

# WELLS CAROLYN

PATTY'S  
SOCIAL  
SEASON

Carolyn Wells

**Patty's Social Season**

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### CHAPTER I

### FLOWERS!

"Patty, do come along and get your luncheon before everything grows cold!"

"And the stars are old, And the leaves of the judgment book unfold," chanted Patty, who had just learned this new song, and was apt to sing it at unexpected moments. She sat on the floor in the middle of the long drawing-room of her New York home. To say she was surrounded by flowers, faintly expresses it. She was hemmed in, barricaded, nearly smothered in flowers.

They were or had been in enormous florist's boxes, and as fast as Patty opened the boxes and read the cards which accompanied the blossoms, Jane took the boxes away.

It was the great occasion of Patty's *début*, and in accordance with the social custom, all her friends had sent her flowers as a message of congratulation.

"You certainly have heaps of friends," said Elise, who was helping arrange the bouquets.

"Friends!" cried Patty; "nobody could have as many friends as this! These flowers must be also from my enemies, my casual acquaintances, and indeed from utter strangers! I think the whole hilarious populace of New York has gone mad on the subject of sending flowers!"

Even as she spoke, Jane came in with several more boxes, followed by Miller, fairly staggering under an enormous box that was almost too much for one man to carry. Behind him was Nan, who went straight to Patty and held out both hands to assist her to rise.

"Patty," she said, "if you don't come out this minute, you never *can* get out! A few more of these boxes, and the door will be completely blocked up."

"That's so, Nan," and Patty scrambled to her feet. "Come on, girls, let's gather our foodings while we may. These flowers will keep; but I shudder to think of the accumulation when we come back from luncheon!"

"I didn't know there were so many flowers in the world," said Mona Galbraith, who paused to look back into the drawing-room.

"There aren't," said Patty solemnly; "it's an optical illusion. Don't you know how the Indian jugglers make you see flowers growing, when there aren't any flowers there? Well, this is like that."

Following Nan, Patty's pretty stepmother, the three girls, arm in arm, danced along to the dining-room, quite hungry enough to do justice to the tempting luncheon they found there.

All the morning they had been untying the flower boxes and making a list of the donors.

"Just think of the notes of thanks I have to write," said Patty, groaning at the outlook.

"Wish we could help you," said Elise, "but I suppose you have to do those yourself."

"Yes; and I think it will take me the rest of my natural life! What's the use of 'coming out,' if I have got to go right in again, and write all those notes? Why, there are hundreds!"

"Thousands!" corrected Elise. And Mona said, "Looks to me like millions!"

"Who sent that last big box, Patty?" asked Nan; "the one that just came."

"Dunno, Nancy; probably the Czar of Russia or the King of the Cannibal Islands. But I mean to take time to eat my luncheon in peace, even if the flowers aren't all in place by the time the company comes."

"We can't stay very long," said Elise; "of course, Mona and I have to go home and dress and be back here at four o'clock, and it's nearly two, now."

"All right," said Patty; "the boys are coming, and they'll do the rest. We couldn't hang the flowers on the wall, anyway."

"We ought to have had a florist to attend to it," said Nan, thoughtfully; "I had no idea there'd be so many."

"Oh, it'll be all right," returned Patty. "Father's coming home early, and Roger and Ken will be over, and Mr. Hepworth will direct proceedings."

Even as she spoke the men's voices were heard in the hall, and Patty jumped up from the table and ran to the drawing-room.

"Did you ever see anything like it?" she exclaimed, and her visitors agreed that they never had.

"It must be awful to be so popular, Patty," said Roger. "If I ever come out, I shall ask my friends to send fruit instead of flowers."

"Patty would have to start a canning factory, if she had done that," said Kenneth, laughing. "Let's open this big box, Patty. Who sent it?"

"I haven't an idea, but there must be a card inside."

They opened the immense box, and found it full to the brim with exquisite Killarney roses.

After some search, Roger discovered a small envelope, with a card inside. The card read, "Mr. William Farnsworth," and written beneath the engraved name was the message, "With congratulations and best wishes."

"From Big Bill!" exclaimed Mona. "For goodness' sake, Patty, why didn't he send you more? But these didn't come all the way from Arizona, where he is."

"No," said Patty, looking at the label on the box; "he must have just sent an order to a New York florist."

"To two or three florists, I should think," said Mr. Hepworth. "What can we do with them all?"

But the crowd of merry young people set to work, and in an hour the floral chaos was reduced to a wonderful vision of symmetry and beauty. Under Mr. Hepworth's directions, the flowers were banked on the mantels and window-seats, and hung in groups on the wall, and clustered on the door-frames in a profusion which had behind it a methodical and symmetrical intent.

"It's perfectly beautiful!" declared Nan, who, with her husband, was taking her first view of the finished effect. "It's a perfect shame to spoil this bower of beauty by cramming it with a crowd of people, who will jostle your bouquets all to bits."

"Well, we can't help it," said Patty. "You see, we invited the people, as well as the flowers, so we must take the consequences. But they can't reach those that are up high, and as soon as the party is over, I'm going to put them all in fresh water—"

"What! the party?" and Kenneth looked astounded.

"I mean the flowers," said Patty, not deigning to laugh at his foolishness. "And then, to-morrow morning, I'm going to send them all to the hospital."

"The people?" said Kenneth again. "That's thoughtful of you, Patty! I have no doubt they'll be in condition to go. I'm about ready, myself."

"Well, you may go now," and Patty smiled at him. "Your work is done here, and I'm going away to dress. Good-bye, Ken; this is the last time you'll see me as a little girl. When next we meet, I shall be a young lady, a fully-fledged society lady, whose only thoughts will be for dancing and gaiety of all sorts."

"Nonsense," said Kenneth; "you can't scare me. You'll be the same old Patty, foolish and irresponsible,—but sunshiny and sweet as ever."

"Thank you, Ken," said Patty, for there was a note of earnestness in Kenneth's voice that the girl was quick to catch. They had been friends since childhood, and while Patty did not take her "coming out" very seriously, yet she realised that it meant she was grown up and a child no longer.

"Don't let it all spoil you, Patty." It was Mr. Hepworth who said this, as he was about to follow Kenneth out. "I have a right to lecture you, you know, and I want to warn you—"



"Oh, don't do it now, Mr. Hepworth," said Patty, laughing; "the occasion is solemn enough, I'm sure, and if you lecture me, I shall burst into large weeps of tears! Do let me 'come out' without being lectured, and you can come round to-morrow and give me all the warnings you like."

"You're right, little Patty," and Hepworth looked at her kindly. "I ought not to spoil one of the happiest days of your life with too serious thought. Yours is a butterfly nature--"

"But butterfly natures are nice; aren't they, Mr. Hepworth?" and Patty looked up at him with the roguishness that she could never quite control.

"Yes,--" and the man hesitated a moment, as he looked into Patty's blue eyes. Then, suddenly, "Yes, indeed, *very* nice." And, turning abruptly, he left her.

"Now, you girls, skip," ordered Patty.

"You haven't more than time to fly home and get dressed, for I don't want you to be late and delay the ceremony."

"Gracious! it sounds like a wedding," cried Mona, laughing.

"Well, it isn't!" declared Patty. "I may have a wedding some day, but that's in the far, far future; why, I'm only just entering society, and when I'm married, I suppose I shall leave it. I expect to have heaps of fun between this and then."

The programme for the occasion was an afternoon reception, from four o'clock until seven. This was really Patty's *début*. A dinner at eight was to follow, to which were invited about a dozen of her dearest friends, and after this would be a dance, to which a goodly number more were asked.

"You ought to have time for an hour's rest, Patty," said Nan, as she drew the girl away from a last look at the beautiful flowers, and took her up to her room.

"Well, I haven't, little steppy-mother. It will be just about all Miss Patricia Fairfield can do to get into her purple and fine linen by four o'clock p.m., and methinks you'd better begin on your own glad toilette, or you'll be late yourself."

"Was I *ever* late?" asked Nan, scornfully, and as Patty responded, "never anything but," she ran away to her own room.

However, four o'clock found all the members of the reception party in their places.

Patty looked adorable in soft white chiffon, untrimmed, save for some fine lace round the slightly low-cut neck. She wore a string of small but perfect pearls which her father had given her for the occasion, and she carried a beautiful bouquet of orchids, which was Nan's gift.

Patty had never looked prettier. Her rose-leaf cheeks were slightly flushed with excitement, and her big violet eyes were bright and sparkling. Her golden hair, which was really unusual in texture and quantity, was dressed simply, yet in a manner very becoming to her small, prettily poised head. On her brow and temples it rippled in natural ringlets, which gave her piquant face a charming, childish effect. Patty was certainly a beauty, but she was of such a sweet, unspoiled nature, and of such simple, dainty manners, that everybody loved her.

Her father looked at her rather thoughtfully, half unable to realise that his little Patty had really grown up and was taking her place in society. He had no fears for her, he knew her sweet nature too well; but he was earnestly hoping that she was starting out on a life of happiness and well-being. Though healthy and moderately strong, Patty was not of a robust constitution, and there was danger that too much gaiety might result in a nervous breakdown. This, Mr. Fairfield determined to guard against; and resolved that, while Patty should be allowed generally to do as she chose, he should keep a strict eye against her overdoing.

Nan had much the same thoughts as she looked at the lovely *débutante*, so exquisite in her fresh young beauty. Nan's gown of heavy white lace was very becoming, and though a secondary figure, she ably shared the honours of the afternoon with Patty.

Mona and Elise assisted in the capacity of "Floaters," and in their pale pink frocks, they were quite in harmony with the floral setting of the picture.

And then the guests began to arrive, and Patty learned what it meant to stand and shake hands, and receive the same compliments and congratulations over and over again. It was interesting at first, but she grew very tired as the hours went by.

“Now, I say,” exclaimed a cheery voice, suddenly, “it can’t be that you have to stand here continuously from four to seven! Mrs. Fairfield, mayn’t I take Patty to get a cup of tea or an ice, and you stay here and ‘come out’ until she returns?”

It was Philip Van Reypen who made this request, and Nan consented readily. “Yes, indeed, Philip,” she said, “do take her off to rest a minute. I think most of the people have arrived; and, anyway, you must bring her back shortly.”

“I will,” and young Van Reypen led Patty through the crowd to the dining-room.

“I ought to find you a ‘quiet little corner,’” he said, smiling; “but I don’t see such a thing anywhere about. So I’ll just place you on one of these gimcrack gilt chairs, and I’ll ask you to keep this one next, for me, until I make a raid on the table. What will you have?”

“I don’t really want anything, Philip, but just to sit here a moment and rest. I had no idea coming out was so tiresome! I believe I’ve said, ‘oh, thank you!’ a billion times!”

“Yes, you said it to me,” and Philip laughed at the recollection, “and I can tell you, Patty, it had the real society ring! You said it like a conventionalised parrot.”

“Well, I don’t care if I did! It was the proper thing to say, and nobody could say it a million times in succession, without sounding parrotty! I know now how the President feels when he has to shake hands with the whole United States!”

Philip left her, and returned in a moment, followed by a waiter, who brought them hot bouillon and tiny sandwiches.

“My, but these are good!” exclaimed Patty, as she nibbled and sipped. “Why, Philip, I believe I was hungry and that’s what made me tired! Oh, hello, Mona! Did you get leave of absence, too?”

“Yes; the mad rush is pretty much over. Only a few late stragglers now, and Elise is floating them. Here’s Roger. He says you wouldn’t speak to him this afternoon, except to say, ‘oh, thank you!’ three times.”

“I couldn’t help it,” returned Patty, laughing. “That’s all I said to anybody. I felt like a rubber stamp—repeating myself. Well, thank goodness, I’m out!”

“But you’re not a bit more grown up than when you were in,” said Kenneth, joining the group around Patty.

“Oh, pshaw, I’m never going to be grown up. Now I’m rested, Philip; please take me back to Nan. She said we must return soon.”

So Patty went back to the drawing-room, and insisted that her stepmother should go for a little refreshment. “I can hold the fort alone now,” she said; “you’ve no idea how capable I am, now that I’m really out. Run along, Nan, and get some of those sandwiches; they’re awfully good.”

“It isn’t romantic, Patty, to think about eating when you’re celebrating an occasion like this,” reproved Philip.

“Well, I’m not romantic,” declared Patty, “and I never expect to be. Oh, how do you do, Mr. Galbraith? It’s so late, I feared you weren’t coming.” And Patty held out her hand to Mona’s father.

“How d’y’do, Patty?” And Mr. Galbraith shook hands heartily. “I suppose I ought to say all sorts of pretty things to you, but you know, I’m not much up in social chat.”

“I’m glad of it,” said Patty, “and then I won’t have to say, ‘oh, thank you!’ to you. Mona is looking beautiful this afternoon, isn’t she?”

“She’s a fine girl—a fine girl.” Mr. Galbraith’s eyes rested on his daughter a little thoughtfully. He was a Chicago man, who had made his fortune suddenly, and was a little bewildered at his own success. His one interest in life, outside of business matters, was his daughter Mona, for whom he desired every possible good, and to whose wishes and whims he always willingly consented.



At her request, he had closed his Chicago home and come to spend the winter in New York, that Mona might be near Patty, whom she adored. The Galbraiths were living for the winter at the Plaza Hotel, and Patty, who had grown fond of Mona, was glad to have her friend so near her.

"She's a fine girl," Mr. Galbraith repeated, "and a good-looking girl." He paused a moment, and then added in a sudden burst of confidence, "but, Patty, I wish she had a mother. You know how I idolise her, but I can't do for her what a mother would do. I've urged her to have a chaperon or a companion of some sort, but she won't do it. She says a father is chaperon enough for her, and so we live alone in that big hotel, and I'm afraid it isn't right. Right for her, I mean. I don't care a snap about conventions, but Mona is impulsive, even headstrong, and I wish she had an older woman to guide and advise her."

"I wish she did, Mr. Galbraith," said Patty, earnestly, for the two were chatting by themselves, and no one else was within hearing. "I've thought about it, and I've talked with my stepmother about it. Perhaps I could persuade Mona to do as you wish her to."

"I hope you can, Patty; I do hope you can. You know, Mona is dignified and all that, and as proud as they make them. Nobody would dare to speak to her if she didn't want them to; but, Patty, here's the trouble. There's a young man at the hotel named Lansing. He's not especially attractive, and yet, somehow, he has gained Mona's favour. I have told my girl that I do not like him, but she only laughs and says carelessly that he's all right. Now, I mustn't detain you longer, my child; there are people waiting to speak to you. But, some time, I want to have a little talk to you about this, and perhaps you can help me in some way. For I believe, Patty, that that Lansing man is trying to win my girl for the sake of her money. He has all the appearances of a fortune-hunter, and I can't let Mona throw herself away on such."

"I should think not!" exclaimed Patty, indignantly. And then Mr. Galbraith moved away to give his place to other guests who were arriving.

## CHAPTER II

### AT THE DANCE

At eight o'clock that same evening, Patty came down to her own dinner party. An hour's rest had freshened her up wonderfully, and she had changed her little white frock for a dinner gown of pale green chiffon, sparkling with silver embroidery. It trailed behind her in a most grown-up fashion, and she entered the drawing-room with an exaggerated air of dignity.

"Huh," cried Roger; "look at grown-up Patty! Isn't she the haughty lady? Patty, if you put on such airs, you'll be old before your time!"

"Airs, nothing!" retorted Patty, and with a skipping little dance step, she crossed the room, picked up a sofa pillow, and aimed it deftly at Roger, who caught it on the wing.

"That's better," he said. "We can't have any of these *grande dame* airs. Now, who is the lucky man who is to take you out to dinner? Me?"

"No, not you," and Patty looked at him, critically; "you won't do, and neither will Kenneth, nor Phil Van Reypen, nor Mr. Hepworth." She looked at them each in turn, and smiled so merrily that they could take no offence. "I think," she said, "I shall select the best-looking and best-natured gentleman, and walk out with him." Whereupon she tucked her arm through her father's, and led the way to the dining-room, followed by the rest of the merry crowd.

The dinner was a beautiful one, for Nan had spared no pains or thought to make it worthy of the occasion. At the girls' places were beautiful souvenirs, in the shape of fans of carved ivory with lace mounts, while the men received attractive stick-pins.

"Shall you feel like dancing after all this gaiety, Patty?" asked Van Reypen.

"Well, rather!" declared Patty. "Why, I'd feel like dancing if I'd been through a—civil war! I could scarcely keep still when the orchestra was playing this afternoon, and I'm crazy for to-night's dance to begin."

"Frivolous young person, very," murmured Philip. "Never saw such devotion to the vain follies of life! However, since you're determined to dance, will you honour me with the first one to-night?"

"Why, I don't mind, if you don't," said Patty, dimpling at him.

"And give me the second," said Kenneth and Roger simultaneously.

"I can't do these sums in my head," said Patty; "I'll get all mixed up. Let's wait till we get our dance orders, and fill them up, hit or miss."

"You be the miss and I'll try to make a hit," said Philip.

"What waggery!" exclaimed Patty, shaking her head. "If you're too clever, Philip, I can't dance with you. When I dance, I keep my mind on my feet, not on my head."

"That explains your good dancing," said Mr. Hepworth, laughing. "Perhaps, if I could keep my mind on my feet, I could dance better."

"Oh, you're too highminded for such low levels," laughed Patty, while Mona, who was rather practical, said, seriously, "Do you really think about your feet all the time you're dancing, Patty?"

"No," returned Patty; "sometimes I have to think about my partner's feet, to keep out of the way of them."

When they returned to the drawing-room, they found it had been cleared for the dance, and soon the evening guests began to arrive.

Patty again stood by Nan to receive them, and after greeting many people she knew, she was surprised to find herself confronted by a stranger. He was a thick-set, stockily-built man, several years older than most of Patty's friends. He had black hair and eyes and a short black moustache and a round, heavy type of face. His black eyes were of the audacious sort, and he flashed a glance of admiration at Patty. Before she could speak, or even offer her hand, Mona sprang forward, saying,

“Patty, this is my friend Mr. Lansing. I took the liberty of inviting him to your dance. Mrs. Fairfield, may I present Mr. Lansing?”

Patty was angry. This, of course, must be the man of whom Mr. Galbraith had spoken, and, aside from the fact that he seemed undesirable, Patty felt that Mona had no right to invite him without asking permission from her hostess.

But Nan knew nothing of all this, and she cordially greeted the stranger because he was a friend of Mona's. Patty recovered her equilibrium sufficiently to say, “How do you do, Mr. Lansing?” in a non-committal sort of way, but she couldn't refrain from giving Mona a side glance of reproof, to which, however, that young woman paid no attention.

In another moment Mona had drifted away, and had taken Mr. Lansing with her. Patty turned to speak to Nan about him, but just then some more guests arrived; and then the dancing began, and Patty had no further opportunity.

As Patty had promised, she gave the first dance to Philip Van Reypen; and after that she was fairly besieged by would-be partners. The fact that she was hostess at her own coming-out ball, the fact that she danced beautifully, and the fact that she was so pretty and charming, all combined to make her, as was not unusual, the most popular girl present.

“Anything left for me?” asked Roger, gaily, as he threaded the crowds at Patty's side.

“I saved one for you,” said Patty, smiling at him; “for I hoped you'd ask me, sooner or later.”

Roger gratefully accepted the dance Patty had saved for him, and soon after he came to claim her for it.

“I say, Patty,” he began when they were whirling about the floor, “who is that stuff Mona has trailing after her?”

“Moderate your language, Roger,” said Patty, smiling up at him, and noticing that his expression was very wrathful indeed.

“He doesn't deserve moderate language! He's a bounder, if I ever saw one! What's he doing here?”

“He seems to be dancing,” said Patty, demurely, “and he doesn't dance half badly, either.”

“Oh, stop your fooling, Patty; I'm not in the mood for it. Tell me who he is.”

Patty had never known Roger to be so out of temper, and she resented his tone, which was almost rude. Now, for all her sweetness, Patty had a touch of perversity in her nature, and Roger had roused it. So she said: “I don't know why you speak like that, Roger. He's a friend of Mona's, and lives at the Hotel Plaza, where she lives.”

“The fact that two people live in the same big hotel doesn't give them the right to be friends,” growled Roger. “Who introduced them, anyhow?”

“I don't know, I'm sure,” said Patty, her patience exhausted; “but Mr. Galbraith knows him, so it must be all right.”

Patty was not quite ingenuous in this speech, for she knew perfectly well, from what Mr. Galbraith had said to her, that it was not all right. But she was irritated by Roger's demeanour, and perversely disagreed with him.

“Well, I don't believe he's all right; I don't like his looks a bit, and, Patty, you know as well as I do, that the Galbraiths are not quite competent always to select the people best worth knowing.”

“Oh, what a fuss you are, Roger; and it's hardly fair when you don't know anything at all about Mr. Lansing.”

“Do you?”

“No,” and then Patty hesitated. She did know something,—she knew what Mr. Galbraith had told her. But she was not of a mind to tell this to Roger. “I only met him as I was introduced,” she said, “and Mona has never so much as even mentioned him to me.”

“Didn't she ask you if she might bring him to-night?”

“No; I suppose, as an intimate friend, she didn't think that necessary.”

"It *was* necessary, Patty, and you know it, if Mona doesn't. Now, look here; you and I are Mona's friends; and if there are any social matters that she isn't quite familiar with, it's up to us to help her out a little. And I, for one, don't believe that man is the right sort for her to be acquainted with; and I'm going to find out about him."

"Well, I'm sure I'm willing you should, Roger; but you needn't make such a bluster about it."

"I'm not making a bluster, Patty."

"You are so!"

"I am not!"

And then they both realised that they were bickering like two children, and they laughed simultaneously as they swept on round the dancing-room. The music stopped just then, and as they were near a window-seat, Patty sat down for a moment. "You go on, Roger," she said, "and hunt up your next partner, or fight a duel with Mr. Lansing, or do whatever amuses you. My partner will come to hunt me up, I'm sure, and I'll just wait here."

"Who is your next partner, Patty?"

"Haven't looked at my card; but, never mind, he'll come. You run along."

As Roger's next partner was Mona, and as he was anxious to talk to her about her new friend, Roger obeyed Patty's bidding and strolled away.

Patty sat alone for a moment, knowing full well who was her next partner, and then Mr. Lansing appeared and made a low bow before her.

Now, Patty had not chosen to express to Roger her real opinion of this new man, but in reality she did not approve of him. Though fairly good-looking and correctly dressed, there was about him a certain something—or perhaps, rather, he lacked a certain something that invariably stamps the well-bred man. He stared at Patty a trifle too freely; he sat down beside her with a little too much informality; and he began conversation a little too familiarly. All of these things Patty saw and resented, but as hostess she could not, of course, be openly rude.

"Nice, jolly rooms you've got here for a party," Mr. Lansing remarked, rolling his eyes about appreciatively, "and a jolly lot of people, too. Some class to 'em!"

Patty looked at him coldly. She was not accustomed to this style of expression. Her friends perhaps occasionally used a slang word or term, but it was done in a spirit of gaiety or as a jest, whereas this man used his expressions as formal conversation.

"Yes, I have many kind and delightful friends," said Patty, a little stiffly.

"You sure have! Rich, too, most of 'em."

Patty made no response to this, and Mr. Lansing turned suddenly to look at her. "I say, Miss Fairfield, do you know what I think? I think you are prejudiced against me, and I think somebody put you up to it, and I think I know who. Now, look here, won't you give me a fair show? Do you think it's just to judge a man by what other people say about him?"

"How do you know I've heard anything about you, Mr. Lansing?"

"Well, you give me the icy glare before I've said half a dozen words to you! So, take it from me, somebody's been putting you wise to my defects."

He wagged his head so sagaciously at this speech, that Patty was forced to smile. On a sudden impulse, she decided to speak frankly. "Suppose I tell you the truth, Mr. Lansing, that I'm not accustomed to being addressed in such—well, in such slangy terms."

"Oh, is that it? Pooh, I'll bet those chums of yours talk slang to you once in a while."

"What my chums may do is no criterion for an absolute stranger,"—and now Patty spoke very haughtily indeed.

"That's so, Miss Fairfield; you're dead right,—and I apologise. But, truly, it's a habit with me. I'm from Chicago, and I believe people use more slang out there."

"The best Chicago people don't," said Patty, seriously.

Mr. Lansing smiled at her, a trifle whimsically.

"I'm afraid I don't class up with the best people," he confessed; "but if it will please you better, I'll cut out the slang. Shall we have a turn at this two-step?"

Patty rose without a word, and in a moment they were circling the floor. Mr. Lansing was a good dancer, and especially skilful in guiding his partner. Patty, herself such an expert dancer, was peculiarly sensitive to the good points of a partner, and she enjoyed the dance with Mr. Lansing, even though she felt she did not like the man. And yet he had a certain fascination in his manner, and when the dance was over, Patty looked at him with kinder eyes than she had when they began. But all that he had won of her favour he lost by his final speech, for as the dance ended, he said, brusquely: "Now, I'll tumble you into a seat, and chase my next victim."

Patty stood looking after him, almost moved to laughter at what he had said, and yet indignant that a man, and a comparative stranger, should address her thus.

"What's the matter, Lady Fair?" and Philip Van Reypen came up to her. "Methinks thou hast a ruffled brow."

"No, it's my frock that's ruffled," said Patty, demurely. "You men know so little of millinery!"

"That's true enough, and if you will smile again, I'll drop the subject of ruffles. And now for my errand; will you go out to supper with me?"

"Goodness, is it supper time? I thought the evening had scarcely begun!"

"Alas! look at the programme," and Van Reypen showed her that it was, indeed, time for intermission.

"Intermission is French for supper," he said, gravely, "and I'd like to know if you'd rather sit on the stairs in good old orthodox party fashion, or if you'd rather go to the dining-room in state?"

"Who are on the stairs?"

"I shall be, if you are. You don't want to know more than that, do you?" The young man's gaze was so reproachful that Patty giggled.

"You are a great factor in my happiness, Mr. Van Reypen," she said, saucily; "but you are not all the world to me! So, if I flock on the stairs with you, I must know what other doves will be perching there."

"Oh, doves!" in a tone of great relief. "I thought you wanted to know what men you would find there,—you inveterate coquette, you! Well, Elise is there waiting for you, and Miss Farley."

"And Mona Galbraith?"

"I don't know; I didn't see Miss Galbraith. But if you will go with me, I will accumulate for you any young ladies you desire."

"And any men?"

"The men I shall have to fight off, not invite!"

Laughing at each other's chaff, they sauntered across to the hall and found the stairs already pretty well occupied.

"Why is it," Mr. Hepworth was saying, "that you young people prefer the stairs to the nice, comfortable seats at little tables in the dining-room?"

"Habit," said Patty, laughing, as she made her way up a few steps; "I've always eaten my party suppers on the stairs, and I dare say I always shall. When I build a house I shall have a great, broad staircase, like they have in palaces, and then everybody can eat on the stairs."

"I'm going to give a party," announced Van Reypen, "and it's going to be in the new Pennsylvania Station. There are enormous staircases there."

"All right, I'll come to it," said Patty, and then Mona and Mr. Lansing came strolling along the hall, and demanded room on the stairs also.

"Seats all taken," declared Roger, who had had a real tiff with Mona on the subject of her new friend. The others, too, did not seem to welcome Mr. Lansing, and though one or two moved slightly, they did not make room for the newcomers.

Patty was uncertain what she ought to do. She remembered what Mr. Galbraith had said, and she felt that to send Mona and Mr. Lansing away would be to throw them more exclusively in each other's society; and she thought that Mr. Galbraith meant for her to keep Mona under her own eye as much as possible. But to call the pair upon the stairs and make room for them would annoy, she felt sure, the rest of the group.

She looked at Roger and at Philip Van Reypen, and both of them gave her an eloquent glance of appeal not to add to their party. Then she chanced to glance at Mr. Hepworth and found him smiling at her. She thought she knew what he meant, and immediately she said, "Come up here by me, Mona; and you come too, Mr. Lansing. We can make room easily if we move about a little."

There was considerable moving about, and finally Patty found herself at the top of the group with Mona and Mr. Lansing. Christine and Mr. Hepworth were directly below them, and then Elise and Kenneth.

Mr. Van Reypen and Roger Farrington declared their intention of making a raid on the dining-room and kidnapping waiters with trays of supplies. On their return the supper plates were passed up to those on the stairs, and Van Reypen and Roger calmly walked away.

Patty knew perfectly well what they meant. They intended her to understand that if she and Mona persisted in cultivating the acquaintance of the man they considered objectionable, they did not care to be of the party.

"Which is perfectly ridiculous!" said Patty to herself, as she realised the state of things. "Those boys needn't think they can dictate to me at my own party!"

Whereupon, perverse Patty began to make herself extremely and especially agreeable to Mr. Lansing, and Mona was greatly delighted at the turn things had taken.

Christine and Mr. Hepworth joined in the conversation, and perhaps because of what Patty had said earlier in the evening, Mr. Lansing avoided to a great extent the use of slang expressions, and made himself really interesting and entertaining.

"What a fascinating man he is," said Christine later, to Patty, when Mona and her new friend had walked away to the "extra" supper dance.

"Do you think so?" said Patty, looking at Christine in astonishment. "He was rather nicer than I thought him at first, but, Christine, I never dreamed *you* would approve of him! But you never can tell when a quiet little mouse like you is going to break loose. Why did you like him, Christine?"

"I don't know exactly; only he seemed so breezy and unusual."

"Yes, he's that," and Patty wagged her head, knowingly; "but I don't like him very much, Christine, and you mustn't, either. Now run away and play."

Patty's last direction was because she saw a young man coming to ask Christine for this dance; while two others were rapidly coming toward herself.

The rest of the evening was danced gaily away, but neither Roger nor Philip Van Reypen came near Patty. To be sure, she had plenty of partners, but she felt a little offended at her two friends' attitude, for she knew she hadn't really deserved it.

But when the dance was over, Patty's good-nights to Roger and Philip were quite as gentle and cordial as those she said to any one else. She smiled her best smiles at them, and though not as responsive as usual, they made polite adieux and departed with no further reference to the troublesome matter.

## CHAPTER III

### HAPPY SATURDAYS

As was not to be wondered at, Patty slept late the next morning. And when she awakened, she lay, cozily tucked in her coverlets, thinking over the occurrences of the night before.

Presently Jane came in with a dainty tray of chocolate and rolls, and then, with some big, fluffy pillows behind her, Patty sat up in bed, and thoughtfully nibbled away at a crust.

Then Nan came in, in her pretty morning gown, and, drawing up a little rocker, sat down by Patty's bedside.

"Are you in mood for a gossip, Patty?" she asked, and Patty replied, "Yes, indeedy! I want to talk over the whole thing. In the first place, Nan, it was a howling, screaming success, wasn't it?"

"Why, yes, of course; how could it be otherwise? with the nicest people and the nicest flowers and the nicest girl in New York City!"

"In the whole United States, you mean," said Patty, complacently, as she took a spoonful of chocolate. "Yes, the party in all its parts was all right. There wasn't a flaw. But, oh, Nan, I got into a scrap with the boys."

"What boys? and what *is* a scrap? Patty, now that you're out, you mustn't use those slang words you're so fond of."

"Nan," and Patty shook her spoon solemnly at her stepmother, "I've come to realise that there is slang and slang. Now, the few little innocent bits I use, don't count at all, because I just say them for fun and to help make my meaning clear. But that man last night,—that Lansing man,—why, Nan, his slang is altogether a different matter."

"Well, Patty, he, himself, seems to be an altogether different matter from the people we know."

"Yes, doesn't he? And yet, Nan, he isn't so bad. Well, anyway, let me tell you what Mr. Galbraith says."

"That's just it!" declared Nan, after Patty had finished her story. "That man *is* a fortune-hunter, and he means to try to marry Mona for the sake of her father's money!"

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Patty, laughing; "isn't it grand to be grown up! I see I'm mixed up in a matrimonial tangle already!"

"Nothing of the sort, you foolish child! There won't be any matrimonial tangle. Mr. Galbraith is quite right; this man must be discouraged, and Mona must be made to see him in his true light."

"But, Nan, he isn't so awful. You know, sometimes he was quite fascinating."

"Yes, you think that, because he has big dark eyes and rolled them at you."

"Goodness! it sounds like a game of bowls. No, I don't mean that; but—well, I'll tell you what I do mean. He said we weren't fair to him, to judge him adversely, not knowing anything about him. And I think so, too, Nan; it doesn't seem fair or right to say a man is a bounder,—that's what Roger called him,—when we don't know anything about him, really."

"Patty, you're a goose! Don't you suppose we'll find out about him? Of course, *we* can't, but your father and Mr. Galbraith,—yes, and Roger Farrington, will soon find out his standing."

"Well," said Patty, with a relieved sigh, "then I needn't bother about *him* any more. But, Nan, I have troubles of my own. Philip and Roger are both mad at me!"

"Goodness! Patty, how awful! Do you suppose they'll stay mad all day?"

"Oh, it isn't just a momentary tiff; they are up and down angry! Why, neither of them danced with me or even spoke to me after supper last night!"

"Well, it was probably your own fault."

"My own fault, indeed! It was all because of that horrid Lansing man. Well, if they want to stay mad, they may! *I* shan't make any advances."



“Don’t worry, my child. Into each life some little squabbles must fall,—and though you’re fairly good-natured, as a rule, you can’t expect it always to be smooth sailing.”

Seeing she could get no sympathy from her stepmother, Patty dropped the subject of her quarrels, and remarked, with a yawn, “Well, I suppose I may as well get up, and begin on those flower notes. What shall I say, Nan, something like this? ‘Miss Patricia Fairfield thanks you for your kind donation of expensive blossoms, but as it’s such a bother to write the notes of acknowledgment, she really wishes you hadn’t sent them.’”

“What base ingratitude! Patty, I’m ashamed of you! or I would be, if I thought you meant a word of it, but I know you don’t. What are you doing this afternoon?”

“Oh, I forgot to tell you. We’re going to have a club, just a little club,—only four of us girls. And, Nan, you know there are so many clubs that make an awful fuss and yet don’t really *do* anything. Well, this is going to be a *Doing* Club. We’re going to be real *doers*.”

“It sounds lovely, Patty. What are you going to do?”

“We don’t know yet, that’s what the meeting’s for this afternoon. But we’re going to do good, you know—some kind of good. You know, Nan, I always said I didn’t want to be just a social butterfly and nothing else. I want to accomplish something that will give some joy or comfort to somebody.”

Patty’s blue eyes looked very earnest and sincere as she said this, and Nan kissed her, saying, “I know you do, Patty, dearest, and I know you’ll succeed in your doing. If I can help you in any way, be sure to ask me; and now I’ll run away and let you dress.”

Patty made a leisurely toilette; and then, in a trailing blue silk negligée, she went into her boudoir and began to write her notes.

It was not a difficult task, and she did not really mind it, though it was a long list. But Patty had a knack at writing graceful little notes, and although she jested about it, she was really grateful to the kind friends who had sent the flowers.

“I don’t know *why* I have so many friends,” she said to herself, as she scanned the rows of names. “To be sure, a great many are really friends of father’s and Nan’s, but there’s a lot of our crowd, too, and lots of out of town people. Perhaps it would be a good idea to do the farthest away first, and so work back to New York.”

Patty picked up Mr. Farnsworth’s card, and read again the message on it. “H’m,” she said to herself, “it sounds to me a trifle formal and conventional—considering all things. Now, Little Billee is a Western man,—but how different he is from that Lansing person! I wonder what makes the difference. Little Billee isn’t formal or conventional a bit, and yet his manners are as far removed from Horace Lansing’s as white is from black. Oh, well, I know the reason well enough. It’s because Little Billee is a thorough gentleman at heart; and the other one is,—well, I guess he’s what Roger called him. Now, what shall I say to Mr. William Farnsworth by way of thanks for his truly beautiful pink roses? I’d like to write a nice, every-day letter, and tell him all about the party and everything; but, as he just sent his visiting card, with a mere line on it, I suppose I must reply very formally.”

Patty began her formal note, but tore up half a dozen beginnings before she completed one to her satisfaction. This one read, “Miss Patricia Fairfield thanks Mr. William Farnsworth sincerely for his exquisite gift of roses, and for his kind congratulations.”

Patty gave a little sigh as she sealed this missive and addressed it to her friend in Arizona.

With the exception of the roses, Patty had never heard a word from Big Bill since they were at Spring Beach together. She had told her father and Nan of what Mr. Farnsworth had said to her down there, and as they had agreed that Patty was altogether too young even to think of such a thing as being engaged to anybody, it was wiser to hold no correspondence with him at all.

Apparently, this in no way disappointed the young man, for he had made no effort on his part to recall himself to Patty’s remembrance, until the occasion of sending the flowers.

Patty had liked Bill extremely, but as Arizona was far away, and she had no reason to think she would ever see him again, she gave him few thoughts. However, the thoughts, when she did allow

them to come, were pleasant ones. Although she had sealed the note she intended to send, she began another one, and the opening words were "Little Billee." This note she wrote in the first person, and thanked him simply and naturally for the flowers. Then, for a signature, she made a carefully and daintily drawn pen-and-ink sketch of an apple blossom. She was clever at flower-sketching, and she sat a moment admiring her own handiwork. Then a flush spread over her pretty face, and she spoke sternly to herself, as was her habit when she disapproved of her own actions.

"Patty Fairfield," she said, reprovingly, "you ought to be ashamed to think of sending a personal, lettery sort of a note like that, to a man who sent you the formalest kind of a message! He only sent the flowers, because convention demanded it! He never gave you one single thought after that last time he saw you,—and that's all there is about *that*!"

And then, to her great surprise, luncheon was announced, and she found that her whole morning was gone and only one name on her list crossed off!

The club that met that afternoon in Mona's pretty sitting-room in the Plaza Hotel, consisted of only four girls—Patty, Mona, Elise, and Clementine Morse.

It was thought wiser to start with a few earnest members and then enlarge the number later if it seemed advisable.

"What a beautiful room!" said Clementine, as she tossed off her furs. "Don't you like it, Mona, to live in a big hotel like this, and yet have your own rooms, like a home all to yourself?"

"Yes, I like it in some ways; but I'm alone a great deal. However, I would be that, if father and I lived in a house or an apartment."

"You ought to have a companion of some sort, Mona," said Patty, who thought this a good opportunity to urge Mr. Galbraith's wishes.

"No, thank you," and Mona tossed her head, disdainfully; "I know what companions are! Snoopy old maids who won't let you do anything, or careless, easy-going old ladies who pay no attention to you. If I could have a companion of my own age and tastes, I'd like that,—but I suppose that wouldn't do."

"Hardly," said Elise, laughing; "that would only mean your father would have two troublesome girls to look after instead of one. And I daresay, Mona, you are quite as much as he can handle."

"I suppose I am. But he's so good to me I'm afraid he spoils me. But come on, girls, let's organise our club."

"Don't let's have too much organisation," said Clementine. "Do you know, I think lots of clubs, especially charity clubs, have so much organisation that they haven't anything else. One club I joined fell to pieces before it was fairly started, because the two vice-presidents squabbled so."

"If there's anything I hate," declared Patty, "it's a squabble. Whatever else we girls do, let's try not to have any friction. Now, I know perfectly well that none of us four is *very* meek or mild."

"I am," declared Elise, assuming an angelic expression, which made them all laugh, for Elise was really the one most likely to take offence at trifles, or to flare up impulsively if any one disagreed with her.

Patty knew this only too well, and was trying to forestall it by a preliminary treaty of peace.

"Well, then, let's be an organisation that doesn't organise," said Mona, "but let's be it *now*."

"I think," said Patty, "that our end and aim ought to be to do good to somebody who doesn't expect it. Now, that isn't quite what I mean,—I mean to people who wouldn't accept it if it seemed like charity, but to whom we could give a pleasure that they would really like."

"Patty, my child," said Clementine, "I think your ideas are all right, but I must say you don't express them very clearly. Let's get down to something definite. Do you mean to give material things, —like presents or money?"

"That's just exactly what I *don't* mean, Clem! Don't you remember that little club we used to have at school,—the Merry Grigs?"

"Indeed I do! All we had to do was to be merry and gay."

“Well, that’s what I mean,—in a way,—if you know what I mean.”

“Oh, Patty,” cried Mona, “I never knew you to be so hopelessly vague. Now, for instance, how would it be if we gave a lovely motor ride to some poor shop girl, or somebody that never gets into a motor?”

“That’s it!” cried Clementine, approvingly; “I was thinking of sending flowers to hospitals, but that’s so general. Now, your suggestion, Mona, is definite, and just the right sort of thing.”

“But aren’t we going to have a president and treasurer, and things like that?” asked Elise.

“No,” said Patty; “my mind is clearing now, and I begin to see our club. Instead of a president, we’ll all four be presidents, and instead of a treasurer, we’ll all four be treasurers. We’ll give money when it’s necessary, or we’ll use our motor cars, or buy flowers, or whatever we like; but we won’t have dues and officers and things.”

“But the shop girls are always busy; how can we take them motoring?” asked Elise.

“That was only a suggestion,” said Mona; “it needn’t be exactly a shop girl; but anybody we know of, who would enjoy a little unexpected pleasure.”

“The principle is exactly right,” said Clementine; “now, let’s get it down to practicability. As Mona says, we needn’t necessarily choose a shop girl,—but suppose we do, many of them are free Saturday afternoon.”

“Only in the summer time,” objected Elise.

“Yes, perhaps, in the big shops; but there are lots of them, in offices,—or even school teachers,—who would be free Saturday afternoons. Well, anyway, here’s what I’m thinking of, and you can all say what you think of it. Suppose we try, every week, to give a happy Saturday afternoon to somebody who wouldn’t have it otherwise.”

“The Happy Saturday Afternoon Club!” cried Patty; “that’s a lovely name! let’s do it!”

“But,” said Elise, “that would mean giving up our Saturday afternoons. Do we want to do that? What about matinées?”

“I think we ought to be willing to sacrifice something,” said Patty, thoughtfully; “but I do love Saturday matinées.”

“Oh, if there’s anything especial, we needn’t consider ourselves bound to give up the afternoon,” said Clementine. “For that matter, we could send a couple of girls for a motor ride without going ourselves.”

“But that’s more like charity,” objected Patty: “I meant to go with them, and be real nice and pleasant with them, and make a bright spot in their lives that they would always remember.”

“They’d always remember you, Patty, if you were the bright spot,” declared Mona, who idolised her friend. “But I must confess I do like to be definite about this thing. Now, how’s this for a plan? To-day’s Thursday. Suppose we begin on Saturday and make a start at something. Suppose we each of us pick out a girl,—or a boy, for that matter,—or a child or anybody, and think what we can do to make them happy on Saturday afternoon.”

“Now we’re getting somewhere,” said Elise, approvingly. “I’ve picked mine already. She’s a girl who comes to our house quite often to sew for the children. She’s a sweet little thing, but she looks as if she never had a real good time in all her life. Now, can the rest of you think of anybody like that?”

“Yes, I have one,” said Mona. “Your suggestion made me think of her. She’s my manicure girl. She comes here, and sometimes she’s so tired she’s ready to drop! She works awfully hard, and never takes a day off, because she has to support two little sisters. But I’ll make her take a holiday Saturday afternoon, somehow.”

“There’s a girl I’d like to have,” said Clementine, thoughtfully; “she’s at the ribbon counter in Walker’s. She always waits on me there; and she has such a wistful air, I’d like to do her a kindness. I don’t suppose she could get off,—but I could go and ask the head of the department, and perhaps he’d let her.”

"I can't think of anybody," said Patty, "except one person, that I would simply *love* to have. And that's a very tired and cross-looking lady who gives out embroidery patterns in a dreadful place, way down town. I believe it would sweeten her up for a year to have a little spree with us."

"All right," said Mona. "Now we have selected our guests, what shall we do with them? Say, a motor ride and a cup of tea afterward in some pretty tea room?"

"I think," said Elise, "that we'd better give them luncheon first. They can't enjoy a motor ride if they're hungry, and they probably will be."

"Luncheon where?" said Patty, looking puzzled; "at one of our houses?"

"I could have them here, easily enough," said Mona. "Our dining-room here, would really be better than any of the homes of you girls. Because you all have people, and I haven't. Father would just as lieve lunch downstairs, in the main dining-room."

"That's lovely of you, Mona," said Patty. "I was going to suggest some small, quiet restaurant, but a luncheon here in your pretty dining-room would indeed be a bright spot for them to remember. But suppose they won't come?"

"Then we must ask someone instead," said Clementine; "let's promise each to bring someone with us on Saturday, and if the first one we ask declines, keep on asking till we get somebody. Of course, Mona, we'll share the expense of the luncheon equally."

"Nonsense," returned Mona; "I'll be glad to give that."

"No," said Patty, firmly; "we'll each pay a quarter of whatever the luncheon costs. And let's have it good and substantial, and yet have some pretty, fancy things too. For, you know, this isn't a charity or a soup kitchen,—it's to give those girls a bright and beautiful scene to look back on."

"Oh, it will be lovely!" cried Mona. "I'll have pretty place cards, and favours, and everything."

"But we mustn't overdo it," said Clementine.

"You know, to the unaccustomed, an elaborate table may prove embarrassing."

"That will be all right," said Patty, smiling. "Mona can fix her table, and I'll come over before the luncheon, and if she has too many or too grand flumadiddles, I'll take some of them off. I don't want our guests struck dumb by too much grandeur, but I do want things pretty and nice. Suppose we each bring a favor for our own guest."

"Something useful?" said Elise.

"No; *not* a suit of flannel underwear or a pair of shoes! But a pretty necktie or handkerchief, if you like, or even a little gold pin, or a silver one."

"Or a picture or cast," said Clementine.

"Yes," and Patty nodded approval; "but it ought to be a little thing that would look like a luncheon souvenir and not like a Christmas present. I think they ought to be all alike."

"So do I," said Mona, "and I think a little pin in a jeweler's box will be the prettiest; and then a lovely bunch of flowers at each plate, and an awfully pretty place-card."

"Oh, it will be beautiful!" cried Patty, jumping up and dancing about the room; "but I must flit, girls,—I have an engagement at five. Wait, what about motors? I'm sure we can use our big car."

"And ours," said all the rest together.

"Well, we'll need two," said Clementine, "and two of us girls and two guests can go in each. We'll see which cars can be used most conveniently; perhaps our fathers may have something to say on that subject. But we can arrange all such things by telephone to-morrow. The main thing is to get our guests."

"Oh, we'll do that," said Patty, "if we have to go out into the highways and hedges after them."

## CHAPTER IV

### AN INVITATION

The next morning Patty started off in her own little electric runabout with Miller, the chauffeur. She let him drive, and gave the address, as she stepped in, "The Monongahela Art Embroidery Company," adding a number in lower Broadway.

The correct Miller could not suppress a slight smile as he said, "Where I took you once before, Miss Patty?" And Patty smiled, as she said, "Yes, Miller."

But it was with a different feeling that she entered the big building this time, and she went straight to department B. On her way she met the red-headed boy who had so amused her when she was there a year ago.

He greeted her with the same lack of formality that had previously characterised him.

"Is youse up against it again?" he inquired, grinning broadly. "I t'ought youse didn't get no cinch, and had to can de whole projick."

"I'm not on the same 'projick' now," said Patty, smiling at him. "Is department B in the same place?"

"Sure it is," and for some reason the boy added, "miss," after a momentary pause, which made Patty realise his different attitude toward her, now that she wore a more elaborate costume, than when he had seen her in a purposely plain little suit.

"And is the same lady still in charge of it?"

"Yep; dey ain't nuttin' lessen dynnimate goin' to boost Mis' Greene outen o' here!"

"Then Mrs. Greene is the lady I want to see," and Patty threaded her way through the narrow passages between the piled up boxes.

"No pass needed; she's a free show," the boy called after her, and in a moment Patty found herself again in the presence of the sharp-faced, tired-looking woman whom she had once interviewed regarding her embroidery work.

"This is Mrs. Greene, isn't it?" said Patty, pleasantly.

"Yes, I am," snapped the woman. "You don't want work again, do you?"

"No," said Patty, smiling, "I come this time on quite a different errand."

"Then you don't want to see *me*. I'm here only to give out work. Did Mr. Myers send you?"

"No, I came of my own accord. Now, Mrs. Greene, forget the work for a moment, and let me tell you what I want."

"If it's subscribin' to any fund, or belongin' to any working woman's club run by you swell ladies, you can count me out. I ain't got time for foolishness."

"It isn't anything like that," and Patty laughed so merrily that Mrs. Greene's hard face softened in spite of herself. "Well, what is it?" she asked, in a less belligerent tone.

"It's only this," and though Patty's errand had seemed to her simple enough before she came in, she now began to wonder how Mrs. Greene would take it. "Some friends of mine and I are asking three or four people to lunch with us and take a little motor ride on Saturday, and I want you to come as my guest?"

"What!" and Mrs. Greene's face was blank with amazement, but her manner betokened an impending burst of wrath.

Patty realised that the woman's pride was up in arms at the idea of patronage, and she was at her wit's end how to make the real spirit of her invitation understood.

As it chanced, she unwittingly took the right tack. So earnest was she that her lips quivered a little, and her eyes showed a pleading, pathetic expression, as she said, "*Please* don't misunderstand

me, Mrs. Greene. If you would enjoy it, I want you to come to our party on Saturday as our welcome guest. If you wouldn't enjoy it,—just say so,—but—but *don't* scold me!”

Mrs. Greene looked puzzled, and then the hard, stern mouth broke into an actual smile.

“Well, I declare,” she said, “I do believe you've got a real heart!”

“And I do believe that *you* have!” exclaimed Patty. “And, now that we know the truth about each other, you'll come, won't you?”

“Tell me about it,” and the speaker seemed still uncertain, though wavering.

So Patty told her, honestly and straightforwardly, the circumstances of the party, and wound up by saying, “I truly want you, Mrs. Greene, for the simple reason that I want you to enjoy the afternoon,—and for no other reason.”

“And I'll come, and be awful glad of the chance! Why, I've never had a ride in a motor car in my life, and I've never eaten in one of those fandangle hotels; and the way you put it, I'm just crazy to go!”

“Do you have holiday Saturday afternoon?”

“Yes, all these downtown places do.”

“Very well, then, I shall expect you at the Plaza at one o'clock. Ask for Miss Galbraith, and they will show you right up to her rooms.”

“Land! it does seem too good to be true! Say, Miss Fairfield, I've only got a black mohair to wear,—will that do?”

“Of course it will. Maybe you've a pretty bit of embroidery or something to lighten it up a little.”

“Yes, I've got a linjerry collar and cuffs that I've just been achin' to wear ever since my sister gave them to me last Christmas.”

“Then I shall expect you on Saturday, and I'm so glad.”

With a smiling bow, Patty started away, but she saw by Mrs. Greene's face, there was something left unsaid.

“What is it?” she asked, kindly, stepping back again to the counter.

“Say, Miss Fairfield,” and Mrs. Greene twisted her fingers a little nervously, “don't think this is queer,—but won't you wear one of your real pretty dresses? I do like to see a pretty, stylish dress,—and I never get a chance.”

“Of course I will,” said Patty, heartily; “I've a brand-new one that I've never worn, and I'll honour the occasion with it, on Saturday.”

And then Patty went away, greatly pleased at her success.

“Had quite a buzz, didn't yer?” observed the red-headed boy, looking at Patty with curiosity, as she passed him.

“Yes, I did. By the way, young man, what is your name?”

“Rosy; should think you'd know without askin',” and he grabbed a bunch of his red hair with a comical grin.

“Well, I didn't know whether it was that or Freckles,” said Patty, who was moved to chaff him, by reason of his good-natured *camaraderie*.

“Might just as well 'a' been,” and Rosy grinned wider than ever.

Patty nodded a good-bye, and went on, rapidly turning over in her mind a new plan that would include Rosy in some future happy Saturday afternoon. But this plan must wait for development, as the coming Saturday was enough to occupy her thoughts for the present.

“Home, Miller,” she said, as she took her seat. Miller gave a relieved sigh, for he was always more or less afraid of Patty's escapades; and he didn't like to have her go alone into these strange buildings.

They whizzed homeward, and at luncheon time Patty gave Nan a graphic account of her interview with Mrs. Greene.

“I think that's the funniest of all,” said Nan, “that she should want you to wear your elaborate clothes.”

“So do I,” said Patty. “We girls had planned to wear our plainest dresses, thinking to make our guests feel more at ease. And when Madame Greene spoke of her black mohair, I thought I’d even rip the trimming off my brown waist! But not so,—far otherwise. So I shall get me into that new American Beauty satin, and I hope to goodness it will suit her taste. I expect she’s fearfully critical.”

“Perhaps the other girls’ guests won’t feel as Mrs. Greene does about this matter. What then?”

“Now, Nan, don’t stir up trouble! I have only my own guest to look after, and I shall dress my part. The others will have to do as seemeth unto them best. Oh, Nan, it’s going to be heaps of fun!”

“Yes, if it turns out right,—without any awkwardness or embarrassment.”

“Oh, you old wet blanket! Now, you know perfectly well, we’re doing our best. And if we’re awkward, we can’t help it. We’re going this afternoon to get the favours. What do you think of little pins,—silver gilt, or enamel?”

“They’d be all right, or hatpins, either.”

“No, hatpins everybody has. And they don’t show, anyhow. That amethyst one of mine always hides itself behind a bow or a feather. No; I’m sure a nice little round brooch is the best thing.”

“How about gloves?”

“Or overshoes? or knitted wash-cloths? Nan, can’t I bang it into your head that this affair is for pleasure, not profit? Would you give *your* luncheon guests gloves as souvenirs?”

“I suppose you’re right, Patty. But it *is* an experiment.”

“Of course it is! And it’s going to be a successful one, and the forerunner of many others!”

Half an hour before luncheon time, Patty walked into Mona’s dining-room. She wore her new gown of American Beauty satin, softly draped with a thin black marquissette, and a soft sash of black satin. Her hat was all black, with a Beauty rose tucked under the brim, and resting against her fair hair.

Mona surveyed her with delight. “You look unusually well, Patty,—but that’s not saying anything unusual, for you always look unusually well.”

“Good gracious, Mona, what kind of English is that? And a doubtful compliment beside! But I see you’re preoccupied, so I shan’t expect much appreciation of my new costume. Simple but tasty, isn’t it?”

As she spoke, Patty was looking at herself in a long mirror and craning her neck to get a view of her back. She was fond of pretty clothes, and her new gown, though rich, was really simple in line and colouring.

“Your table is beautiful, Mona,” she said, suddenly bringing her attention from her own raiment to the festal preparation.

The girls had decided that, since Christmas was only about a fortnight away, it would be attractive to use Christmas decorations for their party. And so the round table showed crossed strips of broad red ribbon, under bands of lace, and a central decoration of a real Christmas tree, with beautiful fancy ornaments and colored electric lights. At each place was an elaborate bonbonnière of Christmas red, decked with sprays of holly. The place cards were Christmassy; and the little brooches they had bought, were in dainty boxes tied with holly ribbon.

“It’s perfectly lovely, Mona,” said Patty, enthusiastically. “There isn’t a bit too much of anything, and it’s just as cheery and jolly as it can be.”

“I thought I wouldn’t have any flowers on the table,” Mona explained, “for they didn’t go with the other things. So, you see, I’ve these four big bunches of red carnations around the room, and I shall give them each one to take home. Of course, I have boxes ready for them,—and then, Patty, I thought we’d distribute the Christmas tree decorations among them,—and I have the boxes big, so we can put those and the place-cards and candy-boxes and souvenirs all in them. And then, you know, it won’t seem like *giving* them things; for you know yourself how keen people are to take away their place cards and such things.”



"They are, indeed! I've been *surprised* the people who have *everything* will gather up their cards and trumpery boxes after a luncheon! And your thoughtfulness is lovely, Mona. We'll each give them our own place-card and box, too."

"Yes; and then, you see, they'll have quite a few little things for their own Christmas, and that will make them remember the 'bright spot' all the more."

"Of course it will! Mona, you're a perfect *darling*!" And Patty grasped Mona's shoulders and swung her about in a mad dance of jubilation.

"And, Patty," Mona went on, "Mr. Lansing wants to help us with our Happy Saturdays Club. He says he could go with us some afternoon, to take a lot of newsboys to the circus."

"Why, Mona Galbraith!" and Patty stared at her friend in astonishment. "Have you been telling *him* about our club?"

"Yes; of course, I have. It's no secret society, is it?"

"No; but we don't want men for members."

"But, Patty, he would be a help. I'd love to give some of those poor little newsboys a good time, and we couldn't do it, just by ourselves."

Suddenly, Patty thought of "Rosy," and her idea of including him in some of their plans. To be sure, it would be better to have a man to help manage such a project. But not Mr. Lansing!

"No, Mona," she said; "our club is made up of just us four girls, and we can find plenty to do among girls or women. At least, for this winter. If it's all a success, we can do more next winter, and perhaps get some men to help us then. If we want to take newsboys to the circus, father will go with us. Don't be everlastingly dragging in that Mr. Lansing."

"I'm *not* dragging him in! He kindly offered to help. But of course,—if you don't want him—"

"Well, I don't! And, look here, Mona, I wish you'd let him alone, yourself. He's not like the men of our set, and I want you to realise that. Roger says he's a bounder,—if you know what that is."

"Pooh! Roger is jealous."

"Yes, I think he is. But, aside from that, he's right about Mr. Lansing not being the right kind of a friend for you. Philip Van Reypen says the same thing."

"Oh, pshaw! Mr. Van Reypen is an old stuck-up! He thinks nobody is any good if they don't begin their names with a Van."

"Now, Mona, don't be silly. I'm sure I don't know what you see so admirable in Mr. Lansing, but I do think you ought to be advised by others who know better than you. Why, your own father doesn't like him."

"I know dad doesn't; but—well, all the same, I *do*! Why, Patty, he's awfully interesting, and he brings me flowers and candy and books—"

"Now, stop, Mona. You know you don't care for those things! You can have all you want, without Mr. Lansing's gifts. You like him, because he flatters you, and—well, I must admit that he has a way with him."

"Oh, yes, Patty, he has! Why, when you know him, he's really fascinating!"

"Well, don't let him fascinate you. He's loud, Mona. He's not our sort. Now, do promise me to see less of him, won't you? He seems to be calling on you very often."

"Yes, he does. But how can I stop that? I can't be rude to him."

"Well, you can be cool. Every girl can discourage a man's attentions, if she wants to."

"H'm; you seem to know a great deal about it."

"I only know what my common sense tells me. Mona, dear, *do* drop that man! Why, Roger is worth a dozen of him!"

"Roger's all right,—but Mr. Lansing is so,—so,—well, he's different."

"He is, indeed! And that's the trouble. The difference is all in Roger's favour, if you only could see it."

“Well, I can’t! Now, look here, Patty. You know how much I care for you, but I won’t have you talking to me like a Dutch Aunt. I made father bring me to New York this winter, so I could be near you, and we could have fun together. But, if you’re going to scold me all the time, we won’t have any fun at all.”

Patty began to realise that, though Mona might be coaxed, she could never be driven. So she concluded to drop the subject, and use more thought and tact in her endeavours to break up Mona’s new friendship.

And then Clementine Morse came, so the matter had to be laid aside.

“Is Jenny here?” asked Clementine, as she tossed off her furs.

“Jenny who?”

“My guest, Jenny Bisbee. She’s the ribbon girl I told you about. I had the greatest time to get her off for the afternoon. I had to go to Walker’s, you know, and see all sorts of Heads of Departments. My! they acted like Crowned Heads! They said it wouldn’t do at all,—it would establish a precedent,—and all sorts of things like that. But, somehow or other, I wheedled them into it, and at last they said Jenny might come. She was just crazy about it. She said, she never has any fun in her life, except looking at the new ribbons when they come in! Oh, girls, isn’t it awful *never* to have any fun? I expect Jenny will be embarrassed, but I’m sure she’ll enjoy it all. Oh, how lovely the table looks! Mona, you are a wonder! I never should have thought of all those Christmas fixings.”

“I’m glad you like them. Say, Clementine, don’t you think it would be nice to have men members in our club?”

“Why, I don’t know. No, I guess not, though my brother Clifford says it’s a great game, and he’d like to help us.”

“Yes, and I know another man who wants to help,” said Mona, eagerly, when Clementine interrupted her.

“I hope it isn’t that strange being you brought to Patty’s party! Wherever *did* you pick up that freak, Mona?”

“He *isn’t* a freak! Mr. Lansing is not a rich man, but he’s very exclusive. He told me so himself.”

“Don’t you believe it!” and Clementine laughed merrily. “As a rule, people who say themselves that they’re exclusive, are *not*. And one glance at that man is enough to show his standing.”

“What *is* his standing, then?” said Mona, sulkily.

“Outside the pale of society, if not outside the pale of civilisation,” retorted Clementine, who was plain-spoken.

“Don’t let’s talk about Mr. Lansing now,” broke in Patty, who feared an unpleasant element in their pleasant occasion. “And, anyway, here comes Elise.”

## CHAPTER V

### HAPPY GUESTS

Elise came in, bringing her guest with her. The three girls waiting in the sitting-room were surprised to see the small, dainty person whom Elise introduced as Miss Anna Gorman. She had a sweet, sad little face, and wore a simple one-piece gown of dove-grey voile. Her hat was grey, also; a turban shape, with a small knot of pink roses at one side. Anna was not pretty, but she had a refined air, and a gentle manner. Though embarrassed, she strove not to show it, and tried to appear at ease.

Mona greeted her cordially: "How do you do, Anna?" she said, for they had agreed to call the girls informally, by their Christian names. "I am glad to see you. Come with me into the boudoir, and lay off your coat." Mona herself assisted, for she thought it better not to have her maid about.

"I'm well, thank you," said Anna, in response to Mona's inquiry, and then she broke out, impulsively: "Oh, I'm so happy to be here! It was so heavenly kind of you young ladies to ask me. You don't *know* what it means to me!"

"Why, I'm very glad," said Mona, touched at the girl's gratitude. "Now, I hope you'll just have the time of your life!"

"Oh, I shall, indeed! I know it. I'm enjoying every minute, just being in these lovely rooms, and seeing you kind ladies."

Then Mona's manicure girl came. Her name was Celeste Arleson, and she was a tall, slender young woman, garbed all in black. It was the gown she always wore at her work, and, being of French descent, she had an air of charm that made her attractive.

"Good-morning, Celeste; come right in," said Mona, and then she introduced her to Anna.

The two looked at each other a little shyly, and then Anna said, "Good-morning," in a timid way. Mona felt embarrassed, too, and began to wonder if their party would be a failure, after all.

But Patty came in then and, with her ever-ready tact, took the two visitors to the drawing-room, and began to show them some pictures and curios.

Then Jenny Bisbee came, the girl from the ribbon counter, whom Clementine had invited.

"My, isn't this fine!" she exclaimed, as she met the others. "I just do think it's fine!"

"I'm glad we could arrange for you to come," said Clementine, cordially.

"Glad! My gracious, I guess I'm glad! Well! if you measured ribbon from morning till night, I guess you'd be glad to get away from it for once. Why, I measure ribbon in my dreams, from night till morning. I can't seem to get away from that everlasting stretching out of thirty-six inches, over and over again."

"But the ribbons are so pretty," said Clementine, by way of being agreeable.

"Yes; when they first come in. But after a few weeks you get so tired of the patterns. My, I feel as if I could throw that Dresden sash ribbon on the floor and stamp on it, I'm so tired of seeing it! And there's one piece of gay brocade that hits me in the eye every morning. I can't stand that piece much longer."

"I'll come round some day, and buy it," said Patty, laughing good-naturedly. "I didn't know the ribbons were so individual to you."

"Yes, they are. There's one piece of light blue satin ribbon, plain and wide, that I just love. It's a real comfort to me."

Jenny gave a little sigh, as she thought of her favourite ribbon, and Patty looked at her in wonderment, that she should be so sensitive to colour and texture. But her taste in colours did not seem to extend to her clothes. Jenny was a pale little thing, with ashy blonde hair, and large, light blue eyes. She wore a nondescript tan-coloured dress, without tone or shape; and she had a weary, exhausted air, as if chronically tired.

Conversation was a little difficult. The four hostesses tried their best to be entertaining without being patronising, but it was not an easy task. At least, their advances were not easily received, and the guests seemed to be on the alert to resent anything that savoured of patronage. But help came from an unexpected quarter. Just at one o'clock Mrs. Greene arrived.

"My land!" she exclaimed, as she entered the room, "if this isn't grand! I wouldn't of missed it for a farm! You see, I waited out on the corner, till it was just one o'clock. I know enough to get to a party just on the minute. My bringin' up was good, if I have fell off a little since. But my folks was always awful particular people,—wouldn't even take their pie in their hands. My husband, now, he was different. He wasn't a fool, nor he wasn't much else. But I only had him a year, and then he up and got killed in a rolling mill. Nice man, John, but not very forth-putting. So I've shifted for myself ever since. Not that I've done so awful well. I'm slow, I am. I never was one o' those to sew with a hot needle and a scorching thread, but I do my stent right along. But, my! how I do rattle on! You might think I don't often go in good society. Well, I don't! So I must make the most of this chance."

Mrs. Greene's chatter had been broken in upon by introductions and greetings, but that bothered her not at all. She nodded her head affably at the different ones, but kept right on talking.

So Mona was fairly obliged to interrupt her.

"Now, let us go out to luncheon," she said, after the maid had announced it twice.

"Glad to," said Mrs. Greene. "Oh, my land! what a pretty sight!"

She stood stock still in the doorway, and had to be urged forward, in order that the others might follow.

"Well, I didn't know a table *could* look so handsome!" she went on. "My land! I s'pose it's been thirty years since I've went to a real party feast, and then, I can tell you, it wasn't much like this!"

Probably not, for Mona's table, with the coloured electric lights blazing from the pretty Christmas tree, the soft radiance of the room, the fragrance of flowers, the exquisite table appointments, and the pretty, kindly hostesses, was a scene well worthy of praise.

Anna Gorman trembled a little as she took her seat, and sat, wide-eyed, looking almost as if in a trance of delight. Celeste Arleson was less embarrassed, as her profession took her into fine mansions and in presence of fashionable people every day.

Jenny Bisbee looked rapturous. "Oh," she said, "Oh! I am *so* happy!"

The guests all looked a trifle awestruck when the first course appeared, of grapefruit, served in tall, slender ice-glasses, each with a red ribbon tied round its stem, and a sprig of holly in the bow.

"Well, did you ever!" exclaimed Mrs. Greene. "And is this the way they do things now? Well, well! It does look 'most too good to eat, but I'm ready to tackle it."

Anna Gorman looked a little pained, as if this homely enthusiasm jarred upon her sense of fitness. But Mona said hospitably, "Yes, indeed, Mrs. Greene,—it's here to be eaten."

"Now, I'm free to confess, I don't know what spoon to take," Mrs. Greene acknowledged, looking blankly at the row of flat silver before her.

"I know," spoke up Jenny Bisbee, eagerly; "I read it in a Sunday paper. You begin at the outside of the row, and eat in!"

"Land! are you sure to come out right, that way? S'pose you had a fork left for your ice cream!"

"We'll risk it," said Mona, smiling. "Let's use this spoon at the outside, as Jenny suggests."

The second course was clam bouillon, and after it was served, a maid passed a dish of whipped cream.

Mrs. Greene watched carefully as Mona placed a spoonful on the top of her soup, and then she exclaimed:

"Well, if that don't beat all! What is that, might I ask?"

"Whipped cream," said Mona. "Won't you have some?"

"Well, I will,—as you took some. But if that ain't the greatest! Now, just let me tell you. A friend of mine,—she has seen some high society,—she was telling me a little how to behave. And

she told me of a country person she knew, who had some soup in a cup once. And he thought it was tea, and he ca'mly puts in milk and sugar! Well, he was just kerflum-mixed, that poor man, when he found it was soup! So, my friend says, says she: 'Now, Almira, whatever you do, *don't* put milk in your soup!' And, I declare to goodness, here you're doin' just that very thing!"

"Well, we won't put any sugar in," said Mona, pleasantly; "but I think the cream improves it. You like it, don't you, Jenny?"

"Heavenly!" said Jenny, rolling her eyes up with such a comically blissful expression that Elise nearly choked.

As Patty had agreed, the luncheon was good and substantial, rather than elaborate. The broiled chicken, dainty vegetables, and pretty salad all met the guests' hearty approval and appreciation; and when the ice cream was served, Mrs. Greene discovered she had both a fork and a spoon at her disposal.

"Well, I never!" she observed. "Ain't that handy, now? I s'pose you take whichever one you like."

"Yes," said Mona. "You see, there is strawberry sauce for the ice cream, and that makes it seem more like a pudding."

"So it does, so it does," agreed Mrs. Greene, "though, land knows, it ain't much like the puddin's I'm accustomed to. Cottage, rice, and bread is about the variety we get, in the puddin' line. Not but what I'm mighty grateful to get those."

"I like chocolate pudding," said Jenny, in a low voice, and apparently with great effort. Patty knew she made the remark because she thought it her duty to join in the conversation; and she felt such heroism deserved recognition.

"So do I," she said, smiling kindly at Jenny. "In fact, I like anything with chocolate in it."

"So do I," returned Jenny, a little bolder under this expressed sympathy of tastes. "Once I had a whole box of chocolate candies,—a pound box it was. I've got the box yet. I'm awful careful of the lace paper."

"I often get boxes of candy," said Celeste, unable to repress this bit of vanity. "My customers give them to me."

"My," said Jenny, "that must be fine. Is it grand to be a manicure?"

"I like it," said Celeste, "because it takes me among nice people. They're mostly good to me."

"My ladies are nice to me, too," observed Anna. "I only sew in nice houses. But I don't see the ladies much. It's different with you, Miss Arleson."

"Well, I don't see nice ladies," broke in Jenny. "My, how those queens of society can snap at you! Seems 'if they blame me for everything: the stock, the price, the slow cash boys,—whatever bothers 'em, it's all my fault."

"That is unkind," said Clementine. "But shopping does make some people cross."

"Indeed it does!" returned Jenny. "But I'm going to forget it just for to-day. When I sit here and see these things, all so beautiful and sparkly and bright, I pretend there isn't any shop or shopping in all the world."

Jenny's smile was almost roguish, and lighted up her pale face till she looked almost pretty.

Then they had coffee, and snapping crackers with caps inside, and they put on the caps and laughed at each other's grotesque appearance.

Mrs. Greene's cap was a tri-corne, with a gay cockade, which gave her a militant air, quite in keeping with her strong face. Patty had a ruffled night-cap, which made her look grotesque, and Anna Gorman had a frilled sunbonnet.

Celeste had a Tam o' Shanter, which just suited her piquant face, and Jenny had a Scotch cap, which became her well.

"Now," said Mona, as she rose from the table, "I'm going to give you each a bunch of these carnations—"

"To take home?" broke in Jenny, unable to repress her eagerness.

"Yes; and I'll have them put in boxes for you, along with your cards and souvenirs, which, of course, you must take home also. And, if there's room, I'll put in some of these Christmas tree thingamajigs, and you can use them for something at Christmas time."

"Oh!" exclaimed Jenny; "maybe my two kid brothers won't just about go crazy over 'em! Says I to myself, just the other day, 'What's going in them kids' stockings is more'n I know; but something there must be.' And,—here you are!"

"Here you are!" said Mona, tucking an extra snapping cracker or two in Jenny's box.

"We plan to go for a motor ride, now," said Mona. "I wonder if you girls are dressed warmly enough."

All declared that they were, but Mona provided several extra cloaks and wraps, lest any one should take cold.

"We have two cars for our trip," she explained; "Miss Farrington's limousine and my own. Has any one any preference which way we shall go?"

"Well," said Mrs. Greene, "if you ask me, I'd like best to ride up Fifth Avenue. There ought to be some fine show of dress, a bright afternoon like this. And there ain't anything I admire like stylish clothes. That's a real handsome gown you got on, Miss Fairfield."

"Do you like it?" said Patty, smiling.

"Yes, I do. It's fashionable of cut, and yet it ain't drawn so tight as some. And a becomin' colour, too."

"It's a dandy," observed Jenny. "I see lots of good clothes on my customers, but they don't all have such taste as Miss Fairfield's. And all you other ladies here," she added, politely, glancing round.

"Now, are we all ready?" asked Mona, looking over the group. "Mrs. Greene, I fear you won't be warm enough, though your jacket *is* thick, isn't it? But I'm going to throw this boa round your neck, by way of precaution. Please wear it; I have another."

"My land! if this ain't luxuriant," and Mrs. Greene smoothed the neckpiece and muff that Mona put on her. "What is this fur, Miss Galbraith?"

"That is caracul. Do you like it?"

"Like it? Well, I think it's just too scrumptious for anything. I'll remember the feel of it for a year. And so genteel looking, too."

"Yes, it's a good fur," said Mona, carelessly throwing a sable scarf round her own throat. "Now, let us start."

Down went the eight in an elevator, and Mrs. Greene was overjoyed to find that she was attended with quite as much deference as Mona herself. Elise and Clementine took their guests in the Farrington car, leaving Patty and Mona, with their guests, for the Galbraith car.

Celeste Arleson enjoyed the ride, but she was not so openly enthusiastic as Mrs. Greene.

"My!" exclaimed that worthy, as she bobbed up and down on the springy cushions; "to think it's come at last! Why, I *never* expected to ride in one of these. I saved up once for a taxicab ride, but I had to use my savings for a case of grippe, so I never felt to try it again."

"Did you have grippe?" said Patty, sympathetically; "that was too bad."

"Well, no; it wasn't *my* grippe. Leastways, I didn't have it. It was a lady that lived in the same boardin' house, along with me. But she'd had misfortune, and lost her money, so I couldn't do no less than to help her. Poor thing! she was crossed in love and it made her queer. But that Rosy,—you know, that redhead boy, Miss Fairfield?"

"Yes, I do," returned Patty, smiling.

"Well, he says she was queered in love, and it made her cross! She works in our place, you know. Well, cross she is; and, my land! if she wasn't cross when she had the grippe! You know, it ain't soothin' on folks' nerves."

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