Dorothy's Triumph



By Evelyn Raymond

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DOROTHY'S TRIUMPH

BY

EVELYN RAYMOND

Illustrated By

RUDOLF MENCL

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“A MELODY SUCH AS SETS THE HEART BEATIN(

“Dorothy’s Triumph.”

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DOROTHY'S TRIUMPH

CHAPTER I

ON THE TRAIN

"Maryland, my Maryland!" dreamily hummed Dorothy Calvert.

"Not only *your* Maryland, but *mine*," was the resolute response of the boy beside her.

Dorothy turned on him in surprise.

“Why, Jim Barlow, I thought nothing could shake your allegiance to old New York state; you’ve told me so yourself dozens of times, and —”

“I know, Dorothy; I’ve thought so myself, but since my visit to old Bellvieu, and our trip on the houseboat, I’ve—I’ve sort o’ changed my mind.”

“You don’t mean that you’re coming to live with Aunt Betty and I again, Jim? Oh, you just can’t mean that! Why, we’d be so delighted!”

“No, I don’t mean just that,” responded Jim, rather glumly—“in fact, I don’t know just what I mean myself, except I feel like I must be always near you and Mrs. Calvert.”

“Say Aunt Betty, Jim.”

“Well, Aunt Betty.”

“You know she is an aunt to you, in the matter of affection, if not by blood.”

“I do know that, and I appreciate all she did for me before she got well enough acquainted with you to believe she wanted you to live with her forever.”

“Say, Jim, dear, often when I ponder over my life it seems like some brilliant dream. Just think of being left a squalling baby for Mrs. Calvert, my great-aunt, to take care of, then sent to Mother Martha and Father John, because Aunt Betty felt that she should be free from the care of

raising a troublesome child. Then, after I've grown into a sizable girl, in perfect ignorance as to my real parentage, Aunt Betty meets and likes me, and is anxious to get me back again. Then Judge Breckenridge and others take a hand in the matter of hunting up my real name and pedigree, with the result that Aunt Betty finally owns up to my being her kith and kin, and receives me with open arms at Deerhurst. Since then, I, Dorothy Elisabeth Somerset-Calvert, F. F. V., etc., etc., changed from near-poverty to at least a comfortable living, with all my heart could desire and more, have had one continuous good time. Yes, Jim, it is too strange and too good to be true."

"But it is true," protested the boy—"true as gospel, Dorothy. You are one of the finest little ladies in the land and no one will ever dispute it."

"Oh, I wasn't fishing for compliments."

"Well, you got 'em just the same, didn't you? And you deserve 'em."

The train on which Dorothy and Jim, together with Ephraim, Aunt Betty's colored man, were riding, was already speeding through the broad vales of Maryland, every moment bringing it nearer the city of Baltimore and Old Bellvieu, the ancestral home of the Calverts, where Mrs. Elisabeth Cecil Somerset-Calvert, familiarly termed, "Aunt Betty," would be awaiting them.

Since being “taken into the fold” by Aunt Betty, after years of living with Mother Martha and Father John, to whom she had sent the child as a nameless foundling, Dorothy had, indeed, been a happy girl, as her experiences related in the previous volumes of this series, “House Party,” “In California,” “On a Ranch,” “House Boat,” and “At Oak Knowe,” will attest.

Just now she was returning from the Canadian school of Oak Knowe, where she had spent a happy winter. Mrs. Calvert had been unable to meet her in the Dominion, as she had intended, but had sent Jim and Ephraim, the latter insisting that he was needed to help care for his little mistress. Soon after the commencement exercises were over the trio had left for Dorothy’s home.

And such a commencement as it had been! Dorothy could still hear ringing in her ears the rather solemn, deep-toned words of the Bishop who conferred the diplomas and prizes, as he had said:

“To Miss Dorothy Calvert for uniform courtesy.” Then again: “To Miss Dorothy Calvert, for advancement in music.”

“The dear old Bishop!” she cried, aloud, as she thought again of the good times she had left behind her.

“‘The dear old Bishop’?” Jim repeated, a blank expression on his face. “And who, please, is the

dear old Bishop?"

"I'd forgotten you did not meet him, Jim. He's the head director of the school at Oak Knowe, and one of the very dearest of men. I shall never forget my first impression of him—a venerable man, with a queer-shaped cap on his head, and wearing knee breeches and gaiters, much as our old Colonial statesmen were wont to do. 'So this is my old friend, Betty Calvert's child, is it?' he said. Dorothy imitated the bass tones of a man with such precision that Jim smiled in spite of himself. 'Well, well! You're as like her as possible—yet only her great-niece. Ha! Hum!' etc., etc. Then he put his arm around me and drew me to his side, and, Jim, I can't tell you how comfortable I felt, for I was inclined to be homesick, 'way up there so far from Aunt Betty. But he cured me of it, and asked Miss Muriel Tross-Kingdon to care for me."

"Miss Muriel Tross-Kingdon?"

"Why, yes—the Lady Principal. You met her, Jim. You surely remember her kind greeting the night the prizes and diplomas were conferred. She was very courteous to you, I thought, considering the fact that she is so haughty and dignified."

"Don't believe I'd like to go to a girls' school," said Jim.

"Why, of course, you wouldn't, silly—being a boy."

“But I mean if I was a girl.”

“Why?”

“Oh, the life there is too dull.”

“What do you know about life at a girls’ school, Jim?”

“Well, I’ve heard a few things. I tell you, there must be plenty of athletics to make school or college life interesting.”

“Athletics? My dear boy, didn’t you see the big gym at Oak Knowe? Not a day passed but we girls performed our little feats on rings and bars, and as for games in the open air, Oak Knowe abounds with them. Look at me! Did you ever see a more rugged picture of health?”

“You seem to be in good condition, all right,” Jim confessed.

“*Seem* to be? I *am*,” corrected Dorothy.

“Well, just as you say. I won’t argue the point. I’m very glad to know you’ve become interested in athletics. That’s one good thing Miss Muriel Tross-Kingdon has done for you, anyway.”

“Jim, I don’t like your tone. Do you mean to insinuate that otherwise my course at Oak Knowe has been a failure?”

“No, no, Dorothy; you misunderstood me. You’ve benefited greatly, no doubt—at least, you’ve upheld the honor of the United States in a school

almost filled with English girls. And that's something to be proud of."

"Not all were English, Jim. Of course, Gwendolyn Borst-Kennard and her chum, Laura Griswold, were members of the peerage. But the majority of the girls were just everyday folks like you and I have been used to associating with all our lives. Even Millikins-Pillikins was more like an American than an English girl."

"'Millikins-Pillikins'!" sniffed Jim. "What a name to burden a girl with!"

"Oh, that's only a nickname; her real name is Grace Adelaide Victoria Tross-Kingdon."

"Worse and more of it!"

"Jim!" she protested sternly.

"I beg your pardon, Dorothy—no offense meant. Millikins-Pillikins is related to Miss Muriel Tross-Kingdon, I suppose?"

"Certainly."

"Well, it may be all right," sighed the thoroughly practical Jim, "but this putting a hyphen between your last two names looks to me like a play for notoriety."

Dorothy's eyes flashed fire as she turned a swift gaze upon him.

"Now, look here, Jim Barlow, we've been fast friends for years, and I don't want to have a

falling out, but you shall not slander my friends. And please remember, sir, that the last two words in *my* name are connected by a hyphen, then see if you can't bridle your tongue a while."

Dorothy, plainly displeased, turned and looked out of the car window. But she did not see the green fields, or the cool-looking patches of woodland that were flashing past; she was wondering if she had spoken hastily to her boy chum, and whether he would resent her tone.

But Jim, after a moment's silence, became duly humble.

"I—I'm very sorry I said that, Dorothy," he began, slowly. "I—I'm sure I'd forgotten the hyphen in your own name. I was just thinking of those English girls. I'm positive that when they met you they felt themselves far above you, and it just makes my American blood boil—that's all!"

Dorothy turned in time to catch a suspicious moisture in Jim's eyes, and the warm-hearted girl immediately upbraided herself for speaking as she had.

"You're true blue, Jim! I might have known how you meant it, and that you wouldn't willingly slander my friends. And, just to show you that I believe in telling the truth, I'll admit that Gwendolyn was a hateful little spitfire when I first entered the school. But finally she grew to know that in the many attributes which

contribute to our happiness there were girls in the world just as well off as she. Gradually she came around, until, at the end, she was one of my warmest friends."

Dorothy went on to relate how she had saved Gwendolyn from drowning, and how, in turn, the English girl had saved Dorothy from a terrible slide to death down an icy incline.

"Well, that wasn't bad of her," admitted Jim. "But she couldn't very well stand by and see you perish—anyway, you had saved her life, and she felt duty bound to return the compliment."

"Please believe, Jim, that she did it out of the fullness of her heart."

"Well, if you say so," the boy returned, reluctantly.

Both looked up at this juncture to find Ephraim standing in the aisle. The eyes of the old colored man contained a look of unbounded delight, and it was not difficult to see that his pleasure was caused by the anticipated return, within the next few hours, to Old Bellvieu and Mrs. Calvert.

"Well, Ephy," said Dorothy, "soon we'll see Aunt Betty again. And just think—I've been away for nine long months!"

"My, Miss Betty'll suttin'ly be glad tuh see yo' once moah, 'case she am gittin' tuh a point now where yo' comp'ny means er pow'ful lot tuh her. Axin' yo' pawdon, lil' missy, fo' mentionin' de

subjeck, but our Miss Betty ain't de woman she were befor' yo' went away las' fall. No, indeedy! Dar's sumpthin' worryin' her, en I hain't nebber been able tuh fin' out w'at hit is. But I reckon hit's some trouble 'bout de ole place."

"I'll just bet that's it," said Jim. "You remember we discussed that last summer just before we went sailing on the houseboat, Dorothy?"

"Yes," said the girl, a sad note creeping into her voice. "Something or somebody had failed, and Aunt Betty's money was involved in some way. I remember we feared she would have to sell Bellvieu, but gradually the matter blew over, and when I left home for Oak Knowe I had heard nothing of it for some time. The city of Baltimore has long coveted Bellvieu, you know, as well as certain private firms or individuals. The old place is wanted for some new and modern addition I suppose, and they hope eventually to entice Aunt Betty into letting it go. Oh, I do wish the train would hurry! I'm so anxious to take the dear old lady in my arms and comfort her that I can scarcely contain myself. Don't you think, Jim, there will be some way to save her all this worry?"

"We can try," answered the boy, gravely. The way he pursed up his lips, however, told Dorothy that he realized of what little assistance a boy and girl would be in a matter involving many thousands of dollars. "Let's wait and see. Perhaps there is nothing to worry over after all."

“Lor’ bress yo’, chile—dem’s de cheerfulest wo’ds I eber heered yo’ speak. An’ pray God yo’ may be right! De good Lord knows I hates tuh see my Miss Betty a-worryin’ en a-triflin’ her life erway, w’en she’d oughter be made comf’table en happy in her las’ days. It hain’t accordin’ tuh de Scriptur’, chillen—it hain’t accordin’ tuh de Scriptur’.”

And with a sad shake of his head the faithful old darkey moved away. A moment later they heard the door slam and knew that he had gone to the colored folks’ compartment in the car ahead.

“Ephy is loyalty personified,” said Dorothy. “His skin is black as ink, but his heart is as white as the driven snow.”

The boy did not answer. He seemed lost in thought, his eyes riveted on the passing landscape. Dorothy, too, looked out of the window again, a feeling of satisfaction possessing her as she realized that she was again in her beloved South.

On every hand were vast cotton fields, the green plants well above ground, and flourishing on account of the recent rains. Villages and hamlets flashed by, as the limited took its onward way toward the great Maryland city which Dorothy Calvert called her home.

“Oh, Jim, see!” the girl cried, suddenly, gripping her companion’s arm, and pointing out of the window. “There is the old Randolph plantation.

We can't be more than an hour's ride from Baltimore. Hurrah! I'm so glad!"

"Looks like a 'befor' de war' place," Jim returned, as he viewed the rickety condition of what had once been one of Maryland's finest country mansions.

"Yes; the house was built long before the war. It was owned by a branch of the famous Randolphs, of Virginia, of whom you have heard and read. Aunt Betty told me the story one night, years ago. I shall never forget it. There was a serious break in the family and William Randolph moved his wife and babies away from Virginia, vowing he would never again set foot in that state. And he kept his word. He settled on this old plantation, remodeling the house, and adding to it, until he had one of the most magnificent mansions in the South. Aunt Betty frequently visited his family when a young girl. That was many years before the Civil War. When the war finally broke out, William Randolph had two sons old enough to fight, so sent them to help swell the ranks of the Confederate Army. One was killed in battle. The other was with Lee at Appomattox, and came home to settle down. He finally married, and was living on the old plantation up to ten years ago, when he died."

"What became of the father?" queried the interested Jim.

"Oh, he died soon after the war, without ever seeing his brothers in Virginia, they say. The

son, Harry Randolph, being of a sunny disposition, though, finally resolved to let bygones be bygones, and some years after his father's death, he went to see his relatives in the other state, where he was received with open arms. How terrible it must be to have a family feud, Jim!"

"Terrible," nodded the boy.

"Just think how I'd feel if I were to get mad at Aunt Betty and go to Virginia, or New York to stay, never to see my dear old auntie again on this earth. Humph! Catch me doing a thing like that? Well, I reckon not—mo matter how great the provocation!"

Jim smiled.

"Not much danger of your having to do anything like that," he replied. "Aunt Betty loves you too much, and even if you did, you could go back to Mother Martha and Father John."

"Yes; I could, that's true. But life would never seem the same, after finding Aunt Betty, and being taken to her heart as I have. But let's not talk of such morbid things. Let us, rather, plan what we shall do for a good time this summer."

"Humph!" grunted the boy. "Reckon I'll be having a good time studying 'lectricity. There's work ahead of me, and I don't dare allow myself to forget it."

"But, Jim, you are going home with me for a

vacation. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, or, at least, that's what I've always been taught to believe."

"I know, Dorothy; but I've got a living to make." The serious note in Jim's voice made Dorothy turn in some surprise.

"Why, Jim Barlow, how you talk! You're not old enough to strike out for yourself yet." A note of authority crept unconsciously into Dorothy's tones.

"Yes; I am. Lots of boys younger than I have gone out to wrestle with the world for a livelihood, and I reckon I can do the same."

"But Dr. Sterling won't let you, I'm sure."

"Humph! A lot Dr. Sterling has to say about *that*!"

"But you would surely regard his advice as worth something?"

"Yes; a great deal. His advice is for me to learn electricity—to learn it thoroughly from the bottom up. To do that I shall have to serve as an apprentice for a number of years. The pay is not great, but enough to live on. I've made up my mind, Dorothy, so don't try to turn me from my purpose."

Dorothy Calvert looked with pride on this manly young fellow at her side, as she recalled her first meeting with him some years before. At that

time she had been living with Mother Martha and Father John on the Hudson near Newburgh. Jim, the "bound boy," had been Mrs. Calvert's protégé, and had finally worked his way into the regard of his elders, until Dr. Sterling had taken him under his protecting wing. The doctor, a prominent geologist, had endeavored to teach the boy the rudiments of his calling, and Jim had proved an apt pupil, but had shown such a yearning toward electricity and kindred subjects that the kindly doctor had purchased for him some of the best books on the subject. Over these the boy had pored night and day, rigging up apparatus after apparatus, that he might experiment with the great force first discovered in its primitive form by Benjamin Franklin, and later given to the world in such startling form by Morse and Edison.

"I shall never try to turn you from your purpose, Jim," said Dorothy. "I feel that whatever you attempt will be a success. You have it in you, and in your lexicon there is no such word as fail. When do you begin your apprenticeship?"

"In Baltimore this month, if I can find a place."

"Oh, Jim, won't that be fine? I'll tell Aunt Betty the moment we arrive. Perhaps some of her friends will know of an opening. I'm sure some of them will, and we'll have you always with us."

"That sounds good to me. I've written Dr. Sterling to send my books and electrical

apparatus by freight to Bellvieu."

"Then we'll give you a fine, large room all to yourself, where you can set up your laboratory."

Dorothy's enthusiasm began to communicate itself to Jim, and soon he had launched himself into an exposition of electricity and its uses, with many comments on its future.

So engrossed were both boy and girl in the discussion that they did not hear Ephraim, who came silently down the aisle and stood in a respectful attitude before them.

"S'cuse me, please, Miss Dorot'y, en Mistah Jim, but p'raps yo' don't know dat we's almos' tuh de Baltimore station."

Dorothy threw a quick glance out of the window.

"Oh, so we are! See, Jim! There's the old Chesapeake, and it's a sight for sore eyes. Now, for old Bellvieu and Aunt Betty!"

There was a hasty gathering of satchels and paraphernalia as the train drew into the big station. The hum of voices outside, mingled with the shouts of the cab drivers and the shrill cries of the newsboys, met their ears as they descended from the coach.

Through the throng Ephraim led the way with the luggage, Dorothy and Jim following quickly, until finally, in the street, the girl descried a familiar carriage, on the top of which a young

colored boy was perched.

“Hello, Methuselah Bonaparte Washington! Don’t you know your mistress?” cried Dorothy, running toward him.

This was probably the first time Dorothy had ever called him anything but “Metty,” by which nickname he was known at Bellvieu, where he had always lived, and where he had served as Aunt Betty’s page and footman since he was old enough to appreciate the responsibilities of the position.

His eyes glowed with affection now, as he viewed his little mistress after many months’ absence. Descending from his perch on the carriage, he bowed low to Dorothy, his face wreathed in a smile of such broad proportions that it seemed his features could never go back into their proper places.

“Lordy, lil’ missy, I’s suah glad tuh sot mah eyes on yo’ once mo’. Ole Bellvieu hain’t eben been interestin’ sence yo’ lef las’ fall.”

“Do you mean that, Metty?” cried the girl, her heart warming toward the little fellow for the sincerity of his welcome.

“Yas’m, lil’ missy, I suah does mean hit. An’ I hain’t de only one dat’s missed yo’. Mrs. Betty done been habin’ seben fits sence yo’ went off tuh school, an’ as fo’ Dinah en Chloe, dey hain’t smiled onct all wintah. Dey’ll all be glad tuh see yo’ back—yas’m, dey suah will!”

“And how is Aunt Betty?” the girl asked, a little catch in her voice. Instinctively she seemed to dread the answer. Aunt Betty was getting old, and her health had not been of the best recently.

“She’s pow’ful pooh, lil’ missy, but I jes’ knows she’ll git plenty ob strength w’en she sees yo’ lookin’ so fine en strong.”

“Well, take us to her,” said Dorothy, “and don’t spare the horses.”

“Yas’m—yas’m—I’ll suah do dat—I’ll suah do dat!”

Through the narrow, crowded streets of old Baltimore the Calvert carriage dashed, with Dorothy and Jim inside, and Ephraim keeping company with Metty on the box. Metty chose a route through the dirtiest streets, where tumbledown houses swarmed with strange-looking people, who eyed the party curiously; but this was the shortest way to the great country home of the Calverts. Soon the streets grew wider, the air purer, then the Chesapeake burst into view, the salty air refreshing the tired occupants of the carriage as nothing had done for days.

Finally, the glistening carriage and finely caparisoned horses sped on a swift trot through the great gateway at Bellvieu, and Dorothy, leaning out of the window, saw Aunt Betty standing expectantly on the steps of the old mansion.

Home at last!

CHAPTER II

AT OLD BELLVIEU AGAIN

“Oh, Aunt Betty, Aunt Betty!” cried Dorothy, as she leaped from the carriage and dashed across the lawn toward the steps, followed more leisurely by Jim. “I just can’t wait to get to you!”

Aunt Betty gave an hysterical little laugh and folded the girl in her arms with such a warmth of affection that tears sprang into Dorothy’s eyes.

“My dear, dear child!” was all the old lady could say. Then her lip began to tremble and she seemed on the verge of crying.

Dorothy took the aged face between her two hands and kissed it repeatedly. She forgot that Jim was standing near, waiting for a greeting—forgot everything except that she was home again, with Mrs. Elisabeth Cecil Somerset-Calvert, the best and dearest aunt in the world, to love and pet her.

“Break away! Break away!” cried Jim, after a moment, forcing a note of gayety into his voice for Aunt Betty’s sake. “Give a fellow a chance for

a kiss, won't you, Dorothy?"

"Certainly, Jim; I'd forgotten you were with me," was the girl's response.

"You, as well as Dorothy, are a sight for sore eyes," cried Aunt Betty, pleased at the warm embrace and hearty kiss of her one-time protégé.

"And we're glad to be here, you bet!" Jim replied. "A long, tiresome journey, that, Aunt Betty, I tell you! The sight of old Bellvieu is almost as refreshing as a good night's sleep, and that's something I stand pretty badly in need of about now. And just gaze at Dorothy, Aunt Betty! Isn't she looking well?"

"A perfect picture of health, Jim. Had I met her in a crowd in a strange city, I doubt if I should have known her."

"Oh, Aunt Betty, surely I haven't changed as much as that," the girl protested.

"You don't realize how you've grown and broadened, and—"

"Broadened? Oh, Aunt Betty!"

"Broadened, not physically, but mentally, my dear. I can see that my old friend, the Bishop, took good care of you, and that Miss Tross-Kingdon has borne out her well-established reputation of returning young ladies to their relatives greatly improved both in learning and culture."

“Well, auntie, dear, I’m satisfied if you are, and now, let me take off my things. I’m so tired of railroad trains, I don’t care to see another for months.”

“Well, you’ve had your work, and now you shall have your play. I do not mean that you shall be shut up in this hot city all summer without a bit of an outing. What would you say to a—oh, but I’m ahead of my story! I’ll tell you all this when you are rested and can better decide whether my plans for your vacation will please you.”

“Oh, auntie, tell me now—don’t keep me in suspense!”

“Young ladies,” said Aunt Betty, regarding her great-niece half-severely over her glasses, “should learn to control their curiosity. If allowed to run unbridled, it is apt, sooner or later, to get them into trouble.”

“But, auntie, I want to know!”

Just the suggestion of a pout showed itself on Dorothy’s lips.

“What a pretty mouth! And so you shall know.”

“You’re the best auntie!”

Two white arms went around Mrs. Calvert’s neck and the pouting face was wreathed in smiles.

“But not now,” concluded Aunt Betty.

“Oh!”

The disappointed tone made Aunt Betty smile, and she winked slyly at Jim, as she observed:

“Isn’t it wonderful what a lot of interest a simple little sentence will arouse?”

“I’ve never yet met a girl who wasn’t overburdened with curiosity—and I s’pose I never shall,” was Jim’s response. “It’s the way they’re built. Aunt Betty, and I reckon there’s no help for it. Not changing the subject, but how do I reach my room?”

“Ephy will show you. It’s the big room on the east side. Everything is ready for you. When you have washed and freshened up a bit you may join Dorothy and I on the lawn.”

“Very good; but don’t wait for me. I may decide to take a snooze, and when I snooze I’m very uncertain. Traveling always did tire me out.”

Ephraim, with Jim’s suit case, led the way up the broad stairs of the Calvert mansion, the boy following.

“Heah we is, sah,” said the colored man, after a moment. He paused to throw open the massive door of a room. “Dis yeah room am de very bestest dis place affords. Youse mighty lucky, Mistah Jim, tuh be relegated tuh de guest chambah, en I takes dis ercasion to congratulate yo’.”

“Thank you, Ephy. But, being a guest, why

should I not have the guest chamber?" and Jim's eyes roamed admiringly over the old-fashioned but richly-furnished apartment.

"No reason 'tall, sah—no reason 'tall. I hain't sayin' nuffin'. But dis suah am er fine room."

The suit case was resting on the floor by the wardrobe, and Ephraim was carefully unpacking the boy's clothes, and putting them in their proper places, while Jim, glad to be rid of his coat, which he termed "excess baggage," was soon puffing and blowing in a huge bowl of water, from where he went for a plunge in the tub.

"Lordy, Mistah Jim," the colored man chuckled, following him to the door of the bathroom, "hit suah looks as though yo' was a darkey, en all de black had washed off."

"That's some of the smoke and cinders acquired during our journey from Canada. Don't forget that you have them on you, too, Ephy, only, being as black as ink, they don't show up so well."

"Yas'r, yas'r, I reckon dat's right." Old Ephraim continued to chuckle at frequent intervals. "Yo' suah is er great boy, Mistah Jim!"

"Thank you, Ephy."

"A-washin' yo' face en haid in de wash bowl, den climbin' intuh de tub fo' tuh wash de rest. Dat's w'at I calls extravagantness." He straightened up

suddenly. “Now, sah, yo’ clothes is all laid out nice, sah. Is dar anyt’ing moah I kin do?”

“Nothing, Ephy—nothing. You’ve done everything a gentleman could expect of his valet. So vamoose!”

“Huh?”

“Get out—take your leave—anything you want to call it, so you leave me alone. I’m going to take a nap, and when I wake up I’ll be as hungry as a bear.”

“Well, I reckon we kin jes’ about satisfy dat appetite, chile. If dar’s anyt’ing mah Miss Betty hain’t got in de way ob food, I hain’t nebber diskivered hit yet.”

So Ephraim left Jim to his own devices, and went down to the servants’ quarters, where he literally talked the arms off of both Chloe and Dinah, while Metty stood by with wide-open mouth, as he listened to Ephraim’s tale of his adventures in Canada.

In the meantime, Dorothy and Aunt Betty were in the former’s big front room, and the girl, too, was removing the stains of the journey, keeping up an incessant chatter to Mrs. Calvert, the while.

“I was perfectly delighted with Oak Knowe,” she said, “and most particularly with your friend, the Bishop, who received me with open arms—not figuratively, but literally, Aunt Betty—and gave

me such a good send-off to Miss Tross-Kingdon that I'm sure she became slightly prepossessed in my favor."

Dorothy then told of her examination by Miss Hexam, and how well she had gone through the ordeal, despite the fact that she had been dreadfully nervous; her examination in music, and her introduction to the other scholars; the antipathy, both felt and expressed for her by Gwendolyn Borst-Kennard, a member of the British peerage, who led the student body known as the "Peers"; of her introduction to the "Commons," the largest and wildest set in the school, who were all daughters of good families, but without rank or titles.

"And I can see my mischievous girl entering into the pranks of the 'Commons,'" smiled Aunt Betty. "I only hope you did not carry things with a high hand and win the disapproval of Miss Tross-Kingdon."

"Occasionally we did," Dorothy was forced to admit. "But for the most part the girls were a rollicking lot, going nearly to the extreme limits of behavior when any fun promised, but keeping safely within the rules. There is no doubt, Aunt Betty, but that Miss Tross-Kingdon was secretly fonder of us than of the more dignified 'Peers.'"

Then Aunt Betty must know the outcome of the dislike expressed for Dorothy by Gwendolyn Borst-Kennard, so the girl recounted her subsequent adventures, including her rescue of

Gwendolyn from the water, and the English girl's brave act in saving Dorothy from a frightful slide down a precipice.

"Just think! You were in deadly danger and I knew nothing of it," said Aunt Betty, a sternly reproving note in her voice.

"But think, dear Aunt Betty, of the worry it would have caused you. It was all over in a few moments, and I was safe and sound again. If I had written you then, you would have felt that I was in constant peril, whereas my escape served as a lesson to me not to be careless, and you would have worried over nothing."

"Perhaps you are right, Dorothy; at any rate, now I have you with me, I am not going to quarrel. I'm sure your adventure was merely the result of being thoughtless."

"It was. And Gwendolyn's rescue was simply magnificent, auntie. Her only thought at that moment seemed for me."

"We will try to thank her in a substantial manner some day, my dear."

"I should dearly love to have her visit me at Bellvieu, if only to show the cold, aristocratic young lady the warmth and sincerity of a Southern reception."

"And perhaps you will have the opportunity. But not this summer. I have other plans for you."

“Now, you are arousing my curiosity again,” said Dorothy, in a disappointed tone. “Please, Aunt Betty, tell me what is on your mind.”

“All in good time, my dear.”

“Has it—has it anything to do with Uncle Seth?” the girl queried, a slight tremor in her voice. Somehow, she felt that the death of the “Learned Blacksmith,” with whom Aunt Betty had been so intimate for years, had been responsible in a measure for the present poor state of her health.

“Yes; it has to do with your Uncle Seth, poor man. His death, as you have probably imagined, was a great shock to me. I felt as though I had lost a brother. And then, the news of his demise came so suddenly. It was his dearest wish that you become a great musician. You will remember how he encouraged and developed your talent while we were at Deerhurst, arranging with Mr. Wilmot to give you lessons? He has frequently expressed himself as not being satisfied with your progress. Shortly before his death I had a letter from him, in which he urged me to employ one of the best violin teachers in Baltimore for you at the end of your course at Oak Knowe. I feel it is a small favor, to grant, dear, so if you are still of the notion that you were intended for a great violinist, I have decided to give you a chance to show your mettle.”

“Dear Aunt Betty,” said the girl, earnestly, putting an arm affectionately around the neck of

her relative, “it is the dearest wish of my life, but one.”

“What is the other wish, Dorothy?”

“That you be thoroughly restored to health. Then, if I can become perfect on my violin, I shall be delighted beyond measure.”

“Oh, my health is all right, child, except that I am beginning to feel my age. It was partly through a selfish motive that I planned this outing in Western Maryland.”

“An outing in Western Maryland! Oh, and was that the secret you had to tell me?”

“Yes; the South Mountains, a spur of the famous Blue Ridge range, will make an ideal spot in which to spend a few weeks during the summer months.”

“It must be a beautiful spot,” said the girl. “I love the mountains, and always have. The Catskills especially, will always be dear to me. When do we start, auntie?”

“As soon as you have perfected your arrangements with Herr Deichenberg, and have rested sufficiently from your journey.”

“Herr Deichenberg? Oh, then you have already found my teacher?”

“Yes; and a perfect treasure he is, or I miss my guess. Do you remember David Warfield in ‘The

Music Master,' which we saw at the theater a year ago?"

"Indeed, yes, auntie. How could one ever forget?"

"Herr Deichenberg is a musician of the Anton Von Barwig type—kind, gentle, courteous—withal, possessing those sterling qualities so ably portrayed in the play by Mr. Warfield. The Herr has the most delightful brogue, and a shy manner, which I am sure will not be in evidence during lesson hours."

"And I am to be taught by a real musician?"

"Yes."

"What a lucky girl I am!"

"If you think so, dear, I am pleased. I have tried to make you happy."

"And you have succeeded beyond my fondest expectations. There is nothing any girl could have that I have wanted for, since coming to live with you. You are the finest, best and bravest auntie in the whole, wide world!"

"Oh, Dorothy!"

"It's true, and you know it. It's too bad other girls are not so fortunate. To think of your having my vacation all planned before I reached home. I said I am tired of railroad trains, but I've changed my mind; I am perfectly willing to ride

as far as the South Mountains and return."

"But in this instance we are not going on a train, my dear."

"Not going on a train?" queried Dorothy, a blank expression on her face. Aunt Betty shook her head and smiled.

"Now, I've mystified you, haven't I?"

"You surely have. The trolleys do not run that far, so how—?"

Dorothy paused, perplexed.

"There are other means of locomotion," said Aunt Betty in her most tantalizing tone.

"Yes; we might walk," laughed the girl, "but I dare say we shall not."

"No; we are going in an automobile."

"In an automobile? Oh, I'm so glad, auntie. I—I —" Dorothy paused and assumed a serious expression. "Why, auntie, dear, wherever are we to get an automobile? You surely cannot afford so expensive a luxury?"

"You are quite right; I cannot."

"Then—?"

"But Gerald and Aurora Blank have a nice new car, and they have offered to pilot our little party across the state."

“Then I forgive them all their sins!” cried Dorothy. “Somehow, I disliked them when we first met; and you know, dear auntie, they *were* rude and overbearing during the early days on the houseboat.”

“But before the end of the trip, through a series of incidents which go a long way toward making good men and women out of our boys and girls, they learned to be gentle to everybody,” Aunt Betty responded, a reminiscent note in her voice. “I remember, we discussed it at the time.”

“I must say they got over their priggishness quickly when they once saw the error of their ways,” said Dorothy.

“Yes. Gerald is growing into a fine young man, now. You know his father failed in business, so that he was forced to sell the houseboat, and that Uncle Seth bought it for you? Well, Gerald has entered into his father’s affairs with an indomitable spirit, and has, I am told, become quite an assistance to him, as well as an inspiration to him to retrieve his lost fortunes. The Blanks have grown quite prosperous again, and Mr. Blank gave the auto to Gerald and Aurora a few weeks since to do with as they please.”

“I’m glad to hear of Gerald’s success. No doubt he and Jim will get along better this time—for, of course, Jim is to be included in our party?”

“Indeed we should never go a mile out of

Baltimore without him!" sniffed Aunt Betty. "It was expressly stipulated that he was to go. Besides Jim, Gerald, Aurora, and ourselves, there will be no one but Ephraim, unless you care to invite your old chum, Molly Breckenridge?"

"Oh, auntie, why do you suggest the impossible?" Dorothy's face went again from gay to grave. "Dear Molly is in California with her father, who is ill, and they may not return for months."

"I'd forgotten you had not heard. Molly returned east with her father some two weeks since, hence may be reached any time at her old address."

"That's the best news I have heard since you told me I was to study under Herr Deichenberg," Dorothy declared. "I'll write Molly to-day, and if she comes, she shall have a reception at Bellvieu fit for a queen."

Molly and Dorothy had first met during Dorothy's schooldays at the Misses Rhinelanders' boarding academy in Newburgh, where they had been the life of the school. Their acquaintance had ripened into more than friendship when, together, they traveled through Nova Scotia, and later met for another good time on the western ranch of the railroad king, Daniel Ford. More than any of her other girl friends Dorothy liked Molly, hence the news that she had returned east, and that she might invite her to share the outing in the South Mountains, caused Dorothy's

eyes to glow with a deep satisfaction.

“And now that we have discussed so thoroughly our prospective outing,” said Aunt Betty, “we may change the subject. It remains for me to arrange an early meeting for you with Herr Deichenberg. The Herr has a little studio in a quiet part of the city which he rarely leaves. It is quite possible, however, that I can induce him to come to Bellvieu for your first meeting, though I am sure he will insist that all your labors be performed in his own comfortable domicile, where he, naturally, feels perfectly at home.

“I visited the studio some weeks ago—shortly after I received your Uncle Seth’s letter, in fact. The Herr received me cordially, and said he would be delighted to take a pupil so highly recommended as Miss Dorothy Elisabeth Somerset-Calvert.”

“To which I duly make my little bow,” replied the girl, dropping a graceful curtsey she had learned from Miss Muriel Tross-Kingdon.

“My dear Dorothy, that is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen you do. As Ephraim would express it, it is ‘puffectly harmonious.’ Indeed, you *have* improved since going to Canada, and it pleases me immensely.”

Aunt Betty’s admiration for her great-niece was so thoroughly genuine that Dorothy could not refrain from giving her another hug.

“There, there, dear; you overwhelm me. I am

glad to be able to pay you an honest compliment. I have no doubt you have acquired other virtues of which I am at present in ignorance."

"Aunt Betty, you're getting to be a perfect flatterer. And what about the vices I may have acquired?"

Aunt Betty smiled.

"They are, I am sure, greatly in the minority—in fact, nothing but what any healthy, mischievous girl acquires at a modern boarding school. Now, in my younger days, the schoolmasters and mistresses were very strict. Disobedience to the slightest rule meant severe punishment, and was really the means of keeping pent up within one certain things from which the system were better rid. But I must go now and dress. When you have rested and completed your toilet, pass by my room and we'll go on the lawn together."

With a final kiss Aunt Betty disappeared down the hall, leaving Dorothy alone with her thoughts.

"Dear old auntie," she murmured. "Her chief desire, apparently, is for my welfare. I can never in this world repay her kindness—never!"

Then, seized with a sudden inspiration, she sat down at her writing desk by the big window, overlooking the arbor and side garden, and indicted the following letter to her chum:

"*My Darling Molly:*

"Heavy, heavy hangs over your head! You are severely penalized for not writing me of your return. But to surprise your friends was always one of your greatest delights, you sly little minx! So I am not holding it up against you. I'll even the score with you some day in a way you little imagine.

"Well, well, well, you just can't guess what I have to tell you! And I'm glad you can't, for that would take away the pleasure of the telling. Aunt Betty has planned a fine outing for me in the South Mountains, which, as you know, form a spur of the Blue Ridge range in Western Maryland. We are to be gone several weeks, during which time who can say what glorious adventures we will have?

"You are going with us. I want your acceptance of the invitation by return mail, Lady Breckenridge, and I shall take pleasure in providing a brave knight for your escort in the person of one Gerald Blank, in whose automobile we are to make the trip. He has a new seven-passenger car given him by his father, and, in the vulgar parlance of the day, we are going to 'make things hum.' It is only some sixty miles to the mountains, and we expect to be out only one night between Baltimore and our destination.

Besides yourself, Aunt Betty and I, there will be only Gerald, Aurora, his sister, Jim Barlow, and Ephraim, who will be camp cook, and general man-of-all-work.

“Now write me, dear girlie, and say that you will arrive immediately, for I am just dying with anxiety to see you, and to clasp you in my arms. Jim is already here, having traveled to Canada with Ephy to bring me safely home. As if a girl of my mature age couldn’t travel alone! However, it was one of Aunt Betty’s whims, she being in too ill health to come herself, so I suppose it is all right. Dear auntie will improve I feel sure—now that I am back. That may sound conceited, but I assure you it was not meant to. We are just wrapped up in each other—that’s all. The outing will do her good, and will, I am sure, restore in a measure her shattered health.

“And oh, I forgot to tell you! I am to have violin lessons after my vacation from the famous Herr Deichenberg, Baltimore’s finest musician, whom Aunt Betty had especially engaged before my return. No one can better appreciate than you just what this means to me. My greatest ambition has been to become a fine violinist, and now my hopes bid fair to be realized. I know it rests with me to a great extent just how far up the ladder I

go, and am resolved that Herr Deichenberg, before he is through with me, shall declare me the greatest pupil he has ever had. It takes courage to write that—and *mean* it—Molly, dear; but if we don't make such resolves and stick to them, we will never amount to much, I fear.

"My first meeting with the Herr Professor will be within the next few days, and I am looking eagerly forward to the time. Aunt Betty says he has the dearest sort of a studio in a quiet part of the city, where he puts his pupils through a course of sprouts and brings out all the latent energy—or, temperament, I suppose you would call it.

"Well, Molly, dear, you must admit that this is a long letter for my first day home, especially when I am tired from the journey, and have stopped my dressing to write you. So don't disappoint me, but write—or wire—that you are starting at once. Tell the dear Judge we hope his health has improved to such an extent that you will be free from all worry in the future. Remember us to your aunt, and don't forget that your welcome at old Bellvieu is as everlasting as the days are long.

"Ever your affectionate
"DOROTHY."

“There! I guess if that don’t bring Miss Molly Breckenridge to time, nothing will.”

Dorothy put the letter in a dainty, scented envelope, stamped and addressed it, and laid it on her dresser where she would be sure to carry it down to Ephraim when she had dressed.

An hour later, when the declining sun had disappeared behind the big hedge to the west of Bellvieu, and the lawn was filled with cool, deep shadows, Dorothy and Aunt Betty settled themselves in the open air for another chat.

CHAPTER III

DOROTHY MEETS HERR DEICHENBERG

The arrival of Herr Deichenberg at Bellvieu was looked forward to with breathless interest by Dorothy, and calm satisfaction by Aunt Betty, whose joy at seeing her girl so well pleased with the arrangements made for her studies, had been the means of reviving her spirits not a little, until she seemed almost like her old self.

The day following Dorothy’s return Ephraim was

sent to the musician's studio with a note from Mrs. Calvert, telling of the girl's arrival, and suggesting that possibly the first meeting would be productive of better results if held at Bellvieu, where the girl would be free from embarrassment. Here, too, was a piano, the note stated, and Herr Deichenberg, who was also an expert on this instrument, might, if he desired, test Dorothy's skill before taking up the work with her in earnest in his studio.

Ephraim returned in the late afternoon, bringing a written answer from the music master, in which he stated that it was contrary to his custom to visit the homes of his pupils, but that in the present instance, and under the existing circumstances, he would be glad to make an exception. He set the time of his visit at ten the following morning.

Dorothy awoke next day with a flutter of excitement. To her it seemed that the crucial moment of her life had come. If she were to fail —! She crowded the thought from her mind, firmly resolved to master the instrument which is said by all great musicians to represent more thoroughly than any other mode of expression, the joys, hopes and passions of the human soul.

Breakfast over, with a feeling of contentment Dorothy stole up to her room to dress, the taste of Dinah's coffee and hot biscuits still lingering in her mouth.

As the minutes passed she found herself

wondering what Herr Deichenberg would look like. She conjured up all sorts of pictures of a stoop-shouldered little German, her final impression, however, resolving itself into an image of “The Music Master’s” hero, Herr Von Barwig.

Would he bring his violin? she wondered. It was a rare old Cremona, she had heard, with a tone so full and sweet as to dazzle the Herr’s audiences whenever they were so fortunate as to induce him to play.

Descending finally, arrayed in her prettiest gown, a dainty creation of lawn and lace, Dorothy found Aunt Betty awaiting her.

“Never have I seen you dress in better taste, my dear!” cried Mrs. Calvert, and the girl flushed with pleasure. “The Herr, as you have perhaps surmised, is a lover of simple things, both in the way of clothes and colors, and I am anxious that you shall make a good impression. He, himself, always dresses in black—linen during the warmer days, broadcloth in the winter. Everything about him in fact is simple—everything but his playing, which is wonderful, and truly inspired by genuine genius.”

“Stop, auntie, dear, or you will have me afraid to meet the Herr. After holding him up as such a paragon, is it any wonder I should feel as small and insignificant as a mouse?”

“Come, come, you are not so foolish!”

"Of course, I'm not, really—I was only joking," and Dorothy's laugh rang out over the lawn as they seated themselves on the gallery to await the arrival of the guest. "But I do feel a trembling sensation when I think that I am to meet the great Herr Deichenberg, of whom I have heard so much, yet seen so little."

"There is nothing to tremble over, my dear—nothing at all. He is just like other men; very ordinary, and surely kind-hearted to all with whom he comes in contact."

As they were discussing the matter, Jim and Ephraim came around the corner of the house, their hands full of fishing tackle.

"Well, Aunt Betty," greeted the boy, "we're off for the old Chesapeake to court the denizens of the deep, and I'm willing to wager we'll have fish for breakfast to-morrow morning."

He pulled off his broad-brimmed straw hat and mopped a perspiring brow.

"Don't be too sure of that," returned Aunt Betty. "Fish do not always bite when you want them to. I know, for I've tried it, many's the time."

"Mah Miss Betty suah uster be er good fisher-woman," quoth Ephraim, a light of pride in his eyes. "I've seen her sot on de bank ob de Chesapeake, en cotch as many as 'leben fish in one hour. Big fellers, too—none ob yo' lil' cat-fish en perch. Golly! I suah 'members de time she hooked dat ole gar, en hollered fo' help tuh

pull 'im out. Den all de folks rush' up en grab de line, en ole Mistah Gar jes' done come up outen de watah like he'd been shot out ob er gun."

Slapping his knees at the recollection, Ephraim guffawed loudly, and with such enthusiasm that Aunt Betty forgot her infirmities and joined in most heartily.

"The joke was on me that time, Ephy," she finally said, wiping the tears from her eyes. "But we landed old 'Mistah Gar,' which I suppose was what we wanted after all."

"Wish I might hook a gar to-day," said Jim.

"En like as not yo' will, chile, 'case dem gars is mighty plentiful in de bay. Hardly a day go by, but w'at two or t'ree ob 'em is yanked outen de sea, en lef' tuh dry up on de bank."

"Well, we'll try our hand at one if possible. Good-by, Dorothy! Good-by, Aunt Betty. Have plenty of good things for lunch," were Jim's parting words, as he and Ephraim strode off down the path toward the gate. "We will be as hungry as bears when we get back, and I'm smacking my lips now in anticipation of what we're going to have."

"Go along!" said Aunt Betty. "You're too much trouble. I'll feed you on corn bread and molasses." But she laughed heartily. It pleased her to see Jim enjoying himself. "Oh, maybe I'll cook something nice for you," she called after him—"something that will make your mouth

water sure enough."

"Yum yum! Tell me about it now," cried Jim.

"No; I'm going to surprise you," answered the mistress of Bellvieu, and with a last wave of their hands, Jim and the old darkey disappeared behind the big hedge.

They were hardly out of sight before the figure of a little, gray-haired man walked slowly up to the gate, opened it, and continued his way up the walk, and Dorothy Calvert, her heart beating wildly, realized that she was being treated to her first sight of the famous music master, Herr Deichenberg.

As the Herr paused before the steps of the Calvert mansion, hat in hand, both Mrs. Calvert and Dorothy arose to greet him.

Dorothy saw before her a deeply intellectual face, framed in a long mass of gray hair; an under lip slightly drooping; keen blue eyes, which snapped and sparkled and seemed always to be laughing; a nose slightly Roman in shape, below which two perfect rows of white teeth gleamed as Herr Deichenberg smiled and bowed.

"I hope I find you vell dis morning, ladies," was his simple greeting.



"HERR DEICHENBERG."
"Dorothy's Triumph."

"Indeed, yes, Herr," Aunt Betty responded, offering her hand. "I am glad to see you again. This is the young lady of whom I spoke—my great-niece, Dorothy Calvert."

“H’m! Yes, yes,” said the Herr, looking the girl over with kindly eye, as she extended her hand. Then, with Dorothy’s hand clasped tightly in his own, he went on: “I hope, Miss Dorothy, dat ve vill get on very good togedder. I haf no reason to believe ve vill not, an’ perhaps—who knows?—perhaps ve shall surprise in you dat spark of genius vhich vill make you de best known little lady in your great American land.”

“Oh, I hope so, Herr Deichenberg—I hope so,” was the girl’s fervent reply. “It has been my greatest ambition.”

The Herr turned to Aunt Betty:

“She iss in earnest, Madame; I can see it at a glance, and it iss half de battle. Too many things are lost in dis world t’rough a lack of confidence, and de lack of a faculty for getting out de best dat iss in one.”

The Herr sank into one of the deep, comfortable rockers on the gallery, near Aunt Betty, as Dorothy, at a signal from her aunt, excused herself and went in search of Dinah, with the result that mint lemonade, cool and tempting, was soon served to the trio outside, greatly to the delight of the Herr professor, who sipped his drink with great satisfaction. After a few moments he became quite talkative, and said, after casting many admiring glances over the grounds of old Bellvieu:

“Dis place reminds me more than anything I

have seen in America, of my fadder's place in Germany. De trees, de flowers, de shrubs—dey are all de same. You know," he added, "I live in Baltimore, dat iss true, yet, I see very little of it. My list of pupils iss as large as I could well desire, und my time iss taken up in my little studio."

"But one should have plenty of fresh air," said Aunt Betty, "It serves as an inspiration to all who plan to do great things."

"Dat sentiment does you credit, madame. It iss not fresh air dat I lack, for I have a little garden in vhich I spend a great deal of time, both morning und evening—it iss de inspiration of a grand estate like dis. It makes me feel dat, after all, there iss something I have not got out of life."

There was a suspicious moisture in the Herr's eyes, brought there, no doubt, by recollections of his younger days in the Old Country, and Aunt Betty, noticing his emotion, hastened to say:

"Then it will give us even greater pleasure, Herr Deichenberg, to welcome you here, and we trust your visits will be neither short nor infrequent."

"Madame, I am grateful for your kindness. No one could say more than you have, and it may be dat I vill decide to give Miss Dorothy her lessons in her own home, dat ve may both have de inspiration of de pretty trees und flowers."

“Aside from the fact that I am anxious to see your studio,” said the girl, “that arrangement will please me greatly.”

“It vill please me to be able to show you my studio, anyvay,” said the Herr.

“How long have you been in America?” Aunt Betty wanted to know, as the Herr again turned toward her.

“I came over just after de Civil War. I was quite a young lad at de time und a goot musician. I had no difficulty in finding employment in New York City, vhere I played in a restaurant orchestra for a number of years. Den I drifted to Vashington, den to Baltimore, vhere I have remained ever since.”

“And have you never been back across the water?” asked Dorothy.

“Yes; once I go back to my old home to see my people. Dat was de last time dat I see my fadder und mudder alive. Now I have few relatives living, und almost no desire to visit Germany again. America has taken hold of me, as it does every foreigner who comes over, und has made of me vhat I hope iss a goot citizen.”

The talk then drifted to Dorothy’s lessons. Herr Deichenberg questioned her closely as to her experience, nodding his head in grave satisfaction as she told of her lessons from Mr. Wilmot at Deerhurst. Then, apparently satisfied that she would prove an apt pupil, he asked to

be allowed to listen to her playing. So, at Aunt Betty's suggestion, they adjourned to the big living-room, where Dorothy tenderly lifted her violin from its case.

As she was running her fingers over the strings to find if the instrument was in tune, she noticed Herr Deichenberg holding out his hand for it.

She passed it over. The old German gave it a careful scrutiny, peering inside, and finally nodding his head in satisfaction.

"It iss a goot instrument," he told her. "Not as goot as either a Cremona or a Strad, but by all means goot enough to serve your purpose."

"It was a present from my Uncle Seth," said Dorothy, "and I prize it very highly, aside from its actual value."

"Und so you should—so you should," said the Herr. "Come, now,"—moving toward the piano. "You read your music of course?"

Dorothy admitted that she did.

The Herr, sitting on the stool before the large, old-fashioned instrument, struck a chord.

"Tune your instrument with me, und we vill try something you know vell. I shall then be able to judge both of your execution und your tone. There iss de chord. Ah! now you are ready? All right. Shall we try de 'Miserere' from 'Il Trovatore?' I see you have it here."

Dorothy nodded assent.

Then, from somewhere in his pocket, Herr Deichenberg produced a small baton, and with this flourished in his right hand, his left striking the chords on the piano, he gave the signal to play.

Her violin once under her chin, the bow grasped firmly in her hand, what nervousness Dorothy had felt, quickly vanished. She forgot the Herr professor, Aunt Betty—everything but the music before her. Delicately, timidly, she drew her bow across the strings, then, when the more strenuous parts of the Miserere were reached, she gathered boldness, swaying to the rhythm of the notes, until a light of positive pleasure dawned in Herr Deichenberg's eyes.

"Ah!" he murmured, his ear bent toward her, as if to miss a single note would be a rare penance. "Ah, dat iss fine—fine!"

Suddenly, then, he dropped his baton, and fell into the accompaniment of the famous piece, his hands moving like lightning over the keys of the piano.

Such music Aunt Betty vowed she had never heard before.

With a grand flourish the Herr and Dorothy wound up the Miserere, and turned toward their interested listener for approval. And this Aunt Betty bestowed with a lavish hand.

“I am proud indeed to know you and to have you for a pupil,” the music master said, turning to Dorothy. “You have an excellent touch and your execution iss above reproach, considering de lessons you have had. I am sure ve shall have no trouble in making of you a great musician.”

Flushing, partly from her exertions, partly through the rare compliment the great professor had paid her ability, the girl turned to Aunt Betty and murmured:

“Oh, auntie, dear, I’m so glad!”

“And I am delighted,” said Aunt Betty. “That is positively the most entrancing music I have ever heard.”

Herr Deichenberg showed his teeth in a hearty laugh.

“She shall vait until you have practiced a year, my little girl,” he said, winking at his prospective pupil. “Den who shall say she vill not be charmed by vhat she hears? But come,” he added, sobering, “let us try somet’ing of a different nature. If you are as proficient in de second piece as in de first, I shall have no hesitation in pronouncing you one of de most extraordinary pupils who has ever come under my observation.”

Dorothy bowed, and throwing her violin into position, waited for the Herr professor to select from the music on the piano the piece he wished

her to play.

“Ah! here iss ‘Hearts und Flowers.’ Dat iss a pretty air und may be played with a great deal of expression, if you please. Let me hear you try it, Miss Dorothy.”

Again the baton was waved above the Herr professor’s head. The next instant they swung off into the plaintive air, Dorothy’s body, as before, keeping time to the rhythm of the notes, the music master playing the accompaniment with an ease that was astonishing. In every movement the old German showed the finished musician. Twice during the rendition of the piece did he stop Dorothy, to explain where she had missed the fraction of a beat, and each time, to his great satisfaction, the girl rallied to the occasion, and played the music exactly as he desired.

The ordeal over at last, Herr Deichenberg was even more lavish in his praise of Dorothy’s work.

“Of course, she iss not a perfect violinist,” he told Aunt Betty. “Ve could hardly expect dat, you know. But for a young lady of her age und experience she has made rapid progress. Herr Wilmot, who gave de first lessons had de right idea, und there iss nothing dat he taught her dat ve shall have to change.”

Out on the broad gallery, as he was taking his leave, the professor looked proudly at Dorothy again.

“I repeat dat I am glad to meet you und have

you for a pupil. Vhen shall de first lesson be given?"

Dorothy threw a quick glance at Aunt Betty.

"Not for at least four weeks, Herr Deichenberg," said that lady.

"Eh? Vhat!" cried the old music master. "Not for four veeks! Vhy iss it dat you vait an eternity? Let us strike vhile de iron iss hot, as de saying has it."

"But, Herr, my little girl has just returned from a winter of strenuous study at the Canadian school of Oak Knowe, and I have promised her a rest before she takes up her music."

"If dat iss so, I suppose I shall have to curb my impatience," he replied, regretfully. "But let de time be as short as possible. If you are going avay, please notify me of your return, und I vill manage to come to Bellvieu to give Miss Dorothy her first lesson. But don't make it too long! I am anxious—anxious. She vill make a great musician—a great musician. So goot day, ladies. It has been a pleasure to me—dis visit."

"Let us hope there will be many more, Herr Deichenberg," said Aunt Betty.

They watched the figure of the little music teacher until it disappeared through the gate and out of sight behind the hedge. Then they turned again to their comfortable rockers, to discuss the visit and Dorothy's future.

“Oh, Aunt Betty,” confessed the girl, “I was terribly nervous until I felt my violin under my chin. It seemed to give me confidence, and I played as I have never played before. Somehow, I felt I could not make a mistake. I’m so glad the Herr professor was pleased. Isn’t he a perfect dear? So genteel, so polished, in spite of his dialect—just the kind of a man old Herr Von Barwig was in ‘The Music Master.’”

Dinah came out on the gallery to say that Dorothy was wanted at the ’phone.

“Oh, I wonder who it can be?” said the girl. “I didn’t think any of my friends knew I was home.”

She hastened inside, and with the receiver at her ear, in keen anticipation murmured a soft:

“Hello!”

“Hello, Dorothy, dear! How are you?”

It was a girl’s voice and the tones were familiar.

“Who is this? I—I don’t quite catch the—! Oh, surely; it’s Aurora Blank!”

“You’ve guessed it the first time. I only learned a few moments ago that you were home. I’m just dying to see you, to learn how you liked your trip and the adventures you had at school. You’ll tell me about them in good time, won’t you, Dorothy?”

“Why, yes, of course. On our camping trip,

perhaps."

"Won't that be jolly? Papa says we're to stay in the mountains as long as we like—that's what he bought the auto for. Gerald and I have been planning to start the first of the week if you can be ready."

"Oh, I'm sure we can. I'll speak to Aunt Betty and let you know."

"Do so, and I'll run over to Bellvieu to-morrow to discuss the details. Did that nice boy, Jim Barlow, return to Baltimore with you?"

"Yes; he is going with us on the trip—at least, Aunt Betty said he was included in the invitation."

"Indeed he is! I like him immensely, dear—lots more than he likes me, I reckon."

"Oh, I don't know!"

"I'm sure of it."

"Aurora, I'm afraid you're trying to make a conquest."

"No, I'm not—honor bright. But he's a dear boy and you can tell him I said so."

"I'll do that," said Dorothy, with a laugh. Then she said good-by and hung up the receiver. "I guess I won't!" she muttered, as she went out to join Aunt Betty again. "Jim Barlow would have a conniption fit if he ever knew what Aurora Blank

had said."

CHAPTER IV

THE BEGINNING OF THE TRIP

"I'm glad to see you again, Miss Blank. You'll find Dorothy waiting for you in the house."

It was the following morning, and Jim had been roaming about the grounds when Aurora came in. At first he had seemed disinclined to be affable, for her actions on Dorothy's houseboat had been anything but ladylike, until, like many another young girl, she had been taught a lesson; but he decided to be civil for the Calverts' sake, at least.

"But I want to see you, Jim," Aurora persisted. "You don't mind my calling you 'Jim,' do you?"

"No."

"And will you call me Aurora?"

"If you wish."

"I do wish. We're going on a long camping trip together, as I suppose you've heard."

"Yes, and I want to thank you for the invitation."

“You’ve decided to accept, of course?”

“Yes. At first I didn’t think I could; but Aunt Betty—Mrs. Calvert, that is—said if I didn’t I’d incur her everlasting displeasure, so I’ve arranged to go.”

“I’m delighted to hear it. We just can’t fail to have a good time.”

“I figure on its being a very pleasant trip, Miss Blank—er—I mean, Aurora.”

“You should see our new car, Jim. Papa presented it to Gerald and I, and it’s a beauty. Gerald’s coming over with it to-day to teach you and Ephraim how to run it. Then you can take turns playing chauffeur on our trip across country. I imagine if I were a boy that I should like nothing better.”

Jim’s face brightened as she was speaking.

“Thank you; I believe I will learn to run the machine if Gerald doesn’t care.”

“Care? He’d better not! The machine is a partnership affair, and I’ll let you run my half. But he won’t object, and what’s more, he’ll be only too glad to lend you the car occasionally to take Mrs. Calvert and Dorothy riding.”

“I’ll ask him when he comes over,” said the boy.

Electricity was Jim’s chief hobby, but anything of a mechanical nature appealed to him. While a gasoline car uses electricity only to explode its

fuel, Jim was nevertheless deeply interested, particularly as he had never been able to look into the construction of an auto as thoroughly as he would have desired.

“When do we start?” he asked Aurora.

“The first of next week, if it’s all right with Mrs. Calvert and Dorothy.”

“Who dares talk of Dorothy when she is not present?” demanded that young lady, coming out on the gallery at this moment. “I believe this is a conspiracy.”

“Dorothy Calvert!”

“Aurora Blank!”

These sharp exclamations were followed by a joyous hug and a half dozen kisses, while Jim stood looking on in amusement.

“Say, don’t I get in that game?” he wanted to know.

“If you wish,” said Aurora, throwing him a coquettish glance.

“No indeed!” laughed Dorothy. “Gentlemen are entirely excluded.” She turned to her girl friend. “How well you are looking! And what a pretty dress!”

“Do you like it, Dorothy? Mamma had it made for me last week. At first it didn’t please me—the the front of the waist is so crazy with its pleats

and frills."

"Oh, that's what I liked about it—what first caught my eye. It's odd, but very, very pretty."

"Excuse me!" murmured Jim. "The conversation grows uninteresting," and turning his back, he walked off down the lawn. He cast a laughing glance over his shoulder an instant later, however, shaking his head as if to say, "Girls will be girls."

"Come into the house, Aurora, and tell me about yourself. What has happened in old Baltimore since I've been gone? Really, Aunt Betty and I have been too busy arranging for my music lessons, and with various and sundry other things to have a good old-time chat."

"Things have been rather dull here. Gerald and I went with papa and mamma to the theaters twice a week last winter, with an occasional matinée by ourselves, but aside from that, life has been very dull in Baltimore—that is, until the auto came a few weeks since. Now we take a 'joy' ride every afternoon, with an occasional evening thrown in for good measure."

"I am anxious to see your car, Aurora."

"And I am anxious to have you see it."

"It must be a beauty."

"Oh, it is." Aurora leaned toward her friend. "Confidentially, Dorothy, it cost papa over four

thousand dollars."

"Just think of all that money to spend for pleasure!" cried Dorothy. "But then, it makes you happy, and I suppose that's what money is for."

"Did you ask your aunt about starting on our trip the first of the week?"

"Yes, and it's all right. We'll be ready. The only thing worrying me now is that I'm expecting to hear from one of my dearest girl chums, Molly Breckenridge—"

"Oh, and is she going with us?"

"Aunt Betty made me ask her. She said you wanted us to make up the party, and include Gerald and yourself."

"That's the very idea. It's your trip, Dorothy, given in honor of your home-coming."

"I'm sure that's nice of you, Aurora. And now let's discuss—"

"Pawdon me, Miss Dorot'y," interrupted Ephraim, entering at this moment. "I—I—er—good mawnin', Miss Aurory."

"Good morning, Ephy," Dorothy's visitor responded. "Has anyone told you that you are to become a chauffeur?"

"W'at's dat, Miss Aurory? A show fer? A show fer w'at?"

“A chauffeur, Ephy, is a man who drives an automobile.”

“One o’ dem fellers dat sets up in de front seat en turns de steerin’ apparatus?”

“Exactly. How would you like to do that?”

“I ain’t nebber monkeyed round dem gasoline contraptions none, but I reckon I’d like tuh do w’at yo’ say, Miss Aurory—yas’m; I jes’ reckon I would.”

“Well, Gerald is coming over some time to-day to show you and Jim a few things about the car. You will take turns playing chauffeur on our camping trip, and he wants to give you a lesson every day until we leave.”

“Dat suah suits me,” grinned the old negro.

“But what did you want, Ephy?” Dorothy asked, recalling him suddenly to his errand.

“Oh, Lordy, I done fergit w’at I come fo’. Lemme see—oh, yas’m, I got er lettah fo’ yo’. Jes’ lemme see where I put dat doggone—er—beggin’ yo’ pawdon, young ladies, I—Heah hit is!”

The letter, fished from one of Ephraim’s capacious pockets, was quickly handed over.

“Oh, it’s from Molly!” the girl cried, joyously, as she looked at the postmark. “Let’s see what she has to say. You may go, Ephy.”

“Yas’m,” responded the darkey, and with an

elaborate bow he departed.

Tearing open the letter, Dorothy read as follows:

"*My Dear, Dear Chum*:—

"To say that I was overwhelmed by your very kind invitation, is to express it mildly, indeed. The surprise was complete. I had hardly realized that you had finished your course at Oak Knowe and returned to Baltimore. It is strange how rapidly the time flies past.

"We returned from California, some two weeks ago. Papa is greatly improved in health, for which we are all duly thankful. He says he feels like a new man and his actions bear out his words. He wants to know how his little Dorothy is, and when she is coming to visit him. In the meantime, it may be that I shall bring the answer to him in person, as I am leaving next Monday evening for Baltimore, and you, dear Dorothy!

"How glad I shall be to see you! As for the camping trip, you know how I love an outing, and this, I am sure, will prove to be one of the finest I have ever had. So, until Tuesday morning, when you meet me at the train, *au revoir*.

"Ever your loving
"MOLLY."

“I just know I shall like Molly Breckenridge,” cried Aurora. “Such a nice letter! I have already pictured in my mind the sort of girl that wrote it.”

“You will like her, Aurora, for she is one of the best girls that ever breathed. Full of mischief, yes, but with a heart as big as a mountain. There is nothing she won’t do for anyone fortunate enough to be called her friend.”

“I hope to be that fortunate before our trip is over. But you, Dorothy, are more than friend to her. One can see that from the tone of the letter.”

“I hope and believe I am her dearest chum.”

“You are *my* dearest chum, Dorothy Calvert!” cried Aunt Betty, who entered the room at this moment. “How are you, Aurora?”

“Very well, Mrs. Calvert.”

“I am glad to see you here. My little girl will get lonesome, I fear, unless her friends drop in frequently to see her.”

“I shall almost live over here, now Dorothy is home,” replied Aurora.

“Indeed she will,” Dorothy put in. “And Molly is coming, Aunt Betty!” Triumphantly she displayed the letter. “Ephy just brought it. Want to read it?”

“No; you can tell me all about it, dear,” returned Aunt Betty. “I am glad she is coming. I hardly thought she’d refuse. Judge Breckenridge is very good to her, and allows her to travel pretty much as she wills.”

The talk turned again to the camping trip.

“I have talked it over with Dorothy,” said Aunt Betty, “and we have decided to be ready Wednesday morning.”

“That will suit us fine,” said Aurora. “Gerald couldn’t get away before Tuesday anyway, and another day will not matter. He thinks we’d better plan to start in the cool of the morning, stopping for breakfast about eight o’clock at some village along the route—there are plenty of them, you know. The recent rains have settled the dust, and the trip, itself, should be very agreeable. We figure on being out only one night, reaching the mountains on the second morning. Of course, if pushed, the auto could make it in much less time, but Gerald thinks we’d better take our time and enjoy the ride.”

“The plan is a fine one,” said Aunt Betty, “especially the getting away in the early morning, before the hot part of the day sets in.”

“I thoroughly agree with you, auntie,” said Dorothy.

“If we fail to find a village,” Aunt Betty continued, “where we can get coffee and rolls,

we will draw on our own supply of provisions and eat our breakfast en route. Or we can stop by the wayside, where Ephy can make a fire and I can make some coffee."

"Oh, you make my mouth water," said Aurora, who knew that Aunt Betty Calvert's coffee was famous for miles around.

Aurora took her leave a short while later, and hardly had she gone before Gerald Blank drew up in front of the Calvert place in his big automobile and cried out for Jim and Ephraim.

Neither the boy nor the negro needed a second invitation. Each had been keen in anticipation of the ride—Jim because of his natural interest in mechanism of any sort; Ephraim because he felt proud of the title "chauffeur," which Aurora had bestowed upon him, and was curious to have his first lesson in running "dat contraption," as he termed it.

"I tell you, Gerald, she's a dandy," said Jim, after the boys had shaken hands and made a few formal inquiries about the interval which had elapsed since last they met. As Jim spoke, his eye roamed over the long torpedo body of the big touring car.

Straight from the factory but a few weeks since, replete with all the latest features, the machine represented the highest perfection of skilled mechanical labor. The body was enameled in gray and trimmed in white, after the fashion of

many of the torpedo type of machines which were then coming into vogue.

Seeing Jim's great interest, Gerald, who was already a motor enthusiast, went from one end of the car to the other, explaining all the fine points.

"There is not a mechanical feature of the Ajax that has not been thoroughly proven out in scores of successful cars," he said. "Now, here, for instance, is the engine." Throwing back the hood of the machine, the boy exposed the mechanism. "That's the Renault type of motor, known as 'the pride of France,' and one of the finest ever invented. Great engineers have gone on record that the men who put the Ajax car together have advanced five years ahead of the times. You will notice, Jim, that the engine valves are all on one side. You're enough of a mechanician to appreciate the advantage of that. It makes it simple and compact, and gives great speed and power. We should have little trouble in traveling seventy miles an hour, if we chose."

"Lordy, we ain't gwine tuh chose!" cried Eph.

"Why, I thought you had the speed mania, Ephy," was Gerald's good-natured retort.

"Don' know jes' w'at dat is, Mistah Gerald, but I ain't got hit—no, sah, I ain't got hit."

"Now, Jim," Gerald continued, as they bent over to look under the car, "you see the gear is of the selective sliding type, which has been adopted

by all the high grade cars. And back here is what they term a floating axle. The wheels and tires are both extra large—in fact, there is nothing about the car, that I've been able to discover, that is not the best in the business."

"What a fine automobile agent you'd make, Gerald!"

"Do you think so?"

"Surely. You spiel it off like a professional. The only difference is, I feel what you say is true. I am greatly taken with that engine, and should like to see it run."

"When we start in a moment, you shall have that pleasure. Of course, I could run it for you now, while the machine is standing still, but they say it's poor practice to race your engine. If you do so, the wear and tear is something awful."

"I'd heard that, but had forgotten," said Jim.

"Well, come on, now, and I'll take you and Ephy for a spin, and, incidentally, I'll teach you both how to run the car."

Jim crawled into the front seat, Ephraim occupying the big five-passenger compartment in the rear. Gerald, after "cranking up," took his seat behind the steering wheel.

"All ready, Ephy?"

"Yas'r—yas'r."

“Then we’re off.”

The big Ajax started without a jar and moved almost noiselessly off down the road. The engine ran so smoothly that it was hard to imagine anything but an electric motor was driving the machine.

Gerald knew Baltimore and its environs by heart. He did not enter the city immediately, however, but kept to the fine country roads which lay just outside. When a level stretch was reached once, he put her on the high speed, and Jim and Ephraim traveled for a few moments at a pace neither had ever experienced before—even on a railroad train.

Finally, slowing down, Gerald said:

“Now I’ll change places with you, Jim, and you shall run the car.”

The change was quickly effected, Jim being eager to feel the big steering wheel in his grasp, his feet on the pedals in front, with the single thought in his mind that the Ajax was run and controlled by his hand alone.

Gerald explained the points of starting, showing him the three speeds forward and the reverse; how to regulate his spark so as to keep the motor from knocking, especially on heavy grades; then how to advance the spark where the pull was slight, so as to make the motor work cooler and to use less gasoline.

Jim admired Gerald's thorough knowledge of the car. It showed a side to the boy's nature that Jim had not suspected—in fact, the Gerald Blank who owned this auto was hardly the same boy who had caused so much dissension on the houseboat the summer before.

"When you think you've had enough, we'll let Ephy try it," said Gerald.

"I'd never get enough," smiled Jim. "So better let Ephy get a-hold right here and now."

He good-naturedly resigned his post, and Ephraim soon found himself sitting in the chauffeur's seat, the big steering wheel almost touching his breast, his feet on the pedals. Then Gerald instructed him as he had Jim. When he told the old negro to press slowly on one of the pedals to make the machine slow down, Ephraim misunderstood his orders and pressed the wrong one, with the result that the speed remained undiminished, while the exhaust set up such a beating that Ephy turned a shade whiter.

The joke was on him. No harm was done, and soon, when Gerald and Jim were through laughing at him, he began to show considerable agility in the handling of the car.

"I'll give you both another lesson to-morrow," said Gerald, as, some seven miles out of the city, he took charge of the big machine and turned for the run back to Baltimore.

Soon the engines began to sing as the car gathered headway. The road was clear ahead, hence Gerald felt no qualms about “speeding her up.” He kept a close watch, however, for lanes and crossroads, twice slowing down for railway crossings, only to resume his former pace when on the other side. Trees and houses flashed past in hopeless confusion. A cloud of dust arose behind them, and mingled with the gaseous smoke that came from the rear of the machine.

Through the city they went, now at a much lessened pace—in fact, at only eight miles an hour, which was the speed limit in the city—finally turning out along the shores of the Chesapeake toward old Bellvieu.

Dorothy and Aunt Betty were sitting on the gallery when they drew up, and waved their hands at Gerald as he let Jim and Ephraim out and turned his machine toward home.

“You are both chauffeurs now, I suppose?” queried Aunt Betty, as the pair came up the walk toward the house.

“Ephraim is, at least,” laughed Jim.

“Yas’r, yas’r; I suah is,” said Ephraim with a deep chuckle. “Dis yere joy ridin’ business am gittin’ intuh mah blood. Nebber ain’t gone so fast in mah whole life as w’en Mistah Gerald done let dat blame contraption out. Lordy, but we jes’ flew!”

“Where did Jim come in?” Dorothy wanted to

know.

“Oh, Mistah Gerald teached him how tuh run de machine, en den he teached me. I tell yo’ w’at, Miss Betty, I’s gwine tuh be yo’ shofer all right, en I’s gwine tuh be a mighty good one, too.”

“He can hardly wait for Gerald to come back to-morrow,” said Jim.

“Then Gerald is coming back, is he?” asked Dorothy.

“Yes; we can’t learn to run his car in one lesson, you know. I reckon I haven’t much call to talk about Ephy’s enthusiasm, for the fever’s in my blood, too.”

“That’s what they call ‘automobilitis,’” said Aunt Betty.

“Well, whatever hit am, I’s got it,” said Ephraim, with a grave shake of his head. Then he emitted another chuckle and walked away.

The next few days passed quickly.

Gerald came each afternoon, as he had promised, and before the long-looked-for day arrived, both Jim and Ephraim were nearly as proficient in the use of the car as he.

On Tuesday afternoon Molly Breckenridge arrived, as she had promised in her letter, Dorothy, Jim and Metty meeting the train with the barouche.

To describe the meeting between the girls would be impossible. A bystander, observing the hugs and kisses they bestowed upon each other, might well have wondered who they were, to be so lavish with their affection.

“You dear, good girl!” Dorothy kept saying, over and over, each word accented by another kiss.

Molly surprised Jim by kissing him rapturously on the cheek, an act the boy did not like, but which he took with the good nature he knew would be expected of him.

Later, in confidence, he confessed his displeasure to Gerald, which caused that young man to go off into a fit of merriment.

“You’re a funny fellow, Jim,” he said, finally, when he had induced a sober expression to remain on his face. “Most fellows would go several miles out of their way to get a kiss from Molly Breckenridge. But you, with kisses thrust upon you, are angry. Well, that may be all right, but I don’t understand it—hanged if I do!”

But Jim vouchsafed no further comment. He only smiled and shook his head.

CHAPTER V

THE CAMP IN THE MOUNTAINS

Old Bellvieu was early astir on Wednesday morning, the time set for the departure. At four o'clock, when the darkness without was still intense, Ephraim, who had been awakened by an alarm clock, went from door to door of the big mansion, arousing the inmates.

The provisions and cooking utensils had been packed in baskets and were setting in the front hall, ready to be carried to the automobile when Gerald and Aurora should arrive. There was also a hamper containing extra clothes for Aunt Betty, Dorothy and Molly.

It was two sleepy-eyed girls who came slowly down the back stairway to eat hominy, biscuits and coffee, prepared by Chloe and Dinah in the big kitchen—sleepy-eyed, because the chums had lain awake more than half the night talking over old times. Molly's trip to California had been told of to the most minute detail, and at the end of the discourse Dorothy had started on her adventures at Oak Knowe. Then to sleep at half past one, to rise at four!

It was no wonder Dorothy said, as they entered the kitchen:

"I feel like the last rose of summer. The next time you keep me awake till nearly morning, Molly Breckenridge, I'm going to be revenged."

"The same to you, Dorothy Calvert," was Molly's

retort. “You seem to have no regard for my condition after my long journey here. I needed rest, but you kept me awake all night with your constant chatter, telling me things that did not interest me.”

“I didn’t!”

“You did!”

And so forth and so on. Then, when Chloe, Dinah and Metty, were staring open-mouthed, impressed with the fact that the young ladies had apparently descended in a very bad humor, both girls laughed, threw their arms about each other’s neck, and concluded their performance with a resounding kiss.

“My, how affectionate!” said Aunt Betty, who entered at this moment. “And what swollen eyes!”

“Why, isn’t that strange?” asked Dorothy, assuming an innocent look. “She says our eyes are swollen, Molly—and after all the sleep we had, too.”

Aunt Betty laughed.

“Do you think, my dears, I did not hear you talking ’way into the night?”

“Oh, did you, auntie?”

“Yes; but it was your first night together, so I decided to say nothing. But come; let us eat, for Gerald and Aurora will shortly be here in the

car."

The girls needed no second invitation. The coffee, made by Chloe, after Aunt Betty's special recipe, was delicious, and served to revive the sleepy girls, while the biscuits, as Molly expressed it, "fairly melted in your mouth."

The meal over, preparations for departure went forward rapidly, and when, at half past five, just as the sun was getting ready to peep above the distant horizon, the big touring car drew up in front of the place, Aunt Betty, the girls, Jim and Ephraim were all waiting on the gallery.

"Ship ahoy! What ship is that?" cried Jim, cupping his hands at Gerald.

"The good ship Ajax, out of Baltimore for the South Mountains. Four first and one second class cabins reserved for your party, Mr. Barlow."



“THE PARTY CLIMBED INTO THE BIG MACHINE”
“Dorothy’s Triumph.”

There was much good-natured badinage as the party climbed into the big machine. Molly and Aurora seemed to take to each other from the

first, and Aunt Betty saw with no little satisfaction that the trip bade fair to be a happy one.

When the baskets were all under the seats, or placed in the great trunk-like compartment on the rear of the machine, along with several large tent flaps and a coil of rope, the party waved a cheery good-by to Chloe, Dinah and Metty, Gerald started the Ajax, and they went bowling off down the smooth road on the first stage of their journey.

Gerald occupied the driver's seat with Dorothy beside him. In the big rear seat were Aunt Betty, Molly and Aurora, while the smaller seats at either side were occupied by Jim and Ephraim.

The city was just beginning to stir itself as the big car rolled through the main streets and out into the suburbs beyond.

Soon the city limits were passed, and the great country highway, so enticing to Baltimore automobilists, lay before them.

Straight toward the west Gerald drove the car, the miles being reeled off at a good rate of speed —all, in fact, that Aunt Betty would allow.

"I'm no speed maniac," she told Gerald, in response to his query as to whether she cared to ride as fast as a railroad train. "I'm well satisfied at the present pace. I feel that it is as fast as we can go in perfect safety, and I have no desire to endanger the lives of the young ladies under my

charge. This is not a limited, anyway, but just a slow train through Maryland."

"I'll bear that in mind," the boy returned, smiling.

Some miles further on the country grew rolling and hilly. Patches of dense timber were penetrated, and finally the machine shot out onto a broad plain which stretched away for many leagues toward the west. The sun was well up now, but the party had hardly felt its warmth. The big automobile, moving along at a fair rate of speed, created enough breeze to keep the occupants at a comfortable temperature.

Dorothy and Molly, thoroughly awake now, and in no way missing the sleep they had lost, kept up an incessant chatter, Aurora and Aunt Betty occasionally chiming in.

"I've never thought to ask, but what sort of sleeping quarters are we to have at the camp?" asked Molly.

"Goodness me! I hadn't thought of that," said Aunt Betty. "Gerald, did you provide sleeping quarters for the lady guests?"

"Yes, ma'am; there are several portable tent tops packed in the rear compartment."

"Tent tops! Indeed, it seems to me we'll need some tent *sides*, too, if we are to sleep with any peace of mind."

This caused a general laugh.

“I’ve provided for that, too,” said Gerald. “Don’t worry. It was impossible to carry poles and stakes, however, so Jim and I will show our woodcraft by cutting them in the mountains where we camp.”

“I imagine we’ll think of several things we’ve forgotten before we’ve been long at our destination,” said Aurora.

Dorothy uttered a startled exclamation.

“My goodness! How you startled me,” said Aunt Betty. “What’s wrong?”

“I’ve forgotten something already.”

“Now our troubles begin.” Mrs. Calvert heaved a long sigh of resignation. “Well, what is it?”

“My curling irons.”

“Pouff! I might have known you were starting a joke. You’ll be lucky to have a comb and brush, young lady, let alone curling irons, and as for a mirror, I’m blessed if I believe we thought to bring one.”

“I have one,” smiled Aurora. “It will do for all. We can take turns each morning combing our hair.”

“A fine idea,” said Jim. “Every morning, I’ll delegate myself as a sort of camp marshal to see that each of you has a turn at the mirror. So when you hear me call, ‘Hey, Molly; you’re next!’ you want to bestir yourself.”

Ephraim, who had been silent most of the time since the car left the city, now burst into a loud guffaw.

“Lordy, but I didn’t imagine dis was gwine tuh be sich er ceremonious occasion. I done lef’ mah curlin’ irons tuh home, but maybe yo’-all will take pity on er pooh colored gem’man en allow him tuh comb his curly locks in front ob yo’ solitary glass.”

“Of course, we will, Ephy,” said Aurora —“especially after all that fine language. You shall have your turn—I’ll see to that.”

It was eight o’clock when Gerald stopped the car in front of a small village inn. The community was just bestirring itself, and the inhabitants gazed long and curiously at the party.

Addressing a middle-aged man who sat on the front steps of the hostelry, smoking a pipe, Gerald said:

“How about breakfast for seven?”

“Reckon we can accommodate you,” was the reply, in a low drawl—“that is, if you ain’t too particular what you eat.”

“Needn’t worry about that. We’re hungry—that’s all. Some fresh milk and eggs, some crisp slices of fried bacon, a cup of coffee, and a few things of a similar nature will be more than sufficient.”

“You’ve just hit off my bill o’ fare to a T,” the man responded, grinning. “Come in and make

yourselves at home, while I go tell Martha there's some extry mouths to feed."

The members of the little camping party needed no urging, for the early morning ride had given them large appetites, which they were anxious to satiate.

Soon the Ajax was standing silent in front of the building, while its occupants were grouped in the little parlor of the hotel, waiting the welcome call to breakfast.

"There's a picture of George Washington," said Jim, as his glance roamed about the room. "Wonder if there's a village hotel in any part of the original thirteen states, which hasn't a picture of our immortal ancestor?"

"Probably not," smiled Gerald. "Thomas Jefferson seems also to be a favorite. See, there he is, peeking at you from behind the what-not."

"And there's Robert E. Lee, bless his heart," cried Dorothy, to whom the southern hero's name was the occasion for no little amount of reverence—thoughts that had been instilled in her mind by Aunt Betty, loyal southerner that she was.

The hotel proprietor appeared on the scene a few moments later with the cheery remark:

"You all can come into the dinin'-room now."

He led the way through the hall and into a small, though comfortable, room, where the landlady had already begun to serve the breakfast.

Their appetites sharpened by the ride, everyone did ample justice to the things which were put before them. Even Aunt Betty, usually a light eater, consumed three eggs, two glasses of milk and a plate of fried bacon, topping them off with a cup of strong coffee.

“Whatever has come over you?” cried Dorothy in delight. “I never knew you to eat so much for breakfast, auntie, dear.”

“I just wanted it,” was Aunt Betty’s response, “and, wanting it, I see no reason why I should not have it. I have no intention of denying myself what sustenance I require.”

“Then never talk to me again about being an invalid!” cried the girl. “When I came back to Bellvieu I was led to believe that you were fast failing in health. But, as yet, I have seen no indication that you are not as hale and hearty as the best of us.”

“I feel some better—that I will freely admit.”

“And at the end of our camping trip you are going to feel better still. Who knows? You may take on ten or twelve pounds in weight.” This from Jim.

“Well, let us hope not. I am carrying now all the flesh I am able to put up with.”

Breakfast over at last, the party lost no time in re-embarking, and soon the big Ajax, given a new lease on life by reason of a sharp turn of the

crank in front, was again speeding on its way.

The car proved itself an excellent traveler. The roads were rough in many places, yet not once during the day did any trouble arise either from mechanism or tires.

The machine proceeded at a steady gait until shortly after noon, when, in another village some forty odd miles from Baltimore, the party stopped for lunch.

Here the supply of gasoline was replenished, Gerald having already been forced to draw upon his reserve. This was necessitated by his having forgotten to fill his tank before leaving home.

“I don’t know how I came to neglect such an important matter,” he said to Jim. He seemed rather piqued.

“Mistakes will happen, no matter what you are doing or where you are,” was Jim’s reply, intended to be consoling. “Suppose we had run out of gasoline between towns, though?”

Gerald grinned at the thought.

“But we didn’t,” he said.

“Yes; but if we had?”

“Well, some of us would have taken a little journey, to the nearest available supply, and brought some back with us—that’s all. Fortunately, in these days of the automobile, an ample supply of gasoline may be found at any

country store. There was a time when it was as hard as the mischief to get it."

"How far can you run with one supply?"

"Seventy-five miles, without the reserve, which is good for another forty."

"This machine seems complete in every particular, with its reserve tank, and store box behind."

"Surely. While called a touring car, it has many of the features of a roadster."

"A roadster?"

"Yes; a car built for traveling across country—one you can take long trips in—a car built to stand no end of wear and tear."

"All right, boys!" Aurora called out at this moment. "We're through lunch. Let's be moving. You know we want to get as near the mountains as possible before putting up for the night."

So on they went, the country spreading out before them in gentle undulations. The Ajax would climb a low hill to pass the pinnacle and go bowling down into some miniature valley, over foot-bridges and through grove after grove of pretty trees. It seemed that old Mother Nature had spread on the scenic touches with a master hand in this part of Maryland, and the occupants of the car thoroughly enjoyed themselves, particularly as the recent rains had soaked the

dirt so thoroughly it had not yet had time to resolve itself again into dust.

Farmers stopped to watch them, often to wave hat or handkerchief as they went flying past. To these salutations the girls took delight in replying, greatly to the disgust and chagrin of Jim Barlow.

“Why, you don’t even know them!” he said to Dorothy in a sternly reproving tone, when she chided him gently about a reproof he had just administered to Molly, who had become quite enthusiastic in her efforts to attract the attention of a young farmer lad who was plowing in a nearby field.

“Neither do they know us,” the girl responded. “Besides, Molly is her own mistress, and you have no right to tell her she may or may not do as she pleases.”

“But I can express my opinion on the subject,” growled Jim. “This is a free country.”

“Ugh! He’s a regular bear to-day, girls,” said Aurora. “Let’s leave him alone until he can be civil.”

Which made Jim grate his teeth in rage. He gradually cooled off, however, when he found that no one was paying any attention to him, and by the middle of the afternoon was laughing and chatting as gayly as ever.

Villages appeared before their gaze every few

miles, only to vanish behind them as they went down the main street, the hoarse-voiced horn sending out its warning to pedestrians. Their speed was clearly within the limits of what was required by law, however, so they experienced no trouble from country constables, as is often the case when automobile parties go on tour.

Throughout the afternoon the big auto kept up its steady gait, reeling off mile after mile, until the sun had disappeared below the horizon. Just when dusk was ready to envelop the land they descried in the distance a good-sized town, and beyond it some miles the eastern spur of the South Mountains.

“There, children, is where we will be camping if all goes well to-morrow,” said Aunt Betty.

“Sounds mighty good to me,” said Gerald. “Here, Ephy, take hold of this steering wheel awhile. I’m going to stretch myself and gaze out over the country a bit.”

Ephraim, delighted at the confidence reposed in him by the boy, clambered into the front seat, while Gerald took one of the small seats in the rear compartment, facing Jim.

Sometime later Ephraim guided the car into the main street of the village, and, at Aunt Betty’s suggestion stopped before what seemed to be a hotel of the better class. Upon investigation accommodations were found to be so tempting, the party decided to spend the night. Gerald

registered for the crowd, while Ephraim, with a stable boy belonging at the hotel, took the Ajax around to the rear where shelter might be had from the elements.

Supper was served at seven-thirty in a large and commodious dining-room, and the campers sustained their reputations for ravenous eaters so well that the proprietor secretly wrung his hands in despair. Had these city folks come to eat him out of house and home? he wondered.

He was glad when the meal was over, and the visitors had departed down the street in search of amusement before turning in.

This amusement was found at the town hall, where a cheap theatrical company was offering the time-worn favorite, “Lady Audley’s Secret.” Even Aunt Betty enjoyed the old play which she had not seen for years, though she declared that the scene at the well gave her a fit of the “creeps.”

The company was a very mediocre one—in fact, an organization which made its living off of small town audiences, where the standard set is not so high, and a little less for the money does not seem to matter.

To bed at eleven and up at six was the story of the night, as recorded by the master of ceremonies, James Barlow, who was the first to awaken in the morning, and who aroused Ephraim and told him to wake the others.

The proprietor of the hotel, evidently fearing a repetition of the night before, was careful to put on the table only such food as he felt his guests should have, and when a second portion was asked for his solitary waiter was instructed to say that the concern was out of that particular dish.

While Jim and Molly were hardly satisfied at being limited to but one batch of pan-cakes each, they were too eager to be on their way to register a protest.

As soon as the sun had risen the South Mountains loomed up distinctly to the west, the purple haze which had enveloped them the night before being gone. Instead, the sun seemed to glint off the peaks like burnished gold. However, as Old Sol rose higher, this effect was gradually dissipated, and after a two hours' ride, during which the progress was very slow on account of the condition of the roads, the party found themselves in the foothills, with the mountains looming close at hand.

A pretty sight lay before their eyes a short time later, when Gerald stopped the machine half way up the side of one of the mountains, and they gazed out over the valley, through which a silvery stream of water flowed merrily toward the Potomac. Then, their eyes thoroughly satiated, they began to look for a suitable place in which to make their camp.

"Seems to me there's a desirable spot over there

on that plateau," said Dorothy. "There are lots of fine shade trees, and we would have an excellent view of the valley. And then, if I am not mistaken, that path leading down the mountainside goes to yonder village, and it is just as well to be in close proximity to what supplies we may need."

"That village is farther away than you think," said Jim.

"Well, we'll ride over and look at the plateau, anyway," said Gerald.

"Getting there is the next thing," said Molly.

The way did appear difficult. The road they were on wound up and around the mountain, and it was only after a most diligent search that Gerald and Jim discovered another road leading off in another direction and finally crossing the plateau.

They reached their destination some time later, and found the prospective camp-site even more satisfactory than they had expected. A vote of the party was taken, and it was unanimously decided to stay on this spot.

"It will soon be noon," said Aunt Betty, at once assuming charge of arrangements. "So let's unload the things while the boys are fixing the tents. If we have good luck we shall have our lunch in good Camp Blank."

"Oh, not Blank," said Aurora, with becoming

modesty. “Why not call it Camp Calvert?”

“I think Camp Blank sounds very nice,” Aunt Betty made reply.

“And I,” said Dorothy. “Let’s call it Camp Blank.”

“No,” said Gerald; “the Blanks have nothing to do with it. This is Dorothy’s party. It shall be called Camp Calvert.”

“I protest,” said Dorothy. “It’s no more my party than yours, Gerald Blank, even if it is given in honor of my home-coming.”

“It shall be Camp Calvert,” Gerald persisted.

“Well, we’ll submit it to arbitration. Jim, you have taken no part in the controversy. Shall we name it Camp Blank or Camp Calvert?”

“Neither,” said Jim.

“What!” cried Dorothy and Gerald in a breath.

“Oh, come now, Jim!” This from Aunt Betty.

“No,” said Jim, “we’ll call it neither. You’ve left the matter to me, so we’ll call it Camp Breckenridge after Molly, but we’ll make it Camp ‘Breck’ for short.”

“No, no,” said Molly. “I shan’t permit it.”

But Molly’s protests were quickly overridden, and with the discussion at an end, the members of the party went about the various tasks they

had set themselves to do.

Getting a hand-ax from the tool box, Gerald took Jim and marched off into the woods, while Ephraim was delegated to stay behind and “tote” things for the ladies.

First, an imaginary plan was drawn of the camp —just where the tents would go; where the camp-fire should be to get the best draught; which direction the breeze was coming from, so the tent flaps might be left back at night for the comfort of the sleepers; and the many other little details which a woman and several girls will always think of.

By the time Gerald and Jim returned, bearing several tent poles and an armful of stakes, all matters had been definitely settled. The first tent was pitched between two huge oak trees, which threw their shade for yards around. The other, which was to house the boys and Ephraim, was placed a short distance to the rear in a clump of smaller trees, but within a few steps of the rear of the ladies’ quarters.

Once the tents were up, Ephraim was instructed to kindle a fire, which he did very quickly, his camping experience having been of a wide and varied nature.

While the fire was blazing merrily as if to welcome the campers to the newly-organized Camp Breck, the mistress of Bellvieu bustled about in a nimble fashion for one of her years,

directing the preparation of the meal.

Molly was set peeling potatoes, while Dorothy and Aurora spread the table cloth in a level spot on the soft grass, and began to distribute the tin plates, steel knives and forks and other utensils which had been purchased especially for the camp.

Soon affairs were moving merrily, and the party sat down to lunch shortly after one, half-famished but happy, little dreaming of the thrilling adventure which was to befall them ere another day had passed.

CHAPTER VI

A CRY IN THE NIGHT

In the late afternoon, after the girls and Aunt Betty had taken their naps, Gerald suggested a jaunt down the mountainside toward the valley. The suggestion was eagerly accepted by Aurora, Dorothy, Molly and Jim. Aunt Betty agreed that she would stay with Ephraim to look after the camp, being unable to do the climbing which would be necessary on the return.

No Alpine stocks had been brought, but Gerald

and Jim again sallied forth with the hand-ax, the result being that in a short while the entire party was equipped with walking sticks.

Telling Aunt Betty good-by, and warning Ephraim not to stray away from his mistress during their absence, they soon were off down the pathway leading toward the village in the valley.

“I’ll tell you, girls, there’s some class to this outing,” said Gerald, who, with Dorothy, led the way.

Molly and Aurora, with Jim as escort, were close behind.

“This is one of the most beautiful spots I have ever seen,” said Molly. “The picturesque grandeur of the Rockies is missing, to be sure, but there is something fascinating about these low, quiet mountains. It makes one feel as if one could stay here forever and ever.”

“Come—don’t get poetical, Molly,” warned Jim. “This is a very modern gathering, and blank verse is not appreciated.”

“Nothing was farther from my thoughts than blank verse, Jim Barlow, and you know it!”

“Sounded like blank verse to me,” and Jim grinned.

“You mustn’t blame me for being enthused over such sights as these. If you do not experience the

same sensation, there is something sadly deficient in your make-up."

"That's right, Molly; rub it in," Dorothy said, over her shoulder. "Jim is entirely too practical —too prosaic—for this old world of ours. We simply must have a little romance mixed in with our other amusements, and poetry is naturally included."

"Hopelessly overruled," murmured Jim. "So sorry I spoke. Go ahead, Molly; sing about the rocks and rills, the crags and—and—"

"Pills?" suggested Aurora.

"Well, anything you wish; I'm no poet."

"You're no poet, and we all know it," hummed Aurora.

"I dare you girls to go as far as the village!" cried Dorothy.

"How about the boys?" Gerald wanted to know.

"They are included in the dare, of course."

"Well, I'll have to take the dare," said Molly. "That village is too far for me to-day."

"Why, it's only a short way down the valley," Dorothy protested.

"It's several miles, at least," said Jim.

"Oh, come!"

“Why, yes; distances are very deceptive in this part of the country.”

Dorothy could not be convinced, so the others decided to keep on until the girl realized that she had misjudged the distance, and asked to turn back.

They did not know Dorothy Calvert.

The path led down the mountainside and into a broad road which followed the bank of a stream. Somehow, when this point was reached, the village seemed no nearer.

Dorothy uttered no protest, however. But the others exchanged glances, as if to say:

“Well, I wonder will she ever get enough?”

On they went till at last, at a great bend in the road, where lay a fallen log, Molly stopped for a rest.

“You folks can go on,” said she, seating herself on the fallen tree. “I’ll wait here and go back with you.”

“And I,” said Aurora, dropping down beside her.

“Guess those are my sentiments, too,” drawled Jim, as he languidly sat down beside the girls.

“Well,” said Gerald, “after our journey this morning, and the work I did in camp, I don’t believe I want any village in mine, either.”

And he, too, sat down.

Dorothy stood gazing at her friends, an amused expression on her face.

“I suppose if the majority vote is to be listened to, I lose,” she said. “I thought you all were mountain climbers, and great believers in exercise on a large scale. But I see I was mistaken. I yield to the rule of the majority; we will not go to the village to-day.”

Dorothy sat down. As she did so, the others burst into a roar of laughter.

“Well, I don’t see anything so funny,” she said. “But perhaps that is because I am lacking a sense of humor.”

“No, it’s not that,” said Gerald. “We are laughing to see how stubbornly you give up a little whim. Nobody wanted to go to the village but you, yet you insisted that everyone go.”

“Oh, I didn’t mean that like you took it, at all, Gerald,” protested the girl, a slight flush creeping over her face.

“We felt that, hence, knowing it could give you no real pleasure to go farther, and tire yourself and ourselves completely out, so that we would have to hire a conveyance to get back to camp, we decided to rebel, and stay here.”

“I imagine the fishing is good in this neighborhood,” said Molly, who was looking out

over the stream where the water ran gently between the rocks. It was as clear as glass, and the fish could be seen swimming about.

“They catch a great many trout in these mountains, I’ve heard,” said Jim. “Say we get some poles and try our luck before we go back, eh, Gerald?”

“Surely,” responded the person addressed. “I brought plenty of fishing tackle in the big chest on the back of the machine. I have also four poles in sections, each fitted with a fine reel and silk line. I wouldn’t come on a camping trip like this without having a try at the fish, I assure you.”

When the party had rested sufficiently, the climb back to camp was begun, and even Dorothy was thankful that they had not gone to the village, realizing the truth of Gerald’s words, that they would have needed a conveyance to get them back to their starting point.

It was late afternoon when they reached the camp, to find that Aunt Betty and Ephraim had supper on the fire. And a fine supper it was, too —fine for camp life. When it was spread on the ground before them a short time later, they devoured it ravenously, which pleased Aunt Betty immensely, for she loved to see young folks eat.

The meal over and the things cleared away, the young folks and Aunt Betty gathered before the

ladies' tent where a fine view of the valley could be obtained, and for some little time were silent, as the wonderful glories of Mother Nature unfolded themselves. Before they realized it, almost, the day was gone—their first day in camp—and night was upon them. A gray light, mingling with the faint afterglow of twilight, showed clearly the outlines of the distant mountains. The stars blinked down from their heavenly dome and the air was cool and comfortable, thanks to the altitude. To the silent watchers it seemed that no skies were ever so deep and clear as those which overspread Camp Breck.

"It would seem," said Aunt Betty, breaking a long silence, "that in making the stars, nature was bent on atoning in the firmament for a lack of beauty and brilliancy on the earth."

"How like the Gates of Wonderland I read about when a wee child are these hills on such a night," said Dorothy reverently.

"Stop!" warned Molly. "If you don't, Jim will soon be chiding you for becoming poetic."

"No; this is different, somehow," said the boy. "It has gotten into my blood. I feel much as Dorothy does—a sensation I've never experienced before, though I've traveled through the Catskills till I know them like a book. Even the Rockies did not appeal to me in this way."

"It is not the environment, but the viewpoint,

Jim," Aunt Betty said. "The nights in the Catskills are just as beautiful as here; it happens that you have never thought of the wonders of nature in quite the same way in which you have had them brought home to you to-night. I daresay you will never spend another night in any mountains, however, without thinking of the transcendent beauty of it all."

"There is something in the air that makes me feel like singing," said Gerald.

"Then by all means indulge yourself," Dorothy advised.

"Let's form a quartette," said Molly. "I can sing a fair alto."

"And I can't sing anything—can't even carry an air," Aurora put in in a regretful voice. "But Gerald has a fine tenor voice, and perhaps Dorothy can take the soprano and Jim the bass."

In this way it was arranged, Dorothy being appointed leader.

"First of all, what shall we sing?" she wanted to know.

"Oh, any old thing," said Jim.

"No; not any old thing. It must be something with which we are all familiar."

"Well, let's make it a medley of old Southern songs," suggested Gerald.

“An excellent idea,” said Aunt Betty, while Ephraim was so delighted at the suggestion that he clapped his hands in the wildest enthusiasm.

So Dorothy, carrying the air, started off into “The Old Folks At Home.”

Never, thought Aunt Betty, had the old tune sounded so beautiful, as, with those clear young voices ringing out on the still air of the summer’s night, and when the last words,

Way down upon the Suwanee
River,
Far from the old folks at
home,

had died away, she was ready and eager for more. “Old Black Joe,” followed, then “Dixie,” and finally “Home, Sweet Home,” that classic whose luster time never has or never will dim, and which brought the tears to her eyes as it brought back recollections of childhood days.

Then, as if to mingle gayety with sadness, Ephraim was induced to execute a few of his choicest steps on a hard, bare spot of ground under one of the big oak trees, while Jim and Gerald whistled “Turkey in the Straw,” and kept time with their hands. The old negro’s agility was surprising, his legs and feet being as nimble, apparently, as when, years before as a young colored lad, he had gone through practically the same performance for Aunt Betty, then in the

flower of her young womanhood.

After this the party sought the tents, where, on blankets spread on the ground, covered by sheets, and with rough pillows under their heads, each member of the party sought repose.

In one end of the tent occupied by Gerald and Jim slept old Ephraim, the watch-dog of the camp, who prided himself that no suspicious sound, however slight, could escape his keen ears in the night time.

The slumber of the party was undisturbed during the early hours of the night, as, with the tent flaps thrown back, to allow the clear passage of the cool breeze off the valley, the occupants of both tents slept soundly.

Sometime after midnight, however, the slumber of all was broken by a most startling incident. It was a cry of distress coming out of the night from farther down the mountainside—a cry so appealing in its pathos that Ephraim was on his feet, listening with open mouth, before the echoes had died away. Then, as he roused Gerald and Jim, the cry came again, reverberating over the mountain in trembling, piteous tones:

“Oh, help me! Help me! Won’t someone please help me? Oh, oh-h-h-h!”

The last exclamation, drawn out in a mournful wail sent a thrill of pity through the hearts of the old negro and the boys.

Dorothy heard the second cry, and she, too, felt the appeal of the voice, as she awakened the other inmates of the tent.

The cry came again at short intervals.

“What can it be?” someone asked.

“Sounds to me like someone’s lost their way,” said Jim, as he and Gerald stood listening outside their tent.

“Oh, Lordy! Maybe it’s er ghost!” wailed Ephraim, whose superstitious fears the passing years had failed to dislodge. “Dat suah sound tuh me like de cry ob er lost soul.”

“Nonsense!” cried Gerald. “There’s no such thing as a lost soul. And stop that sort of talk, Ephy. No matter what you think, there’s no use scaring the women.”

“What are you boys going to do?” asked Dorothy, peeking out from behind the flap of her tent.

“There’s only one thing to do, when a voice appeals to you like that—investigate,” said Jim.

“Yes; we must find out who it is,” Gerald readily agreed.

“But you boys mustn’t venture down the mountainside alone,” said Aurora. “No telling what will happen to you. No, no; you stay here and answer the voice. Then maybe the person will be able to find his way to the camp.”

“I’m not so sure we want him in camp,” said Aunt Betty, grimly.

“Well, the least we can do is meet him half way,” was Jim’s final decision.

Dorothy, who knew the boy, felt that further argument would be useless, particularly as Gerald seemed to agree with everything Jim said.

“But you have no revolvers,” protested Aurora. “It is nothing short of suicide to venture off into the darkness unarmed.”

“That’s right; we didn’t think to bring any fire-arms with us,” Gerald said, turning to Jim. “But we’d have a hard time finding anything to shoot in the dark, so I reckon we may as well get a couple of stout clubs and see who that fellow is.”

Two poles that had been found too short for the purpose of erecting the tents lay near at hand, and searching these out, the boys bade Ephraim not to leave the women under any circumstances and started down the side of the mountain in the direction from whence the cries had come.

“Help, help!” came the voice again, like a person in mortal terror.

“Hello, hello!” Jim responded, in his deep bass voice which went echoing and re-echoing down the valley. “Where are you?”

“Here!” came the quick response. “Come to me!

Hurry! Hurry!”

“Have patience and keep calling; we’re moving in your direction. We’ll find you,” replied Jim in an encouraging tone.

At short intervals the voice came floating up to them, getting louder and louder, until it seemed but a few yards away. The boys realized, however, that voices carry a great distance on a clear night, hence knew that they had not yet achieved the object of their search.

Grasping their clubs tightly, they worked their way through the underbrush. The trees were scattered in places, letting a few beams of moonlight seep through, though the dark shadows were deceptive and no objects could be distinguished beyond their bare outlines.

Soon, however, they were in close proximity to the voice, which appeared to be that of a young boy. Then, suddenly, as Jim called out again in an encouraging tone to know whom they were addressing, a form came staggering toward him out of the shadows, and someone grabbed him in frenzied madness, while great heart-rending sobs shook his frame.

Startled at first, Jim realized that this was caused by fright, so instead of casting the person away as his instinct seemed to bid him, he threw his arms about the trembling form and tried to distinguish in the darkness who and what he was.

What he felt caused a great feeling of pity to surge over him; for his hands encountered the slight form of a young lad, not more than twelve years old. Jim was astonished, and readily perceived why one so young should be racked with terror at being alone on the mountainside in the dead of night.

“There, there,” he said; “don’t cry. It’s all right. You’re with friends.” He turned to Gerald: “It’s nothing but a boy. Scared most to death, I suppose.”

“What, a boy, and alone on the mountain at this hour?”

“Strange, but true.”

“I don’t understand it.”

“Neither do I. I suppose he’s lost, or has run away from home. In either case, the best we can do is to get to camp with him as quickly as possible.”

Jim tried to draw the lad out—to get him to tell something of himself, but his only answer was more sobs, as the lad still quivered from fright.

“Well, are you alone?” Jim asked.

There was a hastily murmured:

“Yes.”

“Do you want to go with us?”

“Oh, yes, yes—don’t l-l-leave m-m-me alone again!”

“We’ll not leave you alone. We have a camp near here and you’re more than welcome.”

Gerald led the way back up the mountainside, Jim, his arm supporting the little fellow at his side, following as rapidly as the rough going would permit.

It was no easy matter, getting back to camp, as they quickly discovered. As a matter of caution, of course, those at the camp would not allow any lights, so the boys were forced to pick their way through the woods with only the stars and a partly-obscured moon to guide them.

The descent had been comparatively easy, but this was almost more than human endurance could stand. Several times great rocks impeded their progress and they were forced to go around them. They paused frequently to rest on account of the young boy, who seemed all but exhausted. The frightened lad continued his sobbing at intervals, his body shaking like one with the ague. He refused to talk, however, save to respond to an occasional question in a monosyllable.

“Is that the camp, do you suppose?” Gerald inquired, suddenly, after they had climbed what seemed an interminable distance.

Jim, following the motion of his arm, saw a bright patch of light; but as he looked this

resolved itself into sky. Concealing their disappointment, they continued the ascent.

At times they were almost tempted to cry out, but thoughts of the boy, and the fear that he had not been alone on the mountain, caused them to refrain.

Finally, they reached the road by which that morning they had come upon the mountain. Now, at least, they were able to get their bearings, for the mountain to the east, the first one they had ascended after leaving the foothills in the auto, loomed up sentinel-like, through the moonlight.

Forming their impressions by their distance from this mountain, the boys decided that they were nearly half a mile from camp.

“Just think of all the climb we wasted,” said Jim. “We might have been at camp twenty minutes ago had we been able to keep in the right direction.”

“Well, one thing is sure,” Gerald responded; “we’ll be able to find it now.”

They set off down the road, which, being composed of sand, was plainly visible in the moonlight, in spite of the deep shadows thrown by the trees on either side.

Some moments later they made out the tents. This time there was no mistake, for, as they listened, they heard the murmur of voices. The

girls and Aunt Betty were no doubt discussing their protracted absence. Probably suspecting that some harm had come to the boys they were afraid to make their presence known, and were talking in low, guarded tones.

“Camp ahoy!” cried Gerald, suddenly.

Then everyone screamed, and there was a scramble to strike a light, as they all crowded around the boys with eager questions. Ephy struck a light and by its fitful glare the girls saw the pale face of the lad Jim and Gerald had found on the mountain.

“Here’s the result of our trip,” said Jim, as he led his burden forward.

“In heaven’s name!” cried Aunt Betty. “Who have you there, Jim Barlow?”

“Ask me something easy, Aunt Betty. We found him alone on the mountain, half scared to death. He won’t talk. He’s been hysterical all the way back. Perhaps after a good night’s rest he will be able to tell us who he is and where he came from.”

“You poor boy!” cried the sympathetic Dorothy.

Then, moved by a sudden impulse, she threw her arms about his neck and drew him to her—an action which the lad seemed in no way to resent.

The story of their adventure told, Gerald and Jim again sought their sleeping quarters, taking

their newly-found friend with them.

Before they went to sleep they induced him to tell his name, which was Len Haley. When they pressed him to know how he came to be alone so far from home, he shook his head and his lip trembled. That, he said, he would tell them in the morning.

Fixing a comfortable place for him, the boys waited until he was sound asleep, before again closing their own eyes. Then, tired from the exertions of the day and night, they, too, dropped off to sleep, to the tune of old Ephraim's snores.

CHAPTER VII

UNWELCOME VISITORS

While gathered about the breakfast table—if table, it could be called—the next morning, the campers heard the boy's story. Len Haley had by this time thoroughly recovered from his fright, and he related in a timid, halting fashion how he had come to be alone on the mountain in the dead of night.

An orphan, living with his uncle, James Haley,

near the little village of Armsdale in the valley, he had worked for years in a truck garden. Neither James Haley or his wife had experienced any affection for the lad, but seemed bent only upon making him carry on his young shoulders the burden of running their little farm.

Len, a willing worker, had accepted his lot as a matter of course. But when the hours grew longer, and he was forced to rise before daylight to milk the cows and feed the horses, and was not allowed to retire until the same services had been performed late at night, with hours of drudgery in the field, during the intervening time, he had rebelled, only to be soundly beaten by his uncle, and told to return to his work under the penalty of being beaten till he was black and blue.

The boy had stood this as long as he could. Then he resolved to run away. He kept this purpose to himself, however, waiting for the proper opportunity to present itself.

The previous night James Haley had gone to the village about eight o'clock. Mrs. Haley was feeling badly, and it was necessary to fill a prescription at the drug store. Why Len was not selected for this mission he could not imagine, for usually his uncle took a keen delight in rousing him out of bed at all hours of the night.

It had seemed to the boy to be an omen in his favor. James Haley apparently believed him to be asleep at the time of his departure for the

village. The boy had really gone to bed, but lay there thoroughly dressed. Soon after his uncle left the farm, the boy had crept softly down the stairs in his stocking feet, then out of the house. Putting on his shoes out by the barn he had immediately struck out for the mountains, not realizing what a terrible thing it was for a boy to be alone in the woods in the night time.

When finally this realization was brought home to him, he became frightened. But he gritted his teeth, resolved not to turn back. He knew full well that the beatings he had received in the past would be as nothing compared to what the future would hold in store, if James Haley ever laid hands on him again.

He wandered on up the mountainside as the hour grew late, until, driven almost into hysterics by the dreadful lonesomeness about him, he had cried out for help, hoping, he said, to attract the attention of some people he knew lived in this vicinity.

The first response to his cries had been Jim's "Hello!" So overjoyed was Len at hearing a human voice again that he had come near fainting.

Now that the dreadful trip was a thing of the past, and the boy had an opportunity to think calmly over the matter, he feared that his cries had been heard in the valley, and it would be only the question of a few hours until his uncle

would be searching the mountain.

The sympathies of the entire party, particularly those of Dorothy and Aunt Betty, were with the unfortunate boy, and what action was to be taken to keep him out of his uncle's hands was to all a pertinent question.

"Don't let them take me back there," Len begged, while they were discussing the matter. "I'd rather die—honest to goodness, I would!"

"Oh, we just can't let you go back," was Aunt Betty's rather grim resolve. "It's against all the principles of human nature to stand by and see a young boy like you abused. You shall stay with us, Len; you shall be under our protection. We'll find some way to circumvent your uncle and keep you out of his hands."

Tears came into the boy's eyes, and he flashed her a look of gratitude.

"We might take Len back to Baltimore with us and find him a position," said Dorothy.

"There is enough work at Bellvieu alone to keep him busy for many months," returned Aunt Betty. "Ephraim is getting old, and Metty is occupied with the care of the horses and cattle. Len shall be our yard boy for a while, if he desires."

Len did desire, and did not hesitate to so express himself. He would work hard for Mrs. Calvert, he said, until he was old enough to strike out for

himself.

This part of the matter was soon settled to the satisfaction of all. It was then decided that Len should remain in the seclusion of one of the tents during the day, so that he would be out of sight from anyone approaching Camp Breck from either direction. Aurora had brought a bundle of reading matter, including several illustrated papers, and these were placed at Len's disposal. The boy had had several years of schooling previous to the death of his parents, and was a fair reader. Like most boys who have been restrained through one cause or another from reading all the books they desired, he was ready and anxious to devour anything that came his way.

Jim and Gerald put their heads together, and resolved to circumvent James Haley should he appear on the scene in search of Len.

"We'll lead him away from the camp," said Jim, "without telling him any deliberate untruths—send him off on a false scent. Aunt Betty is right, you know; we can't let him go back to a life like that."

"No," said Gerald; "it would be a pity. If his uncle's treatment was bad enough to make Len take to the mountains in the night time, it must have been at least a mild sort of an inquisition."

The boys congratulated themselves later on planning matters out in advance, for the

forenoon was barely half gone when two horsemen rode out of the woods to the south of the camp and turned their horses in the direction of the tents.

Jim was the first to see them.

“Don’t be startled, folks,” he said, “and please don’t turn and ‘rubber,’ for there are two men coming toward camp on horseback.”

“Oh!” gasped Molly. “Poor Len!”

“Poor Len, nothing!” Jim returned. “I know it is hard for a girl to refrain from doing something she’s been asked not to, but if you turn your head, Molly Breckenridge, or let on in any way that you’ve seen those horsemen, you need never call me your friend again. We must act like we haven’t seen them, until they hail us. Ephraim, you sneak into the tent, without looking to the right or the left. Then hide Len under the cots or somewhere where they won’t find him. Gerald and I will talk to the men when they arrive.”

The girls and Aunt Betty kept their presence of mind very well, considering the fact that they were laboring under no little excitement.

Ephraim went carelessly into the tent, as Jim had bade him, where he concealed the runaway lad in a very natural manner under a heavy quilt. It mattered not that the weather was excessively warm this time of day; the old negro figured that the exigencies of the case demanded desperate measures, and as for Len, he accepted

his punishment without a whimper.

By the time the men had drawn rein before the tents, Ephraim was sitting calmly in a chair, an illustrated paper in his hand, puffing complacently at his pipe.

“Good morning,” greeted the larger of the two men.

“Good morning,” returned Jim, pleasantly. Then he and Gerald went forward to meet them.

One of the riders, a rather pompous-looking individual, with a long, drooping mustache, dismounted and threw the reins over his horse’s head.

“I’m Sheriff Dundon of this county, boys,” he said. “The gentleman with me is Mr. Haley. We’re searching for a boy named Len Haley—Mr. Haley’s nephew, in fact. He left his home down in the valley some time in the night. We thought perhaps you’d seen him.”

Jim and Gerald exchanged feigned glances of surprise, which was part of the plan they had mapped out to save Len.

“It must have been him we heard cry out in the night,” said Jim.

“Yes,” Gerald responded. “Too bad we didn’t know it was only a boy.”

“You heard someone cry out in the night, then?”

the sheriff asked, while the man on the horse eyed them keenly, and flashed curious glances about the camp.

“Why, yes,” Jim returned; “Old Ephraim, our darkey, woke us up in the night to hear some mournful noises which he said came from somewhere down the mountainside. We listened and heard someone crying out at intervals for help. But having no fire-arms, and not knowing whether it was a drunken man or a lunatic, we were afraid to venture very far away from camp.”

“What time was this?”

“Must have been in the neighborhood of two o’clock.”

The sheriff shot a questioning glance at Mr. Haley.

“It was Len; no doubt about it,” said that worthy, nodding. “He’s only a kid and I s’pose he got scared when he found himself alone in the dark.”

“You don’t know which way he was going at that time?” asked the sheriff, turning again to the boys.

“It would be hard to say. At one time the cries seemed to be nearer, then got farther, and finally ceased altogether. We all heard them, including the ladies, and none of us went back to bed until everything was quiet.”

“Let’s see,” said the sheriff; “I didn’t quite catch your names.”

“Mine’s Jim Barlow. This is Gerald Blank. We’re members of a camping party from Baltimore. We arrived in the mountains yesterday morning for a two weeks’ stay.”

“Blank?” repeated the sheriff. “Blank? Any relation to Blank, the broker?”

“He’s my father,” said Gerald.

“That so? Then I’m right glad to meet you.” The sheriff extended a horny hand, which Gerald shook. “I knew him years ago. Didn’t realize he had a boy as old as you. Well, we must be getting on. Sorry you can’t give us a clue to the boy’s whereabouts.”



“I AM SHERIFF OF THIS COUNTY.”
“Dorothy’s Triumph.”

“It is too bad,” said Gerald. “When we last heard the cries they came from about that direction,” and he extended his finger down the mountainside. “Then they grew fainter and seemed to be moving off to the east. We’d like

very much to help you, sheriff. If we'd any idea it was only a boy, and a scapegoat, at that, we could have caught and held him until your arrival."

"Well, I could hardly expect that," returned the minion of the law, with a good-natured smile. "Come, Haley, let's be off. He can't have gone far between midnight and now, so we're apt to overhaul him at some of the farm houses up the valley. Good-by, boys—see you later!"

The men tipped their hats to the ladies out of courtesy for their presence, and rode away.

"Hope they don't see us later," said Jim, as he stood with Gerald gazing after their receding forms.

"No; for he might catch us at an inopportune moment. If they ever found Len in our camp there'd be the very dickens to pay."

"Couldn't do anything to us, Gerald, and I don't believe he'd have any right to take Len, unless there's some papers filed in the court of this county, appointing James Haley his guardian. Just merely because he's an orphan don't give a man a right to take him and hold him against his will—even if he is his uncle."

"Boys, I really must congratulate you on your presence of mind," said Dorothy, when the riders had disappeared from view. "You handled the matter perfectly. Wait till I tell Ephraim to let Len come out from under cover," and she left

them to enter the tent.

Len was nearly roasted when he emerged from beneath the quilt, for the weather was excessively warm and his clothes were not as thin as they might have been. But he was smiling bravely through the perspiration, and rejoiced with the others that he had been so lucky as to escape being returned to captivity.

“I don’t understand how my uncle ever influenced the sheriff to help him hunt for me,” he said. “I know Sheriff Dundon, and he’s a mighty good man. He knows very well the way I was treated, so Uncle James must have pulled the wool over his eyes some way. Well, I reckon it don’t matter much now. They’re gone and I hope they’ll never come back.”

“It won’t do to take any chances, yet, Len,” said Aunt Betty. “You’ll have to spend most of your time in the tent, with someone constantly on watch outside. It will be pretty hard on you, but better than going back to the life you left.”

“I don’t mind in the least, Mrs. Calvert—staying in the tent, I mean. I’d do anything to escape my uncle. He’s certainly the meanest man on earth.”

Aunt Betty’s plan was followed during the next few days, but neither Sheriff Dundon or James Haley put in a further appearance at the camp. Aunt Betty cautioned Len, however, to keep out of sight until the end of the trip, at which time he was to be piled into the big auto and taken

with them back to Baltimore.

The party had been in the mountains a week before Jim and Gerald decided to put into practice their oft-repeated resolve to go fishing. Dorothy and Molly begged to be taken along, and to this the boys reluctantly consented.

The trout stream in the valley was the objective point of the pilgrimage. Here, in the spot where Molly had discovered the fish swimming about in plain view of those on shore, they would try their luck.

Aurora, interested in a book, refused to be tempted by the other girls, and stated her intention of remaining in camp with Aunt Betty, Ephraim and Len.

With a bundle of sandwiches and their tackle, the fishing party got away from camp in the early morning, planning to spend the better part of the day in enticing the denizens of the deep to nibble at their flies. Then the return to camp could be made in the cool of the evening between sundown and dark.

By nine o'clock they were seated on the bank of the stream, poles in hand, and lines cast far out into the stream.

At first the girls kept up an incessant chatter, in spite of the warning from Jim and Gerald that if they did not stop they would scare the fish away.

"Nonsense!" cried Molly, laughing aloud at the

warning. “Fish can’t hear.”

At this Jim and Gerald exchanged glances of amused tolerance.

“Told you we should have left ’em at home,” said the latter.

“I knew it,” Jim replied. “It was only through the kindness of my heart that I agreed to let them come.”

This statement only served to amuse Dorothy and Molly, and their laughter rang out over the water so loudly, that Jim and Gerald, with sighs of resignation, began winding in their lines with the evident intention of departing.

At first this increased the merriment of the girls. But when they saw the boys taking their poles apart, and stowing the sections away in their fishing bags, they realized that they had really incurred the displeasure of their young friends by what they had intended as a joke.

“Come,” said Dorothy, soberly. “You boys are not going home?”

“Oh, aren’t we?” demanded Gerald.

“Yes; we’re going home,” Jim said, rather curtly. “Where did you think we were going—to the village?”

“Oh, come! You must have known Molly and I were only joking?”

“Of course, they knew it,” Molly chimed in, in a careless tone.

“There’s such a thing as carrying a joke too far,” said Gerald.

“No use to argue with a couple of girls, Gerald,” said Jim. “Let’s take ’em home and come back to-morrow.”

“Suits me,” responded his chum. “I hate to think we’ve had this long jaunt for nothing, but there’s an old saying to the effect that we must learn by experience.”

Their poles “knocked down,” and stowed away in their canvas cases, the boys picked up their coats and prepared to move.

“Oh, I say, this is a shame!” cried Dorothy. “I had counted on having such a good time.”

“So had I,” echoed Molly—“such a good time!”

“So had we,” said the boys in unison.

“But we didn’t,” Jim added.

“No; we didn’t,” echoed Gerald.

“Well, it wasn’t our fault,” said Dorothy.

“We thought you could take a joke,” said Molly.

“We can,” Gerald replied. “It’s a good joke. We’re willing to admit it’s on us. You asked to come; we consented. That was our fault, not

yours."

"Yes," Jim put in, "we thought you knew at least the rudiments of fishing."

Molly shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh, dear, what a fuss over nothing," she groaned. "And to think I started it all by remarking that fish have no ears. And I'll stand by my statement. I'm sure I am right."

"No use to argue with a girl," said Jim.

"Not a bit," Gerald replied. "Let's get 'em back to camp."

"I refuse to go!" The fire fairly flashed from Dorothy's eyes. "I came down here to fish, and fish I shall until I get ready to stop, and you're a bigger 'it' than I think you are, Molly Breckenridge, if you let two unruly boys bluff you into doing as they wish."

"Then we'll have to leave you here," said Jim, in the most matter of fact tone he could muster.

Gerald nodded assent.

Then both boys assumed an independent air, and acted as if they were going to leave—as much as to say that settled the matter.

"Well, let's be going," said Gerald, casting a sly glance toward Dorothy, and noticing that she made no move to wind in her line. He picked up his basket and threw an inquiring glance at Jim.

“Of course, if the girls agree to keep still, it won’t be necessary for us to go,” said Jim.

“Too bad we didn’t think of that before we wound in our lines,” Gerald lamented.

“Well, it’s never too late to let them out again,” Dorothy said, coolly.

“Will you promise to be quiet, Dorothy?”

“I promise nothing, Jim Barlow!”

“Oh, come now; don’t act contrary!”

“It’s not me who’s contrary, and you know it very well.”

“You said you were going back to camp. Why don’t you go?” Molly flung at them, tauntingly.

“Well, by cracky, we should; it would serve you right,” Gerald responded, slightly impatient. “You girls have no right to treat us this way. We brought you with us to give you a good time, and it seems that you might respect our wishes a little. No one can catch fish with a regular gab-fest going on on the bank.”

“Go along and don’t bother us,” admonished Dorothy.

At that instant her floater began to bob fiercely up and down. There was a strong tug on her line, and the reel began to revolve at a high rate of speed, as Mr. Fish, evidently aware that in snapping what appeared to be a nice, fat fly, he

had gotten decidedly the worst of it, made a desperate effort to get away.

“Hold him!” cried Molly, rising on the bank and waving her arms excitedly.

“Oh, yes, hold him,” said the boys, exchanging glances of amusement.

“Hold him?” Dorothy gritted her teeth. “You just know I’ll hold him! We’ll show these young gentlemen that fish *can* be caught when there is noise on the bank. Oh, we’ll show them!”

The reel was revolving more slowly now, and before the end of the line was reached, had ceased altogether. Then the girl, a light of triumph in her eyes, began to wind in her prize. It was a slow task and a hard one, for when the denizen of the river found he had again encountered resistance, he renewed his struggle for freedom. Once he nearly jerked the girl off the bank into the water, greatly to the delight of Jim and Gerald, who had settled in a comfortable nook under the trees with the avowed intention of being “in at the finish.” That Dorothy would fail to land the fish they were quite sure, and to be on hand with a hearty laugh when her disappointment came, would in a measure atone for the trouble of bringing the girls on the trip.

Little by little the struggling fish was brought nearer, until, with a quick jerk of her pole, the girl lifted him clean of the water and swung him

over her head to the shore.

So quickly did it happen that Jim was unable to get out of the way, and the fish, which was a three-pound trout, struck him squarely in the face, bowling him over in the grass, and causing him to drop the fishing tackle he was holding in his hands, long enough to brush the water from his eyes.

Now it was the girls' turn to laugh, and they did not neglect the opportunity.

"Thought I couldn't catch a fish, didn't you, Jim Barlow?" cried Dorothy. "Well, I trust you now see the error of your judgment. I caught him, and you caught him, too, only you caught him where I didn't—across the face."

At this both girls burst out laughing again, and Gerald, no longer able to restrain himself, convulsed at the sight of Jim as he went tumbling backward with his eyes and nose full of water, was forced to join them. They laughed so loudly that Jim first smiled, then burst into a guffaw himself. He had been inclined to be angry at the humiliation imposed upon him by the fish, but now the ludicrous side of the affair appealed to him. He admitted that Dorothy had all the best of the argument and wound up by declaring that he intended trying his luck at the fish again.

Dorothy, in the meantime, had walked over and picked up her squirming catch, which she

detached from the hook and dropped in the basket she had brought with her for that purpose.

“Here goes again!” she cried, and fastening a new fly on her line, she cast it far out into the stream. “Better hurry, you people, or I’ll have the record for the day.”

Gerald and Jim, thus admonished, began undoing their fishing tackle, and soon the quartet were fishing as if their lives depended on what they caught that afternoon. And the strangest part about it was that nobody—not even the girls—said a word! Silence reigned supreme. So, although Dorothy had triumphed in showing the boys the folly of keeping absolutely silent, the boys had also won their point in getting the girls so interested that neither cared to talk.

The fish began to bite with unusual frequency, and soon each member of the party had a fine string in the basket. Lunch was forgotten, so eager was each to beat the other’s record, and so nearly equal were the numbers of fish caught by each, they were afraid to stop to count them for fear they would be losing valuable time.

But finally, when the declining sun told them that the afternoon would soon be gone, with the pangs of hunger gnawing at their stomachs, a general agreement caused all to wind in their lines.

The fish were counted and it was seen that Dorothy had made the best record with seventeen trout of various sizes. Gerald came a close second, having sixteen, while Molly and Jim followed in the order named with fourteen and twelve respectively.

Lunch was eaten—or rather devoured, for they were ravenously hungry—in the shade of the big trees on the bank before preparations were made for the return to camp.

"Wish those fish were up the mountain," sighed Jim.

"Oh, it will be easy to carry them," said Molly.

"Yes; easy for you, because Gerald and I will have to carry all you've caught as well as our own."

"How clever of you to guess that," Dorothy said, laughing. "You're a bright boy, Jim."

"Yes; a little too bright sometimes," he returned. "Next time I come fishing I hope I shall be bright enough not to invite you girls."

"You did not invite us; we invited ourselves," said Molly with some spirit.

"And they should be well satisfied," said Dorothy. "If it had not been for us they would have gone back to camp before the fish commenced to bite, and then we would have had none."

“Pooh, pooh!” said Jim.

“And again pooh, pooh!” said Gerald.

Then, without further ado, the boys picked up their loads and the climb back to the camp was begun.

They reached their destination tired from the exertion of the climb and generally weary from the day’s strenuous outing, but soon the odor of fried fish made them glad they had taken the trip and that the results had been so satisfying.

CHAPTER VIII

THE JOURNEY HOME

The next few days passed quickly to the campers, who were loath for the time to approach when they would have to “pull up stakes” for the return to Baltimore.

Among the excursions following the fishing trip, was another of a similar nature, participated in alone by Jim and Gerald. But as the results were considerably less than on the day the girls had accompanied them, there was a hearty laugh at the boys’ expense when they returned to camp. This they accepted good-naturedly, however.

At one time or another the whole face of the mountain was explored, many curious things being discovered. Among them was a cave of large extent, where stalactites and stalagmites abounded in great profusion. Many were broken off to be taken back home as mementoes of the trip.

Nothing further had been heard from James Haley and Sheriff Dundon, and during the last few days in camp Len was allowed to show himself, though he did not venture far from the tents, fearing to take a risk that might be the means of placing him again in captivity.

By the time the day for departure came, the lad had won his way into the hearts of everyone. Aunt Betty and Dorothy were so taken with his winning manners and extreme good nature that they already regarded him as a protégé, and were planning how he was to be trained for the future, and given a thorough business education.

When the plan was mentioned to Len he fell into the spirit of it with an alacrity that astonished them. His resolve to make something of himself was a commendable one and showed the proper appreciation for their efforts.

On the morning which marked the end of their two weeks' stay, the boys began to gather up the camping paraphernalia which was packed in the rear chest and under the seats of the automobile.

After a short conference between the campers, it

was decided that to best enjoy their last day, the afternoon should be spent running about over the mountains in the machine. The journey home would then be made by moonlight, Gerald having won Aunt Betty's consent to "speed her up." He promised that they should all be home and in bed shortly after midnight.

"Oh, dear, dear!" moaned Aunt Betty. "I see I'm in for it. Why did I ever let you persuade me to become a party to this speed mania, Gerald Blank?"

"Don't ask me why, Mrs. Calvert," Gerald responded, laughing; "I only know that you did. I have your promise, remember! And," he added, dramatically, "a Calvert never goes back on a promise."

"Oh, yes; you have my promise, but I'm sorry I gave it."

"She'll be glad she promised, when she sees how easy the big Ajax covers ground," said Jim, winking at his chum.

"I think the ride back to Baltimore by moonlight will be ideal," said Molly, rapturously.

"Isn't it strange to think that here we are over sixty miles from home, not planning to start until the moon is up, yet will be home and in bed by midnight?" said Aurora.

"Pshaw! That's nothing," cried Gerald. "It's mere play for this big Ajax. Why, I could easily do the

sixty miles in a little over an hour if Aunt Betty —”

“Mercy!” screamed Aunt Betty. “In a little over an hour? Gerald, if you don’t stop that silly talk, I shall sit myself down under one of these trees and refuse to budge an inch.”

“Oh, you don’t know how nice it is to ride fast, Aunt Betty,” said Dorothy; “to feel the wind fairly blowing the hair off your head; the landscape flashing past so rapidly one can scarcely see it, and to know that—”

“Stop, Dorothy Calvert! You shall not tempt me. I’m too old to acquire such habits, and if Gerald lets his car get beyond a fair rate of speed during our journey home, I shall leap out into the ditch. Then just think how badly you all will feel.”

But the boys only grinned at this, and resumed their work of taking down the tents.

Soon everything was packed in the machine but enough food for their mid-day lunch, which was eaten under the shade of the trees.

When the time to leave came at last, no one seemed happier or more eager than Len Haley. An instinctive fear seemed to possess the lad that his uncle would be prowling about the mountains and apprehend him when he least expected it; hence, to go flying away to Baltimore in a big automobile was to him the acme of delight.

The early afternoon was spent at the camp, but about four o'clock, when the sun was on the decline, and the shadows in the valley had commenced to lengthen, Gerald, at the wheel of the big Ajax, sent the machine slowly across the plateau toward the eastern mountain.

As the car moved along the girls burst into a song, and a moment later Jim and Gerald joined in. For a few moments they fairly made the welkin ring. Then as the machine was plunging down a steep descent the concert came to an abrupt end, and the inmates clutched the rails to keep from pitching forward.

Up around the side of the east mountain the auto then climbed slowly, seeming to exert itself very little for the performance of so difficult a task.

Shortly after sundown, they went spinning down into the valley to the hotel where they had stopped for the night on their trip to the mountains two weeks before.

The landlord had apparently forgotten that this was the party who had feasted on the good things he had set before them, greatly to his discomfiture; for now he put himself out to serve them a fine supper.

And everyone was hungry! Cold meats, bread, fresh country butter, and milk, with iced tea for those who desired it, and strawberry jelly and chocolate cake for dessert, made a bill of fare tempting enough to suit the most fastidious

member of the party.

With the supply of gasoline replenished, both in the regular and reserve tanks, with the moon peeping over the undulating land to the eastward, shedding its brilliant rays over farm and road, the party left the village hotel for the run back to Baltimore.

Aunt Betty sat sternly in the big rear seat, with Dorothy on one side and Aurora on the other, her bonnet held firmly in place by a large veil, her lips tightly compressed in prospect of the fast ride Gerald had promised was to come. She had little to say. In her heart was a nameless dread—had been, in fact, since Gerald won her consent to allow him to run at a faster pace on the return trip.

The highways in this part of Maryland were all that could be desired, and Gerald was not long in fulfilling part of his promise. Knowing that something over half way to their destination there was for several miles a bad stretch of road, he wished to even matters by making good time until the rough spots were reached.

It was nearly nine o'clock now, and as the auto gathered speed, Aunt Betty gave a little gasp, then looked at Dorothy and bravely smiled. Gradually Gerald let the car out until she was doing fully forty miles an hour. This could be kept up only on the smooth level stretches which they encountered every now and then. In climbing the hills, the car did not average over

eight. The streams of light from the gas lamps made a wobbly path in the darkness when occasionally clouds blew across the sky, obscuring the moon.

The car made very little noise. In fact, the low hum of the engine, and swish of the tires along the smooth roadway, were all that met their ears as they went flying up hill and down dale, past farmhouses and over bridges. The great highway seemed deserted save for an occasional farm wagon, which turned quickly to one side when its occupant saw their rapidly approaching lamps.

Gerald was very considerate of horses, knowing that many animals were unused to automobiles, hence were liable to become frightened at the slightest provocation.

Through the villages the speed was slackened to not more than ten miles an hour. Very few of the places had electric lights, hence Gerald was forced to depend entirely upon the moon and his lamps for guidance through crooked streets. At times they passed little groups of people, come out from nearby houses to watch them go by; at others they were chased for long distances by yelping dogs, who snapped at the wheels and in other ways tried to show their supreme contempt for a vehicle driven without horses.

Aunt Betty soon grew used to the bursts of speed, and before they were half way to Baltimore she was breathing freely once more,

conscious of the fact that in Gerald the big auto had a good pilot, and convinced that did the occasion demand it, the car could be brought to a standstill within its own length.

“I believe I like it when you ‘speed her up,’ as you say,” she finally admitted, greatly to Gerald’s delight. “I hope I shan’t develop a mania for speeding, however, as that would necessitate my buying a car—something which I don’t feel able to do just at present.”

“I shouldn’t allow you to buy one,” said Dorothy, a note of authority in her voice that caused a laugh from the others.

“Humph! Talks like she rules the ranch,” said Jim.

“Well, maybe I do, Mr. Smarty,” replied the girl. “One thing I am quite sure of—*you* don’t!”

“Come, children; neither of you rule the ranch,” Aunt Betty intervened. “I rule it and expect to do so for an indefinite period.”

“See!” Jim cried, tauntingly. “Told you so! Told you so!”

Dorothy aimed a playful blow at him, but he dodged and caught her arm in a vise-like grip, refusing to let go until she had promised to be a good girl.

At ten-fifteen they passed through a village which Gerald said was the half-way mark

between Baltimore and the South Mountains.

“We have rather a bad stretch of road ahead, however,” he told them, “so for the next half hour it will be slower going. But wait till we strike the graveled county road this side of Baltimore. Then we’ll make up some of our lost time.”

But somehow this did not interest Aunt Betty. She was talking with the girls and apparently felt not the slightest tremor at the thought of going at a faster pace—a change that Dorothy noticed and commented on with no little delight.

Just when Gerald was congratulating himself that the roughest part of the trip was over, the front tire on the left exploded with a bang that brought a scream from every feminine inmate of the car.

Molly, who was nearest the noise, promptly threw her arms around Gerald’s neck, and clung there as if her very life depended on it.

It was with considerable difficulty that the boy retained the presence of mind to stop the car. But he did so immediately, then gave himself up to the task of releasing Molly’s arms. When he had succeeded, he kissed her on the lips, greatly to her amazement and chagrin, for the others, recovered from their momentary scare, laughed heartily.

“Gerald Blank!” she cried. “I’ll never, never

forgive you for that!”

“Well, seeing you came so near capsizing us by your affectionate embrace of the chauffeur, the latter individual is surely entitled to some reward for his valued services—particularly as he will now have to detain the party some ten or fifteen minutes while he does a little real hard labor.”

He jumped quickly out of the machine and going around to the left front wheel, examined the exploded tire. It was perfectly flat.

“Yes;” he repeated, “this means a little work.”

“That was hard luck, Gerald,” said Dorothy, “particularly when you were trying to make a record run.”

“Yes; it’s the first trouble we’ve had with the machine since starting on our trip. But this is really a simple matter, Dorothy.”

“Oh, I’m so glad of that.”

“I shall still have the satisfaction of putting you into Bellvieu in time to be in bed by twelve—and we may even shade that time a little. Come, Jim! Get that jack out of the tool chest, and help me hoist this wheel off the ground. You’d better bring the pump, also, and we’ll see how long it will take you and Ephy to inflate a tire of this size.”

Jim and Ephraim both sprang to Gerald’s aid. Soon the jack was under the wheel, where it

required but a moment to raise the machine until the wheel was clear of the ground.

Then Gerald removed the punctured tire, pulled out the inner tube, and proceeded to put the new one in its place. With the tire back on the rim again, he attached the end of the pump to the air tube with astonishing swiftness, and Jim began at once to force the ozone into the rubber. Tiring after a few moments, he gave way to Ephraim, while Gerald, his hand on the tire, waited until it was sufficiently hard to carry the weight of the machine. Then he gave the signal to stop pumping.

Another moment sufficed to lower the wheel onto the ground, and to put the tools back in the chest. Then Gerald and his helpers crawled into the machine and the big car started off as if nothing had happened. The whole affair had not taken over ten minutes.

“I had no idea punctures were so easily remedied,” said Aunt Betty. “Somehow, I have always dreaded the thought of being in an automobile away from the city when a tire blew up. But, aside from the noise, there seem to be no disagreeable features.”

“Would be if you didn’t happen to have an extra inner tube along,” said Jim.

Gerald nodded.

“You’re right. The idea is always to have one.”

“But what would you do if you hadn’t?” asked Dorothy.

“It would be necessary to find the hole in the punctured tube and stop it up with cement.”

“And then you would have to wait hours for it to dry, I suppose?”

“No; only a few minutes. There is a preparation something like putty which you force into the puncture, and which dries in a very few minutes. Of course, a tire fixed in this way would never be considered as satisfactory as a new inner tube, yet they have been known to go many miles without the slightest trouble. In fact, you are more apt to get a new puncture, than to have the patch give out.”

Time passed so quickly as the big machine shot along the level highway at a rapid pace that no one realized their whereabouts until Aunt Betty cried suddenly:

“Oh, look over there! Those must be the Northern Lights.”

Her hand was extended toward a brilliant glare which lit up the sky as the moon went behind a heavy cloud.

“The Northern Lights, and in the east!” cried Dorothy. “Oh, Aunt Betty!”

“As I live that *is* the east! Why, I’m all turned around. Then what are those lights, my dear?”

“Baltimore, of course, you dear auntie.”

“So soon? Why, it seems as if we have been out barely two hours.”

“And we have been out but a very little more,” said Jim, looking at his watch. “It is only eleven o’clock and it was a few minutes to nine when we left the hotel. Another half hour will put us to the gates of Bellvieu, eh, Gerald?”

“Surely,” was the response, delivered in an “I-told-you-so” tone.

Gradually they began to encounter more vehicles, the majority of which seemed to be traveling toward the city.

“Strange those wagons are all going that way,” said Aurora.

“Nothing so strange about it,” said Jim. “Most of them are lumber wagons filled with country produce, such as vegetables, eggs and fruit. They leave the farms early in the night so as to be on hand at the Baltimore market when it opens for business in the morning.”

On they flew at a high speed, the lights ahead becoming brighter and brighter. Soon an electric light burst before their vision off to the right, then another, and another, until they realized that they were, indeed, in the outskirts of Baltimore.

Gerald ran the car more slowly now, for city ordinances are very strict, imposing a low limit

on the speed of autos when within the confines of a municipality. Gerald had never been fined for speeding since coming into possession of an auto, and he had made up his mind that he never would be.

Through the shopping district they went, and into a brilliantly-lighted residence street, thence into smaller, narrower streets as Gerald turned the big Ajax toward the shore of the bay.

Then old Bellvieu, lying dark and silent in the moonlight, a single light twinkling from the servants' quarters in the rear, burst upon their view. The car ran quickly along the hedge and stopped before the gate.

Gerald looked at his watch.

"It is just eleven-thirty," he said. "I have the honor to report that I have beaten the time I suggested by several minutes—enough to give you time to unload your things and get to bed before the clock strikes twelve."

Jim and Ephraim grabbed the baskets out of the big chest in the rear, while Aunt Betty and the girls seized their other belongings. Then, bidding Gerald and Aurora good night, with many thanks for the nice time they had had in the new car, they went up the pathway toward the house.

Chloe, Dinah and Metty had heard their voices, and with shouts of delight had begun to light up the mansion. By the time the party reached the

gallery the big house looked as inviting as one could wish.

How soft and fine the beds seemed that night to each one of the tired camping party, for no matter how enjoyable a time they had had, they were forced to admit that there was no place like home.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST LESSON

The next week was a pleasant one at Bellvieu. Molly Breckenridge secured the consent of her father to remain for that long, and the girls explored every nook and corner of the old mansion and its grounds. Even the big, old-fashioned barn came in for its share of their attention.

Horseback riding is one of the chief attractions at Bellvieu. Both girls were good riders, and very fond of horses. Jim was not so anxious, but usually accompanied them when they ventured away from home.

Long rides into the country early in the morning, or in the cool of the evening, were enjoyed to

the utmost. Gerald came over frequently and the big automobile served to give them many pleasant hours.

The first lesson with Herr Deichenberg had been postponed until after Molly's departure, though that young lady was not aware of it. The Herr refused to have the attention of his pupils distracted by visitors, so, while impatient to begin his labors, he consented to a postponement until Bellvieu should be clear of company and affairs running along in their natural groove.

The day for Molly's departure finally rolled around, and at the station to see her off, besides Dorothy and Jim, were Gerald and Aurora. Molly waved a last farewell from the car window as the train moved out of the station.

In Dorothy's ears still rang her promise:

"If papa consents, I will spend Christmas with you at old Bellvieu."

To which Dorothy had replied:

"Of course, he'll consent, for you're to invite him, too."

This pleased Molly greatly and she had promised to write her chum what the judge's decision was.

The first violin lesson was set for the morning after Molly's departure, Herr Deichenberg having kindly consented to come to Bellvieu, greatly to the delight of both Dorothy and Aunt Betty.

Dorothy was eager to display her ability, and, feeling every confidence in herself, was not the least bit flustered when she met Herr Deichenberg at the door and ushered him into the big drawing-room.

“It seems real good to see you again, Miss Dorothy,” the old professor said. “I have been t’inking about you a great deal vhile you have been avay, und I am really anxious to have you back—really und truly anxious.”

“It was good of you to come to Bellvieu, Herr. I feel that I should have gone to your studio.”

“Ah! Don’t mention dat. I—”

“But I am much younger than you. I can afford to exercise myself a little if it will save you trouble.”

“You are younger, yes. Yet, I am not as old in body as in looks. I valk pretty straight, yet, eh, Miss Dorothy?” and laughing, he chucked her playfully under the chin.

“You walk with military precision, Herr, except on a few occasions when you forget yourself. Then I have noticed a slight stoop to the shoulders,” she replied.

“Ah, vhen I forget myself, yes—und I fear dat is very often, eh?”

“No, no; I think you do remarkably well.”

“Do you, really? Dat iss very nice of you to say.

If you vill pay me all de time such compliments, I t'ink you need not come to my studio at all. I vill be happy to come to your great home, here." He looked out through the window, where the magnificent sweep of lawn, with its flowers, trees and hedges, made a pretty picture. "It iss beautiful—beautiful!"

While they were talking Aunt Betty, attired in a charming morning gown, well-becoming to one of her age, entered the room.

Herr Deichenberg arose with a broad smile to greet her.

"Ah, here iss de mistress of de house," he said to Dorothy, then turned to Aunt Betty, who had extended her hand with the words:

"Welcome again to Bellvieu, Herr Deichenberg."

"T'ank you, madame. It iss very kind of you. Really, if I sit here much longer, admiring de flowers und de trees, I shall forget dat I have come to give dis young lady a moosic lesson, und dat I shall have another pupil vaiting for me in de studio at eleven."

"But it is well that you occasionally forget your labors, Herr."

"Ah, yes, but—"

"I know what you are going to say—that you have your living to make."

"Madame, you have read the sordid t'oughts of

an old man who is supposed to have made a great success."

"And I'm sure you have made a great success. As for the money, Herr, is that any reason you should ruin your health?"

"No, no, madame, but—"

"Ah, Herr," she interrupted again, "you are becoming too thoroughly imbued with the American spirit, which thinks of nothing more than to catch the dollars as they go rolling past. Then, after they are corralled in a bank, or invested in property, you are not satisfied, but begin to covet more."

"Madame, you have struck de key-note of it all, I fear. I plead guilty. But I also plead, in extenuation, dat I have a vife to whom I owe a great duty."

"Ah, yes, a wife! True, true; but did you ever put straight to her the question whether she would prefer to have you slave for money or give her a little more of your time for pleasure?"

"No; but I know vhat she vould say. You are right und I am wrong. But come, Miss Dorothy, de lesson! I have brought with me my own instrument. I vill get it at once."

Stepping across the room he picked up his violin case and began to unfasten the clasps, while Dorothy watched him with fascinated gaze.

"Oh, Herr," cried the girl, "you—you didn't

bring your old Cremona?"

"Surely. Vhat you t'ink, dat you are not good enough to be taught on a Cremona, eh?"

"Oh, Herr, you know I didn't mean that!"

"Of course not," he laughed. "You meant dat you vould like to see it, maybe?"

"Yes, yes."

"Vell, here it iss."

For a moment Dorothy was awed as she gazed at the rather ordinary-looking violin.

Could this be the great Cremona of which she had heard so much? This—this—why, this looked more like a ten-dollar fiddle picked up in a pawnshop!

She knew, however, that the Herr would not deceive her, so she took the instrument tenderly in her hands while the old German watched her intently. When he saw the look of reverence that crossed her face, he seemed pleased.

"You vould like to try it, yes, Miss Dorothy?"

"Oh, Herr, if I only may!"

"Surely, surely. Iss it stingy I am, do you t'ink? Surely you may try it, my leetle girl. Here—use my own bow, too. It iss well resined, und in good shape for to make fine moosic. Now, let me hear you play."

Not until she had drawn the bow across the strings and heard the deep, sweet tones of the old Cremona, did Dorothy realize that in her hands she held an instrument constructed by one of the finest of the old masters—an instrument that had come down, perfectly preserved through the ages, growing better with each passing year.

As the girl played one of the simple pieces which lay uppermost on the piano-rack, the big living-room was filled to overflowing with matchless melody. So clear and pure were the tones that Dorothy could hardly believe her ears. Was it indeed she who made such delightful music, or was she dreaming?

Herr Deichenberg's voice brought her back to her normal state of mind.

"It iss beautiful—de melody. I did not believe you could do it, even on a Cremona."

"It is not me, Herr, but this wonderful violin," the girl cried in admiration.

"Oh, come, now, vhen ve simmer t'ings down to a fine point, de Cremona iss not so different from your own instrument, Miss Dorothy."

"Oh, Herr, surely you are mistaken. Why, I seem to be dreaming when I am playing on the Cremona."

"Und vhy iss dat? Because you have made up your mind dat dis iss absolutely de finest violin

in de whole vorld, und have prepared yourself to hear somet'ing vhich iss not there. De tones are clear und full, but so are those of your own violin, on vhich you played for me vhen I vass here before."

Dorothy shook her head in disbelief, unable to appreciate the full truth of his words.

Herr Deichenberg smiled.

"You von't believe me, eh? Very vell. Let us on with de lesson. I shall convince you at another time."

"I'm afraid you will have a hard time ever convincing me of that," the girl replied.

Dorothy's own violin was tuned, and on this, under the music master's direction, she ran scales for the better part of an hour—to limber her fingers, Herr Deichenberg said.

"But they are already limber, Herr," she returned, in a tone of mild protest.

"Vait, vait," he good-naturedly said. "Vait just a few veeks und den you vill see vhat you shall see. I vill have you doing vhat you Americans call 'stunts' on dat violin. Really, it vill surprise you! Your fingers are stiff. See; I vill show you. Now, try dis exercise—here!" He opened one of her music books and pushed the music before her.

"Right there, now. One—two—t'ree! One—two

—t'ree!—"

Dorothy swung off into the exercise with apparent ease, but soon reached a difficult scale in the third position. Somehow her fingers would not go where she intended them. She tried it once—twice—then stopped, flushing.

"You see?" said the Herr professor. "If I vant to be mean, I vould say, 'I told you so.'"

"Oh, Herr, I beg your pardon! I will never dispute your word again—never—never! My fingers *are* stiff. They are all right for ordinary music in the first and second positions, but the third I can hardly do at all, and I'm sure I have practiced and practiced it."

"Surely you have practiced it, but never as you shall during de next few veeks. It iss only by constant application to a certain method dat great violin players are made. Dey are expected to accomplish de impossible. Dat may sound rather vague to you, but you vill some day understand vhat I mean."

"I understand what you mean now, Herr. I find an exercise which it is impossible for me to play. But I keep everlastingly at it until I can play it. In that way I have achieved what *seemed* to be the impossible."

"Dat iss it—dat iss it! You catch my idea exactly. Do you t'ink you vill be able to accomplish many of those impossible t'ings?"

“I shall perform every task you set for me, no matter how long or how hard I have to try.”

“Ah, now, dat iss de proper spirit. If all young ladies vere like you vhat a beautiful time de moosic teachers vould have.”

“They would, Herr?”

“Oh, yes; dey vould be so overjoyed dat dey vould be avay on a vacation most of de time.”

“I suppose you have all sorts of pupils, Herr?” said Aunt Betty, who had been an interested listener to the conversation between the girl and the professor.

“Yes; mostly young girls, madame, und to say dat dey are a big trouble iss but expressing it mildly. In fact, dey are de greatest of my troubles. Dey pay me vell, yes, but vhat iss pay vhen you must labor with dem hour after hour to get an idea t’rough their heads? Vy, for example I vill show you. A lady pupil vill valk into my studio, t’row off her t’ings und prepare for a lesson. Vhen I say now you do dis or dat, she vill reply, ‘Oh, Herr, you should not ask of me de impossible!’ Und I try to explain dat it iss only by practice dat she vill ever make a great musician. Den perhaps she vill reply: ‘Vell, if I had known it vass such hard vork maybe I vould not have tried to play,’ und den she heaves such a sigh dat for a moment I really feel ashamed of myself for making her vork so hard. Oh, madame, it iss awful! Sometimes I almost go

crazy in my head." He turned again to Dorothy. "But, come, young lady, back to de lesson, und ve vill soon be t'rough."

Dorothy nodded her willingness, which caused the Herr professor to smile and nod delightedly at Aunt Betty.

"Dat iss de proper spirit," he kept repeating, half aloud.

Scale after scale the girl ran over, repeating dozens of times the same notes, until Herr Deichenberg would nod his head that she had played it to his satisfaction. Then on to another and the same performance over again.

Her work won from the Herr the heartiest of commendation, and when he left he told both Dorothy and Aunt Betty that he would look forward to the next lesson with a great deal of pleasure.

Thereafter, twice each week, the Herr came to Bellvieu. He seemed to dearly love the old place, for during her first four weeks of lessons Dorothy was unable to win from him his consent to take her to his home.

Finally, he agreed that the next lesson should be in the studio, but only after considerable pleading on her part.

"I am doing it to please you," he told her, "for if I have my vay, I vould much rather come to dis beautiful place."

Dorothy could hardly wait for the time of the visit to come.

The Herr had asked Aunt Betty to accompany her great-niece, to meet Frau Deichenberg, and on the morning in question they set out together in the barouche.

Metty finally drew up on a quiet street before the quaintest-looking little house Dorothy had ever seen. It was not a bungalow, yet about it were certain lines which suggested that type of structure. It was all in one story, with great French windows on two sides, and with trailing vines climbing the porch posts onto the roof in thoroughly wild abandon.

Herr Deichenberg came out to meet them and lead them into the living-room of the house, where Dorothy and Aunt Betty met for the first time Frau Deichenberg, who had been out on the occasion of Aunt Betty's first visit. The Frau proved to be a kindly German lady who spoke English with even more accent than her distinguished husband.

The welcome to the studio was complete in every way, and as Dorothy went from room to room examining the rare curios and works of art, which the Herr and his wife had gathered from various parts of the world, she felt that her visit had not been in vain.

In the large, well-lighted music room, where the Herr received his pupils, Dorothy found the

things of greatest interest. Half a dozen violins were scattered about on the shelves, or lying on the old-fashioned piano, while clocks of every conceivable size and shape, bronze statues from the Far East, and queerly woven baskets from the Pampas, mingled with the Mexican pottery and valuable geological specimens from her own United States.

Finally, when the girl's curiosity had been thoroughly satisfied, Aunt Betty and Frau Deichenberg were shown into another room and the music master and his pupil began their lesson.

It was not until the lesson was over that the Herr turned to his pupil with a merry twinkle in his eyes and observed:

"You are so fond of moosic, perhaps you do not know dat every year I give a concert in de theater before de opening of de regular season."

"Oh, yes, I have often heard of your concert," the girl replied. "I have longed to go to them, but something has always kept me from it."

"Vell, you are going to my next one."

"I am? Oh, how good of you, Herr!"

"Yes, it iss very good of me, for there you shall meet one of my most promising pupils."

"Oh, tell me who it is," she replied, unable to restrain her curiosity.

“Vell, it iss a secret dat has not yet been vhispered to a soul. But I don’t mind telling you. De name of de young lady iss Miss Dorothy Calvert.”

“Why, Herr Deichenberg, you don’t mean that —?”

Dorothy stopped short. A lump came into her throat and she was unable to continue.

“Dat iss just vhat I mean,” he smiled, reading her thoughts. “You are to play at de concert, vhere you are expected to do both yourself und your moosic teacher proud.”

“Oh, Herr, I hadn’t imagined such an honor would be conferred upon me this year. Why, surely there are other pupils who have more talent and can make a better showing for you than I?”

“My dear young lady, it iss I who shall be de best judge of dat.”

“Oh, I didn’t mean—”

“Never before have I had a young lady refuse an invitation to play at my concert.”

“Why, Herr, I haven’t refused. You don’t understand me. I—I—”

“Yes, yes. I understand you perfectly—I have surprised you and you have not yet found time to catch your breath. Iss dat not so?”

“Yes, but—”

“Oh, no ‘buts.’ I know vhat you vould say. But it is not necessary. I have made up my mind, und once I do dat, I never change.”

“I know, Herr, but—”

“Didn’t I say no ‘buts’? You shall show de people of Baltimore vhat a really fine violinist dey have in their midst.”

“Well, if you insist, of course I shall play. And are you to play my accompaniments?”

“I, my dear young lady? No, no; I shall have my hands full vidout attempting dat. But you shall have a full orchestra at your beck und call to t’under at you vun minute und to help you lull de audience to sleep de next.”

“Herr, you overwhelm me!”

“Such vass not my intention. I am merely telling you vhat I know to be de truth. You are a remarkable girl und nothing I can say vill turn your head. I have tried it und I know. Dat iss vhy I do not hesitate to say it.”

When Dorothy Calvert left Herr Deichenberg’s studio that morning she was the happiest girl in Baltimore.

CHAPTER X

HERR DEICHENBERG'S CONCERT

Herr Deichenberg's concert was but a month away, and Dorothy, despite the hotness of the weather, practiced as she never had before.

After her visit to the studio Herr Deichenberg resumed his comings to Bellvieu. He seemed never to tire descanting on the beauties of the old estate, and in this way won a warm place in the hearts of both Dorothy and Aunt Betty—aside from his many other fine qualities.

Aunt Betty had been delighted at the thought of Dorothy's appearing at the Herr's concert.

"His affairs are the finest of their kind given in the city," she told the girl, "and it is an honor you must not fail to appreciate. The Herr would not have invited you to appear had he not been sure of your ability to uphold his standards."

The week before the concert Herr Deichenberg came out one morning in a particularly good humor—though, to tell the truth, he seemed always bubbling over with agreeable qualities.

"It iss all arranged," he told Dorothy—"for de concert, I mean. De theater has been put in readiness, und you should see de decorations. Ah! Vines trailing t'rough de boxes, und de stage just loaded down with palms. Und yet I am not

t'rough, I have been offered de loan of some of de finest plants in de city. I tell you, Miss Dorothy, it iss very nice to have friends."

"It is indeed," the girl responded. "A little inspiration from them can go a long way toward helping us accomplish our tasks."

The lesson went unusually well that morning.

Dorothy was practicing certain pieces now, which she was to render at the concert, the selections having been made from among the classics by the Herr professor. There were two pieces, and a third—a medley of old Southern airs—was to be held in readiness, though the music master warned his pupil not to be discouraged if she did not receive a second encore.

The Herr was even more particular than was his wont—if such a thing were possible. The missing of the fraction of a beat—the slightest error in execution or technique—he would correct at once, making her play over a certain bar time and again, until her playing was to his entire satisfaction. Then he would encourage her with a nod of approval, and go on to the next.

But Dorothy did not mind this; rather, she revelled in it. Her heart was in her prospective career as a violinist, and she was willing to undergo any discomfort if she could but attain her ambition.

On the morning before the concert Herr

Deichenberg made his last call at Bellvieu—before the event. By this time Dorothy had learned well her lessons, and the Herr required that she run over each piece but once. Her execution was perfect—not a note marred or slurred—and he expressed his satisfaction in glowing terms.

“You vill now take a vell-deserved rest,” he said. “Please do not touch a violin until you arrive at the theater to-morrow evening.”

“I can hardly wait for to-morrow evening to come, Herr,” she replied. The eagerness in her voice caused the music master to smile.

“Ah, but you must not be too anxious, young lady. Better it iss to get de concert off your mind for a vhile. Vhat iss de use of playing de whole affair over in your mind, until you are sick und tired of it? No, no; don’t do it. Vait till you get de reality.”

“As well try to banish my dear Aunt Betty from my thoughts,” was the answer of the smiling girl.

“Ah, vell, vhen you are as old as I, those t’ings vill not vorry you.”

“Ah, but Herr, you are worried yourself—I can see it.”

“Vhat! Me vorried? Oh, my dear young lady, no; my composure is perfect—perfect.”

“You are worrying right now.”

“Over vhat, please?”

“Well, first you are wondering whether the confidence reposed by you in one Miss Dorothy Calvert will be justified when she faces a great audience for the first time in her life. Now, ’fess up, aren’t you, Herr Deichenberg?”

“No, no; I have not de slightest doubt of dat.”

“Then you are worrying because you fear some of the other numbers on the programme will not come up to your expectations. Now, aren’t you?”

“No, no, Miss Dorothy. No; I do not vorry—of course, there iss dat young lady who is to render de piano selections from ‘Faust’—er—yet, I have no cause to vorry. No, no, I—”

Dorothy interrupted with a laugh.

“Your troubled expression as you said that gave you away, Herr. But I suppose it is very bold and impudent of me to tease you about these matters.”

The Herr smiled.

“Oh, you just tease me all you vant—I like it. But really, if I vass vorried, I vould tell you—surely I vould. Er—if dat young lady vill just remember vhat I haf told her, she—”

Again the troubled expression flitted over Herr Deichenberg’s countenance, and Dorothy, seeing that he was really worried though he would not

admit it, decided not to tease him further.

He soon took his departure, and the girl rushed away to tell Aunt Betty that the Herr was well satisfied with her work, then to talk incessantly for half an hour about the coming event. The concert was by far the largest affair that had ever loomed up on Miss Dorothy's horizon, and she naturally could not get it off her mind.

The great opera house in which the concert was to be held was packed with people the next evening.

Dorothy, on the stage, peeping through a little hole in the curtain, saw one of the most fashionable audiences old Baltimore had ever turned out—the largest, in fact, Herr Deichenberg had ever drawn to one of his affairs, though the drawing power of the old professor had always been something to talk about.

Entering the stage entrance early in the evening, dressed in an elaborate white evening gown, made expressly for this occasion at one of the great dressmaking establishments, Dorothy had deposited her violin in her dressing-room and sallied forth to view the wonders of Fairyland—for such the stage, with its many illusions and mysteries, seemed to her.

She took great care to keep out of the way of the stage hands, who rushed back and forth, dragging great pieces of scenery over the stage

as if they were but bits of pasteboard. Drops were let down, set pieces put in place, until, right before the eyes of the girl, a picture, beautiful indeed, had appeared. Where there had been but an empty stage now stood a scene representing a magnificent garden, with statuary, fountains and beautiful shrubbery all in their proper places. True, a great portion of this was represented by the back drop, but Dorothy knew that from the front the scene would look very real. Great jagged edges of wood wings protruded on to the stage—three on either side—while benches and palms were scattered here and there to properly balance the picture. Then, as if to force into the scene an incongruity of some sort, a grand piano was pushed out of the darkness in the rear of the stage, to a place in the garden, where it stood, seemingly the one blot on the landscape.

“A piano in a garden!” exclaimed Dorothy, and laughed softly to herself. “Who ever heard of such a thing? Yet, of course, the concert could not proceed without it.”

“Ah, my dear, here you are! You are fascinated with it all, yes?” questioned Herr Deichenberg, as he passed in a hurry. She nodded, smiling, and saw him rush hurriedly to the dressing-rooms below the stage to make sure all his pupils were present.

As he went the house electrician, with each hand on portions of the big switchboard, threw on the border and bunch lights, making the great stage

almost as light as day. Then, out in front, Dorothy heard the orchestra as it struck into the overture, and hastening away, she seated herself in her dressing-room to await her turn on the programme.

Aunt Betty, she knew, sitting with Len and Jim in one of the front rows of the orchestra, would be eagerly awaiting her appearance. She resolved that not only her relative, but Herr Deichenberg, as well, should be proud of her achievements.

She heard the first number—a piano solo—then the great roar of applause that swept over the assemblage. This was followed by an encore. Then another round of applause.

The next number was a harp solo. This was followed by a piano duet, which, in turn, was succeeded by a vocal number. Following each the applause was almost deafening. Encores were allowed in each instance by the music master.

Finally, toward the close of another piano duet, a call boy came to the door of Dorothy's dressing-room to say:

"Herr Deichenberg says tell you your turn is next, and you will please come at once and wait in the wings."

Most girls would have felt a flutter of excitement when told that one of the crucial moments of their lives was at hand. Not so Dorothy Calvert.

Her hands were steady and her confidence unbounded.

Holding her skirt slightly off the stage, that her new frock might present a spotless appearance, the girl, violin in hand, hurried to the wings.

The encore of the piano duet was just concluding. Herr Deichenberg nodded and smiled at her. Then the players, two young girls, scarcely older than she, arose, and with graceful bows, tripped off the stage within a few feet of her, their faces flushed with pleasure as great rounds of applause again rolled over the big auditorium. Herr Deichenberg sent them out for another bow, after which the noise simmered down, and the music master turned his attention to the next number.

The curtain was not lowered between numbers. There was merely a pause as the orchestra laid aside one set of music and turned to another.

“Be ready now,” he warned, turning to Dorothy. “You enter from vhere you are, valking to de center of de stage, down near de footlights. Smile, Miss Dorothy, und do not put your violin to your shoulder until de orchestra is half way t’rough de introduction.”

The girl inclined her head and smiled that she understood. Then, at a nod from the music master, the electrician flashed a signal to the orchestra. The leader raised his baton, then the instruments swept off into the overture of the

piece Dorothy was to play.

“Now,” said the Herr, giving her a gentle push.

The next instant Dorothy, for the first time in her life, found herself sweeping out on a great stage, with a sea of faces in front of her. She blinked once or twice as the footlights flashed in her eyes, then singling out Aunt Betty, Jim and Len —having previously located their seats—she smiled genially.

In the center of the great stage, but a few feet back from the footlights, she paused as Herr Deichenberg had told her. Then, as the orchestra approached the end of the overture, she raised her violin to her chin. With a graceful sweep of the bow she began.

There was a great hush over the auditorium, as the horns, bass viol and second violins left off playing, and the clear notes of Dorothy’s instrument went floating into every corner of the building, accompanied by soft strains from the piano and first violins. The piece was one of the classics, recognized immediately by everyone, and there was an expectant move as the girl reached the more difficult parts.

Her eyes closed, her body swaying slightly, Dorothy played as she never had before. She forgot the audience, Aunt Betty, everything, except that here was a great orchestra playing her accompaniment—surely enough encouragement for any girl to do her best.

There came a pause in the music, and the girl lowered her violin, while the orchestra played on. There was a slight ripple of applause from several in the audience, who, apparently, thought the piece was at an end, but this died away as the girl again raised the instrument to her chin.

The second part was even more difficult than the first, but Dorothy swept into it with no thought but to play it as it should be played. Even the eyes of the orchestra leader lit up with admiration, and when at last the piece was concluded with a great flourish, and Dorothy had bowed herself off into the wings, the applause that swept over the assemblage was louder than at any other time during the evening.

Herr Deichenberg patted Dorothy reassuringly on the back as she stood in the wings, panting slightly from the exertion of her work, and well-pleased that so much of the ordeal was over.

The applause continued without cessation—first, the sharp clapping of hands, which spread over the audience as if by magic, finally the stamping of feet; later shrill whistles from the gallery.

“It means for you an encore,” said the music master, smiling at Dorothy. Then he nodded to the electrician, who again flashed a signal to the orchestra leader, and the musicians struck off into the overture of Dorothy’s second piece.

Bowing rather timidly, but with much grace, the girl again advanced to the center of the stage, and gazed out for a moment over the vast ocean of faces which stared up at her. Then as the orchestra finished the introduction, she again raised her violin to her chin.

The second piece was a sad, plaintive one, and as Dorothy drew her bow full length across the strings, the instrument sent forth loud wails, which, to anyone with a keen musical ear, denoted mortal anguish. This was followed by shorter, quicker parts, which finally resolved themselves into the coming of a storm. On her G string the girl brought forth all the terrors of the elements, running the whole gamut from incessant rumbling to the crashing of the thunder, while the orchestra supplied effective and necessary accompaniments.

It was a beautiful piece of music, well played, and when Dorothy had finished and again bowed herself off the stage, the storm of applause broke forth again. Under Herr Deichenberg's direction she took three bows in succession, only to find the applause, if anything, more pronounced.

She looked at the music master for her cue. He smilingly said:

"Vell, dey seem to like it. You may play another."

Again he signaled the orchestra, and once more

Dorothy Calvert went tripping out on the stage, gratitude surging in her heart toward that great audience which had been so kind as to express approval of her work.

This time it was a medley of old Southern airs she played. The audience sat spellbound while the strains of “Old Black Joe,” and “Old Folks at Home” were heard throughout the auditorium, and when Dorothy swung into the quick measures of her beloved “Dixie,” such a roar shook the building as Aunt Betty had never heard before.

Again Dorothy bowed herself off into the first entrance. Again and again she was sent forth to bow her acknowledgments—to bow again and again until she was forced to throw up her hands in token of the fact that she had exhausted her repertoire.

The applause extended well into the beginning of the next number, and the young lady who was to perform on the piano after Dorothy, refused to go on the stage until the young violinist had taken another bow.

Then followed the appearance of Herr Deichenberg, whose reception was easily the greatest of the evening. Dorothy did not wait to hear her music master play, but hurried off to her dressing-room with her violin, her heart singing a song of gladness.

“Thus it is,” she thought, “that success takes

hold of our sensibilities, and in the same way does failure serve to discourage one, and put enthusiasm at a low ebb."

In her dressing-room she sat and heard the thunders of applause that followed the Herr's playing. Then, after a short wait, when the audience was quiet, the Herr appeared suddenly at the door of her dressing-room. With him was a smartly-dressed stranger who bowed and extended his hand in a cordial way as the old German said:

"Miss Calvert, allow me to introduce Mr. Ludlow, de theatrical manager from New York. He happened to be in de theater during your performance, and he hastened back to talk over with you a few matters of importance. I vill leave him with you."

The Herr disappeared, and after inviting Mr. Ludlow to have a seat, Dorothy reseated herself and turned expectantly toward him.

"I know you are wondering what I have to say to you, Miss Calvert, so I will come at once to the point. Being in the theatrical business, I am naturally on the lookout for talent along various lines. I have been vividly impressed with your playing to-night and I felt that I should not care to let the opportunity go by to inquire into your future plans."

This was put partly in the form of a question and the girl responded:

“Do you mean, Mr. Ludlow, that you would like to offer me an engagement?”

“That I shall, perhaps, be able to determine when I learn your plans.”

“Well, I have none. My lessons are not over with Herr Deichenberg. I shall be under his instruction until next spring, at least.”

“And after that?”

“Oh, I cannot say. Before talking over arrangements with you, I should like to discuss the matter with my aunt, Mrs. Calvert.”

“That will be agreeable to me, I am sure.”

“But she is out in front. I shall be unable to see her until the concert is over.”

“To-morrow will do, Miss Calvert. I merely wish to-night to make sure you do not sign a contract with another manager without giving me a chance.”

“Oh, I can safely promise that.”

“Then I shall be content. Where can I see you to-morrow?”

“We shall be very glad to have you call at Bellvieu.”

“Bellvieu, Miss Calvert?”

“Yes; our home in the suburbs. I had forgotten

you were not a native Baltimorean."

"At what time will it be convenient for me to call?"

"Either in the morning or afternoon."

"Shall we say ten o'clock, then?"

"Yes."

"I trust I shall not inconvenience your aunt by calling so early."

"Not at all."

"It is imperative that I catch a train for New York at twelve."

Mr. Ludlow took his leave, after expressing his pleasure at having met Dorothy.

The girl's feelings would be hard to describe. That her playing should have awakened the interest of a professional manager was to her rather astonishing.

She was meditating over the offer, and wondering what her prim and staid Aunt Betty would think of it, when Frau Deichenberg entered the dressing-room. The Frau had been on the stage looking after several of the Herr's protégés, and was highly elated over the showing they had made.

"My dear, my dear," she cried. "You have done nobly! Herr Deichenberg is pleased with you beyond measure."

To which Dorothy responded:

“If I have deserved his praise, I am glad. But it seems that I have done so little.”

“Ah, but did you not hear de audience? Dey liked your moosic, und dey clap their hands und stamp their feet. Dat iss de one true mark of appreciation.”

When the concert was over and Dorothy was traveling homeward in the barouche with Aunt Betty, she told her of the visit of Mr. Ludlow. Aunt Betty listened patiently until she had finished, then said:

“Dear, I had supposed I was raising you up to something better than a stage career.”

“But, auntie, the stage is all right—it must be, there are so many fine people connected with it. And then, it would be the concert stage in my case, and that is different from dramatic work, you know.”

“Yes; but violinists, as well as other performers, sometimes listen to the call of the dollar, and go from the concert to the variety stage. I am not sure such connections would be the best for my little girl.”

“But, Aunt Betty, it is my life’s ambition,” said the girl, a queer little catch in her voice.

“There, there,” Aunt Betty responded, as she put her arm about the shoulder of her great-niece. “Don’t take what I say so much to heart. We will

think this matter over, and you may be very sure of one thing, dear—we shall do what is right and for the best."

And with this for the time being Dorothy was forced to be content.

The matter was put in abeyance for an indefinite time, however, by a message from Mr. Ludlow, the following morning, in which he said he had been called back to New York earlier than he had expected, but that he would not forget the girl, and upon his next visit to Baltimore during the course of the fall or winter, he would arrange to call and settle matters to Dorothy's entire satisfaction.

"And who knows, by then I may have won Aunt Betty over," muttered the girl, who, however, decided to drop the subject until the opportune moment arrived to discuss it.

CHAPTER XI

CHRISTMAS AT BELLVIEU

The fall days slipped rapidly by, and still Dorothy continued to take instruction from Herr Deichenberg, improving her technique with each

lesson under the old music master's careful guidance. The concert had been a revelation to her. For the first time in her life she had stood before a great assemblage and heard the roars of applause which her playing aroused, and it had given her confidence as nothing else could.

Aunt Betty's deep-rooted prejudice against a stage career was the only thing that served to mar the girl's pleasure, and even this caused no great unhappiness, for Aunt Betty's refusal to allow Dorothy to play professional engagements took the form only of feeble protests. This led the girl to hope her relative might gradually be won over.

Then, as the holidays approached, bringing a letter from Molly in which she stated that she and the Judge would arrive at Bellvieu several days before Christmas, the stage career was for the time relegated to the innermost recesses of her mind, and she joined Aunt Betty in an effort to have a real, old-fashioned Christmas. This, with the aid of Ephraim, Dinah and Chloe, they were fortunately able to do. As the preparations went forward, Aunt Betty's delight knew no bounds, and her soul was filled with rapturousness as joy after joy unfolded itself to relieve the tedium and monotony of her old age.

A week before the eventful day, Ephraim and Metty, with two other negroes, hired for the occasion, took a team and sleigh and set out for the timber along the shore of the bay. There had been a heavy fall of snow the night before and

the ground was covered with a sparkling mantle, while an invigorating breeze from the north filled everyone with energetic desires.

Once at their destination Ephraim and his men felled a large black gum tree from which two logs were cut. These were just short of four feet in length and cut with the especial purpose of filling the two large fire-places in the Calvert mansion.

Returning late in the evening with their load, they rolled the big logs into the duck pond back of the barn, where the crust of ice was thin, there to soak until Christmas morning, at which time they would be placed in their respective fire-places in the big dining and living-rooms of the house, and a fire kindled.

Ephraim was thoroughly familiar with the old custom, and it was understood between him and Aunt Betty that he should keep good fires burning during the day and banked during the night after bed time. Logs such as these would, by this process, last ten days, or until the holidays had come and gone, for they were burned until not a vestige remained but ashes.

During the latter part of November Aunt Betty had caused a half dozen of her finest turkeys to be put up to fatten. Some days later several huge pound cakes had been baked and a nice little pig put in the pen to grow round and tender, later to be roasted whole, with a tempting red apple in his mouth. Mincemeat, souse, and stuffed

sausages, those edibles of the early days, which Aunt Betty had grown to love and yearn for, were provided on this occasion by Chloe and Dinah, and when, a few days before Christmas, Metty returned from the woods with a fine, fat possum, the mistress of Bellvieu began to feel that her Christmas would be indeed complete.

A store of sweet potatoes had been laid by, and green apple, pumpkin, potato and other pies made and stored in the cellar.

In the days of Aunt Betty's girlhood, when there were no cooking stoves, turkeys were cooked in a turkey roaster made of sheet iron, with a dripping-pan in the bottom and a large tin lid, much resembling a buggy top, over the pan. When Mr. Turkey was stuffed and otherwise prepared for the feast, he was spitted on an iron rod that passed through the sides of the roaster and on through his body from end to end. Then he was ready for the finishing touches over a red-hot fire. The roasters had legs at each corner, so that hot embers could be placed under it when necessary. The tin top reflected the heat and had hinges so that it could be turned back when the cook basted the turkey with a prepared sauce. The dripping-pan at the bottom served to catch and hold the rich gravy.

As Aunt Betty stood now, watching the preparations for the roasting of one of the turkeys, her thoughts traveled back to those other days, and she marveled at the progress of civilization.

“Lawsee, Mis’ Betty!” cried Chloe, as she stopped to wipe her hands on her gingham apron. “We’s gwine tuh hab ’nuff food in dis yere house tuh feed er million people, looks like tuh me.”

Aunt Betty laughed.

“Better too much than not enough,” she observed. “I reckon there won’t be much left by the time New Year’s Day has come and gone. Gerald and Aurora Blank will be over for Christmas dinner, and will drop in for occasional meals during holiday week. Then, with Miss Molly and her father, and Herr and Frau Deichenberg, there will be a nice little party here at home. Those boys, Jim and Len, have appetites that will startle you. Oh, yes; we have lots to eat, Chloe, but—well, you just watch it disappear!”

“Yas’m; we’ll watch hit, all right, en I reckon, Mis’ Betty, dat Ephy, Dinah en me’ll sort o’ *help* it disappear, too!”

Chloe, bending nearly double, guffawed loudly at her own joke.

Aunt Betty smiled, too, then went to the front of the house to meet the carriage which had been sent to the train, with Dorothy and Jim in it, to meet Judge Breckenridge and Molly.

Dorothy’s chum waved her hand at Aunt Betty, then came hurrying up the walk, to be the first to greet the mistress of Bellvieu. Then came the

Judge, cane in hand, assisted by Jim, looking much better, but still somewhat enfeebled in health.

“I’m glad indeed to see you again, Judge Breckenridge,” greeted Aunt Betty, as she clasped one of his hands in both her own. “I am particularly pleased to be able to welcome you to a Christmas at Bellvieu.”

“And I am more than pleased to be here,” was the Judge’s response. “I am sure it will be one of the most delightful trips of my life.”

Once inside, and ensconced in easy chairs in the living-room, Aunt Betty pressed him for news concerning his sister, Lucretia, as well as Mrs. Hungerford, Mrs. Stark and Mrs. Cook, not forgetting to ask if the Judge ever heard from Joel Snackenberg. These questions answered to her entire satisfaction, Aunt Betty excused herself to see to the preparing of the mid-day meal, leaving Jim to talk to the Judge.

“I haven’t seen you in a long time, my boy,” said Molly’s father, “but it seems to me you are growing into a fine, strong young man. Molly tells me you’ve left Dr. Sterling for good.”

“Yes, sir; I thought I’d better strike out for myself.”

“And what do you intend doing, if I may ask?”

“I intend learning electricity, sir—in fact, it is on Dr. Sterling’s advice that I do so. Aunt Betty

through some of her friends here, has arranged to secure me a place the first of the year. I have been idle during the past few months waiting for this position to materialize, and I'm certainly glad it is coming out all right."

"You will have to serve an apprenticeship, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, electricity is a good thing to know, Jim. I wish you every success. Hello—who is this?"

The Judge's eyes were turned toward a lad who entered the room at that moment. It was Len Haley, attired in a brand new Christmas suit, and looking as spick and span as one could wish.

"Oh, I'd forgotten you didn't know Len, sir. Surely you've heard Molly speak of Len Haley, sir? He's the boy we rescued from a cruel uncle on our camping trip last summer. Aunt Betty has had him under her wing ever since. This is Molly's father, Len."

"Yes, yes," said the Judge. "So this is Len Haley, the boy who was lost in the woods in the dead of night?" The judge reached out and took Len's hand. "I am glad to know you, my boy, and to learn that you have found such a fortunate way around your troubles."

"Thank you, sir."

"Anyone whom Mrs. Betty Calvert stands

sponsor for is surely to be envied."

"I think so too, sir," said Len, beginning to thaw out under Judge Breckenridge's good-natured smile.

When Dorothy and Molly came downstairs and joined them, they made a merry party. Molly had changed her traveling dress for a clean frock, and with her hair arranged prettily in the latest mode, made even Jim Barlow "sit up and take notice." As for the Judge and his gayety, if old in years, he was young in heart, and forgot his infirmities to such an extent that Aunt Betty, entering suddenly, threw up her hands in amazement.

"I knew this trip would make a wonderful improvement in you, Judge," said she, "but had no idea the change would be effected in so rapid a manner."

"I just can't help it, Mrs. Calvert. To see these young folks about me makes me feel young again, which reminds me that I have never been happier than when I once took the boys and girls on a jaunt through the Nova Scotia woods."

"A jaunt that ended in my giving a house party at Deerhurst," said Dorothy. "That was after I had learned that I was not a homeless waif, but the great-niece of Mrs. Betty Calvert."

"It was papa, if you remember, who ran down the clues leading to the discovery that Mrs. Calvert was your relative," said Molly.

"And I'll never forget how overjoyed we all were when we knew to whom our girl friend was related," and the old Judge leaned over and stroked Dorothy's hand as he spoke.

"Then came my humiliation," said Aunt Betty in a reminiscent tone. "I was forced to admit to you all that when my nephew's baby came I was indignant, feeling that I was too old to have a squalling infant forced upon me. Then, better thoughts prevailing, I saw in Dorothy traces of my own family likeness and wanted to keep her. Then I listened to Dinah and Ephraim, and finally took their advice to hunt up a worthy couple unburdened with children of their own, and force the child upon them to be reared in simple, sensible ways. When I found that you had discovered the relationship between us, I did only what my heart had been bidding me do for many years—took Dorothy to my bosom, and into my household where she belonged."

Dinah came to the door to say that lunch was served, and the party filed into the dining-room to continue the discussion at the table.

On the following morning—the day before Christmas—a great bundle of presents arrived from one of the Baltimore department stores, and was taken upstairs by Ephraim, there to be concealed.

On the night before Christmas, following the time-honored custom, stockings of every size and color were strung up around the big fire-place in

the living-room. Those of the Judge, Jim and Len not being large enough, garments of a satisfactory size were generously tendered by Dorothy and Molly. Going late to bed, hoping that old Santa Claus would be good to each of them, the young folks awoke in the morning to find their stockings fairly bulging with good things.

There was a cane and a pocketbook from the Judge to Jim, and wearing apparel running from neckties to shirts from Aunt Betty and the girls. Len came in for a similar lot of presents, his gift from the Judge being a shining five-dollar gold piece, which he declared should go in the savings bank as a foundation of his fortune.

Dorothy and Molly were well remembered, the gifts being both pretty and useful, and running principally to toilet articles and lingerie, while Aunt Betty found great difficulty in lifting her stocking from its peg over the fire-place, so heavy was it.

Early Christmas morning came a belated 'phone message from Herr Deichenberg, accepting on the part of him and Frau Deichenberg, the kind invitation extended by Aunt Betty to gather around the festive Christmas board. It had been necessary to postpone two lessons, the music master said, which accounted for the delay in letting them know.

At ten o'clock Gerald and Aurora arrived. There had been a slight protest on the part of Mr. and

Mrs. Blank at the children being away from home for Christmas dinner, but a compromise had been effected by which they were to eat with their parents on New Year's Day.

With the arrival of Herr and Frau Deichenberg nothing then remained but to serve the dinner. Metty and Ephraim were both pressed into service, and with Chloe and Dinah working like Trojans in the kitchen, the meal was served on scheduled time, and to the entire satisfaction of everyone concerned.

Tale and jest passed around the table, as the members of the Christmas party made merry.

"Christmas comes but once a year," some one has said, and with this in their minds, trouble was given its *conge* for the time being, and mirth and gayety reigned supreme.

Herr Deichenberg was asked to tell of the old German customs at Christmas time, which he did in an interesting way. He told of the toymakers of Nuremberg and other cities, and how easily and dexterously they did their work. Then there were many humorous incidents of his own boyhood, which he remembered and told with such success, that he had the entire party roaring with laughter before the meal was half over.

When he had finished, the Judge and Aunt Betty took turns telling of strange and funny incidents that had come under their observation at various Christmas times, and by the time dessert was

reached everyone felt at peace with the world.

It was a dinner long to be remembered, and when it was over they all gathered in the living-room, where the Herr was induced to play a number of his favorite pieces, Dorothy's violin being pressed into service for the occasion.

Dorothy next took her turn with the violin, Herr Deichenberg playing her accompaniments on the piano. Molly, who had not heard her chum play for many months, was astonished at the progress she had made, as was the Judge, and they complimented both master and pupil, after three pieces had been rendered. The players then stopped under protest, promising to play more before the gathering broke up.

Jim sang a bass solo. Gerald also rendered a song, his sweet tenor voice delighting his auditors, after which the old quartette of the mountain camp was formed again and sang familiar pieces in such a manner as to win the heartiest of commendation from all—even that captious critic, Herr Deichenberg.

Aunt Betty was asked to speak one of her girlhood pieces, but begged to be allowed to substitute old Ephraim, who, upon being urged, recited the following verses, remembered since his earliest recollection:

“Sho’ ’nuff, is dat yo’, buddie?
Why, I sca’ce beliebs mah eyes!
Yo’s growed so slendah en so tall,
I like not tuh know yo’ size.
Does yo’ eber hunt de possum —
Climb de ole p’simmon tree?
Like we did in de good ole times
W’en de niggah wasn’t free?
We’d take ole Tige, en den a torch,
Den we’d start out fo’ a spree,
Lots o’ fellers wuz in dat chase,
Erside, mah boy, frum yo’ en me,
After a w’ile ole Tige’d yelp,
Den we’d know dar’s sumpthin’ round,
Er rabbit, coon, er possum, sho’,
Er gittin’ ober de ground.
W’en up de tree de possum run,
Den ole Tige he’d change he tune,
Den wif de torch we’d shine his eyes

Den we'd nab him pretty
soon,
We'd break he neck, en build
er fire
Den a tater roast, yo' mind;
Why, bress yo' heart, dis
make me cry,
Nebber mo' dem times yo'
find.
De Massa's gone—ole Missus,
gone,
En mah ole woman am, too;
I'm laid up now wif
rheumatiz,
En mah days am growin'
few.
Ole Tige mos' blind en
crippled up,
So dat he can't hunt no
mo';
No possums now tuh grease
de chops,
Oh, I's feelin' mighty po'!"

As Ephraim concluded he made a most elaborate bow, touching his hand to his forelock—or where the forelock should have been.

The old negro's interested listeners burst into loud applause, and the bow was repeated again and again. The verses had been rendered with considerable feeling and some sense of their poetic value, which, of course, Ephraim had learned from hearing the verses recited by

others.

Len Haley, upon being called on for a contribution to the entertainment, spoke the first —and last—piece he had learned during the few short months he had attended school. It was a temperance piece, and if not thoroughly in keeping with the festive occasion, was at least one of the most earnest efforts of the afternoon.

Aurora, who was an elocutionist of no mean merit, rendered Longfellow's "Hiawatha," with such realistic touches that Herr Deichenberg sat spellbound through her recital, to spring up and grasp her hand when she had finished.

"My dear girl," he cried, "dat was excellent—excellent. I am proud, indeed, to know you."

"I trust you will never have occasion to change your mind," was the girl's pleasant response.

The entertainment over, Herr Deichenberg and Judge Breckenridge engaged in a checker contest, which was so closely fought that the others stopped whatever they were doing to look on. The Herr was finally triumphant, taking four games out of seven.

When the Christmas party broke up that evening, all were agreed that it had been one of the most glorious holiday times they had ever spent.

CHAPTER XII

MR. LUDLOW'S OFFER

The holidays passed all too quickly to the happy party at Old Bellvieu. Herr and Frau Deichenberg came no more during the stay of the Judge and Molly, but Gerald and Aurora were over nearly every evening.

One night, toward the close of the week, Aunt Betty and the Judge chaperoned a party of young people, including Dorothy, Molly, Aurora, Gerald, Jim and Len to the theater, where one of the reigning comic opera successes was on view. It was an imported piece of the "Merry Widow" type, and everyone enjoyed it to the utmost. Aunt Betty and the Judge found their risibilities thoroughly shaken by the antics of the star, a comedian of prominence, while the tastes of the young people seemed to incline toward the bright chorus numbers, and the individual songs and duets.

Len was perhaps the most joyous member of the party. It was his first experience at the theater, and the elaborate stage settings, the bright lights, and the catchy music had opened to him the gates of Fairyland, as it were.

When one of the characters cracked a joke, and the comedian replied that he was very fond of walnuts and hickory nuts, but not at all partial to chestnuts, Len nearly fell out of his seat, and

the young lady who followed them on the stage was well through her song before he controlled his laughter enough to realize what was going on.

Len's merriment so pleased Aunt Betty and Judge Breckenridge that they, too, burst into laughter, which continued until a whispered "Sh!" from Dorothy warned them that they were attracting the attention of others in the theater. Then the Judge put his finger to his lips and looked solemnly at Len and Aunt Betty, whereupon the trio instantly became sober, and turned their attention again to the stage.

After the theater the Judge insisted on treating the party to hot chocolate and cake, so they were led to a popular resort often frequented during the days by Dorothy and Aurora. This served to round off a very pleasant evening, and as there was nothing to prevent each member of the party from sleeping late the following morning, their happiness was complete.

So urgently did Aunt Betty and Dorothy beg Molly and the Judge to spend the early part of January with them, that the Judge consented, greatly to Molly's delight.

"Business really demands my attention in New York," he said, "but I suppose that can wait another week. We don't have times like this every year, do we Molly, girl?"

"Indeed, no," responded the person addressed.

“But it will not be my fault hereafter, if you do not have them each year,” said Aunt Betty. “I hereby issue a standing invitation for you both to spend the next holiday season with us, and the next, and the next, and so on, and next year, Judge, you must bring your sister Lucretia. It was an oversight on my part in not inviting her on this occasion.”

“Lucretia has been very busy doing some settlement work, and Christmas is her busy time, hence, she would have been unable to accept your kind invitation. Next year, however, things may have changed. If so, we shall certainly bring her with us.”

There followed a succession of trips to nearby points of interest. The snow, which lay thick during the holidays, began to melt soon after the new year dawned, and, the roads drying hard, Gerald came over one day in the auto and took them for a jaunt in the country.

A fishing excursion to the shores of the bay on another day, with Jim and Ephraim as the pilots, served to demonstrate to the Judge that he was every bit as good a fisherman as he had been in the early days, for he caught eight speckled sea-trout, and three red-fish—a better record than was made by any other member of the party.

Finally, the Judge and Molly took their departure, the former declaring that the duties in New York had become imperative ones. Dorothy hated to lose her chum again, they saw each

other so seldom, but agreed with Molly that the latter must spend some time in her own home.

Then, as February passed, and the winds of March began to make themselves felt, things settled down to their usual routine at Bellvieu.

Dorothy, who had resumed her lessons immediately upon Molly's departure, was fast approaching a point where, Herr Deichenberg declared, she would be able to appear before an audience in the most critical of musical centers. He advised that she immediately seek the opportunity, or allow him to seek one for her.

Again Aunt Betty interposed a mild objection, and the music master, with a sly wink at Dorothy, observed under his breath:

"Just leave it to me."

This Dorothy did, and with good results, as will be seen.

She dropped the subject entirely when Aunt Betty was around, resolved to wait until the psychological moment arrived to again broach the matter, or until she heard further from Herr Deichenberg.

Two weeks passed and finally Herr Deichenberg came out to the house one morning with Mr. Ludlow, whom he presented to Aunt Betty.

At first the mistress of Bellvieu was inclined to receive the theatrical man coldly, believing he

had come to entice her niece away, but gradually, under Herr Deichenberg's careful urging, she began to see matters in a new light.

"Mr. Ludlow has no desire to take Miss Dorothy avay from you," said the Herr, earnestly. "Please believe me vhen I tell you. Also believe me vhen I say dat all of Miss Dorothy's lessons vill go for naught, if she does not seek a time und place to exploit her talents. There is open for her a career of great prominence—of dat I am very sure, but to attain de pinnacle of success, she must first go a few steps above de middle rounds of de ladder. Mr. Ludlow has a good proposition to make to her, und one dat meets with my hearty approval. I beg of you, Mrs. Calvert, listen carefully to vhat he has to say, und deliberate before you give him an answer."

"If Dorothy's welfare is at stake I shall listen, of course; I should have listened, anyway, but with some prejudice, I will admit. I cannot see where it will do my niece any great good to become a stage celebrity, but if Mr. Ludlow can convince me, I stand ready to acknowledge my error."

"I am sure that is fair enough," said Mr. Ludlow, smiling genially. He had a pleasant personality—refined, even striking in the more serious moments, and Aunt Betty felt attracted to him the instant he began to speak.

"A career for your niece, Mrs. Calvert—a professional career—under proper management, is distinctly the proper thing for her. I heard her

play at Herr Deichenberg's concert here last fall, and knew at once that she had an exceptional amount of talent, which, if fostered, under the Herr's careful methods, would make of her one of the musical wonders of the age. It was then I made my offer—which was merely a tentative one—to Miss Calvert, not meaning to in any way override your authority, but merely for the purpose of sounding her out and winning a promise that she would give me an option on her services, provided she decided to adopt the concert stage as a career."

"She told me of her conversation with you," returned Aunt Betty, "and I am free to admit that I was prejudiced against it."

"You were also prejudiced against riding fast in Gerald's automobile, auntie," said Dorothy, smiling. "But Gerald overcame that just as Mr. Ludlow is going to try to overcome this."

"From speeding in an automobile, to adopting the concert stage as a career, is a far cry, my dear," returned Aunt Betty, rather severely, Dorothy thought.

Had she known what was passing in her relative's mind, however, the girl would not for a moment have condemned her. Had she known, for instance, that Aunt Betty's prejudice against the stage as a career was not at the bottom of her refusal, but the fact that she feared Dorothy would be taken away from her in her old age, just when she had found her a second time, and

learned to know and love her, she would have immediately thrown her arms around Aunt Betty's neck and making no comment have kissed her affectionately.

"Of course, I do not know the state of your finances, nor would I be so presuming as to inquire," Mr. Ludlow went on, "but it may interest you to know that if Miss Dorothy goes on the concert stage it will mean quite a tidy sum of money for her—and money, I am sure, will always prove a handy asset to have around. So, both artistically and financially, it seems the proper thing for her to do."

"But I have heard that girls on the stage are exposed to many temptations," protested Aunt Betty, who felt the ground slipping from under her arguments. Realizing, as she did, that it was Dorothy's wish that she give the concert stage a trial, she was inclined to be lenient.

"A wrong impression, madame—an entirely wrong impression," said Mr. Ludlow, emphatically. "There are temptations in stage life, yes; but so there are in other professions, and he or she who falters will find their steps to be hard ones, no matter who they are or where they be. Force of character rules on the stage, Mrs. Calvert, just as it does in every other walk of life. Thus it is that the theatrical profession shelters some of the smartest, most wonderful women the world has ever known. Because a few notoriety seekers have caused the finger of scorn to be pointed at an honorable profession, just as

one dishonest employé can, and frequently does, cause a whole institution to be looked at with suspicion, should the dramatic profession, as a whole, be made to suffer? I ask you this in all fairness, madame, and await your answer."

"Well, really, I hadn't considered it in that light," said Aunt Betty, slowly, deliberately. "I believe you are right, Mr. Ludlow, and I thank you sincerely for changing my viewpoint. Ever since I saw that great play, 'The Music Master,' with David Warfield in the part of Herr von Barwig, I have wondered if the theatrical profession was wholly a bad one. Now, I think I understand."

"I am glad it remained for me to tell you, Mrs. Calvert."

"And if my niece sees fit to arrange with you for a metropolitan appearance, and you feel that it will be a great triumph for her, I shall certainly not stand in the way."

"Oh, you dear, good auntie!" Dorothy cried, throwing her arms about Mrs. Calvert's neck and giving her a resounding kiss. "I shall thank you all my life for those few words."

"Mrs. Calvert, you have made a very sensible decision," Herr Deichenberg remarked with no little degree of satisfaction. "Believe me, I know vhat I say iss true. Und now, if you vill please allow Mr. Ludlow to make some necessary arrangements before he takes his leave, it vill greatly facilitate matters."

Aunt Betty quickly assented, and turning to Dorothy, Mr. Ludlow said:

“What I wish is for you to appear at a preliminary concert in New York City, at a date yet to be decided upon. You will be under the watchful eye of your music master, and the affair will be given under his auspices. You will, perhaps, have some prominent vocalist to help you fill in the evening’s entertainment. I wish to know if this will be agreeable?”

“Yes, if the date is not too soon,” the girl replied.

“As to that, we shall suit your pleasure, so it occurs before warm weather sets in.”

“It need not be later than the first of May.”

“Then please sign this contract. I have drawn it up with the approval of Herr Deichenberg, but before attaching your name, I will ask you to read it and be sure you thoroughly understand it.”

“Perhaps my lawyers might—” Aunt Betty began.

Herr Deichenberg raised his hand in dissent.

“Madame, it iss unnecessary. I am familiar with every form of contract und I say to you dat de one offered your niece by Mr. Ludlow is equitable and just, and can only be to her advantage.”

“We will take your word, of course,” replied Aunt Betty. “The only reason I spoke is that neither Dorothy or myself is well versed in contracts of any sort.”

“The very reason why I prepared the contract after suggestions offered by Herr Deichenberg,” said Mr. Ludlow with a good-natured smile.

“Oh, Aunt Betty!” cried Dorothy, as she read the document, “for one appearance in New York, I am to receive one hundred dollars and my expenses both ways. I think that is a very liberal offer.”

“Merely a pittance, Miss Calvert, beside what you will get if your concert pleases the music lovers of the metropolis, who, as you are no doubt aware, are the most discriminating in the country.”

“Oh, I hope I shall please them. I shall try so hard.”

“You just leave dat to me,” said Herr Deichenberg. “Any young lady who played as you did at my concert, need have no fear of facing a metropolitan audience.”

“The plan is, Miss Calvert,” Mr. Ludlow went on, in a thoroughly business-like tone, “if your New York concert proves a success, for you to sign contracts to appear next season under my management in the principal cities of the country. When we know positively that this is advisable, we will discuss terms, and I assure

you we shall not quarrel over the matter of a few dollars, more or less."

"I'm sure we won't," replied Dorothy.

Aunt Betty found herself hoping for the success of the plan. All opposition to the matter seemed, for the time, to have slipped her mind.

Mr. Ludlow bade them good-by shortly after, and left in company with Herr Deichenberg.

Dorothy closed the door softly behind them, then, happy that her ambition was at last to become a reality, threw herself in the arms of Aunt Betty and sobbed:

"Oh, auntie, auntie, it has come at last, but it won't—it won't take me away from you."

"We must not be too sure of that, my dear," Aunt Betty replied, as calmly as she could. Her wildly-beating heart cried out for the love and sympathy that she knew only this girl could give her. How could she ever, ever bear to give her up?

"Auntie, dear," Dorothy said, straightening up and wiping her eyes with quick, nervous little dabs, "if such a thing as separation is even suggested, I shall never move a step from old Bellvieu—never, never!"

"Oh, my dear, I cannot expect you to give up a great career for me."

"What would any sort of a career be without

you? Nothing—absolutely nothing! I wouldn't listen to it for a moment. Where I go there you shall go also."

"But I am getting too old to travel."

Aunt Betty's protest, however, sounded rather feeble.

"Nonsense!" the girl replied. "You were the very life of our camping party, and I'm sure riding in railroad trains is not half so strenuous as speeding forty miles an hour over country roads in an automobile. No objections, now, auntie dear, unless you want me to give up my career before it is begun."

"No, no, of course, I—"

"Of course you don't want me to do that. Certainly not. For that very reason, if for no other, you are going to accompany me wherever I go, which means that you may as well start planning that new spring dress, for we will be traveling New Yorkward ere many weeks have passed."

"Do you think blue would be becoming, dear?"

Dorothy could have laughed outright with delight, when she saw how quickly Aunt Betty became lost in contemplation over what she should wear on the trip.

"Well, yes, if it is of the proper shade, auntie, but you know nothing becomes you so well as

black."

"Black it shall be, then—black panama, with a nice new bonnet to match."

"And I, auntie, dear, what shall *I* wear? How are we to afford all these fine things when our finances are at a low ebb?"

"Our finances are in better condition than they were, dear. A letter a few days since from my lawyers, states that certain property I have placed in their hands is rapidly increasing in value, and that I shall be able to realize from time to time such sums as I may need."

"Oh, I'm so glad! Strange you didn't tell me."

"I'd forgotten it. I really believe I am getting absent-minded."

Had Dorothy known the truth—that though the lawyers had agreed to advance certain sums, it meant a mortgage on old Bellvieu, her peace of mind would have been sadly disturbed.

But Aunt Betty took good care she did not know it—self-sacrificing soul that she was.

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE METROPOLIS

New York!

A magic word to Dorothy Calvert, and as she stepped from the train in the great Pennsylvania railway station, curiosity and interest were expressed in her glance. Not since her trip to California with Aunt Betty and Ephraim had the girl been in Gay Gotham, which, to her, had always been a place of great enchantment.

The noise of the trains, the clangor of trucks, as they were whirled up and down the station platform by the baggagemen; the noise of the subway and surface cars, mingled with countless other sounds, were sufficient to distract any girl's attention, and Dorothy came out of her reverie and turned, only when Aunt Betty cried out from the car steps:

"Dorothy Calvert, wherever are you going?"

"Oh, I—"

"Are you going to leave me behind?"

"I—I—why, auntie—I—"

"One would think you had never been in a great city before. Wait for me! Remember, I am going everywhere you go. You did not bring me this far from Bellvieu to leave me in the lurch, young lady."

"Goodness knows, I had no idea of doing

anything of the sort, auntie."

"Well, you just wait! I'm not as spry as I used to be."

Jim Barlow carefully helped Aunt Betty to the platform, while Ephraim followed with a load of suit cases. Then came Herr and Frau Deichenberg, each with a little hand satchel, the professor guarding jealously his beloved violin. No heavy luggage for the Deichenbergs, the Frau had told Aunt Betty on the journey up from Baltimore.

"Ve shan't be here for long; de concert occurs to-morrow night, und ve shall go straight back home vhen ve are t'rough," was the way she put it.

The Herr was attired in his customary black. He had maintained his usual phlegmatic manner all through the journey, and apparently had no intention of departing from it now. Having spent many years in New York after his arrival in America, the city's fascination for the average mortal seemed to make no appeal to him.

Once off the train, Jim began to search diligently in the crowd for a familiar face. For a moment a blank look expressed his disappointment. Then his features lighted up and he waved his hand at a tall, spectacled gentleman who came eagerly forward to meet him.

"Jim, I am glad to see you," greeted this

individual.

“And I to see you, Dr. Sterling.”

A hearty hand-clasp followed.

“Why it *is* Dr. Sterling!” cried Aunt Betty, adjusting her glasses that she might better see him. “How good it seems to find you here in New York. How did you leave things up the Hudson, and especially at Deerhurst?”

“Same as of yore,” he replied. “Hans and Griselda, faithful souls, are keeping the place in spick and span condition.” His face lighted suddenly. “And here is Miss Dorothy, grown into a tall young lady since last I saw her.”

“Don’t accuse me of being too tall, Dr. Sterling,” said Dorothy, in a tone of mild reproof. “That is getting to be a sore subject with me. I have no intention of being either a toothpick or a beanstalk, though if what my friends tell me is true, I am in a fair way to be either, or both.”

Dr. Sterling laughed.

“You mustn’t mind a bit of a joke, you know. You are at an age where nothing can stop your growth. Your height seems to you exaggerated—that’s all—and your friends merely perpetuate the belief with the idea of teasing you.”

“I’ll take your word for that, doctor. And now, let me present my music teacher, Herr Deichenberg, and Mrs. Deichenberg,” Dorothy

then said.

The introductions were duly acknowledged, after which the party went into the station, and thence to the street beyond.

“Where are you going to stop?” Dr. Sterling wanted to know, as he turned an inquisitive glance on Aunt Betty.

“I’ve forgotten the name of the place,” replied the mistress of Bellvieu, “but Herr Deichenberg can enlighten you. He wired ahead for the rooms.”

“It iss de Arlington,” the music master vouchsafed. “De proprietor iss a personal friend of mine, und de accommodations vill be of de very best.”

“Then I shall immediately change my quarters,” said the genial doctor. “I am farther down town, but as we are to be in the city but a couple of days, it is well for us to be together as much as possible.”

This programme was followed to the letter, and before noon Dorothy and Aunt Betty had washed, and changed their attire for fresh, clean linen suits, after which they announced themselves in readiness for any events that might be on the programme.

Dr. Sterling, who had been holding a conference with Jim, proposed a boat trip down the bay.

“Oh, that will be delightful,” Dorothy said. “How can it be arranged?”

“I have a friend in New York, a Mr. Ronald, who owns a very handsome private yacht. This he has placed at my disposal on all occasions. I shall immediately call him up by ’phone and find if the boat is available for this afternoon.”

This the doctor did, and returned a few moments later with the good news that Mr. Ronald would personally see that the party viewed all the sights of the bay and river front.

While at lunch one of the surprises of the day revealed itself in the shape of Judge Breckenridge and Molly, who walked in on the astonished Calverts totally unannounced.

“Molly!”

“Dorothy!”

These exclamations were followed by a bear-like hug as the girls flew into each other’s arms. Many of the diners became interested and stopped eating long enough to watch the lingering embrace to the end.

The Judge shook hands all around, then places were made for him and Molly at the table occupied by Aunt Betty, Dorothy and Jim.

Dorothy quickly won their promise to go down the bay in the yacht, and lunch over, the party immediately made preparations to start.

Herr Deichenberg and his wife were sure the trip would prove rather trying for them, as neither was fond of the water, so decided to remain at the hotel and receive Mr. Ludlow, who was due at four o'clock.

Upon Dorothy's insisting that perhaps she had better stay and meet the manager, also, the Herr shook his head.

"No, no; dat iss entirely unnecessary."

"Then give him my regards, and say that I shall see him to-night or in the morning," cried the girl.

"I vill do dat. In de meantime enjoy yourself. Forget there iss such a t'ing as a concert. To-morrow night, vhen you stand before de great audience in de theater, iss time enough to t'ink of dat."

Aunt Betty at first thought she, too, would remain behind, but after lunch she was feeling in such unusually good spirits that she announced her intention of going, if only to have an old-time chat with the Judge.

"Auntie, you are getting younger every day," cried Dorothy, pleased that her relative was so spry at her advanced age.

"And I intend to continue to grow younger as long as I may, dear. It is a privilege not given many women, and I shall make the most of it. If I have the opportunity I may even set my cap for

a beau."

"Oh, Aunt Betty, how can you say such a thing!"

"'Such a thing,' as you call it, would be perfectly proper. Would it not, Judge Breckenridge?"

"Quite proper, madame—quite proper," responded the judge gallantly—"in fact, judging by the evidence of my eyes, I see no other solution of the matter."

"What a gallant speech," laughed Molly. "You may be a semi-invalid, papa, but you will never, never lose your courtly ways."

"An example which all young men should emulate," said Aunt Betty, looking pointedly at Jim, who grinned broadly.

It was a merry party that boarded the trim gasoline yacht *Nautilus* at one of the wharves an hour later. Aunt Betty, assisted by the Judge and Jim, was the first aboard. Doctor Sterling, with Dorothy and Molly followed.

The owner of the yacht was introduced by Dr. Sterling, and when all were comfortably seated in the deck chairs forward, Mr. Ronald signaled the man in the wheelhouse, who in turn signaled the engine-room to go ahead.

"Ah, this is my style of boating," sighed the Judge, as, with a deep sigh of satisfaction he dropped into one of the comfortable chairs on the forward deck. "When a boy I used to sail a little sloop, but after all, it is better to have

something to push you besides the wind."

The steamer whistle screeched hoarsely.

"We're off!" cried Dr. Sterling.

Though a strong breeze, in which there was a tinge of dampness, came in from the ocean as the yacht went spinning down the bay, no one chose to retire to the cabin, even Aunt Betty protesting that the fresh air was doing her good.

A heavy swell was running, but the *Nautilus* weathered the waves in true ocean style, only a slight rocking movement being perceptible.

When they were well started down the bay, Mr. Ronald came to ask if they cared to visit the Statue of Liberty.

"I think that's an excellent idea," said Dr. Sterling. "Judge Breckenridge and Mrs. Calvert cannot, of course, climb the spiral stairs leading up into the statue, but we younger people can, and will, if you say the word."

"Oh, I think it will be jolly," cried Dorothy, who had seen the Statue of Liberty from the Brooklyn bridge and wondered what was inside it.

Molly and Jim fell promptly in with the plan, so the yacht was moored to the little island, after which Dr. Sterling guided the girls and Jim up to the dizzy height represented by the statue's hand. Quite a climb it was, too, but one which amply rewarded them, for they were able to gaze out over city and bay to such an advantage

that they were loath to descend.

Back to the yacht they finally went, however, and the *Nautilus* again turned her nose down the upper bay.

On one side lay Brooklyn, on the other Jersey City, while about them craft of all shapes and sizes puffed and snorted as they performed their daily tasks.

On down into the lower bay the yacht went skimming, breasting the heavy swells of the Atlantic, and causing exclamations of delight from both Molly and Dorothy, neither of whom had ever been this far at sea.

Down between the upper quarantine and the Staten Island shore they went at a speed of twelve knots, then, rounding the lower quarantine, stood straight for Rockaway Beach.

It was too early in the season for any of the resorts to be open, hence the girls were unable to view the scenes of activity that make these famous places the mecca of the bathers in the warm season.

“I imagine I should like to spend a summer here,” said Dorothy.

“And perhaps some of these days you will have the opportunity—who knows?” remarked Aunt Betty.

“Well, when she comes I must be included in the party or there will be big trouble,” Molly put in.

“Lots of trouble you’d make your best chum, young lady,” replied Aunt Betty, chucking the Judge’s daughter playfully under the chin.

After a run of some twenty minutes, the yacht again turned, this time nosing its way back along the coast toward the lower bay.

“In a few moments, I will show you Brighton and Manhattan Beaches,” said Dr. Sterling—“also the famous Coney Island of which you have heard so much.”

“I should dearly love to visit Coney,” said Dorothy.

“I have been there twice,” said Molly, proudly, “and it is a veritable city of wonders. I have never been able to understand how a brain can conceive all those funny things which amuse you.”

“Great brains are capable of many things in these days,” Jim said.

“Oh, are they now, my noble philosopher?”

“Yes, Miss Saucy, they are!”

“What’s that stretch of water east of us, with all the little islands in it?” asked Dorothy, suddenly.

“That is Jamaica Bay,” replied Mr. Ronald. “It lies across the peninsula from Rockaway Beach.”

“I thought Jamaica was in the West Indies, or some other forsaken spot,” said Molly.

“Come, come,” chided Dr. Sterling. “Remember your geography.”

“You certainly ought to know where the ginger comes from,” said Jim, in the same bantering spirit.

“Well, I guess I do, if anybody asks you, Mr. Barlow,” she returned, saucily. “But that’s no sign I knew there was a Jamaica Bay in New York State. My geography didn’t teach me that.”

“Of course it did,” taunted the boy, “but you did not take the trouble to remember it.”

Further discussion of this unimportant subject was cut short by a crash from the engine-room of the yacht, followed by a hissing noise as of escaping steam, and the propeller, which was being driven at many thousands of revolutions per minute, began suddenly to slow up.

A shriek from Aunt Betty drew Dorothy quickly to her side, while Mr. Ronald cried out:

“Something has happened to the engine!”

Then he made a dash below decks, followed by Dr. Sterling, and, a few seconds later, by Jim, who saw in the yacht’s misfortune another opportunity to satisfy his mechanical curiosity.

The boy reached the engine-room directly on the heels of Mr. Ronald and Dr. Sterling, and saw the engineer and his assistant flat on their backs trying to locate the trouble.

“Something apparently broke inside her, sir,” the engineer was saying, in response to a question from Mr. Ronald. “I can’t say how serious it is till we find it, sir.”

“Then of course you do not know how long we shall be delayed?”

“No; I couldn’t say, sir. Can’t even promise that we can run in on one pair of cylinders, sir, for they all seem to be affected alike.”

At this a shadow overspread the owner’s face and he turned to Dr. Sterling.

“Sorry, Doc,” he said. “What did you tell me about getting to town before dark?”

“I merely mentioned the fact that Miss Calvert should be early to bed, because she appears at a concert to-morrow evening, and it is necessary that she feel as well as possible.”

“It is after four now,” said Mr. Ronald, looking at his watch, “and I don’t know what to tell you until Sharley—that’s my engineer—locates the trouble.”

“Then perhaps we had better withhold from those on deck the fact that there may be an indefinite delay, merely making the general statement that the trouble is being rectified as rapidly as possible.”

“Very well; will you tell them, and make my excuses? I shall want to stay pretty close here till

this trouble is found."

"I'll tell them," said the doctor, and motioning Jim to follow went on deck. So the news which, poorly told, might have brought consternation to Dorothy and her aunt, merely aroused their curiosity. Soon they were laughing and talking with all thoughts of the accident gone from their minds.

Meanwhile, below, Mr. Ronald, Sharley and the assistant engineer, were going over every inch of the gasoline motors, hoping to find what had been the cause of their sudden refusal to do their work.

Screws were tightened and several other minor matters remedied. Then Sharley signaled the pilot house that he was going to try her again. Having tested his batteries with the buzzer, and adjusted the timer, he turned on the gasoline and slowly opened the throttle.

There was no response.

Sharley repeated the operation several times without getting the desired explosion. Then he retested the batteries with the buzzer and adjusted the carburetor, discovering that the gasoline had not been turned on at that point—or, at least, had been turned off after the trouble started. More cranking followed, but without success.

The *Nautilus* was now drifting in toward the shore, and a peep through a porthole told

Sharley that he would be upon the sands of Rockaway if something were not done soon.

“Told you she ought to have a sail equipment for emergencies,” he said to Mr. Ronald.

“Yes; you told me—that’s not your fault. The question now is, what are we going to do?”

“Nothing that I can see but throw out our anchor. Ain’t more than twenty feet of water here, and she’s growing less all the time.”

“But I can’t throw out the anchor without alarming the ladies.”

“Have to alarm ’em, then, I guess. That’s better than going aground and paying somebody salvage to get you off, eh, Mr. Ronald?” and the engineer laughed.

Mr. Ronald admitted the force of the statement, then went on deck to break the news to his guests.

CHAPTER XIV

THE STORM

Mr. Ronald’s appearance on deck was the signal

for a jubilant shout from Dorothy, Molly and Jim.

“Now we’ll be off again in a jiffy!” Molly cried. “I can see it in Mr. Ronald’s face.”

“Which only goes to show that looks are really deceiving,” returned the owner of the yacht, good-naturedly.

“What!” cried Dorothy, while Molly gave vent to a disappointed, “Oh!”

“Do you mean that the engineer hasn’t yet got to the seat of the trouble?” queried Dr. Sterling.

“I regret to say that his efforts are not meeting with the success we had hoped for, and as we are slowly drifting in toward the beach, with only a few feet of water under our keel, we shall be forced to drop anchor, pending further developments in the engine-room.”

“That means that the trouble is serious,” groaned Aunt Betty.

“Not necessarily,” said Judge Breckenridge, in an encouraging tone, “but if we run aground we will be ‘suah ’nuff’ in trouble, as old Ephraim would say.”

“The trouble is merely temporary, I assure you,” Mr. Ronald went on. “If you will excuse me again, I’ll order the anchor dropped. Then we can at least make our minds easy as to where we will stay until the trouble is located.”

The others nodded their assent and he hurried forward. A moment later, with a rattling of chains, the anchor plunged into the waters of the bay.

Mr. Ronald then rejoined his guests, and in spite of the anxiety that was surging in Dorothy's breast, she entered into the spirit of the occasion with the others. Story and jest rang out over the water as the sun gradually approached the horizon.

It was after six when Sharley came on deck to say that the trouble was as elusive as ever.

"We've been over every inch of her," he said, "and can't find a thing the matter. Yet, she won't budge an inch. The gasoline supply is O. K., and the batteries are in good shape. There's no trouble at all about exploding the spark, but I can't get the engine to turn a wheel, sir."

Mr. Ronald cast an uneasy glance toward the eastern sky, where a heavy bank of clouds was appearing above the sky-line. The rapidity with which they were approaching seemed to indicate that a storm was brewing. He said nothing of this to his guests, though, but smilingly remarked that he would go below again to go over the matter another time with Sharley. Then owner and engineer disappeared below decks together.

Anxiously those on deck awaited some report from the engine-room; but the minutes slipped

by and none came.

Finally, Dorothy noticed the approaching storm, and gave vent to a startled exclamation, which, caused Aunt Betty to jump, and Molly to grab her chum nervously by the arm.

“What is it?” Aunt Betty wanted to know.

Dorothy extended her finger toward the formidable looking bank of clouds.

“A storm is coming,” she replied, “and if we don’t hurry and fix the engines we shall be caught in it.”

As if in answer to Dorothy’s remark, Mr. Ronald appeared on deck at this instant. His face wore a troubled expression and the hopes of the guests fell as they noticed it.

“It’s of no use; we can’t find the trouble,” he said. “Looks very like we were in a trap and destined to quite a stay.”

The wind had already commenced to blow. The *Nautilus* had swung around bow on to the east and was tugging viciously at her anchor.

“If some other boat would only come by and pick us up!” cried Aunt Betty. “Why, we may have to stay out here all night.”

“What of it?” queried Judge Breckenridge.

“Why, Dorothy will be in no shape for the concert to-morrow night—that’s what of it. And

Herr and Frau Deichenberg will be worried over our continued absence."

"The cabin of the yacht will afford comfortable sleeping quarters for you ladies," said Mr. Ronald. "I regret this occurrence, but now that we are here, with no prospect for getting away under several hours, we must make the best of a bad bargain."

"Let me suggest that we all go inside," said Dr. Sterling. "The wind is getting too cool for you, Mrs. Calvert."

"I suppose that's an insinuation against my age," returned the person addressed, with some spirit. "But I'll forgive you, doctor; we had best look the facts in the face."

She arose as she spoke, and taking Jim's arm, walked slowly toward the cabin. The others followed.

No sooner were they inside than the storm descended with a roar. Sheets of water, wind-driven, beat against the windows of the cabin, and the yacht rose on top of great waves to plunge down into the trough of the sea with a motion that gave Aunt Betty a sinking feeling.

"It's like going down in an elevator," she confided to Dorothy. "I just know I'm going to be seasick."

"You will if you think about it every minute," said Dr. Sterling. "Get your mind on something

else and you will be all right."

"Easier said than done, doctor."

"Oh, I don't know. Now, that reminds me of a story," and he went on to relate a certain incident of his career which took the thoughts of seasickness and storm away from Aunt Betty's mind.

It soon grew so dark it became necessary to switch on the electric lights. Then, while the yacht rolled and tossed on the heavy waves, Mr. Ronald and his guests entertained themselves as best they could.

Through the windows a glare marked the location of the city, though no objects were visible on the ink-black surface of the water. As Dorothy looked longingly out into the darkness she wondered what Herr Deichenberg and Mr. Ludlow would be thinking by this time.

Knowing she had gone out on the yacht, and that a storm had descended on both bay and city, they would be worried, no doubt, and there was no means of communicating with them to allay their fears until the yacht was able to pull up anchor and steam into the city by her own motive power. And this seemed unlikely to happen soon, for no word of encouragement had come from the engine-room, though Engineer Sharley and his assistant were still making a diligent search for the trouble.

Fortunately the larder of the *Nautilus* was well-

stocked with food, and Mr. Ronald, with the help of one of the deck hands, was able to serve a very satisfactory lunch to the storm-bound, hungry guests.

Steaming coffee was made on a little electric range, and this, with rolls, canned salmon, and bread and butter, served to satisfy the appetites of all.

“How nice and cozy this would be,” said Molly, as they were gathered about the table, “if it were not storming so hard, and Dorothy was not worried as to when she is to reach the city.”

“Why, pshaw! there’s nothing to worry over,” said Jim. “The storm won’t last forever, and I’m sure if the engines are not fixed by morning, Mr. Ronald will signal for a tow to pull us into the city.”

“That will be the only thing to do,” said the yachtsman. “But the trouble will be remedied before morning, I am sure.”

At ten o’clock the storm had abated to some extent, though the rain was still beating in sheets against the cabin windows. The wind, however, seemed to have lost its great velocity, and the yacht did not toss as badly.

Under these comforting circumstances the girls and Aunt Betty retired to the staterooms of the yacht, where they threw themselves in the bunks thoroughly dressed, resolved to get what rest

they could.

In the cabin the men smoked and told stories, while Jim sat near, an interested listener. At midnight the boy curled up on a seat built against the side of the cabin and went to sleep. Judge Breckenridge was nodding in a big Morris chair, so Dr. Sterling and Mr. Ronald left them and went to the engine-room, where Sharley and his assistant were still laboring faithfully at the machinery.

"Well, we've got it located," said the grimy engineer, smiling good-naturedly. "The trouble is on this end of the propeller shaft. A piece of metal is lodged between the cogs, and we've been unable so far to get it out. It's only a question of time, though. Bill is hammering away with a cold chisel and something is bound to give 'way soon."

"Can we run into the city in the storm, Sharley, or will it be better to wait till it clears?"

"Well, it's pretty misty out, and hard to see the lights of other boats, but we'll chance it if you say so, sir."

"I'll think it over. Let me know when the engine is fixed and we'll decide what is best to do. Come, Sterling; let's go on deck for a breath of air."

Donning heavy ulsters, they were soon on the slippery deck of the yacht, the storm beating in

their faces. The man in the wheelhouse, encased in heavy oilskins, was nodding in the shelter of his little quarters. He started up as Mr. Ronald and his friend came slipping along the deck.

“A bad night, sir, but the storm’s going down,” he remarked, pleasantly.

“The engines will soon be fixed, Donnelly, and if it’s let up sufficiently we may try to make the city at once. Otherwise we will wait till daylight.”

“Yes, sir; all right, sir,” and the man bowed as Mr. Ronald and Dr. Sterling passed on.

In the meantime, Dorothy and Molly lay in their bunks, talking on various subjects, but mostly of the coming concert. Dorothy, of course, was worried, and was trying to borrow trouble by declaring the storm would keep up all the following day, and that she might be forced to miss the concert altogether—an idea which Molly “pooh-poohed” in vigorous terms.

“I’m surprised at you, Dorothy Calvert,” she said. “You’re not a quitter. Nothing in the world will keep you from being at the theater to-morrow night, and you will play as you have never played before. Difficulties will but serve to spur you on to greater deeds.”

“You’re right, chum,” Dorothy replied. “That is a well-deserved rebuke and I thank you for it. Which reminds me that my fears were groundless, for the wind is going down and it

does not seem to be raining as hard as it was."

"Of course not, you goosey! These storms rarely last more than a few hours. The sun will be shining in the morning, and all you'll see to remind you of to-night will be the rather worn looks of your companions. But what is one night's loss of sleep, anyway? I just know when you were at school you lost many a good night's sleep through some prank. Now, didn't you?"

"That would be telling tales out of school," smiled Dorothy.

"An evasion means an assent," remarked her chum. "And the next evening you were feeling as well as ever—just as a nice, warm bath and a rub-down will make you forget your troubles of to-night."

And Molly was a true prophet. The storm went down rapidly after midnight, until there was only a slight mist falling, and the wind came in fitful little gusts, which lacked the force to do damage even of a slight nature.

After one o'clock, with the cheering intelligence that the engines would soon be in working order, called to them through the stateroom door by Dr. Sterling, the girls fell asleep, to be awakened some hours later by the motion of the boat.

"Oh, look, Molly!" Dorothy cried, shaking her chum out of a sound sleep. "The yacht is under way."

“Didn’t I tell you so?” was the rather discomforting reply, as Molly sat up, rubbing her eyes. “First thing we know we’ll be back at the hotel.”

“We’ll have to reach the dock first, though.”

“Thanks for the information,” said Molly, as she began to arrange her hair.

The sun was streaming in through the port-holes and the water without was as smooth as glass. The yacht was headed toward the city, and moving along at a steady pace, though not at full speed.

The girls smoothed out their crumpled dresses, gave several other touches to their attire, and after a vigorous use of powder rags, taken from their hand-satchels, they aroused Aunt Betty and together went into the cabin, thence to the deck.

“Good morning!” greeted Judge Breckenridge, who, seated near the rail amidships, was smoking an early morning cigar in the keenest enjoyment.

“It is *good* morning, sure enough!” cried Dorothy, drawing her lungs full of the pure, sweet air. “And I’m so glad. I hope we reach the city soon, for Herr Deichenberg and Mr. Ludlow will be worried to death over my absence.”

“In half an hour we’ll be at the wharf,” said Mr. Ronald, who approached at this moment. “I trust you rested well?”

This remark was directed principally toward Aunt Betty, who replied:

"I didn't hear a sound all night long. The last noise I heard was the chatter of the two young magpies who occupied the berths across from me, but no misfortune, no matter how dire or dreadful, could bridle their tongues, so that was to be expected."

"That sounds very much like a libel to me," said Dorothy, laughing.

"Well, you're my niece, and I can libel you if I wish," was the spirited response.

"But Molly isn't your niece, auntie."

"Never mind; she insists on keeping company with you. Under those circumstances she must expect to take home to herself most of the things I say about you."

"I'm not worried," said Molly. "I suppose we are all you say we are, and more, Mrs. Calvert."

"That's a charitable view to take of it," said Dr. Sterling.

The engines were working so well that before they realized it the *Nautilus* was lying snugly moored to her wharf in the North River.

Mr. Ronald's guests bade him good-by and left the boat, after making him promise to be at Dorothy's concert in the evening.

At the hotel, early as was the hour, Dorothy found Herr Deichenberg and Mr. Ludlow in conference over her continued absence.

“My goodness! My goodness!” cried the music master. “Would you drive us crazy, Miss Dorothy, that you stay avay all night and make us believe you are lost in the storm?”

“I did not make you believe anything, Herr Deichenberg. You took that upon yourself. And perhaps I was lost in the storm, sir,” replied the girl, then extended her hand to Mr. Ludlow.

“I forgive you, Miss Calvert, and trust you have not so impaired your faculties that your work will fall below its usual standard to-night,” said the manager.

“I have not, I assure you. We were very comfortable in the berths, and put in some good time sleeping between midnight and morning. Molly will tell you that we have no reason for feeling badly.”

“Indeed, no, and Dorothy will be in perfect trim, Mr. Ludlow.”

“Your assurance makes my mind perfectly easy,” was his reply.

“But vhy didn’t you let us know?” Herr Deichenberg asked excitedly. “Vhy? Vhy?”

“Because the yacht was not equipped with a wireless apparatus, I suppose,” Jim Barlow put in, rather testily. “She has done the best she

knew how, sir, and that's all anyone can do."

"Truly spoken, my boy," replied the Herr, laying a kindly hand on his shoulder. "You must not mind me; I am a little nervous—dat iss all."

"The nervousness will pass away now the truant has returned," Aunt Betty assured him.

Frau Deichenberg, who approached at that moment, nodded, smiling:

"Ah, madame, dat iss true. You must not mind him. He iss like dat vhenever anyt'ing goes wrong. But he means not'ing—not'ing!" She extended her hand. "I am glad to see you safely back."

Assuring Mr. Ludlow that she would be on hand in the evening without fail, and promising to see him during the afternoon if he called, Dorothy went up to her room, where a hot bath and a nap of several hours' duration put her in excellent physical trim for the ordeal that night —for an ordeal she knew it was to be—an ordeal that would be the making or the breaking of her career.

CHAPTER XV

DOROTHY'S TRIUMPH

At last the hour was approaching when Dorothy would make her appearance before a metropolitan audience. As evening drew near she felt a nervous sensation, mingled with a faint suspicion of nausea, and wondered at it. Upon the occasion of her appearance in Baltimore not even a tremor of excitement had possessed her; yet, the very thought of appearing in the glare of the footlights in this great New York theater gave her an almost uncontrollable desire to fly away—anywhere—away from the people of this city whose opinions seemed to mean so much to the followers of music and the drama.

Arriving at the theater early, just as she had on the occasion of her appearance in her home city, Dorothy again peeped through a small hole in the curtain, to find the great gold-and-green auditorium a perfect blaze of light.

To her right, in the stage box, sat Aunt Betty, Molly, the Judge, Frau Deichenberg, Mr. Ronald and Jim Barlow chatting gayly, and awaiting the time when the curtain should rise for Dorothy's opening number.

The murmur of many voices reached the girl, as she looked. It was an audience of taste and culture. Mr. Ludlow had seen to that. His affairs were looked upon by music lovers as distinctly out of the ordinary, hence the better class of people attended them—even sought eagerly for

seats.

By the time Herr Deichenberg appeared on the stage to flash the orchestra a signal for the overture, the house was packed almost to the doors. People were even standing three deep in the back, apparently in the best of humor and seeming not to mind in the least the discomforts attending “standing room only.”

Dorothy sought her dressing-room, a great lump in her throat, and taking her violin from the case, nervously thumbed the strings. It was so unusual—this feeling of helplessness—the feeling that she was but an unimportant atom in this great sea of people who were waiting for her to appear that they might subject her to scathing criticism.

Herr Deichenberg smiled in at the door a moment later.

“Und how iss my little lady?” he inquired.

“Oh, Herr, I have such a strange sensation. It seems as if my heart is going to stop beating.”

“Ah, ha! You t’ink so, but it iss not so, Miss Dorothy. De heart has changed its place of residence—dat iss all. It is now lodged in de mouth, vhere it vill stay until you get before de audience und realize dat you vill have to play. Den it vill leave you.”

“If I could only be sure!”

“Vhat I tell you iss true. I have been there, many

iss de time. You vill find dat de audience vill be your inspiration."

Shortly after, when the orchestra was in the last bars of the overture, the music master hurried Dorothy out of her dressing-room to her place in the wings. The sinking feeling grew more intense. She could not get her mind off the ordeal which was before her. If she had only agreed not to come, she argued with herself, she might have saved her reputation. But now the merciless critics of the metropolis would subject her to comparisons with greater and more famous artists, and she would surely be the loser thereby. Strange she had not thought of that before!

She was startled out of her meditation by Herr Deichenberg, who cried:

"Ready, now, young lady! Look your prettiest! Valk out as you did before, und forget there iss an audience. Take your time und vait till de orchestra iss t'rough with de introduction."

She nodded, her lower lip trembling visibly. Then, with a sudden shake of her head, she forced a smile and stepped out into view of the audience!

And as those staid old New Yorkers saw this slim, young girl advancing, violin in hand, toward the footlights, while the great orchestra roared and thundered through the introduction to Rubenstein's "Barcarole," they burst into a

round of applause. And Dorothy, surprised at the reception thus accorded her, when she had expected nothing but silence and curious stares, all but stopped in the center of the stage and forgot what she was doing.

Then, realizing that the orchestra was rapidly approaching the place where she was to begin playing, she had the presence of mind to bow and smile. And just back of the footlights, with the faces of her auditors but a blurred spot on her vision, the girl put her violin under her chin and gently drew the bow across the strings.

As the orchestra played a low accompaniment, there suddenly filled the air a sound of deep melody, which swept down the aisles and filled with melodious sweetness every corner of the big theater. It was a melody such as sets the heart beating—a melody full of the most witchingly sweet low notes.

Dorothy swayed back and forth to the rhythm of the music, and the audience listened spellbound. To Aunt Betty and the other attentive auditors it seemed that all the world was music—that, as played by this young girl, it was the greatest and best of all earthly things.

As she played on, by, as it seemed to her, some strange miracle, all her fears and tremblings vanished. Herr Deichenberg had been right, and now her only thought was for her work—how best to do it to the satisfaction of those who had

honored her with their presence.

When it was finished and she had bowed herself off into the first entrance, applause such as she had never heard before, thundered through the building. Out she stepped and bowed, but still the plaudits continued, and finally, walking out, she signified with a nod of her head her willingness to respond with an encore.

She played a simple little piece far removed from the great Rubenstein melody, and it went straight to the hearts of the audience, as Herr Deichenberg, keen old musician that he was had intended that it should. From that moment Dorothy Calvert had her audience with her heart and soul.

As she swept into the concluding bars of the melody, the audience fairly rose to its feet and applauded. She took seven bows before the curtain was allowed to descend. The first part of the entertainment was over and Dorothy sought her dressing-room to rest, closing and locking the door so that no one might intrude on her privacy.

There she lay, eyes half-closed, breathing rather heavily, more from excitement than from actual physical exertion, while the popular tenor whom Mr. Ludlow had engaged to assist in the concert was singing a song from “Lucia.” She heard his encore but faintly—enough, however, to recognize one of the solos from a popular comic opera, then someone rapped on her door and

bade her be ready for her second turn.

Words fail to describe the reception she met as she played Schubert's Sonata, followed by the march from "Lenore," the latter seeming to strike the chord of popular approval in a very forcible manner.

She bowed herself off again, after taking ten curtain calls, to give the tenor another chance. Again she rested in her dressing-room, and again ventured forth for the last, and to her most difficult, part of the entertainment.

Two of the classics she played, then, upon insistent calls from the audience for more, nodded to the orchestra and struck into her old medley of southern airs. As the plaintive notes of "The Old Folks At Home" echoed and reëchoed through the theater, Dorothy watched the effect on her audience, and saw that many handkerchiefs were used as the sadder strains were played. "Old Black Joe" produced much the same effect, and "Dixie" aroused them to cheers which increased as the girl played "The Star Bangled Banner" and, finally, "Home, Sweet Home."

Again and again the curtain descended, only to rise again, as the girl bowed her acknowledgments to the great audience that had received her with such marked expressions of approval. Then, to her dressing-room she went, to find that Aunt Betty and her friends had reached the stage through an entrance back of

their box, and were awaiting her.

“Oh, auntie, auntie!” was all she could say, as she threw herself into the arms of her aged relative and sobbed through sheer joy.

“My dear, it is the triumph of your life. I am indeed proud to call you my own.”

“And she wasn’t one tiny bit scared,” said Molly.

“Shows you don’t know what you’re talking about,” Dorothy replied, with some spirit. “Herr Deichenberg had all he could do to induce me to leave my dressing-room. Let the announcement sound as absurd as it may, I was literally scared to death.”

“If you can play like that when you’re literally scared to death,” said Molly, “I wish someone would scare me.”

“Here’s Mr. Ludlow,” said Jim. “Let’s hear what he has to say.”

“Mr. Ludlow is about the happiest man in New York to-night,” said the manager, “realizing, as he does, that he has discovered, with the aid of Herr Deichenberg, a young lady who is destined to set the whole country afire with her playing. Miss Calvert, I congratulate you most heartily. It was the finest thing of its kind I have ever heard in my long theatrical experience.”

Dorothy choked up and could not speak as she took his hand.

“Don’t try to thank me,” he went on, observing her embarrassment. “It is I who should thank you. And now, I know you are anxious to return to your hotel. I shall see you in the morning before you leave for home and discuss with you our future plans.”

It was not until the early hours of the morning that Dorothy Calvert wooed sleep successfully, and when she did, she dreamed of violins, music masters, stages and scenery—all inextricably mixed.

She arose early, however, as they were to catch a train for Baltimore during the forenoon. Jim Barlow came into the room occupied by Dorothy and Aunt Betty as soon as they had dressed, bringing the morning papers. The music critics were almost unanimous in pronouncing the young violinist a player of exceptional merit, and one destined to become a great force in the musical world.

Dorothy hastened to show the papers to Aunt Betty and Molly, who, of course, were greatly rejoiced over her success.

Mr. Ludlow called as he had promised, and when he took his departure Dorothy had put her signature to a contract, calling for a forty weeks’ tour of the United States and Canada, starting the last week in September. And the contract called for a salary of $200 per week and expenses. Those interested in our heroine’s welfare may learn as to the outcome in the next

volume named “Dorothy’s Tour.”

Dorothy could hardly believe her good fortune; nor could Aunt Betty, whose resources were so low that the only thing in prospect was a mortgage on her beloved Bellvieu.

The fact that Aunt Betty was in such sore financial straits became known by accident to Dorothy after they had returned home. But once the girl was familiar with conditions, she showed what a loyal niece she could be by depositing in one of the Baltimore banks the money she had received for her concert, subject to Aunt Betty’s order. Then, in company with Aunt Betty, she called upon the lawyers who had the Calvert estate in charge, and by explaining her prospects for the coming season, and exhibiting her contract with Mr. Ludlow, arranged for such funds as she and Aunt Betty might need between then and the end of September.

Thus was old Bellvieu saved to those who loved her most.

It was a happy summer to Dorothy, though she kept up her work under the direction of Herr Deichenberg, gradually growing to be a more polished artist.

As the fall drew near she became very eager, particularly when Mr. Ludlow wrote that he had provided a private car that Aunt Betty might go with her upon her long journey over the continent.

So here, with her triumph achieved, and greater triumphs and trials as well before her, we will leave Dorothy prepared to take up her adventurous tour.

Transcriber's Note:

Minor changes have been made to correct typesetters' errors; otherwise, every effort has been made to remain true to the author's words and intent.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DOROTHY'S TRIUMPH ***

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