

Speed Nell

Molly Brown's Sophomore Days



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CHAPTER I.

THE RETURN OF THE WANDERERS

"I never thought I could be so glad to be anywhere except home," thought Molly Brown as she swung off the 'bus, and, seizing her suit case, ran into Queen's Cottage without so much as ringing the bell.

Two juniors whom Molly had known only by sight the year before and several freshmen had been in the Wellington omnibus; no one in whom she could confide her enthusiasm as the 'bus turned a bend in the road and Wellington's towers came into view.

"Molly! Molly!" cried a voice from somewhere in the upper regions of Queen's, and down three flights of stairs rushed a wild figure, her fluffy light brown hair standing out all over her head and her voluminous kimono sailing behind her like the tail of a kite.

"Oh, Judy, it's good to see you again," cried Molly, and the two girls were instantly folded in each other's arms in a long, loving embrace.

"You remind me strongly of Meg Merriles," continued Molly, holding her friend off at arms' length and giving her a joyful little shake. "You look as if you had been running over the moors in the wind."

"You'd think I was a bit daffy if you could see my room," replied Julia Kean, who, those of you who have met her in an earlier story will recall, was nicknamed "Judy" by her friends. "I'm unpacking. It looks like the world in the era of chaos: mountains of clothes and islands of shoes and archipelagoes of hats all jumbled into a hopeless mass. But, never mind that now. Let's talk about each other. Come on upstairs. Your room's ready. I looked in half an hour ago. You've got new wall paper and a fresh coat of paint. That's because you are one of Mrs. Markham's little pets."

"Really," cried Molly, delighted. "How charmed Nance will be. And I've brought some white dimity curtains with ruffled edges to hang at the windows. I made them last summer when it was ninety-eight in the shade. Where is Nance, by the way? And where are all the Queen's girls, and what new ones are here?"

"One at a time, Miss Brown," laughed Judy, following Molly up to the third story and into the large room shared by Molly and her friend, Nance Oldham.

"How sweet it's going to look," cried Molly, clasping her hands and gazing around her with all the ardor of a returned wanderer. "But where is Nance?"

Judy's face became very grave.

"Is it possible you haven't heard the news about Nance?" she said.

"Judy, what do you mean?" cried Molly, taking off her hat and running her fingers through her rumpled auburn hair, a trick she had when she was excited and overwrought. "Now, tell me at once what has happened to Nance. How could you have kept it from me? Dear old Nance!"

Judy blew her nose violently.

"Why don't you answer me, Judy? Isn't Nance coming back? I haven't heard from her for weeks. Oh, do tell me."

"I'm going to tell you in a minute," answered Judy. "I can't blow my nose and talk at the same time. It's a physical impossibility. I've got a wretched cold, you see. I am afraid it's going into influenza."

"Julia Kean, you are keeping something from me. I don't care a rap about your nose. Isn't Nance coming back?"

Molly almost fell on her knees in the excess of her anxiety. Judy turned her face away from those appealing blue eyes and coughed a forced throaty cough.

"Suppose I should say she wasn't coming back, Molly? Would you mind it?"

"Would I mind it?" repeated Molly, her eyes filling with tears.

Suddenly the closet door was flung open and out rushed Nance.

"Oh, Molly, forgive me," she cried, throwing her arms around her roommate's neck. "Judy thought it would be a good practical joke, but I couldn't stand the deception any longer. It was worth it, though, if only to know you would miss me."

"Miss you?" exclaimed Molly. "I should think I would. Judy, you wretch!"

"I never did say she wasn't coming," replied Judy. "I simply said, 'Is it possible you haven't heard the news about Nance?' It shows how your heart rules your head, Molly. You shouldn't take on so until you get at the real truth. Your impetuous nature needs –"

Here Judy was interrupted by the noise of a headlong rush down the hall. Then the door was burst open and three girls blew into the room all laughing and talking at once.

"My goodness, it sounds like a stampede of wild cattle," exclaimed Judy. "How are you, old pals?"

A general all-round embrace followed.

It was Margaret Wakefield, last year's class president; her chum, Jessie Lynch; and Sallie Marks, now a senior, but not in the least set up by her exalted state.

"Where's Mabel Hinton?" someone demanded.

"She's moved over to the Quadrangle into a singleton. She wanted to be nearer the scene of action, she said, and Queen's was too diverting for her serious life's work," so Margaret explained.

"I'm sorry," said Molly. "I'm one of those nice comfortable home bodies that likes the family to keep right on just the same forever, but I suppose we can't expect everybody to be as fond of this old brown house as we are. Sit down, everybody," she added, hospitably. "And – oh, yes, wait a moment – I didn't open this on the train at all."

She fell on her knees and opened her suit case while her friends exchanged knowing smiles.

"Ruling passion even strong in death," observed Judy.

"Of course it's something good to eat," laughed pretty Jessie.

"Of course," replied Molly, pitching articles of clothing out of her satchel with all the carelessness of one who pursues a single idea at a time. "And why not? My sister made them for me the morning I left and packed them carefully in a tin box with oiled paper."

"Cloudbursts!" they cried ecstatically and pounced on the box without ceremony, while Molly, who, like most good cooks, had a small appetite, leaned back in a Morris chair and regarded them with the pleased satisfaction of a host who has provided satisfactory refreshment for his guests.

The summer had made few changes in the faces of her last year's friends. Margaret was a bit taller and more massive, and her handsome face a little heavier. Already her youthful lines were maturing and she might easily have been mistaken for a senior.

Nance was as round and plump as a partridge and there was a new happiness in her face, the happiness of returning to the first place she had ever known that in any way resembled a home. Nance had lived in a boarding house ever since she could remember; but Queen's was not like a boarding house; at least not like the one to which she was accustomed, where the boarders consisted of two crusty old bachelors; a widow who was hipped about her health and always talked "symptoms"; a spinster who had taught school for thirty years; and Nance's parents – that is, one of them, and at intervals the other. Mrs. Oldham only returned to her family to rest between club conventions and lecture tours.

Judy had a beautiful creamy tan on her face which went admirably with her dreamy gray eyes and soft light brown hair. There were times when she looked much like a boy, and she did at this moment, Molly thought, with her hair parted on one side and a brilliant Roman scarf knotted around her rolling Byronic collar.

Jessie, just now engaged in the pleasing occupation of smiling at her own image in the mirror over the mantel, was as pretty as ever. As for Sallie Marks, every familiar freckle was in its familiar place, and, as Judy remarked later, she had changed neither her spots nor her skin. She had merely added a pair of eye-glasses to her tip-tilted critical nose and there was, perhaps, an extra spark of dry humor in her pale eyes.

Molly was a little thin. She always "fell-off" after a ninety-eight-in-the-shade summer; but she was the same old Molly to her friends, possessed with an indescribable charm and sweetness: the "nameless charm," it had been called, but there were many who could name it as being a certain kindly gentleness and unselfishness.

"What's the news, girls?" she demanded, giving a general all-round smile like that of a famous orator, which seemed to be meant for everybody at once and no one in particular.

"News is scarce; or should I say 'are'?" replied Margaret. "Epiménides Antinous Green, 'the handsomest man ever seen,' was offered a chair in one of the big colleges and refused."

"But why?" cried Molly, round-eyed with amazement.

"Because he has more liberty at Wellington and more time to devote to his writings."

Molly walked over to the window to hide a smile.

"The comic opera," she thought.

"He's just published a book, you know, on the 'Elizabethan Drama,'" went on Margaret, "which is to be used as a text book in lots of private schools. And he's been on a walking trip through England this summer with George Theodore –"

"How did you know all that?" interrupted Judy.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I came up to Wellington on the train with Andy McLean and he answered all the questions I asked him," replied Margaret, laughing. "I also answered all the questions he asked me about a particular young lady –"

Nance pretended to be very busy at this moment with the contents of her work bag. The other girls began laughing and she looked up, disclosing a scarlet countenance.

"Don't you know she never could take a teasing?" cried Judy.

"Who's teasing?" answered Margaret. "No names were mentioned."

"Don't you mind, Nance, dear," said Molly, always tender-hearted when it came to teasing. "The rest of us haven't had one 'inquiring friend,' as Ca'line, our cook, used to call them. When I wrote letters for her to her family in Georgia, she always finished up with 'Now, Miss Molly, jes' end with love to all inquirin' friends.'"

The dainty little French clock on the mantel, one of Nance's new possessions, tinkled five times in a subdued, fairy chime and the friends scattered to their various rooms to unpack. Judy was now in Frances Andrews' old room, next to the one occupied by Molly and Nance.

"I think I'll take a gimlet and bore a hole through the wall," she announced as she lingered a moment after the others had gone, "so that we can communicate without having to walk ten steps – I counted them this morning – and open two doors."

"Who has your old room, Judy?" inquired Molly.

"You'd never guess in a thousand years, so I'll have to enlighten you," answered Judy. "A young Japanese lady."

"For heaven's sake!" cried Molly and Nance in one breath, while Judy, who loved a climax, sailed from the room without vouchsafing any more information.

CHAPTER II.

OTOYO

Molly and Nance were very busy that night arranging their belongings. Molly's tastes were simple and Nance's were what might be called complicated. Molly had been reared all her life in large spaces, big, airy rooms, and broad halls, and the few pieces of heavy old mahogany in them were of the kind that cannot be bought for a song. Nance had been reared in an atmosphere of oiled walnut and boarding house bric-à-brac. She was learning because she had an exceedingly observing and intelligent mind, but she had not learned.

Therefore, that night, when Molly hung the white muslin curtains, and spread out the beautiful blue antique rug left by Frances Andrews, she devoutly hoped that Nance would "go easy" with the pictures and ornaments.

"What we want to try to do this year, Nance," she announced from the top of the step ladder, "is to keep things empty. We got fairly messy last winter after Christmas. I'm going to keep all those banners and things packed this year."

"Perhaps I'd better not get out those passe-partouted Gibson pictures," began Nance a little doubtfully.

"Just as you like, Nance, dear," said Molly.

She would rather have hung the wall with bill posters than have hurt her friend's feelings.

"Honestly, you aren't fond of them, are you?" asked Nance.

"Oh, it isn't that," apologized Molly. "But I think so many small pictures scattered over a big wall space are – well, rather tiring to the optic nerves."

Nance looked sad, but she had unbounded faith in Molly's opinions.

"What shall we do with this big empty wall space, then?" she asked, pausing in her unpacking to regard a sea of blue-gray cartridge paper with a critical eye.

At this juncture there came a light, timid tap, so faint, indeed, that it might have been the swish of a mouse's tail as he brushed past the door.

Molly paused in her contemplation of blank walls and listened.

"Did you hear anything, Nance?" she asked. "I thought I heard a tapping at our chamber door."

"Come in," called Nance briskly.

The door opened first a mere crack. Then the space widened and there stood on the threshold the diminutive figure of a little Japanese girl who by subsequent measurements proved to be exactly five feet one-half an inch in height. She was dressed "like white people," to quote Molly, that is, in a neat cloth suit and a straw turban, and her slanting black eyes were like highly polished pieces of ebony.

"I beg the honorable pardon of the young ladies," she began with a prim, funny accent. "I arrive this moment which have passing at the honorable home of young ladies. I not find no one save serving girl who have informing me of room of sleeping in. Honorable lady of the house, her you calling 'matronly,' not in at present passing moment. I feeling little frightening. You will forgive poor Otoyoy?"

With an almost superhuman effort Molly controlled her face and choked back the laughter that bubbled up irrepressibly. Nance had buried her head in her trunk until she could regain her composure.

"Indeed I do forgive you, poor dear. You must feel strange and lonely. Just wait until I get down from the ladder and I'll show you your bedroom. It used to be the room of one of my best friends, so I happen to know it very well."

Molly crawled down from the heights of the step ladder and took the little Japanese girl's brown hand in hers. "Shall we not shake hands and be friends?" she said. "We are such near neighbors. You

are just down there at the end of the hall, you see. My name is Brown, Molly Brown, and this is my roommate, Nance Oldham."

"I with much pleasure feel to making acquaintance of beautiful young ladies," said the Japanese girl, smiling charmingly and showing two rows of teeth as pointed and white as a spaniel's.

Nance had also risen to the occasion by this time, and now shook Miss Ootoy Sen's hand with a great show of cordiality, to make up for her crimson face and mouth still unsteady with laughter. They conducted the Japanese girl to her room and turned on the lights. There were two new-looking American trunks in the room and two cases covered with matting and inscribed with mystic Japanese hieroglyphics. Wired to the cord wrapping was an express tag with "Miss O. Sen, Queen's Cottage, Wellington," written across it in plain handwriting.

"Oh," exclaimed Miss Ootoy, clasping her hands with timid pleasure, "my estates have unto this place arriving come."

Nance turned and rushed from the room and Molly opened the closet door.

"You can hang all your things in here," she said unsteadily, "and of course lay some of them in the bureau drawers. Better unpack to-night, because to-morrow will be a busy day for you. It's the opening day, you know. If we can help you, don't hesitate to ask."

"I am with gratitude much filled up," said the little Japanese, making a low, ceremonious bow.

"Don't mention it," replied Molly, hastening back to her room.

She found Nance giving vent to noiseless laughter in the Morris chair. Tears were rolling down her cheeks and her face was purple with suppressed amusement. Molly often said that, when Nance did laugh, she was like the pig who died in clover. When he died, he died all over. When Nance succumbed to laughter, her entire being was given over to merriment.

"Wasn't it beautiful?" she exclaimed in a low voice. "Did you ever imagine such ludicrous English? It was all participles. How do you suppose she ever made the entrance examinations?"

"Oh, she's probably good enough at writing. It's just speaking that stumps her. But wasn't she killingly funny? When she said 'my estates have unto this place arriving come,' I thought I should have to departing go along with you. But it would have been rude beyond words. What a dear little thing she is! I think I'll go over later and see how she is. America must be polite to her visitors."

But Japan, always beforehand in ceremonious politeness, was again ahead of America in this respect. Just before ten o'clock the mouse's tail once more brushed their door and Nance's sharp ears catching the faint sound, she called, "Come in."

Miss Ootoy Sen entered, this time less timidly, but with the same deprecating smile on her diminutive face.

"Begging honorable pardon of beautiful young ladies," she began, "will condescendingly to accept unworthy gift from Ootoy in gratitude of favors receiving?"

Then she produced a beautiful Japanese scroll at least four feet in length. In the background loomed up the snow-capped peak of the ever-present sacred mountain, Fujiyama, and the foreground disclosed a pleasing combination of sky-blue waters dotted with picturesque little islands connected with graceful curving bridges, and here and there were cherry trees aglow with delicate pink blossoms.

"Oh, how perfectly sweet," exclaimed the girls, delighted.

"And just the place on this bare wall space!" continued Molly. "It's really a heaven-sent gift, Miss Sen, because we were wishing for something really beautiful to hang over that divan. But aren't you robbing yourself?"

"No, no. I beg you assurance. Ootoy have many suchly. It is nothing. Beautiful young ladies do honor by accepting humbly gift."

"Let's hang it at once," suggested Molly, "while the step ladder is yet with us. Queen's step ladder is so much in demand that it's very much like the snowfall in the river, 'a moment there, then gone forever.'"

The two girls moved the homely but coveted ladder across the room, and, with much careful shifting and after several suggestions timidly made by Ootoyo, finally hung up the scroll. It really glorified the whole room and made a framed lithograph of a tea-drinking lady in a boudoir costume and a kitten that trifled with a ball of yarn on the floor, Nance's possession, appear so commonplace that she shamefacedly removed it from its tack and put it back in her trunk, to Molly's secret relief.

"Won't you sit down and talk to us a few minutes?" asked Nance. "We still have a quarter of an hour before bed time."

Ootoyo timidly took a seat on a corner of one of the divans. The girls could not help noticing another small package which she had not yet proffered for their acceptance. But she now placed it in Nance's hand.

"A little of what American lady call 'meat-sweet,'" she said apologetically. "It all way from Japan have coming. Will beautiful ladies accept so humbly gift?"

The box contained candied ginger and was much appreciated by young American ladies, the humble giver of this delightful confection being far too shy to eat any of it herself.

By dint of some questioning, it came out that Ootoyo's father was a merchant of Tokio. She had been sent to an American school in Japan for two years and had also studied under an English governess. She could read English perfectly and, strange to say, could write it fairly accurately, but, when it came to speaking it, she clung to her early participial-adverbial faults, although she trusted to overcome them in a very little while. She had several conditions to work off before Thanksgiving, but she was cheerful and her ambition was to be "beautiful American young lady."

She was, indeed, the most charming little doll-like creature the girls had ever seen, so unreal and different from themselves, that they could hardly credit her with the feelings and sensibilities of a human being. So correctly polite was she with such formal, stiff little manners that she seemed almost an automaton wound up to bow and nod at the proper moment. But Ootoyo Sen was a creature of feeling, as they were to find out before very long.

"Did many girls come down on the train with you to-night, Miss Sen?" asked Nance, by way of making conversation.

Several young ladies had come, Miss Sen replied in her best participial manner. All had been kind to Ootoyo but one, who had frightened poor Japanese very, very much. One very kind American gentleman had been commissioned to bring little Japanese down from big city to University. He had look after her all day and brought her sandwiches. He friend of her father and most, most kindly. He had receiving letters from her honorable father to look after little Japanese girl.

Across the aisle from Ootoyo had sat a "beeg young American lady, beeg as kindly young lady there with peenk hair," indicating Molly. The "beeg" young American lady, it seems, had great "beeg" eyes, so: Ootoyo made two circles with her thumbs and forefingers to indicate size of young American lady's optics. She called Ootoyo "Yum-Yum" and she made to laugh at humble Japanese girl, but Ootoyo could see that young American lady with beeg eyes feeling great anger toward little strange girl.

"But for what reason?" asked Molly, slipping her arm around Ootoyo's plump waist. "How could she be unkind to sweet little Japanese stranger?"

"Young great-eyed lady laugh at me mostly and I very uncomfortably." She brought out the big word with proud effort.

"But how cruel! Why did she do it?" exclaimed Nance.

Here Ootoyo gave a delicious melodious laugh for the first time that evening.

"She not like kindly gentlemanly friend to be attentionly to humble Japanese."

"What was the gentleman's name, Ootoyo?" asked Molly; and somewhat to her surprise Ootoyo, who, as they were to learn later, never forgot a name, came out patly with:

"Professor Edwin Green, kindly friend of honorable father."

"Did the young lady call him 'Cousin'?" asked Nance in the tone of one who knows what the answer will be beforehand.

"Yes," answered Otoyō Sen.

"The same old Judith Blount," laughed Molly.

And Nance recalled Judy's prophetic speech on the last day of college in June: "Can the leopard change his spots?"

Then the first stroke of the tower clock began to chime the hour of ten and they promptly conducted Otoyō to her bedroom with the caution that all lights must be out at ten, a rule she followed thereafter with implicit obedience.

The next morning, Molly and Nance took Otoyō under their especial care. They introduced her to all the girls at Queen's, placed her between them at Chapel, showed her how to register and finally took her on a sight-seeing expedition.

It turned out that through Professor Green her room had been engaged since early the winter before. Why he should have chosen Queen's they hardly knew, since Otoyō appeared to have plenty of money and might have lived in more expensive quarters. But Queen's he had selected, and that very evening he called on Mrs. Markham to see that his little charge was comfortably settled. Molly caught a glimpse of him as he followed the maid through the hall to Mrs. Markham's sitting room, and made him a polite bow. She felt somewhat in awe of the Professor of English Literature this winter, since she was to be in one of his classes, Lit. II, and was very fearful that he might consider her a perfect dunce. But Professor Green would not pass Molly with a bow. He paused at the door of the living room and held out his hand.

"I'm glad to see you back and looking so well," he said. "My sister asked to be remembered to you. I saw her only yesterday."

The Professor looked well, also. His brown eyes were as clear as two brown pools in the forest and there was a healthy glow on his face; but Molly could not help noticing that he was growing bald about the temples.

"Too bad he's so old," she thought, "because sometimes he's really handsome."

"I am commissioned," he continued, "to find a tutor for a young Japanese girl boarding here, and I wondered if you would like to undertake the work. She needs lessons in English chiefly, but she has several conditions to work off and it would be a steady position for anyone who has time to take it. Her father is a rich man and willing to pay more than the usual price if he can get someone specially interested who will take pains with his daughter's education."

"I'm willing to do all that," said Molly, "but it goes with the job, don't you think? I have no right to ask more than is usually asked."

"Oh, yes, you have," answered the Professor quickly. "What you can give her means everything to the child. She is naturally very timid and strange. If you are willing to give up several hours to her, say four times a week, I will arrange about salary with her father and the lessons may begin immediately."

It was impossible for Molly to disguise her feelings of relief and joy at this windfall. Her lack of funds was, as usual, an ever-present shadow in the background of her mind, although, through some fine investments which Mrs. Brown had been able to make that summer, the Brown family hoped to be relieved by another year of the pressure of poverty.

CHAPTER III. A CLASHING OF WITS

Queen's Cottage seemed destined to shelter girls of interesting and unusual types.

"They always do flock together, you know," Miss Pomeroy had remarked to the President, as the two women sat talking in the President's office one day. The question had come up with the subject of the new Japanese student, the first of her nation ever to seek learning in the halls of Wellington.

"They do," said the President, "but whether it's the first comers actively persuading the next ones or whether it's a matter of unconscious attraction is hard to tell."

"In this case I understand it's a matter of very conscious attraction on one side and no persuasion on the other," replied Miss Pomeroy. "That charming overgrown girl from Kentucky, Miss Brown, although she's as poor as a church mouse and last year even blacked boots to earn a little money, is one of the chief attractions, I think. But some of the other girls are quite remarkable. Margaret Wakefield lives there, you know. She makes as good a speech as her politician father. It will be interesting to watch her career if she only doesn't spoil everything by marrying."

The two spinsters looked at each other and laughed.

"She won't," answered the President. "She's much too ambitious."

"Then," went on Miss Pomeroy, "there's Julia Kean. She could do almost anything she wished, and like all such people she doesn't want to do anything. She hasn't a spark of ambition. It's Miss Brown who keeps her up to the mark. The girl was actually about to run away last winter just at mid-years. She lost her courage, I believe, and there was a remarkable scene, but she was induced to stay."

"Who are the other girls?" asked the President thoughtfully.

"One of them, you recall, is a daughter of the famous suffragette, Mrs. Anna Oldham. But I fancy the poor daughter has had quite enough of suffrage. The only other really interesting characters at Queen's, besides your Japanese, are two sophomores who roomed at Plympton's last year. They are the Williams sisters, Katherine and Edith, and they are remarkably bright. They work in a team, and I have not been able to discover which is the brighter of the two, although I had them to tea once or twice last year. One is talkative and the other is quiet, but I suspect the quiet one of doing a deal of thinking."

The two women enjoyed these occasional chats about Wellington students. They were accustomed to regard most of the classes as units rather than the members as individuals. Sometimes it was a colorless, uninteresting class with no special traits worthy of admiration. Sometimes it was a snobbish, purse-proud class, as in the case of the present juniors. And again, as with last year's seniors, it was a class of sterling qualities made up of big girls with fine minds. Seldom did a class contain more than one or two brilliant members, often not one. The present sophomore class was one of those "freak" bodies which appear once in a life time. It was an unusually small class, there being only thirty-eight members. Some twenty of these girls were extremely bright and at least ten gave promise of something more than ordinary. As the fastest skaters keep together on the ice, so the brightest girls gradually drifted into Queen's and became as one family. It was known that there was a good deal of jealousy in the less distinguished portion of the class because of this sparkling group. But, all unconscious of the feeling they were exciting, the Queen's girls settled themselves down to the enjoyment of life, each in her own peculiar way.

The two new sophomores at Queen's were, in fact, a welcome addition, and Molly and her friends found them exceedingly amusing. They were tall, rather raw-boned types, with sallow skins and large, lustrous, melancholy eyes. There was only a year's difference in their ages, and at first it was difficult to tell one from the other, but Edith, the younger of the sisters, was an inch taller than Katherine and was very quiet, while Katherine talked enough for the two of them. Because they were

always together they were called "the Gemini," although occasionally they had terrific battles and ceased to be on speaking terms for a day or two.

One afternoon, not long after the opening day at college, the Williams sisters and Mabel Hinton, who now lived in the Quadrangle, paid a visit to Molly in her room.

"We came in to discuss with you who you consider would make the best class president this year, Molly," began Katherine. "It's rather hard to choose one among so many who could fill the place with distinction – "

"But I think Margaret should be chosen," interrupted Molly. "She was a good one last year. Why change?"

"Don't you think it looks rather like favoritism?" put in Mabel. "Some of the other girls should have a chance. There's you, for instance."

"Me?" cried Molly. "Why, I wouldn't know how to act in a president's chair. I'd be embarrassed to death."

"You'd soon learn," said Katherine. "It's very easy to become accustomed to an exalted state."

"But why not one of you?" began Molly.

"It's a question," here remarked the silent Edith, "whether a class president should be the most popular girl or the best executive."

"Margaret is both," exclaimed Molly loyally; "but, after all, why not leave it to the vote at the class meeting?"

"Oh, it will be finally decided in that way, of course," said Katherine, "but such things are really decided beforehand by a little electioneering, and I was proposing to do some stump speaking in your behalf, Molly, if you cared to take the place."

"Oh, no," cried Molly, flushing with embarrassment; "it's awfully nice of you, but I wouldn't for anything interfere with Margaret. She is the one to have it. Besides, as Queen's girls, we ought to vote for her. She belongs to the family."

"But some of the girls are kicking. They say we are running the class, and are sure to ring in one of our own crowd just to have things our way."

"How absurd!" ejaculated Molly. "I'm sure I never thought of such a thing. But if that's the case, why vote for me, then?"

"Because," replied Mabel, "the Caroline Brinton faction proposed you. They say, if they must have a Queen's girl, they'll take you."

"'Must' is a ridiculous word to use at an honest election," broke in Molly hotly. "Let them choose their candidate and vote as they like. We'll choose ours and vote as we like."

"That's exactly the point," said Katherine. "They are something like Kipling's monkey tribe, the 'banderlog.' They do a lot of chattering, but they can't come to any agreement. They need a head, and I propose to be that head and tell them whom to vote for. Shall it be Molly or Margaret?"

"Margaret," cried Molly; "a thousand times, Margaret. I wouldn't usurp her place for worlds. She's perfectly equipped in every possible way for the position."

Nance and Judy now came into the room. Nance looked a little excited and Judy was red in the face.

"Do you know," burst out the impetuous Judy, "that Caroline Brinton has called a mass meeting of all the sophomores not at Queen's? She has started up some cock-and-bull tale about the Queen's girls trying to run the class. She says we're a ring of politicians. We ran in all our officers last year and we're going to try and do it this year."

"What a ridiculous notion," laughed Molly. "Margaret was elected by her own silver-tongued oratory, and Jessie was made secretary because she was so pretty and popular and seemed to belong next to Margaret anyway."

"But the question is: are the Queen's girls going to sit back and let themselves be libeled?" demanded Nance.

Here Edith spoke up.

"Of course," she said, "let them talk. Don't you know that people who denounce weaken their own cause always, and it's the people who keep still who have all the strength on their side? Let them talk and at the class meeting to-morrow some of us might say a few quiet words to the point."

The girls recognized the wisdom of this decision and concluded to keep well away from any forced meeting of sophomores that evening. It had not occurred to simple-hearted Molly that it was jealousy that had fanned the flame of indignation against Queen's girls, but it had occurred to some of the others, the Williamses in particular, who were very shrewd in regard to human nature. As for Margaret Wakefield, she was openly and shamelessly enjoying the fight.

"Let them talk," she said. "To-morrow we'll have some fun. Just because they have made such unjust accusations against us they ought to be punished by being made to vote for us."

It was noted that Margaret used the word "us" in speaking of future votes. She had been too well-bred to declare herself openly as candidate for the place of class president, but it was generally known that she would not be displeased to become the successful candidate. The next morning they heard that only ten sophomores attended the mass meeting and that they had all talked at once.

Later in the day when the class met to elect its president for the year, as Edith remarked: "The hoi polloi did look black and threatening."

Molly felt decidedly uncomfortable and out of it. She didn't know how to make a speech for one thing and she hoped they'd leave her alone. It was utterly untrue about Queen's girls. The cleverest girls in the class happened to live there. That was all.

Margaret, the Williamses and Judy wore what might be called "pugilistic smiles." They intended to have a sweet revenge for the things that had been said about them and on the whole they were enjoying themselves immensely. They had not taken Molly into their confidence, but what they intended to do was well planned beforehand.

Former President Margaret occupied the chair and opened the meeting with a charming little speech that would have done credit to the wildest politician. She moved her hearers by her reference to class feeling and their ambition to make the class the most notable that ever graduated from Wellington. She flattered and cajoled them and put them in such a good humor with themselves that there was wild applause when she finished and the Brinton forces sheepishly avoided each other's eyes.

There was a long pause after this. Evidently the opposing side did not feel capable of competing with so much oratory as that. Margaret rose again.

"Since no one seems to have anything to say," she said, "I beg to start the election by nominating Miss Caroline Brinton of Philadelphia for our next class president."

If a bomb shell had burst in the room, there couldn't have been more surprise. Molly could have laughed aloud at the rebellious and fractious young woman from Philadelphia, who sat embarrassed and tongue-tied, unable to say a word.

Again there was a long pause. The Brinton forces appeared incapable of expressing themselves.

"I second the nomination of Miss Brinton," called Judy, with a bland, innocent look in her gray eyes.

Then Katherine Williams arose and delivered a deliciously humorous and delightful little speech that caused laughter to ripple all over the room. She ended by nominating Margaret Wakefield for re-election and before they knew it everybody in the room was applauding.

Nominations for other officers were made after this and a girl from Montana was heard to remark:

"I'm for Queen's. They're a long sight brighter than any of us."

When the candidates stood lined up on the platform just before the votes were cast, Caroline Brinton looked shriveled and dried up beside the ample proportions of Margaret Wakefield, who beamed handsomely on her classmates and smiled so charmingly that in comparison there appeared to be no two ways about it.

"She's the right one for president," Judy heard a girl say. "She looks like a queen bee beside little Carrie Brinton. And nobody could say she ran the election this time, either. Carrie has had the chance she wanted."

Molly was one of the nominees for secretary and, standing beside a nominee from the opposing side, she also shone in comparison.

When the votes were counted, it was found that Margaret and Molly had each won by a large majority, and Caroline Brinton was ignominiously defeated.

That night Jessie Lynch, who had not in the least minded being superseded as secretary by Molly, gave a supper party in honor of her chum's re-election. Only Queen's girls were there, except Mabel Hinton, and there was a good deal of fun at the expense of Caroline Brinton of Philadelphia.

"Poor thing," said Molly, "I couldn't help feeling sorry for her."

"But why?" demanded Katherine. "She had the chance she wanted. She was nominated, but she was such a poor leader that her own forces wouldn't stand by her at the crucial moment. Oh, but it was rich! What a lesson! And how charming Margaret was! How courteous and polite through it all. What a beautiful way to treat an enemy!"

"What a beautiful way to treat wrath, you mean," said her sister; "with 'a soft answer.'"

"It was as good as a play," laughed Judy. "I never enjoyed myself more in all my life."

But, somehow, Molly felt a little uncomfortable always when she recalled that election, although it was an honest, straightforward election, won by the force of oratory and personality, and so skillfully that the opposing side never knew it had been duped by a prearranged plan of four extremely clever young women.

CHAPTER IV.

A TEMPEST IN A TEAPOT

"Do you think those little feet of yours will be able to carry you so far, Otoyo?" asked Molly anxiously, one Saturday morning.

Otoyo gave one of her delightfully ingenuous smiles.

"My body is smally, too," she said. "The weight is not grandly."

"Not smally; just small, Otoyo," admonished Molly, who was now well launched in her tutoring of the little Japanese, and had almost broken her of her participial habits. But the adverbial habit appeared to grow as the participial habit vanished.

"And you won't get too tired?" asked Judy.

"No, no, no," protested Otoyo, her voice rising with each no until it ended in a sweet high note like a bird's. "You not know the Japanese when you say that. I have received training. You have heard of jiu jitsu? Some day Otoyo will teach beautiful young American lady some things."

"Yes, but the jiu jitsu doesn't help you when you're tired, does it?"

"Ah, but I shall not be tired. You will see. Otoyo's feet great bigly."

She stuck out her funny stubby little feet for inspection and the girls all laughed. As a matter of fact, she was a sturdy little body and knew the secret of keeping her strength. She achieved marvels in her studies; was up with the dawn and the last person in the house to tumble into bed, but she was never tired, never cross and out of humor, and was always a model of cheerful politeness.

"Art ready?" asked Katherine Williams, appearing at the door in a natty brown corduroy walking suit.

"Can't have the face to ask the question when we've been waiting for you ten minutes?" replied Judy.

It was a glorious September day when the walking club from Queen's started on its first expedition. The rules of the club were few, very elastic and susceptible to changes. It met when it could, walked until it was tired and had no fixed object except that of resting the eyes from the printed page, relaxing the mind from its arduous labors and accelerating the circulation. Anyone who wanted to invite a guest could, and those who wished to remain at home were not bound to go.

"Did anybody decide where we were going?" asked Molly.

"Yes, I did," announced Margaret. "Knob Ledge is our destination. It's the highest point in Wellington County and commands a most wonderful view of the surrounding country-side –"

"Dear me, you sound like a guide book, Margaret," put in Judy.

"Professor Green is the guide book," answered Margaret. "He told me about it. You know he is the only real walker at Wellington. Twenty miles is nothing to him and Knob Ledge is one of his favorite trips."

"I hope that isn't twenty miles," said Jessie anxiously.

"Oh, no, it's barely six by the short way and ten by the road. We shall go by the short way."

"Isn't Molly lovely to-day?" whispered Nance to Judy, after the walking expedition had crossed the campus and started on its way in good earnest.

Molly was a picture in an old gray skirt and a long sweater and tam of "Wellington blue," knitted by one of her devoted sisters during the summer.

"She's a dream," exclaimed Judy with loyal enthusiasm. "She glorifies everything she wears. Just an ordinary blue tam o'shanter, exactly the same shape and color that a hundred other Wellington girls wear, looks like a halo on a saint's head when she wears it."

"It's her auburn hair that's the halo," said Nance.

"And her heavenly blue eyes that are saint's eyes," finished Judy.

Molly, all unconscious of the admiration of her friends, walked steadily along between Otoyoy and Jessie, a package of sandwiches in one hand and a long staff, picked up on the road, in the other.

They were not exactly out for adventure that day, being simply a jolly party of girls off in the woods to enjoy the last sunny days in September, and they were not prepared for all the excitements which greeted them on the way.

Scarcely had they left the path along the bank of the lake and skirted the foot of "Round Head," at the top of which Molly and her two chums had once met Professor Green and his brother, when Margaret Wakefield, well in advance of the others, gave a wild scream and rushed madly back into their midst. Trotting sedately after her came an amiable looking cow. The creature paused when she saw the girls, emitted the bovine call of the cow-mother separated from her only child, turned and trotted slowly back.

"Why, Margaret, I didn't know you were such a coward," began Jessie reproachfully.

"Coward, indeed," answered the other indignantly. "I don't believe Queen Boadicea herself in a red sweater would have passed that animal. Listen to the creature. She's begun mooing like a foghorn. I suppose she held me personally responsible for her loss. Anyhow, she began chasing me and I wasn't going to be gored to death in the flower of my youth."

There was no arguing this fact, and several daring spirits, creeping along the path until it curved around the hill, hid behind a clump of trees and took in the prospect. There stood the cow with ears erect and quivering nostrils. She had a suspicious look in her lustrous eyes and at intervals she let out a deep bellow that had a hint of disaster in it for all who passed that way.

The brave spirits went back again.

"What are we to do?" exclaimed Katherine. "If it got out in college that an old cow kept ten sophomores from having a picnic, we'd never hear the last of it."

"Unless we behave like Indian scouts and creep along one at a time, I don't see what we are to do," said Molly. "If we went further up the hill, she'd see us just the same and if we crossed the brook and took to the meadow, we'd get stuck in the swamp."

"Suppose we make a run for it," suggested Judy with high courage. "Just dash past until we reach that group of trees over there."

"Not me," exclaimed Jessie, shaking her head vigorously. "Excuse me, if you please."

There was another conference in low voices behind the protecting clump of alder bushes. At last the cow began to ease her mental suffering by nibbling at the damp green turf on the bank of the little brook.

"She's forgotten all about us. Let's make a break for it," cried Molly. There was a certain stubbornness in her nature that made her want to finish anything she began no matter whether it was a task or a pleasure.

The cow flicked a fly from her flank with her tail and went on placidly cropping grass. Apparently, creature comforts had restored her equanimity.

"One, two, three, run!" shouted Judy, and the ten students began the race of their lives.

Not once did the flower and wit of 19 – pause to look back, and so closely did they stick together, the strong helping the weak, that to the watchers on the hill – and, alas! there were several of them – they resembled all together an enormous animal of the imagination with ten pairs of legs and a coat of many colors. At last they fell down, one on top of the other, in a laughing, tumbling heap, in the protecting grove of pine trees, and pausing to look back beheld the ferocious cow amiably swishing her tail as she cropped the luscious turf on the bank of the little stream.

"Asinine old thing," cried Margaret. "She's just an alarmist of the worst kind."

"Who was the alarmist, did you say, Margaret?" asked Edith, with a wicked smile. But Margaret made no answer, because, as her close friends well knew, she never could stand being teased.

And now the watchers on the hill, having witnessed the entire episode from behind a granite boulder and enjoyed it to the limit of their natures, proceeded to return to Wellington with the story

that was too good to keep, and Queen's girls went on their way rejoicing as the strong man who runs a race and wins.

At two o'clock, after a long, hard climb, they reached the ledges. To Molly and Judy, the leading spirits of the expedition, the beautiful view amply repaid their efforts, but there were those who were too weary to enjoy the scenery. Jessie was one of these.

"I'm not meant for hard work," she groaned, as she reposed on one of the flat rocks which gave the place its name and pillowed her head on Margaret's lap.

They opened the packages of luncheon and ate with ravenous appetites, finishing off with fudge and cheese sticks. Then they spread themselves on the table rocks and regarded the scenery pensively. Having climbed up at great expense of strength and effort, it was now necessary to retrace their footsteps. The thought was disconcerting.

Edith, who never moved without a book, pulled a small edition of Keats from her pocket and began to read aloud:

"My heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk – "

A short laugh interrupted this scene of intellectual repose. Edith paused and looked up, annoyed.

"I see nothing to laugh at," she said. But the faces of her classmates were quite serious.

"No one laughed," said Molly.

"A rudely person did laugh," announced Otoyoto decisively. "But not of us. Another hidden behind the rock."

The girls looked around them uneasily. There was no one in sight, apparently, and yet there had been a laugh from somewhere close by. Coming to think of it, they had all heard it.

"I think we'd better be going," said Margaret, rising hastily. "We can see the view on the other side some other day."

Twice that day Margaret, the coming suffragette, had proved herself lacking in a certain courage generally attributed to the new and independent woman.

"Come on," she continued, irritably. "Don't stop to gather up those sandwiches. We must hurry."

Perhaps they were all of them a little frightened, but nobody was quite so openly and shamelessly scared as President Wakefield. They had seized their sweaters and were about to follow her down the steep path, when another laugh was heard, and suddenly a strange man rushed from behind one of the large boulders and seized Margaret by the arm.

The President gave one long, despairing shriek that waked the echoes, while the other girls, too frightened to move, crouched together in a trembling group.

Then the little Japanese bounded from their midst with the most surprising agility, seized the man by his thumb and with a lightning movement of the arm struck him under the chin.

With a cry of intense pain, the tramp, for such he appeared to be, fell back against the rock, his black slouch hat fell off, and a quantity of dark hair tumbled down on his shoulders. Judith Blount, looking exceedingly ludicrous in a heavy black mustache, stood before them.

"Oh, how you hurt me," she cried, turning angrily on Otoyoto.

Otoyoto shrank back in amazement.

"Pardon," she said timidly. "I did not know the rudely man was a woman."

The girls were now treated to the rare spectacle of Margaret Wakefield in a rage. The Goddess of War herself could not have been more majestic in her anger, and her choice of words was wonderful as she emptied the vials of her wrath on the head of the luckless Judith. The Williams sisters sat down on a rock, prepared to enjoy the splendid exhibition and the discomfiture of Judith Blount, who

for once had gone too far in her practical joking. Molly withdrew somewhat from the scene. Anger always frightened her, but she felt that Margaret was quite justified in what she said.

"How dare you masquerade in those disreputable clothes and frighten us?" Margaret thundered out. "Do you think such behavior will be tolerated for a moment at a college of the standing of Wellington University? Are you aware that some of us might have been seriously injured by what you would call, I suppose, a practical joke? Is this your idea of amusement? It is not mine. Do you get any enjoyment from such a farce?"

At last Margaret paused for breath, but for once Judith had nothing to say. She hung her head shamefacedly and the girls who were with her, whoever they were, hung back as if they would feign have their share in the affair kept secret.

"I'm sorry," said Judith with unusual humility. "I didn't realize it was going to frighten you so much. You see, I don't look much like a man in my gymnasium suit. Of course the mackintosh and hat did look rather realistic, I'll admit. When we saw you run from the cow this morning, it was so perfectly ludicrous, we decided to have some fun. I put on these togs and we got a vehicle and drove around by the Exmoor road. I'm sorry if you were scared, but I think I came out the worst. My thumb is sprained and I know my neck will be black and blue by to-morrow."

"I advise you to give up playing practical jokes hereafter," said the unrelenting Goddess of War. "If your thumb is sprained, it's your own fault."

Judith flashed a black glance at her.

"When I lower myself to make you an apology," she ejaculated, "I should think you'd have the courtesy to accept it," and with that she walked swiftly around the edge of the rock, where she joined her confederates, while the Queen's girls demurely took their way down the side of the hill.

"Was my deed wrongly, then?" asked Otoyó, innocently, feeling somehow that she had been the cause of the great outburst.

"No, indeed, child, your deed was rightly," laughed Margaret. "And I'm going to take jiu jitsu lessons from you right away. If I could twirl a robber around the thumb like that and hit a cow under her chin, I don't think I'd be such a coward."

Everybody burst out laughing and Molly felt greatly relieved that harmony was once more established. The walk ended happily, and by the time they had reached home, Judith Blount had been relegated to an unimportant place in their minds.

CHAPTER V. AN UNWILLING EAVESDROPPER

Busy days followed for Molly. She had been made chairman of the committee on decoration for the sophomore-freshman reception along with all her many other duties, and had entered into it as conscientiously as she went into everything. Some days before the semi-official party for the gathering of autumn foliage and evergreens, Chairman Molly and Judy had a consultation.

"What we want is something different," Judy remarked, and Molly smiled, remembering that her friend's greatest fear in life was to appear commonplace.

"Caroline Brinton will want cheese cloth, of course," said Molly, "but I think she'll be outvoted if we can only talk to the committee beforehand. My plan is to mass all the greens around the pillars and hang strings of Japanese lanterns between the galleries."

"And," went on fanciful Judy, who adored decoration, "let's make a big primrose and violet banner exactly the same size as the Wellington banner and hang them from the center of the gymnasium, one on each side of the chandelier."

A meeting of the class was called to consider the question of the banner and it was decided not only to have the largest class banner ever seen at Wellington, but to give the entire class a hand in the making of it. The money was to be raised partly by subscription and partly by an entertainment to be given later.

The girls were very proud of the gorgeous pennant when it was completed. Every sophomore had lent a helping hand in its construction, which had taken several hours a day for the better part of a week. It was of silk, one side lavender and the other side primrose color. On the lavender side "Wellington" in yellow silk letters had been briar-stitched on by two skillful sophomores and on the primrose side was "19 – " in lavender.

The Wellington banner, a gift from the alumnae, was also of silk in the soft blue which every Wellington girl loved. It was necessary to obtain a special permission from President Walker to use this flag, which was brought out only on state occasions, and it devolved on Molly, as chairman, to make the formal request for her class. That this intrepid class of sophomores was the first ever to ask to use the banner had not occurred to her when she knocked at the door of the President's office.

Miss Walker would see her in ten minutes, she was told by Miss Maxwell, the President's secretary, and she sat down in the long drawing room to await her summons. It was a pleasant place in which to linger, Molly thought, as she leaned back in a beautiful old arm chair of the sixteenth century, which had come from a Florentine palace. Most of the furniture and ornaments in the room had been brought over from Italy by Miss Walker at various times. There were mirrors and high-backed carved chairs from Venice. Over the mantel was a beautiful frieze of singing children, and at one side was a photograph, larger even than Mary Stewart's, of the "Primavera"; on the other side of the mantel was a lovely round Madonna which Molly thought also might be a Botticelli.

As her eyes wandered from one object to another in the charming room, her tense nerves began to relax. At last her gaze rested on the photograph of a pretty, dark-haired girl in an old-fashioned black dress. There was something very appealing about the sweet face looking out from the carved gilt frame, a certain peaceful calmness in her expression. And peace had not been infused into Molly's daily life lately. What a rush things had been in; every moment of the day occupied. There were times when it was so overwhelming, this college life, that she felt she could not breast the great wave of duties and pleasures that surged about her. And now, at last, in the subdued soft light of President Walker's drawing room she found herself alone and in delightful, perfect stillness. How polished the floors were! They were like dim mirrors in which the soft colors of old hangings were reflected. Two Venetian glass vases on the mantel gave out an opalescent gleam in the twilight.

"Some day I shall have a room like this," Molly thought, closing her eyes. "I shall wear peacock blue and old rose dresses like the Florentine ladies and do my hair in a gold net – "

Her heavy eyelids fluttered and drooped, her hands slipped from the arms of her chair into her lap and her breathing came regularly and even like a child's. She was sound asleep, and while she slept Miss Maxwell peeped into the room. Seeing no one, apparently, in the dim light, she went out again. Evidently the sophomore had not waited, she decided, so she said nothing to Miss Walker about it.

Half an hour slipped noiselessly by; the sun set. For a few minutes the western window reflected a deep crimson light; then the shadows deepened and the room was almost dark.

"Never mind the lights, Mary. I'll see Miss Walker in her office at five thirty," said a voice at the door. "She expects me and I'll wait here until it's time."

"Very well, sir," answered the maid.

Someone came softly into the room and sat down near the window, well removed from the sleeping Molly. Again the stillness was unbroken and the young girl, sitting in the antique chair in which noble lords and ladies and perhaps cardinals and archbishops had sat, began to dream. She thought the dark-haired girl in the photograph was standing beside her. She wore a long, straight, black dress that seemed to fade off into the shadows. Molly remembered the face perfectly. There was a sorrowful look on it now. Then suddenly the sadness changed inexplicably and the face was the face in the photograph, the peaceful calmness returned and the eyes looked straight into Molly's, as they did from the picture.

Molly started slightly and opened her eyes.

"I must have been asleep," she thought.

"My dear Edwin," Miss Walker's voice was saying, "this is terrible. I am so shocked and sorry. What's to be done?"

"I don't know. I haven't been able to think yet, it was all so sudden. I had just heard when I telephoned you half an hour ago. It's a great blow to the family. Grace is with them now, and she's a tower of strength, you know."

"What's to be done about Judith? She was getting on so well this year. I think her punishment last winter did her good."

"She did appear to be in a better frame of mind," said Professor Green drily.

"Is she to be told at once?"

"She has to be told about the money, of course, but the disgraceful part is to be kept from her as much as possible."

Molly's heart began to beat. What should she do? Make her presence known to Professor Green and Miss Walker? But how very embarrassing that would be, to break suddenly into this intimate conversation and confess that she had overheard a family secret.

"The thing has been kept quiet so far," went on the Professor. "The newspapers, strange to say, have not got hold of it, but it's going to take every cent the family can get together to pull out of the hole. Hardly half a dozen persons outside the family know the real state of the case. I have taken you into my confidence because you are an old and intimate friend of the family and because we must reach some decision about Judith. Her mother wants her to stay right where she is now, just as if nothing had happened. Judith has always been very proud and her mother thinks it would be too much of a come-down for her to live in cheaper quarters."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Miss Walker. "On the contrary, I think it would do Judith good to associate with girls who are not so well off. Put her with a group of clever, hard-working girls like the ones at Queen's, for instance."

Molly's heart gave a leap. How much she would like to tell the girls this compliment the President had paid them! Then again the embarrassment of her position overwhelmed her. She was about to force herself to rise and confess that she had been an unwitting eavesdropper when she heard the Professor's voice from the door saying:

"Well, you advise me to do nothing this evening? Richard is going to call me up again in an hour on the long distance in the village for the sake of privacy. If he agrees with you, I'll wait until to-morrow."

"Where's Mr. Blount now?"

"They think he's on his way to South America. You see, Richard, in some way, found out about the fake mining deal and the family is trying to get together enough money to pay back the stockholders. There are not many local people involved. Most of it was sold in the West and South and we hope to refund all the money in the course of time. It's nearly half a million, you know, and while the Blounts have a good deal of real estate, it takes time to raise money on it."

"What did you say the name of the mine was? I have heard, but it has slipped my memory."

"The Square Deal Mine'; a bad name, considering it was about the crookedest deal ever perpetrated."

Molly started so violently that the Venetian vases on the mantel quivered and the little table on which stood the picture in the gilt frame trembled like an aspen.

"The Square Deal Mine!" Had she heard anything else but that name all summer? Had not her mother, on the advice of an old friend, invested every cent she could rake and scrape together, except the fund for her own college expenses, in that very mine? And everybody in the neighborhood had done the same thing.

"It's a sure thing, Mrs. Brown," Colonel Gray had told her mother. "I'm going to put in all I have because an old friend at the head of one of the oldest and most reliable firms in the country is backing it."

The voices grew muffled as the President and Professor Green moved slowly down the hall. Molly felt ill and tired. Would the Blounts be able to pay back the money? Suppose they were not and she had to leave college while Judith was to be allowed to finish her education and live in the most expensive rooms in Wellington.

She pressed her lips together. Such thoughts were unworthy of her and she tried to brush them out of her mind.

"Poor Judith!" she said to herself.

The President's footsteps sounded on the stairs. She paused on the landing, cleared her throat and mounted the second flight.

How dark it had grown. A feeling of sickening fear came over Molly, and suddenly she rushed blindly into the hall and out of the house without once looking behind her. Down the steps she flew, and, in her headlong flight, collided with Professor Green, who had evidently started to go in one direction and, changing his mind, turned to go toward the village.

"Why, Miss Brown, has anything frightened you? You are trembling like a leaf."

"I – I was only hurrying," she replied lamely.

"Have you been to see the President?"

"I didn't see her. It was too late," answered Molly evasively.

They walked on in silence for a moment.

"I am going down to the village for a long-distance message. May I see you to your door on my way?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," said Molly, half inclined to confide to the Professor that she had just overheard his conversation. But a kind of shyness closed her lips. They began talking of other things, chiefly of the little Japanese, Molly's pupil.

At the door of Queen's, the Professor took her hand and looked down at her kindly.

"You were frightened at something," he said, smiling gravely. "Confess, now, were you not?"

"There was nothing to frighten me," she answered. "Did you ever see a picture," she continued irrelevantly, "a photograph in a gilt frame on a little table in the President's drawing room? It's a

picture of a slender girl in an old-fashioned black dress. Her hair is dark and her face is rather pale-looking."

"Oh, yes. That's a photograph of Miss Elaine Walker, President Walker's sister."

"Where is she now?" asked Molly.

"She died in that house some twenty-five years ago. You know, Miss Walker succeeded her father as President and they have always lived there. Miss Elaine was in her senior year when she had typhoid fever and died. It was a good deal of a blow, I believe, to the family and to the entire University. She was very popular and very talented. She wrote charming poetry. I have read some of it. No doubt she would have done great things if she had lived."

"After all," Molly argued with herself, "I went to sleep looking at her photograph. It was the most natural thing in the world to dream about it. But why did she look so sorrowful and then so hopeful? I can't forget her face."

Once again she was on the point of speaking to Professor Green about the mine, and once again she checked her confidence. The cautious Nance had often said to her: "If there's any doubt about mentioning a thing, I never mention it."

"By the way, Miss Brown, I wonder if there are any vacant rooms here at Queen's?"

"Yes," said Molly, "there happens to be a singleton. It was to have been taken by a junior who broke her arm or something and couldn't come back to college this year. Why? Have you any more little Japs for me to tutor?"

"No, but I was thinking there might have to be some changes a little later, and Miss Blount, my cousin, would perhaps be looking for – er – less commodious quarters. But don't mention it, please. It may not be necessary."

"I may have to make some changes myself for the same reason," thought poor Molly, but she said nothing except a trembly, shaky "good-night," which made the Professor look into her face closely and then stand watching her as she hastened up the steps and was absorbed by the shadowy interior of Queen's still unlighted hallway.

CHAPTER VI.

TWO LONG DISTANCE CALLS

The President readily granted her gracious permission for the sophomores to use the Wellington alumnae banner. She was pleased at the class spirit which had engendered the request and which had also prompted the sophomores to make a banner of their own.

With reverent hands the young girls hoisted the two splendid pennants on the evening of the reception. And another unusual distinction was granted this extraordinary class of 19 – . The President and several of the faculty appeared that evening in the gallery to view the effect. Never before in the memory of students had Prexy attended a sophomore-freshman ball.

"They have certainly made the place attractive," said the President, looking down between the interstices of garlands of Japanese lanterns on the scene of whirling dancers below. "The banners are really beautiful. I feel quite proud of my sophomores this evening."

The sophomores were proud of themselves and worked hard to make the freshmen have a good time and feel at home. Molly, remembering her own timidity of the year before, took care that there were no wall flowers this gala evening.

She had invited Madeleine Petit, a lonely little Southern girl, who had a room over the post office in the village and was working her way through college somehow. In spite of her own depleted purse, Molly had sent Madeleine a bunch of violets and had hired a carriage for the evening. As for the little freshman, she was ecstatic with pleasure. She never dreamed that her sophomore escort was nearly as poor as she was. People of Molly's type never look poor. The richness of her coloring, her red gold hair and deep blue eyes and a certain graciousness of manner overcame all deficiencies in the style and material of her lavender organdy frock.

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