

BAUM LYMAN FRANK

THE DARING TWINS

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The Daring Twins A Story for Young Folk:

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L. Frank Baum

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCING THE DARINGS

“Now you-all stop dat a-foolin’ an’ eat yo’ brekfas’ like sens’ble chill’ns,” said Aunt Hyacinth, coming in with a plate of smoking cakes. “Ef yo’ don’, yo’ done be late fo’ school, shore ’nuff.”

A ripple of laughter went around the group of five young Darings as a scramble was made for the cakes.

“I don’t b’lieve I’ll go to school to-day, Auntie,” said Sue, a demure little miss at the lower end of the table.

“Yes yo’ will, honey,” retorted the black mammy, in a voice she meant to be severe. “Yo’ ’s goin’ to school, all of yo’, an’ I don’t ’tend yous’ll be late, nuther.”

“I’m not going, for one,” declared Don, his mouth too full to speak properly.

“Get some more cakes; will you, Aunt Hy?” requested Becky, in a plaintive tone. “They snapped those up so quick I couldn’t harpoon a single one.”

The faithful old servant pattered back to the kitchen, slid more cakes from the griddle to her plate, poured on fresh batter and came pattering back again.

“Yo’, now, Miss Sue; what’s dat I heah ’bout stayin’ home f’m school?” she demanded, a frown wrinkling her ebony brow.

“That’s it, Auntie; no school for me,” said Sue, grabbing a cake with her fork before Phoebe could reach the plate.

“But yo’ mus’, chile; yo’ ain’t sick. Yo’ *mus’* go to school.”

“Not to-day. I jus’ won’t, Auntie.”

“Yes yo’ will, Miss Sue! yo’ ’ll go ef I has to lead yo’ dere by de ear o’ you.”

Even Phil joined the laughter now, and he said in his grave yet pleasant way:

“You’ll have to lead us all, then, Auntie, and there are more ears than you have hands.”

Aunt Hyacinth seemed bewildered. She looked around the table, from one to another of the bright, laughing faces, and shook her head reproachfully.

Then Sue, having consumed the cake, leaned back in her chair, shook the tangled brown curls from her face and slowly raised her long curling lashes, until the mischievous eyes were unveiled and sent a challenge to Auntie’s startled ones.

“We’re misbehavin’ *drea’*fully; ain’t we? But a fact’s a fact, Auntie. We’re none of us goin’ to school – so there, now!”

“W’y, yo’ – yo’ – yo’ – ”

Sue sprang upon her chair and threw both arms around old

Hyacinth's neck, giving the black cheek a smacking kiss.

"You big goose!" said she; "don't you know it's Sat'day? There *be n't* no school."

"Wha' 's 'at?" cried Auntie, striving to cover her humiliation at being caught in such a foolish error. "Is dat a proper speechifyin' to say dere '*be n't* no school'? Where's yo' grammeh, Miss Sue? Don' let me heah yo' say '*be n't*' agin. Say, 'dere *hain't* no school.'"

Phœbe led the laughter this time; but, when it had subsided she said to the indignant servant:

"She certainly does use awfully bad grammar, Auntie, and you're quite right to correct her. But, I'm positive that something's burning in the kitchen."

Aunt Hyacinth made a dive for the door and let in a strong odor of charred cakes as she passed through.

Phœbe got up from her place and walked to the latticed window. Something attracted her attention outside, for she gave a little start. Phil joined her just then and slipped his arm around her slim waist. They were twins, these two, and the eldest of the five Darings.

"What is it, dear?" he asked.

"The people are moving in, across the way," she said, rather sadly. "I didn't know they were expected so soon."

There was a rush for the window, at this, but five heads were too many for the space and the outlook was hindered by a mass of climbing ivy. Don made for the porch, and the others followed him into the fresh morning air.

For a while they all gazed silently at the great mansion across the way, set in the midst of an emerald lawn. Men were carrying trunks in at the side entrance. Before the door stood a carriage from which a woman, a man, a girl and a boy had alighted. They were gazing around them with some curiosity, for the scene was all new to them.

“Isn’t it funny,” whispered Becky, softly, “to think of other folks living in our old home?”

“It isn’t ours, now,” said Don, testily; “so, what’s the odds?”

“It was sold last fall, soon after papa died,” remarked Phoebe, “and this Mr. Randolph bought it. I suppose that’s him strutting across the lawn – the stout gentleman with the cane.”

“The grounds seem more of an attraction to them than the house,” remarked Phil.

“Yes, they’re fresh from the city,” answered his twin. “I’m rather surprised they haven’t come to Riverdale before, to occupy their new home.”

“Our house was sold ’cause we were poor, wasn’t it?” asked Sue.

“Yes, dear. We couldn’t afford to keep it, because poor papa left a lot of debts that had to be paid. So we moved over here, to Gran’pa Eliot’s.”

“Don’t like this place,” observed Don, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, as he stared across the street. “It isn’t half as fine or cosy as our old home.”

“It’s lucky for us that Gran’pa Eliot had a house,” returned

Phil, gravely. "And it's lucky Mr. Ferguson induced him to let us live in it."

"Guess gran'pa couldn't help himself, being paralyzed like he is," said Becky.

"It's the first thing he ever did for us, anyhow," added Don, grumblingly. "And he sticks to his room upstairs and won't let us come near him."

"Do you want to visit gran'pa?" asked Phoebe, turning to her younger brother.

"No."

"Then don't complain, dear, if he doesn't want you. He's old and helpless; and as for helping us, I'm afraid gran'pa is almost as poor as we are," she said, her eyes still regarding, with wistful earnestness, the scene across the street.

"Poor! Gran'pa Eliot poor, with this big house?" exclaimed Sue, incredulously.

"I think so; I'm sure it's so," answered Phoebe. "Old Miss Halliday asked me to keep you all from picking the fruit in the garden, when it ripens; because, she says gran'pa has to sell it to get enough money to pay taxes and his living expenses. And she gathers all the eggs from the chickens and sells them to Mr. Wyatt, the grocer. That must mean gran'pa's pretty poor, you know."

"Is old Miss Halliday any relation to us?" asked Don.

"No; she was an old servant of grandmother's, before she died – her housekeeper, I believe; and afterward, when gran'pa

became paralyzed, she took care of him.”

“She seems to run everything around this place as if she owned it,” muttered the boy.

“She’s a very faithful woman,” observed Phil; “and a very disagreeable one. I don’t know what gran’pa would have done without her. She gets his meals and waits on him night and day.”

“Somehow,” said Becky, “I sort o’ hate her. She won’t let us into any of the back rooms upstairs, though she and gran’pa can’t use all of ’em; and she never comes near us unless she wants to jaw about something we’ve done. I run a clothesline through the grass yesterday, and tripped old Halliday up when she went to feed the chickens, and she was as mad as anything.”

“I think she doesn’t care much for young people,” admitted Phœbe; “and as none of us cares for her it’s just as well that we should live apart – even if we occupy the same house. After all, my dears, we should be grateful for being allowed so much room in this comfortable old shack. We had no other place to go after our own home was sold.”

There was silence in the little group for a moment. Then Becky asked, curiously:

“Where do we get the money to live on? We have to pay our own grocery bills, don’t we?”

Phil started and looked upon his younger sister wonderingly, as if she had suggested a new thought to him. Then he turned to Phœbe.

“There must have been a little money left,” he said. “It never

occurred to me before. I must ask Mr. Ferguson about it.”

Phœbe flushed a trifle, but looked down instead of meeting her twin’s earnest gaze.

“*I’ve* thought of it, Phil,” she replied, softly. “Whatever was left after paying papa’s debts must have been little enough, and can’t last forever. And then – ”

Phil was regarding her with serious eyes. He glanced at the younger ones and said quickly:

“Never mind. We haven’t suffered from poverty so far, have we? And we won’t. We’ve Daring blood in our veins, and that means we can accomplish anything we set out to do.”

Phœbe smiled and turned to reënter the house.

“Saturday is my busy day,” she remarked brightly. “I suppose you’re going to practice for the baseball match, Phil?”

“Yes,” he said, “I promised the boys – ” Then he stopped and shook his head. “I don’t know yet what I’ll do, Phœbe,” he added. “Just now I’ve an errand down town.”

He caught up his cap, kissed his twin and strode down the walk to the gate. Phœbe cautioned the younger ones not to raise a racket under Gran’pa Eliot’s window, but to keep in the front yard if they were going to play. Then she stole softly away to her own little room upstairs and locked herself in so as not to be disturbed.

CHAPTER II

PHIL INTERVIEWS THE LAWYER

Phil Daring walked toward the village with uneasy, nervous strides. There was an anxious expression upon his usually placid face.

“Queer,” he muttered to himself, “that I never thought to ask how we’re able to live. It costs money to feed five hungry youngsters; and where does it come from, I wonder?”

The Eliot house was on the brow of a knoll and the street sloped downward to the little village where the “business center” clustered around the railway station. The river was just beyond, flowing sleepily on its way to the gulf, and at Riverdale a long wooden bridge spanned the murky water. It was a quiet, pretty little town, but had such a limited population that every resident knew nearly everyone else who lived there and kept fairly well posted on the private affairs of each member of the community.

Wallace Daring, the father of the twins, had been the big man of Riverdale before he died a few months ago. He had come to the town many years before, when he was a young man, and built the great beet sugar factory that had made all the farmers around so prosperous, growing crops to supply it. Mr. Daring must have made money from the business, for he married Jonathan Eliot’s daughter and established a cosy home where Phil and Phœbe, and

Donald and Becky were born. Afterward he erected a splendid mansion that was the wonder and admiration of all Riverdale. But no one envied Wallace Daring his success, for the kindly, energetic man was everybody's friend and very popular with his neighbors.

Then began reverses. His well-beloved wife, the mother of his children, was taken away from him and left him a lonely and changed man. He tried to seek consolation in the society of his little ones; but in a brief four years he himself met a sudden death in a railway wreck. Then, to the amazement of all who knew him, it was discovered that his vast fortune had been swept away and he was heavily in debt.

Judge Ferguson, his lawyer, was made his executor by the court and proceeded to settle the estate as advantageously as he could; but the fine mansion had to be sold. The five orphaned children lived in their old home, cared for by honest, faithful Aunt Hyacinth, until two months before the time this story begins, when a man from the East named Randolph bought the place and the Darings moved over to their grandfather's old-fashioned but roomy and comfortable house across the way.

Phil walked more slowly as he approached the business district. The task he had set himself was an unpleasant one, but he felt that he must face it courageously.

The boy's father had been so invariably indulgent that Phil, although now sixteen years of age, had never been obliged to think of financial matters in any way. He was full of life and

healthful vitality, and his one great ambition was to prepare himself for college. His father's sudden death stunned him for a time, but he picked up the trend of his studies again, after a little, and applied himself to work harder than ever. Vaguely he realized that he must make a name and a fortune for himself after graduating from college; but so far he had not been called upon to consider the resources of the family. Mr. Ferguson had attended to the settlement of his father's estate, of which the boy knew nothing whatever, and Aunt Hyacinth had cared for the house, and got the meals and sent her five charges to school each day in ample season. The lives of the young Darings had scarcely been interrupted as yet by the loss of their father; although with him vanished every tangible means of support. A chance word this morning, however, had caused Phil to realize for the first time the fact that they were really poor and dependent; and he knew it was his duty, as the eldest of the family to find out what their exact circumstances were. In reality he was not the eldest, for his twin sister, Phœbe, was five minutes his senior; but Phil was a boy, and in his estimation that more than made up for the five minutes' difference in age and established him as the natural protector of Phœbe, as well as of the other children.

Down at "The Corners" the main residence street entered the one lying parallel with the river, and around this junction the business center of Riverdale was clustered, extending some two or more blocks either way. The hotel was on one corner and Bennett's general store on another, while the opposite corners

were occupied by the druggist and the hardware store. Bennett's was a brick structure and all the others were frame, except Spaythe's Bank, a block up the street. Between them were rambling one story and two story wooden buildings, mostly old and weather-beaten, devoted to those minor businesses that make up a town and are required to supply the wants of the inhabitants, or of the farmers who "came to town" to trade.

Between the post office and the hardware store was a flight of stairs leading to offices on the second floor. These stairs Phil ascended and knocked at a door bearing a small painted sign, the letters of which were almost effaced by time, with the words: "P. Ferguson; Lawyer."

No one answered the knock, so Phil opened the door and walked softly in.

It was a bare looking room. A few maps and a print of Abraham Lincoln hung upon the cracked and discolored plaster of the walls. At one side was a shelf of sheep-covered law books; in the center stood a big, square table; beyond that, facing the window, was an old-fashioned desk at which sat a man engaged in writing. His back was toward Phil; but from the tousled snow white locks and broad, spreading ears the boy knew he stood in the presence of his father's old friend and confidant, Judge Ferguson. His title of "Judge" was derived from his having been for some years a Justice of the Peace, and it was, therefore, more complimentary than official.

As Phil closed the door and stood hesitating, a voice said: "Sit

down.” The tone was quiet and evenly modulated, but it carried the effect of a command.

Phil sat down. There was a little room connected with the big office, in which sat a tow-headed clerk copying paragraphs from a law book. This boy glanced up and, seeing who his master’s visitor was, rose and carefully closed the door between them. Mr. Ferguson continued writing. He had no idea who had called upon him, for he did not turn around until he had leisurely completed his task, when a deliberate whirl of his revolving office chair brought him face to face with the boy.

“Well, Phil?” said he, shooting from beneath the bushy overhanging eyebrows a keen glance of inquiry.

“I – I wanted to have a little talk with you, sir,” returned Phil, a bit embarrassed. “Are you very busy?”

“No. Fire ahead, my lad.”

“It’s about our – our family affairs,” continued the visitor, haltingly.

“What about them, Phil?”

“Why, I know nothing as to how we stand, sir. No one has told me anything and I’ve been too thoughtless to inquire. But, I ought to know, Mr. Ferguson – oughtn’t I?”

The judge nodded.

“You ought, Phil. I’ve been going to speak of it, myself, but waited to see if you wouldn’t come here of your own accord. You, or Phœbe. In fact, I rather expected Phœbe.”

“Why, sir?”

“You’re not a very practical youth, Phil. They say you’re a student, and are trying for honors at the high school graduation next month. Also, you’re the pitcher of the baseball team, and stroke oar for the river crew. These things occupy all your time, it seems, as well they may.”

Phil flushed red. There was an implied reproach in the old man’s words.

“Now, Phœbe is different,” continued the lawyer, leaning back in his chair with his elbows on the arms and joining the tips of his fingers together – a characteristic attitude. “Phœbe has a shrewd little head, full of worldly common sense and practical, if womanly, ideas. I’d a notion Phœbe would come to me to make these necessary inquiries.”

Phil slowly rose. His face was now white with anger, yet his voice scarcely trembled, as he said:

“Then, I’ll let her come to you. Good morning, sir.”

Mr. Ferguson nodded again.

“Yes,” he remarked, without altering his position, “my judgment of you was correct. You’ll be a man some day, Phil, and a good one; but, just now, you’re merely a stubborn, unformed boy.”

Phil paused with his hand on the knob of the door. To leave the office at this juncture would be humiliating and unsatisfactory. His nature was usually calm and repressed, and under excitement he had a way of growing more quiet and thinking more clearly, which is exactly the opposite of the usual formula with boys of his

age. His strong resentment at the frank speech of the old lawyer did not abate, but he began to reason that a quarrel would be foolish, and if he intended to satisfy the doubts that worried him he must ignore the slight cast upon his character.

He laid down his hat and resumed his chair.

“After all, sir,” he said, “I’m the eldest boy and the head of the family. It is my duty to find out how we stand in the world, and what is necessary to be done to protect and care for my brother and sisters.”

“True enough, my lad,” rejoined the lawyer, in a hearty tone. “I’ll help you all I can, Phil, for your father’s sake.”

“You administered the estate,” said the boy, “and you are still my guardian, I believe.”

“Yes. Your father left no will, and the court appointed me administrator and guardian. I’ve done the best I could to untangle the snarl Wallace Daring left his business in, and the affairs of the estate are now closed and the administrator discharged.”

“Was – was there anything left?” inquired Phil, anxiously.

“Your father was a wonderful man, Phil,” resumed the lawyer, with calm deliberation, “and no doubt he made a lot of money in his day. But he had one fault as a financier – he was too conscientious. I knew Wallace Daring intimately, from the time he came to this town twenty years ago, and he never was guilty of a crooked or dishonest act.”

Phil’s face brightened at this praise of his father and he straightened up and returned the lawyer’s look with interest.

“Then there was nothing disgraceful in his failure, sir?”

“No hint of disgrace,” was the positive reply. “Daring made a fortune from his sugar factory, and made it honestly. But three years ago all the beet sugar industries of the country pooled their interests – formed a trust, in other words – and invited your father to join them. He refused, believing such a trust unjust and morally unlawful. They threatened him, but still he held out, claiming this to be a free country wherein every man has the right to conduct his business as he pleases. I told him he was a fool; but I liked his sterling honesty.

“The opposition determined to ruin him, and finally succeeded. Mind you, Phil, I don’t say Wallace Daring wouldn’t have won the fight had he lived, for he was in the right and had a host of friends to back him up; but his accidental death left his affairs in chaos. I had hard work, as administrator, to make the assets meet the indebtedness. By selling the sugar factory to the trust at a big figure and disposing of your old home quite advantageously, I managed to clear up the estate and get my discharge from the courts. But the surplus, I confess, was practically nothing.”

Phil’s heart sank. He thought earnestly over this statement for a time.

“We – we’re pretty poor, then, I take it, sir?”

“Pretty poor, Phil. And it’s hard to be poor, after having enjoyed plenty.”

“I can’t see that there’s any college career ahead of me, Mr.

Ferguson,” said the boy, trying to keep back the tears that rushed unbidden to his eyes.

“Nor I, Phil. College is a fine thing for a young fellow, but under some circumstances work is better.”

“Why didn’t you tell me this before, then?” demanded the boy, indignantly.

“There was no use in discouraging you, or interrupting your work at high school. I consider it is best for you to graduate there, especially as that is liable to end your scholastic education. The time is so near – less than three months – that to continue your studies would make little difference in deciding your future, and the diploma will be valuable to you.”

No one but Phil will ever know what a terrible disappointment he now faced. For years his ambition, fostered by his father, had been to attend college. All his boyish dreams had centered around making a record there. Phil was a student, but not one of the self-engrossed, namby-pamby kind. He was an athlete as well as a scholar, and led his high school class in all manly sports. At college he had determined to excel, both as a student and an athlete, and never had he dreamed, until now, that a college career would be denied him.

It took him a few minutes to crowd this intense disappointment into a far corner of his heart and resume the conversation. The lawyer silently watched him, his keen gray eyes noting every expression that flitted over the boy’s mobile features. Finally, Phil asked:

“Would you mind telling me just how much money was left, Mr. Ferguson?”

“The court costs in such cases are extremely high,” was the evasive reply. The lawyer did not seem to wish to be explicit, yet Phil felt he had the right to know.

“And there were your own fees to come out of it,” he suggested.

“My fees? I didn’t exact any, my lad. Your father was the best and truest friend I ever had. I am glad I could do something to assist his orphaned children. And, to be frank with you, Phil, I couldn’t have squared the debts and collected legal fees at the same time, if I’d wanted to.”

“I see,” returned Phil, sadly. “You have been very kind, Mr. Ferguson, and we are all grateful to you, I assure you. But will you please tell me how we have managed to live for the past eight months, since there was nothing left from father’s estate?”

It was the lawyer’s turn to look embarrassed then. He rubbed his hooked nose with one finger and ran the other hand through the thick mat of white hair.

“Wallace Daring’s children,” said he, “had trouble enough, poor things, without my adding to it just then. I’ve a high respect for old black Hyacinth, Phil. The faithful soul would die for any one of you, if need be. She belongs to the Daring tribe, mind you; not to the Eliots. Your father brought her here when he was first married, and I think she nursed him when he was a baby, as she has all his children. So I took Aunt Hyacinth into my confidence,

and let her manage the household finances. A month ago, when the final settlement of the estate was made, I turned over to her all the surplus. That's what you've been living on, I suppose."

"How much was it?" asked the boy, bent on running down the fact.

"Forty dollars."

"Forty dollars! For all our expenses! Why, that won't last us till I graduate – till I can work and earn more."

"Perhaps not," agreed the attorney, drily.

Phil stared at him.

"What ought I to do, sir? Quit school at once?"

"No. Don't do that. Get your diploma. You'll regret it in after life if you don't."

"But – there are five of us, sir. The youngsters are hearty eaters, you know; and the girls must have clothes and things. Forty dollars! Why, it must have all been spent long ago – and more."

Mr. Ferguson said nothing to this. He was watching Phil's face again.

"It's all so – so – sudden, sir; and so unexpected. I – I – " he choked down a sob and continued bravely: "I'm not able to think clearly yet."

"Take your time," advised the lawyer. "There's no rush. And don't get discouraged, Phil. Remember, you're the head of the family. Remember, there's no earthly battle that can't be won by a brave and steadfast heart. Think it all over at your leisure, and

consider what your father might have done, had some whim of fortune placed him in your position. Confide in Phœbe, if you like, but don't worry the little ones. Keep a stiff upper lip with your friends and playmates, and never let them suspect you're in trouble. The world looks with contempt on a fellow who shows he's downed. If he doesn't show it, he *isn't* downed. Just bear that in mind, Phil. And now run along, for I've a case to try in half an hour, at the courthouse. If you need any help or advice, lad," he added, with gentle kindness, "come to me. I was your father's friend, and I'm your legal guardian."

Phil went away staggering like a man in a dream. His brain seemed in a whirl, and somehow he couldn't control it and make it think logically. As he reached the sidewalk Al Hayden and Eric Spaythe ran up to him.

"We've been waiting for you, Phil," said one. "Saw you go up to the judge's office."

"Let's hurry over to the practice field," suggested the other, eagerly. "The rest of our nine is there by this time, and we've got to get in trim for the match this afternoon."

Phil stared, first at one face and then the other, trying to understand what they were talking about.

"If we're beaten by Exeter to-day," continued Al, "we'll lose the series; but we won't let 'em beat us, Phil. Their pitcher can't hold a candle to you, and we've got Eric for shortstop."

"How's your arm, Phil?" demanded Eric.

They had started down the street as they talked, and Phil

walked with them. Gradually, the mist began to fade from his mind and he came back to the practical things of life. “If a fellow doesn’t show it, he *isn’t* downed,” the shrewd old lawyer had said, and Phil knew it was true.

“My arm?” he replied, with a return of his usual quiet, confident manner; “it’s fit as anything, boys. We’ll beat Exeter to-day as sure as my name’s Phil Daring.”

CHAPTER III

BECKY GETS ACQUAINTED

Meantime Becky, Donald and Sue had maintained their interest in the new neighbors, and partly concealed by the vines that covered the porch were able to watch every movement across the way.

“Isn’t it a shame,” said Don, “to have them walk into our old home that father built, and use the pretty furniture that mother bought in the city, and have all the good things that *we* used to have?”

“Wonder who’s got my room,” mused Sue. “If it’s that yellow haired girl yonder, I could scratch her eyes out.”

“She’s about my age,” asserted Becky, gazing hard at the fairylike form of the new arrival. “I hope she’s ’spectable an’ decent, an’ won’t try to be bossy.”

“They’re from New York,” added Sue. “I jus’ hate New York folks.”

“How do you know they’re from New York?” demanded Don.

“Somebody said so. Oh, it was Lil Harrington; her father once knew ’em.”

The elders had entered the house by this time, and the carriage and baggage wagon had driven away. The girl and boy, about fourteen and twelve years of age, were walking with

mincing steps about the grounds, examining the shrubbery and flowers and, as Don said, evidently “taking stock” of their new possessions.

“That fellow,” Don added, “is a snob. I can see that from here. He wears a velvet suit, and it’s *braided*. Think of that, girls!”

“Let’s go over and talk to ’em,” suggested Becky. “We can show ’em the stables, an’ where we kept the rabbits an’ guinea pigs, an’ how to climb the pear-tree.”

“Not me!” exclaimed Don, scornfully.

“We’ve got to know ’em sometime,” retorted his sister, “bein’ as we’re next door neighbors. And it’s polite for us to make the first call.”

“They’re usurpers,” declared Don. “What right had they to buy our old house? They’ll get no politeness out o’ me, Beck, if they live here a thousand years.”

The boy and girl opposite came down the lawn and stood at the entrance of the driveway, looking curiously down the wide village street, shaded with its avenue of spreading trees.

“Come on, Sue,” said Becky. “Don’t be cross to-day, anyhow. Let’s go and talk to our neighbors.”

But Sue drew back, shaking her curls, positively.

“I don’t like ’em, Becky. They – they’re not our style, I’m ’fraid. You can go – if you dare.”

One thing Becky couldn’t do, was to “take a dare.” She was not really anxious to make the pilgrimage alone, but having suggested it, she turned a comical look upon the others and said:

“All right. Here goes.”

Don gave a snort of disdain and Sue laughed. It would be fun to watch their reckless sister and see what she did.

Becky Daring was not the beauty of the family, by any means. Her hair was a glaring, painful red; her face long, thin and freckled; her nose inclined to turn upward. But Becky's hazel eyes were splendid and sparkled so continuously with humor and mischief that they won for her more smiles and friendly words than she really deserved. Auntie had despaired long ago of trying to make Becky look neat and tidy, and at fourteen she was growing so fast that she shot out of her gowns as if by magic, and you could always see more of her slim legs and sunburned wrists than was originally intended. She was not dainty, like little Sue, nor calm and composed like beautiful Phœbe; but Becky enjoyed life, nevertheless, and had a host of friends.

One of her shoes became untied as she crossed the road to where the Randolph children stood. She placed her foot on the stone coping at the sidewalk and, as she fastened the knot, said with her slow Southern drawl:

“Good mawnin’. I s’pose you’re our new neighbors.”

The boy and girl, standing side by side, looked at her solemnly.

“Come to stay, I guess, haven’t you?” continued Becky, inspecting them carefully at close range.

“Come away, Doris,” said the boy, taking his sister’s hand. “It is some common village child. I am sure mamma won’t care to have us know her.”

Becky threw back her head with a merry laugh.

“Don was right, you know,” she said, nodding. “He sized you up in a jiffy, an’ from ’way over there, too,” indicating the porch from whence she had come.

“Who is Don, pray?” asked Doris, in quiet, ladylike tones, “and in what way was he right?”

“Don’s my brother,” was the reply; “an’ he jus’ gave one squint at *your* brother an’ said he was a snob.”

“Me – a snob!” cried the boy, indignantly.

“That’s what he said. Funny how he spotted you so quick, isn’t it?”

“Come, Doris. It is an insult,” he said, his face growing red as he tugged at Doris’ hand.

“Wait a moment, Allerton; we must return good for evil. Evidently the poor child does not know she has been rude,” remarked the girl, primly.

Becky gave a gasp of astonishment.

“Child!” she echoed. “I’m as old as you are, I’ll bet a cookie.”

“In years, perhaps,” answered Doris. “But, permit me to state that your brother was wrong. Having been bred in this simple, out of the way village, he does not understand the difference between a gentleman and a snob. Nor do you realize the rudeness of accosting strangers without a proper introduction, repeating words designed to injure their feelings. I am not blaming you for what you do not know, little girl; I am merely trying to point out to you your error.”

Becky sat plump down upon the sidewalk and stared until her great eyes seemed likely to pop out of their sockets. Then, suddenly seeing the humor of the situation, she smiled her sunny, amiable smile and hugging her knees with both arms said:

“I got it that time – right in the Adam’s apple, where it belonged. My compliments to Miss Doris Randolph,” rising to drop a mock curtsy. “I’ve mislaid my cardcase somewhere, but allow me to present Miss Rebecca Daring, of Riverdale, who resides on the opposite corner. When you return my call I hope you’ll find me out.”

“Wait!” cried Doris, as Becky turned to fly. “Did you say Daring?”

“I said Daring, my child,” with great condescension.

“The Daring family that used to live here, in this place?”

“The same Darings, little girl.”

“Forgive me if I seemed supercilious,” said Doris, earnestly. “I – I mistook you for a common waif of the village, you know. But mamma says the Darings are an excellent family.”

“Score one for mamma, then. She hit the bull’s-eye,” returned Becky, lightly. But, the recognition of her social position was too flattering to be ignored.

Said Allerton, rather sourly:

“Is that fellow who called me a snob a Daring, too?”

“He is Donald Ellsworth Daring,” replied Becky, with pride. “But he may have been wrong, you know. You’ll have a chance to prove it when we know you better.”

That gracious admission mollified the boy, somewhat.

“You see,” continued Becky in a more genial tone, “I can’t stay dressed up all the time, ’cause we’re slightly impecunious – which means shy of money. If it hadn’t been for that we’d not have sold our house and moved over to Gran’pa Eliot’s. In that case, you’d never have had the pleasure of my acquaintance.”

Doris looked across the street to the rambling old mansion half hid by its trees and vines. In front were great fluted pillars that reached beyond the second story, and supported a porch and an upper balcony.

“You live in a much more beautiful house than the one papa has bought,” she said, rather enviously.

“What! that old shack?” cried Becky, amazed.

“Yes. Mamma and I hunted all over this part of the state to find one of those old Colonial homesteads; but none was for sale. So, we were obliged to take this modern affair,” tossing a thumb over her shoulder.

“Modern affair! By cracky, I should think it was,” retorted Miss Daring, indignantly. “It cost a lot more money than Gran’pa Eliot’s place ever did.”

“Of course,” agreed Doris, with a slight smile. “The accident of wealth will enable anyone to build a much more palatial house than this. But only the accident of birth, it seems, enables one to occupy a splendid old Southern homestead.”

Becky regarded the speaker with wonder.

“You’re from the No’t’h?” she inquired.

“Yes. Our family is old, too; perhaps as aristocratic as that of your Grandfather Eliot. We are from Boston.”

“L-a-w – zee! I believe you are,” declared Becky. “I knew a Boston girl once, who was even more proper an’ ridic’lous in her ways than you are; but she died of a cold in the head, poor thing.”

“A cold?”

“Yes. Mortification set in, ’cause she couldn’t pronounce all the big words proper, on account o’ the cold.” Noticing a resentful look creep over Doris’ face, she hastened to add: “But that don’t count, you know. What really s’prises me is that you think Gran’pa Eliot’s shack is finer than our beautiful old home. I guess that as soon as Noah’s flood faded away Gran’pa Eliot’s house was built, it’s so blamed old.”

“Dear me!” said Doris, in seeming distress, “I wish you wouldn’t speak disrespectfully of Bible history.”

“What’s Bible history?” asked the astonished Becky.

“The flood God sent to punish a wicked world.”

“Oh, *that*,” with much relief. “I thought you were in earnest, at first.”

“My sister,” explained Allerton Randolph, with dignity, “is very religiously inclined.”

“Are you?” asked Becky, curiously.

“Yes, dear. I am trying to live my daily life in conformance with the highest religious principles. So it hurts me to hear sacred things spoken of lightly.”

Becky regarded this prim young lady with a sudden access of

shyness. She felt that a gulf had opened between them that never could be bridged. Allerton, studying her face, saw the effect of his sister's announcement and said in his serious way:

“Doris takes her religious ideas from our mother, who is interested in charities and foreign missions. She has exhausted her strength and undermined her health in this unselfish work, and that is why we have come to the country to live. Neither father nor I have much religious inclination.”

“Oh, Allerton!”

“It's true, Doris. Father detests it with all his heart, and says our mother has ruined his home for a lot of naked niggers in Africa; but I'm more – more – ”

“Tolerant, I suppose you mean. But you must not convey a wrong impression of our father to Miss Daring. He merely regrets our mother's excessive devotion to the cause. He does not hate religion, in the abstract.”

Becky had never been so astonished in her life. Here was a boy of Don's age and a girl of about her own years discussing religion with the utmost gravity, and using such “nifty” language that it positively shocked her. Again she realized that there could be nothing in common between the youthful Randolphs and the tribe of Daring; but, she had determined to be gracious to these strangers and so she stifled a sigh of regret and said:

“If you like, I'll show you over the stables, and where we played circus back of the harness room, and Phil's rabbit warren, and how to climb the pear-tree in the garden without breaking

your neck, and – ”

“Thank you very much,” interrupted Doris; “but, we are not interested in vulgar romps of that character; are we, Allerton?”

“They – they sound rather interesting,” he submitted, eyeing Becky a little wistfully.

“Perhaps, for village children,” returned the girl, haughtily. “But although we are now living in the country we should remember our breeding and try to instill some of our native culture into these primitive surroundings, rather than sink our refinement to the level of the community.”

“L-a-w – zee!” cried Becky, again. Then, in spite of her effort to be “good” she laughed in Doris’ face, bobbing her frouzled red head up and down as peal after peal of genuine merriment burst from her slim throat.

Allerton frowned and Doris looked grieved and sad. Positively, this country girl was laughing at their expense.

“I – I can’t help it!” chuckled Becky, trying to control herself. “It’s – it’s too good to keep. I must go an’ tell the kids before I – I bust with it all! Bye-bye, Doris. See you again soon. ‘Or river,’ Allerton! Guess I’ll call you Al. Come over an’ get acquainted.”

She had backed away one step at a time, still bubbling with hysterical laughter that she could not control, and at the final words turned and dashed across the street like mad, her thin legs twinkling beneath her short skirts.

“Well,” said Don, as Becky threw herself down upon the porch and shook with an abandon of glee; “tell us the joke, Beck.

What's happened?"

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" was all the reply.

"Are they nice?" inquired Sue, squatting in a rustic chair and swinging her legs, as she calmly surveyed her sister.

"Nice? Sue, they're the funniest kids you ever heard of," gasped Becky, her eagerness to talk stifling the spasms of merriment. "They ain't New Yorkers – not a bit – they're Bostoners! Think of that. It would kill you to hear 'em talk. They're as full of culture as an egg is of meat; an' *langwidge!*— say, folks, it's something awful."

"I guessed as much," said Don, with a grin. "But, I'm glad they're not our kind. I wouldn't care to go over to our old house and play with the usurpers. Let's shut 'em out, for good and all."

"Oh, they'll shut us out, I s'pect," remarked Becky, wiping her eyes on her gingham sleeve. "You ought to have seen 'em stick up their noses at me till they found out I was a Daring. Then they put on so many airs it was disgust'n'."

"Seems to me," said Sue, shaking away her troublesome curls and looking thoughtfully at her sprawling, ungainly sister, "they're 'zactly the sort we ought to 'sociate with. If you could rub a little culture off'n 'em, dear, it wouldn't hurt you a bit."

"Nor you, either, Sue," laughed Don. "If you pronounced English that way in Boston, they'd jail you."

"*Now* who's a snob, Don?" asked Sue, indignantly. "No one's s'posed to pernounce ev'ry measley letter the dicsh'naries chuck into a word, is they?"

“Oh, Sue!” said Becky; “your grammar is as bad as your pronunciation. I must look after your education, myself. Those Randolph kids are a revelation to me; and, honest injun, I’m somewhat ashamed of myself. We’re going wrong, all of us, since mother died,” with a sigh and a catch in her voice, “and need to be jerked into line.”

She said this in sober earnestness, remembering the sweet, gentle mother who had labored so hard to keep her flock from straying, and whose loss had permitted them to wander as their natural, untamed instincts dictated.

“Mother,” said Don in tender accents, “was a lady to her finger tips, and wanted her girls and boys to grow up to be ladies and gentlemen. I try to do as she’d like to have me, whenever I think of it; but, that isn’t very often.”

“You’re a cross-patch,” asserted Sue; “and I’ve heard teacher say that you’re the worst scholar in the school. You don’t mind Phœbe any more’n a fly minds sugar.”

“Phœbe isn’t my boss,” retorted Don, resentfully. But, the next moment his frown softened, and he added: “Anyhow, I try to be decent, and that’s more than some of the family do.”

“Meanin’ me?” asked Becky, defiantly.

“You’re fourteen, and almost a woman; yet you act like a kindergarten kid. I’ll leave it to anyone if I’m not more dignified ’n’ respectable than you are; and I won’t be thirteen ’til next month.”

“You’re old for your years, Don; and it’s lucky that you can

find any good in yourself, for nobody else can!” remarked Becky, complacently.

CHAPTER IV

PHOEBE'S SECRET

“Let’s get some pails and go to the woods for blackberries,” suggested Sue, posing as peacemaker. “P’raps Auntie’ll make us a pie for dinner.”

“Can’t,” said Don. “I promised old Miss Halliday I’d make her a chicken coop. Another hen is hatching out and there’s no coop to put her in.”

“All right, I’ll help you,” exclaimed Becky, jumping up. “You saw the boards, Don, and I’ll hammer the nails.”

“Can’t you saw?”

“Not straight; but, I’m game to try it.”

A rush was made for the back yard, and Don searched the shed for some old boards to use in making the coop for the expected flock. When the saw and hammer began to be heard Miss Halliday came down from Gran’pa Eliot’s room and stood watching them, her finger on her lips to caution them to be as quiet as possible.

She was old and withered, lean and bent; but her small black eyes still twinkled brightly. Miss Halliday seldom spoke to the Daring children and had as little to do with them as possible. She was virtually the autocrat of the establishment, for old Mr. Eliot was paralyzed and almost speechless. It is true he could mumble

a few words at times, but no one seemed able to understand them, except his constant nurse and attendant.

Miss Halliday had been with the Eliots since she was a young woman. She was Gran'ma Eliot's maid, at first, then the housekeeper, and after Mrs. Eliot's death and her master's paralytic stroke, the sole manager of the establishment and a most devoted servant. In person she was exceedingly neat, although she dressed very simply. She was noted in Riverdale for her thrift and shrewd bargaining. They called her miserly until it came to be generally understood that Mr. Eliot's money was gone; then the merchants respected her careful management of the old man's finances.

Why Elaine Halliday stuck to her post, under such unpleasant conditions, had puzzled more than one wise head in the village. Some said that Jonathan Eliot had willed her the homestead in return for her services; others, that the frugal stewardess was able to save more than her wages from the reputed wreck of the Eliot fortunes, which had once been considered of enormous extent. Only a very few credited her with an unselfish devotion to her old master.

After the death of his daughter, Mrs. Daring, and just before his own paralytic stroke, Mr. Eliot had had a stormy interview with his son-in-law, Wallace Daring; but, no one except Elaine Halliday knew what it was about. Twenty-four hours later the irascible old man was helpless, and when Phœbe hurried over to assist him he refused to see her or any of his grandchildren.

Mr. Daring, a kindly, warm-hearted man, had been so strongly incensed against his father-in-law that he held aloof in this crisis, knowing old Elaine would care for the stricken man's wants. All this seemed to indicate that the rupture between the two men could never be healed.

After the Daring children had been left orphans and reduced to poverty, Judge Ferguson went to Miss Halliday and pleaded with her to intercede with Jonathan Eliot to give the outcasts a home. The big house was then closed except for a few rooms on the second floor, where the invalid lay awaiting his final summons. There was more than enough room for the Darings, without disturbing the invalid in the least.

At first, the old woman declared such an arrangement impossible; but, Mr. Ferguson would not be denied. He had been Mr. Eliot's lawyer, and was the guardian of the Darings. If anyone knew the inner history of this peculiar family it was Peter Ferguson. For some reason Miss Halliday had been forced to withdraw her objections; she even gained the morose invalid's consent to "turn his house into an orphan asylum," as she bitterly expressed it. The Darings were to be allowed the entire lower floor and the two front bedrooms upstairs; but they were required to pay their own expenses. Elaine declared that it was all she could do to find money enough to feed Gran'pa Eliot his gruel and pay the taxes on the place.

A powerful antipathy, dating back many years, existed between Miss Halliday and the Darings' black servant, Aunt

Hyacinth. During the two months since the Darings had found refuge in the old house not a word had been exchanged between them. But the black mammy, as much the protector of the orphans as Miss Halliday was of their grandsire, strove to avoid trouble and constantly cautioned her flock not to “raise a racket an’ ’sturb poeh gran’pa.” As for the children, they stood so much in awe of the invalid that they obeyed the injunction with great care.

It was not often that Miss Halliday asked the boys to assist her in any way; but, occasionally Phil or Don would offer to do odd jobs about the place when they were not in school.

“It seems like helping to pay the rent,” said Phil, with a laugh, “and as gran’pa quarreled with father I hate to be under obligations to him. So, let’s do all we can to help old Miss Halliday. She has enough to worry her, I’m sure.”

That was why Don set about making the chicken coop this Saturday morning, as he had promised to do, and why Becky and Sue were eager to assist him. The saw was dull, and that made the sawing the hard part of the work until Becky declared she could handle the tool much better than her brother – even if she couldn’t manage to keep on the marked line. He let her try, and then scolded her – and jeered her attempts. A row started very promptly and a struggle began for the possession of the saw, ending by Don’s snatching it away and drawing the jagged teeth across the palm of Becky’s hand. She let go with a scream of pain and the blood spurted forth in a manner to frighten them all.

Don tried to tie his handkerchief over the wound, but with a wail of anguish Becky turned and fled into the house and up the front stairway to the door of Phœbe's room, leaving a red trail behind her as she went.

"Quick, Phœbe – I'm murdered! Let me in before I die," she shouted, kicking at the door as she squeezed the wounded hand with the other.

A key turned in the lock and the door flew open.

Phœbe stared a moment at her sister's white face and noted the stream of blood. Then she drew Becky into the room without a word and led her to the washbasin. She bathed the wound freely with cold water, applied a healing lotion and bandaged the hand, neatly. It was a broad, jagged cut, but not deep. Phœbe knew that it was not a serious wound, but it would be very sore and lame for several days to come.

Becky, trembling with nervousness and weak from fright and the sight of blood, tottered to a lounge and sank down among the cushions.

"How did it happen, dear?" Phœbe now asked.

Becky related the incident with dramatic details until her eyes fell upon a table drawn before the window and covered with papers, among which rested an imposing looking machine.

"Jumpin' jooks, Phœbe!" she exclaimed; "it's a typewriter. Where on earth did it come from?"

Phœbe flushed and for a moment looked distressed.

"I rented it," she replied. "It's a great secret, Becky, and you

must promise not to tell anyone.”

“Can you run it? Have you had lessons?” asked the younger girl, sitting up in her eagerness and forgetting her affliction for a time.

“I’ve taught myself,” said Phœbe. “It is not very hard to learn. At first, you know, I made lots of mistakes; but, now I do very well. I’ve had it almost six months, and every Saturday I typewrite all day.”

“But why? What are you copying?” demanded Becky, going to the table and looking down at the piles of manuscript.

“It is a book of sermons that Doctor Huntley is preparing for a publisher. He is too busy to do it himself, so he gave me the job. I get ten cents a page, and I’ve copied nearly four hundred pages already.”

“My!” cried Becky; “what a lot of money! Whatever will you do with it, dear?”

Phœbe smiled a little sadly, but put her arm around her sister and kissed her, affectionately.

“That’s a part of my secret, dear, and you mustn’t ask me. You’ll not mention the typewriter, Becky – nor anything I’ve told you? I don’t want Phil or the children to know.”

“Trust me!” returned Becky, delighted to share so important a secret with her elder. Then, she remembered her sore hand and lay down upon the couch again, while Phœbe, having once more locked the door, resumed her work.

It was dinner time when Don finished the chicken coop and

helped Miss Halliday to move the hen and her newly hatched brood into it. There had been sundry quarrels between him and Sue, who accused him of “spilling Becky’s heart’s blood,” but now the girl was so fascinated by the fuzzy chicks that she was loth to leave them, when Auntie called her to the midday meal.

Phil came in, flushed with his exertions on the ball field, but unusually glum and serious. He found no time for his proposed talk with Phœbe then, for as soon as dinner was over he was obliged to put on his baseball uniform and hurry to the ground, where the important match game with the Exeter nine was to take place.

“Any of you coming to the game?” he inquired.

“We’re all coming,” declared Becky, who now posed as a heroine because of her hurt. But, Phœbe shook her head and smiled.

“I shall be too busy at home, Phil,” she said; “but the others may go.”

He gave her a quick, curious look, but said nothing more.

CHAPTER V

A MATCH GAME

For a long time there had been great rivalry between the ball teams of Riverdale and Exeter; the latter, a small town lying five miles inland, where there was a boys' preparatory school. This year each had won five games out of a series of ten, and the extra game to be played to-day was to decide the championship. The Riverdale high school captain, Al Hayden, the druggist's son, had picked his team with great care for this important occasion, and Phil had been chosen pitcher.

The ball grounds were just outside of the village, and not only were the people of Riverdale there in large numbers, but the crowd was augmented by farmers from the surrounding country who had come in for their Saturday trading and took advantage of the opportunity to see a good ball game. Several wagon loads of "fans" from Exeter also rode over in the wake of the bus that carried their ball players, to participate in the fun and excitement.

All classes of people occupied the "bleachers." Merchants, lawyers and even two liberal minded ministers of the gospel were among them, while Judge Ferguson strolled over as the game commenced, accompanied by his pretty daughter, Janet, to see how Phil conducted himself. The Randolph children were plebeian enough to attend; the manager of the mill was there, and

all the small Darings, except Phoebe, eagerly awaited the contest.

There was a stand where red lemonade was sold, and boys carried around baskets of peanuts and popcorn to refresh the audience. Nearly every high school in town had thought it her duty to be present, and their bright ribbons and dresses added a picturesque element to the scene.

Phil Daring appeared as composed as ever, when he entered the arena with his comrades; but, never for a moment, since his interview with Mr. Ferguson had his mind been free from grief, humiliation and bitter disappointment. He nodded and smiled as the throng greeted him with hearty cheers; yet all the time he was thinking to himself: "My days of fun and freedom are nearly over now. I must give up college, for good and all, and settle down somewhere to make a living and help support the children. I don't know what I can do, I'm sure, that will earn the needed money. No one in Riverdale needs any help such as I can give, and I'm not experienced enough to be of much service in a big city. It will be a hard fight, with all the chances against me; but I've got to undertake it and make a go of it."

These and similar thoughts flooded his mind to the exclusion of all else. Mechanically, he tossed the ball in practice, and when time was called he took his position in the pitcher's box with scarcely a realization of what he was doing.

A sudden silence fell upon the throng as Phil pressed the new ball into his palm, drew back with his well-known easy swing and sent the sphere flying through the air. There followed

a low murmur that sounded like a groan as the ball flew wide and smashed against the back-stop. Some of the Exeter people laughed. But Phil was unaware of either moans or laughter. He was thinking of something else more important. Getting the ball again, he made another toss and the batter caught it with a full blow and sent it flying into the field for a two-bagger. Al Hayden looked grave at this but said nothing. Phil was Riverdale's crack pitcher, as a rule; but, perhaps he hadn't his hand in yet.

As the game progressed, however, it was evident to all that Phil Daring had "fallen down" and was pitching a miserable game. The Exeters had six runs to the best of it at the end of the sixth inning and the prospects for the Riverdale nine's being able to even the score were decidedly gloomy. Phil had been equally unsuccessful at the bat, "fanning out" whenever his turn came.

It was unwise to risk the winning of the game by allowing Daring to play any longer. Al Hayden hurriedly consulted with his mates and then called Phil aside.

"I'm sorry, old man," he said; "but, you don't seem fit, to-day, and we're bound to lose unless we make a desperate effort. Take the bench, and I'll put Eric in to pitch – and Jed Hopkins in Eric's place."

Phil gave a sudden start and drew his hand across his forehead, as the full import of the words was understood. Retired? Retired and discredited at this important juncture! Why, he never would be able to hold up his head in Riverdale again, and all the honors he had formerly won on the field would be wiped away by this

disgrace.

“What’s wrong with me, Al?” he asked, anxiously.

“I don’t know, Phil; but something’s wrong. Look at that score – eight to two! – and only three more innings to play. You are usually our stand-by, old fellow; but, to-day you’re the only one of the nine who hasn’t been up to scratch, and fighting to win. I’ve been watching you, and you seem dazed, somehow. Have the Exeter fellows scared you?”

“No,” was the reply. The score, now noticed for the first time, positively startled him. Aroused from his dreams at last he begged Al to try him for another inning.

“Just one,” he pleaded. “Eric can’t pitch as well as I can, I’m sure, and if I don’t make good you can pull me out any time.”

Al hesitated, sighed, and then consented. He really despaired now of winning the game and was so fond of Phil that he hated to humiliate him.

But the conference had been noted by the discontented Riverdale audience and people began to shout: “Take him out!” “Put Daring on the shelf!” “Phil’s gone bad to-day!” and other similar remarks that made Phil straighten up and walk to his station with an air of resolve.

Groans and hoots greeted him, but he never wavered. The first batter to face him, one of the crack Exeter players, struck out, and the crowd ceased their jibes. The next man made a “pop-up” which Phil cleverly caught, and a gentle murmur of applause, mostly from the women, rewarded him. The third man

also struck out, and then the crowd forgot its grievance against the young pitcher and gave a hearty cheer.

“Why didn’t he do that, before?” grumbled Judge Ferguson, who had been greatly annoyed at Phil’s poor showing.

“He hasn’t seemed himself, to-day,” replied Janet, with friendly generosity. “It occurred to me that he had heard bad news, or perhaps is not well. Really, papa, I’m not sure that Phil knew he was playing ball, till just now.”

The old lawyer nodded. He knew very well, now that Janet shrewdly called his attention to it, what had doubtless depressed his young friend, and occupied his mind.

“He seems all right now,” he remarked with a sympathetic sigh. “That last inning he played all by himself.”

Indeed, Phil’s record of three “put-outs” unassisted, inspired his fellows with renewed confidence in him. Al Hayden went to bat and made a two-bagger. Toby Clark, Mr. Ferguson’s office clerk, got first base on balls. The next batter struck out, but the one following stepped up to the plate and pounded out a clean hit that filled the bases. It was Phil’s turn now, and he realized the full importance of the crisis. Usually a pitcher is not a very good batter; yet, until to-day Phil had been considered an exception to this rule. So far in the game, however, his bat had never once touched a ball.

The spectators were thrilled by the excitement of the moment, but expected young Daring to strike out and let the next man, a reliable player, bring in some of the men on bases.

But Phil's face was set and determined. He had not yet redeemed himself. Having well-nigh lost the game for his team by his poor showing, it now behooved him to save the day if he could. No thought now engaged his mind, but this; he was living in the present – not in the future. With watchful eye he followed the approaching ball on its course, and at the proper time struck shrewdly with might and main.

High in the air rose the sphere, describing a perfect arch. With one accord the spectators rose in their seats to watch the ball as it sailed over the back fence, giving the batter a home run and bringing in the three other men.

When the mighty cheer that rent the air had subsided the score was six to eight, instead of eight to two.

In the eighth and ninth innings Phil pitched so well that no runs were added by the Exeter team, while the Riverdales made one tally in each inning and tied the score.

The excitement was now intense. Each team formerly had five games to its credit, and in the present decisive game each side had scored eight runs. An extra inning must be played to determine the championship.

The boys on both sides settled down to do their level best. Phil was perfectly calm and confident. He struck out two and Al caught a long, high fly that retired Exeter with a "goose-egg." Then the Riverdale team came to bat and the first two – poor Al one of them – went out in short order. But when Phil again came to bat the opposing pitcher lost his nerve, remembering

that famous home run. The result was a long drive that landed Daring on third, and the next batter, Jed Hopkins, brought him home, winning the game and the series.

The Riverdale crowd was in an ecstasy of delight and cheered until it was hoarse. Phil's wonderful playing during the final three innings had fully redeemed him in the eyes of his friends and a dozen young fellows leaped into the arena and hoisted him upon their shoulders, carrying him from the field in triumph. Even the defeated Exeters good-naturedly joined in the applause, while Becky and Sue sobbed with joy at the honors being showered upon their big brother.

"Wasn't Phil splendid?" exclaimed Janet, as she followed her father from the grand stand.

The old lawyer nodded thoughtfully.

"Yes," said he, "the lad has a wonderful amount of reserve force, which makes him a good uphill fighter. He reminded me of his father, during that last rally. If Phil Daring has only half the pluck and backbone that Wallace Daring possessed, I predict he'll some day make his mark in the world."

"Yet Mr. Daring died poor," suggested Janet.

"True, my dear; and that was because he died. Had he lived, it would have been a different story."

CHAPTER VI

HUNTING A JOB

When Phil managed to shake off his enthusiastic friends and return to his home, he found that Phoebe had gone out. Entering the kitchen to ask Aunt Hyacinth where his sister was, he found the black mammy preparing the supper.

“Don’ know whar she am, Marse Phil, I’s e shuah,” she said. “But Miss Phoebe’s sartin to be back ’fo’ long.”

Phil turned to go; then he paused, and after a moment’s thought inquired:

“Auntie, who pays our grocery bills?”

“I do, chile,” she answered, giving him an odd look.

“And where do you get the money?” he continued.

Auntie was beating eggs for a custard. She pretended not to hear him. Phil repeated the question.

“Marse Ferg’son done gi’ me a lot,” said she, in a matter of course way.

“Forty dollars, I believe,” the boy rejoined, rather bitterly.

“Mo’ ’n dat, honey; lots mo’.”

“When?”

“Fore we shifted oveh to dis yeah house. Den he done guv me fohty dollehs mo’, an’ said dat were all dere was left. But I guess it’ll do, all right.”

“Auntie,” said Phil, taking both her hands and looking her squarely in the eyes, “tell me truly; is any of that last forty dollars left?”

A look of genuine distress crossed her honest face.

“No, honey,” she admitted, in a low voice.

“Then, where does the money come from that we’re living on now?”

“H – m. Miss Phœbe done guv it to me.”

“Phœbe!”

“Miss Phœbe; shuah.”

“Where could Phœbe get any money?” he inquired, wonderingly.

“Yo’ haf to ask heh, I guess, Marse Phil.”

He reflected a moment.

“Auntie, you’re keeping something from me; something I ought to know; and it isn’t right to treat me so,” he declared.

She made no reply to this.

“Phœbe hasn’t any money; or, if she’s been trying to earn some, it must be mighty little. See here: I’ll finish school next week, and then I’m going to take care of the family myself, and look after things. Don’t you know I’m the head of the Darings, Auntie, and entitled to know all about our affairs? So tell me, where does all the money come from to pay the grocer, and the butcher, and all the rest?”

“Miss Phœbe done guv me some,” she persisted, half frightened at his earnestness.

“And the rest, Auntie?”

She twisted her apron in her hands and cast an appealing glance into his stern face.

“Tell me, Auntie!”

“Well, yo’ see, Marse Phil,” she began, slowly, “I’ve got a little money what useter b’long to yo’ dead papa.”

“My father!”

“Dat’s a fac’, honey. Ol’ Marse allus done pay me mo’ wages’n I could earn, nohow. I kep’ sayin’ I didn’ want no money; but he insis’, chile; dat ol’ Marse Wallace insis’ I take all he guv me. Law sakes, I don’ neveh need no money, Marse Phil. What ’n a world I need money fo’ – now yo’ tell me, ef yo’ can! But I gotter take it, or make Marse Wallace mad. So, I put it in de bank fo’ safe keepin’, an’ jus’ bided mah time to git even. ’Twan’t mine, honey, shuah ’nuff; but I jes’ let it stay in de bank fo’ ’mehgencies.”

Phil’s face was a study. It grew red and white, stern and dismayed by turns. It was not that he resented accepting assistance from Aunt Hy; she seemed one of the family; but that the Darings should be so miserably poor as to be dependent upon the services of their black mammy for support was so shameful that he could scarcely bear the thought.

“I’m an able-bodied young man,” said he to Phoebe a little later, when the girl had returned from her errand, “and, instead of wasting my muscles and energies on athletic games, all these months, I should have been at work for the family.”

“You didn’t know, dear.”

“I *ought* to have known, Phœbe. That’s no excuse.”

“I’m sure that everything has happened for the best, Phil,” she replied, tenderly. “We’ve gone along, somehow, and I was anxious that we should both be able to complete our high school course. It’s so near the end, now, that we’d better stick it out.”

“Do you know that Auntie has been spending her savings to buy food for us?”

“Yes; but she doesn’t need the money just now and we will pay her back some time.”

“She says that you have given her money, too.”

“Just a trifle, Phil,” she replied, after a brief hesitation.

“Where did it come from, Phœbe?”

“I – I earned it.”

“How?”

She unclasped her hand and showed him a bright five-dollar gold piece.

“That’s my last week’s wage – as an amateur typist. I’ve been copying manuscript for Reverend Doctor Huntley.”

Phil couldn’t help it; he gathered his twin into his arms and cried like a baby, while Phœbe sobbed on his shoulder and was glad the secret was out at last. There were not many secrets between these two.

Finally, when they had quieted down and could smile into each other’s eyes again, the girl explained how she had found the work and how the kindly clergyman had secured a typewriter for her and been very patient with her mistakes until she had thoroughly

mastered it.

“He said, to-day, that it was the neatest and most correct copying he had ever seen,” she added, proudly.

The discovery that Phœbe had been working while he played added fuel to Phil’s remorse. He wanted to quit school at once and seek work, but Phœbe argued long and patiently and at last prevailed upon him to complete his course. It would only require a couple of weeks more to do this, and meantime he could be inquiring for work in the village.

“I’ll not be likely to find it, though,” he predicted. “Riverdale is a dull place, and I’m afraid I’ll have to go to the city.”

“Oh, no!” she exclaimed, for the twins had never been parted in their lives, and she could not endure the thought. “I’m sure that some position may be found here, and although the pay will not be as liberal as in the city, your expenses will be much less. And, above all, we can then remain together.”

“I’ll see what can be done,” he promised, kissing her affectionately; and then the younger ones came trooping in to end their conversation.

For several days it seemed as if Phil’s prediction would be fulfilled. No position was offered him, although the entire village was canvassed. Many of the graduating class were sons of merchants, who intended taking them into their stores. For that reason it was a bad time of the year to seek for work.

Phil went to Mr. Ferguson and asked if it would be right for him to apply at the sugar factory for a job. He did not know

his father's successor, a stern looking man who had been sent by the syndicate to manage the plant, and who was a stranger to Riverdale.

"I'll see him myself, lad," decided the lawyer. "I've met Mr. Atkins in business ways, and believe I would have more influence with him than you. Come and see me again to-morrow and I'll report results."

After school the next day Phil kept the appointment, trying hard to hope that Mr. Ferguson had succeeded. But the old lawyer shook his head, gravely.

"Nothing there for you, Phil," he said. "Atkins claims it's his dull season, but I know better. No doubt the man could give you employment, if he chose, but he doesn't care to have a Daring in the office. An old prejudice against your father for fighting the trust so long."

"You haven't thought of any other opening, sir, have you?"

"Not just yet. But, I'll keep my eye open for you, Phil, and let you know if anything offers. Keep your courage, lad. There's something for everybody in this world."

This bit of philosophy fell upon deaf ears. Phil was quite discouraged as he went slowly down the stairs to the street. In the doorway he paused, for Ned Thurber had halted before him. Ned was the clerk in Spaythe's Bank.

"Congratulate me, Phil," he said. "I've an offer to go to St. Louis, at a big salary."

Phil shook his hand.

“Are you going, Ned?” he asked eagerly.

“Of course. I’ll be assistant teller in one of the biggest banks there.”

“Who will take your place at Spaythe’s?”

“I don’t know yet. Just got the offer this morning, you see; but I’ve talked with Mr. Spaythe and promised him that I’d stay until he can get someone to take my place. That won’t be easy, though – unless he imports someone.”

“Couldn’t I fill the place, Ned?”

“You! I thought you were going to college.”

“I – I’ve decided not to,” replied Phil.

“But you’ve no experience in banking.”

“No other young fellow in town has, for that matter.”

“That’s true,” said the other, thoughtfully.

“I’d like the job, Ned,” pleaded Phil.

“In that case I’ll speak to the old man about you. I’ve an idea you could fill Eric’s place, while Eric could climb to my position as head bookkeeper. His father ought not to object to that, and I’m sure you could do Eric’s work easily. Another thing is in your favor, Phil. The Daring name is rather popular around here, especially with the farmers, and that counts with a man like Spaythe. The more I think of it, the more I believe we’ve hit the right combination. Trust me to help work it out, for I want to get away as soon as possible.”

Phil did not leave this unexpected chance wholly to Ned’s management, however. He went back and told Judge Ferguson

about it, and then he met Eric, the banker's only son and Phil's friend. Eric was also employed at the bank and he was astonished and delighted when Phil proposed taking Eric's place – thus advancing him to the more important post of bookkeeper, to be vacated by Ned Thurber.

“I'll go and talk to father about it at once,” he said.

That same day Mr. Spaythe was approached by no less than four people in the interests of Phil Daring. First, came his son Eric, who told him Phil was a prince of good fellows. Then Ned Thurber pointed out the fact that the popularity of the Darings would add prestige to the bank. Presently, Judge Ferguson walked in and vouched for Phil's character and ability, offering to stand sponsor for the boy, if he was given the place. Finally, Phœbe Daring stole into the bank and timidly asked to see Mr. Spaythe.

He looked at her curiously as she entered his private room; a pretty and modest young girl, he thought.

“I met Mr. Thurber a little while ago, and he says that he is going away to St. Louis,” she began. “So I thought I would come here and ask if you won't take brother Phil in his place. I'm Phœbe Daring, you know.”

Mr. Spaythe nodded.

“I know. You've often been here with your father, in the old days. But you're growing fast now, Miss Phœbe.”

“I need to grow, sir, for I must mother the other children. Of course you know how poor we are. Father always banked here,

I remember; so you know, perhaps better than I do, our present circumstances.”

“How old is Phil now?”

“Sixteen, sir.”

“H – m. That is rather young.”

“But he is big for his age, Mr. Spaythe. He’s nearly six feet tall, and as strong as anything.”

“Do you think we bank by main strength, Miss Daring?”

“Phil will graduate next week, at High. He hopes to be at the head of his class.”

Mr. Spaythe drummed thoughtfully on the desk with his fingers.

“I’m going to consider your application, my dear,” he said, quite genially for him. “Ask your brother to come and see me.”

Phœbe hurried away, overjoyed at her success. She astonished Phil that evening by saying that she had made an appointment for him to see Mr. Spaythe. He tore up the little note that he had intended to mail to the banker, then kissed his twin sister and thanked her for her assistance. Only Mr. Spaythe knew whose influence had induced him to consider giving the position to an inexperienced, untried youth, fresh from high school. Perhaps, after all, it was the remembrance of his old friendship for the elder Daring.

Anyhow, Phil had a long interview with the old banker and came away engaged to fill the vacancy made by Ned Thurber’s withdrawal. As soon as school closed he was to begin work.

There was great rejoicing among the Darings that evening. Aunt Hyacinth made them one of her famous shortcakes for supper, to celebrate the occasion, and Phil became a hero to his younger brother and sisters, because he was about to step from youth to manhood and become a breadwinner.

CHAPTER VII

THE COMING OF COUSIN JUDITH

Next morning while they were at breakfast, the doorbell rang and Auntie answered it. A moment later a comely young woman entered the room, gazed smilingly at the circle of young faces and advanced to kiss Phœbe, as the eldest, first of all.

“Don’t you remember me?” she asked. “I’m your Cousin Judith.”

“Cousin Judith Eliot!” cried Phœbe, delightedly. And then there was a rush to greet this newly found relative, all the Darings crowding around her in a mob.

“I thought you were still in Europe, Cousin Judith,” said Phil. “Have you been long in America?”

“Just four days,” she replied, throwing off her wrap and sitting down in the place Aunt Hyacinth had prepared for her. “I hurried here as soon after landing as possible.”

“But what good fortune brought you to Riverdale?” inquired Phœbe, looking with pleasure at the beautiful, refined face of the elder woman and noting the daintiness of her attire – dainty and fresh, although she was just out of a sleeping coach, after a long journey.

Cousin Judith, although almost the only relative which the Darings possessed, and familiar to them by name since their

infancy, was nevertheless almost a stranger to them all. She was their mother's cousin and, although much younger, had always been Mrs. Daring's closest and warmest friend. For years past, however, she had resided in some small European town, studying art while she painted portraits and copies of the Madonna on porcelain. She had never married; dimly, Phoebe remembered hearing of some tragedy in Cousin Judith's life when her fiancé had died on the eve of their approaching marriage. She was now but twenty-four; although, in the eyes of her young cousins, she appeared very mature indeed.

"I came here," said Cousin Judith, smilingly, yet with a serious ring in her sweet-toned voice, "at the call of duty. I wanted to come to you the moment I heard of your dear father's death, but it takes some little time to break up an establishment even as modest as mine, when it is in far-away Italy. But here I am, at last."

"Going to stay?" asked Sue, softly.

"I think so. Is there any room for me, here?"

"Plenty, Cousin Judith!" cried five voices.

"Then, while I drink my coffee, tell me all the news about yourselves. How is Gran'pa Eliot? – he's my uncle, you know – and who takes care of him?"

Becky began the story, but talked so excitedly that she made a sad jumble of it. Then Phil picked up the narrative, telling the simple facts that Cousin Judith might be interested in, and Phoebe concluded the recital.

“I remember Elaine Halliday,” said the new arrival, musingly. “She was Aunt Eliot’s maid when I was a young girl, and whenever I visited here I used to fight with the woman continually. She had a rather sour disposition, then.”

“It’s worse now,” declared Becky. “She’s a reg’lar Tartar; and a – a – an autocrat, and an anarchist and traitor, and – ”

“Afterward, she was housekeeper,” continued Judith. “I saw her more seldom, then, but she ran the household in an able manner while Aunt Eliot was so much of an invalid.”

“She has been a faithful servant, I’m sure,” said Phœbe, “and if she happens to be a bit cranky with us at times we ought to put up with it. I don’t know what gran’pa would do without her. She’s the only one who can understand him, and she attends to him and all his affairs – cooks the things he can eat – feeds him with a spoon, and all that.”

“Don’t you all live together, then?” asked Miss Eliot.

“No,” replied Phœbe. “We’ve been given a certain part of the house, and run our own establishment, while Miss Halliday runs her part. We are ordered not to go near gran’pa’s rooms, or pick the fruit or berries – or steal the hen’s eggs. If we behave, she will let us stay here, rent free; but if we don’t mind her, or dare to intrude on gran’pa, out we go, neck and crop.”

Judith Eliot looked thoughtful. But she avoided carrying the conversation farther in the presence of the younger children. There was little time, indeed, to talk much with any of them, as they were obliged to run off to school. It was Friday, fortunately,

and to-morrow would be a holiday, when they could “visit” to their hearts’ content.

As they said good-by to their new cousin the drayman was carrying in two big trunks and some portmanteaus.

“By jooks! I’m glad she’s come,” cried Becky. “It almost seems like having mother back. Don’t you think they look alike?”

“She’s a dandy, all right,” commented Don. “I’m glad she’s going to stay.”

“Isn’t she *beautiful*?” chimed in little Sue, tossing her curls ecstatically. “And only to think she’s lived in Europe! Won’t she have some nibsy stories to tell us, though?”

Meantime, Cousin Judith was sitting face to face with Aunt Hyacinth in the kitchen, and listening to the story that the old mammy was telling of the trials and tribulations her poor children had suffered.

First, there was the mother’s death. That was indeed a serious misfortune, for Mrs. Daring had looked after her young flock with tender care and taught them to adopt the manners of ladies and gentlemen. After her death there was only the old black mammy to cope with the situation. Mr. Daring proved a loving and devoted father to his motherless ones, but he was too indulgent to correct their ways and manners and the younger ones, especially, soon lapsed into the wild and untamed ways of young savages. Mr. Daring realized this, and wrote an account of his doubts and fears for their future to Judith, asking her if she would not come back to America and make her future home

with them.

The young woman refused the invitation at that time. She could not leave her studies, or her work, without ruining all her plans. She wrote him to get a governess to look after the accomplishments of the children. Aunt Hyacinth would be sure to take care of their physical requirements. And, having proffered this advice, she dismissed the subject from her mind.

Last fall, when news of Mr. Daring's death and his bankruptcy reached her, Judith had been much distressed. Duty called her to far away Riverdale, to look after Mollie Eliot's orphaned little ones. She wrote to Lawyer Ferguson for particulars and he frankly informed her of the unfortunate condition of the young Darings. So she "broke camp," as she said, and as soon as she could complete and deliver the miniatures which she had contracted to paint for a wealthy Englishman, the successful artist abandoned her brilliant career and departed, bag and baggage, for America.

"So they're pretty wild, are they?" she asked Aunt Hy.

"Wild 's hawks, Miss Judy, I's sorrerful to remahk. Marse Phil an' Miss Phœbe ain't so bad, kase dey's old 'nuff to 'member what ther pore deah ma done tell 'em. But Miss Sue uses jus' drea'fu' grammer, an' she dat stubbo'n 'twould make a mule blush. Marse Don, he's got a good heart, but he can't 'member jus' whar it's locationed, an' he plagues ever'body mos' alarmin'. As fer dat flyaway Becky, 'tain't jus' no use triflin' wid her; she kain't be brung up proper, nohow."

“Becky is at a difficult age, just now,” mused Judith, smiling at the eloquent old servant.

“All her ages done ben diff’cult, Miss Judy – shuah’s yo’ bohn. Miss Becky don’ seem like a Daring a’ tall. She’s mo’ like dat Topsy in Unc’ Tom’s Cab’n; ’cept’ she ain’t black.”

Then came the subject of finances, wherein Aunt Hyacinth was able to give definite and fairly lucid information. She had managed to feed her flock so far, but the future contained an alarming menace unless more money was forthcoming. When Aunt Hyacinth’s savings were gone, starvation might stare the Darings in the face. It is true both Phil and Phœbe planned to make some money, “but what’s dem helpless chill’ns know ’bout de expensiveness of livin’?” inquired the old mammy, hopelessly.

Judith looked grave, but she was not greatly surprised.

“Miss Phœbe’s ben workin’ right ’long, ev’ry minute she’s out ’n school,” reported Auntie; “but it ain’t sech work as’ll last long. An’ Marse Phil’s goin’ take a place in de bank, when he’s got his schoolin’ – ’twere all decided no more’n yist’day. But ten dollahs a week ain’t no great ’mount to fill all dem moufs. Lucky we don’ haf to pay rent.”

“I have always thought my uncle – their Grandfather Eliot – a rich man,” remarked Judith, more to herself than to old Hyacinth. “In my girlhood days he was said to be the largest property owner in the county.”

“So he were, Miss Judy. Don’ I ’member when Marse Daring fus’ brung me heah, how Misteh Jonat’n Eliot was de big rich

man o' Riverdale? But he done sold off de hull estate, piece by piece, 'til nuthin's lef' but dis yere ol' house an' de gahden."

"But what became of all the money he received for the land?"

"Dunno, honey. Dat's what Marse Wallace done fight wid him about, years ago. He say ol' Marse Eliot done sell his land an' squander de money, what oughter go to Miss Molly an' her chiluns; an' ol' Marse Eliot done tell him min' his own business. Miss Molly were he on'y chile, an' she done fit wi' de ol' man, too; so we uns didn't hev no truck wi' dey uns fer a long time. When Miss Molly died, Marse Wallace try to patch up t'ings, but ol' Marse Eliot got de stroke what mumbled him, an' it turned out he's pore like Job's turkey."

"How does he live, then?" asked Judith.

"It don' take much to feed his gruel to him, an' ol' Miss Halliday's dat pars'monius she don' eat decent cookin' herself. She sell de aigs 'n' chickens, an' de fruit an' sich, an' she bargains at de groc'ry fer de cheapes' stuff dey got. So dey somehow gits along – don' ask me how, honey."

"Well," said Judith, rising with a sigh, "I see that I'm needed here, in more ways than one. Where may I locate my room, Aunt Hyacinth?"

This puzzled Mammy for a time. The old mansion had been built on a queer plan. Upstairs there were four bedrooms in the front of the house and four in the rear. Of these last the two at the back end overlooked the mountains and the valleys and were the most pleasantly situated of any in the house. Mr. Eliot had

therefore chosen them for his own, and now he sat in a chair all day looking out of a window over the broad stretch of land he had always loved. It was a peaceful, quiet scene. Behind the house the streets were merely green lanes, with a few scattered habitations here and there. A little to the right, but in plain sight of this second-floor window, stretched the old-fashioned country graveyard – not yet sufficiently dignified to be called a “cemetery” – and Mr. Eliot’s eyes might clearly see a white mausoleum, which he had built years before, to contain his body when he had passed from life.

Everyone had thought this an eccentric thing for Jonathan Eliot to do; some of the neighbors shuddered at the idea of a live, healthy man preparing his own tomb. But there it was, scarcely a quarter of a mile distant from his dwelling; and, as he now sat paralyzed before the broad window, perhaps his glassy eyes rested more often upon that ghostly tomb than upon the charming landscape of hill and dale, that extended far into the distance toward Exeter.

Opening from this room was a balcony with outside stairs leading to the garden. Adjoining the two large rear rooms were a couple of small chambers opening into a hallway. The hall originally ran to the front of the house, but directly in the center of the passage had been placed a stout door, separating the upper part of the house into two distinct parts, each containing four chambers. Miss Halliday, in reserving the four rear rooms, had fitted up one of the hall chambers as a kitchen and retained the

other for her own sleeping apartment. Of the two more spacious rear rooms, one was old Mr. Eliot's bedroom and the other his living room. These four rooms satisfied all the requirements of the paralytic and his nurse, and so the balance of the house was turned over, somewhat grudgingly, to the orphaned Darings.

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