guess it as I read?"

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

"'If it be true, as Welshmen say,
Honour depends on pedigree,
Then stand by – clear the way —
And let me have fair play.
For, though you boast thro' ages dark
Your pedigree from Noah's ark,
I, too, was with him there.
For I was Adam, Adam I,
And I was Eve, and Eve was I,
In spite of wind and weather;
But mark me – Adam was not I,
Neither was Mrs. Adam I,
Unless they were together.
Suppose, then, Eve and Adam talking —
With all my heart, but if they're walking
There ends all simile.
For, tho' I've tongue and often talk,
And tho' I've feet, yet when I walk
There is an end of me!
Not such an end but I have breath,
Therefore to such a kind of death
I have but small objection.
I may be Turk, I may be Jew,
And tho' a Christian, yet 'tis true
I die by Resurrection!'"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What was it there for?"

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

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

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

"Take this mathematical one, then. 'Divide nine into two equal parts that, added together, will make ten.'"

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

"Have you really done it?" cried Patty.

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

"IV," said Patty; "that's four."

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

"VI; that's six."

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

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

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

"But I'm not a bit sleepy, father dear," protested Patty.

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

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

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

CHAPTER III
A LECTURE

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

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

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

"Because," went on her father, "I'm going to lecture you, and I'm in a very serious mood."

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

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

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

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

"I think so, too," agreed Patty, calmly. "But it isn't me – I, he comes to see. It's Nan."

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

"Yes, it is, daddy. Nan encourages him something scan'lous! I don't wonder you kick!"

"Object, Patty, not kick."

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

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

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

"Indeed, it does not! If he keeps this up, he'll be forbidden the house altogether."

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

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

"'I will be good, dear mother,
I heard a sweet child say,'"

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

"Oh, Patty," cried Nan, "how ungrateful!"

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

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

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

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

"He isn't bad at all. He's a most estimable and exemplary young man. But I won't have anybody calling on you three nights in one week, at your age. It's out of the question! Kenneth doesn't."

"But Ken is so busy."

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

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

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

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

"How many of your precious puzzles are done?"

"Sixty-nine out of the hundred."

"How many have you solved yourself?"

"About fifty."

"Then that man did nineteen for you?"

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

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

"April first."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But, for some reason, she couldn't accomplish it. Philip Van Reypen was himself so straightforward, and so quick to see through any subterfuge, that all the notes she wrote seemed to

her artificial and insincere. She tore them up one after another, and at last, seizing her pen again, she wrote rapidly:

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

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

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

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

"Think so, Nannikins? I doubt it."

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

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

"Patty, have you no ambition?"

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

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

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

"You can't use it alone in the city."

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

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

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

"I hope you will get it, after you've worked so hard."

"I hope so, too. But hopes don't solve anagrams and enigmas."

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

"About four. She won't be home till then. Does that suit your plans?"

"Perfectly, my child."

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

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

Even in the short time she had been there, Christine had done much to make the plain room more attractive. And Patty had helped, for many of the comforts that had been added had been her

gifts. A growing palm, and a smaller bowl of ferns looked thrifty and well-kept; and a large jar of exquisite pink roses gave the place a gala air.

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

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

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

"Why?"

"Oh, because you're so sweet and good, yourself. And you work so hard, and you never complain, – and you're so pretty."

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

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

"Fine! Why, Christine, you've arrived!"

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

"You dear!" cried Patty. "As if any one could imagine *you* conceited! And, of course, you're going ahead, – fast!"

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER IV
THE HUNDREDTH QUESTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Four," answered Patty, disconsolately.

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

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

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

"'I am intangible, yet I may be felt, seen, and heard. I exist from two to six feet above the ground. I have neither shape nor substance, and, though a natural production, I am neither animal, vegetable, or mineral. I am neither male nor female, but something between both. I am told of in the Scriptures, in history, in song, and in story. I am sad or merry; loving or treacherous. I am given or bought, and, because of my great value, I am sometimes stolen. I am used by men who swear, and

by innocent children. Of late, there has been a prejudice against me, but I shall probably be in vogue as long as the world shall stand.'"

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

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

"I have it! Miss Fairfield, I've guessed it! Will you give it to me, if I tell you what it is?"

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

"But I've guessed it, I tell you. And, if you'll promise to give it to me, I'll tell you the answer."

"No, I won't promise," said Patty. "It might be the motor car itself!"

"But it isn't! It's far more valuable than that! It's a kiss!"

"Oh!" said Patty, "so it is! How *did* you guess it? It's fearfully hard!"

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

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

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

"Oh, have you done that one?"

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

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

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

"One's a charade," answered Patty. "Here it is:

> ""'Tis futile, Son, my first to use
> To change to yours another's views;
> For one convinced against his will
> Is of the same opinion still.
>
> "'If e'er a letter you receive
> From maiden fair; pray don't believe
> All that the note itself may say, —
> But to my last attention pay.
>
> "'My total may be well employed
> To still a molar's aching void,
> When stopping has not stopped the pain;
> That tooth will never ache again!'

"I've worked on that a solid week, but I can't get it."

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

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

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

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

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

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

But Patty smiled and shook her head.

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

"What faith!" murmured Van Reypen.

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

"I guessed one!" said Kenneth, proudly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Not the one Mr. Hepworth took away."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"How long can you wait?"

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

"So should I; do telephone, Patty."

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

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

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

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

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

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

And then the telephone bell rang!

And it was Mr. Hepworth calling.

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

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

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

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

"Not at all," said Patty.

Then Mr. Hepworth came.

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

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

"Oh, that old joke!" cried Nan.

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

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

"I told you I would," he answered, simply.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER V
A SUMMER HOME

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Let's take Christine," suggested Patty; "a day at the seashore will do her good."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I didn't know you had moods and thoughts," said Christine, smiling at Patty a little quizzically.

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

"Why do you class mine with Mr. Hepworth's?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"This is my choose!" declared Patty, sitting down on the steps of the front veranda. "What's the use of coming to the seashore and living in a forest? Oh, my fond parents, do decide to take this one, for your little Patty's sake!"

"Will there be shade enough?" asked Mr. Fairfield.

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

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

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

"In your motor car?" enquired her father.

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

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

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

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

"'Sea View,'" said her father, and Patty laughed.

"Yes," she said; "or 'Ocean View,' or 'Fair View,' or 'Beach View'! No, let's get something descriptive and unhackneyed. Help us, Christine."

"I like a name like 'The Breakers,'" said Nan. "It's so dignified."

"How about 'The Pebbles'?" asked Christine, looking at the pebbled walks that led through the lawn.

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

"Yes; I like that. It's simple and yet expressive."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Christine, you're a darling. I don't believe many people know how fine and lovely you are. Do they?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

“What’s my part in this universal plan?” asked Mr. Fairfield.

“Oh, you can just pay the bills, and say ‘perfectly lovely, my dear,’ whenever we ask you how you like anything!”

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

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.