DUNTON EDITH KELLOGG

BETTY WALES, FRESHMAN

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I
FIRST IMPRESSIONS

"Oh, dear, what if she shouldn't meet me!" sighed Betty Wales for the hundredth time at least, as she gathered up her bags and umbrella, and followed the crowd of noisy, chattering girls off the train.

"So long, Mary. See you to-morrow."

"Get a carriage, Nellie, that's a dear. You're so little you can always break through the crowd."

"Hello, Susanna! Did you get on the campus too?"

"Thanks awfully, but I can't to-night. My freshman cousin's up, you know, and homesick and – "

"Oh, girls, isn't it fun to be back?"

It all sounded so jolly and familiar. Weren't any of them freshmen? Did they guess that she was a freshman "and homesick"? Betty straightened proudly and resolved that they should not. If only the registrar had got father's telegram. As she stood hesitating on the station platform, amazed at the wilderness of trunks and certain that no one could possibly find her until

that shouting, rushing mob in front of her had dispersed, a pretty girl in immaculate white duck hurried up to her.

"Pardon me," she said, reaching out a hand for Betty's golf clubs, "but aren't you a stranger here? Could I help you, perhaps, about getting your luggage up?"

Betty looked at her doubtfully. "I don't know," she said. "Yes, I'm going to enter college, and my elder sister couldn't get here until a later train. But father telegraphed the registrar to meet me. Do you know her? Could you point her out?"

The pretty girl's lips curved into the faint suggestion of a smile. "Yes," she said, "I know her–only too well for my peace of mind occasionally. But I'm afraid she hasn't come to meet you. You see she's very busy these first days–there are a great many of you freshman, all wanting different things. So she sends us down instead."

"Oh, I see." Betty's face brightened. "Then if you would tell me how to get to Mrs. Chapin's on Meriden Place."

"Mrs. Chapin's!" exclaimed the pretty girl. "That's easy. Most of you want such outlandish streets. But that's close to the campus, where I'm going myself. My time is just up, I'm happy to say. Give me your checks and your house number, and then we'll take a car, unless you wouldn't mind walking. It's not far."

On the way to Mrs. Chapin's Betty learned that her new friend's name was Dorothy King, that she was a junior and roomed in the Hilton House, that she went in for science, but was fond of music and was a member of the Glee Club; that she was

back a day early for the express purpose of meeting freshmen at the trains. In return Betty explained how she had been obliged at the last moment to come east alone; how sister Nan, who was nine years older than she and five years out of college, was coming down from a house party at Kittery Point, but couldn't get in till eight that night; and father had insisted that Betty be sure to arrive by daylight.

"Wales–Wales – " repeated the pretty junior. "Why, your sister must have been the clever Miss Wales in '9-, the one who wrote so well and all. She is? How fine! I'm sorry, but I leave you here. Mrs. Chapin's is that big yellow house, the second on the left side–yes. I know you'll like it there. And Miss Wales, you mustn't mind if the sophomores get hold of that joke about your asking the registrar to meet you. I won't tell, but it will be sure to leak out somehow. You see it's really awfully funny. The registrar is almost as important as the president, and a lot more dignified and unapproachable, until you get to know her. She'll think it too good to keep, and the sophomores will be sure to get hold of it and put it in the book of grinds for their reception–souvenirs they give you, you know. Now good-bye. May I call later? Thank you so much. Good-bye."

Betty was blushing hotly as she climbed Mrs. Chapin's steps. But her chagrin at having proved herself so "verdant" a freshman was tempered with elation at the junior's cordiality. "Nan said I wasn't to run into friendships," she reflected. "But she must be nice. She knows the Clays. Oh, I hope she won't forget to come!"

Betty Wales had come to college without any particular enthusiasm for it, though she was naturally an enthusiastic person. She loved Nan dearly, but didn't approve of her scheme of life, and wasn't at all prepared to like college just because Nan had. Being so much younger than her sister, she had never visited her at Harding, but she had met a good many of her friends; and comparing their stories of life at Harding with the experiences of one or two of her own mates who were at the boarding-school, she had decided that of two evils she should prefer college, because there seemed to be more freedom and variety about it. Being of a philosophical turn of mind, she was now determined to enjoy herself, if possible. She pinned her faith to a remark that her favorite among all Nan's friends had made to her that summer. "Oh, you'll like college, Betty," she had said. "Not just as Nan or I did, of course. Every girl has her own reasons for liking college–but every nice girl likes it."

Betty decided that she had already found two of her reasons: the pretty Miss King and Mrs. Chapin's piazza, which was exceedingly attractive for a boarding-house. A girl was lounging in a hammock behind the vines, and another in a big piazza chair was reading aloud to her. "They must be old girls," thought Betty, "to seem so much at home." Then she remembered that Mrs. Chapin had said hers would probably be an "all freshman house," and decided that they were friends from the same town.

Mrs. Chapin presently appeared, to show Betty to her room and explain that her roommate would not arrive till the next

morning. Betty dressed and then sat down to study for her French examination, which came next day; but before she had finished deciding which couch she preferred or where they could possibly put two desks and a tea-table, the bell rang for dinner.

This bid fair to be a silent and dismal meal. All the girls had come except Betty's roommate, and most of them, being freshmen, were in the depths of examinations and homesickness. But there was one shining exception, a very lively sophomore, who had waited till the last moment hoping to get an assignment on the campus, and then had come to Mrs. Chapin's in the place of a freshman who had failed in her examinations.

"She had six, poor thing!" explained the sophomore to Betty, who sat beside her. "And just think! She'd had a riding horse and a mahogany desk with a secret drawer sent on from home. Wish I could inherit them along with her room. Now, my name is Mary Brooks. Tell me yours, and I'll ask the girl on the other side and introduce you; and that will start the ball rolling."

These energetic measures succeeded much better than Mrs. Chapin's somewhat perfunctory remarks about the dry weather, and the whole table was soon talking busily. The two piazza girls proved to be sisters, Mary and Adelaide Rich, from Haddam, Connecticut. Betty decided that they were rather stupid and too inclined to stick together to be much fun. A tall, homely girl at the end of the table created a laugh by introducing herself as Miss Katherine Kittredge of Kankakee.

"The state is Illinois," she added, "but that spoils the

alliteration."

"The what?" whispered Betty to the sophomore.

But Miss Brooks only laughed and said, "Wait till you've finished freshman English."

Betty's other neighbor was a pale, quiet little girl, with short hair and a drawl. Betty couldn't decide whether she meant to be "snippy" or was only shy and offish. After she had said that her name was Roberta Lewis and her home Philadelphia, Betty inquired politely whether she expected to like college.

"I expect to detest it," replied Miss Lewis slowly and distinctly, and spoke not another word during dinner. But though she ate busily and kept her eyes on her plate, Betty was sure that she heard all that was said, and would have liked to join in, only she didn't know how.

The one really beautiful girl at the table was Miss Eleanor Watson. Her complexion was the daintiest pink and white, her black hair waved softly under the big hat which she had not stopped to take off, and her hazel eyes were plaintive one moment and sparkling the next, as her mood changed. She talked a good deal and very well, and it was hard to realize that she was only sixteen and a freshman. She had fitted for college at a big preparatory school in the east, and so, although she happened to be the only Denver girl in college, she had a great many friends in the upper classes and appeared to know quite as much about college customs as Miss Brooks. All this impressed Betty, who admired beauty and pretty clothes immensely. She resolved to

have Eleanor Watson for a friend if she could, and was pleased when Miss Watson inquired how many examinations she had, and suggested that they would probably be in the same divisions, since their names both began with W.

The remaining girl at Mrs. Chapin's table was not particularly striking. She had a great mass of golden brown hair, which she wore coiled loosely in her neck. Her keen grey eyes looked the world straight in the face, and her turned-up nose and the dimple in her chin gave her a merry, cheerful air. She did not talk much, and not at all about herself, but she gave the impression of being a thoroughly nice, bright, capable girl. Her name was Rachel Morrison.

After dinner Betty was starting up-stairs when Mary Brooks called her back. "Won't you walk over to the campus with me, little girl?" she asked. "I have one or two errands. Oh no, you don't need a hat. You never do here."

So they wandered off bareheaded in the moonlight, which made the elm-shaded streets look prettier than ever. On the dusky campus girls strolled about in devoted pairs and sociable quartettes. On the piazza of one of the dwelling-houses somebody was singing a fascinating little Scotch ballad with a tinkling mandolin accompaniment.

"Must be Dorothy King," said the sophomore. "I thought she wouldn't come till eight. Most people don't."

"Oh!" exclaimed Betty, "I know her!" And she related her adventure at the station.

"That's so," said Miss Brooks. "I'd forgotten. She's awfully popular, you know, and very prominent,–belongs to no end of societies. But whatever the Young Women's Christian Association wants of her she does. You know they appoint girls to meet freshmen and help them find boarding-places and so on. She's evidently on that committee. Let's stop and say hello to her."

Betty, hanging behind, was amazed to see the commotion caused by Miss Brooks's arrival. The song stopped abruptly, the mandolin slammed to the floor, and performers and audience fell as one woman upon the newcomer.

"Why, Mary Brooks! When did you come?"

"Did you get a room, honey?"

"Oh, Mary, where did you put on that lovely tan?"

"Mary, is Sarah coming back, do you know?"

"Hush up, girls, and let her tell us!"

It was like the station, only more so, and oh, it was nice–if you were in it. Mary answered some of their questions and then looked around for Betty. "I've lost a freshman," she said, "Here, Miss Wales, come up and sit on the railing. She knows you, Dottie, and she wants to hear you sing. These others are some of the Hilton House, Miss Wales. Please consider yourselves introduced. Now, Dottie."

So the little Scotch ballad began again. Presently some one else came up, there were more effusive greetings, and then another song or two, after which Miss King and "some of the

Hilton House" declared that they simply must go and unpack. Betty, suddenly remembering her trunk and her sister, decided to let Miss Brooks do her other "errands" alone, and found her way back to Mrs. Chapin's. Sure enough, Nan was sitting on the piazza.

"Hello, little sister," she called gaily as Betty hurried up the walk. "Don't say you're sorry to be late. It's the worst possible thing for little freshmen to mope round waiting for people, and I'm glad you had the sense not to. Your trunk's come, but if you're not too tired let's go up and see Ethel Hale before we unpack it."

Ethel Hale had spent a whole summer with Nan, and Betty beat her at tennis and called her Ethel, and she called Betty little sister, just as Nan did. But here she was a member of the faculty. "I shall never dare come near her after you leave," said Betty. Just as she said it the door of the room opened–Nan had explained that it was a freshman trick to ring front door-bells–and Ethel rushed out and dragged them in.

"Miss Blaine and Miss Mills are here," she said.

Betty gathered from the subsequent conversation that Miss Blaine and Miss Mills were also members of the faculty; and they were. But they had just come in from a horseback ride, and they sat in rather disheveled attitudes, eating taffy out of a paper bag, and their conversation was very amusing and perfectly intelligible, even to a freshman who had still an examination to pass.

"I didn't suppose the faculty ever acted like that. Why, they're

just like other people," declared Betty, as she tumbled into bed a little later.

"They're exactly like other people," returned Nan sagely, from the closet where she was hanging up skirts. "Just remember that and you'll have a lot nicer time with them."

So ended Betty's first day at college. Nan finished unpacking, and then sat for a long time by the window. Betty loved Nan, but Nan in return worshiped Betty. They might call her the clever Miss Wales if they liked; she would gladly have given all her vaunted brains for the fascinating little ways that made Betty friends so quickly and for the power to take life in Betty's free-and-easy fashion. "Oh, I hope she'll like it!" she thought. "I hope she'll be popular with the girls. I don't want her to have to work so hard for all she gets. I wouldn't exchange my course for hers, but I want hers to be the other kind."

Betty was sound asleep.

CHAPTER II
BEGINNINGS

The next morning it poured.

"Of course," said Eleanor Watson impressively at breakfast. "It always does the first day of college. They call it the freshman rain."

"Let's all go down to chapel together," suggested Rachel Morrison.

"You're going to order carriages, of course?" inquired Roberta Lewis stiffly.

"Hurrah! Another joke for the grind-book," shrieked Mary Brooks. Then she noticed Roberta's expression of abject terror. "Never mind, Miss Lewis," she said kindly. "It's really an honor to be in the grind-book, but I promise not to tell if you'd rather I wouldn't. Won't you show that you forgive me by coming down to college under my umbrella?"

"She can't. She's coming with me," answered Nan promptly. "I demand the right to first choice."

"Very well, I yield," said Mary, "because when you go my sovereignty will be undisputed. You'll have to hurry, children."

So the little procession of rain-coats flapping out from under dripping umbrellas started briskly off to join the longer procession that was converging from every direction toward

College Hall. Roberta and Nan were ahead under one umbrella, chatting like old friends.

"I suppose she doesn't think we're worth talking to," said Rachel Morrison, who came next with Betty.

"Probably she's one of the kind that's always been around with grown people and isn't used to girls," suggested Betty.

"Perhaps," agreed Rachel. "Anyhow, I can't get a word out of her. She just sits by her window and reads magazines and looks bored to death when Katherine or I go in to speak to her. Isn't Katherine jolly? I'm so glad I don't room alone."

"Are you?" asked Betty. "I can tell better after my roommate comes. Her name sounds quite nice. It's Helen Chase Adams, and she lives somewhere up in New Hampshire. Did you ever see so many girls?"

There seemed to be no end to them. They jostled one another good-naturedly in the narrow halls, swarmed, chattering, up the stairs, and filled the chapel to overflowing. It was very exciting to see the whole college together. Even Roberta Lewis condescended to look interested when Mary Brooks showed her the faculty rows, and pointed out the college beauty, the captain of the sophomore basket-ball team, and other local celebrities.

"That's evidently a freshman," declared Eleanor Watson, who was in the row behind with Katherine and the Riches. "Doesn't she look lost and unhappy?" And she pointed out a tall, near-sighted girl who was stalking dejectedly down the middle aisle.

A vivacious little brunette was sitting next Eleanor. "Pardon

me," she said sweetly, "but did you mean the girl who's gone around to the side and is now being received with open arms by most of the faculty? She's a senior, the brightest girl in the class, we think, and she's sad because she's lost her trunk and broken her glasses. You're a freshman, I judge?"

"Thank you, yes," gasped Eleanor with as much dignity as she could muster, and resolved to keep her guesses to herself in future.

The chapel service was short but very beautiful. The president's kindly welcome to the entering class, "which bids fair to be the largest in the history of the institution," completely upset the composure of some of the aforesaid class, and a good many moist handkerchiefs grew moister, and red eyes redder during the prayer. But on the whole the class of 190- conducted itself with commendable propriety and discretion on this its first official appearance in the college world.

"I'm glad I don't have that French exam.," said Katherine, as she and Betty picked out their umbrellas from a great, moist heap in the corner of the hall. "Come down with me and have a soda."

Betty shook her head. "I can't. Nan asked me to go with her and Eth–I mean Miss Hale, but I simply must study." And she hurried off to begin.

At the entrance to the campus Eleanor Watson overtook her. "Let's go home and study together," she proposed. "I can't see why they left this French till so late in the week, when everybody has it. What did you come to college for?" she asked abruptly.

Betty thought a minute. “Why, for the fun of it, I guess,” she said.

“So did I. I think we’ve stumbled into a pretty serious-minded crowd at Mrs. Chapin’s, don’t you?”

“I like Miss Morrison awfully well,” objected Betty, “and I shouldn’t call Katherine Kittredge of Kankakee serious-minded, but – ”

“Oh, perhaps not,” interrupted Eleanor. “Anyhow I know a lot of fine girls outside, and you must meet them. It’s very important to have a lot of friends up here. If you want to amount to anything, you can’t just stick with the girls in your own house.”

“Oh, no,” said Betty meekly, awed by the display of worldly wisdom. “It will be lovely to meet your friends. Let’s study on the piazza. I’ll get my books.”

“Wait a minute,” said Eleanor quickly. “I want to tell you something. I have at least two conditions already, and if I don’t pass this French I don’t suppose I can possibly stay.”

“But you don’t act frightened a bit,” protested Betty in awestruck tones.

“I am,” returned Eleanor in a queer, husky voice. “I could never show my face again if I failed.” She brushed the tears out of her eyes. “Now go and get your books,” she said calmly, “and don’t ever mention the subject again. I had to tell somebody.”

Betty was back in a moment, looking as if she had seen a ghost. “She’s come,” she gasped, “and she’s crying like everything.”

"Who?" inquired Eleanor coolly.

"My roommate–Helen Chase Adams."

"What did you do?"

"I didn't say a word–just grabbed up my books and ran. Let's study till Nan comes and then she'll settle it."

It was almost one o'clock before Nan appeared. She tossed a box of candy to the weary students, and gave a lively account of her morning, which had included a second breakfast, three strawberry-ices, a walk to the bridge, half a dozen calls on the campus, and a plunge in the swimming-tank.

"I didn't dream I knew so many people here," she said. "But now I've seen them all and they've promised to call on you, Betty, and I must go to-night."

"Not unless she stops crying," said Betty firmly, and told her story.

"Go up and ask her to come down-town with us and have a lunch at Holmes's," suggested Nan.

"Oh you come too," begged Betty, and Nan, amused at the distress of her usually self-reliant sister, obediently led the way up-stairs.

"Come in," called a tremulous voice.

Helen Chase Adams had stopped crying, at least temporarily, and was sitting in a pale and forlorn heap on one of the beds. She jumped up when she saw her visitors. "I thought it was the man with my trunk," she said. "Is one of you my roommate? Which one?"

"What a nice speech, Miss Adams!" said Nan heartily. "I've been hoping ever since I came that somebody would take me for a freshman. But this is Betty, who's to room with you. Now will you come down-town to lunch with us?"

Betty was very quiet on the way down-town. Her roommate was a bitter disappointment. She had imagined a pretty girl like Eleanor Watson, or a jolly one like Katherine and Rachel; and here was this homely little thing with an awkward walk, a piping voice, and short skirts. "She'll just spoil everything," thought Betty resentfully, "and it's a mean, hateful shame." Over the creamed chicken, which Nan ordered because it was Holmes's "specialty," just as strawberry-ice was Cuyler's, the situation began to look a little more cheerful. Helen Chase Adams would certainly be an obliging roommate.

"Oh, I wouldn't think of touching the room till you get back from your French," she said eagerly. "Won't it be fun to fix it? Have you a lot of pretty things? I haven't much, I'm afraid. Oh, no, I don't care a bit which bed I have." Her shy, appealing manner and her evident desire to please would have disarmed a far more critical person than Betty, who, in spite of her love of "fine feathers" and a sort of superficial snobbishness, was at heart absolutely unworldly, and who took a naive interest in all badly dressed people because it was such fun to "plan them over." She applied this process immediately to her roommate.

"Her hat's on crooked," she reflected, "and her pug's in just the wrong place. Her shirt-waist needs pulling down in front and

she sticks her head out when she talks. Otherwise she'd be rather cute. I hope she's the kind that will take suggestions without getting mad." And she hurried off to her French in a very amiable frame of mind.

Helen Chase Adams thanked Nan shyly for the luncheon, escaped from the terrors of a tête-à-tête with an unfamiliar grown-up on the plea of having to unpack, and curled up on the couch that Betty had not chosen, to think it over. The day had been full of surprises, but Betty was the culmination. Why had she come to college? She was distinctly pretty, she dressed well, and evidently liked what pretty girls call "a good time." In Helen Chase Adams's limited experience all pretty girls were stupid. The idea of seeing crowds of them in the college chapel, much less of rooming with one, had never entered her head. A college was a place for students. Would Miss Wales pass her examination? Would she learn her lessons? What would it be like to live with her day in and day out? Helen could not imagine–but she did not feel in the least like crying.

Just as the dinner-bell rang, Betty appeared, looking rather tired and pale. "Nan's gone," she announced. "She found she couldn't make connections except by leaving at half past five, so she met me down at the college. And just at the last minute she gave me the money to buy a chafing-dish. Wasn't that lovely? I know I should have cried and made a goose of myself, but after tha–I beg your pardon–I haven't any sense." She stopped in confusion.

But Helen only laughed. “Go on,” she said. “I don’t mind now. I don’t believe I’m going to be homesick any more, and if I am I’ll do my best not to cry.”

How the rest of that first week flew! Next day the freshman class list was read, and fortunately it included all the girls at Mrs. Chapin’s. Then there were electives to choose, complicated schedules to see through, first recitations to find, books to buy or rent, rooms to arrange, and all sorts of bewildering odds and ends to attend to. Saturday came before any one was ready for it, bringing in its wake the freshman frolic, a jolly, informal dance in the gymnasium, at which the whole college appears, tagged with its name, and tries to get accustomed to the size of the entering class, preparatory to becoming acquainted with parts of it later on. To Betty’s great delight Dorothy King met her in the hall of the Administration Building the day before and asked permission to take her to the frolic. At the gymnasium Miss King turned her over to a bewildering succession of partners, who asked her the stereotyped questions about liking college, having a pleasant boarding-place, and so on, tried more or less effectively to lead her through the crowd to the rather erratic music of one piano, and assured her that the freshman frolic was not at all like the other college dances. They all seemed very pleasant, but Betty felt sure she should never know them again. Nevertheless she enjoyed it all immensely and was almost sorry when the frolic was over and they adjourned to Dorothy’s pretty single room in the Hilton House, where a few other upper-class girls had been

invited to bring their freshmen for refreshments.

"Wasn't it fun?" said Betty to a fluffy-haired, dainty little girl who sat next her on Dorothy's couch.

"I don't think I should call it exactly fun," said the girl critically.

"Oh, I like meeting new people, and getting into a crowd of girls, and trying to dance with them," explained Betty.

"Yes, I liked it too," said the girl. She had an odd trick of lingering over the word she wished to distinguish. "I liked it because it was so queer. Everything's queer here, particularly roommates. Do you have one?"

Betty nodded. "Well, mine never made up her bed in her life before, and first she thought she couldn't, but her mother told her to take hold and see what a Madison could do with a bed–they're awfully proud of their old family–so she did; but it looks dreadfully messy yet, and it makes her late for chapel every single morning. Is yours anything like that?"

Betty laughed. "Oh, no," she said. "She's very orderly. Won't you come and see us?"

The little freshman promised. By that time the "plowed field" was ready–an obliging friend had stayed at home from the frolic to give it an early start–and they ate the creamy brown squares of candy with a marshmallow stuffed into each, and praised the cook and her wares until a bell rang and everybody jumped up and began saying good-bye at once except Betty, who had to be enlightened by the campus girls as to the dire meaning of the

twenty-minutes-to-ten bell.

"Don't you keep the ten o'clock rule?" asked the fluffy-haired freshman curiously.

"Oh, yes," said Betty. "Why, we couldn't come to college if we didn't, could we?" And she wondered why some of the girls laughed.

"I've had a beautiful time," she said, when Miss King, who had come part way home with her, explained that she must turn back. "I hope that when I'm a junior I can do half as much for some little freshman as you have for me."

"That's a nice way to put it, Miss Wales," said Dorothy. "But don't wait till you're a junior to begin."

As Betty ran home, she reflected that she had not seen Helen dancing that evening. "Oh, Helen," she called, as she dashed into the room, "wasn't it fun? How many minutes before our light goes out? Do you know how to dance?"

Helen hesitated. "I–well–I know how, but I can't do it in a crowd. It's ten minutes of ten."

"Teach you before the sophomore reception," said Betty laconically, throwing a slipper into the closet with one hand and pulling out hairpins with the other. "What a pity that to-morrow's Sunday. We shall have to wait a whole day to begin."

CHAPTER III
DANCING LESSONS AND A CLASS-MEETING

The next morning Helen had gone for a walk with Katherine, and Betty was dressing for church, when Eleanor Watson knocked at the door. She looked prettier than ever in her long silk kimono, with its ruffles of soft lace and the great knot of pink ribbon at her throat.

"So you're going to church too," she said, dropping down among Betty's pillows. "I was hoping you'd stay and talk to me. Did you enjoy your frolic?"

"Yes, didn't you?" inquired Betty.

"I didn't go," returned Eleanor shortly.

"Oh, why not?" asked Betty so seriously that Eleanor laughed.

"Because the girl who asked me first was ill; and I wouldn't tag along with the little Brooks and the Riches and your fascinating roommate. Now don't say 'why not?' again, or I may hurt your feelings. Do you really like Miss Brooks?"

Betty hesitated. As a matter of fact she liked Mary Brooks very much, but she also admired Eleanor Watson and coveted her approval. "I like her well enough," she said slowly, and disappeared into the closet to get something she did not want and change the subject.

Eleanor laughed. “You’re so polite,” she said. “I wish I were. That is, I wish I could make people think I was, without my taking the trouble. Don’t go to church.”

“Helen and Katherine are coming back for me. You’d better go with us,” urged Betty.

“Now that Kankakee person – ” began Eleanor. The door opened suddenly and Katherine and Helen came in. Katherine, who had heard Eleanor’s last remark, flushed but said nothing. Eleanor rose deliberately, smoothed the pillows she had been lying on, and walked slowly off, remarking over her shoulder, “In common politeness, knock before you come in.”

“Or you may hear what I think of you,” added Katherine wickedly, as Eleanor shut the door.

Helen looked perplexed. “Should I, Betty?” she asked, “when it’s my own room.”

“It’s nicer,” said Betty. “Nan and I do. How do you like our room, Katherine?”

“It’s a beaut,” said Katherine, taking the hint promptly. “I don’t see how you ever fixed your desks and couches, and left so much space in the middle. Our room is like the aisle in a Chicago theatre. That Japanese screen is a peach and the water-color over your desk is another. Did you buy back the chafing-dish?”

Betty laughed. She had amused the house by getting up before breakfast on the day after Nan left, in her haste to buy a chafing-dish. In the afternoon Rachel had suggested that a teakettle was really more essential to a college establishment, and they had

gone down together to change it. But then had come Miss King's invitation to eat "plowed field" after the frolic; and the chafing-dish, appearing once more the be-all and end-all of existence, had finally replaced the teakettle.

"But we're going to have both," ventured Helen shyly.

"Oh yes," broke in Betty. "Isn't it fine of Helen to get it and make our tea-table so complete?" As a matter of fact Betty much preferred that the tea-table should be all her own; but Helen was so delighted with the idea of having a part in it, and so sure that she wanted a teakettle more than pillows for her couch, that Betty resolved not to mind the bare-looking bed, which marred the cozy effect of the room, and above all never to let Helen guess how she felt about the tea-table. "But next year you better believe I'm hoping for a single room," she confided to the little green lizard who sat on her inkstand and ogled her while she worked.

When church was over Katherine proposed a stroll around the campus before dinner. "I haven't found my bearings at all yet," she said. "Now which building is which?"

Betty pointed out the Hilton House proudly. "That's all I know," she said, "except these up here in front of course–the Main Building and Chapel, and Science and Music Halls."

"We know the gymnasium," suggested Helen, "and the Belden House, where we bought our screen, is one of the four in that row."

They found the Belden House, and picked out the Westcott by its name-plate, which, being new and shiny, was easy to read

from a distance. Then Helen made a discovery. “Girls, there’s water down there,” she cried. Sure enough, behind the back fence and across a road was a pretty pond, with wooded banks and an island, which hid its further side from view.

“That must be the place they call Paradise,” said Betty. “I’ve heard Nan speak of it. I thought it was this,” and she pointed to a slimy pool about four yards across, below them on the back campus. “That’s the only pond I’d noticed.”

“Oh, no,” declared Katherine. “I’ve heard my scientific roommate speak of that. It’s called the Frog Pond and ‘of it more anon,’ as my already beloved Latin teacher occasionally remarks. To speak plainly, she has promised to let me help her catch her first frog.”

They walked home through the apple orchard that occupied one corner of the back campus.

“It’s not a very big campus, and not a bit dignified or imposing, but I like it,” said Betty, as they came out on to the main drive again, and started toward the gateway.

“Nice and cozy to live with every day,” added Katherine. Helen was too busy comparing the red-brick, homely reality with the shaded marble cloisters of her dreams, to say what she thought.

Betty’s dancing class was a great success. With characteristic energy she organized it Monday morning. It appeared that while all the Chapin house girls could dance except Helen and Adelaide Rich, none of them could “lead” but Eleanor.

"And Miss King's friends said we freshmen ought to learn before the sophomore reception, particularly the tall ones; and most of us are tall," explained Betty.

"That's all right," interposed Eleanor, "but take my advice and don't learn. If you can't lead, the other girl always will; and the men say it ruins a girl's dancing."

"Who cares?" demanded Katherine boldly. "Imagine Betty or Miss Brooks trying to see over me and pull me around! I want to learn, for one–men or no men."

"So do I," said Rachel and Mary Rich together. "And I," drawled Roberta languidly.

"Oh well, if you're all set upon it, I'll play for you," said Eleanor graciously. She was secretly ashamed of the speech that Katherine had overheard the day before and bitterly regretted having antagonized the girls in the house, when she had meant only to keep them–all but Betty–at a respectful distance. She liked most of them personally, but she wished her friends to be of another type–girls from large schools like her own, who would have influence and a following from the first; girls with the qualities of leadership, who could control votes in class-meetings and push their little set to first place in all the organized activities of the college. Eleanor had said that she came to college for "fun," but "fun" to her meant power and prominence. She was a born politician, with a keen love of manœuvring and considerable tact and insight when she chose to exercise it. But inexperience and the ease with which she had "run" boarding-school affairs

had made her over-confident. She saw now that she had indulged her fondness for sarcasm too far, and was ready to do a good deal to win back the admiration which she was sure the Chapin house girls had felt for her at first. She was particularly anxious to do this, as the freshman class-meeting was only a week off, and she wanted the votes of the house for the Hill School candidate for class-president.

So three evenings that week, in spite of her distaste for minor parts and bad pianos, she meekly drummed out waltzes and two-steps on Mrs. Chapin's rickety instrument for a long half hour after dinner, while Betty and Roberta–who danced beautifully and showed an unexpected aptitude in imparting her accomplishment–acted as head-masters, and the rest of the girls furnished the novices with the necessary variety of partners, practiced "leading," and incidentally got better acquainted. On Friday evening, as they sat in the parlor resting and discussing the progress of their pupils and the appalling length of the Livy lesson for the next day, Eleanor broached the subject of the class-meeting.

"You know it's to-morrow at two," she said. "Aren't you excited?"

"It will be fun to see our class together," said Rachel. Nobody else seemed to take much interest in the subject.

"Well, of course," pursued Eleanor, "I'm particularly anxious about it because a dear friend of mine is going to be proposed for class president–Jean Eastman–you know her, Betty."

"Oh yes," cried Betty, enthusiastically. "She's that tall, dark girl who was with you yesterday at Cuyler's. She seemed lovely."

Eleanor nodded and got up from the piano stool. "I must go to work," she said, smiling cordially round the little group. "Tell them what a good president Jean will make, Betty. And don't one of you forget to come."

"She can be very nice when she wants to," said Katherine bluntly when Eleanor was well out of hearing.

"I think she's trying to make up for Sunday," said Betty. "Let's all vote for her friend."

The first class-meeting of 190- passed off with unwonted smoothness. The class before had forgotten that it is considered necessary for a corporate body to have a constitution; and the class before that had made itself famous by suggesting the addition of the "Woman's Home Monthly" to the magazines in the college reading-room. 190- avoided these and other absurdities. A constitution mysteriously appeared, drawn up in good and regular form, and was read and promptly adopted. Then Eleanor Watson nominated Jean Eastman for president. After she and the other nominees had stood in a blushing row on the platform to be inspected by their class, the voting began. Miss Eastman was declared elected on the first ballot, with exactly four votes more than the number necessary for a choice.

"I hope she'll remember that we did that," Katherine Kittredge leaned forward to say to Betty, who sat in the row ahead of her with the fluffy-haired freshman from the Hilton and her "queer"

roommate.

That night there was a supper in Jean's honor at Holmes's, so Eleanor did not appear at Mrs. Chapin's dinner-table to be duly impressed with a sense of her obligations. "How did you like the class-meeting?" inquired Rachel, who had been for a long walk with a girl from her home town, and so had not seen the others.

"I thought it was all right myself," said Adelaide Rich, "but I walked home with a girl named Alford who was dreadfully disgusted. She said it was all cut and dried, and wanted to know who asked Eleanor Watson to write us a constitution. She said she hoped that hereafter we wouldn't sit around tamely and be run by any clique."

"Well, somebody must run us," said Betty consolingly. "Those girls know one another and the rest of us don't know any one well. I think it will all work around in time. They will have their turns first, that's all."

"Perhaps," admitted Adelaide doubtfully. Her pessimistic acquaintance had obtained a strong hold on her.

"And the next thing is the sophomore reception," said Rachel.

"And Mountain Day right after that," added Betty.

"What?" asked Helen and Roberta together.

"Is it possible that you don't know about Mountain Day, children?" asked Mary Brooks soberly. "Well, you've heard about the physical tests for the army and navy, haven't you? This is like those. If you pass your entrance examinations you are allowed a few weeks to recuperate, and then if you can climb the

required mountain you can stay on in college."

"How very interesting!" drawled Roberta, who had some idea now how to take Mary's jibes. "Now, Betty, please tell us about it."

Betty explained that the day after the sophomore reception was a holiday, and that most of the girls seized the opportunity to take an all-day walk or drive into the country around Harding.

"Let's all ask our junior and senior friends about the nicest places to go," said Rachel, emphasizing "junior and senior" and looking at Mary. "Then we can make our plans, and engage a carriage if we want one. I should think there might be quite a rush."

"You should, should you?" jeered Mary. "My dear, every horse that can stand alone and every respectable vehicle was engaged weeks ago."

"No one has engaged our lower appendages," returned Katherine. "So if worse comes to worst, we are quite independent of liveries. Which of us are you going to take to the sophomore reception?"

"Roberta, of course," said Mary. "Didn't you know that Roberta and I have a crush on each other? A crush, my dears, in case you are wanting to know, is a warm and adoring friendship. Sorry, but I'm going out this evening."

"Has she really asked you, Roberta?" asked Betty.

"Yes," said Roberta.

"How nice! I'm going with a sophomore whose sister is a

friend of Nan's."

"And Hester Gulick is going to take me–she's my friend from home," volunteered Rachel.

"I was asked to-day," added Helen. "After the class-meeting an awfully nice girl, a junior, came up here. She said there were so many of us that some of the juniors were going to help take us. Isn't it nice of them?"

Nobody spoke for a moment; then Katherine went on gaily. "And we other three have not yet been called and chosen, but I happen to know that it's because so many people want us, and nobody will give up. So don't the rest of you indulge in any crowing."

"By the way, Betty," said Rachel Morrison, "will you take some more dancing pupils? I was telling two girls who board down the street about our class and they said they wanted to learn before the reception and would much rather come here than go to that big class that two seniors have in the gym. But as they don't know you, they would insist on paying, just as they would at the other class."

Betty looked doubtfully at Roberta. "Shall we?" she said.

"I don't mind," answered Roberta, "if only you all promise not to tell my father. He wouldn't understand. Do you suppose Miss Watson would play?"

"If not, I will," said Mary Rich.

"And we could use the money for a house spread," added Betty, "since we all help to earn it."

“And christen the chafing-dish,” put in Katherine.

“Good. Then I’ll tell them–Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays,” said Rachel; and the dinner-table dissolved.

CHAPTER IV
WHOSE PHOTOGRAPH?

The dancing class went briskly on; so did the Livy class and the geometry, the English 1, the French required and the history elective. The freshmen were getting acquainted with one another now, and seldom confused their classmates with seniors or youthful members of the faculty. They no longer attempted to go out of chapel ahead of the seniors, or invaded the president's house in their frantic search for Science Hall or the Art Gallery. For October was fast wearing away. The hills about Harding showed flaming patches of scarlet, and it was time for the sophomore reception and Mountain Day. Betty was very much excited about the reception, but she felt also that a load would slip off her shoulders when it was over. She was anxious about the progress of the dancing pupils, who had increased to five, besides Helen and Adelaide, and for whom she felt a personal responsibility, because the Chapin house girls persisted in calling the class hers. And what would father say if they didn't get their money's worth? Then there was Helen's dress for the reception, which she was sure was a fright, but couldn't get up the courage to inquire about. And last and worst of all was the mysterious grind-book and Dorothy King's warning about father's telegram to the registrar. She had never mentioned the incident to anybody, but

from certain annoying remarks that Mary Brooks let fall she was sure that Mary knew all about it and that the sophomores were planning to make telling use of it.

"How's your friend the registrar?" Mary would inquire solemnly every few days. And if Betty refused to answer she would say slyly, "Who met you at the station, did you tell me? Oh, only Dottie King?" until Betty almost decided to stop her by telling the whole story.

Two days before the reception she took Rachel and Katherine into her confidence about Helen's dress.

"You see if I could only look at it, maybe I could show her how to fix it up," she explained, "but I'm afraid to ask. I'm pretty sure she's sensitive about her looks and her clothes. I should want to be told if I was such a fright, but maybe she's happier without knowing."

"She can't help knowing if she stays here long," said Rachel.

"Why don't you get out your dress, and then perhaps she'll show hers," suggested Katherine.

"I could do that," assented Betty doubtfully. "I could find a place to mend, I guess. Chiffon tears so easily."

"Good idea," said Rachel heartily. "Try that, and then if she doesn't bite you'd better let things take their course. But it is too bad to have her go looking like a frump, after all the trouble we've taken with her dancing."

Betty went back to her room, sat down at her desk and began again at her Livy. "For I might as well finish this

first," she thought; and it was half an hour before she shut the scarlet-covered book with a slam and announced somewhat ostentatiously that she had finished her Latin lesson.

"And now I must mend my dress for the reception," she went on consciously. "Mother is always cautioning me not to wait till the last minute to fix things."

"Did you look up all the constructions in the Livy?" asked Helen. Betty was so annoyingly quick about everything.

"No," returned Betty cheerfully from the closet, where she was rummaging for her dress. "I shall guess at those. Why don't you try it? Oh, dear! This is dreadfully mussed," and she appeared in the closet door with a fluffy white skirt over her arm.

"How pretty!" exclaimed Helen, deserting her Livy to examine it. "Is it long?"

"Um-um," said Betty taking a pin out of her mouth and hunting frantically for a microscopic rip. "Yes, it's long, and it has a train. My brother Will persuaded mother to let me have one. Wasn't he a brick?"

"Yes," said Helen shortly, going back to her desk and opening her book again. Presently she hitched her chair around to face Betty. "Mine's awfully short," she said.

"Is it?" asked Betty politely.

There was a pause. Then, "Would you care to see it?" asked Helen.

Betty winked at the green lizard. "Yes indeed," she said cordially. "Why don't you try it on to be sure it's all right? I'm

going to put on mine in just a minute."

She breathed a sigh of relief when she saw the dress. It was a simple white muslin. The sleeves were queer, the neck too high to be low and too low to be high, and the skirt ridiculously short. "But it might have been a lot worse," reflected Betty. "If she'll only fix it!"

"Wait a minute," she said after she had duly admired it. "I'll put mine on, and we'll see how we both look dressed up."

"You look like a regular princess out of a story-book," said Helen solemnly, when Betty turned to her for inspection.

Betty laughed. "Oh, wait till to-morrow night," she said. "My hair's all mussed now. I wonder how you'd look with your hair low, Helen."

Helen flushed and bit her lip. "I shan't look anyhow in this horrid short dress," she said.

"Then why don't you make it longer, and lower in the neck?" inquired Betty impatiently. Helen was as conscientiously slow about making up her mind as she was about learning her Livy. "It's hemmed, isn't it? Anyhow you could piece it under the ruffle."

"Do you suppose mamma would care?" said Helen dubiously. "Anyway I don't believe I have time–only till to-morrow night."

"Oh I'll show you how," Betty broke in eagerly. "And if your mother should object you could put it back, you know. You begin ripping out the hem, and then we'll hang it."

Helen Chase Adams proved to be a pains-taking and

extremely slow sewer. Besides, she insisted on taking time off to learn her history and geometry, instead of "risking" them as Betty did and urged her to do. The result was that Betty had to refuse Mary Brooks's invitation to "come down to the gym and dance the wax into that blooming floor" the next afternoon, and was tired and cross by the time she had done Helen's hair low, hooked her into the transformed dress, and finished her own toilette. She had never thought to ask the name of Helen's junior, and was surprised and pleased when Dorothy King appeared at their door. Dorothy's amazement was undisguised.

"You'll have to be costumer for our house plays next year, Miss Wales," she said, while Betty blushed and contradicted all Helen's explanations. "You're coming on the campus, of course."

"So virtue isn't its only reward after all," said Eleanor Watson, who had come in just in time to hear Miss King's remark. "Helen Chase Adams isn't exactly a vision of loveliness yet. She won't be mistaken for the college beauty, but she's vastly improved. I only wish anybody cared to take as much trouble for me."

"Oh, Eleanor!" said Betty reproachfully. "As if any one could improve you!"

Eleanor's evening dress was a pale yellow satin that brought out the brown lights in her hair and eyes and the gleaming whiteness of her shoulders. There were violets in her hair, which was piled high on her head, and more violets at her waist; and as she stood full in the light, smiling at Betty's earnestness, Betty was sure she had never seen any one half so lovely.

"But I wish you wouldn't be so sarcastic over Helen," she went on stoutly. "She can't help being such a freak."

Eleanor yawned. "I was born sarcastic," she said. "I wish Lil Day would hurry. Did you happen to notice that I cut three classes straight this morning?"

"No," said Betty aghast. "Oh, Eleanor, how dare you when–" She stopped suddenly, remembering that Eleanor had asked her not to speak of the entrance conditions.

"When I have so much to make up already, you mean," Eleanor went on complacently. "Oh, I shall manage somehow. Here they come."

A few moments later the freshman and sophomore classes, with a sprinkling of juniors to make the numbers even, were gathered *en masse* in the big gymnasium. All the afternoon loyal sophomores had toiled thither from the various campus houses, lugging palms, screens, portières and pillows. Inside another contingent had arranged these contributions, festooned the running-track with red and green bunting, risked their lives to fasten Japanese lanterns to the cross-beams, and disguised the apparatus against the walls with great branches of spruce and cedar, which still other merry, wind-blown damsels, driving a long-suffering horse, had deposited at intervals near the back door. By five o'clock it was finished and everybody, having assured everybody else that the gym never looked so well before, had gone home to dress for the evening. Now the lights softened what Mary Brooks called the "hidjous" greens of the freshman

bunting, a band played sweet music behind the palms, and pretty girls in pretty gowns sat in couples on the divans that lined the walls, or waited in line to speak to the receiving party. This consisted of Jean Eastman and the sophomore president, who stood in front of the fireplace, where a line of ropes intended to be used in gym practice had been looped back and made the best sort of foundation for a green canopy over their heads. Ten of the prettiest sophomores acted as ushers, and four popular and much envied seniors presided at the frappé bowls in the four corners of the room.

"There's not much excitement about a manless dance, but it's a fascinating thing to watch," said Eleanor to her partner, as they stood in the running-track looking down at the dancers.

"I'm afraid you're blasé, Miss Watson," returned the sophomore. "Only seniors are allowed to dislike girl dances."

Eleanor laughed. "Well, I seem to be the only heretic present," she said. "They're certainly having a good time down there."

They certainly were. The novelty of the occasion appealed to the freshmen, and the more sophisticated sophomores were bound to make a reputation as gallant beaux. So although only half the freshman could dance at once and even then the floor was dreadfully crowded, and in spite of the fact that the only refreshment was the rather watery frappé which gave out early in the evening, 190-'s reception to 190- was voted a great success.

At nine o'clock the sophomore ushers began arranging the couples in a long line leading to the grind table, and Betty knew

that her hour had come. The orchestra played a march, and as the girls walked past the table the sophomore officers presented each freshman with a small booklet bound in the freshman green, on the front cover of which, in letters of sophomore scarlet, was the cryptic legend: "Puzzle–name the girl." This was explained, however, by the inside, where appeared a small and rather cloudy blue-print, showing the back view of a girl in shirt-waist and short skirt, with a pile of books under her arm, and the inevitable "tam" on her head. On the opposite page was a facsimile telegraph blank, filled out to the registrar,

"Please meet my dear young daughter, who will arrive on Thursday by the 6:15, and oblige,

"Thomas – ."

Everybody laughed, pushed her neighbors around for a back view, and asked the sophomores if the telegram had truly been sent, and if this was the real girl's picture. So no one noticed Betty's blushes except Mary Brooks, upon whom she vowed eternal vengeance. For she remembered how one afternoon the week before, she and Mary had started from the house together, and Mary, who said she was taking her camera down-town for a new film, had dropped behind on some pretext. Betty had been sure she heard the camera click, but Mary had grinned and told her not to be so vain of her back.

However, nobody recognized the picture. The few sophomores who knew anything about it were pledged to secrecy, as the grinds were never allowed to become too personal, and

the freshmen treated the telegram as an amusing myth. In a few minutes every one was dancing again, and only too soon it was ten o'clock.

"Wasn't it fun?" said Betty enthusiastically, as she and Helen undressed.

"Oh yes," agreed Helen. "I never had such a good time in my life. But, do you know, Miss Watson says she was bored, and Roberta thought it was tiresome and the grind-book silly and impossible."

"Truth is stranger than fiction sometimes," said Betty sagely, smothering a laugh in the pillows.

She was asleep in five minutes, but Helen lay for a long while thinking over the exciting events of the evening. How she had dreaded it! At home she hated dances and never went if she could help it, because she was such a wall-flower. She had been afraid it would be the same here, but it wasn't. What a lovely time she had had! She could dance so well now, and Miss King's friends were so nice, and college was such a beautiful place, though it was so different from what she had expected.

Across the hall Roberta had lighted her student lamp and was sitting up to write an appreciative and very clever account of the evening to her cousin, who was reporter on a Boston paper and had made her promise to send him an occasional college item.

And Eleanor, still in the yellow satin, sat at her desk scribbling aimlessly on a pad of paper or staring at a clean sheet, which began, "My dear father." She had meant to write him that she was

tired of college and wanted to come home at once; but somehow she couldn't begin. For she thought, "I can see him raise his eyebrows and smile and say, 'so you want to throw up the sponge, do you? I was under the impression that you had promised to stay out the year,' as he did to the private secretary who wouldn't sit up with him till three in the morning to write letters."

Finally she tore up "My dear father," and went to bed in the dark.

CHAPTER V
UP HILL–AND DOWN

The next day was just the sort that everybody had been hoping for on Mountain Day,–crisp and clear and cool, with the inspiriting tang in the air, the delicious warmth in the sunshine, and the soft haze over the hills, that belong to nothing but a New England October at its best. The Chapin house breakfast-table was unusually lively, for each girl wanted to tell what she thought about the reception and how she was going to spend Mountain Day; and nobody seemed anxious to listen to anybody's else story.

"Sh–sh," demanded Mary Brooks at last. "Now children, you've talked long enough. Run and get your lunch boxes and begin making your sandwiches. Mrs. Chapin wants us to finish by ten o'clock."

"Ten o'clock!" repeated Katherine. "Well, I should hope so. Our horse is ordered for nine."

"Going to be gone all day?" inquired Mary sweetly.

"Of course," answered Katherine with dignity.

"Well, don't kill the poor beast," called Mary as she ran up-stairs for her box.

Mary was going off in a barge with the sophomore decorating committee, who wanted a good chance to congratulate and

condole with one another over their Herculean labors and ultimate triumph of the day before. The Rich sisters had decided to spend the holiday with an aunt who lived twenty miles down the river; Eleanor had promised early in the fall to go out with a party of horseback riders; and Helen, whose pocketbook had been prematurely flattened to buy her teakettle, had decided to accept the invitation of a girl in her geometry division to join an economical walking party. This left Rachel, Katherine, Roberta and Betty, who had hired a horse and two-seated trap for the day, invited Alice Waite, Betty's little friend from the Hilton House, to join them, and were going to drive "over the notch."

"I haven't the least idea what a notch is like," said Katherine. "We don't have such things where I come from. But it sounds interesting."

"Doesn't it?" assented Rachel absently, counting the ham sandwiches. "Do you suppose the hills are very steep, Betty?"

"Oh, I guess not. Anyhow Katherine and I told the man we were going there and wanted a sure-footed horse."

"Who's going to drive?" asked Roberta.

"Why, you, of course," said Katherine quickly. "You said you were used to driving."

"Oh, yes, I am," conceded Roberta hastily and wondered if she would better tell them any more. It was true that she was used to horses, but she had never conquered her fear of them, and they always found her out. It was a standing joke in the Lewis family that the steadiest horse put on airs and pranced for Roberta. Even

old Tom, that her little cousins drove out alone–Roberta blushed as she remembered her experience with old Tom. But if the girls were depending on her–"Betty drives too," she said aloud. "She and I can take turns. Are you sure we have enough gingersnaps?"

Everybody laughed, for Roberta's fondness for gingersnaps had become proverbial. "Half a box apiece," said Rachel, "and it is understood that you are to have all you want even if the rest of us don't get any."

When the horse arrived Roberta's last fear vanished. He was meekness personified. His head drooped sadly and his eyes were half shut. His fuzzy nose and large feet bespoke docile endurance, while the heavy trap to which he was harnessed would certainly discourage all latent tendencies to undue speed. Alice Waite, Rachel and Katherine climbed in behind, Betty and Roberta took the front seat, and they started at a jog trot down Meriden Place.

"Shall we go through Main Street?" asked Roberta. "He might be afraid of the electric cars."

"Afraid of nothing," said Betty decidedly. "Besides, Alice wants to stop at the grocery."

The "beastie," as Katherine called him, stood like a statue before Mr. Phelps's grocery and never so much as moved an eyelash when three trolley cars dashed by him in quick succession.

"What did you get?" asked Katherine, when Alice came out laden with bundles.

"Olives – "

"Good! We forgot those."

"And bananas – "

"The very thing! We have grapes."

"And wafers and gingersnaps – "

Everybody laughed riotously. "What's the matter now?" inquired Alice, looking a little offended. Rachel explained.

"Well, if you have enough for the lunch," said Alice, "let's keep these out to eat when we feel hungry." And the box was accordingly stuffed between Betty and Roberta for safe keeping.

Down on the meadow road it was very warm. By the time they reached the ferry, the "beastie's" thick coat was dripping wet and he breathed hard.

"Ben drivin' pretty fast, hain't you?" asked the ferryman, patting the horse's hairy nose.

"I should think not," said Katherine indignantly. "Why, he walked most of the way."

"Wall, remember that there trap's very heavy," said the ferryman solemnly, as he shoved off.

Beyond the river the hills began. The "beastie" trailed slowly up them. Several times Roberta pulled him out to the side of the road to let more ambitious animals pass him.

"Do you suppose he's really tired?" she whispered to Betty, as they approached a particularly steep pitch. "He might back down."

"Girls," said Betty hastily, "I'm sick of sitting still, so I'm going

to walk up this next hill. Any of you want to come?"

Relieved of his four passengers the horse still hung his head and lifted each clumsy foot with an effort.

"Oh, Roberta, there's a watering trough up here," called Betty from the top of the hill. "I'm sure that'll revive him."

By their united efforts they got the "beastie" up to the trough, which was most inconveniently located on a steep bank beside the road; and while Betty and Alice kept the back wheels of the trap level, Katherine unfastened the check-rein. To her horror, as the check dropped the bits came out of the horse's mouth.

"How funny," said Alice, "just like everything up here. Did you ever see a harness like that, Betty?" Betty left her post at the hind wheel and came around to investigate.

"Why he has two bits," she said. "Of course he couldn't go, poor creature. And see how thirsty he is!"

"Well, he's drunk enough now," said Roberta, "and you'll have to put the extra bits in again–that is, if you can. He'd trail his nose on the ground if he wasn't checked."

The "beastie" stood submissively while the bits were replaced and the check fastened. Then he chewed a handful of clover with avidity and went on again as dejectedly as ever. Presently they reached a long, level stretch of road and stopped in the shade of a big pine-tree for a consultation.

"Do you suppose this is the top?" asked Rachel.

Just then a merry tally-ho party of freshmen, tooting horns and singing, drew up beside them. "Is this the top of the notch?"

asked Betty, waving her hand to some girls she knew.

"No, it's three miles further on," they called back. "Hurrah for 190-!"

"Well?" said Betty, who felt in no mood for cheering.

"Let's go back to that pretty grove two hills down and tie this apology for a horse to the fence and spend the rest of the day there," suggested Katherine.

Everybody agreed to this, and Roberta backed her steed round with a flourish.

"Now let's each have a gingersnap before we start down," she said. So the box was opened and passed. Roberta gathered the reins in one hand, clucked to the horse, and put her gingersnap into her mouth for the first bite. But she never got it, for without the slightest provocation the "beastie" gave a sudden spring forward, flopped his long tail over the reins, and started at a gallop down the road. Betty clung to the dashboard with one hand and tried to pluck off the obstructing tail with the other. Roberta, with the gingersnap still in her mouth, tugged desperately at the lines, and the back seat yelled "Whoa!" lustily, until Betty, having rearranged the tail and regained her seat, advised them to help pull instead. They had long since left the little grove behind, had dashed past half a dozen carriages, and were down on the level road near the ferry, when the "beastie" stopped as suddenly as he had started. Roberta deliberately removed the gingersnap from her mouth, handed the reins to Betty to avoid further interruption, and began to eat, while the rest of the party

indulged in unseemly laughter at her expense.

"We've found out what that extra bit was for," said Rachel when the mirth had subsided, "and we can advise the liveryman that it doesn't work. But what are we going to do now?"

"Murder the liveryman," suggested Katherine.

"But the horse is sure-footed; he didn't lie," objected Alice so seriously that everybody burst out laughing again.

"He told the truth, but not the whole truth," said Rachel. "Next time we'll ask how many bits the horse has to wear and how it takes to hills. Now what can we do?"

"We can't go back to the woods, that's sure," said Katherine. "And it's too hot to stay down here. Let's go home and get rid of this sure-footed incubus, and then we can decide what to do next."

The ferryman greeted them cheerfully. "Back so soon?" he said. "Had your dinner?"

"Of course not," replied Katherine severely. "It's only twelve o'clock. We're just out for a morning drive. Do you remember saying that this horse was tired? Well, he brought us down the hills at about a mile a minute."

"Is that so!" declared the ferryman with a chuckle. "Scairt, were you? Why didn't you git them young Winsted fellers, that jest started up, to rescue yer? Might a ben quite a story."

"We didn't need rescuing, thank you," said Katherine. "Did you see any men?" she whispered to Betty.

Betty nodded. "Four, driving a span. They were awfully

amused. Miss King was in another of the carriages," she added sadly. Then she caught sight of Roberta and began to laugh again. "You were so funny with that cookie in your mouth," she said. "Were you dreadfully frightened?"

"No," said Roberta, with a guilty blush. "I always expect something to happen. Horses are such uncertain creatures."

They drove back through the meadows at a moderate pace, deposited the horse and a certified opinion of him with an apologetic liveryman, and carried their lunch down to Paradise. "For it's as pretty as any place and near, and we're all hungry," Alice said.

Paradise was deserted, for the girls had preferred to range further afield on Mountain Day. So the five freshmen chose two boats, rowed up stream without misadventure, spread out their luncheon on a grassy knoll, and ate, talked, and read till dinner time. As they crossed the campus, they met parties of dusty, disheveled pedestrians, laden with purple asters and autumn branches. A barge stopped at the gateway to deposit the campus contingent of the sophomore decorating committee, and in front of the various dwelling-houses empty buckboards, surreys and express wagons, waiting to be called for, showed that the holiday was over.

"I don't think our first Mountain Day has been so bad after all, in spite of that dreadful horse," said Rachel.

"So much pleasant variety about it," added Katherine.

"Let's not tell about the runaway," said Alice who hated to be

teased.

"But Miss King saw us," expostulated Betty, "and you can trust Mary Brooks to know all about it."

When Mary, who was late in dressing, entered the dining-room, she gave a theatrical cry of joy. "I'm so glad you're all safe," she said. "And how about that cookie, Roberta?"

"I'm sorry, but it's gone. They're all gone," said Roberta coolly. "Now you might as well tell us how you knew."

"Knew!" repeated Mary scornfully. "The whole college knows by this time. We were lunching on the notch road, near the top, when four Winsted men came up, and asked if they might join us. They knew most of us. So we said yes, if they'd brought any candy, and they told us a strange story about five girls–very young girls, they said," interpolated Mary emphatically, "that they'd seen dashing down the notch. One was trying to eat a cookie, and another was pulling the horse's tail, and the rest were screaming at the top of their lungs, so naturally the horse was frightened to death. Pretty soon three carriage loads of juniors came along and they confirmed the awful news and gave us the names of the victims, and you can imagine how I felt. The men want to meet you, but I told them they couldn't because of course you'd be drowned in the river."

"I hope you'll relieve their minds the next time they come to see you," said Katherine. "Are they the youths who monopolize our piazza every Wednesday and Saturday afternoon?"

"Two of them help occasionally."

Katherine winked meaningly at the rest of the Mountain Day party. “We’ll be there,” she said, “though it goes against my conscience to receive calls from such untruthful young gentlemen.”

The next Saturday afternoon Betty and Katherine established themselves ostentatiously on the front piazza to await the arrival of Mary’s callers, Rachel had gone to play basket-ball, and Roberta had refused to conspire against Mary’s peace of mind, particularly since the plot might involve having to talk to a man. Promptly at three o’clock two gentlemen arrived.

“Miss Brooks is that sorry, but she had to go out,” announced the maid in tones plainly audible to the two eavesdroppers. “Would you please to come back at four?”

Katherine and Betty exchanged disappointed glances. “Checked again. She’s too much for us,” murmured Katherine. “Shall we wait?”

“And is Miss Wales in–Miss Betty Wales?” pursued the spokesman, after a slight pause.

The maid looked severely at the occupants of the piazza. “Yes, sor, you can see that yoursilf,” she said and abruptly withdrew.

The man laughed and came quickly toward Betty, who had risen to meet him. “I’m John Parsons,” he said. “I roomed with your brother at Andover. He told me you were here and asked me to call. Didn’t he write to you too? Miss Brooks promised to present me, but as she isn’t in – ”

“Oh, yes, Will wrote, and I’m very glad to meet you, Mr.

Parsons," Betty broke in. "Only I didn't know you were–I mean I didn't know that Miss Brooks's caller was you. Miss Kittredge, Mr. Parsons. Wasn't your friend going to wait?"

"Bob," called Mr. Parsons after the retreating figure of his companion, "come back and hear about the runaway. You're wanted."

It was fully half-past four when Messrs. Parsons and Hughes, remembering that they had another engagement, left their escorts by request at the gymnasium and returned from a pleasant walk through Paradise and the campus to Meriden Place, where a rather frigid reception awaited them. Betty and Katherine, having watched the finish of the basket-ball game, followed them, and spent the time before dinner in painting a poster which they hung conspicuously on Mary's door. On it a green dragon, recently adopted as freshman class animal, charged the sophomores' purple cow and waved a long and very curly tail in triumph. Underneath was written in large letters, "Quits. Who is going to the KΦ dance at Winsted?"

"I'm dreadfully afraid mother won't let me go though," said Betty as they hammered in the pins with Helen's paper-weight. "And anyhow it's not for three whole weeks."

When the drawing was securely fastened, Betty surveyed it doubtfully. "I wonder if we'd better take it down," she said at last. "I don't believe it's very dignified. I'm afraid I oughtn't to have asked Mr. Parsons to call his friend back, but I did so want to meet both of them and crow over Mary. And it was they

who suggested the walk. Katherine, do you mind if we take this down?"

"Why, no, if you don't want to leave it," said Katherine looking puzzled. "I'm afraid Mr. Hughes didn't have a very good time. Men aren't my long suit. But otherwise I think we did this up brown."

Just then Eleanor came up, and Katherine gave her an enthusiastic account of the afternoon's adventure. Betty was silent. Presently she asked, "Girls, what is a back row reputation?"

"I don't know. Why?" asked Eleanor.

"Well, you know I stopped at the college, Katherine, to get my history paper back. Miss Ellis looked hard at me when I went in and stammered out what I wanted. She hunted up the paper and gave it to me and then she said, 'With which division do you recite, Miss Wales?' I told her at ten, and she looked at me hard again and said, 'You have been present in class twelve times and I've never noticed you. Don't acquire a back row reputation, Miss Wales. Good-day,' and I can tell you I backed out in a hurry."

"I suppose she means that we sit on the back rows when we don't know the lesson," said Helen who had joined the group.

"I see," said Betty. "And do you suppose the faculty notice such things as that and comment on them to one another?"

"Of course," said Eleanor wisely. "They size us up right off. So does our class, and the upper class girls."

"Gracious!" said Betty. "I wish I hadn't promised to go to a

spread on the campus to-night. I wish – What a nuisance so many reputations are!" And she crumpled the purple cow and the green dragon into a shapeless wad and threw it at Rachel, who was coming up-stairs swinging her gym shoes by their strings.

CHAPTER VI
LETTERS HOME

Betty was cross and "just a tiny speck homesick," so she confided to the green lizard. Nothing interesting had happened since she could remember, and it had rained steadily for four days. Mr. Parsons, who played right tackle on the Winsted team, had written that he was laid up with a lame shoulder, which, greatly to his regret, would prevent his taking Betty to his fraternity dance. Helen was toiling on a "lit." paper with a zealous industry which got her up at distressingly early hours in the morning, and was "enough to mad a saint," according to her exasperated roommate, whose own brief effusion on the same subject had been hastily composed in one evening and lay neatly copied in her desk, ready to be handed in at the proper time. Moreover, "gym" had begun and Betty had had the misfortune to be assigned to a class that came right in the middle of the afternoon.

"It's a shame," she grumbled, fishing out her fountain pen which had fallen off her desk and rolled under the bureau. "I shall change my lit. to afternoon–that's only two afternoons spoiled instead of four–and then tell Miss Andrews that I have a conflict. Haven't you finished that everlasting paper?"

"No," said Helen meekly. "I'm sorry that I'm so slow. I'll go

out if you want to have the girls in here."

"Oh no," called Betty savagely, dashing out into the hall. Eleanor's door was ornamented with a large sign which read, "Busy. Don't disturb." But the door was half-way open, and in the dusky room, lighted, as Eleanor liked to have it, by candles in old-fashioned brass sticks, Eleanor sat on a pile of cushions in the corner, strumming softly on her guitar.

"Come in," she called. "I put that up in case I wanted to study later. Finished your lit. paper?"

Betty nodded. "It's awfully short."

"I'm going to do mine to-night–that and a little matter of Livy and French and–let me see–Bible–no, elocution."

"Can you?" asked Betty admiringly.

"I'm not sure till I've tried. I've been meditating asking your roommate to do the paper. Would you?"

"No," said Betty so emphatically that Eleanor stopped playing and looked at her curiously.

"Why not? Do you think it's wrong to exchange her industry for my dollars?"

Betty considered. She still admired Eleanor, but she had learned her limitations. Her beauty wove a spell about all that she did, and she was very clever and phenomenally quick when she cared to apply herself. But she cared so seldom, roused herself only when she could gain prestige, when there was something to manipulate, to manage. And apparently she was not even to be trusted. Still, what was the use of quarreling with her about honor

and fair play? To Betty in her present mood it seemed a mere waste of time and energy.

"Well, for one reason," she said at last, "Helen hasn't her own paper done yet, and for another I don't think she writes as well as you probably do;" and she rose to go.

"That was a joke, Bettina," Eleanor called after her. "I am truly going to work now–this very instant. Come back at ten and have black coffee with me."

Betty went on without answering to Rachel's room. "Come in," chorused three cheerful voices.

"No, go get your lit. paper first. We're reading choice selections," added Katherine.

"She means she is," corrected Rachel, handing Betty a pillow. "You look cross, Betty."

"I am," said Betty savagely, recounting a few of her woes. "What can we do? I came to be amused."

"In a Miracle play of this type – " began Katherine, and stopped to dodge a pillow. "But it is amusing, Betty."

"I'm afraid it will amuse Miss Mills, if the rest is anything like what you read," said Rachel with a reminiscent smile. "What are you doing, Roberta?"

"Writing home," drawled Roberta, without looking up from her paper.

"Well, you needn't shake your fountain pen over me, if you are," said Katherine. "I also owe my honored parents a letter, but I've about made up my mind never to write to them again. Listen

to this, will you." She rummaged in her desk for a minute. "Here it is.

"'My dear daughter'–he only begins that way when he's fussed. I always know how he's feeling when I see whether it's 'daughter' or 'K.' 'My dear daughter:–Your interesting letter of the 12th inst. was received and I enclose a check, which I hope will last for some weeks.' ("I'm sorry to say it's nearly gone already," interpolated Katherine.) "'Your mother and I enjoyed the account of the dance you attended in the gymnasium, of the candy pull which Mrs. Chapin so kindly arranged for her roomers, and the game of hockey that ended so disastrously for one of your friends. We are glad that you attended the Morality play of "Everyman," though we are at a loss to know what you mean by the "peanut gallery." However it occurs to us that with your afternoon gymnasium class, your recitations, which, as I understand it, fully engage your mornings, and all these diversions in one week, you could have spent but little time in the study of your lessons. Do not forget that these years should be devoted to a serious preparation for the multifarious duties of life, and do not neglect the rich opportunities which I am proud to be able to give you. The Wetherbees have – ' Oh well, the rest of it is just Kankakee news," said Katherine, folding the letter and putting it back in her desk. "But isn't that first bit lovely? Why, I racked my brain till it ached, positively ached, thinking of interesting things to say in that letter, and now because I didn't mention that I'd worked three solid hours on my German every

day that week and stood in line at the library for an hour to get hold of Bryce's American Commonwealth, I receive this pathetic appeal to my better self."

"How poetic you're getting," laughed Betty. "Do you know it's awfully funny, but I got a letter something like that too. Only mine was from Nan, and it just said she hoped I was remembering to avoid low grades and conditions, as they were a great bother. She said she wanted me to have a good time, but as there would be even more to do when I got on the campus, I ought not to fall into the habit of neglecting my work this year."

"Mine was from Aunt Susan," chimed in Rachel. "She said she didn't see when I could do any studying except late at night, and she hoped I wasn't being so foolish as to undermine my health and ruin my complexion for the sake of a few girlish pleasures. Isn't that nice–girlish pleasures? She put in a five dollar bill, though I couldn't see why she should, considering her sentiments."

Roberta put the cap on to her fountain pen and propped it carefully against an adjacent pillow. "I've just answered mine," she said, sorting the sheets in her lap with a satisfied smile.

"Did you get one, too? What did you say?" demanded Betty.

"The whole truth," replied Roberta languidly. "It took eight pages and I hope he'll enjoy it."

"I say," cried Katherine excitedly. "That's a great idea. Let's try it."

"And read them to one another afterward," added Rachel. "They might be more entertaining than your lit. paper."

"May I borrow some paper?" asked Betty. "I'm hoping Helen will finish to-night if I let her alone."

Roberta helped herself to a book from the shelves and an apple from the table, and the rest settled themselves to their epistolary labors. Except for the scratching of Betty's pen, and an occasional exclamation of pleasure or perplexity from one of the scribes, the room was perfectly still. Betty had just asked for an envelope and Katherine was numbering her pages when Mary Brooks knocked at the door.

"What on earth are you girls doing?" she inquired blandly, selecting the biggest apple in the dish and appropriating the Morris chair, which Katherine had temporarily vacated. "I haven't heard a sound in here since nine o'clock. I began to think that Helen had come in and blown out the gas again by mistake and you were all asphyxiated."

Everybody laughed at the remembrance of a recent occasion when Helen had absent-mindedly blown out the gas while Betty was saying her prayers.

"It wasn't so funny at the time," said Betty ruefully. "Suppose she'd gone to sleep without remembering. We've been writing home, Mary," she said, turning to the newcomer, "and now we're going to read the letters, and we've got to hurry, for it's almost ten. Roberta, you begin."

"Oh no," said Roberta, looking distressed.

"I wish somebody would tell me what this is all about first," put in Mary. Rachel explained, while Katherine and Betty

persuaded Roberta to read her letter.

"It isn't fair," she protested, "when I wrote a real letter and you others were just doing it for fun."

"Go on, Roberta!" commanded Mary, and Roberta in sheer desperation seized her letter and began to read.

"Dear Papa:–I have been studying hard all the evening and it is now nearly bedtime, but I can at least begin a letter to you. To-day has been the fourth rainy day in succession and we have thoroughly appreciated the splendid opportunity for uninterrupted work. Yesterday morning–I think enough has happened in these two days to fill my letter–I was up at seven as usual. I stuck a selection from Browning into my mirror, as it was the basis of our elocution lesson, and nearly learned it while I dressed. Before chapel I completed my geometry preparation. This was fortunate, as I was called on to recite, the sixth proposition in book third being my assignment. The next hour I had no recitation, so I went to the library to do some reference work for my English class. Ten girls were already waiting for the same volume of the Century Dictionary that I wanted, so I couldn't get hold of it till nearly the end of the hour. I spent the intervening time on the Browning. I had Livy the next hour and was called on to translate. As I had spent several hours on the lesson the day before, I could do so. After the elocution recitation I went home to lunch. At quarter before two I began studying my history. At quarter before four I started for the gymnasium. At five I went to a tea which one of the girls was

giving for her mother, so I felt obliged to go. I stayed only half an hour and cannot remember how I spent the half hour till dinner, so I presume it was wasted. I am afraid I am too much given to describing such unimportant pauses in the day's occupation and magnifying their length and the frivolous pleasure which we thoughtlessly derive from them.

"In the evening – Oh it all goes on like that," cried Roberta. "Just dull and stuffy and true to the facts. Some one else read."

"It's convincing," chuckled Mary. "Now Katherine."

Katherine's letter was an absurd mixture of sense and nonsense, in which she proved that she studied at least twelve hours out of the twenty-four. Rachel's was a sensible explanation of just how much time, or rather how little, a spread, a dance or a basket-ball game takes.

"That's what they don't understand," she said, "and they don't know either how fast we can go from one thing to another up here. Why, energy is in the air!"

Betty's letter, like her literature paper, was extremely short. "I couldn't think of much to say, if I told the truth," she explained, blushing. "I don't suppose I do study as much as I ought."

Mary had listened with an air of respectful attention to all the letters. When the last one was finished she rose hastily. "I must go back," she said. "I have a theme to write. I only dropped in to ask if that famous spread wasn't coming off soon."

"Oh, yes," said Betty. "Let's have it next week Wednesday. Is anything else going on then? I'll ask Eleanor and you see the

Riches and Helen."

A few days later Mary appeared at the lunch table fairly bursting with importance. "Well," she said, beaming around the table. "What do you suppose has happened now? Really, Mrs. Chapin, you ought to be proud of us. We began to be famous before college opened – "

"What?" interrupted Eleanor.

"Is it possible you didn't know that?" inquired Mary. "Well, it's true nevertheless. And we were the heroines of Mountain Day, and now we're famous again."

"How?" demanded the table in a chorus.

Mary smiled enigmatically. "This time it is a literary sensation," she said.

"Is it Helen's paper?" hazarded Betty.

"Mine, of course," said Katherine. "Strange Miss Mills didn't mention it this morning when I met her at Cuyler's."

Mary waited until it was quiet again. "If you've quite finished guessing," she said, "I'll tell you. You remember the evening when I found four of you in Rachel and Katherine's room writing deceitful letters to your fond parents. Well, I had been racking my brains for weeks for a pleasing and original theme subject. You know you are supposed to spend two hours a week on this theme course, and I had spent two hours for four weeks in just thinking what to write. I'm not sure whether that counts at all and I didn't like to ask–it would have been so conspicuous. So I was in despair when I chanced upon your happy gathering and was

saved. Miss Raymond read it in class to-day," concluded Mary triumphantly.

"You didn't put us into it–our letters!" gasped Roberta.

"Indeed I did," said Mary. "I put them all in, as nearly as I could remember them, and Miss Raymond read it in class, and made all sorts of clever comments about college customs and ideals and so on. I felt guilty, because I never had anything read before, and of course I didn't exactly write this because the letters were the main part of it. So after class I waited for Miss Raymond and explained how it was. She laughed and said that she was glad I had an eye for good material and that she supposed all authors made more or less use of their acquaintance, and when I went off she actually asked me to come and see her. My junior friends are hoping it will pull me into a society and I'm hoping it will avert a condition."

"Where is the theme?" asked Eleanor. "Won't you read it to us?"

"It's–why, I forgot the very best part of the whole story. Sallie Hill has it for the 'Argus.' She's the literary editor, you know, and she wants it for the next number. So you see you are famous.

"Why don't some of you elect this work?" asked Mary, when the excitement had somewhat subsided. "It's open to freshmen, and it's really great fun."

"I thought you said that you spent eight hours and were in despair – " began Eleanor.

"So I was," said Mary. "I declare I'd forgotten that. Well,

anyhow I'm sure I shan't have any trouble now. I think I've learned how to go at it. Why, do you know, girls, I have an idea already. Not for a theme–something else. It concerns all of you–or most of you anyway."

"I should think you'd made enough use of us for the present," said Betty. "Why don't you try to make a few sophomores famous?"

"Oh it doesn't concern you that way. You are to – Oh wait till I get it started," said Mary vaguely; and absolutely refused to be more explicit.

CHAPTER VII
A DRAMATIC CHAPTER

The Chapin house girls decided not to spend the proceeds of the dancing class for an elaborate supper, as they had first intended, but to turn their "spread" into the common college type, where "plowed field" and chocolate made with condensed milk and boiling water are the chief refreshments, and light-hearted sociability ensures a good time for everybody.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.