

WELLS

CAROLYN

PATTY'S

SUMMER DAYS

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CHAPTER I

A GAY HOUSEHOLD

“Isn’t Mrs. Phelps too perfectly sweet! That is the loveliest fan I ever laid eyes on, and to think it’s mine!”

“And *will* you look at this? A silver coffee-machine! Oh, Nan, mayn’t I make it work, sometimes?”

“Indeed you may; and oh, see this! A piece of antique Japanese bronze! Isn’t it *great*?”

“I don’t like it as well as the sparkling, shiny things. This silver tray beats it all hollow. Did you ever see such a brightness in your life?”

“Patty, you’re hopelessly Philistine! But that tray is lovely, and of an exquisite design.”

Patty and Nan were unpacking wedding presents, and the room was strewn with boxes, tissue paper, cotton wool, and shredded-paper packing.

Only three days more, and then Nan Allen was to marry Mr. Fairfield, Patty’s father.

Patty was spending the whole week at the Allen home in Philadelphia, and was almost as much interested in the wedding preparations as Nan herself.

“I don’t think there’s anything so much fun as a house with a wedding fuss in it,” said Patty to Mrs. Allen, as Nan’s mother came into the room where the girls were.

“Just wait till you come to your own wedding fuss, and then see if you think it’s so much fun,” said Nan, who was rapidly scribbling names of friends to whom she must write notes of acknowledgment for their gifts.

“That’s too far in the future even to think of,” said Patty, “and besides, I must get my father married and settled, before I can think of myself.”

She wagged her head at Nan with a comical look, and they all laughed.

It was a great joke that Patty’s father should be about to marry her dear girl friend. But Patty was mightily pleased at the prospect, and looked forward with happiness to the enlarged home circle.

“The trouble is,” said Patty, “I don’t know what to call this august personage who insists on becoming my father’s wife.”

“I shall rule you with a rod of iron,” said Nan, “and you’ll stand so in awe of me, that you won’t dare to call me anything.”

“You think so, do you?” said Patty saucily. “Well, just let me inform you, Mrs. Fairfield, that is to be, that I intend to lead you a dance! You’ll be responsible for my manners and behaviour, and I wish you joy of your undertaking. I think I shall call you *Stepmamma*.”

“Do,” said Nan placidly, “and I’ll call you Stepdaughter Patricia.”

“Joking aside,” said Patty, “honestly, Nan, I am perfectly delighted that the time is coming so soon to have you with us. Ever since last fall I have waited patiently, and it seemed as if Easter would never come. Won’t we have good times though after you get back from your trip and we get settled in that lovely house in New York! If only I didn’t have to go to school, and study like fury out of school, too, we could have heaps of fun.”

“I’m afraid you’re studying too hard, Patty,” said Mrs. Allen, looking at her young guest.

“She is, Mother,” said Nan, “and I wish she wouldn’t. Why do you do it, Patty?”

“Well, you see, it’s this way. I found out the first of the year that I was ahead of my class in some studies, and that if I worked extra hard I could get ahead on the other studies, and,—well, I

can't exactly explain it, but it's like putting two years' work into one; and then I could graduate from the Oliphant school this June, instead of going there another year, as I had expected. Then, if I do that, Papa says I may stay home next year, and just have masters in music and French, and whatever branches I want to keep up. So I'm trying, but I hardly think I can pass the examinations after all."

"Well, you're not going to study while you're here," said Mrs. Allen, "and after we get Nan packed off on Thursday, you and I are going to have lovely times. You must stay with me as long as you can, for I shall be dreadfully lonesome without my own girl."

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Allen, I am very happy here, and I love to stay with you; but of course I can stay only as long as our Easter vacation lasts. I must go back to New York the early part of next week."

"Well, we'll cram all the fun possible into the few days you are here then," and Patty's gay little hostess bustled away to look after her household appointments.

Mrs. Allen was of a social, pleasure-loving nature. Indeed, it was often said that she cared more for parties and festive gatherings than did her daughter Nan.

Nobody was surprised to learn that Nan Allen was to marry a man many years older than herself. The surprise came when they met Mr. Fairfield and discovered that that gentleman appeared to be much younger than he undoubtedly was.

For Patty's father, though nearly forty years old, had a frank, ingenuous manner, and a smile that was almost boyish in its gaiety.

Mrs. Allen was in her element superintending her daughter's wedding, and the whole affair was to be on a most elaborate scale. Far more so than Nan herself wished, for her tastes were simple, and she would have preferred a quieter celebration of the occasion.

But as Mrs. Allen said, it was her last opportunity to provide an entertainment for her daughter, and she would not allow her plans to be thwarted.

So preparations for the great event went busily on. Carpenters came and enclosed the wide verandas, and decorators came and hung the newly made walls with white cheese cloth, and trimmed them with garlands of green. The house was invaded with decorators, caterers, and helpers of all sorts, while neighbours and friends of Mrs. Allen and of Nan flew in and out at all hours.

The present-room was continually thronged by admiring friends who never tired of looking at the beautiful gifts already upon the tables, or watching the opening of new ones.

"There's the thirteenth cut-glass ice-tub," said Nan, as she tore the tissue paper wrapping from an exquisite piece of sparkling glass. "I should think it an unlucky number if I didn't feel sure that one or two more would come yet."

"What are you going to do with them all, Nan?" asked one of her girl friends; "shall you exchange any of your duplicate gifts?"

"No indeed," said Nan, "I'm too conservative and old-fashioned to exchange my wedding gifts. I shall keep the whole thirteen, and then when one gets broken, I can replace it with another. Accidents will happen, you know."

"But not thirteen times, and all ice-tubs!" said Patty, laughing. "You'll have to use them as individuals, Nan. When you give a dinner party of twelve, each guest can have a separate ice-tub, which will be very convenient."

"I don't care," said Nan, taking the jest good-humouredly, "I shall keep them all, no matter how many I get. And I always did like ice-tubs, anyway."

Another great excitement was when Nan's gowns were sent home from the dressmaker's. Patty was frankly fond of pretty clothes, and she fairly revelled in Nan's beautiful *trousseau*. To please Patty, the bride-elect tried them all on, one after another, and each seemed more beautiful than the one before. When at last Nan stood arrayed in her bridal gown, with veil and orange blossoms complete, Patty's ecstasy knew no bounds.

“You are a picture, Nan!” she cried. “A perfect dream! I never saw such a beautiful bride. Oh, I am so glad you’re coming to live with us, and then I can try on that white satin confection and prance around in it myself.”

They all laughed at this, and Nan exclaimed, in mock reproach:

“I’d like to see you do it, Miss! Prance around in my wedding gown, indeed! Have you no more respect for your elderly and antiquated Stepmamma than that?”

Patty giggled at Nan’s pretended severity, and danced round her, patting a fold here, and picking out a bow there, and having a good time generally.

The next day there was a luncheon, to which Mrs. Allen had invited a number of Nan’s dearest girl friends.

Patty enjoyed this especially, for not only did she dearly love a pretty affair of this sort, but Mrs. Allen had let her help with the preparations, and Patty had even suggested some original ideas which found favour in Mrs. Allen’s eyes.

Over the table was suspended a floral wedding bell, which was supplied with not only one clapper, but a dozen. These clappers were ingenious little contrivances, and from each hung a long and narrow white ribbon. After the luncheon, each ribbon was apportioned to a guest, and at a given signal the ribbons were pulled, whereupon each clapper sprang open, and a tiny white paper fluttered down to the table.

These papers each bore the name of one of the guests, and when opened were found to contain a rhymed jingle foretelling in a humorous way the fate of each girl. Patty had written the merry little verses, and they were read aloud amid much laughter and fun.

As Patty did not know these Philadelphia girls very well, many of her verses which foretold their fates were necessarily merely graceful little jingles, without any attempt at special appropriateness.

One which fell to the lot of a dainty little golden-haired girl ran thus:

Your cheeks are red, your eyes are blue;
Your hair is gold, your heart is too.

Another which was applied to a specially good-humoured maiden read thus:

The longer you live the sweeter you’ll grow;
Your fair cup of joy shall have no trace of woe.

But some of the girls had special hopes or interests, and these Patty touched upon. An aspiring music lover was thus warned:

If you would really learn to play,
Pray practice seven hours a day,
And then perhaps at last you may.

And an earnest art student received this somewhat doubtful encouragement:

You’ll try to paint in oil,
And your persistent toil,
Will many a canvas spoil.

Patty’s own verse was a little hit at her dislike for study, and her taste in another direction:

Little you care to read a book,

But, goodness me, how you can cook!

Nan's came last of all, and she read it aloud amid the gay laughter of the girls:

Ere many days shall pass o'er your fair head,
Your fate is, pretty lady, to be wed;
Yet scarcely can you be a happy wife,
For Patty F. will lead you such a life!

The girls thought these merry little jingles great fun, and each carefully preserved her "fortune" to take home as a souvenir of the occasion.

Bumble Barlow was at this luncheon, for the Barlows were friends and near neighbours of the Allens.

Readers who knew Patty in her earlier years, will remember Bumble as the cousin who lived at the "Hurly-Burly" down on Long Island.

Although Bumble was a little older, and insisted on being called by her real name of Helen, she was the same old mischievous fly-away as ever. She was delighted to see Patty again, and coaxed her to come and stay with them, instead of with the Allens. But Mrs. Allen would not hear of such an arrangement, and could only be induced to give her consent that Patty should spend one day with the Barlows during her visit in Philadelphia.

The short time that was left before the wedding day flew by as if on wings. So much was going on both in the line of gaiety and entertainment, and also by way of preparation for the great event, that Patty began to wonder whether social life was not, after all, as wearing as the more prosaic school work.

But Mrs. Allen said, when this question was referred to her, "Not a bit of it! All this gaiety does you good, Patty. You need recreation from that everlasting grind of school work, and you'll go back to it next week refreshed, and ready to do better work than ever."

"I'm sure of it," said Patty, "and I shall never forget the fun we're having this week. It's just like a bit of Fairyland. I've never had such an experience before."

Patty's life had been one of simple pleasures and duties. She had a great capacity for enjoyment, but heretofore had only known fun and frolic of a more childish nature. This glimpse into what seemed to be really truly grown-up society was bewildering and very enjoyable, and Patty found it quite easy to adapt herself to its requirements.

CHAPTER II

WEDDING BELLS

At last the wedding day arrived, and a brighter or more sunshiny day could not have been asked for by the most exacting of brides.

It was to be an evening wedding, but from early in the morning there was a constant succession of exciting events. The last touches were being put to the decorations, belated presents were coming in, house guests were arriving, messengers coming and going, and through it all Mrs. Allen bustled about, supremely happy in watching the culminating success of her elaborate plans. Patty looked at her with a wondering admiration, for she always admired capability, and Mrs. Allen was exhibiting what might almost be called generalship in her house that day.

Of course, Patty had no care or responsibility, and nothing to do but enjoy herself, so she did this thoroughly.

In the morning Marian and Frank Elliott came. They were staying at the Barlows', and Mr. Fairfield was staying there too.

It sometimes seemed to Patty that her father ought to have played a more prominent part in all the preliminary festivities, but Mrs. Allen calmly told her, in Mr. Fairfield's presence, that a bridegroom had no part in wedding affairs until the time of the ceremony itself.

Mr. Fairfield laughed good-humouredly, and replied that he was quite satisfied to be left out of the mad rush, until the real occasion came.

Like Nan, Mr. Fairfield would have preferred a quiet wedding, but Mrs. Allen utterly refused to hear of such a thing. Nan was her only daughter, and this her only chance to arrange an entertainment such as her soul delighted in. Mr. Allen was willing to indulge his wife in her wishes, and was exceedingly hospitable by nature. Moreover, he took great pride in his charming daughter, and wanted everything done that could in any way contribute to the success or add to the beauty of her wedding celebration.

Patty fluttered around the house in a sort of inconsequent delight. Now in the present-room, looking over the beautiful collection, now chatting with her cousins, or other friends, now strolling through the great parlours with their wonderful decorations of banked roses and garland-draped ceilings.

Dinner was early that night, as the ceremony was to be performed at eight o'clock, and after dinner Patty flew to her room to don her own beautiful new gown.

This dress delighted Patty's beauty-loving heart. It was a white tulle sprinkled with silver, and its soft, dainty glitter seemed to Patty like moonlight on the snow. Her hair was done low on her neck, in a most becoming fashion, and her only ornament was a necklace of pearls which had belonged to her mother, and which her father had given her that very day. The first Mrs. Fairfield had died when Patty was a mere baby, so of course she had no recollection of her, but she had always idealised the personality of her mother, and she took the beautiful pearls from her father with almost a feeling of reverence as she touched them.

"I'm so glad it's Nan you're going to marry, Papa," she said. "I wouldn't like it as well if it were somebody who would really try to be a stepmother to me, but dear old Nan is more like a sister, and I'm so glad she's ours."

"I'm glad you're pleased, Patty, dear, and I only hope Nan will never regret marrying a man so much older than herself."

"You're not old, Papa Fairfield," cried Patty indignantly; "I won't have you say such a thing! Why, you're not forty yet, and Nan is twenty-four. Why, that's hardly any difference at all."

"So Nan says," said Mr. Fairfield, smiling, "so I dare say my arithmetic's at fault."

“Of course it is,” said Patty, “and you don’t look a bit old either. Why, you look as young as Mr. Hepworth, and he looks nearly as young as Kenneth, and Kenneth’s only two years older than I am.”

“That sounds a little complicated, Patty, but I’m sure you mean it as a compliment, so I’ll take it as such.”

A little before eight o’clock, Patty, in her shimmering gown, went dancing downstairs.

The rooms were already crowded with guests, and the first familiar face Patty saw was that of Mr. Hepworth, who came toward her with a glad smile of greeting.

“How grown-up we are looking to-night,” he said. “I shall have to paint your portrait all over again, and you must wear that gown, and we will call it, ‘A Moonlight Sonata,’ and send it to the exhibition.”

“That will be lovely!” exclaimed Patty; “but can you paint silver?”

“Well, I could try to get a silvery effect, at least.”

“That wouldn’t do; it must be the real thing. I think you could only get it right by using aluminum paint like they paint the letter-boxes with.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Hepworth, “that would be realistic, at least, but I see a crowd of your young friends coming this way, and I feel quite sure they mean to carry you off. So won’t you promise me a dance or two, when the time comes for that part of the programme?”

“Yes, indeed,” said Patty, “and there is going to be dancing after the supper.”

Mr. Hepworth looked after Patty, as, all unconscious of his gaze, she went on through the rooms with the young friends who had claimed her.

Gilbert Hepworth had long realised his growing interest in Patty, and acknowledged to himself that he loved the girl devotedly. But he had never by word or look intimated this, and had no intention of doing so until she should be some years older. He, himself, was thirty-four, and he knew that must seem old indeed to a girl of seventeen. So he really had little hope that he ever could win her for his own, but he allowed himself the pleasure of her society whenever opportunity offered, and it pleased him to do for her such acts of courtesy and kindness as could not be construed into special attentions, or indication of an unwelcome devotion.

Among the group that surrounded Patty was Kenneth Harper, a college boy who was a good chum of Patty’s and a favourite with Mr. Fairfield. Marian and Frank were with them, also Bob and Bumble, the Barlow Twins, and a number of the Philadelphia young people.

This group laughed and chatted merrily until the orchestra struck up the wedding march, and an expectant hush fell upon the assembly.

At Nan’s special request, there were no bridesmaids, and when the bride entered with her father, she was, as Patty had prophesied, a perfect picture in her beautiful wedding gown.

Mr. Fairfield seemed to think so too, and his happy smile as he came to meet her, gave Patty a thrill of gladness to think that this happiness had come to her father. His life had been lonely, and she was glad that it was to be shared by such a truly sweet and lovely woman as Nan.

Patty was the first to congratulate the wedded pair, and Mr. Hepworth, who was an usher, escorted her up to them that she might do so. Patty kissed both the bride and the bridegroom with whole-hearted affection, and after a few merry words turned away to give place to others.

“Come on, Patty,” said Kenneth, “a whole crowd of us are going to camp out in one of those jolly cozy corners on the verandah, and have our supper there.”

So Patty went with the merry crowd, and found that Kenneth had selected a conveniently located spot near one of the dining-room windows.

“I’m so glad it’s supper time,” she said, as they settled themselves comfortably in their chosen retreat. “I’ve been so busy and excited to-day that I’ve hardly eaten a thing, and I’m starving with hunger. And now that I’ve got my father safely married, and off my hands, I feel relieved of a great responsibility, and can eat my supper with a mind at rest.”

“When I’m married,” said Helen Barlow, “I mean to have a wedding exactly like this one. I think it’s the loveliest one I ever saw.”

“You won’t, though, Bumble,” said Patty, laughing. “In the first place, you’ll forget to order your wedding gown until a day or two before the occasion, and of course it won’t be done. And then you’ll forget to send out the invitations, so of course you’ll have no guests. And I’m sure you’ll forget to invite the minister, so there’ll be no ceremony, anyway.”

Bumble laughed good-naturedly at this, for the helter-skelter ways of the Barlow family were well known to everybody.

“It would be that way,” she said, “if I looked after things myself, but I shall expect you, Patty, to take entire charge of the occasion, and then everything will go along like clockwork.”

“Are you staying long in Philadelphia, Miss Fairfield?” asked Ethel Banks, a Philadelphia girl, who lived not far from the Allens.

“A few days longer,” said Patty. “I have to go back to New York next Tuesday, and then no more gaiety for me. I don’t know how I shall survive such a sudden change, but after this mad whirl of parties and things, I have to come down to plain everyday studying of lessons,—but we won’t talk about that now; it’s a painful subject to me at any time, but especially when I’m at a party.”

“Me, too,” said Kenneth. “If ever I get through college, I don’t think I’ll want to see a book for the next twenty years.”

“I didn’t know you hated your lessons so, Kenneth,” said Marian. “I thought Patty was the only one of my friends who was willing to avow that she was like that ‘Poor little Paul, who didn’t like study at all.’”

“Yes, I’m a Paul too,” said Kenneth, “and I may as well own up to it.”

“But you don’t let it interfere with your work,” said Patty; “you dig just as hard as if you really enjoyed it.”

“So do you,” said Kenneth, “but some day after we have both been graduated, I suppose we’ll be glad that we did our digging after all.”

A little later, Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield went away, amid showers of *confetti*, and after that there was an hour of informal dancing.

Patty was besieged with partners asking for a dance, and as there was no programme, she would make no promises, but accepted whoever might ask her first at the beginning of each dance. She liked to dance with Kenneth, for his step suited hers perfectly, and her cousin Bob was also an exceptionally good dancer.

But Patty showed no partiality, and enjoyed all the dances with her usual enthusiasm.

Suddenly she remembered that she had promised Mr. Hepworth a dance, but he had not come to claim it. Wondering, she looked around to see where he might be, and discovered him watching her from across the room.

There was an amused smile on his face, and Patty went to him, and asked him in her direct way, why he didn’t claim his dance.

“You are so surrounded,” he said, “by other and more attractive partners, that I hated to disturb you.”

“Nonsense,” said Patty, without a trace of self-consciousness or embarrassment. “I like you better than lots of these Philadelphia boys. Come on.”

“Thank you for the compliment,” said Mr. Hepworth, as they began to dance, “but you seemed to be finding these Philadelphia boys very agreeable.”

“They’re nice enough,” said Patty, carelessly, “and some of them are good dancers, but not as good as you are, Mr. Hepworth. Do you know you dance like a—like a—will-o’-the-wisp.”

“I never met a will-o’-the-wisp, but I’m sure they must be delightful people, to judge from the enthusiastic tone in which you mention them. Do you never get tired of parties and dancing, Patty?”

“Oh, no, indeed. I love it all. But you see I haven’t had very much. I’ve never been to but two or three real dancing-parties in my life. Why, I’ve only just outgrown children’s parties. I may get tired of it all, after two or three seasons, but as yet it’s such a novelty to me that I enjoy every speck of it.”

Mr. Hepworth suddenly realised how many social seasons he had been through, and how far removed he was from this young *débutante* in his views on such matters. He assured himself that he need never hope she would take any special interest in him, and he vowed she should never know of his feelings toward her. So he adapted his mood to hers, and chatted gaily of the events of the evening. Patty told him of the many pleasures that had been planned for her, during the rest of her visit at Mrs. Allen’s, and he was truly glad that the girl was to have a taste of the social gaiety that so strongly appealed to her.

“Miss Fairfield,” said Ethel Banks, coming up to Patty, as the music stopped, “I’ve been talking with my father, and he says if you and Mr. and Mrs. Allen will go, he’ll take us all in the automobile down to Atlantic City for the week-end.”

“How perfectly gorgeous!” cried Patty, her eyes dancing with delight. “I’d love to go. I’ve never been in an automobile but a few times in my life, and never for such a long trip as that. Let’s go and ask Mrs. Allen at once.”

Without further thought of Mr. Hepworth, save to give him a smiling nod as she turned away, Patty went with Ethel to ask Mrs. Allen about the projected trip.

Mrs. Allen was delighted to go, and said she would also answer for her husband. So it was arranged, and the girls went dancing back to Mr. Banks to tell him so. Ethel’s father was a kind-hearted, hospitable man, whose principal thought was to give pleasure to his only child. Ethel had no mother, and Mrs. Allen had often before chaperoned the girl on similar excursions to the one now in prospect.

As Mr. Banks was an enthusiastic motorist, and drove his own car, there was ample room for Mr. and Mrs. Allen and Patty.

Soon the wedding guests departed, and Patty was glad to take off her pretty gown and tumble into bed.

She slept late the next morning, and awoke to find Mrs. Allen sitting on the bed beside her, caressing her curly hair.

“I hate to waken you,” said that lady, “but it’s after ten o’clock, and you know you are to go to your Cousin Helen’s to spend the day. I want you to come home early this evening, as I have a little party planned for you, and so it’s only right that you should start as soon as possible this morning. Here is a nice cup of cocoa and a bit of toast. Let me slip a kimono around you, while you breakfast.”

In her usual busy way, Mrs. Allen fluttered about, while she talked, and after putting a kimono round her visitor, she drew up beside her a small table, containing a dainty breakfast tray.

“It’s just as well you’re going away to-day,” Mrs. Allen chattered on, “because the house is a perfect sight. Not one thing is in its place, and about a dozen men have already arrived to try to straighten out the chaos. So, as you may judge, my dear, since I have to superintend all these things, I’ll really get along better without you. Now, you get dressed, and run right along to the Barlows’. James will take you over in the pony cart, and he’ll come for you again at eight o’clock this evening. Mind, now, you’re not to stay a minute after eight o’clock, for I have invited some young people here to see you. I’ll send the carriage to-night, and then you can bring your Barlow cousins back with you.”

As Mrs. Allen rattled on, she had been fussing around the room getting out Patty’s clothes to wear that day, and acting in such a generally motherly manner that Patty felt sure she must be missing Nan, and she couldn’t help feeling very sorry for her, and told her so.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Allen, “it’s awful. I’ve only just begun to realise that I’ve lost my girl; still it had to come, I suppose, sooner or later, and I wouldn’t put a straw in the way of Nan’s happiness. Well, I shall get used to it in time, I suppose, and then sometimes I shall expect Nan to come and visit me.”

CHAPTER III

ATLANTIC CITY

Patty's day at the Barlows' was a decided contrast to her visit at Mrs. Allen's.

In the Allen home every detail of housekeeping was complete and very carefully looked after, while at the Barlows' everything went along in a slipshod, hit-or-miss fashion.

Patty well remembered her visit at their summer home which they called the Hurly-Burly, and she could not see that their city residence was any less deserving of the name. Her Aunt Grace and Uncle Ted were jolly, good-natured people, who cared little about system or method in their home. The result was that things often went wrong, but nobody cared especially if they did.

"I meant to have a nicer luncheon for you, Patty," said her aunt, as they sat down at the table, "but the cook forgot to order lobsters, and when I telephoned for fresh peas the grocer said I was too late, for they were all sold. I'm so sorry, for I do love hothouse peas, don't you?"

"I don't care what I have to eat, Aunt Grace. I just came to visit you people, you know, and the luncheon doesn't matter a bit."

"That's nice of you to say so, child. I remember what an adaptable little thing you were when you were with us down in the country, and really, you did us quite a lot of good that summer. You taught Bumble how to keep her bureau drawers in order. She's forgotten it now, but it was nice while it lasted."

"*Helen*, Mother, I do wish you would call me Helen. Bumble is such a silly name."

"I know it, my dear," said Mrs. Barlow, placidly, "and I do mean to, but you see I forget."

"I forget it, too," said Patty. "But I'll try to call you Helen if you want me to. What time does Uncle Ted come home, Aunt Grace?"

"Oh, about five o'clock, or perhaps six; and sometimes he gets here at four. I never know what time he's coming home."

"It isn't only that," said Bob; "in fact, father usually comes home about the same time. But our clocks are all so different that it depends on which room mother is in, as to what time she thinks it is."

"That's so," said Helen. "We have eleven clocks in this house, Patty, and every one of them is always wrong. Still, it's convenient in a way; if you want to go anywhere at a certain time, no matter what time you start, you can always find at least one clock that's about where you want it to be."

"I'm sure I don't see why the clocks don't keep the right time," said Mrs. Barlow. "A man comes every Saturday on purpose to wind and set them all."

"We fool with them," confessed Bob. "You see, Patty, we all like to get up late, and we set our clocks back every night, so that we can do it with a good grace."

"Yes," said Helen, "and then if we want each other to go anywhere through the day,—on time, you know,—we go around the house, and set all the clocks forward. That's the only possible way to make anybody hurry up."

Patty laughed. The whole conversation was so characteristic of the Barlows as she remembered them, and she wondered how they could enjoy living in such a careless way.

But they were an especially happy family, and most hospitable and entertaining. Patty thoroughly enjoyed her afternoon, although they did nothing in particular for her entertainment. But Aunt Grace was very fond of her motherless niece, and the twins just adored Patty.

At five o'clock tea was served, and though the appointments were not at all like Mrs. Allen's carefully equipped service, yet it was an hour of comfortable enjoyment. Uncle Ted came home, and he was so merry and full of jokes, that he made them all laugh. Two or three casual callers dropped in, and Patty thought again, as she sometimes did, that perhaps she liked her Barlow cousins best of all.

Dinner, not entirely to Patty's surprise, showed some of the same characteristics as luncheon had done. The salad course was lacking, because the mayonnaise dressing had been upset in the refrigerator; the ice cream was spoiled, because by mistake the freezer had been set in the sun until the ice melted, and the pretty pink pyramid was in a state of soft collapse.

But, as Aunt Grace cheerfully remarked, if it hadn't been that, it would have been something else, and it didn't matter much, anyway.

It was this happy philosophy of the Barlow family that charmed Patty so, and it left no room for embarrassment at these minor accidents, either on the part of the family or their guest.

"Now," said Patty, after dinner, "if necessary, I'm going to set all the clocks forward, for, Helen, I do want you to be ready when Mrs. Allen sends for us. She doesn't like to be kept waiting, one bit."

"Never mind the clocks, Patty," said Helen good-naturedly. "I'll be ready." She scampered off to dress, and sure enough was entirely ready before the carriage came.

"You see, Patty," she said, "we *can* do things on time, only we've fallen into the habit of not doing so, unless there's somebody like you here to spur us up."

Patty admitted this, but told Bumble that she was sorry her influence was not more lasting.

On Saturday they started with the Banks's on the automobile trip. Mrs. Allen provided Patty with a long coat for the journey, and a veil to tie over her hat. Not being accustomed to motoring, Patty did not have appropriate garments, and Mrs. Allen took delight in fitting her out with some of Nan's.

Mr. Banks's motor-car was of the largest and finest type. It was what is called a palace touring car, and represented the highest degree of comfort and luxury.

Patty had never been in such a beautiful machine, and when she was snugly tucked in the tonneau between Mrs. Allen and Ethel, Mr. Banks and Mr. Allen climbed into the front seat, and they started off.

The ride to Atlantic City was most exhilarating, and Patty enjoyed every minute of it. There was a top to the machine, for which reason the force of the wind was not so uncomfortable, and the tourists were able to converse with each other.

"I thought," said Patty, "that when people went in these big cars, at this fearful rate of speed, you could hardly hear yourself think, much less talk to each other. What's the name of your car, Mr. Banks?"

"The Flying Dutchman," was the reply.

"It's a flyer, all right," said Patty, "but I don't see anything Dutch about it."

"That's in honour of one of my ancestors, who, they tell me, came over from Holland some hundreds of years ago."

"Then it's a most appropriate name," said Patty, "and it's the most beautiful and comfortable car I ever saw."

They went spinning on mile after mile at what Patty thought was terrific speed, but which Mr. Banks seemed to consider merely moderate. After a while, seeing how interested Patty was in the mechanism of the car, Mr. Allen offered to change seats with her, and let her sit with Mr. Banks, while that gentleman explained to her the working of it.

Patty gladly made the change, and eagerly listened while Mr. Banks explained the steering gear, and as much of the motor apparatus as he could make clear to her.

Patty liked Mr. Banks. He was a kind and courteous gentleman, and treated her with a deference that gave Patty a sudden sense of importance. It seemed strange to think that she, little Patty Fairfield, was the honoured guest of the well-known Mr. Banks of Philadelphia. She did her best to be polite and entertaining in return, and the result was very pleasant, and also very instructive in the art of motoring.

They reached Atlantic City late in the afternoon, and went at once to a large hotel, where Mr. Banks had telegraphed ahead for rooms.

Patty and Ethel had adjoining rooms, and the Allens and Mr. Banks had rooms across the hall from them.

Patty had begun to like Ethel before this trip had been planned, and as she knew her better she liked her more. Ethel Banks, though the only daughter of a millionaire, was not in the least proud or ostentatious. She was a sweet, simple-minded girl, with friendly ways, and a good comradeship soon developed between her and Patty.

She was a little older than Patty, and had just come out in society during the past winter.

As Patty was still a schoolgirl, she could not be considered as “out,” but of course on occasions like the present, such formalities made little or no difference.

“Now, my dear,” said Mr. Banks to Ethel, “if you and Miss Fairfield will hasten your toilettes a little, we will have time for a ride on the board walk before dinner.” This pleased the girls, and in a short time they had changed their travelling clothes for pretty light-coloured frocks, and went downstairs to find Mr. Banks waiting for them on the verandah. He explained that the Allens would not go with them on this expedition, so the three started off. As their hotel faced the ocean, it was just a step to the wide and beautiful board walk that runs for miles along the beach at Atlantic City.

In all her life Patty had never seen such a sight as this before, and the beauty and wonder of it all nearly took her breath away.

The board walk was forty feet wide, and was like a moving picture of gaily-dressed and happy-faced people.

Although early in April, it seemed like summer time, so balmy was the air, so bright the sunshine. Patty gazed with delight at the blue ocean, dotted with whitecaps, and then back to the wonderful panorama of the gay crowd, the music of the bands, and the laughter of the children.

“The best way to get an idea of the extent of this thing,” said Mr. Banks, “is to take a ride in the wheeled chairs. You two girls hop into that double one, and I will take this single one, and we’ll go along the walk for a mile or so.”

The chairs were propelled by strong young coloured men, who were affable and polite, and who explained the sights as they passed them, and pointed out places of interest. Patty said to Ethel that she felt as if she were in a perambulator, except that she wasn’t strapped in. But she soon became accustomed to the slow, gentle motion of the chairs, and declared that it was indeed an ideal way to see the beautiful place. On one side was an endless row of small shops or bazaars, where wares of all sorts were offered for sale. At one of these, a booth of oriental trinkets, Mr. Banks stopped and bought each of the girls a necklace of gay-coloured beads. They were not valuable ornaments, but had a quaint, foreign air, and were very pretty in their own way. Patty was greatly pleased, and when they passed another booth which contained exquisite Armenian embroideries, she begged Ethel to accept the little gift from her, and picking out some filmy needle-worked handkerchiefs, she gave them to her friend.

On they went, past the several long piers, until Mr. Banks said it was time to turn around if they would reach the hotel in time for dinner.

So back they went to the hotel, and, after finding the Allens, they all went to the dining-room.

Privately, Patty wondered how these people could spend so much time eating dinner, when they might be out on the beach. At last, to her great satisfaction, dinner was over, and Mr. Allen proposed that they all go out for a short stroll on the board walk.

Although it had been a gay scene in the afternoon, that was as nothing to the evening effect. Thousands,—millions, it seemed to Patty,—of electric lights in various wonderful devices, and in every possible colour, made the place as light as day, and the varied gorgeousness of the whole scene made it seem, as Patty said, like a big kaleidoscope.

They walked gaily along, mingling with the good-natured crowd, noticing various sights or incidents here and there, until they reached the great steel pier, where Mr. Allen invited them to go

with him to the concert. So in they went to listen to a band concert. This pleased Patty, for she was especially fond of a brass band, but Mrs. Allen said it was nothing short of pandemonium.

“Your tastes are barbaric, Patty,” she said, laughing. “You love light and colour and noise, and I don’t believe you could have too much of any of the three.”

“I don’t believe I could,” said Patty, laughing herself, as the music banged and crashed.

“And that gewgaw you’ve got hanging around your neck,” went on Mrs. Allen; “your fancy for that proves you a true barbarian.”

“I think it’s lovely,” said Patty, looking at her gay-coloured beads. “I don’t care if I do like crazy things. Ethel likes these beads, too.”

“That’s all right,” said Mrs. Allen. “Of course you like them, chickadees, and they look very pretty with your light frocks. It’s no crime, Patty, to be barbaric. It only means you have youth and enthusiasm and a capacity for enjoyment.”

“Indeed I have,” said Patty. “I’m enjoying all this so much that I feel as if I should just burst, or fly away, or something.”

“Don’t fly away yet,” said Ethel. “We can’t spare you. There are lots more things to see.”

And so there were. After the concert they walked on, and on, continually seeing new and interesting scenes of one sort or another. Indeed, they walked so far that Mr. Allen said they must take chairs back. So again they got into the rolling chairs, and rolled slowly back to the hotel.

Patty was thoroughly tired out, but very happy, and went to sleep with the music of the dashing surf sounding in her ears.

CHAPTER IV

LESSONS AGAIN

But all this fun and frolic soon came to an end, and Patty returned to New York to take up her studies again.

Grandma Elliott was waiting for her in the pretty apartment home, and welcomed her warmly.

Mrs. Elliott and Patty were to stay at The Wilberforce only about a fortnight longer. Then Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield were to return and take Patty away with them to the new home on Seventy-second Street. Then the apartment in The Wilberforce was to be given up, and Grandma Elliott would return to Vernondale, where her son's family eagerly awaited her.

"I've had a perfectly beautiful time, Grandma," said Patty, as she took off her wraps, "but I haven't time to tell you about it now. Just think, school begins again to-morrow, and I haven't even looked at my lessons. I thought I would study some in Philadelphia, but goodness me, there wasn't a minute's time to do anything but frivol. The wedding was just gorgeous! Nan was a dream, and papa looked like an Adonis. I'll tell you more at dinner time, but now I really must get to work."

It was already late in the afternoon, but Patty brought out her books, and studied away zealously until dinner time. Then making a hasty toilette, she went down to the dining-room with grandma, and during dinner gave the old lady a more detailed account of her visit.

After dinner, Lorraine Hamilton and the Hart girls joined them in the parlour. But after chatting for a few moments with them, Patty declared she must go back to her studies.

"It's awfully hard," she said to Lorraine, as they walked to school next morning, "to settle down to work after having such a gay vacation. I do believe, Lorraine, that I never was intended for a student."

"You're doing too much," said Lorraine. "It's perfectly silly of you, Patty, to try to cram two years' work into one, the way you're doing."

"No, it isn't," said Patty, "because then I won't have to go to school next year, and that will be worth all this hard work now."

"I'm awfully sorry you're going away from The Wilberforce," said Lorraine. "I shall miss you terribly."

"I know it, and I'll miss you, too; but Seventy-second Street isn't very far away, and you must come to see me often."

The schoolgirls all welcomed Patty back, for she was a general favourite, and foremost in all the recreations and pleasures, as well as the classes of the Oliphant school.

"Oh, Patty," cried Elise Farrington, as she met her in the cloakroom, "what do you think? We're going to get up a play for commencement. An original play, and act it ourselves, and we want you to write it, and act in it, and stage-manage it, and all. Will you, Patty?"

"Of course I will," said Patty. "That is, I'll help. I won't write it all alone, nor act it all by myself, either. I don't suppose it's to be a monologue, is it?"

"No," said Elise, laughing. "We're all to be in it, and of course we'll all help write it, but you must be at the head of it, and see that it all goes on properly."

"All right," said Patty, good-naturedly, "I'll do all I can, but you know I'm pretty busy this year, Elise."

"I know it, Patty, and you needn't do much on this thing. Just superintend, and help us out here and there."

Then the girls went into the class room and the day's work began.

Patty had grown very fond of Elise, and though some of the other girls looked upon her as rather haughty, and what they called stuck-up, Patty failed to discern any such traits in her friend;

and though Elise was a daughter of a millionaire, and lived a petted and luxurious life, yet, to Patty's way of thinking, she was more sincere and simple in her friendship than many of the other girls.

After school that day Elise begged Patty to go home with her and begin the play.

"Can't do it," said Patty. "I must go home and study."

"Oh, just come for a little while; the other girls are coming, and if you help us get the thing started, we can work at it ourselves, you know."

"Well, I'll go," said Patty, "but I can only stay a few minutes."

So they all went home with Elise, and settled themselves in her attractive casino to compose their great work.

But as might be expected from a group of chattering schoolgirls, they did not progress very rapidly.

"Tell us all about your fun in Philadelphia, Patty," said Adelaide Hart.

And as Patty enthusiastically recounted the gaieties of her visit, the time slipped away until it was five o'clock, and not a word had been written.

"Girls, I must go," cried Patty, looking at her watch. "I have an awful lot of studying to do, and I really oughtn't to have come here at all."

"Oh, wait a little longer," pleaded Elise. "We must get the outline of this thing."

"No, I can't," said Patty, "I really can't; but I'll come Saturday morning, and will work on it then, if you like."

Patty hurried away, and when she reached home she found Kenneth Harper waiting for her.

"I thought you'd never come," he said, as she arrived. "Your school keeps very late, doesn't it?"

"Oh, I've been visiting since school," said Patty. "I oughtn't to have gone, but I haven't seen the girls for so long, and they had a plan on hand that they wanted to discuss with me."

"I have a plan on hand, too," said Kenneth. "I've been talking it over with Mrs. Elliott, and she has been kind enough to agree to it. A crowd of us are going to the *matinée* on Saturday, and we want you to go. Mrs. Morse has kindly consented to act as chaperon, and there'll be about twelve in the party. Will you go, Patty?"

"Will I go!" cried Patty. "Indeed I will, Ken. Nothing could keep me at home. Won't it be lots of fun?"

"Yes, it will," said Kenneth, "and I'm so glad you will go. I was afraid you'd say those old lessons of yours were in the way."

Patty's face fell.

"I oughtn't to go," she said, "for I've promised the girls to spend Saturday morning with them, and now this plan of yours means that I shall lose the whole day, and I have so much to do on Saturday; an extra theme to write, and a lot of back work to make up. Oh, Ken, I oughtn't to go."

"Oh, come ahead. You can do those things Saturday evening."

Patty sighed. She knew she wouldn't feel much like work Saturday evening, but she couldn't resist the temptation of the gay party Saturday afternoon. So she agreed to go, and Kenneth went away much pleased.

"What do you think, grandma?" said she. "Do you think I ought to have given up the *matinée*, and stayed at home to study?"

"No, indeed," said Grandma Elliott, who was an easy-going old lady. "You'll enjoy the afternoon with your young friends, and, as Kenneth says, you can study in the evening."

So when Saturday came Patty spent the morning with Elise. The other girls were there, and they really got to work on their play, and planned the scenes and the characters.

"It will be perfectly lovely!" exclaimed Adelaide Hart. "I'm so glad for our class to do something worth while. It will be a great deal nicer than the *tableaux* of last year."

"But it will be an awful lot of work," said Hilda Henderson. "All those costumes, though they seem so simple, will be quite troublesome to get up, and the scenery will be no joke."

“Perhaps Mr. Hepworth will help us with the scenery,” said Patty. “He did once when we had a kind of a little play in Vernondale, where I used to live. He’s an artist, you know, and he can sketch in scenes in a minute, and make them look as if they had taken days to do. He’s awfully clever at it, and so kind that I think he’ll consent to do it.”

“That will be regularly splendid!” said Elise, “and you’d better ask him at once, Patty, so as to give him as much time as possible.”

“No, I won’t ask him quite yet,” said Patty, laughing. “I think I’ll wait until the play is written, first. I don’t believe it’s customary to engage a scene painter before a play is scarcely begun.”

“Well, then, let’s get at it,” said Hilda, who was practical.

So to work they went, and really wrote the actual lines of a good part of the first act.

“Now, that’s something like,” said Patty, as, when the clock struck noon, she looked with satisfaction on a dozen or more pages, neatly written in Hilda’s pretty penmanship. “If we keep on like that, we can get this thing done in five or six Saturday mornings, and then I’ll ask Mr. Hepworth about the scenery. Then we can begin to rehearse, and we’ll just about be ready for commencement day.”

While Patty was with the girls, her interest and enthusiasm were so great that the play seemed the only thing to be thought of. But when she reached home and saw the pile of untouched schoolbooks and remembered that she would be away all the afternoon, she felt many misgivings.

However, she had promised to go, so off she went to the matinée, and had a thoroughly pleasant and enjoyable time. Mrs. Morse invited her to go home to dinner with Clementine, saying that she would send her home safely afterward.

Clementine added her plea that this invitation might be accepted, but Patty said no. Although she wanted very much to go with the Morses, yet she knew that duty called her home. So she regretfully declined, giving her reason, and went home, determined to work hard at her themes and her lessons. But after her merry day with her young friends, she was not only tired physically, but found great difficulty in concentrating her thoughts on more prosaic subjects. But Patty had pretty strong will-power, and she forced herself to go at her work in earnest. Grandma Elliott watched her, as she pored over one book after another, or hastily scribbled her themes. A little pucker formed itself between her brows, and a crimson flush appeared on her cheeks.

At ten o’clock Mrs. Elliott asserted her authority.

“Patty,” she said, “you must go to bed. You’ll make yourself ill if you work so hard.”

Patty pushed back her books. “I believe I’ll have to, grandma,” she said. “My head’s all in a whirl, and the letters are dancing jigs before my eyes.”

Exhausted, Patty crept into bed, and though she slept late next morning, Grandma Elliott imagined that her face still bore traces of worry and hard work.

“Nonsense, grandma,” said Patty, laughing. “I guess my robust constitution can stand a little extra exertion once in a while. I’ll try to take it easier this week, and I believe I’ll give up my gymnasium work. That will give me more time, and won’t interfere with getting my diploma.”

But though Patty gained a few extra half hours by omitting the gymnasium class, she missed the daily exercise more than she would admit even to herself.

“You’re getting round-shouldered, Patty,” said Lorraine, one day; “and I believe it’s because you work so hard over those old lessons.”

“It isn’t the work, Lorraine,” said Patty, laughing. “It’s the play. I had to rewrite the whole of that garden scene last night, after I finished my lessons.”

“Why, what was the matter with it?”

“It was all wrong. We didn’t think of it at the time, but in one place Elise has to go off at one side of the stage, and, immediately after, come on at the other side, in different dress. Now, of course, that won’t do; it has to be arranged so that she will have time to change her costume. So I had to write in some lines for the others. And there were several little things like that to be looked after, so I had to do over pretty nearly the whole scene.”

“It’s a shame, Patty! We make you do all the hardest of the work.”

“Not a bit of it. I love to do it; and when we all work together and chatter so, of course we don’t think it out carefully enough, and so these mistakes creep in. Don’t say anything about it, Lorraine. The girls will never notice my little changes and corrections, and I don’t want to pose as a poor, pale martyr, growing round-shouldered in her efforts to help her fellow-sisters!”

“You’re a brick, Patty, but I will tell them, all the same. If we’re all going to write this play together, we’re going to do it all, and not have you doing our work for us.”

Lorraine’s loyalty to Patty was unbounded, and as she had, moreover, a trace of stubbornness in her character, Patty knew that no amount of argument would move her from her determination to straighten matters out. So she gave up the discussion, only saying, “You won’t do a bit of good, Lorraine; and anyway, somebody ought to revise the thing, and if I don’t do it, who will?”

Patty said this without a trace of egotism, for she and Lorraine both knew that none of the other girls had enough constructive talent or dramatic capability to put the finishing touches on the lines of the play. That was Patty’s special forte, just as Clementine Morse was the one best fitted to plan the scenic effects, and Elise Farrington to design the costumes.

“That’s so,” said Lorraine, with a little sigh, “and I suppose, Patty, you’ll just go on in your mad career, and do exactly as you please.”

“I suppose I shall,” said Patty, laughing at Lorraine’s hopeless expression; “but I do want this play to be a success, and I mean to help all I can, in any way I can.”

“It’s bound to be a success,” said Lorraine with enthusiasm, “because the girls are all so interested, and I think we’re all working hard in our different ways. Of course I don’t have anything to do except to look after the incidental music, but I do hope that will turn out all right.”

“Of course it will, Lorraine,” said Patty. “Your selections are perfect so far; and you do look after more than that. Those two little songs you wrote are gems, and they fit into the second act just exactly right. I think you’re a real poet, Lorraine, and after the play is over I wish you’d get those little songs published. I’m sure they’re worth it.”

“I wish I could,” said Lorraine, “and I do mean to try.”

CHAPTER V

A NEW HOME

Great was the rejoicing and celebration when Mr. and Mrs. Fairfield returned from their wedding trip. They came to the apartment to remain there for a few days before moving to the new house.

Patty welcomed Nan with open arms, and it was harder than ever for her to attend to her studies when there was so much going on in the family.

The furnishing of the new house was almost completed, but there remained several finishing touches to be attended to. As Patty's time was so much occupied, she was not allowed to have any hand in this work. Mrs. Allen had come on from Philadelphia to help her daughter, and Grandma Elliott assisted in dismantling the apartment, preparatory to giving it up.

So when Patty started to school one Friday morning, and was told that when the session was over she was to go to her new home to stay, she felt as if she were going to an unexplored country.

It was with joyful anticipations that she put on her hat and coat, after school, and started home.

Her father had given her a latch-key, and as she stepped in at the front door, Nan, in a pretty house dress, stood ready to welcome her.

"My dear child," she said, "welcome home. How do you like the prospect?"

"It's lovely," said Patty, gazing around at as much as she could see of the beautiful house and its well-furnished rooms. "What a lot of new things there are, and I recognise a good many of the old ones, too. Oh, Nan, won't we be happy all here together?"

"Indeed we will," said Nan. "I think it's the loveliest house in the world, and mother and Fred have fixed it up so prettily. Come up and see your room, Patty."

A large, pleasant front room on the third floor had been assigned to Patty's use, and all her own special and favourite belongings had been placed there.

"How dear of you, Nan, to arrange this all for me, and put it all to rights. I really couldn't have taken the time to do it myself, but it's just the way I want it."

"And this," said Nan, opening a door into a small room adjoining, "is your own little study, where you can be quiet and undisturbed, while you're studying those terrific lessons of yours."

Patty gave a little squeal of delight at the dainty library, furnished in green, and with her own desk and bookcases already in place.

"But don't think," Nan went on, "that we shall let you stay here and grub away at those books much of the time. An hour a day is all we intend to allow you to be absent from our family circle while you're in the house."

"An hour a day to study!" exclaimed Patty. "It's more likely that an hour a day is all I can give you of my valuable society."

"We'll see about that," said Nan, wagging her head wisely. "You see I have some authority now, and I intend to exercise it."

"Ha," said Patty, dramatically, "I see it will be war to the knife!"

"To the knife!" declared Nan, as she ran away laughing.

Patty looked about her two lovely rooms with genuine pleasure. She was like a cat in her love of comfortable chairs and luxurious cushions, and she fully appreciated the special and individual care with which Nan and her father had considered her tastes. Had she not been so busy she would have preferred to have a hand in the arranging of her rooms herself, but as it was, she was thankful that someone else had done it for her.

Hastily throwing off her hat and coat, she flung herself into a comfortable easy chair by her library table, and was soon deep in her French lesson.

A couple of hours later Nan came up and found her there.

“Patty Fairfield!” she exclaimed. “You are the worst I ever saw! Get right up and dress for dinner! Your father will be home in a few minutes, and I want you to help me receive properly the master of the house.”

Patty rubbed her eyes and blinked, as Nan pulled the book away from her, and said, “Why, what time is it?”

“Time for you to stop studying, and come out of your shell and mingle with the world. Wake up!” and Nan gave Patty a little shake.

Patty came to herself and jumped up, saying, “Indeed, I’m glad enough to leave my horrid books, and I’m hungry enough to eat any dinner you may set before me. What shall I wear, Nan?”

“Put on that pretty light blue thing of yours, with the lace yoke. This is rather a festival night, and we’re going to celebrate the first dinner in our new home.”

So Patty brushed her curly hair and tied on a white ribbon bow of such exceeding size and freshness that she looked almost as if wings were sprouting from her shoulders. Then she donned her light blue frock, and went dancing downstairs, to find that her father had already arrived.

“Well, Pattikins,” he said, “can you feel at home in this big house, after living so long in our apartment?”

“Yes, indeed,” said Patty, “any place is home where you and Nan are.”

The dinner passed off gaily enough. Only the three were present, as Nan did not want any guests the first night.

Although the dining-room appointments were those that had furnished the Fairfields’ Vernondale home, yet they were so augmented by numerous wedding gifts of Nan’s that Patty felt as if she were at a dinner party of unusual splendour.

“It’s lovely to live in a house with a bride,” she said, “because there are such beautiful silver and glass things on the table, and on the sideboard.”

“Yes,” said Nan, glancing around her with satisfaction. “I intend to use all my things. I think it’s perfectly silly to pack them away in a safe, and never have any good of them.”

“But suppose burglars break in and steal them,” said Patty.

“Well, even so,” said Nan, placidly, “they would be gone, but it wouldn’t be much different from having them stored away in a safe deposit company.”

“Nan’s principle is right,” said Mr. Fairfield. “Now, here’s the way I look at it: what you can’t afford to lose, you can’t afford to buy. Remember that, Patty, and if ever you are tempted to invest a large sum of money in a diamond or silver or any portable property, look upon that money as gone forever. True, you might realise on your possession in case of need, but more likely you could not, and, too, there is always the chance of losing it by carelessness or theft. So remember that you can’t afford to buy what you can’t afford to lose.”

“That’s a new idea to me, papa,” said Patty, “but I see what you mean and I know you are right. However, there’s little chance of my investing in silver at present, for I can just as well use Nan’s.”

“Of course you can,” said Nan, heartily; “and whenever you want to have company, or a party of any kind, you’ve only to mention it, and not only my silver, but my servants and my own best efforts are at your disposal.”

“That’s lovely,” said Patty, “and I would love to have parties and invite the schoolgirls and some of the boys, but I can’t take the time now. Why, I couldn’t spare an evening from my studies to entertain the crowned heads of Europe.”

“Nonsense,” said Mr. Fairfield, “you mustn’t work so hard, Puss; and anyway you’ll have to spare this evening, for I asked Hepworth to drop in, and I think two or three others may come, and we’ll have a little informal housewarming.”

“Yes,” said Patty, dubiously, “and Kenneth said he would call this evening, and Elise and Roger may come in. So, as it’s Friday evening, I’ll see them, of course; but after this I must study every evening except Fridays.”

A little later on, when a number of guests had assembled in the Fairfield’s drawing-room, Patty looked like anything but a bookworm, or a pale-faced student. Her eyes danced, and the colour glowed in her pretty face, for she was very fond of merry society, and always looked her prettiest when thus animated.

She and Elise entertained the others by quoting some bits from the school play, Nan sang for them, and Kenneth gave some of his clever and funny impersonations.

Mr. Hepworth declared that he had no parlour tricks, but Patty asserted that he had, and she ran laughing from the room, to return with several large sheets of paper and a stick of drawing charcoal. Then she decreed that Mr. Hepworth should draw caricature portraits of all those present. After a little demurring, the artist consented, and shrieks of laughter arose as his clever pencil swiftly sketched a humorous portrait of each one.

“It’s right down jolly,” said Kenneth to Patty, “your having a big house of your own like this. Mayn’t I come often to see you? Mrs. Nan is so kind, she always has a welcome for me.”

“You may come and accept her welcome whenever you like,” said Patty, “but I can’t promise to see you, Ken, except Friday evenings. Honestly, I don’t have one minute to myself. You see, we rehearse the play afternoons, and evenings I have to study, and Saturday is crammed jam full.”

“But she will see you, Kenneth,” said Nan, who had heard these remarks. “We’re not going to let her retire from the world in any such fashion as she proposes; so you come to see us whenever you like, and my word for it, Patty will be at home to you.”

Nan passed on, laughing, and Patty turned to Kenneth with an appealing glance.

“You know how it is, don’t you, Ken? I just have to stick to my work like everything, or I won’t pass those fearful examinations, and now that I’ve made up my mind to try for them, I *do* want to succeed.”

“Yes, I know, Patty, and I fully sympathise with your ambitions. Stick to it, and you’ll come out all right yet; and if I should call sometimes when you’re studying, just say you’re too busy to see me, and it will be all right.”

“What an old trump you are, Ken. You always seem to understand.”

But as the days passed on, Patty found that other people did not understand. Her study hours were continually interrupted. There were occasional callers in the afternoon, and when Nan presented herself at the study door, and begged so prettily that Patty would come down just this once, the girl hadn’t the heart to refuse. Then there was often company in the evenings, and again Patty would be forced to break through her rules. Or there were temptations which she really couldn’t resist,—such as when her father came home to dinner, bringing tickets for the opera, or for some especially fine play.

Then, Nan had a day each week on which she received her friends, and on these Thursdays Patty was supposed also to act as hostess. Of course this pleasant duty was imperative, and Patty always enjoyed the little receptions, though she felt guilty at losing her Thursday afternoons. Almost invariably, too, some of the guests accepted Nan’s invitation to remain to dinner, and that counted out Thursday evening as well.

Altogether, poor Patty was at her wits’ end to find any time to herself. She tried rising very early in the morning and studying before breakfast, but she found it difficult to awaken early, and neither Nan nor her father would allow her to be called.

So she was forced to resort to sitting up late, and studying after the rest of the household had retired. As her room was on the third floor, she had no difficulty in pursuing this plan without anyone being aware of it, but burning the midnight oil soon began to tell on her appearance.

One morning at breakfast, her father said, “Patty, child, what is the matter with you? Your eyes look like two holes burnt in a blanket! You weren’t up late last night?”

“Not very,” said Patty, dropping her eyes before her father’s searching gaze.

Nothing more was said on the subject, but though Patty hated to do anything secretly, yet she felt she must continue her night work, as it was really her only chance.

So that night as she sat studying until nearly midnight, her door slowly opened, and Nan peeped in. She wore a kimono, and her hair was in a long braid down her back.

“Patty Fairfield,” she said, “go to bed at once! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, to sit up so late when you know your father doesn’t want you to.”

“Now, look here, Nan,” said Patty, talking very seriously, “I *have* to sit up late like this, because I can’t get a minute’s time through the day. You know how it is. There’s always company, or something going on, and I can’t wake up early in the morning, and I have to sit up late at night, even if it does make me tired and sleepy and good for nothing the next day. Oh, Nan, instead of hindering and making fun of me, and bothering me all you can, I think you might try to help me!”

Patty threw herself on her knees, and burying her face in Nan’s lap, burst into a convulsive flood of tears.

Nan was thoroughly frightened. She had never before seen Patty cry, and this was more than crying. It was almost hysterical.

Then, like a flash, Nan saw it all. Overwork and worry had so wrought on Patty’s nerves that the girl was half sick and wholly irresponsible for her actions.

With a ready tact, Nan patted the golden head, and gently soothed the excited child.

“Never mind, Patty, darling,” she said, “and try to forgive me, won’t you? I fear I have been rather blind to the true state of the case, but I see more plainly now, and I will help you, indeed I will. I will see to it that you shall have your hours for study just as you want them, and you shall not be interrupted. Dear little girl, you’re all tired out, and your nerves are all on edge, and no wonder. Now, hop along to bed, and you’ll see that things will go better after this.”

As she talked, Nan had gently soothed the excited girl, and in a quiet, matter-of-fact way, she helped her prepare for bed, and finally tucked her up snugly under her down coverlet.

“Good-night, dearie,” she said; “go to sleep without a bother on your mind, and remember that after this Nan will see to it that you shall have other times to study than the middle of the night.”

“Good-night,” said Patty, “and I’m sorry I made such a baby of myself. But truly, Nan, I’m bothered to death with those old lessons and the play and everything.”

“That’s all right; just go to sleep and dream of Commencement Day, when all the bothers will be over, and you’ll get your diploma and your medal, and a few dozen bouquets besides.”

And with a final good-night kiss, Nan left the worn-out girl and returned thoughtfully to her own room.

CHAPTER VI

BUSY DAYS

Nan was as good as her word. Instead of trying to persuade Patty not to study so hard, she did all she could to keep the study hours free from interruption.

Many a time when Nan wanted Patty's company or assistance, she refrained from telling her so, and unselfishly left the girl to herself as much as possible.

The result of this was that Patty gave herself up to her books and her school work to such an extent that she allowed herself almost no social recreation, and took little or no exercise beyond her walks to and from school.

This went on for a time, but Patty was, after all, of a sensitive and observing nature, and she soon discovered, by a certain wistful expression on Nan's face, or a tone of regret in her voice, that she was often sacrificing her own convenience to Patty's.

Patty's sense of proportion rebelled at this, and she felt that she must be more obliging to Nan, who was so truly kind to her.

And so she endeavoured to cram more duties into her already full days, and often after a hard day's work in school, when she would have been glad to throw on a comfortable house gown and rest in her own room, she dressed herself prettily and went out calling with her stepmother, or assisted her to receive her own guests.

Gay-hearted Nan was not acutely observant, and it never occurred to her that all this meant any self-sacrifice on Patty's part. She accepted with pleasure each occasion when Patty's plans fell in with her own, and the more this was the case, the more she expected it, so that poor Patty again found herself bewildered by her multitude of conflicting duties.

"I have heard," she thought to herself one day, "that duties never clash, but it seems to me they never do anything else. Now, this afternoon I'm sure it's my duty to write my theme, and yet I promised the girls I'd be at rehearsal, and then, Nan is so anxious for me to go shopping with her, that I honestly don't know which I ought to do; but I believe I'll write my theme, because that does seem the most important."

"Patty," called Nan's voice from the hall, "you'll go with me this afternoon, won't you? I have to decide between those two hats, you know, and truly I can't take the responsibility alone."

"Oh, Nan," said Patty, "it really doesn't matter which hat you get, they're both so lovely. I've seen them, you know, and truly I think one is just as becoming as the other. And honest, I'm fearfully busy to-day."

"Oh, pshaw, Patty. I've let you alone afternoons for almost a week now, or at least for two or three days, anyhow. I think you might go with me to-day."

Good-natured Patty always found it hard to resist coaxing, so with a little sigh she consented, and gave up her whole afternoon to Nan.

That meant sitting up late at night to study, but this was now getting to be the rule with Patty, and not the exception.

So the weeks flew by, and as commencement day drew nearer, Patty worked harder and her nerves grew more strained and tense, until a breakdown of some sort seemed imminent.

Mr. Fairfield at last awoke to the situation, and told Patty that she was growing thin and pale and hollow-eyed.

"Never mind," said Patty, looking at her father with an abstracted air, "I haven't time now, Papa, even to discuss the subject. Commencement day is next week, to-morrow my examinations begin, and I have full charge of the costumes for the play, and they're not nearly ready yet."

"You mustn't work so hard, Patty," said Nan, in her futile way.

“Nan, if you say that to me again, I’ll throw something at you! I give you fair warning, people, that I’m so bothered and worried that my nerves are all on edge, and my temper is pretty much the same way. Now, until after commencement I’ve got to work hard, but if I just live through that, I’ll be sweet and amiable again, and will do anything you want me to.”

Patty was half laughing, but it was plain to be seen she was very much in earnest.

Commencement was to occur the first week in June, and the examinations, which took place the week before, were like a nightmare to poor Patty.

Had she been free to give her undivided attention, she might have taken them more calmly. But her mind was so full of the troubles and responsibilities consequent on the play, that it was almost impossible to concentrate her thoughts on the examination work. And yet the examinations were of far more importance than the play, for Patty was most anxious to graduate with honours, and she felt sure that she knew thoroughly the ground she had been over in her studies.

At last examinations were finished, and though not yet informed of her markings, Patty felt that on the whole she had been fairly successful, and Friday night she went home from school with a heart lighter than it had been for many weeks.

“Thank goodness, it’s over!” she cried as she entered the house, and clasping Nan around the waist, she waltzed her down the hall in a mad joy of celebration.

“Well, I am glad,” said Nan, after she had recovered her breath; “now you can rest and get back your rosy cheeks once more.”

“Not yet,” said Patty gaily; “there is commencement day and the play yet. They’re fun compared to examinations, but still they mean a tremendous lot of work. To-morrow will be my busiest day yet, and I’ve bought me an alarm clock, because I have to get up at five o’clock in order to get through the day at all.”

“What nonsense,” said Nan, but Patty only laughed, and scurried away to dress for dinner.

When the new alarm clock went off at five the next morning, Patty awoke with a start, wondering what in the world had happened.

Then, as she slowly came to her senses, she rubbed her sleepy eyes, jumped up quickly, and began to dress.

By breakfast time she had accomplished wonders.

“I’ve rewritten two songs,” she announced at the breakfast table, “and sewed for an hour on Hilda’s fairy costume, and cut out a thousand gilt stars for the scenery, and made two hundred paper violets besides!”

“You are a wonder, Patty,” said Nan, but Mr. Fairfield looked at his daughter anxiously. Her eyes were shining with excitement, and there was a little red spot on either cheek.

“Be careful, dear,” he said. “It would be pretty bad if, after getting through your examinations, you should break down because of this foolish play.”

“It isn’t a foolish play, Papa,” said Patty gaily; “it’s most wise and sensible. I ought to know, for I wrote most of it myself, and I’ve planned all the costumes and helped to make many of them. One or two, though, we have to get from a regular costumer, and I have to go and see about them to-day. Want to go with me, Nan?”

“I’d love to go,” said Nan, “but I haven’t a minute to spare all day long. I’m going to the photographer’s, and then to Mrs. Stuart’s luncheon, and after that to a musicale.”

“Never mind,” said Patty, “it won’t be much fun. I just have to pick out the costumes for Joan of Arc and Queen Elizabeth.”

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