

BETTY WALES B.A.

MARGARET WARDE

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June Kuerge.

from
Aunt Snoda

Xmas 1935



Envelope
from
Uncle George

Dec 25th 08



"NOW COME AND LABEL HER DRESSES"

BETTY WALES, B.A.

A STORY FOR GIRLS

***B* MARGARET
WARDE**

Author of
"Betty Wales, Freshman"
"Betty Wales, Sophomore"
"Betty Wales, Junior"
"Betty Wales, Senior"

Illustrated by
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Introduction

WHEN I first knew Betty Wales she was a freshman at Harding College, with a sedate, comical roommate named Helen Chase Adams, and a host of good friends, who stood by her and one another all through the four years of their college course. Mary Brooks—afterward Mrs. Hinsdale—was a sophomore when Betty entered college, but the others, the three B's, Roberta Lewis, Eleanor Watson, Rachel Morrison, and Katherine Kittredge,—all belonged to the "finest class" of 19—. So did Madeline Ayres, though she was a year late in joining it and felt obliged to make up for lost time by being a particularly lively and loyal Hardingite during her abbreviated course there. Georgia Ames first appeared in 19—'s junior year, and joined "The Merry Hearts," a society that Betty and her friends had organized. But Georgia the first, as Madeline used to call her, was only a figment of Madeline's imagination; it was a delightful coin-

cidence when, at the end of the year, a real Georgia Ames appeared to step into the place left vacant by her departed namesake, whose short but strenuous career at Harding had made them both famous.

All these things and many others may be found in the four books entitled respectively "Betty Wales, Freshman," "Betty Wales, Sophomore," "Betty Wales, Junior," and "Betty Wales, Senior." This story was written because some of Betty's friends were not satisfied to leave her at the end of her senior year, but wished to hear what she did next. If any of them still want to know what happened to her after she came back from her trip abroad, why, perhaps some day they may.

MARGARET WARDE.

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Betty Wales, B. A.

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CHAPTER I

AN IMPROMPTU WEDDING—AND OTHER IM- PROMPTUS

“WELL,” announced Betty Wales to the family breakfast table, a week after 19—’s commencement, “I’m beginning to feel quite at home again. I’ve got my room fixed ——”

“So it looks as much like a Harding room as you can make it,” laughed Nan.

“And you spend most of your time describing the lost glories of Harding to anybody who will listen,” added Will.

“And the rest in writing long letters to the other ‘Merry Hearts,’ ” put in mother slyly.

“And she plans what I’ll do when I go to college,” declared the Smallest Sister, who had just had her first “teens birthday” and did

not propose to be excluded from any family council.

"In short," said Mr. Wales, appearing solemnly from behind the morning paper, "being 'quite at home' means wishing you were back at college. Is that about the size of it, Miss Betty Wales?"

"Never, daddy," cried Betty, leaning across the corner of the table to give him a hug. "I'm just as glad as I can be to be really and truly at home again with my family. Of course I shall miss the girls dreadfully, but—oh, there the postman's ring! I wonder if he's got anything for me." And Betty danced off to the door, answering Nan's and Will's chorused "I told you so!" with a laughing "I don't care." As Will had once said, "The nicest thing about Betty is that she can't possibly be teased."

She was back in a minute with a handful of letters for the family and four for herself.

"All from late lamented Hardingites?" inquired Will, who never wrote letters and therefore seldom got any to read over his morning coffee.

Betty was tearing open the second envelope.

"That one isn't. It's just congratulations on graduating, from Aunt Maria. But this is from Madeline Ayres—why, how funny! It's dated Monday, in New York, and she was going to sail last Saturday. Oh, dear, I don't understand at all! She says"—Betty frowned despairingly over Madeline's dainty, unreadable hieroglyphics—"she says, 'You have heard all about it by this time, I suppose, and isn't it just—just——' Oh, I wish Madeline could write plainly."

"Too bad about these college graduates who can neither read nor write," said Will loftily. "Try the next one. Perhaps they'll explain each other. Isn't that scrawly one in the blue envelope from Katherine Kittredge?"

Betty nodded absently and tore open the blue envelope. "Why how funny!" she cried. "K. begins just the very same way. 'Of course you've heard about it by this time, and isn't it the nicest ever? Are you and Roberta going to wear your commencement dresses too? Wasn't it exciting the way they caught Madeline on the wharf? By the way, both the straps of my telescope broke on the way home, and so I've bought a gorgeous

leather bag to carry on this trip, without waiting for my first salary. Dick lent me the money—you know he's been working this winter, so that I could stay at Harding, and they never told me a word about it. We're planning for his college course now, father and I, and I couldn't have gone a step to the wedding if dear old Mary hadn't sent the ticket.' Gracious!" interpolated Betty excitedly, "what is she talking about? Dick's her brother. That hasn't anything to do with the rest of the letter." She glanced at the last envelope. "Oh, this is from Mary Brooks. I hope it won't be puzzle number three."

It wasn't. Betty read it all through to herself—four closely written pages—while the Wales family, who had all become interested by this time, watched her cheeks growing pinker and her eyes brighter and bigger with excitement, as she read. At the end she gave a rapturous little sigh. "Oh, it's just perfectly lovely!" she declared.

"What?" demanded Will.

"Oh, everything," answered Betty vaguely. "Mary's going to be married a week from to-

day, and we're all coming,—every single one of us. She caught Madeline before she went abroad, and Eleanor before she left for Denver, and she's sent tickets to K. and Rachel and Helen, instead of giving us all bridesmaids' presents. Oh, father dear, may I go?"

Mr. Wales smiled into his daughter's flushed, happy face. "Betty," he said, "your enthusiasm is delightful. We shall miss it while you are gone, but if Mary—whoever she may be—is going to be married and can't have it done properly without you, why we shall have to drift along for another week in our accustomed state of staid and placid calm."

And Betty was so excited and so busy explaining to her father which one of all the girls he met at Harding was Mary Brooks, and which one of the faculty was Dr. Hinsdale, that she never noticed the letter from Babbie Hildreth, in her father's mail, or the dainty, scented note, also postmarked Pelham Manor, which her mother read and covertly passed to Nan and then to Mr. Wales. And after breakfast she flew straight up-stairs to answer her letters, never dreaming that the long talk father and mother and Nan were having on

the piazza just underneath her windows was all about her—Betty Wales—and the reasons why she should or should not go on the most glorious summer trip that a girl ever took.

“Well, I’ll see,” father called back from the gate, as he hurried off to his office at last, and Betty smiled to herself and wondered whether Nan wanted a set of new books or the Smallest Sister a bicycle. “Father always says that when he thinks you’re getting pretty extravagant in your tastes, but still he’s going to let you have it all the same,” reflected Betty, and started for the third time to reread Mary’s letter.

“Dearest Betty,” it began, “I’ve left you till the last to write to because you aren’t going to the ends of the earth within the week, and you don’t take ages to make up your mind to things. In short, my child, I know that this impromptu wedding idea will appeal to you and that you will keep your promise to help Roberta do the bridesmaid act just as nicely as if I’d told you six weeks ahead instead of one, and then sent you a neatly engraved invitation at the proper

hour and minute. We want to be married next Thursday at three, because—oh, dear, here comes George Garrison Hinsdale this minute, and I promised to be ready to take him to call on my minister. I'll tell you why we changed our minds when I see you. You and Roberta and Laurie are to stay with me, and the others are invited to Tilly Root's, just across the street. There's a dinner Wednesday night, before the rehearsal. Oh, about clothes,—just wear your graduating dress or anything else that you and Roberta agree upon. Let me know your train. Oh, and you won't draw a present, because I wanted all the girls to come, so I sent tickets to K. and Rachel and Helen. I hope they won't feel hurt, and that you won't mind not having diamond sunbursts to remember the occasion by. You see I couldn't give diamond sunbursts to some and railroad tickets to others. It would have spoiled the scheme of decoration.

“I wanted to tell you how I caught Madeline's coat-tails just as she was going on board her boat, but George Garrison Hinsdale refuses to wait another second. I foresee that I

have drawn a tyrannical husband. And the moral of that is,—I'm too happy to care.

“Yours ever,

“MARY.”

Before she wrote to Mary, Betty puzzled out most of Madeline's letter, which gave an amusing account of her sudden change of plans. “Eleanor came to see me off,” she wrote, “and Dick Blake was there with his arms full of flowers for me and his eyes fastened tight to Eleanor, and all the good Bohemians were saying fond farewells and sending messages to daddy and telling when they'd probably turn up in Sorrento, when up dashed Mary Brooks and her professor. And in five minutes Dick had sold my cabin to a man he knew who had come down on the chance of getting one and that boat had sailed without me and my flowers and my steamer trunk and my ‘carry-all-and-more-too’; and my weeping chaperon that I had not yet wasted time in hunting up is probably sending wireless messages of condolence to my family this minute. But Dr. Hinsdale cabled, and then Dick took the whole crowd to a

roof-garden to cool off, and after that he and I went down the Bowery giving away that armful of roses to the smallest, raggedest children we could find. So it was a very nice party, and of course I can go to Italy any time.

MAD."

And this is how it happened that just two weeks after they had parted, bravely trying not to show that they cared, "The Merry Hearts,"—or at least the Chapin House division of them, with the B's thrown in for full measure,—met, one sultry July afternoon, on Mary's big, vine-shaded piazza and, chattering like magpies, drank inordinate quantities of lemonade and iced tea and heard from the bride-to-be all the whys and wherefores of her impromptu wedding.

"Haven't I told any of you why we changed?" asked Mary. "No, Babe, it wasn't because we hadn't the strength of mind to wait till August. It was because my Uncle Marcellus gave us a desert island up on the Maine Coast for a wedding present. Roberta, pass the cookies to yourself, please."

"Query," propounded K. gaily. "When

given a desert island for a wedding present is it obligatory to take possession instantly or forever after keep away?"

"Don't be foolish," said Mary severely. "It was this way, don't you see. The island has a gorgeous camp on it, and of course we want to go there for our honeymoon, and why shouldn't we start early and stay all summer? If we had waited until the middle of August, as we planned, that desert island would have gone to waste for one whole month."

"Which would ill become the desert island of a psychology professor," declared Madeline. "Who says that the college girl doesn't bring intellect to bear on the practical affairs of life?"

"Hear, hear!" cried Bob, waving her lemonade glass. "Here's to the college bride, who lets no desert island waste its sweetness on the empty air! Here's to the impromptu wedding! Here's to the first 'Merry Heart' reunion! Here's ——"

"Hush, Bob," Babbie protested. "You're disgracing the bridal party in the eyes of the neighborhood. Take us up to see the trousseau, Mary, please."

"I'll bet there's nothing very impromptu about that," declared Babe.

"Oh, girls, I hope you'll like it," began Mary anxiously, leading the way indoors. "I've positively worn myself out trying to have it right—right for a Harding professor's wife, I mean."

"Picture Mary looking twenty in pink chiffon, being a patroness at the junior prom," cried K., picking up the small bride and standing her in a piazza chair.

"Picture Mary behind an armful of violets, sitting on the stage at the big game, trying to remember that she's Mrs. Professor Hinsdale and mustn't shriek for the purple," added Rachel.

"Picture Mary in a velvet suit and a picture hat, making her first calls on the faculty," jeered Bob.

"When she's fairly pining to go snow-shoeing with her little friends in the senior class," added Babe convincingly.

"Stop teasing her," commanded Betty, helping Mary down from her lofty perch. "She'll be the nicest professor's wife that ever was—see if she isn't! Now come and label her dresses for the proper occasions."

It was most absorbing—deciding what Mary should wear to faculty parties, to college lectures, to the president's dinners—"Just to think of being invited to dinner at Prexie's!" said little Helen Adams in awed tones—"to house plays, to senior dramatics, and to all the other important functions of the college year." It took a long time, too, because of course such delicate questions couldn't be decided without seeing Mary in each dress, and getting "the exact combination of youth, beauty, and dignity that resulted," as K., who explained that she was practising "school-ma'am English," put it.

And then there were so many digressions. It was only two weeks since they had separated at Harding, but in the meanwhile a great deal seemed to have happened. Helen had accepted a position to teach English in her home high school. Eleanor was to join her family after the wedding for a hastily planned trip through the Canadian Rockies. Most exciting of all, Bob had actually established her fresh-air colony.

"It's great," she declared. "When I asked father if I might have some slum children out

for two weeks he thought I was joking, so he said yes, and when those six dirty little ragamuffins suddenly dawned upon his vision last Saturday night he was furious. But I coaxed a little, and I got him to give the boys a Fourth of July oration, and when Jimmie Scheverin hopped up and solemnly thanked him for his unique and inspiring address, he gave in. He's staying at home now to look after things while I'm gone. He said he guessed Wall Street could get along without him."

"But if they're only going to stay two weeks, Bob," began Babe hastily, "I don't see why ——" She stopped in sudden confusion.

"Why what?" demanded Katherine curiously.

"Oh, why I've talked such a lot about it, she means," explained Bob calmly. "When these leave there are others coming, Babe. There's an unlimited supply of fresh-air children,—millions of them. That's why we can't keep Jimmie Scheverin more than two weeks, in spite of his enthusiasm for father's oratory and father's enthusiasm for Jimmie.

So it's no use trying to persuade me to go off on frivolous trips with you."

"Where are you going, Babe?" asked Betty idly.

"Oh, I don't know that I'm going anywhere," said Babe, with a conscious little giggle. "Where are you?"

Betty explained that they were going to have a cottage for a month or two at some seaside place near New York—it hadn't been decided when she left home, but father was going to write her. This information the B's and Madeline received with solicitous and solemn interest. Indeed they asked Betty so many questions, that Mary finally declared her wedding was being shamefully neglected.

"I don't know about the wedding," said Mrs. Brooks, appearing at that minute, "but the groom is on the piazza, and six presents have come——"

In the rush down-stairs that followed Babbie pulled Babe into a corner. "You'll let the cat out of the bag if you're not more careful," she declared reproachfully.

"I will be more careful," Babe promised. "But why doesn't her father hurry up and

decide? I shall burst if I can't talk about it pretty soon."

"The loveliest old brass samovar," cried Eleanor.

"From Miss Ferris!" added Betty. "That makes it all the nicer."

"And a silver dish from Prexie and Mrs. Prexie."

"That's what you get for marrying a faculty."

"Isn't it distinguished?" said Babbie, rushing after the others. "I don't see how you can think of anything else, Babe."

"Well, I don't go abroad every summer the way you do," explained Babe breathlessly. "The most distinguished wedding that ever happened couldn't make me forget that I'm going to see Paris and London and all the rest of Europe."

"Not quite all, I hope," laughed Babbie, hurrying to shake hands with Dr. Hinsdale and Marion Lawrence, who was going to be Mary's maid of honor.

Everybody agreed that Mary's impromptu wedding was a decided improvement upon the usual cut-and-dried variety. There was cer-

tainly nothing cut and dried about it. When the sun had gone below the tops of the tall elm trees on the lawn and the shadows fell, long and cool, on the velvety grass, Mary appeared on the piazza, wearing a soft white dress—"that didn't look a bit like a wedding," as little Helen Adams announced with her customary frankness. First she kissed her mother and patted her father's shoulder lovingly, just as she did every morning before breakfast, and then she shook hands with everybody else, as unconcernedly as if it was no day in particular and all her dearest friends had merely happened to drop in for afternoon tea. But all at once, before anybody except the people concerned had noticed it, there was a cleared space in one corner, with a screen of ferns and white sweet peas for a background. Laurie and Roberta and Betty were close behind Mary, her father and Dr. Hinsdale were beside her, the "near-bridesmaids" and "near-ushers," as K. had flippantly dubbed the rest of the bridal party, made a half circle around the others, and Mary Brooks, with one great white rose in her hand and a half-frightened, half-happy little smile on her lips,

was being married to George Garrison Hinsdale.

When it was over, everybody went indoors and had all sorts of cooling things to eat and drink. Meanwhile the bridesmaids, and "near-brides" had slipped away to put on some Roumanian peasant costumes, and "the next number on the program"—according to Katherine—was some curious wedding dances that Roberta had learned and taught to the others. Some were graceful and some were amusing, and the music was so gay that it made everybody feel like dancing too. And that was what they did, by the soft light of Japanese lanterns, until it was time to fill one's hands with confetti and old slippers and speed the wedding-pair on their way to the desert island that would not be deserted any more that summer.

As the girls sat on the piazza talking it all over with Mrs. Brooks, who declared she simply couldn't realize that "little Mary" was old enough to be getting married, Dr. Brooks came out, bringing a letter for Betty.

"Don't ask me how long I've had it in my pocket, Miss Betty," he said with a twinkle

in his eyes. "It beats everything how a wedding does upset me."

"Oh, it doesn't matter," laughed Betty, "as long as you've remembered it in time for me to know where I'm going to-morrow. It's from father, telling me which cottage they've taken. Will you excuse me if I read it right now, Mrs. Brooks?"

The next minute Betty gave a little shriek of delight, dropped her letter, and seizing Babbie's hands whirled her madly down the length of the piazza. Finally she dropped breathlessly down on the broad railing, pulling Babbie to a seat beside her.

"Isn't it just too elegant for anything!" she sighed. "And to think how near Babe came to telling, and I never guessed a thing."

CHAPTER II

A GOING-AWAY PARTY—HARDING STYLE

FOR a while everybody who didn't know what the excitement was about asked questions at once, and everybody who did, which meant the B's and Madeline, answered at once,—a process resulting in that delightful confusion that is the very nicest part about telling a secret. Finally things quieted down a little, and Babbie was called upon to "tell us all about it."

"Why, it's just this way," she explained. "Mother's doctor ordered her to Europe. She isn't strong, you know, and the change is good for her. But he said she mustn't motor this time because it's too wearing; but must travel quietly, and rest a lot, and so on. Well, mother isn't much for quiet herself, so she was afraid I might be bored, just with her and Marie, and no car to run while she takes naps. So she told me to ask Bob and Babe to join us

—this all came up after commencement, you understand. And Babe would, but Bob wouldn't, because of her fresh-air kids; so then I asked Betty. Not that she's second choice one bit," added Babbie hastily, "only of course the B's ——"

"You needn't apologize," Betty interrupted her. "Of course the B's ask each other first! As for me, I'm too overjoyed to be going to think of anything else."

"But I don't see why you didn't tell her that you'd asked her," said little Helen Adams, the practical minded.

"Oh, that was mother's idea," Babbie went on. "She wanted you to come, Betty, just as much as I did; but she said that she didn't know your father and mother, and she didn't know how they would feel about trusting their daughter for a whole summer to a perfect stranger. And she thought it would be easier for them to refuse, for that or any other reason, if you didn't know. Oh, I've just been aching to have you get that letter," sighed Babbie rapturously.

"But suppose it had said the wrong thing," suggested Babe.

"Then we could have talked about it all the same," put in Madeline. "I like the way you leave me out of all your explanations, Babbie Hildreth."

"Well, I can't think of everything at once," Babbie defended herself. "Besides, you just dropped in."

"Yes, I'm only the impromptu feature," said Madeline sadly. "I always am. As I have often explained before, I was born that way."

"But I thought you were in a terrible rush to get to Sorrento," said Rachel.

"I was," admitted Madeline. "But after all why should I be in a rush? Why shouldn't I go to Sorrento via some fun just as well as by any other route? Sorrento will keep."

"Where is your party going, Babbie?" inquired Mrs. Brooks, who had been much entertained by all the excitement.

"Well, we're going to sail to Glasgow, because we couldn't get passage to any other port on such short notice. And then the doctor thinks mother ought to have some cool, bracing air to begin with. After that we

don't know. Mother says that we girls may choose, and of course Babe and I didn't want to discuss it without Betty. And now Madeline says that it's more fun just deciding as you go along. Mother thought it would be dull without a car," Babbie went on eagerly, "but do you know I think it's going to be more exciting without one, because when you have it you feel as if you ought to use it, and you have to keep to good roads. I always thought that when James didn't want to go to a place, or Marie didn't, James said the road was bad. Marie hates little villages, and I just love them. And Madeline will think up all sorts of queer, fascinating things to do."

"The principal feature, though impromptu," murmured Madeline. "Are you going away back home again for the week before we sail, Betty?"

Betty shook her head. "Nan has packed the things she thinks I'll want, and I'm to join her at Shelter Island and help get the cottage ready for the rest of the family. They'll all be here in time to see me off."

"Why don't you ask us all down there to spend the day?" suggested Madeline. "Then

perhaps our stay-at-home friends would take the hint and give a going-away party for us."

"But we shan't be here," chorused Helen, Roberta, Rachel, Eleanor, and Katherine.

"And I couldn't possibly come down for all day. Daddy won't desert Wall Street so soon again," added Bob sadly.

"It's a shame not to have the party. We could think of lots of lovely things to do," sighed Roberta.

"What's the matter with doing them tomorrow?" proposed Dr. Brooks. "You can't leave Mrs. Brooks and me too suddenly, you know. We've got to get used to missing Mary gradually. Now I'll take you all to town in the morning and give you lunch at my club. By the time we get back, the house will be in order again and we'll have that going-away party to amuse us during the evening."

There was a little objection at first, for all the girls had expected to leave the next day; but Dr. Brooks speedily overruled their arguments. They had come to the wedding, he declared, and cheering up the bereft parents was part of the ceremony—everybody knew that; whereas one day at the other end of the

trip wouldn't matter at all. So Babe nominated Bob and Roberta as committee on arrangements for the going-away party and, according to "Merry Heart" procedure, uncereemoniously declared them elected, after which Dr. Brooks carried them off to his study to make plans for the next day's campaign.

The going-away party was a distinctly collegiate function, marked by all the originality and joyous abandon that belong by right to every Harding festivity. Contrary to social precedent it began with toasts. That was Eleanor's fault, Bob explained. She had made a mistake and put ice in the lemonade too soon, and so it had to be drunk immediately. So Katherine grew eloquent on "the Sorrows of Parting for the Second Time in Two Weeks, when you have exhausted all your pretty speeches on the first round." Bob described "Europe As I Shall Not See It," and Babe "Europe As I Hope to See It if not Prevented by the Frivolity of my Friends." Madeline was really witty in her account of "the Impromptu Elements in Foreign Travel—myself, the English climate, and others." Rachel toasted "the Desert Island

Honeymooners, absent but not forgotten," and Dr. Brooks explained "the Uses of Near-Bridesmaids," to the infinite amusement of his guests. After that Roberta said she was sorry about there not being time for the other toasts, but they were all written down on the program and if everybody would tell Babbie that hers was too cute for anything and Eleanor that she could certainly make the best speeches, they would pass on to the "stunts."

These consisted of examinations to test the fitness of the European party for its trip. Betty was the first victim. She was required to tie on a chiffon veil "so you will look too sweet for anything and all the men on board the boat will be crazy about you,"—though Rachel pointed out that it wasn't much of a test, because Betty always looked that way. Next Madeline was requested to prove that she knew how to be seasick on the proper occasions. Babe, whose French accent had been a college joke, was made to "parler-vous" an order for lunch, though she protested hotly that Babbie and Madeline were going to do that part—she had made her family promise

solemnly that she shouldn't be bothered with learning anything ever any more, till she wanted to. And Babbie, who had announced in one breath that she was going to travel with just one little steamer trunk this time, and in the next that she should buy four dresses at least in Paris, was invited to demonstrate how she meant to carry the clothes she needed for the trip and the four dresses all in "one little trunk."

"Not to mention the things you are going to bring home to us," Bob reminded her.

"Oh, but I shall have Marie pack the dresses in one of mother's trunks," Babbie explained easily.

"Crawl!" declared K. "As a forfeit you are condemned to do 'Mary had a little lamb' in your best style."

"And Roberta ought to do the jabber-wock for us," suggested Eleanor.

"And Madeline ought to sing a French song," added Betty.

So all the "Merry Heart" stunts, that had amused them at Harding for four long years, and were just as funny now as they had ever been, were merrily gone through with.

"Ladies and gentlemen," declaimed Bob at last, "we have at last arrived at the real business of this farewell party, which is the presentation of a few slight tokens of our affection, and the delicate intimation of the objects of art ——"

"Or wearing apparel," put in K.

"That we should most like to get in return," concluded Bob pompously, with a withering glance in K.'s direction. "I may say in passing that the aforesaid intimation is strictly by request."

The stay-at-homes and Dr. Brooks disappeared for a few minutes and came back in a laughing, bundle-laden procession, with Dr. Brooks at its head.

"I heartily approve of your resolution to travel with as little baggage as possible," said the doctor solemnly, "so I've put up these prescriptions for seasickness in as concentrated a form as possible." And he presented Betty and Babbie each with a half-gallon bottle, and Babe and Madeline with huge wooden boxes marked "Pills." A tag on Babe's read, "To be exchanged for fruit on day of sailing." Madeline's tag said, "Good

for the same size at Huyler's," while Betty's specified salted almonds, and Babbie's preserved ginger.

"I'll see that the goods are delivered at your boat," the doctor assured them, "and if the ship's physician doesn't get some practice out of you it certainly won't be my fault."

"But you haven't told us what you want us to bring you," said Betty.

"Yourselves safe and sound," said Dr. Brooks gallantly.

The girls were not so modest. Helen, who had stayed at home from the city to print the travelers' names in indelible ink on three dozen laundry markers apiece, confessed shyly that she had always wanted a good photograph of the Mona Lisa.

"To think that you're going to see the real one!" she said. "I'm going to begin right away to save my money for a trip abroad."

"So am I," echoed Rachel.

"And I," from K.

European travel was evidently the "Merry Hearts'" latest enthusiasm.

"In the meantime," laughed Eleanor, "here are some baggage tags for the ones who

are really going. They say you have to mark all your bags and trunks over there, because they don't have checks, and you just have to pick your things out of the big pile on the station platforms."

"What elegance," cried Betty, holding her shining silver marker out at arm's length for inspection. "And what shall we bring you, Eleanor, dear?"

"A duke, if you don't mind," said Eleanor solemnly, and Betty solemnly wrote it down on the slip of paper on which she was recording all the girls' wishes.

Roberta gave them each a tiny book of travel sketches not too big to slip into a shopping-bag—one was about English cathedrals, another about English inns, and the third and fourth described some Scotch and English castles.

"They look rather interesting," said Roberta modestly, "and I remembered that none of you was specially fond of history."

"Don't throw it in my face that I once got a low-grade," Babe reproached her. "Say over again the thing that you wanted, Roberta."

"A gargoyle," repeated Roberta.

Betty looked at her despairingly. "Please

spell it, Roberta. I suppose Babbie and Madeline know just what it is."

Babbie looked mystified. "Why should I know anything like that, Betty?"

"Because you've been to Paris six separate times," declared Madeline, "and motored all through France besides. You evidently don't go in hard for architecture, Babbie."

"Oh, it's architecture, is it?" said Babbie in relieved tones. "Then I don't see how we can bring it home."

"Only a picture of one," Roberta expostulated.

"It's not exactly architecture, Babbie," teased Madeline. "It's an animal, generally. Wouldn't you like a real one better than a picture, Roberta? They have them in the Rue Bonaparte for two francs each."

By this time everybody was excited on the subject of gargoyles and ready to listen while Roberta explained that gargoyles are the grotesque figures, usually in the shape of animals, that ornament Gothic cathedrals, especially the French ones.

"They're waterspouts as well as ornaments," protested Madeline. "Babbie Hil-

dreth, you don't half know your Paris. Prepare to walk down to Notre Dame in the rain with me and see the gargoyles work."

"They sound perfectly fascinating," said Rachel. "Here's a picture of one in this book on architecture that I've brought for you. I believe I'd rather have one than a pair of gloves. Is two francs a lot of money, Madeline?"

"If it isn't, I want a gargoyle too," declared K. "Is there more than one kind?"

"Enough kinds to suit all tastes," laughed Madeline. "It will be great fun picking out appropriate gargoyles for the three of you. What have you in that bundle, K.?"

K. tossed the fat parcel at the travelers, who found inside a pillow covered with brown linen, with a 19— banner fastened across it by way of ornament. "I hope you won't all feel like sleeping in your steamer chairs at the same time," she said. "I couldn't afford but one pillow, and I hadn't time to make any more banners."

Bob's gift was four little towels, just the right size to slip into a traveling bag for use on trains or in railway stations, a fat little pincushion with a bow to hang it up by on

shipboard, and a little silk bag fitted with needles, bodkins, thread, darning cotton, buttons, hooks, a tiny pair of scissors, and everything else that one could need in a mending outfit.

"A cousin of mine gave it to me for a graduating present," explained Bob, when the bag had been duly admired, "but it makes me sort of tired to look at it and think how many things it would mend, and as the cousin is safe in California, and I knew Betty would take to it, I'm passing it on."

"We shall all take to it, I guess, as often as our clothes come to pieces," declared Babe. "What shall we bring you, Bob?"

"Oh, I don't know—something queer and out-of-the-way, that I can put on my dear old Harding desk or hang up on the wall above it. I don't mean a picture, but any queer old thing that you would know came from abroad the minute you set eyes on it from afar."

"Won't that be fun to hunt up," murmured Betty ecstatically, adding Bob's choice to the others. "Now, Mrs. Brooks, what shall we bring you?"

"Oh, I know what she'd rather have," cried

Babbie, leaning over to whisper something in Betty's ear and Betty laughed and wrote a few words on her paper. "It's something that we know you admire," explained Babbie, "because Mary had one nearly the same and you said you wished you were a bride, so people would give you such things. But perhaps you'd rather choose for yourself."

But Mrs. Brooks professed herself quite willing to abide by Babbie's choice. She had already told the girls that her going-away present to them was to be flowers, so "the real business of the meeting," as Bob had expressed it, was now over; and as everybody was leaving early the next morning, it seemed best to adjourn.

There was nothing dismal about the good-byes next day. Bob was the only one who would be at the steamer to wave the travelers a farewell, but the rest promised to write steamer letters, and as Roberta said, "something will turn up before long to bring us together again. Things happen so fast in the wide, wide world."

"It doesn't look as if a September reunion would amount to much," said K., "with three

school-ma'ams and a foreign resident in the crowd."

"Somebody must get married," announced Babe. "People can always manage to come to weddings. You're all going to be married sooner or later, except me and Bob—we're the man-haters' union, you know—and you might just as well be accommodating and hurry up about it."

"You're going to bring me a duke from abroad," Eleanor reminded her laughingly. "If you pick out a nice one, I may decide to use him for a husband."

"Of course we'll pick out a nice one. Won't it be fun assisting at the nuptials of a duke, girls? Grander even than the wedding of a Harding professor."

"I hereby prophesy that Babe's wedding is next on the list," cried K. gaily.

"Why, Katherine Kittredge," retorted Babe indignantly, "haven't I always said ——"

"That's the point," K. interrupted her. "Professed man-haters always marry young. There was Jane Westover and—there's my train. Besides, you owe it to the crowd to be

accommodating and abandon man-hating in the interests of matrimony and reunions." X

"My wedding next on the list, indeed!" murmured Babe angrily, as she waved her handkerchief at the departing train. "We're going to be bachelor maids, aren't we, Bob? with saddle-horses and Scotch collies instead of cats and canaries ——"

"And fresh-air children in the summers," added Bob absently. "I wonder what daddy's doing to keep Jimmie Scheverin out of mischief. Here's our train to town, girls."

CHAPTER III

OFF TO BONNIE SCOTLAND

"I CAN'T believe yet that I'm really going!" Betty Wales stood on the promenade deck of the Glasgow boat, her arms full of Mrs. Brooks's roses and Dr. Brooks's salted almonds. Will's arms were full of flowers too, and the Smallest Sister felt very important indeed because she had been entrusted with a fat package of steamer letters from Betty's Cleveland friends.

"Beginning to feel a little homesick already?" teased Will.

Betty winked hard, and mother told Will that he wasn't playing fair, and suggested that they should find the girls' stateroom and leave some of their bundles in it.

"Miss Ayres is having a hunt for her trunk," said Nan, joining them. "It isn't in your stateroom, and it doesn't seem to be on the wharf."

"Why, she said she marked it to be put in the hold," said Betty. "Has she asked if it's there?" And Will was hurried off to find Madeline and inquire.

It wasn't easy finding anybody or anything on that dock. The edges were crowded with people, the centre was filled with a confused mass of struggling truck horses and shouting drivers who were all terribly anxious to get somewhere, and didn't seem to make the least progress in spite of all their noise. Deck-hands were busy with trunks and boxes, which they fastened to a pulley and swung out over the heads of the people, and then up and down again, into the hold. Once in a while a hansom wriggled its way through the drays to let out an excited passenger, who always acted as if he had expected to find the boat gone without him.

That was the way Bob acted, as she jumped out of her hansom and ran up the gangplank, holding a small boy tight by each hand and not paying the least attention to Babe and Betty, who shrieked frantically at her from their lookout on the upper deck.

"I had to bring these," she explained

breathlessly, when the Smallest Sister had intercepted her and conducted her to her friends. "The housekeeper took two off my hands for the day and the coachman took two, but nobody would take Jimmie or Joe."

"A guy on de dock's tryin' to spiel wid ye," announced Jimmie, who had lost no time in climbing up on the ship's railing; and there, sure enough, was Mr. Richard Blake, with a fresh supply of flowers, making a megaphone of his hands and trying to ask where he should find Madeline.

"Somewhere down there," shrieked back Betty. "But you'd better come up here and wait. Babbie and Mrs. Hildreth haven't even come yet," she added to the others. "What if they should be too late?"

"Seasoned travelers never come on broad till the last minute," said Nan. "It shows that you're new to the business to be standing around like this."

"Oh, but it's such fun to watch everything," objected Babe. "I don't mind people's knowing that it's my first trip. It is, you see. What's that bell ringing for?"

Mr. Wales looked at his watch. "It means

that in five minutes more they're going to put us fellows off."

At that Babe got into a corner with her mother and father, and Betty into another with her family, leaving Bob to entertain Mr. Blake until Madeline sauntered up with the cheerful news that her trunk seemed to be lost "for keeps."

"Just send it along if you happen to run into it anywhere, Dickie," she said, and Mr. Blake promised to find it if it was anywhere in "little old New York."

When the second bell had rung and the boat began to empty of its visitors the girls remembered Babbie again and began to be really alarmed. But just as Betty was frantically trying to ask her father, who had established his party on the edge of the dock, what in the world they should do if the Hildreths didn't come, Babbie appeared, cool and serene in the prettiest of silk traveling suits. "Oh, I thought you knew we'd come on board," she apologized. "Mother's lying down and Marie is with her, and I ——" Babbie blushed prettily. "Jack is awfully shy, and he just hates to meet a lot of people, so we stayed

down below. I'm so sorry." Babbie caught sight of a tall youth shouldering his way to the edge of the wharf, and waved a big bunch of violets at him.

"I wish we could start now," said Madeline. "This shouting last speeches indefinitely isn't all that it might be. Dick looks bored to death."

"They're taking up the gangplank," announced Babe excitedly, tossing a rose to Will.

Just then a hansom drew up with a jerk, and a distinguished-looking gentleman tumbled out. Jimmie Scheverin wriggled away from Bob's firm grasp and jumped to the horse's head, and the driver called to the crowd in general to "lend him a hand" with the trunk.

"No use hurrying now. They've given you up," called somebody, and the crowd roared with laughter.

"Oh, I say, give de guy anudder chanst," cried Jimmie shrilly, and even the dignified gentleman laughed at that. He could afford to, for they were letting down the gangplank again.

"He's a prominent senator," Babe whispered eagerly. "I heard a man say so. Think of

having a boat wait for you! Well, we're off at last. Dear mummy! Goodness, father waved so hard that he almost fell into the water! Betty Wales, are you crying too?"

The wharf was backing away from them; the crowd of excited people, shouting and waving flags and handkerchiefs, was only a great blur of color now.

"Well, that's over," said Madeline gaily. "I hate good-byes. Babe, cheer up. It's only for three months, and you're going to have the time of your life. Come and get bath hours and places for our steamer chairs, and then we can explore the boat a little before it's time to eat our first and possibly our last meal afloat."

"And we must look at the mail," added Babbie, "and give most of our flowers to the stewardess to put on our table in the dining-room."

"Aren't you glad we've got some experienced travelers in the party?" laughed Babe, wiping away the tears, and taking Betty's arm she marched her off after the others. "Now how did they know that was the deck steward? I should be afraid of mixing him up with the captain."

Three days later Babe smiled loftily at the recollection of such pitiful ignorance. She had explored the ship from stem to stern, had stood on the bridge with the captain, danced with the ship's doctor, exchanged views on the weather with the senator who had kept the boat waiting, played deck golf and shuffle-board, and made friends with all the children on the ship. All this she had done the first day out. The other two she had spent forlornly in her berth, with the stewardess to wait on her, Babbie and Madeline to amuse her, when she felt equal to being amused, and Betty to keep her company.

"Betty's getting ready to come up here too," she announced on the third afternoon, tucking herself into the chair beside Babbie. "Now we can decide where we're going."

"Oh, there's time enough for that," objected Madeline lazily. "Let's enjoy the luxurious idleness of shipboard while we can."

Babbie yawned. "I don't enjoy it. A day or so is all right, but eight!"

"Specially if you're inclined to be seasick," put in Babe with feeling.

Betty appeared just then, and she agreed

with the B's. "It's all right if you're an invalid or tired, but as for me, I don't see why people talk so much about the joys of the trip across. Being cooped up so long is stupid, and makes everybody else act stupid, and it's just dreadfully dull."

"And there aren't any possibilities in it, somehow," added Babe. "Of course you may meet some interesting people, but you can't do anything but just talk to them a little and pass on."

"Like 'ships that pass in the night,' " quoted Babbie solemnly. "I always associate the people I've met on shipboard with too much to eat and no place to put your clothes."

"And seasickish headaches," added Babe. "Isn't it almost time for bouillon? The doctor told me to keep eating and I'd be all right."

"There's the bugle for it this minute," said Madeline, "and after that I propose a stunt. Let's all go off separately and see what excitement we can unearth,—who can unearth the most, I mean. I don't agree with you about the possibilities of shipboard. A town of seven hundred people certainly has possibilities, and that's what we are,—a floating

town. In order to make the contest more exciting, let's give the winner a chance to say where we shall go first from Glasgow."

"Goodie!" cried Babbie. "That's something like. I knew you'd think up things to do, Madeline. Do you two invalids feel equal to so much exertion?"

The invalids declared that after they had had their mid-afternoon repast they should feel equal to anything, and five minutes later the four chairs were deserted.

"Time limit, two hours," called Madeline, as she disappeared around the corner. "Meet in our chairs, of course."

Betty lingered a little. Madeline's plan sounded very amusing, but she hadn't much idea how to carry out her part of it. She sauntered slowly down the deck, past the row of steamer chairs, many of whose occupants smiled and nodded at her as she passed. They might be very exciting people, Betty reflected, but she should never find it out. Madeline could do that sort of thing, not she. At the end of the deck Betty stopped and leaning over the railing looked off out to sea, wondering what Will and Nan and the Smallest Sister

were doing just then. Presently her glance fell to the deck below. It was full of the queerest people. They were having a mid-afternoon lunch too,—drinking it with gusto out of big tin cups. Most of them were men, but near the cabin-door sprawled several children, and a few women, with bright-colored shawls over their heads, sunned themselves by the railing.

“Oh, that must be the steerage!” thought Betty, and didn’t know she had said it out loud until somebody answered her.

“Yes, that’s the steerage,” said a deep voice close to her elbow. “Should you like to go down and see what the steerage is like?”

Betty looked around and recognized the senator who had kept the boat waiting.

“Why—yes,” she began, blushing at the idea of talking to such a great man. “I should like to see it, only— isn’t it dreadfully dirty?”

The senator laughed. “I hope not. If it is, we needn’t stay long. You see—it’s a profound secret from the ship’s officials—but I’m going over on purpose to investigate steerages. I’m seriously thinking of coming back in one from Liverpool.”

“You are!” Betty’s eyes opened wide in amazement. “Without letting any one know who you are?”

The senator nodded. “Exactly. And by the same token I’m making this little visit to-day quite impromptu. Want to come? You can talk to the women and find out if they’re being made comfortable.”

“If this isn’t exciting, I don’t know what is,” Betty reflected, following the senator down the steps to the lower deck and past the guard,—who looked very threatening at first, but bowed profoundly when he saw the senator’s card,—into the network of low-ceiled passages beyond the tiny square of open deck. It was dirty, or at least it was unpleasantly smelly. But by the time Betty had satisfied her curiosity and would much rather have turned and gone straight back to her comfortable steamer chair, the senator had forgotten all about her, and surrounded by a group of eager men was deep in his investigation.

“I can’t interrupt, and I can’t very well skip off without saying anything,” thought Betty sadly, “because he might remember me after a while and try to find me.”

Judging by their conversation with the senator, most of the steerage passengers seemed to be men—Scotch or Irish, going back to the “Ould Country” for a visit to the “ould folks.” Betty listened a few minutes, and then went on to the end of the passage, which opened out into a room that seemed to be salon and dining-hall combined. Though this room was nearly empty, the air was close and stifling and Betty was going back to the deck to wait there for the senator, when her attention was attracted by a group of women gathered in one corner. They were standing around a little figure that sat huddled in a forlorn heap on the wooden bench along the wall. The woman—or the child, for she looked hardly more than that—hugged a baby tight in her arms, and rocked it back and forward, moaning pitifully to herself all the time.

Betty hesitated for an instant, and then went timidly up to the group. “What’s the matter?” she asked softly of one of the bystanders, a fat Irishwoman. “Can’t we do something to stop her crying like that?”

“Ah, it’s sore thruble she’s in, the pore

young crayther," explained the woman eagerly. "Her fayther and her mither and her two brothers died in the same week av the dipthery, and she's takin' her baby sister home to the ould folks. An' she's lost the money for her ticket to County Cork."

"You mean she hasn't any money at all?" asked Betty in amazement.

"Niver a cint," the sympathetic Irish-woman assured her. "Shure, 'twas lost or stolen the first day out. Anyhow 'tis gone."

"An' we've none of us ony over to be lendin' her," another woman put in. "The times is that bad, an' all."

"How much does it cost to go to County Cork?"

"A pound an' six from Derry."

"How much is that, and how do you get to 'Derry'?" asked Betty in bewilderment.

"Oh, the boat lets you off at Derry, if you're for the ould country," explained her interlocutress, "and a pound an' six is \$6.50 in the States money, miss. But she'd need a bite an' a sup on the way for her an' the babe."

The girl had apparently paid no attention at all to this colloquy. But now she lifted her tear-



"IT'S ONLY FOR HER I'M CARIN' "

stained face to Betty's and held out the baby. "It's only for her I'm carin'," she said. "I had ten dollars saved over my passage back an' the train ticket, an' that goes a long way in Ireland. The old folks are poor, too, but I thought they'd take her in for that, and what I could be sendin' them later. I couldn't tend her an' work, too, but whatever shall I do over here? There's no work at all in Ireland."

"What a darling baby!" cried Betty, as the blue eyes opened and the little red face crumpled itself into a tremendous yawn. "Why, I never saw such big blue eyes!" The little mother smiled faintly at this praise, and Betty wanted to add that big blue eyes evidently ran in the family. Instead she said, "Please don't feel so unhappy. I'll see that you have the money for the ticket to your friends, and perhaps——" Betty stopped, not wishing to promise anything for the others, though she was sure that if Babbie saw the baby's eyes she would reduce the number of dresses she meant to buy in Paris to three without a murmur.

"An' she ain't the worst off, ayther, ma'am,"

put in Betty's voluble informant. "There's an English gyurul that's sick, pore dear, in her bunk, wid an awful rackin' cough and a face as pale as death, an' it's tin cints she do be havin' to take her home to her mither that's a coster-woman in London town, an' wants to see her daughter before she dies."

"But why did she start if she didn't have enough money?" demanded Betty.

"Wudn't you, dearie, if you was dyin' and knew it?"

"Ah, here you are. Are you ready to go back?" The senator had pumped his audience dry, and remembered Betty. "Well, how is it? Do they complain of the service?" he asked, as they went back to the upper deck.

"The service—oh, I'm so sorry! I hadn't gotten around to ask them," said Betty meekly, and then burst out with the stories she had heard.

The senator listened intently, and his keen eyes grew soft, as he fumbled for his pocket-book. "That's the point, my dear young lady," he said soberly. "After all, what are two weeks' comfort or discomfort to people as poor as most of those? I saw a miserable fel-

low, too,—sick and discouraged, taking his motherless children back home before he dies. But your girl is worse off. Give her this. It will help a little.”

Betty gasped at the size of the bill, but the senator murmured something about wanting to smoke and hurried off, and there was nothing to do but go back to the others. She was the last of the quartette to reach the rendezvous.

“Two minutes late,” called Madeline as she appeared.

“That’s lucky,” laughed Betty, tucking her rug in, “because I couldn’t possibly decide where to go from Glasgow—I don’t know enough about the geography of Scotland—and my story is perfectly sure to take the prize.”

“H’m!” said Babe doubtfully. “I saw you. You needn’t be puffed up because you leaned over the railing and talked to a live senator. I’ve been talking to a live actress—there’s a whole company of them on board, Madeline, and you’ve never discovered them.”

“Which is she?” asked Babbie. “The stunning woman with the blue velvet suit?”

"No, the little mouse-like one with gray furs, and she's played with ——"

"Wait," commanded Madeline. "You've told enough for the first time round. The stunning woman in blue velvet, if you care to know, is the maid of the mouse-like actress. I've talked to her. Now, Babbie."

"Oh, I'm out of it," explained Babbie. "Marie has a sore throat, and mother wanted to be read aloud to."

"Well, the senator is only one of the people I've talked to," put in Betty eagerly. "I've been in the steerage ——"

"Oh, you lucky girl," cried Madeline. "I tried to go yesterday and got turned down. How did you get past the guard? Do tell us all about it."

So Betty "told," saving the senator's bill for a climax. At the end of the story Babbie declared that she simply must see the blue-eyed Irish baby, and Babe winked back the tears over the lonely English girl. While they were talking, some Harding girls of an older generation came up and made Madeline's Dramatic Club pin an excuse for introducing themselves. Of course they heard about

Betty's visit to the steerage, and they were so interested that Madeline had an idea.

"All the passengers would like to help those poor people, I'm sure. Couldn't we give an entertainment of some sort? There's the captain, Babe. Go ask him if he's willing."

The captain assured Babe that "any show she wanted went on his boat," the little gray-gowned actress, who had refused to appear at the ship's concert, promised that she and her leading man would act a farce, the senator volunteered to canvass the steerage for somebody to dance an Irish jig, Babbie designed some dainty souvenir programs, and the other crowd of Harding girls arranged a "stunt number" that proved to be the star feature of the evening. Betty printed the tickets, and the senator sold them all at twenty-five cents "or over," with astonishing financial results.

"That's all right," he said as he passed the money over to Betty. "There are three hundred first class passengers on this boat, but six of them are judges—they pay double—and five are colonels—it takes three tickets to get in a colonel."

"And how many to get in a senator?" laughed Betty.

"Twenty," said the senator solemnly, taking them out of his pocket.

So there was enough money to get the English girl to London, and the Irish girl to County Cork and then back to the States to work for her blue-eyed baby sister, and something over to pay the baby's board with the "ould folks," and to help out the poor man with the big family of children.

"And the best of it is, it's given us something to do," said Babe the last afternoon on board. "I don't believe I should have been seasick if we'd thought of this sooner."

"Easy to say that when land is in sight," said Madeline loftily, squinting at the horizon line.

And sure enough land was in sight and presently it turned out to be the loveliest, greenest land that the girls had ever seen.

"What is it?" demanded Babe excitedly. "An island or a country?"

None of the girls knew, but a friendly passenger explained that it was both an island and a country, for it was Ireland.

"Why, of course," cried Babe. "That's why it's so green. Is it really greener than other places, or does it only look greener because we haven't seen any other places for eight days?"

Madeline and Betty thought it was really greener, while the B's inclined to the opinion that it couldn't be—that it was the atmosphere, perhaps.

"It's certainly a queer atmosphere," said Babe, as they hurried up on deck after dinner, to see the tender full of passengers off for "Derry." "It's eight o'clock this minute, and the sunset hasn't finished up."

"See that lovely white farmhouse up on that hill," said Betty, pointing toward land. "Doesn't it look as if there were fairies in those fields, girls?"

"I don't know about the fairies," said Babe, "but I love the way the white foam breaks on the green moss. Let's go to Ireland."

"Why, we haven't decided"—chanted four voices together.

"Where we'll go from Glasgow," finished Babbie alone. "Well, it doesn't matter, because mother will have to rest a day or two

before we go anywhere. Just think! The poor thing hasn't been up on deck yet."

"And while she's resting," put in Madeline, "we can explore Glasgow and then, if she's willing, go down to Ayr. That's a nice little day trip."

"Let me see," said Babe reflectively. "Ayr—Ayr—I ought to know about it, but I don't."

"Robert Burns' country," explained Madeline briefly. "Why, that tender is really starting. Wave your handkerchiefs to the baby's sister, Betty. She's almost dropping the poor infant in her efforts to make you see her."

"I looked at the map before dinner," announced Babe proudly. "I know just where we are, and the real name of 'Derry' is Londonderry."

"I found that out too," declared Betty. "Maps are quite interesting when you're on one, aren't they? I used to hate geography in school, but from now on I shall adore it, I'm sure."

"I must go and help Marie pack," said Babbie with a last glance at the green hills,

that were turning a beautiful misty gray in the twilight.

"We've got to pack too."

"And go to bed early, because we've got to get up early."

"So as to land in Europe," finished Babe.

"Doesn't that sound too—sweet—elegant—grand for anything. Come on and get busy, girls."

CHAPTER IV

A DISILLUSIONMENT MADE GOOD

THE next morning the rising bell rang uncomfortably early, and everybody dressed and breakfasted in nervous haste, pursued by the fear of not being ready to get off the boat at the critical moment. And then there was nothing to do for an hour or so but "just wait and wait and wait," as Babe complained dolefully. Babe was dreadfully impatient to "land in Europe," and found it simply tantalizing to have to hang over the railing and look at the shores of Scotland, with the little gray town of Greenock hardly a stone's throw off. Betty, on the other hand, was willing to wait because she thought Greenock so pretty, with its curving bay, edged by a stone promenade, and its gray stone houses, all very much alike, standing in a neat row encircling the shore.

"It's a summer resort," she announced, having consulted her Baedeker, which she

had brought up on deck to see just where they were on the map of Scotland. "I wish we could stay there for awhile. It looks so quiet and quaint."

"It doesn't look very exciting to me," objected Babe. "The idea of building summer cottages of stone!"

"They aren't cottages," explained Babbie, "they're villas. Don't you know how people in English novels always go and take lodgings in a villa by the sea?"

"Oh, do let's do that," cried Betty eagerly. "It sounds so perfectly English."

"I've been looking over some Scotch addresses that Mary Brooks gave me," said Madeline, "and I think we ought to go to Oban. She and Marion Lawrence both said it was the most fascinating spot they'd ever seen. It's a seaside resort too, Betty, and the address they gave me is villa something or other, so it answers all your requirements."

"Why, that's the place mother's doctor spoke about," put in Babbie. "I told him I wanted to go to little out-of-the-way villages, and he mentioned that one. How do you get there, Madeline?"

"Why, by boat, I think Mary said. Let me take your Baedeker, Betty."

"Oh, I'm so glad she can make out trains and things," said Babbie, with a sigh of relief. "Mother can't and I can't, and it's such a bother always to have to ask the hotel people."

Presently Madeline announced that she knew just how to go to Oban by boat, and how to come back by train, and then Marie appeared with a message from Mrs. Hildreth that it was time for the girls to come downstairs and get their hand-baggage together.

"But we're not within ten miles of Glasgow yet," objected Babe, proud of her newly-acquired knowledge of the geography of the region.

"Oh, we go there from Greenock on a boat-train," Babbie told her. "And here comes a tender or a ferry, or whatever they call it, to take us ashore."

So there was only time to say good-bye to the funny old Scotch stewardess, who had told them to "Come awa'" to their baths every morning, to the other Harding girls, and to the senator, who gave Betty his card and

made her promise to let him know when she came to Washington; and then they were chug-chugging over to the Greenock station, where Madeline instructed the novices in the art of getting one's trunks through the customs, while Babbie established her mother comfortably on the train. Madeline had quite given up finding her trunk and was congratulating herself on having put so many things into her "carry-all," when she heard the senator protesting volubly that his name wasn't Ayres and that he hadn't brought a trunk anyway, whereupon she pounced joyously on her property and refused to let it out of her sight again until it had been put aboard the Glasgow train.

Betty and Babe found the train very amusing. Instead of long cars with rows of seats on either side of the aisle, there were funny little compartments, each holding eight or ten people, half of whom were obliged to ride backward whether they liked it or not. But as this train wasn't crowded, Mrs. Hildreth's party had a compartment all to themselves, and Betty and Babe were free to exclaim as much as they liked over the delightful queer-

ness of European travel. Foxgloves and chimney-pots were the two objects of greatest interest en route. Babbie discovered the foxgloves growing in a pretty little grove close by the railroad track ; the chimney-pots jostled one another on the roof of every cottage they passed, and as they came into Glasgow made such an impression on Babe that she could think of nothing else and almost fell out the window in her efforts to count the most imposing clusters.

"It's queer," she said, leaning back wearily as the train swept into a tunnel, "how nobody ever tells you about the things you notice most. Now I've talked to quantities of people who've traveled in Europe, and not one of them ever so much as mentioned chimney-pots."

"Well, now you can make yourself famous for your originality by mentioning them to everybody," said Babbie consolingly. "Here we are in Glasgow. Who's going to see about the trunks?"

"Oh, let me," volunteered Betty. "Somebody will have to show me how the first time, but I want to learn."

So Madeline and Betty went off to find the trunks and have them sent to the station hotel, where Mrs. Hildreth had decided to stay while they were in Glasgow.

"It was too comical for anything," Betty told Babe afterward. "They just dumped all the trunks and bags in a heap on the platform, and each person picked out whatever ones he pleased, and said they were his, and got a porter to carry them away for him. The English people must be very honest. Imagine doing that way in America!"

"We've been 'booked' for rooms at the hotel," said Babe, laughing over the queer word. "And that's luggage that you're carrying,—not baggage any more, please remember. So come along and have lunch and then we can go out and see the sights."

Mrs. Hildreth was quite willing that the girls should explore Glasgow without her, and spend the next day in Ayr, if they pleased.

"I don't need to worry about you," she told them, "for I'm sure you are all too sensible to do any foolish or foolhardy things. On the continent you may have to be a little

more particular, but here and in England you can do about as you like."

"I wish you could come too, Mrs. Hildreth," said Betty, when they were ready to start.

Mrs. Hildreth smiled at her. "So do I, my dear. Just as soon as I'm a little rested, I shall be delighted to go with you whenever you'll take me. I quite look forward to seeing Europe in such good company."

"Poor little mother!" said Babbie, as they went off. "She never had a chance to do as she liked when she was a girl. She always had nurses and governesses trailing around after her, and then she went to a fashionable school in Boston, where you take walks two and two and never stir without a chaperon. After that she had to 'come out' in society, though she hated it as much as Bob does, and wanted to study art in Paris. But her mother thought that was all nonsense for a girl who had plenty of money. So when I wanted to go to college mother let me, and she often says she's awfully glad that my best friends are girls who can go ahead and have a good time anywhere—not the helpless society kind."

"I say, where are we aiming for?" Babe demanded suddenly.

"For the Glasgow Cathedral," answered Madeline placidly. "This way, please."

"This way please! Follow the man from Cook's," chanted Babbie mockingly. And after that Madeline was known as "the man from Cook's," because her easy fashion of finding her way around each place they visited, whether or not she had been there before, rivaled the omniscience of the great tourist agency.

So under Madeline's capable guidance they visited the beautiful old cathedral and then took an electric tram, which is like an electric car with seats on the roof and a spiral stairway at the back leading up to them, out to the park and the art gallery. After Babe had looked at the one great treasure of the gallery, Whistler's portrait of Thomas Carlyle, she announced that she had seen enough for one day, and would wait for the others outside.

"Let's all say 'enough,'" suggested Babbie, "and go for a tram-ride. I move that the man from Cook's be censured for telling us

that it wasn't far enough out here to pay us for climbing to the top-story of the tram. Hereafter it is going to be a rule that we always ride on top."

"I should say it was," Babe seconded her eagerly. "My father owns a trolley line in Rochester, New York, and I'm going to write and tell him about this second-story idea. I'm sure people would flock from all over the country to ride up on the roof of the cars. Then he'd make piles of money and I could go abroad every summer, the way Babbie does."

"Let's just ride back to town on top," suggested Betty, "and then go and have tea at the address Mary Brooks gave us. She said it was the nicest tea-shop they went to anywhere."

This suited everybody, and they had all climbed up on the second story of the tram, and were settling themselves for the ride back, when Babbie gave an exclamation of delight. "Why, that's John Morton standing on the steps of the art gallery. Oh, do let's get off! I want to go back and talk to him. Why, I hadn't the least idea he was in Europe!"

"Oh, don't let's get down again," wailed Betty, who had stepped on her skirt-braid in climbing up, and was trying to repair damages with pins. "It's such dreadfully hard work."

"We can't," declared Madeline decisively. "We've paid our tuppences, and we couldn't get them back."

"I wish I could remember to say tuppence," sighed Babe enviously. "Who is John Morton, Babbie? Are you sure it's he on the steps?"

"Oh, I think so," said Babbie eagerly. "I wish he'd turn around again, and I could be sure. He's just the jolliest fellow, and I haven't seen him for two years. Oh, dear, we're starting!" as the tram gave a jerk and a lurch, and was off.

"Never mind, Babbie," teased Babe. "Remember your dear Jack and the touching farewell that caused us all so much anxiety. We can't be bothered with another of your suitors so soon."

"Don't apply the title of suitor to John, please," laughed Babbie, leaning over for a last look at the figure on the steps. "He's as

much of a professed woman-hater as you are man-hater, but he makes an exception of me because I like to tramp and ride horseback. You'd like him, Babe. Madeline, do you know where to get off for this tea place?"

Madeline didn't; and as the conductor didn't see fit to come up, Babbie had to climb down, while the tram was going at full speed, to find out.

"I wouldn't have missed this for anything," said Madeline, when they were settled at one of the tables in Miss Jelliff's Tea Rooms. The seats were carved oak settles, there were wonderful brass candlesticks in niches by the door, and on the tables were bunches of pale blue irises, to match the blue china. The bread was in what Babe called a "three-story revolving bread-case," the toast in a quaint little English toast-rack, and the jam, pepper and mustard in fascinating pots, while the cups, though all blue, were of different shapes and patterns.

"Let me pour the tea," begged Betty. "Which cup do you each choose?"

"I'm so glad we came," said Babe. "First maxim for travelers: When you have had

enough, stop. As I thought of that, I demand first choice of cups."

"All right," conceded Madeline. "Second maxim for travelers: When in doubt, drink afternoon tea. I demand second choice of cups."

"I shall get third choice, anyway, shan't I?" said Babbie. "So I needn't weary my brains thinking of maxims."

So Betty poured the tea, and Madeline told fortunes for all the party in the grounds, after which the smiling waitress appeared and asked them how much bread they had eaten.

"I hated to own up to five pieces," sighed Babe, "not because I begrudged the beggarly pence they cost, but because I am ashamed of my appetite. Girls, there are more rooms up-stairs."

"Let's have breakfast here to-morrow before we go to Ayr," suggested Betty. "Mrs. Hildreth won't be up early enough to eat with us at the hotel, so we might just as well come here."

"All right," agreed Babbie. "Does the man from Cook's know when trains leave for Ayr?"

He didn't, and there was a rush to find out and purchase tickets before dinner-time.

"I'm crazy to see Ayr," said Babe the next day. "I'm very fond of Burns's poems, and I can just imagine the sleepy, old-fashioned little hamlet he was born in. His birthplace and the haunted kirk and the bridges across the Doon and all the other Burns relics are out in the country, about two miles from the station. Let's buy some fruit and sweet chocolate and eat our lunch on the way. It will be a lovely walk, I'm sure."

"Along English lanes, with tall hedges on each side," added Babbie dreamily. "What a pity it's too late for primroses."

So great was their disappointment, when the train stopped at Ayr, to find themselves in a busy, prosperous, specklessly clean town, with a paved square just back of the station, where one was expected to sit and wait for the tram that ran out to the birthplace of Robert Burns once in ten minutes.

"There's nothing to do but take their old tram, I suppose," sighed Babe disconsolately. "It's no fun walking along a car-track."

Fancy this smug, bustling factory-town being Ayr! Is all Europe fixed up like this, Madeline?"

Madeline assured her that it wasn't, and Babbie declared that if Oban was horrid and new they would go straight to London by the first train. "For there's nothing horrid and new about London," she declared.

When they arrived at the house where Burns was born, Babe objected again because the thatched roof and the whitewashed walls looked so new; but the churchyard was beautiful and the "Auld Brig" picturesque, and they were just beginning to enjoy themselves, when two heavily-loaded trams came up, and soon the place was swarming with talkative Americans, most of them from the same boat that the girls had crossed on.

"It's a party," explained Babe, when she had escaped from the embraces of a pretty young girl who had taken a fancy to her on shipboard. "That fat man with spectacles is the conductor. See them all gather around him while he reads selections from Tam O'Shanter. Goodness! Wouldn't I hate to do Europe with a bunch like that!"

"Let's go back," said Babbie sadly. "Haven't we seen everything?"

"And if we hurry we may get there in time for tea at Miss Jelliff's," added Betty. "There's a room we haven't been in yet, you know."

Babbie was very quiet all the way back. As they took their places around the tea-table she announced proudly, "Third maxim for tourists: Avoid birthplaces. Now I can have first choice of cups."

"Don't you think we ought to have a maxim about avoiding conducted parties?" asked Babe, helping herself to bread.

"No," said Madeline decisively, "I don't. The kind of tourists that our maxims are intended for would know better than that without being told. Girls, do you want to know what I'm going to do next year?"

"Of course," chorused her three friends eagerly.

"Start a fascinating tea-room like this in either Harding or New York."

"But I thought you were going to live in Sorrento with your family."

"Don't all Bohemians have to be artists?"

"Then will you come back to America when we do?"

Madeline laughed at the avalanche of questions. "All good Bohemians are artists," she explained, "but not necessarily in paint. You can be an artist in tea-rooms, too, you know. I suppose I shall try to write more or less, since my family seem to expect it of me, but until I've made my everlasting reputation as a short-story writer I should like to have a steady source of income, which is a thing that most Bohemians don't have. Besides, think what fun it would be buying the china."

"It would be great," declared Babbie solemnly. "Don't you want a partner, Madeline?"

Madeline laughed. "Wait until I've broken the news to my family, Babbie. As I only thought of it this afternoon, my ideas of what I want—except this darling china—are somewhat vague."

"Well, anyhow," persisted Babbie, "let's have tea-rooms for one of the dominant interests of our trip. Don't you remember in one of Roberta's books it says that every traveler should have a dominant interest in order

to get the most profit and pleasure out of his journey."

"Well, what can the rest of us have?" asked Betty, turning her teacup upside down and twirling it around three times, ready for Madeline to tell her fortune in the mystic leaves.

"Oh, we'll get them as we go along, I guess," said Babbie easily. "I already know what mine won't be. It won't be birthplaces."

Mrs. Hildreth was much amused at the story of the day's disillusionments.

"It's very hard nowadays to get away from other American tourists," she warned the girls. "You mustn't expect to have exclusive possession of all these beautiful old pilgrimage places."

Babbie groaned. "Suppose that awful conducted party should go up to Oban on the boat with us."

"If they should dare to do such a thing, we'll wait over a day," Babe threatened savagely.

But no such drastic measures proved necessary.

"In spite of what your mother said, I verily

believe we're the only Americans on board," said Babe gleefully, as they swung out of Greenock harbor next morning. It was a glorious day, with fleecy white clouds scudding across a blue sky and the sun turning the sea to a sheet of sparkling silver. As they got further out into the Firth of Clyde the wind blew the clouds up over the sun and wrapped the craggy islands in purple mists. The scenery grew wilder and more magnificent every moment, and the girls more enthusiastic. Every time the boat stopped at a pretty watering-place or a lonely fishing village, Betty wished they could get off. "For I don't see how it can be any nicer than this around Oban," she said, "and what if it should be like Ayr?"

But all day the purple headlands grew bolder and more beautiful, and when at last Oban came into view it proved to be the crowning glory of the day's trip. The crescent-shaped bay had a great rock to guard it on one side and an ivy-covered ruin on the other. Between them the little town clung to the hills above the sea, its villas almost hidden among the trees, and a huge stone amphi-

theatre, which the girls couldn't even guess the meaning of, crowning the highest slope.

Madeline had written ahead to "Daisybank Villa," so there was a boy to meet them at the landing, take charge of their bags, and show them the way up a steep, winding road, to the house—such a pretty house, with roses climbing around the door and real Scotch daisies starring the turf of the tiny lawn.

"Oh, see the 'daisies pied,' " cried Babe in great excitement. "There's more of Robert Burns in this yard than there was in the whole of that horrid old Ayr. Do let's have dinner right off, so we can go and explore."

But dinner was at noon in "Daisybank Villa," so the pretty young housekeeper explained apologetically. What they had now was "tea,"—which meant bread and butter, even nicer, if possible, than Miss Jelliff's; hot scones and bannocks—Babe demanded the names of the blushing little waitress—the nicest orange marmalade, fresh strawberries smothered in thick cream, and tea with a "cozy" to keep the pot warm.

But the real feature of the occasion was the bell which one rang by getting up from the

table and pulling a heavy red tassel that hung behind a curtain by the door.

"Exactly as they always do on the stage," said Babe in ecstasy, manfully resisting the temptation to summon the waitress again just for the fun of pulling the bell.

"And we're living in lodgings in a villa by the sea," added Betty. "I feel like the heroine of a Jane Austen novel, and I'm going to write to Nan this very evening. She'll be so pleased to think that I've at last had a literary sensation."

After tea Babe and Madeline went out to explore Oban, while Babbie helped Marie to make Mrs. Hildreth's room comfortable, and Betty made a pretext of the letter to Nan to wait for her.

When the four girls met half an hour later on the promenade Madeline and Babe were laughing over a little adventure they had had.

"We were walking along that road off there," Babe explained, "hurrying pretty fast, because we wanted to go into that lovely ivy-covered castle and be back here in time to meet you. And as we passed two awfully nice-looking youths, one said something to the

other in Dutch, and Madeline, having spent a summer in Holland, understood it."

"And translated it into the American idiom for Babe's benefit," Madeline took her up, "as 'Get on to their stride,'—never thinking, of course, that the men also understood English. But they did, because the one who had said that in Dutch had the audacity to smile and remark to his friend in Italian that we were the first Americans he'd ever met who understood Dutch."

"And we couldn't get into the ruin," Babe went on, "because the gate was locked, so we came back and sat down here by the water to watch the sunset. And by and by they came back too, and that time they were talking English—not for our benefit either, because they didn't see us."

"Well, were they Americans after all?" asked Babbie.

"Oh, no," Madeline explained, "they were Dutch, I suppose. The Dutch are great linguists, you know."

"They looked awfully jolly," said Babe regretfully, "especially the one who admired our stride. If he'd been an American he'd have

stopped and apologized for his rude remark, and helped us climb the wall into the castle gardens. It's awfully high and it has broken glass on top just like a story-book, and you can go in only on Tuesdays and Fridays."

"How disgusting for a castle to have at-home days!" said Babbie. "I love ruins, and we passed so many nice ones on the way up. Isn't there any other near Oban, man from Cook's?"

"I'll find out in the morning," Madeline promised. "At present I feel more like bed. It's half-past nine, if it is broad daylight."

CHAPTER V

A RUIN AND A REUNION

THE next morning at breakfast Madeline announced that she had found a ruined castle for Babbie.

"The one with the ivy on it is Dunollie," she explained. "It belonged to the giant Fingal once upon a time—he's the giant that had the cave out on one of those lovely purple islands, you know. He must have either lived in this castle, or visited here often, because there is a stone in the yard that he used to tie his dog to."

"And who used to live in my castle?" inquired Babbie, making a wry face as she tasted the queer English coffee. "I don't wonder the English drink tea for breakfast rather than this horrible stuff. I'm going to have milk. Whose turn is it to ring the bell? Now, Madeline," when Betty had proudly

pulled the bell-cord, and taken her seat again, "tell us all about my castle."

"I don't know anything about it," said Madeline, "except that it is named Dunstaffnage, and it's somewhere on the shore, a few miles north of Oban. I presume our landlady can tell us just how to get to it."

"You're sure it's not on any tram-line?" inquired Babbie anxiously. "I don't want the kind of ruin that's on a tram-line, you know."

"No, it's not that kind," Madeline assured her. "You have to drive or walk to get there."

"We'll walk, of course," said Babe, and everybody agreed, though their landlady assured them it was a "right smart distance awa'."

"But ye'll be all the hungrier for your dinner," she added comfortably. "What will ye have for yer dinner?"

"Why, anything you like to give us," said Betty, to whom she had addressed her remark.

"Verra well. Lamb, perhaps, and strawberry tartlets?"

"Strawberry tartlets for mine," cried Babe,

throwing her tam-o'-shanter in the air. "We'll be back in time for strawberry tartlets, no matter how good a time we're having."

So they started briskly off to find the castle,—a merry party in tam-o'-shanters and sweaters,—for the wind fairly whistled across the moors, and it seemed more like November than July, Betty said.

"That's because Scotland is so far north," said Babe wisely. "The long twilights come from that too. It's almost like the land of the midnight sun."

"Well, it's certainly awfully cold," said Babbie. "Let's race."

So they raced down the hard white road till they had reached the graveyard that their landlady had named to them as a landmark.

"This must be the road she told us to take across the fields," said Babe, pointing to a grassy track that turned off the highroad toward the sea.

"I should call that a path, not a road," Madeline objected.

"I'll go ahead and see if there's any other turning," suggested Betty.

There didn't seem to be any, so they took

the grassy path—or tried to. A little way down it were some bars, and when they went through them into the pasture an old black cow rushed out from a clump of bushes and ran at them fiercely with her head down.

Betty and Babbie screamed in terror and scrambled back to the safe side of the fence; Madeline followed them more deliberately, and even Babe, the bold and fearless explorer of cow-pastures, finally climbed to the top of the fence, where she sat astride the highest board to await developments. The cow watched the retreat with interest and after a few minutes wandered idly off to the grassy spot where the rest of the herd were grazing.

“Come on,” said Babe encouragingly, when the cow’s back was safely turned. “She won’t come at us again, I’m sure. If she does, I’ll protect you. Hurry up, Madeline. We’ve got to find the castle and get back in time for the strawberry tartlets.”

So first Babe climbed down into the pasture, then Madeline crawled through the bars, with Babe after her and Betty bringing up the rear. But no sooner had Betty pushed safely through than the old black cow turned

her head, discovered what had happened, and charged as fiercely as before.

"Oh, dear," sighed Babe, from her perch on the fence, "she wouldn't really hurt us, I'm sure of it. She's just curious about us, Cows are awfully curious animals."

"She shows her curiosity in a very peculiar way," declared Babbie. "She doesn't want us in her pasture—that's very evident."

"Being a loyal Scotch cow, she objects to an American invasion," laughed Madeline. "See her eating away as calmly as if we didn't exist. Let's be awfully quiet getting through this time and perhaps we can cut across a corner of the pasture before she discovers us."

But they couldn't. This time Betty was the first one to follow the intrepid Babe into the enemy's country, and as soon as her head appeared between the bars the old cow stopped eating and came toward her. Then Babe had an idea.

"It's your red cap, Betty," she cried. "Hide it and see what happens."

In nervous haste Betty pulled out her hatpins and tucked the scarlet tam-o'-shanter out

of sight under her white sweater. Whereupon the black cow lowed amiably and turned her head to nip a tempting tuft of clover.

"Well, so that was what she wanted," said Babbie indignantly. "I supposed it was all a myth about cows chasing red, didn't you, Babe?"

"I didn't know," said Babe carelessly, striding through the bushes. "Anyhow, I'm mighty glad we're off. We shall never find your castle at this rate."

"Do you know," said Betty reflectively, "this is a real story-book country that we're in. Even the cows act as they do in story-books."

"Well, the roads don't," objected Madeline. "This one has come to a plain, unvarnished end, as roads and other things have a way of doing in real life. Why, it's brought us right down to the sea!"

Sure enough, they had come out on a strip of sandy beach, with a little cluster of bath houses at one end. A girl was standing in the door of one of them.

"Go ask her the way, Madeline," com-

manded Babbie. "You're the only one that can remember the name of my castle."

So Madeline went, and returned with the news that they had taken the wrong turn at the cemetery and must go back through the pasture to the road on the hill.

"Never," declared Babe firmly. "That cow would have a chance to say, 'I told you so.' She was evidently trying to tell us that we were on the wrong track. Didn't you say the castle was near the water? If so, why can't we go to it along the shore? It's a lot prettier down here."

So Madeline interviewed the bath-house girl again.

"She was very discouraging about it," she announced. "She said it was awfully rough, with nothing but sheep-trails to walk on, but we can try it if you all want to."

It was great fun walking on the sheep-trails close by the edge of the sea, with the gorse and heather that they had always read about under their very feet, and the expectation of seeing the castle as they rounded each headland. But presently they came to a fence—a

high, close-meshed wire fence with a strand of barbed wire on top.

"Looks as if it was meant to keep people out, now doesn't it?" said Babe cheerfully.

"Come and help me over," called Babbie, trying to dig her toes into the wire meshes.

"Isn't trespassing a dreadful crime over here?" asked Betty anxiously, when they had all succeeded in getting over.

"Dreadful," answered Madeline solemnly, "but the cliffs are too steep to climb, and we can't go all the way back to the beach. Besides, we haven't any guns. Trespassers are always supposed to be looking for game, I think."

Part of the way the sheep-trail led so near to the water's edge that it made Babbie dizzy, and once they had to cross a rickety little wooden bridge over a deep ravine and Betty got over only by bravely shutting her eyes and trying to believe Babe's blithe assertion that a good fat sheep, like those they saw on the hillsides, must weigh almost as much as a smallish girl. But the worst of it was, they couldn't find the castle.

"Lost: one perfectly good ruin, well off

tram-lines," chanted Babbie wearily. "The cliffs aren't steep here. Let's climb up to the highest point and see if we can't find a farmhouse where we can ask our way."

But at the same moment that they discovered the farmhouse they saw the castle—or rather a thickly wooded point where Babe was sure it was hidden, so they pushed straight on without stopping to make inquiries. A low stone wall separated the wood from the moorland, and Babe was just stepping over it, when she stopped and gave a funny little exclamation.

"Our Dutchmen," she said to Madeline. "They must be the wardens of the castle. Anyhow they're camping in the wood."

"Can't we go on?" inquired Babbie anxiously.

"Of course," said Madeline with decision. "Baedeker would have told us if it hadn't been open to tourists. Come on, Babbie."

The four had climbed the wall and were walking demurely through the wood, politely keeping as far as possible from the tent, when Babbie happened to catch sight of Babe's and Madeline's Dutchmen, who had been lying

comfortably on the ground in front of their tent, and now were sitting up, apparently quite absorbed in the books they were reading.

"Dutchmen indeed!" said Babbie coolly. "Why, it's John Morton. Oh, Jackie Morton!" she raised her voice. "What are you doing camping out in the enchanted wood of my castle?"

At this one of the campers dropped his book, stared in the direction from which Babbie's voice had come, and jumping up came quickly toward her.

"Well, this is funny," he declared, wringing her hand, "because I was just thinking about the jolly summer we had up at Sunset Lake and wishing the same old crowd was here to tramp over the moors and picnic and sail and have bully times together."

Babbie laughed and introduced him to Babe, Betty, and Madeline, and he, in his turn, called to his companion to come and meet everybody.

"It's my tutor—Max Dwight," he explained hastily in an aside to Babbie. "He's just out of college himself, and he's a mighty good

sort, if he does try to keep me everlastingly plugging. I say, Babbie, are you through school yet?"

"Through college," Babbie corrected him with dignity. "We're all Harding 19—'s."

"Gee!" John's face expressed deep concern. "I'm scared. Girls frighten me to death anyhow, and four B. A.'s! Let's stroll off somewhere by ourselves and talk."

"Nonsense!" laughed Babbie. "College girls aren't blue-stockings nowadays. Why aren't you a B. A. yourself, John? You were going to be a junior the year after that summer in the mountains."

John nodded. "I got flunked out of my class," he explained carelessly. "I suppose girls never get into that fix, but plenty of fellows do,—bright ones at that."

"Why, John Morton!" Babbie's tone was very scornful. "I didn't think you were that kind. Oh, yes, some Harding girls get flunked out, but none of our crowd would. We've got too much pride."

"That's all very well to say," John returned sulkily. "You went to college because you wanted to, I suppose. I went

because my father wanted to and couldn't, so he made me. I got as much fun out of it as I could, and did as little work, and I don't care what you think about it."

"Oh, yes, you do," said Babbie coolly. "You care a lot." Then she smiled and held out her hand. "Don't let's quarrel this morning. If you look so glum the girls will think all I've said about your being such a jolly lot is a fairy-tale. I caught a glimpse of you in Glasgow, you know, and I wanted to climb down from the top of a two-story tram to rush back and speak to you. But the tram started just then and I couldn't."

John laughed. "Wanting to climb down from the top of a tram to see a fellow is certainly a proof of true friendship. We'll have our quarrel out some other day."

"All right," Babbie agreed, leading the way back to the others. "But you'd better settle your score with Babe and Madeline right away."

"Settle with Babe and Madeline," repeated John. "What do you mean?"

"You're really even," Babbie pursued, not wanting to embarrass John immediately after

their reconciliation, "because if you commented on their stride, they came home and told Betty and me about meeting some Dutchmen."

"Oh, I say!" John's face lighted and then he blushed, as he recognized Babe and Madeline. "You were the ones we met on the parade. I'm very sorry. So few people know Dutch, and you were sprinting, you know."

The girls declared that he was quite excusable, but Babbie warned him that he wouldn't be safe in using even Bengali when Madeline was around.

"And I shall have to be careful of you," said Madeline. "Where did you learn so many languages, Mr. Morton?"

"Oh, dad's in an importing business with branches all over the world, and his agents sometimes come to New York. I like to go down to the warehouses and talk to them, and I can manage to say a little in ten different languages. It's positively my only accomplishment," added John modestly.

"And now please show us over my castle," Babbie demanded.

"May I ask by what right you claim the

ownership of Dunstaffnage?" asked Mr. Dwight laughingly.

"Oh, I wanted a ruin," explained Babbie, "and Madeline—Miss Ayres—picked this one out for me. But I shan't accept it unless it's a perfectly lovely one."

"It is, though," John assured her. "As far as I know, it can't be beaten anywhere in Europe. How did you girls happen to come in by the back way?"

"We were glad enough to get here by any way," laughed Babe. "Is this the back entrance, and are you the wardens of it?"

"No, but we're the proud possessors of a permit from the owner to camp on his premises," said John. "We got tired of the Oban hotels, and liked this beech-wood and the castle so much that we wanted to board near by. The people at the farm down the road that you should have come by were willing to feed us, but hadn't any extra rooms, so I suggested a tent—I camped all last summer up in Canada—and here we are. If you're going to be lady of the castle, Babbie, you'll have to let us be its lords."

"All right," agreed Babbie, leading the way

along a mossy path between the tall beeches. Presently she gave an exclamation of dismay. "Oh, but it's such a very small castle! I thought it would be big and have a rampart and a moat."

"That's only the chapel, silly," John explained. "The castle is farther on."

"A chapel! Oh, what a darling one!" cried Betty. "I want the chapel for mine, Babbie. You can have the castle."

"I approve your taste, Miss Wales," said Mr. Dwight. "I think that little ivy-covered ruin, hidden among the trees, is lovelier than any castle. Come inside and see the stones."

"Whose graves are they?" asked Betty, following Mr. Dwight across the broken threshold.

"They're not legibly marked, except this one. Some of the ancient owners of the castle, I suppose."

"Who did own it?" asked Betty eagerly.

"The old Scottish kings, first of all. They held their court here for hundreds of years, and kept the famous coronation stone here—the one that's now in Westminster Abbey—until the Norwegians got to be too much for

them and they moved the stone to Scone. Then the Norwegians took Dunstaffnage, and after them, their descendants, the Lords of Argyll and Lorne. In Bruce's time Alexander of Argyll and his son John of Lorne were bitter enemies of the king and almost overthrew him. But Bruce conquered John in the Pass of Brander, close by here, and shut up old Alexander in his own castle. So the family lost their lands to the crown, though they lived on here for over a century longer, and James, Earl of Douglas, met the heads of the family here and tried to induce them to join his cause. In more modern times Flora Macdonald was imprisoned here for helping bonnie Prince Charlie to outwit his enemies and escape to France."

"How interesting!" said Betty eagerly. "It just gives you thrills to think that you're standing on such historic ground, doesn't it? Now I want to see the castle."

While Betty and Mr. Dwight had been talking in the chapel, Babbie had hurried the others through the wood and around to the front of the castle where the entrance was.

"They couldn't have doorways on the side

toward the sea," John explained, "because the enemy would have come in small boats, crept up through the wood in the dark, and surrounded them."

"We can go inside, can't we?" asked Babbie eagerly, and by the time Betty appeared, Babbie and John were perched on the narrow ledge that ran almost all the way around the top of the crumbling castle wall.

"It's great!" Babbie cried to the rest, making a trumpet of her hands. "You can see ever so far. Come up, all of you!"

So the rest, who had dropped down on the grass to rest after their long walk, climbed the narrow, steep stone stairway and emerged on the ledge.

As Babbie had said, it was "great" up there. The castle stood on a promontory at the mouth of a beautiful loch—which, as the girls had already discovered on their way up to Oban, often means simply an arm of the sea, of which, owing to the irregularity of the coastline, there are a great many in Scotland. You could see far up the loch in one direction and out to the open sea in the other, and in the background loomed great, mist-shrouded



"COME UP, ALL OF YOU"

peaks, wild and terrible, with stretches of lonely moorland in the nearer distance.

"What is this?" asked Babe, pointing to a rusty iron standard fastened to the top of the castle's sea-wall.

"That's a beacon-holder," Mr. Dwight told her. "In the good old days of the Border Wars, this castle used to be a station in the chain of signal fires. They fastened a bundle of fagots into that frame and set them on fire, and the chief in the castle over there on one of those purple islands, and the clan gathered on the slope of Ben Cruachan, that highest peak up at the head of the loch, saw the fire, and knew what it meant."

"What did it mean?" demanded Babe.

"Different things at different times," explained Mr. Dwight, "but generally death and pillage for somebody."

Babbie gave a little sigh of satisfaction. "How lovely! I accept my castle, Madeline, with many thanks. I wish it had some rooms down-stairs to explore, and a dungeon, but it's very nice just as it is. It's so absolutely unspoiled."

"It certainly doesn't look much like that

dreadful cottage at Ayr," laughed Betty. "Did you go to Ayr, Mr. Morton?"

John nodded. "Silly little place, isn't it? I say, Babbie, there is one thing that this castle lacks. Dwight and I were talking about it this morning before you came. Don't you know what it is?"

Babbie considered, frowning. "No, I don't, and it isn't nice of you to pick flaws in my castle, John."

"I'm not picking flaws," retorted John. "I'm just calling your attention to any little defects I've noticed, so that you won't accept your castle in ignorance and live to repent your rash act later. Can't any of you guess what I mean?"

"I can," said Madeline promptly. "It ought to have a ghost. No castle is complete without one. But are you perfectly sure this hasn't any?"

"I'm afraid it hasn't," said John solemnly. "We've been here three nights now, and no ghost has walked so far. Besides I consulted the family who live in the farm attached to the castle, and they stoutly deny the existence of a ghost."

"Oh, but that doesn't prove anything," declared Madeline. "Don't you know that the lords of the castle and their retainers always deny the existence of a ghost? They regard it as a blemish on the property."

"How absurd of them," sighed Babbie. "Oh, dear, now that you've mentioned it, I do want my castle to have a ghost, and I believe it has one, too. Who knows about the history of Dunstaffnage? Wasn't anybody ever murdered here, or didn't some beautiful lady pine away for love? Those are the most likely kinds of ghosts, aren't they, Madeline?"

Madeline nodded. "When we get back to Oban, we'll try to find a history of the castle and perhaps we can unearth a ghost for you."

"Oh, Mr. Dwight!" Betty and Mr. Dwight held a whispered conference, then she turned to Babbie.

"We've thought of a ghost for you. Her name is Flora Macdonald. She was imprisoned here once, because she had tried to help bonnie Prince Charles to escape, after there was a price set on his head."

"And now she walks in the beech-wood?" asked Babbie eagerly.

Betty looked questioningly at Mr. Dwight. "She ought to," he said laughingly, "since the fair lady of the castle wishes it. I'll inquire more particularly of the farm people and let you know next time you pay a visit to your domain."

"I suppose we ought to be going back now," said Babbie regretfully, leaving her comfortable perch on the castle-wall.

"I should think so. We've forgotten the strawberry tartlets," cried Babe in tragic tones. "It's half-past twelve now, and our dinner is at one."

"You can't possibly make it," said John. "You'd better stay and have a bite with us at the farm. It isn't elegant, but everything tastes good, and you must be famished."

"We are," sighed Madeline.

"But we've got to go back for our own dinner," declared Babe sternly. "Miss MacNish suggested the tartlets on purpose to please us, you know, and it wouldn't be nice of us not to go back. It's only three miles by road, Mr. Morton says, so we ought to be there by a quarter past one."

"You won't even stop for a drink of milk?" urged John.

Babbie shook her head. "It would take too long. Come and see us, John, and you too, Mr. Dwight. We're at Daisybank Villa. I don't know the street, but you can ask."

"Oh, we'll find it all right," John assured her. "I say, can't we take some trips together, or some tramps?"

"Of course," Babbie promised him, hurrying after the others. "We'll arrange it when you come."

John looked after the party admiringly. "I like their spirit," he said to Mr. Dwight, "going back so as not to disappoint their landlady. Babbie Hildreth is always like that—just as fair and square as any fellow you can name. She's jolly too—if she did graduate from college. I say, Dwight, I'm much obliged to you for giving me the morning off, and I'll make up for it this afternoon, sure enough."

Which was such an unprecedentedly docile attitude on the part of John Morton that his bewildered tutor hoped Babbie Hildreth and her friends would continue to stay in Oban and exercise their beneficent influence.

CHAPTER VI

SCOTCH MISTS

NEXT day it rained—a dismal, drizzling sort of rain that acted as if it never meant to stop.

“I suppose this is a Scotch mist,” said Babe dolefully at breakfast. “Of course we ought to enjoy it, as an experience of real Scotch weather, but for my part I prefer a good rattling American rain-storm.”

“We shouldn’t want to take another long walk to-day, even if it were pleasant,” said Betty consolingly. “I shouldn’t at least. Sprinting home after the strawberry tarts made me horribly lame.”

“Me too,” sighed Babbie. “Also it made a hole in my shoe—the only pair I have that are right for rough walking.”

“Let’s put on rain-coats and go hunting a cobbler,” proposed Madeline.

“And a history of Dunstaffnage,” added

Babbie. "I asked Miss MacNish if there was a library in Oban and she said no ; so we shall have to find a book-store."

"We can buy post-cards too," put in Betty. "This is just the right kind of day for writing letters."

So they tramped blithely down the hill and wandered in more leisurely fashion along Oban's one business street.

"There's a shoe-shop," announced Babe presently. "And it says in the window 'Repairing done while you wait.'"

"Goodie!" exclaimed Madeline. "Then I shall have my sole patched, too. It's worn terribly thin on these stony Scotch roads."

The smiling saleswoman showed the girls into a tiny back room, where Madeline could sit while she waited "with one shoe off and one shoe on." Babbie stayed to keep her company, and Babe and Betty went off to buy post-cards, promising to come back before long with sweet chocolate for the captives.

"This looks like a book-store," said Babe, stopping before a little shop with magazines in the window. "We might inquire about the history of Babbie's castle."

A severe-looking, heavily bearded old gentleman came out from a back room to meet them. No, this was not a book-shop, he explained gruffly; it was a stationer's; there were two book-shops at the other end of the esplanade.

Just then Betty caught sight of some post-cards. "Oh, what lovely cards!" she cried. "Here's one of Dunollie, and one of Dunstaffnage, and oh—here's that lovely gray beach that we came down to from the black cow's pasture. Caernavan Sands is its name. Doesn't that sound romantic?"

"My cairds are hand-teented," said the old stationer in broad Scotch. "They are tuppence ha' penny each. Not that it mak's ony deeference to you, maybe."

"Tuppence ha' penny," repeated Babe meditatively. "That's five cents—cheap enough for hand-colored ones, I'm sure."

Betty picked out the cards she wanted from the rack, and then noticed more piles behind the counter.

"Oh, are there some others back there?" she asked. "May I see them, please?"

The old gentleman said something which Betty mistook for permission to go behind the

counter and look ; but as she started to do so he barred her way.

"No, no, madam," he said sternly. "You can go wherever you like in your own country, but in my shop you stay where you belong."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said Betty meekly. "I thought you said I might see them. I'm very, very sorry."

"I said I wad bring ye the ones that were deeferent from those in the rack," said the old man, glaring at poor Betty from under his beetling eyebrows.

"Let's not buy his old cards," muttered Babe indignantly in Betty's ear.

But Betty smiled and shook her head. "They're too pretty to lose," she whispered. "We should be just spiting ourselves."

By this time the old Scotchman seemed to be a little mollified, and condescended to ask the girls what trips they had taken from Oban and to show them some views of Glencoe, a beautiful mountain pass, and of Iona, the island where Saint Columba's church is, both of which he recommended them to visit. Babe listened in sulky silence, leaving Betty

to answer his questions and thank him for his advice.

"Come again, leedies," he said, as they went out, and Betty thanked him politely for that, too.

"Hateful old thing!" cried Babe, when they were once more outside. "The idea of talking that way to us, just because we're Americans. What has he got against America, I should like to know?"

"Never mind him," said Betty soothingly. "His post-cards are perfectly lovely. Now let's get the sweet chocolate for those poor hungry girls."

"Oh, what fascinating little cakes," cried Babe rapturously, stopping before a pastry-cook's window. "Don't you suppose they'd rather have those than just ordinary sweet chocolate? It would be such fun buying them."

"It's fun buying anything over here with this queer English money," laughed Betty. "Doesn't it seem to you just like toy money, Babe?"

Babe nodded. "And when I spend it I don't feel as if I were spending real money at all. It's the loveliest feeling that whatever

you buy doesn't matter a bit, as long as toy money will pay for it."

"Let's buy four of the buns and three of the chocolaty ones and an odd one for you, because you don't like chocolate," said Betty, returning to the cakes.

They got back to the shoe-shop, with their bag of cakes, just in time to find Madeline tying on her mended shoe.

"Let's save the cakes till we get home," she proposed. "We can eat them while we're reading about Flora Macdonald. Oh, let me see your post-cards. What beauties! Show us where they came from, this minute."

"All right, only prepare to be insulted if you go inside," said Babe, and she told the story of their experience.

"Crusty old party, isn't he?" said Madeline. "Oh, I know what! I can do a beautiful English accent. I'll go in and make him think I'm English. Then he'll talk to me confidentially about America."

"But then I shan't have any cards," objected Babbie forlornly.

"Oh, I'll bring you some," Madeline promised her. "Wait for me——"

"In that Scotch plaid store over there," supplied Babe, who never let an interesting shop escape her notice.

There were golf capes in the store, tweed ulsters—"Just the thing for a Scotch mist," said Babbie, shivering in her natty silk rain-coat—beautiful little kilted suits for small boys to wear, and best of all, a proprietor resplendent in full Scotch regalia—kilted skirt, "golf" stockings, green coat, and the insignia of his clan dangling from a belt around his waist.

"Did you ever see anything so gorgeous," murmured Babbie under her breath. "These plaid silk squares will make lovely bags, girls. I'm going to buy a Macdonald one, in memory of Flora. I do hope she will turn out to be the ghost of my castle."

So Babbie timidly approached the majestic figure in plaids, who bowed affably and did up the silk square as neatly as any ordinary salesman, talking pleasantly meanwhile about the rain and the war-ship that had appeared that morning in the harbor.

The transaction was barely completed when Madeline came back, laden with post-cards and bursting with merriment.

"I took him in completely," she said. "He told me all about you two and how you acted as if you owned Oban and his shop, and how the Americans are all millionaires and are spoiling the town, running about everywhere, asking senseless questions and not respecting any one's privacy."

"Wouldn't he have enjoyed seeing us get over that chicken-wire fence?" said Babe viciously.

"And wouldn't he be wild if he heard Babbie refer to Dunstaffnage as her castle?" added Betty.

"Well, as an impartial person who hasn't seen him," put in Babbie, "I think there's a good deal in his ideas. Lots of American tourists are frights. Wouldn't you be mad, if you lived in Ayr, to see them swarming around the Burns relics and turning the town into pandemonium every pleasant day all summer?"

"I certainly should," admitted Babe, "but all the same I wouldn't be rude about it. I'd move away."

"Oh, but perhaps you couldn't," began Betty seriously. "If you were old, you know, and your business was there——"

Whereupon the other three burst into peals of laughter at her earnestness, and couldn't sober down even at the prospect of scandalizing the bookseller as much as they had the crabbed old stationer. But the bookseller proved to be a brisk young fellow with an eye for trade, and no national prejudices. He sold them two paper-covered guides to the region around Oban, which, he assured them, would tell them all about Flora Macdonald, and all about Dunstaffnage castle as well. He too had post-cards, and Babe bought some, "on principle," she explained, because he was so very agreeable to Americans.

After dinner it rained harder than ever, so the girls gathered in Miss MacNish's parlor, the use of which, they had discovered, went with "lodgings." They had exhausted the guide-books, written on most of their post-cards, decided to go to Iona on the first pleasant day, if there ever was one, and were beginning to feel very dull indeed, when Miss MacNish's funny little maid appeared to say that there were two gentlemen downstairs; and should she bring them right up?

"It's John and Mr. Dwight, of course," said

Babbie gleefully. "Isn't it jolly of them to come all this way through the rain to see us?"

"We got drowned out," John explained. "It's the first rain since we began to camp, and we found it most horribly wetting. So we folded our tent like the Arabs, silently stole with it to the farmer's barn, and took up our quarters at the hotel nearest Daisybank Villa. And here we are."

"Wad ye like an early tea for your friends?" inquired Miss MacNish, smilingly appearing in the doorway; and Babbie said yes, if it was perfectly convenient.

"We were hoping you'd ask us to tea," confessed Mr. Dwight laughingly. "We've become horribly bored with each other's society, haven't we, J.?"

"And we were getting bored with ours," retorted Madeline. "A rainy day is a dreadful strain on the tourist's temper, isn't it?"

"Well, don't you think it's going to clear up to-morrow?" demanded John anxiously. "Because if it does, and if Mrs. Hildreth doesn't object, we were hoping you'd go on some sort of excursion with us."

"How jolly!" cried Babbie, and suggested

Iona. But the men had been there, and John objected to going anywhere in a crowd.

"What I meant was to go off somewhere just as we did that summer in the woods, not looking for scenery or for storied castles, but just for a jolly good time and a good tramp—or a drive if you girls prefer that."

Babbie twisted her face into an expression of puzzled amusement. "Oh, John Morton, you are so funny," she gasped. "You mean you want to forget you're in Scotland and pretend you're in America, so you can go on a plain American picnic."

"I object to plain," said John promptly. "I insist on having extra-super eats on any picnic that I honor with my presence. Stop laughing, Babbie. I don't see anything so funny in wanting to go on a picnic."

"Well, probably there isn't," admitted Babbie, "only I never went on one before in Europe, and I never heard of any one else who did. But I think it will be great fun."

"And that's what we're here for," added Madeline promptly. "We're not the kind of tourists who bore themselves with solid days of ruins and museums and galleries that they'd

never think of visiting if they were in New York. We hope to improve our minds when it's perfectly agreeable, but we're all against cramming."

"Why, Madeline Ayres," cried Betty eagerly, "you know you were the worst crammer in 19—."

"The best, you mean, my child," Madeline corrected her. "Well, now that I'm a full-fledged B. A., I see the error of my ways, and I am resolved not to cram on the British museum when we get to it."

"Everybody stop disputing," commanded Babe, "and decide about the eats."

"Let's cook something," suggested Madeline. "I hate cold luncheons."

"It's just the weather for a bacon-bat," said Betty.

"Then let's have one by all means," Mr. Dwight seconded her. "I don't know what it is, but it certainly sounds appetizing."

"It's great," Babe assured him. "You roast the bacon on sticks, and have rolls and pickles and things to go with it, and coffee, of course. We used to have them all winter in Harding when it wasn't too snowy."

"All right," said John, "a bacon-bat it shall be. We'll get the things in the morning when we start off. Now the next question is, shall we walk or ride?"

"Let's walk," said Babe. "We're all crazy over walking. Unless—would your mother go if we rode, Babbie?"

But Mrs. Hildreth, who appeared just then, having heard from Miss MacNish about the early tea, said she was sure that even if it cleared off in the morning it would be too damp for her idea of a picnic, so it was finally decided to walk.

As soon as tea was over, John declared that he must go. "Got to bone this evening to make up for taking part of to-morrow morning off," he explained, blushing and looking sheepishly at Mr. Dwight.

"I'm glad to see that you pay in advance for your fun, John," said Mrs. Hildreth. "It's the best way."

"I guess you're right, Mrs. Hildreth," said John. "Anyhow I'm experimenting on it just at present. We'll be here at eleven sharp, Babbie."

Next morning every one of the girls got up

long before Daisybank's breakfast hour to have a look at the weather. At least it wasn't raining, and the sun might come out by eleven.

"Besides, who cares for the weather?" inquired Babe calmly, lacing up her heaviest shoes. "We can't waste another day moping around indoors."

"We'd better take the 'last resorts' though," said Betty. "The wood will all be wet."

"Lucky mother insisted on bringing two of them," said Babbie. "Now we can have one for the bacon and one for the coffee."

The sun wasn't shining at eleven; indeed the sky was very gray, and John and Mr. Dwight looked dubious as they turned in at Daisybank Villa. But they were pleasantly disappointed at finding the four girls arrayed in sweaters and tam-o'-shanters, all ready to start.

"We've bought the lunch, too," explained Babe, thrusting a bulky parcel into John's arms. "We thought we shouldn't have any too much time to get well out into the country before it was time to eat."

When they had gone about two miles across the moors, John, who was ahead with Betty,

stopped short. "Did you make it a bacon-bat?" he demanded anxiously.

"Yes," answered Betty.

"Weren't we elected to make it that?" asked Madeline.

"Then we shall starve," declared John tragically. "Look at your skirts. How are we going to make a fire with everything dripping wet like this?"

"Oh, is that your trouble!" Babe gave a sigh of relief, which the others echoed. "Why, we've brought the 'last resorts' along. You don't know what they are, do you? It's private Harding slang. Let's camp on the top of that lovely steep cliff, with the purple heather on top of it, and then we'll show you about 'last resorts.'"

So they settled themselves on the rocks, Babe produced the two chafing-dish lamps, and a flask of alcohol from somewhere inside her sweater,—she and Bob always tucked things away in mysterious places to leave their hands free,—and Mr. Dwight obligingly held the coffee-pot over one lamp, while Babbie arranged the table on a flat rock, and the rest threaded thin slices of bacon on to pointed

sticks and squabbled merrily for a chance to hold them near the flame of the other lamp. Miss MacNish had given them scones instead of rolls, and raspberry tartlets for dessert, so it wasn't quite an American picnic after all. But it was a perfectly satisfactory one, John declared.

"Are all Harding girls like your crowd?" he asked Babe on the way home.

Babe considered laughingly. "How do you mean?"

"Oh, jolly, and up to things, not minding if you get your skirts wet going 'cross country, and knowing about 'last resorts,' and all that."

"Well, of course we always thought we were a little jollier than any other crowd," Babe explained modestly. "We called ourselves 'The Merry Hearts,' you know, and we had all the fun there was going, I guess—especially Bob Parker and Babbie and I."

John's face darkened suddenly. "I thought from something Babbie said—did you go in hard for honors and all that?"

"I didn't," said Babe sturdily. "I just managed to keep along. I'm not a bit clever,

you see, but the others are—except Betty, perhaps, and she was always right up in her work. Helen Adams and Madeline were prods. in lit. and themes, and Eleanor Watson was fine in everything after she settled down to work. Babbie was the brightest kind of a star in the languages, and Bob and K. Kittredge were in all the scientific societies. Oh, and Roberta Lewis was a wonderful actress and Rachel Morrison was considered the best all-around student in 19—. Everybody but me was in Clio or Dramatic Club.”

“I think you were wise to stay out,” said John carelessly. “I don’t believe in killing yourself with work, just for a few empty honors.”

“Empty honors!” Babe’s brown eyes flashed. “Do you think honors are empty in a girl’s college? I should like to have been a star too, I can tell you. I never got a condition, but once I was warned and I had several low-grades. I was just awfully ashamed of them. I hate messing things.” Babe paused, suddenly remembering that Babbie had said vaguely that Mr. Dwight was coaching John Morton for some examina-

tions, and that John had spoken of having work to do. "I hope I haven't hurt your feelings," she murmured. "Babbie said you were studying—you said—well, anyhow I never thought that maybe you'd flunked some courses. I'm sorry. Call it quits for what you said about my walk, won't you?"

"I thought you were even for that already. How about having thought I was a Dutchman?"

"I never," said Babe laughingly. "That was Madeline. I've never seen a Dutchman that I know of, so I couldn't think either way."

"All right then. Anyhow I don't mind your saying what you think. Yes, I did flunk—got to do senior year over again. You see I went with a crowd of fellows who were just there for the fun of it, and I got careless and began coaching too late. I believe you're right about messing things."

"John, Miss Hildreth wants to see her castle by moonlight," called Mr. Dwight. "Do you think we could arrange it?"

"Why, there's nothing to hinder if the moon's willing—she is, isn't she? Unless

Mrs. Hildreth objects, at least. We could drive out right after tea, or we could drive out in the afternoon and have tea there. What do you say, Babbie?"

Babbie refused to be interested in tea. "I'm hoping my ghost will walk," she explained. "I don't think you gave her a fair trial. Ghosts prefer to walk by moonlight; it's so much more becoming."

"We'll go day after to-morrow," said Mr. Dwight. "That's the night for a full moon."

"And we'll give the ghost the fairest kind of a fair trial," added Madeline, and immediately engaged in a low-toned conversation with Mr. Dwight, who was convulsed with merriment at something she told him. The two kept quite by themselves all the rest of the way home, and when Babe demanded to know the joke, they only smiled mysteriously and said it would take too long to explain.

CHAPTER VII

THE GHOST OF DUNSTAFFNAGE

“WILL I chaperon a moonlight expedition to your castle? Babbie dear, what mad scheme will you think of next?”

Babbie gave her mother a loving little hug. “I didn’t think of it all by myself—we all thought of it together, including John and Mr. Dwight. Isn’t it a nice idea, mummie? Aren’t you crazy to see your daughter’s castle by the witching light of the full moon?”

Mrs. Hildreth laughed and hugged Babbie. “I certainly am. It’s extremely interesting to have a castle in the family. You’re sure you’re not finding Oban dull, girls? I’m quite rested now from the voyage, and we can go on to London and Paris as fast as you like.”

“Oban dull!” echoed four amazed voices.

“Why, mummie, it’s perfectly splendid!” Babbie explained eagerly. “You must come with us this morning and see the cottages

back behind the hill—they're just smothered in honeysuckle. And yesterday we found where the shooting that we hear so often comes from. There's a target back there, and funny little soldiers in plaids—think of fighting real battles in kilts, mummie!—shoot at it every afternoon."

"And Sunday Mr. MacNish is going to take us to a Gaelic service at the Free Kirk," put in Betty. "He's lent Madeline a Gaelic primer, so she can learn to say good-morning to the people at the church in their own old-time language."

"This is an open day for Fingal's castle," suggested Madeline. "Mrs. Hildreth ought to see that, so she can compare it with yours, Babbie."

"Come on, dear. Get your hat this very minute," Babbie commanded. "When you're traveling with four B. A.'s you can't waste time."

"'B. A.'s Abroad'—wouldn't that be a nice title for the journal Madeline is keeping for us?" suggested Babe. "It's so—so—what do you call a thing that sounds like that?"

"Alliterative," answered Betty promptly.

"I looked up that word in the fall of freshman year because Mary Brooks said it about Katherine Kittredge of Kankakee."

"But if we have that title," objected Babbie, "we shall have to live up to it. I read over the Glasgow chapter last evening, and it sounds pretty frivolous for B. A.'s."

"Frivolous!" sighed Madeline, "when I put in all Babe's lofty sentiments about the poetry of Burns, and a whole paragraph on our interest in Gothic architecture. Besides, why shouldn't we be frivolous now and then? Nobody can accuse us of not seeing what's to be seen, and think how industriously we've read up on Flora Macdonald."

"For fun," objected Babe.

"If you can make play out of work you've learned the art of true happiness," declared Madeline. "Isn't that the gospel of Bohemia and of Harding, as I've been expounding it for four long and weary years? By the way, Mr. Dwight said he might be up this afternoon, so I suppose I'd better not go out until later."

"You and Mr. Dwight are getting awfully chummy," said Babe. But it was no fun

teasing Madeline about men, because she never cared enough even to listen to what one was saying. Now she answered coolly that it was lucky Mr. Dwight hadn't made his announcement more general, since it had turned out to be such a perfect afternoon for a walk. After the rest were safely out of the way she went to find Miss MacNish, who looked very much amazed when Madeline explained what articles she wanted, but got them for her all the same, and helped her do them up into a neat parcel, which Mr. Dwight smuggled out through the garden just as the others were coming in by the front gate.

At four o'clock the next afternoon John drew up the finest pair of horses to be hired in Oban with a grand flourish in front of Daisybank Villa, and Mr. Dwight helped Mrs. Hildreth and the girls to climb into the high seats of the trap, while Miss MacNish stowed away a tea-basket and all sorts of inviting looking boxes and bundles under their feet.

"Do ye ken that all American lassies are like these?" she asked her little maid, as they stood at the gate waving a farewell

to the picnickers. "They're verra nice lodgers—but they do take some crazy notions," she added grimly, remembering Madeline's confidence of the afternoon before.

"I'm glad we have plenty of time to-day," said Babbie, with a little sigh of satisfaction, when, after a brisk drive, they drew up in the castle yard. "I want to go all through the beech-wood, and climb down the cliffs to the edge of the water, and sit on the parapet and imagine that I'm a Norwegian princess waiting for her lover who's coming from across the sea in a little boat with a white sail."

"Goodness, how romantic!" sniffed Babe. "Where are we going to have tea?"

"Mrs. Hildreth, you decide that," said John. "When you've chosen a spot we'll pile the baskets and things near it, and then I'm going back to the farm to get an armful of wood for the signal-fire. Your forest is too well kept, Babbie. There are no twigs on the ground for the convenience of the shipwrecked mariner who wants to signal the nearest dwelling for help. It's a shame."

"Miss Ayres and I will get your wood,"

suggested Mr. Dwight. "I've promised to take her to the farm to see if any of the family knows how to speak Gaelic."

"All right," agreed John. "I'm not a bit keen for carrying wood. Be sure you bring enough, though; we want a rattling big signal, you know. Now Mrs. Hildreth, let me show you the chapel."

It was a delightful go-as-you-please picnic. Babe went wading in a pool after sea-anemones. Betty lay on a sunny slope dreaming of all the good times she had been having and was going to have all summer. Madeline and Mr. Dwight sat on the parapet and quarreled amicably over the right way to "lay" a signal-fire. Babbie and John conducted Mrs. Hildreth over the castle domain, and when she was tired they decorated the tea-table—a slab of rock on a sunny slope by the sea—with sprays of white heather, which is supposed always to bring good luck to those who wear it. After tea they all sat together watching the sunset, while Madeline told them a quaint folk-tale that an old grannie at the farmhouse had told her, all about ghosts and fairies and

gnomes who lived on the islands in the firth.

"She wouldn't answer when we asked her about a ghost for this castle," Madeline added solemnly. "She just shook her head and muttered something about 'trailing white robes.' Just then her daughter came in with the wood, and the old woman shut up like a clam. The daughter thinks Gaelic and ghosts are all rubbish." Madeline stood up. "It must be lovely on the parapet now."

"It's lovely here," said Babe dreamily, and the party broke up again.

So it happened that Babe, who was the last to leave the shadowy beech-wood, was alone down by the little chapel when she saw the ghost. It was quite across the wood by the wall, when she first noticed it, and in the dusk she thought of course it was Babbie, who was wearing a white serge suit and a big white hat.

"Aren't you coming to watch the moon rise with the others?" Babe called to her. But the figure didn't answer, only came slowly nearer, groping its way uncertainly among the tree trunks. Presently Babe noticed that the

white dress it wore hung in long, loose folds around it, quite differently from Babbie's suit, that it was much taller than she, and that it carried something dark in one outstretched hand.

"It's a trick of the others. They know I'm here alone, and they've sent Madeline down to scare me," Babe reflected indignantly.

"I know you now, Miss Madeline Ghost," she called across to the figure, "so you may as well take off that white shawl of Mrs. Hildreth's and come with me to the parapet to see the moon rise."

The ghostly figure was quite near now, but if it was Madeline it had no intention of letting Babe know it. It came on silently to within a few paces of where she stood waiting, and then suddenly and without warning a pitiful little moaning cry broke the stillness of the wood,—a sound like the stifled, smothered sobbing of some one in terrible anguish.

Babe listened for a minute to the gruesome moaning. Then, "Oh, I say, that's too much," she protested indignantly. "You're giving me the creeps, Madeline Ayres, honestly you are. Please stop." There was real terror in

Babe's appeal, but the ghost paid no heed. The moaning went on softly, incessantly, just as before.

Babe hesitated a moment longer, and then, pocketing her pride, she fled up the path to the castle. Out of the wood she ran, across the grassy slope, and up the winding stone stairs, as if she thought the ghost was close behind her. Near the top of the flight she paused for breath. "Don't care if they did see me," she muttered angrily, brushing the hair out of her face and assuring herself that the ghost had not followed. "It's a mean trick to scare any one like that. It's dangerous, really it is." But they hadn't seen her mad race through the wood. Apparently they hadn't even missed her. They were all, the whole six of them, Madeline included, gathered in an eager group around the signal-fire, which wouldn't burn, in spite of John's most valiant efforts, because the wind was so strong.

"Oh, Babe, was there any alcohol left?" asked Madeline, glancing up as Babe came toward them. She was stooping in front of the beacon-holder, with her skirt spread out to shelter the struggling little flame. "I don't

think there could be any harm in pouring a little on this wood, do you, Mrs. Hildreth?" she went on. "There's nothing up here to take fire."

"I don't remember noticing about the alcohol," answered Babe, making a valiant effort not to catch her breath.

"I'll go and look," volunteered Betty.

"No, let me." John sprang forward.

"You'd never find the flask," objected Betty, "or if you did you'd mix up everything in the tea-basket."

"Then we'll go together," said John, and Babe breathed a sigh of relief. She couldn't have let Betty go back there alone without warning her and she hated to admit that she had been frightened by—what could it have been anyway, since it wasn't Madeline in Mrs. Hildreth's white shawl? Mrs. Hildreth had on her shawl at that very moment.

Betty and John were gone some time, and when they finally appeared Babe knew at once that they had seen the lady in white.

"Oh, Babbie," Betty began tremulously, "there is a ghost attached to your castle—or at least a something. It's down in the edge

of the wood, near the lawn where we left the basket. And it's moaning in the most horrible way."

"Truly?" Babbie appealed to John.

"Sure. It's not a ghost, of course, but it's somebody all right, in a long white cloak sort of thing, with one hand stretched out, holding something red. The way it cries is certainly spooky," added John, with a forced laugh.

Madeline exchanged swift glances with Mr. Dwight. "'A trailing white robe and a sob in the night'—that was what the old crone said, wasn't it? And there was nothing there when you came up, Babe?"

"Oh, I saw it," said Babe with careful unconcern, "but of course it can't be a ghost—nobody believes in ghosts nowadays. I thought it was one of you girls trying to frighten me."

"Maybe it's a white cow," suggested Babbie. "They make queer noises sometimes. Don't you remember that the fierce black one did?"

But this suggestion was received with great contempt by all three of the ghost-seers, who declared excitedly that they could tell the

difference between a cow and a woman, even if it was a little dusky in the wood.

"Well, of course I don't want it to turn out to be a cow," Babbie explained apologetically. "But it seems too good to be true that it's a ghost. I'm going down to find it this very minute."

"Alone?" inquired Babe gravely.

"No, indeed," interposed Mrs. Hildreth promptly, when Madeline pointed down to the open lawn below them.

"You don't need to go down, Babbie. Look there."

The white figure was coming slowly, silently out from behind a clump of tall bushes. The moon had risen above the trees, and shone full on the little lawn in front of the castle, making it almost as bright as day. Slowly, silently the white figure came forward, trailing its robe over the short grass, one hand held aloft, its gaze fastened on what the hand held—a bright bit of cloth, it seemed to be. When it had reached the centre of the lawn, the figure paused and throwing back its head, so that the moonlight fell full on its face—the sweet, sad face of a young girl—it began

the uncanny moaning that had sent Babe flying to find her friends.

"Gaelic," whispered Madeline under her breath. "I heard the words for love and grief."

"She's changed to English now," whispered Mr. Dwight after a minute. "She's crying, 'My prince, my prince, my prince,' over and over."

"What's that in her hand?" asked Babe, who was clinging tight to Betty.

"It's a bit of Scotch plaid, isn't it?" Babbie answered. "That pretty red kind ——"

"The royal Stuart," supplied Madeline.

"Then it is Flora Macdonald." In her excitement Babbie forgot to speak low. "And she's kept a bit of the Stuart plaid in memory of the prince whose life she saved. She was in love with him, of course, and she got him off to France, and he forgot her. And they locked her up here right afterward, when she was feeling the worst about having him gone. Oh, it all fits in beautifully! How can you help believing in ghosts after this?"

"How, indeed?" agreed Madeline drily. "Oh, ghost!" She raised her voice. "Come

up on the turret of yon gray donjon, and help us toast marshmallows in the blaze of the beacon light."

"Madeline!" chorused three indignant voices, while John burst into peals of laughter and Mrs. Hildreth, who had been let into Madeline's secret, reproached the girls for having been so gullible.

"Though it was a very effective ghost," she admitted, "and Madeline's awe-struck face, as she repeated the old woman's description, was capital."

"Don't blame it all on me," protested Madeline. "Mr. Dwight is a fellow conspirator."

"But you thought of it," Mr. Dwight reminded her, "and you planned where we should get a ghost, and you coached her for the part. I only smuggled out the costume, consisting of a pair of Miss MacNish's best linen sheets, and introduced Miss Ayres and the ghost down at the farmhouse. Here she is, by the way. Miss MacBrague, come and meet your admiring audience and receive their congratulations. You took everybody in."

Then there were introductions, explanations, and questions all at once. Madeline

had to tell how she had thought of evoking a spectre to complete Babbie's castle, but knew she should be discovered at once if she or any one else in the picnic-party was missing when the ghost appeared. Mr. Dwight had suggested Miss MacBrague, who lived down the road with her grandparents, and was interested in the old folk-tales of the countryside. Miss MacBrague apologized prettily for her performance.

"I dinna go to the play," she said. "I havena seen the great actors as ye have. I did only just as Miss Ayres showed me, and the crying is like the crying that the old people do at the graves. I am verra glad if it pleased ye, and I hope ye were na really frightened," turning to Babe.

"You ought to go on the stage. You're a perfectly splendid actress," Babe declared fervently. "But it's mean of you to oblige me to confess how I ran away from you."

And then there were more questions and explanations, and the laugh was on Babe.

Between times they had toasted all the marshmallows, though Babbie protested that it was taking a mean advantage of her beacon-

holder to turn it to such base uses; and at last Mrs. Hildreth said it was time to start back. They dropped little Miss MacBrague at her home after having received her thanks for "th' gae good time ye've given me," and made her promise to come and see them in Oban, and drove briskly home, for the sky had clouded over, and the air was full of rain.

"Never mind," said Babbie jubilantly. "I can feel the curl walking out of my feather, but who cares for a little thing like that? Never as long as I live shall I forget the lovely, thrilly, creepy feeling that came over me when I saw my very own ghost walking out of the beech-wood in the moonlight."

"I say, that was rather fine, wasn't it?" said John. "You girls are certainly keeping out of the rut of ordinary European travel."

"That's because we have dominant interests," explained Madeline. "Mine is tea-rooms, Babbie's is evidently ghosts, and Babe's is—let me see—chimney-pots."

"I'm going to change," Babe protested in the general laugh that followed. "I chose in too much of a hurry. I want an interest

that you can follow up. You can't follow up chimney-pots. They're all right there on the surface."

"On the roofs, you mean," laughed John, "and only chimney-sweeps can penetrate their inner mysteries. What's your specialty, Miss Wales?"

"I haven't any yet," explained Betty. "I'm hoping mine will turn up before long, though."

"Oh, we'll find you something in London," Madeline promised her easily. "There is something for everybody in London."

CHAPTER VIII

BETTY DISCOVERS HER SPECIALTY

"STAYING in lodgings in a villa by the sea is awfully English, but so are a lot of other things," said Madeline briskly. "We've seen about all there is to see in this neighborhood, and I think we ought to be pushing on."

It was nearly a week after the ghost party. The girls had spent the two really pleasant days in visiting Glencoe and Iona, both of which were so lovely that Betty had insisted upon calling on the crusty old stationer to thank him for suggesting them. Now they were gathered in the sitting-room, Baedekers in hand, holding a conclave on where to go next.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Babe. "It's been so jolly here! I wish we could settle down for all summer. But of course I know it would be silly to come way across the ocean and then just stick in one spot."

"John's not going to stay all summer, Babe," said Babbie pointedly, for during the week the friendship between the man-hater and the woman-hater had progressed marvelously.

"Isn't he?" Babe's tone was as unconcerned as if she had not solemnly promised to furnish John with a dated itinerary of their trip, and to write him the very minute they changed their plans.

"Dwight thinks we ought to stay on here till he's finished coaching me," John had told her mournfully; "because there are so few distractions to take a fellow's mind from his work. But it will be deadly dull after you've gone."

"Have you a lot more to do?" Babe had asked.

"No. If I boned hard, I think I could finish in two weeks."

"Then why in the world don't you bone hard?" demanded Babe bluntly. "Then you can do as you please all the rest of the summer, can't you?"

John nodded. "After he gets me off his hands, Dwight's going to study at the

British Museum and then at some big library in Paris. He's getting material for his doctor's thesis. I'm going to keep with him for a while and then join the governor somewhere and go home with him in time to start in at the same old grind next fall. I don't envy myself the trip across, either," sighed John.

"Why not?" demanded Babe. "You ought to like traveling with your father."

John shrugged his shoulders. "He'll be in the very dickens of a temper by that time. You see he's been sent over here by his doctor for a long vacation, and he's raging around Europe in his automobile, getting madder and madder every minute, because he's on strict orders to do nothing but loaf, and he doesn't dare to disobey instructions."

"He'll like it when he gets started," suggested Babe, soothingly.

"Never," laughed John. "You don't know my father. The very mention of a vacation affects him just the way Miss Wales's red cap did that old Scotch cow. You ought to see the letters he writes me. They get fiercer and fiercer each time."

"Well, if he's that kind it will please him to know that you're working hard. So I advise you all the more to pitch in and hustle through," Babe had finished, forcibly if not elegantly. "Give yourself two weeks—or three, to be perfectly safe—and then dare yourself to finish."

"If I did that, I'd probably want to go sailing all the time, or I'd dawdle over an exciting novel and forget all about my limit."

"I haven't much use for a person who dares himself and then loses," said Babe coolly. "Are you that sort?"

John did not answer at all at the time, but on the day the girls left Oban he took Babe to one side. "Meet you anywhere you like three weeks from day before yesterday," he announced gaily.

"Good for you!" returned Babe. "I'll keep you posted."

"Here's a pin to remind you of your promise," said John, holding out a stick-pin set with a Scotch cairngorm. "Girls have such short memories."

"They haven't any shorter memories than boys," declared Babe indignantly. "I'm just

as much obliged for the pin, but I don't need it."

"Take it as a souvenir of Oban, then," urged John.

Babe looked longingly at the sparkling yellow stone. "Do you take back what you said about girls' memories?"

"Well, perhaps I don't know much about the general run of girls," John qualified. "Babbie Hildreth remembers her promises all right, and I'm sure you do."

"You're the one that's likely not to be able to keep this particular promise," said Babe, pinning the cairngorm into her blue tie, which showed it off to perfection. "You mustn't come, you know, unless you've finished your work. College boys are such dreadful idlers."

"They're not," declared John hotly. "I'll show you that this one isn't, anyhow."

"All right," laughed Babe. "And I'll show you that my memory isn't short. Then we shall be quits again."

Babe wrote Bob all about the cairngorm pin, but she didn't mention it to her traveling companions. Babbie would think she was silly to talk about it. She knew such loads

of men, and they were always giving her flowers and pretty trinkets. So merely to avoid discussion Babe said nothing at all about the matter, letting the rest think that she had bought the pin herself as a memento of her dear Oban.

"Nothing else will be quite so nice!" she sighed as the train pulled out of the little station, and the others all felt a little the same way,—except Madeline, of course, who always loved beginnings.

"Why do we stay at Glasgow to-night?" she said. "We've done that already. Let's take Mrs. Hildreth to a farewell tea at Miss Jelliff's, and then go on to Balloch. There's an inn there with the loveliest name—Tullichewan Inn. Doesn't that sound quaint and out-of-the-way? Then we shall be one station further on toward the Trossachs, and we shan't have to get up so early in the morning."

"That argument appeals to me," laughed Mrs. Hildreth, and it was settled to go on to Balloch.

"What are the Trossachs, anyway?" inquired Betty plaintively. "People have talked to me about the Trossachs ever since I knew

I was coming to Scotland, but when I've asked just what they were, I never could find out."

"This guide-book says that the word means 'bristling country,'" Babbie explained. "All the hills that you coach over are thickly wooded. There are lakes, too, but I guess they haven't anything to do with the name."

Next day Babe amended the definition to "dripping country." Scotch mists alternated with unmistakable showers all day, the hills were hidden behind thick mantles of gray fog, and the picturesque little lakes looked forlorn enough, with the big rain-drops pattering down on their placid waters.

"Catechism for travelers," announced Babe. "Query one: How do you go through the Trossachs? Answer: In a rain. I know what you're going to say, Betty, but I've talked to all the people on board who've been through before or who've had friends who've been through, and that's the correct answer. Query two: What is a Trossach coach? Answer: A place where everybody's umbrella drips on everybody else and pokes your hat off, and you wish you were snug at home by

the fire. Besides, they aren't coaches at all; they're nothing but four-seated mountain-wagons. And I thought coaching was going to be one of the most glorious joys of the summer!" Babe sighed and carefully emptied the water out of the wrinkles in her ulster.

But the coaching trip through the English lakes satisfied Babe's most extravagant anticipations. It came after a commonplace, very rainy week in Edinburgh, where everybody was too busy getting over colds caught in the Trossachs rain-storm to make any progress with "dominant interests." It was a lovely, sparkling morning, and the coach which was to take them from Keswick to Windermere was a real coach, with seats inside for any one who was foolish enough to want them, seats on top which commanded a splendend view of the pretty English country, and a red-coated, red-faced English coachman who dropped his h's and cracked his long whip in exactly the approved story-book fashion. But the most exciting part of the day came when they stopped for lunch at the little village of Grasmere.

"Three whole hours!" cried Babbie joy-

ously. "Mother doesn't feel like exploring, so she's going to wait for us at the inn. Have lunch whenever you're ready, mummie. If Wordsworth's Dove Cottage and the old church where he's buried are too fascinating we may decide to save time by lunching aboard the coach on fruit and sweet chocolate."

"I'm terribly afraid Dove Cottage will be like Burns' birthplace," said Madeline, as they started off. "Another maxim for travelers: Be cautious about poets' homes. Anyhow Wordsworth never stayed in the house when he could help it on a day like this—I'm sure he didn't. Let's walk up that fascinating shady road first. It looks as if it led to something interesting."

"Now Madeline," protested Betty, "how does a road that leads to something interesting look different from one that doesn't?"

"How indeed, man from Cook's?" Babbie joined her, and the dispute waxed so warm that finally Madeline asked a little girl, who was eyeing them shyly over a garden fence, where this particular road went.

"Proves my point," she announced triumphantly. "It goes to Easdale Tarn."

"What's a tarn?" asked Babe. "A lake? Then it doesn't prove anything at all. Some lakes are interesting and some aren't."

"Don't quarrel, children," interposed Betty. "When we get to the tarn we can see whether it's interesting."

"But who knows how far it is?" objected Babbie. "Have we time to walk to it?"

The small girl had run off to play by this time, but a little old lady was pottering about among the flowers in another garden, and she told the girls that the tarn was only a mile away and showed them a cross-cut through the meadows.

Beyond that the road turned into a path and climbed up hills, and then down again, but mostly up, so that following it was hot and tiresome work.

"Maybe I'm not hungry," sighed Babe. "Do you see that comfortable white farmhouse? When we go back let's stop there and have lunch. They'd surely give us bread and milk out of pity for our famished state."

"All right," agreed Madeline, "but we've got to hurry right along now."

Just then the path curved sharply, and around the turn they came suddenly upon an elderly gentleman who was sitting on a big stone, fanning himself with his Panama hat.

"My word!" he exclaimed, when he saw the girls. "What in creation are you young ladies doing away off here?"

Babbie was ahead. "Going to Easdale Tarn," she explained demurely. "This is the right road, isn't it?"

"Bless me, I don't know," said the elderly gentleman. "Never heard of Easdale Tarn till you mentioned it. My doctor told me to take a walk every day, and I chose this road because I happened to see it."

"It's rather hilly, isn't it?" said Babe, who was quite out of breath.

The gentleman jumped up and waved a hand at his stone seat. "Sit down and get rested," he commanded so peremptorily that Babe obeyed without a word.

"You too." He pointed at Betty, who sank down beside Babe.

"I admire your energy," the old gentleman went on briskly. "I always admire energy. But in this case it also excites my curiosity.

Why are you all so anxious to go to Easdale Tarn ? ”

“ To find out if it’s interesting,” explained Babe, and told the whole story of the dispute about the road.

The old gentleman laughed heartily, and then he sighed. “ Wish I could get as excited as that about this milk-and-water scenery. Well, run along and find your tarn,—all but you,” indicating Betty. “ You’re too tired to go any further. You’d better stay right here with me until the others get back.”

“ I am tired,” admitted Betty, blushing furiously, “ but I think I’d better go on. You said you were taking a walk, and I don’t want to keep you ——”

“ I said my doctor told me to take walks,” interposed the old gentleman irascibly. “ At present I am sitting here enjoying the view, or, to speak quite truthfully, staring at the view without seeing it, and wishing I were back in New York.”

“ But Betty wants to see the tarn too,” urged Babe, who resented such autocratic methods. “ Come on, Betty. You can rest all the afternoon in the coach.”

Betty half rose, hesitated, and then something in the rather wistful smile that the old gentleman gave her from under his bushy eyebrows made her decide to stay.

"I'm afraid I am too tired to enjoy seeing anything more, even if it's interesting," she told the girls. "So if you're sure you won't mind waiting, sir—it's rather lonely here to stay alone."

"I assure you it will be only a pleasure to wait with you," declared the old gentleman with fine, old-fashioned courtesy. "Solitary walks are a dull sort of amusement."

So while the rest went in pursuit of the tarn Betty talked to the old gentleman. He was traveling alone, it seemed, for his health, and he hated traveling, hated doctors, and despised himself for having let one of them bundle him off willy-nilly, like a molly-coddle old woman who had nothing in the world to do but count her pulse and worry about her digestion.

"But don't you think you'd get well faster if you just made up your mind to it and tried to enjoy things and have a good time?" asked Betty timidly.

"That's what they all say," retorted the old gentleman savagely. "'Make up your mind to it. Why, you ought to consider yourself a lucky dog to be able to go off like this, chasing health around the world, if necessary. How we envy you!' Envy! Well, they needn't." He smiled his wistful smile again. "Fact is, when I was young, I hadn't any chance to play—I was too busy hustling to pay for bread and butter and an attic room. Now I'm too old to learn. But I like to see young people play well, if they work well too. I've got a boy—the young rascal—oh, well, you don't want to hear me scold about my boy. Tell me where you've been and where you're going and why it is that you like your Europe so well."

So he led Betty on to tell him about the going-away party at Mary's, about the senator and the emigrants and the ghost of Dunstaffnage; and they had gotten back to the United States and Harding College again, before the others appeared.

"My dear, I appreciate your staying to talk with me," he said finally. "I had a daughter once, but she died. I should like her to have

grown up to be like you,—or like that little tomboy that stood up to me and insisted you should go on if you pleased. I couldn't get her for a private secretary next fall, could I? She wouldn't cry if I happened to find fault with the way she took my dictation."

Just then Babe herself appeared, leading the others.

"We didn't find it," she sang out cheerfully. "That old lady's idea of a mile is exaggerated."

"We didn't dare go any further for fear of missing the coach and worrying mummie," added Babbie.

"In a hurry to get back to the village, are you?" asked the old gentleman. "I've got a car waiting for me somewhere down there at the foot of the hill. You can all squeeze in for that little distance, can't you?"

"Oh, thank you," said Babe, "but we were going to have lunch first—bread and milk at the farmhouse near the foot of the hill, if they'll give it to us. We've allowed time for that, and we're just perishing of hunger. Thank you just as much about the ride."

"Bread and milk at a farmhouse," repeated

the old gentleman briskly. "I—I believe I'm hungry too. Would it be intrusive ——"

"Oh, please do come," said Betty eagerly. "I've made you miss your lunch at the inn, I'm afraid."

So the old gentleman scrambled down the hill with Betty and Babe, while Madeline and Babbie ran ahead to make sure of the luncheon and get the preparations for it under way. The bread and butter was so good and the milk so creamy, and they all ate and drank so much, while the old gentleman forgot to be annoyed at his unhappy plight and told funny stories of his motoring experiences in France,—neither he nor his chauffeur, it seemed, knew a word of any language but English,—that the time slipped by, and when Babe thought to look at her watch it was long past the hour that she had allotted to lunching.

"There's Dove Cottage gone!" she announced in tragic tones. "And when we get back to America and people ask us about it, how we shall hate to say we were right here and didn't take enough interest in Wordsworth to hunt up his house."

"Never mind," Madeline reassured her cheerfully. "We'll just inquire in a casual way if they saw Easdale Tarn, when they were here, and that will settle them."

"The only trouble is we didn't see it either," matter-of-fact Betty reminded her sadly.

The old gentleman was looking at his watch and muttering hasty calculations. "You shall see your Dove Cottage," he announced triumphantly. "You didn't count on going back in my car. Come along."

The next minute they were tearing down the Easdale road at a rate that the old gentleman smilingly characterized as "about our usual speed, and we've only been arrested once so far." When they reached the cottage he sat outside in the car, watch in hand, ready to give the signal for departure, and at the church he did the same thing. Then they whirled back to the inn, where Mrs. Hildreth was getting a little anxious about them, though, as Babbie pointed out, five minutes before the coach started was a whole lot of time—you could see all the regular sights of Grasmere in five minutes if you were a good manager.

Betty and Babe, who had taken a great fancy to the crusty old gentleman, stayed behind the others to say a more extended good-bye.

"We're really very grateful to you," Babe assured him gaily. "You've saved our reputations. But for you the Grasmere chapter of 'B. A.'s Abroad' would have had a disgraceful blank in it."

"'B. A.'s Abroad,'"—the old gentleman turned to Betty. "That's the journal you told me about. B. A.—Benevolent Adventurers—that's what you've been this morning. I haven't had so good a time since I left New York. Thank you all, and you particularly, Miss ——"

"Wales," supplied Betty.

"Miss Wales, I hope we shall meet again during the summer. I'm going back to France, where they have respectable roads. Good-bye."

"You've got to look out for Betty, mummie," laughed Babbie, when they were settled again on the coach. "All the high-and-mighty personages just naturally gravitate to her. First there was the senator, and

now this grand magnate. Who was he, Betty?"

"He didn't tell me his name, and I didn't like to ask."

"He's certainly a person of importance," declared Madeline. "He talks about New York as if he pretty nearly owned it, and did you notice how frantically the inn servants flew around when he appeared?"

"I didn't fly around when he appeared," said Babe proudly, and was much amused and elated when Betty repeated what he had said about her.

"I think benevolent adventures are going to turn out to be Betty's dominant interest," said Babe, after relating the old gentleman's interpretation of B. A. "First there were the emigrants and now this old gentleman. I wonder whom you'll find next to cheer up."

Betty laughed. "I think that's a funny kind of a dominant interest for traveling. Why, you can be nice to people just as well when you're at home."

"Well, you're elected to try it a while longer," declared Babbie, "and see how it works. It's certainly been amusing so far."

The very point about a good dominant interest, you know, is that it's queer. Anybody can take Gothic architecture or Mary Queen of Scots, but ghosts, tea-rooms, chimney-pots, and benevolent adventures show real originality. Girls, aren't we having a good time?"

CHAPTER IX

BUYING A DUKE

FROM the lakes the B. A.'s traveled slowly and merrily to London, where they established themselves at a quiet boarding-house overlooking a pretty square, and plunged into a mad delirium of sight-seeing and shopping.

"I never felt pulled in so many directions in my life," complained Babe wearily. "The shop-windows are so fascinating, and things are all so cheap, and it's such fun paying for them in this comical English money."

"And your friends will all be so glad to get whatever you don't want for yourself because it came from abroad," put in Babbie. "I'm going to do all my Christmas shopping here and in Paris."

"Yes, I want to, too," agreed Babe, "but all the time I'm in the shops I keep thinking how the places I've wanted to see for ages and perhaps never can see again are all within

a stone's throw—well, within a 'bus-ride, if you like that better, and I decide to go sight-seeing with Madeline. But when you and Mrs. Hildreth and Betty come home at night with all your fascinating packages from Liberty's and the Irish lace stores, why then I wish I'd shopped."

"You can't have everything," said Madeline sagely. "That's been my motto for years, and it's never so useful as when I'm traveling. You don't enjoy anything unless you make up your mind not to worry about the things you've got to miss. I'm going shopping myself to-morrow."

"I thought you hated it," exclaimed all her auditors at once.

"But this isn't any ordinary shopping tour. I'm going to buy Eleanor's duke—that is, if the rest of you will trust me to pick him out."

"Of course we will," said Babbie, "but why can't we all come, too, and help?"

"Babbie, you promised me you would stay quietly at home to-morrow and rest," Mrs. Hildreth reminded her.

"Well, so I will," Babbie gave up cheerfully. "And Babe has a luncheon engage-

ment with the friend from home that she met in the American express office."

"Then Betty and I will go duke-hunting," said Madeline. "That suits me perfectly. Too many matchmakers would be fatal. The duke would detect our eagerness and demand an exorbitant settlement. Dukes come high, you know, at best, so be prepared to be generous with your shillings."

"Oh, Madeline, do tell us what you're going to get," begged Babbie. But Madeline only smiled mysteriously and told Mrs. Hildreth that she and Betty probably shouldn't be back for luncheon.

Next morning when they were safely out of ear-shot she divulged her idea. "You know those pretty old Staffordshire china figures? The spotted dogs are the commonest, but there are men and women, too. Oh, you must have seen them, Betty, in the windows of the antique shops—shepherdesses with looped-up skirts, leaning on their crooks, and cute little men with lace ruffles at their wrists and pink coats and silver knee-buckles. They look awfully aristocratic; somehow, I don't think we could get a better duke."

Betty hadn't noticed anything of the sort, so they went a block out of their way down Oxford Street to see some in a shop that Madeline remembered. Sure enough, the window was full of the queer little china figures, and there was one that Betty declared was just the duke for Eleanor.

"Let's go right in and get it," she urged jubilantly. "It's so quaint and—oh, so European somehow. Eleanor will be perfectly delighted."

Madeline laughed at her innocent enthusiasm. "We can't afford to buy it here," she warned her. "Those figures are dreadfully expensive. In a fashionable neighborhood like this they'd probably ask eight or ten dollars for that duke. But the other day when Babe and I were riding on a 'bus away out toward Hammersmith to see how far you could go for fourpence, I noticed a whole cluster of antique shops, and I thought we might find a real bargain out there."

"But this is such a pretty, graceful little figure," said Betty doubtfully. "How much are we going to spend for each of the girls?"

"The gargoyles and the photograph that

Helen wanted won't be over sixty cents, so I suppose we ought to find something at about that price for the general present to Eleanor and Bob. Then, of course, we can any of us take any of them whatever extra things we like."

"Let's just ask about this duke," urged Betty, who had lost her heart to the little china figure, and couldn't believe it cost as much as Madeline thought.

But "Thirty-five shillings," said the pompous shop-keeper, and Betty had to explain blushing that she couldn't afford so much that morning.

"That's eight dollars and seventy-five cents," she said dejectedly, as they went off to find the Hammersmith 'bus. "We can't ever get one for sixty cents, Madeline. The neighborhood wouldn't make eight dollars difference."

"Oh, I don't know," said Madeline easily. "I've bought silver boxes in Holland for thirty cents and matched them on Fifth Avenue for five dollars. Anyhow it will be fun hunting."

It was fun. The Hammersmith shops were crowded with all sorts of interesting old

odds-and-ends, the like of which Betty had never seen before. She admired the glib way in which Madeline chatted with the shopkeepers about strange things like black Wedgwood, Chippendale chairs, and Flemish inlay. But when they inquired for Staffordshire figures no one seemed to have any, or at least not any that could pass for a duke. But every one was very obliging about suggesting more shops to try, and when that particular neighborhood was quite exhausted some one sent the girls off on what proved to be a wild goose chase to the shops near Nottinghill Gate, "where there isn't any hill nor any gate," as Betty explained later, in relating the day's adventures, "so how can you tell when to get off the 'bus?"

And as they couldn't tell, they were carried six blocks past and had to walk back in the noonday heat, only to find that the biggest shop, which had been so highly recommended, kept nothing but brasses.

"We'll go in here," said Madeline, opening the door of a dusky little second-hand store with an impatient jerk, "and if they haven't what we want we'll stop. Yes, no matter if

they tell us positively that a shop round the corner is packed tight with Staffordshire figures, we won't go to it. Instead we'll go and get a cool and luscious luncheon,—though where we can find one in this dingy neighborhood, I'm sure I don't know."

A small girl with wisps of tow-colored hair falling over her eyes came out from a back room to see what they wanted.

She shook her head doubtfully when Madeline mentioned Staffordshire. "I'm sure I couldn't say, ma'am. She's out—the madame is—and I couldn't rightly say what we have. Would you know it if you saw it? You might look about then."

So they "looked about," among the curious agglomeration of mirrors, candlesticks, lustre jugs, cameos, and time-stained engravings, all standing in dusty disarray on top of Queen Anne sideboards, carved centre tables, and beautiful old Sheraton writing-desks with secret compartments, that set Betty, who was having her first taste of the delights of antique-hunting, wild with delight. But though they poked into every nook and corner, no Staffordshire figures came to light.

"Well, we shall have to give it up," said Madeline dejectedly. "How much is that lustre pitcher, please—the fat little one with the roses in the border?"

"I don't know, ma'am," confessed the little maid sadly. "You see very few comes here in the morning, and it's so very difficult remembering the prices, ma'am."

"Oh, dear!" Madeline wanted the fat little pitcher all the more now that she couldn't have it. "When will the owner of the shop be back, do you think?"

"Oh, I really couldn't say, ma'am. In an hour perhaps, and maybe not till time for tea. You see it's Friday, and she's gone to market. But she went early to-day, so she might be back early."

"But does it ever take her all day to do the family marketing?" asked Madeline curiously.

"Oh, it's not for the family, ma'am; it's for the shop she's buying. Everybody goes to the market on Fridays."

"Whom do you mean by everybody?"

"Why, all the dealers in London, ma'am. The madame buys almost everything there. Things go very cheap there, you see. It's a

pity she didn't know what you were wanting, or she'd have found it for you this morning. You can find almost anything at the market if you look sharp."

"I suppose you couldn't tell us how to get there?" inquired Madeline tentatively.

Oh, yes she could ; any one in London could do that. It was the Caledonian market, you understand. First you took the Underground to King's Cross, and then you took the 'bus to Market Road, and any one would tell you where to get down. And after that it was just a step to the market.

"What a find!" Madeline caught Betty's arm as soon as they were outside, and fairly danced her down the street. "We shall get all sorts of bargains in dukes there, and then it's such a lovely stunt hunting them along with all the dealers in London. We'll buy some fruit and eat it on the Underground. Where is the Underground, I wonder? She said everybody went there Friday mornings. Should you think it would close at twelve or at one?"

Of course Betty hadn't the least idea. In fact she couldn't quite see what there was to

be so excited about, but as usual she took Madeline's word for it.

"Markets are great," Madeline explained when they had at last found the Underground. "I've been to the rag-fair in Rome and the Christmas-sale in Paris, and they were both no end of fun. Some one told father about a big market in London, but he never could find it. Won't he be envious when I bring out my trophies!"

When they got into the 'bus for Market Road nearly every other passenger was laden with a big basket.

"They're going to market, too," Madeline nudged Betty. "So we're not hopelessly late after all."

When they had turned in at the big gates Betty stared about her in amazement. The vast open space was thronged with a laughing, chattering crowd of buyers. But above the noise they made rose the strident cries of the marketmen.

"Penny a mar-r-r-ket bunch!"

"Whatever-you-like at yer own price."

"Rusty nails! Rusty na-ils!"

It took time to disentangle even those few

cries from the multitude of strange announcements.

"Who would want rusty nails?" demanded Betty.

"I don't know, but there they are—pounds and pounds of them. Somebody must want them or they wouldn't be here. Isn't it fun having everything spread out on the ground?"

"Literally everything," laughed Betty. "Books and china and second-hand calico wrappers, and—yes, Madeline, second-hand tooth-brushes, right next to that lovely inlaid furniture."

"And there's a Persian kitten," added Madeline. "Poor little pussy! She looks frightened half to death."

"And hats and furs," put in Betty.

"And jewelry. Betty, I'll buy you a penny pin as a memento. Choose."

Betty chose a brooch consisting of a very realistic red raspberry and two green leaves. "Thank you," she said, "and isn't that a lustre-ware pitcher?"

It was, and it was in the collection of a man who was crying, "Whatever-ye-like at yer own price," at the top of his lungs.

"A shilling," Madeline offered boldly, pointing to the pitcher.

"Three," retorted the man decisively.

"But you just said, 'Whatever you like at your own price,'" Madeline reminded him.

The man winked cheerfully. "Any of this rubbish, ma'am, I mean." He picked up a handful of the rusty nails. "You want only the good things. The pitcher's a bargain at three bob."

"Have you any Staffordshire figures?" asked Madeline.

The man rummaged in a basket and produced two little white lambs, each standing on a hillock of green grass.

"Oh, how cunning," murmured Betty. "I simply must have those."

"Then don't act too anxious, or he'll put the price away up," Madeline whispered.

"You buy them," Betty whispered back.

"We wanted a man's figure," explained Madeline nonchalantly. "You haven't any? Then I guess that's all. How much are the lambs?"

"Thrippence."

"I'll take them," cried Betty before Madeline could answer.

The man looked amusedly from one to the other. "You mustn't quarrel over the baa-lambs, ladies."

"Oh, we won't." Betty held out her money. "Madeline, look!"

A wizened, grizzled little Jew, whose wares were spread out next to those of the owner of the "baa-lambs," had overheard their conversation with his rival and was holding out a figure, the exact counterpart of the one in the Oxford Street shop. Madeline pinched Betty to remind her not to appear over-anxious.

"Oh, yes," she said indifferently, holding out her hand for the little figure and examining it carefully for cracks or nicks. "But now that we've bought the lambs I don't know—how much is this?"

"Five bob, and you can't find another such bargain in London," the dealer assured her eagerly.

"What's a bob?" whispered Betty.

"A shilling," Madeline explained. Then she turned to the dealer. "Make it two and six."



"FOUR AND SIX!"

"Four and six," he compromised.

Madeline shook her head severely. "If you'd said three and six I might have considered it. Come on, Betty."

Betty stared in amazement. Was Madeline—yes, she was actually walking off. She was going to leave that lovely duke. But just as Madeline turned the corner, the little dealer jumped up, the figure in one hand and a scrap of crumpled paper in the other, and with a bound he was at Madeline's elbow.

"Have it for three and six," he whispered confidentially.

"Oh, very well." Madeline accepted the bundle nonchalantly.

"Hallo, Madeline. What have you done him out of now?" Dick Blake was standing in front of them, his face wreathed in smiles. "I thought you'd be here to-day," he went on. "I had a 'leading,' as we used to say in Paris when we wanted to do a silly thing, that if I came up here I should lose all the Americans but you. How do you like marketing with Madeline, Miss Wales?"

"Oh, Dick, it's jolly fun seeing you. But what on earth are you doing here?"

"Pursuing you," explained Dick cheerfully. "Didn't I just say so? When I'm not pursuing you, I'm pursuing a magnate. He's more elusive,—or at least I don't know his habits so well, and up to date I haven't found him. But I take my success with you to be a good omen. I'm sure I shall spot my magnate before long."

"Please talk sense, Dick."

"I am," he assured her solemnly. "You see it's this way. New York was hot and stupid, with everybody gone who could manage to get away, and I wanted to go, too. But 'The Quiver' hasn't been exactly booming lately, and I couldn't afford a nice trip."

"Meaning a trip to Europe," interposed Madeline.

"Exactly," Dick took her up. "So I was feeling awfully blue, and then a week ago to-night my old chief down in Newspaper Row 'phoned and said, 'Dickie, you're the best hunter we ever had. Go to Europe and find an elusive magnate, whose mysterious absence is upsetting Wall Street prices,' and I said, 'Done,' and made up 'The Quiver' for two months ahead, and here I am. I got to Liver-

pool last night and to London this morning, and so far I've ascertained that the Elusive Magnate aforesaid isn't staying at any of the likely hotels."

"Dick, you are too absurd," laughed Madeline. "What's your magnate's name?"

"Morton—Jasper Jones Morton. Haven't seen him, have you?"

"I haven't the pleasure of his acquaintance. Have you, Betty?"

Betty shook her head smilingly.

"I've got his picture here somewhere." Dick felt in his pocket and drew out a cabinet photograph. "He's not exactly handsome and he's never gone in for society, but he's really very well-to-do, and when he suddenly departs for the first vacation of his long and useful life, just when his railroads are in a good deal of a muddle and several of his corporations are being sued by Uncle Sam, why, naturally Wall Street sits up and takes notice." He passed the picture to Madeline.

"Why, Betty, it's our magnate," she cried laughingly, and Betty, looking at the picture over her shoulder, gave a little shriek of delight. "It is," she cried.

Dick looked in amazement from one to the other. "I say, have you really met him?" he demanded. "Where was he, and which way was he headed? He didn't drop any hints about his reasons for being over here, did he?"

Madeline looked at Betty. "You talked to him most."

"Do you mean did he say whether he is over here just on a vacation for his health?" asked Betty.

Dick nodded, and she repeated Mr. Jasper Jones Morton's anathemas against vacations, doctors, and European travel. "I'm sure he was telling the truth," she added earnestly. "He said it all as if he meant it,—he couldn't have been making up."

"Having conversed with him about other things he doesn't like, I catch your point," chuckled Dick. "J.J. Morton's earnest hatred is very earnest indeed." Then he grew sober suddenly. "I wonder where's the nearest place to cable from. I must get this off at once. Miss Wales, you've done me the best kind of a good turn. You don't mind my taking your story, do you, since you haven't any possible use for it?"

"Mr. Morton won't mind, will he?" asked Betty anxiously. "He was awfully nice to us, and it would be mean to take advantage of him."

"No," said Dick, "I honestly don't think he'll mind. I don't believe he wants the market to go to smash on his account. And to me it means—well, I haven't been here a day yet; and the chief gave me a week to find him and get an interview. So it means the biggest kind of a big beat, Miss Wales, and that means a juicy fee and a juicy fee means——" Dick stopped suddenly, bit his lip, and then laughed. "I didn't use to be so mercenary, did I, Madeline? Then I have your consent, Miss Wales? Are you girls coming back with me?"

For the first part of the long ride Dick Blake was silent, his face puckered into deep wrinkles of thought. All at once he threw back his head and laughed merrily. "I've got it," he said, "head-lines and all. Now we can talk. What did you do the little Jew out of, Madeline?"

"Oh, we were buying a duke for Eleanor Watson," explained Madeline tantalizingly. "She wants one, you know."

The worried look came back to Dick's fine gray eyes. "Go slow, Madeline. You were buying—— Eleanor wants a duke?"

Madeline took pity on him and unwrapped the dainty figurine, which Dick duly admired.

"By the way, Miss Wales," he began suddenly, "you don't know where Jasper J. went from Grasmere, I suppose."

Betty repeated what the old gentleman had said about the superiority of French roads.

"Then I suppose I'd better cross the channel to-night," sighed Dick, "and here's where I leave this 'bus. Wish I could go home with you and see the rest of the 'Merry Hearts' and have a good talk. Good-bye, Miss Wales. So long, Madeline. See you again somewhere over here." And he was gone.

"Well," Madeline told the others, when they reached home, "we've got the duke and he's a darling, and we've found out the name of the Grasmere magnate, and Betty's been being a B. A. again—to whom in the world do you guess, but Dick Blake. It will be in all the New York papers to-morrow morning. How's that for a strenuous day of it?"

CHAPTER X

THE GAY GHOSTS OF LONDON

"TO-DAY's the third, isn't it?" observed Babe carelessly the next morning at breakfast. "I believe I'll stay at home and write some letters."

Babbie, who was sitting by the window, happened to glance out at the street just then. "You needn't," she announced calmly. "He's arriving this very minute in a hansom."

"Who is arriving, Babbie?" asked Mrs. Hildreth. Whereupon Babbie assured her that she was utterly disqualified as a competent chaperon; she ought to have grasped the connection between John Morton and Babe's mad desire to write letters without any help at all.

John was in high spirits. "Hope you've noticed that I'm exactly on time," he told Babe in a confidential aside. "Old Dwight nearly passed away with surprise when he

saw me settling down to a good steady grind. It's queer how people always think that if a fellow doesn't work it's because he hasn't brains enough. Old Dwight said he actually envied me my clear and logical mind. I told him to tell that to dad, and he did—wrote a corking letter all about me and my industry and my marvelous progress. I can't wait to get dad's answer."

"He'll be sure to be awfully pleased," said Babe sympathetically. "I'm pleased too. If you hadn't finished in time I should have given you back your pin. I wouldn't take a pin from a shirk."

"Are you going to escort us out to see the sights of London, John?" asked Babbie.

"Of course. That's why I came around so early, before you'd had a chance to get started off without me on a picnic or a ghost-hunt or any other interesting festivity. What shall we do first?"

"Oh, let's have a ghost-hunt!" cried Babbie eagerly. "We haven't paid the least speck of attention to ghosts since we left Oban. I can't have my dominant interest so neglected."

"All right," agreed John. "Only it isn't moonlight, and we should probably be 'taken in charge,' as the police say over here, if we made a sheeted ghost walk in London."

"Then how are we going to have a ghost-party?" asked Betty. "Madeline, think up a way."

Madeline considered. "First, we've got to choose our ghosts—there are such quantities in London. Then we must seek out their haunts and conjure them to appear. If they won't, we shall have to go back some evening, and try again by moonlight. Let's each write the name of our favorite London ghost on a slip of paper. Babbie can draw one, because ghosts are her dominant interest, and then we'll all start out in pursuit."

This arrangement suited everybody, and Madeline hunted up pencils and paper. She wrote the name of her favorite ghost without an instant's consideration, but the others had to think hard, and Babe was caught slyly consulting a London Baedeker. John chewed his pencil in solemn silence until the rest were through. Then all at once he banged the table triumphantly with his

fist, scribbled a name on his slip, and handed it to Madeline, who was acting as mistress of ceremonies.

"You'd better choose my ghost, Babbie," he announced. "If you do, I invite you all to have luncheon with me at an appropriate place."

"It's not fair offering bribes," cried Babe. "My ghost did that, and it got him into a horrible scrape."

"My ghost is a lady," said Betty. "I think she deserves some consideration on that account."

"The special advantage of mine," put in Madeline, "is that his haunts are miles away from here. Think of the lovely long 'bus ride we could have."

"Mine is both a lady and a royal personage," said Babbie impressively, "so she really ought to come in ahead of any of yours. But I'm going to be perfectly fair; I'll draw out a slip with my eyes shut. Dr. Samuel Johnson wins," she announced a minute later.

"And he's mine!" cried John. "Now remember, everybody, the meal-tickets are to be on me. Did you girls ever hear of the 'Cheshire Cheese'?"

No one had but Madeline.

"What ignorance!" laughed John, and then confessed that he never had heard of it either, until Mr. Dwight mentioned it the night before. "It seems it was quite a haunt of old Dr. Johnson's," he explained. "It's a queer little eating-house just off Fleet Street. You girls may not like it, but if you don't we needn't stay."

Babbie's ghost was Queen Victoria, Betty's Becky Sharp, Madeline's Carlyle, and Babe's Lord Bacon.

"What a collection!" laughed Madeline. "Perhaps we can take in some of the others on our way to the 'Cheshire Cheese.' Hand me the Baedeker please, Babe."

But John objected. "We've got to make perfectly sure of Dr. Johnson first," he said firmly. "What's the use of choosing a ghost if you don't keep to him? Besides, remember, I got down here only late last evening. If we have any extra time, I want to go and register my address at the American Express office and get my mail. I'm expecting an important letter." John looked at Babe impressively.

After much lively discussion it was voted to walk to the "Cheshire Cheese," or at least to walk until some one got tired. It would be so much more convenient for showing John the sights. And, as Madeline observed, pretty nearly everything in London is a sight in one way or another, so that it was really lunch-time when John and Babe, who were ahead, suddenly turned down a dark little alley and waited at the corner for the rest to come up.

"Is the 'Cheshire Cheese' in here?" asked the fastidious Babbie doubtfully. "Well, this certainly looks like a splendid place for ghosts," she added, diving down the alley after the others.

John pointed ahead to the quaint old swinging sign that read "Ye Old Cheshire Cheese." It was a tiny little inn, the one small dining-room opening right on to the street. A waiter came bustling forward to meet the party.

"Good-morning," said John gravely, looking inquiringly around the room. "Which is Dr. Johnson's chair, please?"

The waiter bowed and pointed to a seat in one corner against the wall.

"Oh, I see, he's not here yet," said John solemnly. "We were hoping to find him. Well, I suppose we'd better sit down and have something to eat while we wait." He led the way to the doctor's table.

The waiter, wearing a perplexed expression, pulled out the chairs,—John insisting that Dr. Johnson's seat should be left vacant,—and recited the menu for the day.

"Which are the Doctor's favorite dishes?" John asked him.

"Hi really couldn't say, sir." The waiter's tone was full of mild reproach. "The lark-pie his our special dish, sir, and the stewed cheese his hexcellent heatin' and a general favorite."

"Then we'll have those, shan't we, girls?" asked John. "And bring enough for Dr. Johnson, in case he should look in," he added gravely, and the waiter went off, shaking his head and murmuring something about "those mad Hamericans."

"I want to sit in Dr. Johnson's chair," complained Babbie, when he had gone. "There's no sense in saving a place for a ghost, John. Don't you know that they can sit

where there is somebody just as well as where there isn't?"

"That may be," admitted John. "But I consider that it's more respectful. Speaking of ghosts, is that the ghost of Billy Benson that I see before me, or is it Billy in person?"

John tumbled his chair over in his eagerness to get to the door and wring the hand of a tall, broad-shouldered youth, who seemed just as delighted to see John as John was to see him. He had a friend with him, whom John evidently did not know, for presently Billy remembered him and summarily pulled him forward to be introduced. Then the three came over to the girls' table.

"May I present Mr. William Benson?" John began. "Best fellow in the world, Billy is. Rooms in my hall at Harvard. And this is Mr. Trevelyan, a friend of Billy's."

Mr. Trevelyan was several years older than John or Billy. He was tall, dark, and slender, with a distinguished manner, queer, near-sighted gray eyes that were slightly out of focus, making it hard to tell just where he was looking, and a very peculiar way of speaking—it was difficult to decide whether he had

a slight foreign accent or an impediment in his speech.

"You fellows will join us, won't you?" asked John hospitably. "Mr. Trevelyan, you can have Dr. Johnson's seat, and Billy, you can be Boswell and squeeze in somewhere, I'm sure."

But Mr. Trevelyan demurred politely. "You have found friends," he told Billy. "I insist that you let me withdraw."

"Oh, nonsense!" said John decisively, and when Babbie seconded the invitation, Mr. Trevelyan allowed himself to be persuaded to stay.

"You see the Doctor did come," John announced triumphantly to the waiter, when that functionary reappeared with the lark-pie and stewed cheese. "And Boswell is with him, so you'd better bring us something extra."

"Very well, sir," said the waiter, smiling condescendingly at the absurdity of the "Hamericans," and Babbie overheard a rosy-cheeked English girl at the next table say she did wish people wouldn't persist in treating England as if it were a queer, old-fashioned

toy that it was fun to spend your summers playing with.

"Come, John, you mustn't tease that poor waiter any more," she commanded. "Mr. Trevelyan and Mr. Benson don't even know why you're doing it."

So John explained to his guests that they had unwittingly joined a ghost-hunt, and then the girls told about the Dunstaffnage ghost, and Mr. Trevelyan followed their story up with an account of a ghost he had seen in the Australian cattle-country.

He was an Australian, he explained, and John, who was tremendously interested in queer, out-of-the-way places, kept him busy telling his experiences in the bush all through luncheon. He told his stories so well that every one else stopped talking to listen, and they sat over their luncheon long after every one else had left.

"Goodness, but you've had an interesting life, Mr. Trevelyan," said Madeline, when they finally rose to go. "Aren't you crazy to get back to Australia? Everything else must seem tame after that."

Mr. Trevelyan bowed gravely in acknowl-

edgment of her interest. "I shall not go back at present. My widowed sister and I are planning to settle down near Paris. We have bought a house, and she is already in France, visiting a friend. As soon as I have finished a little business that I have here I shall join her and we will set up housekeeping. And now I must really leave you. I have a business engagement."

"All right, old man," said Billy gaily. "Only don't forget to turn up for dinner and the theatre."

"Unless you wish to postpone ——" began Mr. Trevelyan.

"No, indeed," Billy assured him. "Perhaps Morton will join us. His hotel is near ours."

Mr. Trevelyan murmured something about its being a great pleasure to have met them all and hurried away.

"Isn't he great?" said Billy eagerly. "He's the most modest fellow you ever saw. Never mentions his own part in all those woolly Australian tales until you quiz him, and then you find he was 'it' every time. Now I happen to know that his sister is visiting a

countess, but you notice he was careful to say just 'a friend.'"

"If he'd said a countess it would have been blowing," said John decidedly. "No nice fellow would have lugged in the countess in that connection. How'd you meet him, Billy?"

"On the street," laughed Billy. "He asked me the way to the Army and Navy Club. When I told him, he noticed I was an American, of course ——"

"Oh, come off, Billy," John broke in. "He'd know that the minute he set eyes on you."

"He didn't know it till I spoke," persisted Billy. "You see he doesn't belong here—hasn't been in London before for fifteen years. Well, anyhow he said he was glad an American could tell him what he'd asked half a dozen Englishmen who couldn't. Then we walked on together a bit, and found we were both traveling alone and seeing the sights, and I asked him to meet me for dinner. Then we went to the Tower together, and out to Kew Gardens, and then he moved to my hotel and we rather joined forces. He's an awfully good sort."

"I don't doubt that he is," agreed John heartily.

"The way he speaks interests me," said Madeline. "Was he born in England? Were his parents both English, do you know?"

Billy nodded. "Australians get to speaking queerly, he says."

"Very likely," agreed Madeline, "but I should have been almost positive that he was French."

"He lisps," declared Babe. "That's one thing that adds to the queerness of his talk. Well, what are we going to do next?"

"We might pursue the ghost of Dr. Johnson to his grave in Westminster Abbey," suggested Madeline. "Graveyards are the logical places to hunt ghosts in, I suppose."

But John objected. "The very reason I chose Dr. Johnson was so we wouldn't have to go to any musty old churchyards. I haven't any use for them or for picture-galleries. Let's go up to the American Express Office, and by that time it will be late enough to pursue your specialty, Miss Ayres, and drink tea somewhere."

Billy Benson accepted with alacrity an in-

itation to join the tea-party. On the way to the Express Office he told Babbie something about his plans for the summer.

"You see, I'm on the Harvard crew," he explained, "and they're all coming over later to have a month's practice on the course here. We row Cambridge in the fall, you know."

Babbie didn't know, and inquired eagerly when and where the race was to come off.

"Why, right here, on the regular course up near Hampton," Billy told her, "and early in September, just before college opens. It's going to be simply great. Can't you manage to be on hand?"

Babbie explained that they were going over to France and had meant to sail for home from a French port. "But there isn't any reason why we shouldn't come back to England first," she declared. "I'm going to ask mother if we can't do that. We could leave a week earlier now, and have a week here in September."

"Well, as I was saying," Billy took up his own story, "my roommate was coming with me in June, but he caught the measles from his kid brother—wasn't that the complete limit of a thing to do?—so I just came along

alone. I was afraid if I waited over another boat for him, my guardian might change his mind about letting me go." Billy smiled pensively. "He can change his mind all he likes now. I'm twenty-one. My birthday was yesterday and I celebrated by cabling home for more money. You see," he added confidentially, "I'm having some clothes made by a Bond Street tailor."

Babbie laughed. "They say what women come abroad for is to buy clothes, but I didn't suppose men cared much about shopping over here."

"Well, the point is that I didn't bring over any glad rags," Billy explained. "Didn't expect to need any, just knocking about by myself. But I'm going to run over to Paris when Trevelyan goes—I shall have just time to see the town before the crew gets here—and the countess that his sister is visiting is going to give a dance for her just about that time. Trevelyan insists that she'll want me to come, when she hears from him that I'm with him, and so of course I've got to have the proper things ready."

"How exciting," laughed Babbie, "to be

going to a countess's ball. Madeline has a cousin who is a viscountess, but she's not in Paris just now, and I'm afraid that spoils our only chance of breaking into titled society."

Meanwhile they had reached the Express Office, and John demanded his mail and received the expected missive from his father with a grin of rapture.

"Excuse me while I read this," he said, waving it triumphantly aloft and retiring in haste to a quiet corner.

Two minutes later he was back, the letter and the smile both out of sight.

"Come on," he said grimly. "Let's go and drown our sorrows in tea."

"What's the matter?" Babe inquired sympathetically, when the party had paired off to walk to a tea-shop that Madeline knew of on Regent Street. "Wasn't he as pleased as you thought he would be?"

"Pleased!" repeated John gloomily. "He wasn't pleased at all. He told me in polite language that Dwight had lied about me, and insinuated that I'd put him up to it, because I wanted to get something out of my father. He says he had a very high opinion of Dwight

when he hired him in the spring, but he sees now that he's only an 'amiable futility,' like all the other tutors I've had. Then he ended by saying that when he wanted information about my mental capacity he would ask for it, and that if I couldn't get along with the allowance we settled on when I came across, I would just have to cut down my expenses."

"What a shame!" Babe's voice was full of righteous indignation. "And you didn't want any more money, did you?"

"I should say not! Why, I saved a lot while we were staying in Oban. Besides I wouldn't take that way to get it,—I'd ask right out, as I generally do. It's so maddening to have him always assume as a matter of course that a fellow's in the wrong."

"Is he that way about everything?"

John nodded. "I told you how he hated this vacation that he's taking. He enjoys grumbling over things as much as you or I enjoy laughing about them."

"Just like the funny old gentleman we met in Grasmere," said Babe. "Why, John, is your father's name Jasper J. Morton?"

John nodded. "Just suits him, too."

"Why, then he was the very one we met." Babe laughed delightedly. "Didn't I write you anything about it? Well, it was this way." She gave a brief sketch of the encounter, ending with, "He may be hard to get along with sometimes, John, but he's an old dear just the same. Betty thinks so, too. She saw more of him than I did."

"Well, we don't hit it off somehow, he and I." John's tone was as gloomy as ever. "I feel sometimes as if I might as well stop trying to please him. Makes you envy a chap like Billy Benson who's always done about as he pleased and now is absolutely his own master. I'm six months older than Billy, but my being of age doesn't make the least difference in the way my father treats me, and now I've done my level best this summer, and that hasn't made the least difference either."

"Oh, but it must in the end," Babe reassured him cheerfully. "You'll feel better after you've had some tea."

But John refused to be cheered, though Billy Benson and Madeline gave absurd imitations of English people taking tea, and

Billy read a thrilling letter from the captain of the Harvard crew, which made all the girls as eager as Babbie had been to come back in September for the race.

"I shan't see that race," John confided in low tones to Babe. "I bet you all the money I saved in Oban against your blue tie that my father chooses that particular day to sail from Liverpool."

"I never bet," Babe returned laughingly. "But if I see your father again—he told us he hoped we might meet somewhere over in France—I'll mention the race and invite him to take me to it."

"But if I go, I shall want to take you myself," objected John.

"Humph!" observed Babe, "it seems to me that Mr. Jasper J. Morton has not monopolized all the contrariety there is in the family."

CHAPTER XI

BETTY WALES, DETECTIVE

BILLY BENSON lost no time in accepting the girls' invitation to call on them. On the evening of the day after the ghost-hunt that developed into a tea-drinking, Billy appeared, arrayed in the "glad rags" that he had cajoled his Bond Street tailor into finishing long before the stipulated time. Finding that Mrs. Hildreth was hesitating a little about including the Harvard-Cambridge race in her itinerary, he set himself to cajole her—with equal success. First he told funny stories to make her laugh; then he unearthed the fact that his mother and she had been girlhood friends; then he alluded casually to English sports, and offered to take her to a cricket-match the next afternoon; finally he smiled his famous smile and asked her if she honestly wouldn't like to see that race he had told the girls about. Of course

he wanted to row his very best, for the honor of Harvard and the United States of America ; and he could do any amount better if he knew that some good friends of his would be watching him and cheering for the crimson. Whereupon Mrs. Hildreth laughed at his ingenious reasoning and commissioned Babbie and Madeline to see about engaging passage back from an English port. And Billy, thanking her with charming deference, and taking an early and ceremonious leave, reflected, as he often had before, that it was easy enough to get things your way if you only took a little pains to be agreeable.

John Morton, on the other hand, bitterly regretted the girls' change of plan. " I know I shan't be here for the race," he told Babe, " and I can't go over to Paris when you do, because old Dwight won't be through with his reading at the British Museum. I might skip off with Billy, I suppose, but my father would be furious if he ever found it out."

" You mustn't do that," Babe advised him. " It wouldn't be the square thing at all. Besides, we're not going straight to Paris. We're going to Saint something. I forget

the name, but it's a seaside place up in Brittany. Madeline says it's lovely. So you may get to Paris as soon as we do after all."

"I hope so. Anyway I think you ought to go sight-seeing in London now and not waste time over shopping. You can do that just as well in September when I'm not here."

"And in that way we won't have the things we buy to lug around in the meantime," added Babe; but it is doubtful if this practical consideration had very much to do with the sudden subsidence of her shopping mania.

Of course Babe told all the girls that Jasper J. Morton, the Grasmere automobilist, and John's father were one and the same person. But only to Betty did she confide the story of the letter that had so disheartened John.

"I wish I were like you," she said; "then I should know how to give him the right kind of advice."

"Why, I should think the only thing to say was that he ought to try to make his father see that he's trying," began Betty doubtfully. "You can't expect a person to believe right off that you are going to work

hard, when you've always wasted your time before. Goodness, don't you remember how long it took Eleanor Watson to get back her reputation? You just wouldn't believe in her yourself, Babe."

"That was very different. She—she wasn't honest. Besides, if I'd been her father I'd have stuck by her."

Betty smiled at Babe's easy assumptions. "You can't tell what you'd have done. But, anyhow, don't feel so bad about it. They'll just have to get along as they always have before."

"Oh, no, they won't!" Babe's tone was tragic. "They — Oh, Betty, I've just got to tell some one. John says he simply can't stand it any longer. He's talked to Mr. Benson about it, and he has been asking Mr. Trevelyan about the chances for a young man in Australia. Mr. Benson has some kind of a big business that his guardian is managing for him until he's through college, and he says he will ask the guardian to give John a position there. But John thinks Australia would be better, because you can always earn more in a wild country, and then besides, if

his father objected, he would be away off there and he could just go ahead with his plans."

"Oh, Babe, how silly! Then he doesn't want to finish his college course, after all the time he's spent tutoring?"

Babe shook her head. "He doesn't want to do that anyway. He says it will be only a waste of time. Whatever he does, he wants to go right to work. He'd be perfectly satisfied if his father would let him go to work in his business."

"But what's his dreadful hurry?" demanded Betty. "As long as his father wants him to finish college why doesn't he do it, and then go to work? If he's really in earnest about trying to please his father that's what he ought to do."

"Yes, but you see a year is a lot of time to lose, when you might be getting started in business. He wouldn't expect his father to support him—that is, we wouldn't want—we couldn't——" Babe paused, blushing furiously. "Oh, Betty, don't you see how it is? You've just screwed it out of me. Promise you won't tell anybody."

"Of course not," laughed Betty. "A nice consistent man-hater you are, Babe."

"But Betty, I haven't decided anything yet," Babe protested hastily. "I may decide to go on being a man-hater just the same. Anyway John is only the exception that proves the rule."

"Well, certainly, Babe," Betty went on seriously, "you wouldn't want him to have any trouble with his father on your account."

"Of course not," said Babe earnestly. "I couldn't bear to have him do that. That's why it all worries me so."

"Then why not tell him that you think he ought to stick to college and try to please his father, whatever happens?"

Babe considered, frowning. "I will. A year isn't so terribly long, when you're young. I'll—yes, I'll tell him that if he doesn't decide to go back to college and do his best to make his father happy why I'll just return his cairngorm pin."

The few remaining days of the girls' stay in London flew swiftly by. It was the regular thing for John to join them for a part of each day. Sometimes when he was not too busy at

the British Museum, Mr. Dwight came too. Billy Benson, who was an indefatigable sight-seer, divided his time between John and the girls and Mr. Trevelyan, who kept modestly in the background, always ready if Billy wanted his society, and always having "business" to attend to when Billy was otherwise engaged. Billy, who was an impressionable youth, was forever singing his new friend's praises.

"He's so thoughtful and considerate," he declared to Babbie one morning. "My invitation to the countess's dance came this morning." He held out a daintily engraved card. "What did he do but write to his sister to see if I might bring you along. No, I didn't suggest it. It was all his own idea. He said that his sister would be the only woman there who spoke English, and as the guest of honor she'll be busy of course. And as I can't 'parlez-vous' one small word, he's afraid I'll be bored—or a bore. Would you come?"

Babbie wasn't sure that they would be in Paris in time for the dance. Even if they were she hadn't any evening dress with her, and anyway, she was afraid her mother

wouldn't be willing that she should go. "But it was fine of him to think of it," she ended. "I'm going to ask mother if she minds his joining us on the trip to Hampton Court."

The Hampton Court expedition was to furnish the grand finale for the London chapter of "B. A.'s Abroad." They were to go up to Hampton by an early afternoon train, see the palace and gardens, have dinner at an inn with a fascinating name just outside the palace gates, and row down the river at sunset, taking a train back to London somewhere further down the line. Mrs. Hildreth was going to chaperon the party, and she had no objection to Babbie's asking Mr. Trevelyan to join it. She shook her head, however, over the invitation to the countess's dance. "You couldn't go without a chaperon, dear," she said. "And if the idea is that Mr. Trevelyan's sister is to chaperon you, why I shouldn't be at all willing unless I had met her beforehand."

Billy assured her easily that all those details could be arranged. "Don't say no until you have to," he begged. "I'm afraid Trevelyan will be discouraged at the prospect

of my dumbness and try to get out of taking me. Besides, it would be such a jolly lark if you came."

So the matter was left in abeyance for the moment. Billy, in his casual way, told Mr. Trevelyan that Mrs. Hildreth hoped she could meet his sister before the dance, and Mr. Trevelyan bowed gravely and said his sister would certainly do herself the honor of calling on Mrs. Hildreth.

He bowed gravely again as he accepted Babbie's invitation to go with them to Hampton Court. He seemed very familiar with the place, and John and Billy, who found English time-tables and tram-lines very confusing, sighed relieved sighs and let him direct the party.

"It's fine having him along," Billy declared. "He always knows where things are and how you get there and what there is to see. He's as good as a regular guide, and at the same time he's an addition to the party."

"Without being an additional expense," laughed John. "Pays his own way, doesn't he?"

Billy nodded. "We sort of take turns.

If I pay for our luncheons, he pays for dinner. Then I pay for the theatre and so on. It evens up in the end, and it's less trouble among friends."

"This expedition is to be a Dutch treat, you know," John explained. "Babbie insisted that it must be that way."

Billy felt in his pockets absently. "By George, that's lucky for me, because I forgot to get a check cashed this morning. Can you lend me a little?"

John laughed. "I can't. I forgot too, and I shall be doing well if I get back to London with a 'bus fare."

They were standing on the terrace at Hampton Court, overlooking the river, with its gay row of house-boats anchored to the opposite shore. Trevelyan was with the girls and Mrs. Hildreth, pointing out the different boats and telling the names of their owners.

"I say, Trevelyan," Billy hailed him, "can you finance me for the day, and maybe John, too? We've forgotten to get any checks cashed."

Trevelyan smiled. "I think I can accommodate you, if you don't want too much. You

carry express checks, too?" He looked at John.

"All good Americans do," declared John.

"Except me," Babbie put in. "I carry gold certificates."

"You'd better not say that too loud," laughed John. "With your gold certificates, and that ring"—pointing at the sparkling hoop of diamonds that had been Babbie's father's last present to her and that she always wore—"you'd be a valuable prey for brigands." He pointed to the shadowy length of Queen Mary's "pleached walk" just behind them. "These European show-places swarm with adventurers. How do you know that Trevelyan isn't one, and that he isn't planning to drag you off to that pleached walk after dinner and rob you?"

Babbie laughed. "I'm not afraid. But it is queer, isn't it, how the first subject of conversations among travelers is always, 'How do you carry your money?' I've told lots of people how I carry mine." She turned to Trevelyan. "I told you the very first time I met you."

"Did you?" asked Trevelyan absently. "I

don't remember. Shall we go and walk in Mary's bower, Miss Hildreth?"

Babbie had not liked Mr. Trevelyan particularly before, but he was so entertaining this afternoon that she was secretly annoyed when she found herself paired off with Mr. Dwight for the long row down the river. Mr. Trevelyan was with Betty, who always got on beautifully with Mr. Dwight. But it couldn't be helped, so Babbie settled herself to enjoy the river and make the best of her rather prosy companion. The river was crowded with pleasure-craft—motor-boats, launches, rowboats, and punts. These last fascinated Betty, because they were different from anything in America.

"I like all these nice slow English things," she told Mr. Trevelyan. "Can you punt?"

He nodded. "But don't you notice that in punting the girl nearly always does the work?" He held his oars in one hand and pointed to a boat that was coming up-stream near the other bank. As he did so, he turned to face it and the man who was lolling on the cushions recognized him and sat up suddenly.

"How are you, Lestrangle?" he called across the water. "Haven't seen you in weeks."

"Quite well, thanks. I've been awfully busy," Trevelyan called back, and picking up his oars began pulling off with long steady strokes that speedily put distance between himself and the punt. But he could row and talk, too. He seemed bent on being as agreeable to Betty as, earlier in the afternoon, he had to Babbie. When they reached the landing-place that had been appointed as a rendezvous he still kept close beside her, and on the train and the 'bus he was a most attentive escort. Betty, who was very sleepy, wished at last that he would talk to somebody else and let her have a little cat-nap in peace. She also wanted to ask John or Billy Benson whether his first name was Lestrangle, but she couldn't, with him close beside her. Very likely Babbie or Babe would know. It was certainly a queer first name.

"Who's going to see us off in the morning?" asked Babbie, as the men made ready to say good-night. "John, you will, of course."

"I'm not sure," returned John stiffly, avoid-

ing Babbie's eyes. "Quarter to ten is very early for London."

"Nonsense!" retorted Billy Benson cheerfully. "I'll get you up in time. I'm coming to the station, and so is Trevelyan, aren't you, old man?"

"Yes, indeed," said Trevelyan, who was still standing close by Betty.

"Well, did everybody have a good time?" asked Madeline, when they were indoors.

"I did," said Babbie quickly, "until I got caught with Mr. Dwight."

"I did," agreed Betty, "until I got sleepy and kept yawning in Mr. Trevelyan's face, in spite of myself. By the way, a queer thing happened while we were rowing down the river. Do any of you happen to know his first name?"

"It's Arthur," said Babbie promptly. "I saw it on the invitation that Mr. Benson had to the countess's ball. It was addressed in care of Mr. Arthur Trevelyan."

"That's queer." Betty repeated what the man in the punt had said.

"Probably Lestrangle is his second name," suggested Madeline. "The invitation might

have read L. Arthur or Arthur L. Babbie wouldn't have noticed the initial."

"But just suppose it isn't," Betty argued. "I thought he looked queer, and tried to hurry away, though that may all have been my imagination; but anyhow it would have been the most natural thing in the world for him to have explained."

"But he wouldn't think of explaining if it is his other name," Madeline persisted, "any more than Babe would think of explaining if some one happened to call her Sarah. However, of course Mr. Benson doesn't really know anything about him. Let's suppose he is an adventurer, with aliases and deep-laid schemes for separating the boys from their money. You'd better write and warn them, Betty."

"Honestly, Betty, you ought," added Babe, thinking of John's Australian schemes, which depended more or less on Mr. Trevelyan's co-operation.

"We shall see them all in the morning," Babbie reminded them. "And please don't say anything to mother until you're sure. She'll be so horrified to think that she allowed

her innocent young daughter and her daughter's little friends to go around London in such dreadful company."

So Betty decided to wait until morning. But though the girls scanned the platform anxiously until the train pulled out of the station no one appeared to see them off.

"I knew they wouldn't come," Babe confided in savage tones to Betty. "At least I knew John wouldn't. I did what I told you I would, and he was perfectly horrid—said it was just like a girl to want to decide everything, and that of course he'd like to please me, but he must do what he thought was best. So I gave him back his old cairngorm, and there isn't any exception to the rule of man-hating, after all. And I'm perfectly miserable, so there now!"

Several days later Babbie got a note from John, forwarded from her Paris address, which seemed to disprove Babe's theory. They had all three gone to see the girls off, he explained, but Mr. Trevelyan had for once proved unreliable; he had made an unaccountable mistake about the station, which John had discovered too late to correct. So

they had waited for the girls at Paddington while the girls watched for them in Waterloo. "He got us there an hour early too," John wrote. "Insisted that you said eight forty-five instead of nine. And we were all awfully sleepy, because after we left you we took a long 'bus ride through the East End and then stopped on the Embankment for supper. Dwight hasn't finished reading through the British Museum, so I don't know when we may get to Paris. However, I still find London very interesting"—a conclusion which made everybody but Babe smile.

This letter crossed with Betty's note, telling John about the name by which some of Mr. Trevelyan's English friends knew him; so of course it threw no light on the subject. The girls watched eagerly for another letter, all through the week they spent at Saint Malo, but none came. However, as Madeline remarked, Saint Malo was quite fascinating enough without any adventurer stalking through its streets, and besides, one didn't need to speculate about imaginary adventures when you were living in the midst of real ones.

CHAPTER XII

JASPER J. MORTON AGAIN

“MAXIM for travelers : Always begin your first trip to France at Saint Malo,” announced Betty Wales, after they had explored the quaint old town a little. Babbie and Madeline, the traveled contingent, agreed that it was “just as dear and almost as dirty ” as anything in Italy, which was Madeline’s standard of real charm. Babe, being in a state of subdued and pensive melancholy, said nothing and thought a great deal—but not about Saint Malo. Madeline and Babbie supposed she was missing John until Babe, unable to endure their constant chaffing any longer, informed them curtly that she never wished to see him again as long as she lived. Having freed her mind, she felt a little better ; but she sternly rejected sympathy, even from Betty, refused to confide in Babbie, though the B’s had always told one another everything, and spent most

of her time on the hotel piazza facing the sea, sitting in one of the hooded beach chairs that abound at all the continental watering-places. The hood of this particular one was lined with pink flowered cretonne, and it was so becoming that Babbie declared it was a perfect shame the effect should be lost.

"John would do anything she wanted if he could see her in that chair," she declared. "As for her not wanting to see him, she's simply dying to this very minute. Won't it be interesting watching them make up in Paris?"

"Almost as interesting as it is watching Betty buy post-cards in French," laughed Madeline.

"I don't care if I am funny," declared Betty stoutly. "I'm learning. I can say almost anything I want to now, only I have to look up some words in my dictionary. I've written my family that you can learn more French here in a week than you do in a year at Harding."

"That's a base slander on Harding," returned Madeline promptly. "Here you are engaging the entire time of two excellent

tutors,—meaning me and Miss Hildreth,—besides getting incidental instruction from nearly every inhabitant of the town. You ought to be learning a little something, my child.”

“You never bought a dictionary either, at Harding,” put in Babbie. “You used to borrow Nita’s.”

Betty’s diminutive French dictionary had been her first purchase in Saint Malo. In the crowd of porters and custom-house officials on the landing-wharf she had discovered that she knew even less French than she had supposed, and Madeline’s and Babbie’s easy intercourse with the hotel servants and shop-keepers filled her with envy and despair.

“I will learn,” she declared. “I never wanted to particularly before, but now I want to more than anything. I won’t be carried along on this trip like a piece of baggage, having to call one of you whenever I want to ask for hot water or buy a postage stamp.”

So she bought her dictionary and carried it with her everywhere, bringing it out on all occasions, to the intense amusement of Babbie and Madeline, who criticised her accent mercilessly, taught her the most complicated

idioms they could remember, and assisted her progress by making her inquire the way about the town, do their shopping as well as her own, and even flounder through protracted interviews with the fat and obtuse old woman who rented bath-houses and suits on the rocks just below the wall that encircled the town. With such strenuous practice it was certainly no wonder, as Madeline had pointed out, that Betty's progress was rapid.

Saint Malo is a tiny, sleepy town, shut in by a great wall. Its narrow, crooked streets are lined with tall stone houses, there is a lovely old church towering over everything, and on all sides, when the tide is high, is the sea. At low tide there are great stretches of ugly yellow sand flats, where it is not safe to walk because of treacherous quicksands, and over which the incoming sea rushes "faster than a horse can gallop," so the natives tell you proudly. But there are small bathing beaches close to the wall; there is the wall to promenade on; there are the dark, stuffy little shops in the town where one buys Brittany ware and Cluny lace, all "*très bon marché*," of bright-eyed peasant women in caps and sabots; and

everywhere there is the fascinating foreign atmosphere that is, after all, the crowning feature in the charm of traveling.

"I'm so glad we aren't automobiling this time!" sighed Babbie. "James wouldn't have let us come here. He'd have fussed about the roads or the garages or something of that sort. I hope we shall have time for some more little out-of-the-way villages."

"There are dozens in this neighborhood," the "man from Cook's" assured her. "We ought to be energetic and take some side-trips. We can go to Dinard ——"

"That's where I want to go," broke in Mrs. Hildreth. "I've heard so much about what a gay, pretty little place it is. Is it hard to get there, Madeline?"

"Not a bit," responded Madeline, "only if we're going to-day we ought to start in a few minutes and have lunch there, because the tide is low about noon, and at low tide the ferry-boat doesn't run, or if it does it starts from some inconvenient place."

"Then if Dinard is dressy, I can't go," said Betty sadly. "Every one of my thin waists is torn, and it takes ages to mend them nicely."

"Then why don't you come over in the afternoon and meet us there?" suggested Madeline. "The pretty French girl who sits opposite us at table d'hôte says that there is a Casino where they have music in the afternoons. People motor in from the châteaux, and it's great fun sitting on the piazzas and watching the gaiety. I'll wait and come with you, if you like."

But Betty insisted that she could go perfectly well alone. "I can say, 'Ou est le casino?' beautifully," she declared, "and if I don't understand a word of the answer why I can just watch which way they point. The lovely thing about French people is that they always point. I'll mend all my waists and take the ferry about four, or whenever the tide is right, and meet you at the Casino."

And so at half-past three,—because, to tell the truth, it was easier to be a little early than to ask the hotel clerk about the tide,—Betty, dressed in her prettiest white suit and her hat with the pink roses, came out of the hotel and started down the road to the ferry landing. It was a hot day and the road was

dusty, and she hurried as fast as possible to get into the shelter of the little park just back of the landing. But before she reached it she heard a shout from the bottom of the landing-steps, and the next minute she realized that somebody was calling her,—a stout gentleman, who, having detached himself from the little crowd that had gathered there, was laboriously climbing the steps to meet her, still calling and beckoning frantically as he came. But instead of using her name he was shouting, "Miss B. A. ! Miss B. A. ! " And this, before he was near enough to be recognized, gave Betty the clue to his identity. It was Jasper J. Morton, of course.

His coat was off, he carried his hat in his hand, and his face was red with heat and indignation.

"Do you speak English?" he demanded, when he was near enough to be heard. "I mean do you speak French? I've been tearing around asking people if they speak English until I'm hoarse."

"I'm very glad to see you again," said Betty, holding out her hand and trying not to smile at the absurd figure he cut. "I

speak only a little bit of French, but fortunately I have my dictionary along,"—she pulled the little book out of a pocket in her linen coat—"and with that I can generally manage pretty well."

"The point is," Mr. Morton broke in impatiently, "do you speak French enough to ascertain what has happened to this confounded ferry? I came over here this morning from a place called Dinard. I came by ferry. I climbed those identical steps." He waved his hand dramatically toward the landing. "I lunched and strolled around the town until it was nearly time for me to meet my chauffeur in Dinard. Then I came back here. The ferry is gone. The ocean is gone. Am I out of my senses, or what's happened?" He mopped his brow and glowered darkly at Betty.

"The ferry hasn't gone for good," she assured him soothingly, "nor the ocean. In a few minutes they'll both be back and we can go to Dinard together. I'm waiting for the ferry too." And she explained about the tides, which necessitated the intermittent service.



"I HAVE MY DICTIONARY"

Jasper J. Morton stared out across the great stretch of bare sand. "Do you mean to tell me that in a few minutes all that will be under water enough to float a good-sized ferry-boat? Well, these tides must be French, like all the rest of it. In that case it's lucky I didn't try to walk out to the edge of the water to see if I couldn't find a boat there." He looked at his watch. "I'm two hours late now. I'm never late for my appointments. My chauffeur won't know what to make of it. He can't speak French either, so he won't be able to ask any questions."

Betty laughed. "You ought to get a dictionary like mine. It's very useful. Can I do anything else for you, Mr. Morton?"

Mr. Morton looked at her sharply. "You can. You can come down the steps with me and tell the man who insists on holding my coat that I don't want a guide, philosopher and friend, or whatever else he's trying to be to me, but that I do want my coat. Pay him off with these." He handed her some silver.

With some difficulty Betty made the man understand that "*le monsieur Anglais*" did

not want a guide for the afternoon, nor a boatman, nor a porter.

"And now," said Jasper J. Morton briskly, "comes the real business of the moment. I've got to send some telegrams to Dol, where I'm stopping and where I was to meet two friends on business at five o'clock. I shan't be there at five. Is your French equal to finding a telegraph office?"

Betty looked up several words in her dictionary, asked a question or two, and they started off. At the telegraph office Mr. Morton wrote two messages just alike: "Unavoidably detained. Back in evening. Clef d'Or best hotel."

"That will fix them," he said, smiling cheerfully at Betty. "They'll spend the afternoon in the sulks, thinking I've changed my mind and won't come in to their game. Now see that he reads them right and tell him to hurry them off, and then we can talk English for a while."

"I've done everything to-day that my doctor ordered me not to," he told her when they were on their way back to the ferry. "I've worried about business, I've got overexcited

and overheated, I've lost my temper, and to-night I'm going to do business—the biggest deal I ever put through. You've been a Benevolent Adventurer this time all right, Miss—Miss ——”

“Wales,” Betty supplied.

“Think I'll have to call you Miss B. A.,” he laughed. “By the way, how did you find out my name?”

Betty had to think a minute. “Why, we met a man in London who knows you, and then we know your son.”

“You know John?” repeated Mr. Morton irritably.

Betty nodded. “Don't you remember I told you when we met before what a good time we had in Oban? Well, he was the one we had it with—he and Mr. Dwight. Only I didn't know it then—I didn't know he was your son, I mean. And then in London we met him again.”

“You did, eh?” Mr. Morton eyed her sharply. “Met him again in London? Are you at the bottom of this new leaf of his that Dwight wrote me about, Miss B. A.?”

“Oh, no,” said Betty quickly, “but I think

Babe is,—at least they got to be awfully good friends, and she hates a shirk."

"Babe—that's the little tomboy who stood up for you against me." Mr. Morton laughed at the recollection. "She'd be a match for John. She'd make something of him if any one could. But what she can see in him beats me. Oh, he's a pleasant fellow enough, but he'll never amount to that, Miss B. A." Jasper J. Morton snapped his fingers derisively.

They had come out on the water-front and Betty, happening to look ahead, saw that the tide had come in, and with it the ferry-boat, which at that very moment gave a warning whistle.

"Oh, dear, we've missed the boat!" she said, "and they only go once an hour."

"No, we haven't," cried Mr. Morton. "What's the French for 'Wait'? You tell me and I'll shout it." Which he did with such effect that the captain reversed his engines and put back for them.

"Attendez," repeated Mr. Morton, when he had settled himself on board and caught his breath. "Hope I can remember that. It will be sure to come in handy somewhere. I

haven't any head for languages—never had. Can't talk to one of my foreign agents without an interpreter."

"It's queer that your son should be so fine at languages," said Betty, glad to get in a word in John's favor. "We've always thought that Madeline Ayres was perfectly remarkable, but she says he is any amount more so."

"Really?" Mr. Morton's tone was unpleasantly sceptical. "Well, I don't know that I ever paid a bill for a tutor in languages, as far as that goes."

"Oh, these aren't the kinds you study at college," Betty explained, "or at least he knows them too, I suppose; but I was thinking of Dutch and Danish and Russian and those queer kinds. He speaks ten different ones, I think he said, and he can understand a few words of some others."

"This is all news to me," said Jasper J. Morton drily. "How'd he learn them?"

"Down on some wharves that you own, he said. You do own some wharves, don't you?"

Mr. Morton puckered his lips into a queer smile. "Well, I'm surprised for once in my

life—agreeably surprised. I didn't suppose John had any useful accomplishments."

Betty smiled engagingly. "Well, as long as you didn't know about this one, don't you suppose he has lots of others that you don't know about, either?"

Mr. Morton laughed good-naturedly. "So you think I'm inclined to look on the dark side of things, do you, Miss B. A.? Well, I'll write the boy to-night, after I've scalped those two railroad presidents, and tell him that I hear good accounts of him. I say, here we are at Dinard, and actually there's my chauffeur waiting for me. Waited because it was the easiest thing to do, I suppose. Now you must let me take you to your friends, only you'll have to ask the way, because I can't."

As Betty waved him a good-bye from the steps of the Casino she thought sadly of a great many things she might have said about John and hadn't. "It's so difficult when you've been confided in and have to remember what you mustn't tell," she thought. "Oh, dear, I meant to explain about Mr. Blake and what I told him. I forgot that

too. I hope Mr. Morton won't forget to write the letter to his son."

Her eyes followed Mr. Morton's big red car as it turned a corner, and there, walking briskly toward her, his eyes absently fixed on the ground, his cynical expression even more pronounced than usual, was Mr. Richard Blake himself.

CHAPTER XIII

A "NEAR-ADVENTURE"

JUST as Betty discovered Mr. Blake he looked up and discovered her.

"How do you do?" he inquired gaily, striding across the street and up the steps to shake hands. "I'm extra glad to see you because I regard your appearance as a good omen. You've got another scoop up your sleeve for me, now haven't you?"

"Do you mean that you haven't found Mr. Morton yet?" demanded Betty, dispensing with formal greetings in her haste to explain Mr. Morton's whereabouts. "Why, you just met him, Mr. Blake. He went around that corner just now in his car."

"The mischief he did!" Mr. Blake turned and surveyed the corner ruefully. "I was thinking of somebody—something else. I didn't know a car passed me. I say,

I suppose you haven't any idea where he was going?"

"To Dol. He told me he was staying there."

"He'll change his mind on the way—I've chased him long enough now to know his habits. Still it's worth trying. See here, Miss Wales, don't you want to come along and introduce me,—or just countenance the expedition by your presence? Jasper J. hates newspaper men, and you might be a lot of help. It won't take ten minutes to round him up. We can go in that car." He waved his hand at one drawn up by the curbing.

"Of course I'll come," agreed Betty, "only I ought to go in and tell Mrs. Hildreth first."

"No time," objected Dick brusquely. "Every minute counts." He ran down the steps and began cranking the engine vigorously. "Get up in front beside me, so we can talk."

Betty hesitated an instant and then, reflecting that ten minutes couldn't matter much, and wishing to be obliging, she jumped in. Mr. Blake was beside her in an instant,

and before she had had time to button her coat or pull her veil tight, they were fairly whizzing down the hill.

"You don't mind going fast, do you?" asked Mr. Blake absently, his eyes on the sharp rise beyond.

Betty's eyes sparkled with excitement. "I never went fast enough yet. I didn't know you had a car with you, Mr. Blake."

"Oh, I haven't," he explained quickly. "This belongs to an old pal of mine—somebody you know, by the way. Remember Mrs. Bob, who chaperoned Madeline's house-party? Well, this is her husband's car. You remember him, too, and the awful daubs he painted? We guyed him about them until he took it to heart and went West to make his fortune. Put all his money in a Texas oil well, had beginner's luck, and now he's drawing a thousand a week from that well. And prosperity has improved his painting, too, until he turns out very decent things. He's working in the garden next the Casino this afternoon. I was to come for him about this time, and we were going for a little spin in the cool of the afternoon."

"Won't he be worried about his car?"

"Probably, if he goes out to look for it," said Mr. Blake calmly. "But he ought to have something to worry over. He's getting disgracefully fat. Do you know, Miss Wales, our friend Jasper J. is going the pace all right, if that cloud of dust ahead is his outfit."

"We're catching up a little though, aren't we?" asked Betty anxiously.

"We certainly are," Dick assured her, "but I'm afraid it's no ten minute job we've tackled. I didn't know he was such a reckless driver. I'm sorry I got you out here on false pretences, Miss Wales. Will Mrs. Hildreth worry?"

"Not unless I'm awfully late," said Betty cheerfully. "And, anyway, we can't help it now. I certainly can't walk back and you can't take me back; you'd surely lose Mr. Morton if you did that."

"Exactly." Mr. Blake's eyes were on the white road ahead, and he spoke in jerky sentences, keeping time to the throb of the machine. "I should lose the trail, and the last chance of making good on this assignment. Time's up to-morrow, you know. When I met you I was blue as indigo—saw myself sail-

ing back to New York with my reputation for being the best sleuth in town knocked to splinters. So Mrs. Hildreth and Bob Enderby will both have to bear up as best they can."

"It's queer how I've happened on Mr. Morton twice just in time to accommodate you," laughed Betty.

"Mighty lucky for me," said Richard briefly. "You're cold, Miss Wales. Reach under the seat and you'll find something in the way of a wrap."

Betty reached, and drew out a leather coat. "How stunning!" she said, pulling it around her shoulders. "Is it yours or Mr. Enderby's?"

"It's Bob's." He turned to look. "I say, that's a new one on me. Bob's blossoming out in awfully swell togs all of a sudden. He's been sporting an old corduroy coat that his wife wouldn't have in the studio."

"Mr. Blake, the other car has stopped!" cried Betty eagerly.

"It has, for sure. You certainly do bring luck, Miss Wales! Now here goes for one last desperate spurt."

They dashed along the straight white road

in silence, Betty wondering rather anxiously how Jasper J. Morton would receive them, Mr. Blake intent on his work, until suddenly he gave an impatient little exclamation, and slowing down, leaned forward to listen to his engine.

"The gasoline can't be low," he muttered angrily. "I took her to be filled myself and Bob just ran her around the town a bit afterward." He went slower still to make sure. "It is low," he told Betty dejectedly. "It's horribly low. We shall be lucky if we catch him where he is now. If he starts on we're lost."

"Oh, well, perhaps he won't start on," said Betty cheerfully, "at least not if we hurry."

Dick started the car again. "I say, but you're game," he declared admiringly. "A good many girls would dislike the charming prospect of having to go home in a Brittany farm-wagon." He squinted at the big car ahead. "Jasper J. can't take us back. He's punctured one of his back tires. He'll be in an angelic mood to receive us."

Betty gave a nervous little laugh. "That's what I'm afraid of."

Mr. Blake sighed. "I oughtn't to have

brought you, Miss Wales—I don't see how I ever thought of such a foolish scheme. But now that you're here you're just to sit in the car, while I go and inquire the way to the nearest gasoline supply, and incidentally, as I inquire, discover that I'm talking to a man I want most awfully to see. It's all going to be beautiful and casual, and I shall refer to you only if everything else fails."

By this time they were very near Mr. Morton's car, and their own was crawling so slowly that Mr. Blake drew it up by the roadside and, tooting his horn a few times by way of encouraging Mr. Morton to wait for him, started briskly off to his interview.

"You'll be in plain sight of us," he told Betty, "so you can't get lonely, and you can have oceans of fun watching Jasper J. turn me down—or try to."

Betty, watching him go, wished she had thought it fair to tell him about the railroad presidents who were waiting at Dol. "But I couldn't do that," she reflected. "I'm afraid I've told him too much as it is."

Meanwhile there was a good deal of excitement at the Dinard Casino—the "high-life

Casino," so read the tickets of admission and the placard by the door. It wasn't about Betty; Mrs. Hildreth and the girls had been wondering about her non-appearance, but they had scarcely reached the worrying stage as yet. The excitement had to do with a scandal in "high-life." A young Frenchman had driven his car in from a near-by château, had barely stepped inside the Casino, and come back to find the car gone. He had immediately borrowed a racing machine and rushed off in hot pursuit, leaving the Casino piazzas agog with strange rumors. These flew about chiefly in French, but Madeline and Babbie caught snatches and told the others. The most picturesque detail was the fact that the Casino's porter had stood unsuspectingly and watched the thief and his confederate, a pretty young girl, drive off. The girl had come and stood on the steps,—looking in, supposedly, to make sure that the coast was clear. She was English or perhaps American, was young, with curly golden hair, was dressed all in white, and had nothing of the air of the adventuress about her. Madeline and Babbie exchanged bewildered glances, suppressed some details,

and covertly assured each other that Betty was too old and too sensible to let herself be kidnapped in broad daylight. And how otherwise should she be helping to steal automobiles? It was too ridiculous!

This was just what an excited young Frenchman, having stopped his racing car with a skillful turn close beside her, and caught her attention by a low bow and a deferential "Pardon, Madame," was demanding of her in rapid-fire French, which dazzled poor Betty's mind into absolute blankness.

"I'm sorry, but I don't understand," she said sadly at last. "That is, *Jé ne comprend pas*. If you can't speak English, you'd better ask Mr. Blake. *Demandez à ce monsieur*." She pointed ahead.

"Ah!" The Frenchman's black eyes flashed with pleasure as he noticed Mr. Blake. He turned to a man in uniform in the tonneau and they conversed in more rapid-fire French, after which the man in uniform jumped out of the Frenchman's car and then with another "Pardon, Madame," calmly climbed into Betty's. This was strange enough, but the effect of the Frenchman's communication on

Mr. Blake, who spoke French like a native, was even stranger. He listened a minute, asked a quick question, and then started on the run toward Betty, with Jasper J. Morton panting behind him. When Mr. Blake started, the man in uniform hopped nimbly out and stood in the middle of the road, as if to intercept his passage, and when he rushed around to the back of the car the man in uniform was instantly beside him.

"It's true, all right," he told Betty a minute later, coming around to her side. "Oh, you didn't understand? He says I've stolen a car, and I have. That's not Bob's number. This car is absolutely like his in every other way—except for the lack of gasoline and the different coat, of course. And how was I to know that Bob hadn't squandered his gasoline and bought a new coat?"

"Miss B. A.! Are you here?" cried Mr. Morton, coming up behind Dick. "Then perhaps you'll be good enough to explain. This gentleman asked me to lend him gasoline enough to get to a garage, and instead of waiting for my answer he begins to jabber French and then runs off like a madman."

"Why, we've stolen a car," explained Betty. "That is, Mr. Blake took the wrong one by mistake, and these people thought he did it on purpose."

"Took the wrong car by mistake," muttered Mr. Morton. "Well, I don't doubt it, since you vouch for the gentleman, but otherwise it would look very black to me. Is he given to making mistakes of that sort?"

"Oh, no," cried Betty quickly. "But you see we were in such a hurry, and I suppose he was pretty much excited because it was his last chance and so important and all ——"

"Wait a minute," commanded Mr. Morton peremptorily. "I don't follow you. What was your tremendous hurry? What was the gentleman's last chance that it was of the utmost importance he should utilize?"

"Oh, hadn't he told you?" asked Betty. "But of course he hadn't had time to. Why—please don't be angry, Mr. Morton, but we were chasing you. Mr. Blake's newspaper sent him over here to interview you, and he has missed you ever so many times, and he couldn't stay any longer than to-day." She

paused to see what the effect of her announcement would be.

"You and a New York reporter chasing me in a stolen automobile! A pretty story that would make!" Jasper J. Morton's tone was deeply indignant. Then he looked from Betty's solemn face to Mr. Blake, who was hot from his run and his valiant efforts to convince the Dinard police sergeant of his innocence, then at the Frenchman, alert and smiling, as he awaited the outcome of the discussion, and his eyes began to twinkle. "Does he know about those railroad presidents in Dol?" he demanded, jerking his thumb toward Mr. Blake.

Betty explained that she hadn't considered herself at liberty to tell Mr. Blake that.

"Just chased me on general principles," he chuckled. "Well, I've been chased pretty hard sometimes, but never by a pretty girl in a stolen automobile, so far as I remember. Hi there, young man," he raised his voice. "Come over here and tell me how all this happened." Then, as Dick deserted the sergeant, he added, "Miss B. A. here is trying to make me think that I'm to blame."

Dick laughed. "Then I suppose she's told you that it was awfully important to me to see you. If I could just ask you a few questions, Mr. Morton, before I go back with this man, I should be everlastingly obliged. He insists on putting me under arrest. I've got a friend in Dol who'll go bail for me, but until then the best I can do is to make him let Miss Wales off." He smiled dejectedly at Betty.

"Put you under arrest, indeed!" sniffed Jasper J. Morton. "Why, it was a clear case of mistake, wasn't it? She says it was. You've got a friend who's got a car like that, haven't you? You can show 'em—the car and the friend—as soon as we get into Dinard. You'll ride back with me, both of you, if my man ever gets that puncture mended." Jasper J. Morton pulled out a roll of fifty-franc notes and flourished them at the sergeant, who was staring uncomprehendingly. "How much do you want, my good fellow? I'll go bail, or whatever you please to call it. Ask him how much he wants, Miss B. A. Where's your dictionary? No," as Mr. Blake started forward, "you wait a minute. She'll manage him best."

So Betty explained what Mr. Morton wanted, with frequent promptings from that impatient gentleman ; and the sergeant, accepting a small fee "for the accommodation," agreed to take the gentleman's word and his friend's word that they would both appear in court at Dinard, if, after the aggrieved Frenchman had seen Mr. Bob's car and interviewed its owner, he was not willing to accept Mr. Blake's apology and withdraw his suit. As a matter of fact, all the Frenchman wanted was his car back unharmed ; he had brought the police sergeant only in case of emergency. And as the policeman couldn't drive a car, he was glad to accept Mr. Morton's offer that his chauffeur, who had at last finished repairing the tire, should put in enough gasoline from his machine to carry the stalled car to a garage and should then drive it back to Dinard.

"I'm going to drive mine myself," Mr. Morton announced. "That's another thing that my doctor told me not to do, you know. Blake, get in behind with Miss B. A."

But Betty protested that she was tired and wanted the tonneau to herself. As a matter of fact, she was sure that if Mr. Blake and Mr.

Morton rode together, Mr. Morton would never be able to resist telling about the railroad presidents cooped up in Dol waiting for him. And sure enough, it was only a few minutes before she heard him say, "That'll make a great story, you know. Sleepy French town—nothing happened there for centuries—doesn't know the meaning of high finance. Americans choose it as neutral ground on which to discuss biggest traffic coup in history. Wall Street feels the shock. Oh, I suppose you can turn out that sort of thing much better than I can. You come over to Dol and see the fun. I'll introduce you as my secretary. Can you act a little like a secretary?"

After a while she heard him ask, "Do you always chase everything you want as hard as you chased me? I like to see a man chase hard."

Madeline and Babe were on the Casino steps waiting to get the first possible sight of the crowd coming up from the ferry, for if Betty didn't come on this boat they were all going back to Saint Malo in the hope of finding her there. But before Betty, assisted by Mr. Blake and Mr. Morton, had finished explain-

ing herself, the Frenchman, who had waited to pilot his own car to a garage, came up, and Madeline deserted her friends to rush at him with such a friendly greeting and such a torrent of questions in French, that she immediately became the centre of interest.

"Dick Blake," she began, bringing the smiling Frenchman over to the other group, "do you mean to tell me that you've forgotten my cousin Edmond, after all the fun we had together in Paris? That's as bad as Edmond's having forgotten his English, so that he couldn't tell Betty in plain terms that she was a thief."

"Ah, Madeline!" He turned to Betty, eager to deny such an intention, but his face fell and he made a comical gesture of inadequacy. "It ez so far away! I cannot say my meaning."

"So long ago, you mean, don't you, young man?" asked Mr. Morton, eyeing him as if he were some sort of strange animal. "See here, these reunions are all very interesting, but I'm getting hungry. Now, why can't you all have dinner with me at that hotel over there? Baedeker says it's the best in the place. A

sort of peace festival, you know. Miss B. A., suppose you take me in and present me to Mrs. Hildreth and see what she says about it."

Babe had hurried in ahead of them with the news of Betty's safe return, without waiting to have any conversation with Mr. Morton. But when the dinner project was approved by Mrs. Hildreth and Mr. Morton insisted that "the little tomboy" must sit on his left, Babe made no objection, and she had spirited repar-tees ready for all Mr. Morton's sallies. She even went so far as to tell him about the Harvard-Cambridge race and ask him, as she had promised John she would, to take her to see it.

"Sure you won't throw me over for a younger beau?" he asked her. "He's likely to be in London then if I am, you know."

But Babe only laughed unconcernedly, and assured him that she never, never broke engagements.

The party separated early because, as Mr. Morton explained jovially, he and Mr. Blake had urgent business in Dol. Mr. Blake had managed to sit beside Madeline at dinner, and had told her all about his success with

Mr. Morton, and what he hoped might come of it.

"I just must tell some one or I'll burst," Blake confided. "Mr. Morton has been asking me about the magazine. 'If you had a hundred thousand or so and a free hand, could you win out with it?' he asked me. So who knows, Madeline—my chance may have come at last!"

"Oh, Dick," Madeline began, breathlessly, "wouldn't that be —— I'm going to touch wood right away," she added, suiting the action to the word. Dick laughed, but his eyes were shining with a new hope and purpose.

"He never mentioned Eleanor, of course," Madeline told the others, as they brushed their hair in Babe's room and discussed the events of the most exciting day of the summer. "But that's why he cares so much. He used to be the most indifferent, blasé person you ever saw."

"What I don't understand," said Babbie, carefully barricading herself from a storm of pillows, "is why a person who doesn't want to see another person as long as she lives should invite another person's father to take

her to a boat-race, knowing that another person will be there too."

"Your English is mixed," retorted Babe with all her customary levity, "but if you mean me and Mr. Morton and the race in London, why I promised to ask him ages ago, and I wouldn't back down now just because John and I were silly and quarreled. John was your friend to begin with, and if he tags his father to the race you can look after him, I guess."

"I don't look after men; I let them look after me," announced Babbie with dignity.

"Don't squabble," said Madeline. "I've got an idea. I believe Arthur Lestrangle Trevelyan, or Lestrangle Arthur Trevelyan, is all right. Think how black things looked for Dick to-day, with only the thin excuse of having made a mistake about the automobiles. If Edmond had been a bad-tempered person and the police sergeant had been incorruptible, they'd certainly have arrested him."

"And Betty too," put in Babbie. "Think of poor innocent little Betty's being arrested!"

"He must be all right—Mr. Trevelyan, I mean," suggested Babe, "because as soon as John got your letter, he and Mr. Benson would have gone to work to find out about him, and if he hadn't been all right they'd certainly have written to us before this."

"Well, I'm going to bed," said Betty, yawning vigorously. "I'm sleepy, and if your cousin is going to take us automobiling all day to-morrow and comes for us as early as he said, we've got to be up betimes."

"Too true," agreed Madeline. "But please don't hold us responsible for the strenuous life we're leading. It's all your fault, Miss B. A."

"I didn't do a single thing I could help," protested Betty.

But Madeline insisted gaily that it had all been a preconceived plan on Betty's part to make her dominant interest fill most space in the annals of "B. A.'s Abroad."

"You began with mild little benevolent adventures," she said, "and now you've had what Roberta Lewis would call a near-adventure. Next thing you know you'll plunge us all into a real adventure—the kind you read about in novels."

"Wouldn't that be great?" sighed Babe sleepily. "Now please run away and let me have a little peace."

But Madeline and Babbie were still wide awake. They sat on the edge of poor Babe's bed for an hour longer inventing "real adventures" that should materialize in Paris.

"The thing we need is an adventurer," complained Madeline sadly, "that is, unless Mr. Trevelyan will 'oblige with the part,' as they say at actors' benefits. We'll ask Edmond about the haunts of adventurers. Perhaps he'll be able to put us on the track of a king in exile looking for an American wife, or a prime minister watching for a lady to drop her handkerchief as a signal that she is his fellow conspirator. You see I have to leave you in Paris and I do want a grand excitement of some sort before I go."

"Paris gowns are quite exciting," suggested Babbie, dragging Madeline off to bed at last. "I'm not counting on the ball, because it's so uncertain."

"Why how stupid of us to have forgotten the ball," began Madeline eagerly. "We

could start a perfectly magnificent adventure with that."

But Babbie put her fingers over her ears and ran away. "It's awfully late," she explained, "and besides, I shall want to go to the dance more than ever if you make up a lovely story about it. So good-night."

CHAPTER XIV

A REAL ADVENTURE

MADELINE's cousin Edmond, who was motoring about Brittany with a friend, took the girls to the quaint old shrine of Mount St. Michel and promised them other expeditions equally delightful if they would only stay on for a few days longer at Saint Malo or Dinard. But Mrs. Hildreth felt anxious to get to Paris, which was really the goal of all her trips abroad, and Babbie had her own reason—the countess's ball,—for not wanting their arrival delayed beyond the appointed day. Babe couldn't have explained even to herself why she wanted to be in Paris, but she did. And Betty and Madeline, not wishing to be in the opposition and being sure of a good time either way, were perfectly satisfied with Mrs. Hildreth's decision to go on just as they had intended.

“ And we'll go to Madeline's pension, shan't

we, mummie?" asked Babbie, a trifle anxious lest Mrs. Hildreth should insist on the hotel where she always stayed.

"And it's just as ordinary and commonplace as if it were in New York," Babbie had told the girls sadly, with a newly awakened perception that her traveling had hitherto been of a very commonplace variety. But Mrs. Hildreth only asked what were the especial merits of Madeline's pension.

"She won't tell," explained Babbie, looking beseechingly at Madeline, who only returned a serene smile. "She just says it's queer and quaint and the kind of thing we all like, and that we can see what it's like, if we go there."

"But if we don't go there, you simply must describe it, Madeline," said Betty so solemnly that Mrs. Hildreth laughed and declared they would patronize Madeline's pension.

Finally, after a long day's ride in the Paris express and a drive across the city in the queer taximeter cabs—where you sit and watch the distance and the francs for the fare, pile up in the indicator and forget, in the absorbing interest of this occupation, to look around you at the sights of the strange city—the driver

of the first cab stopped before a blank wall in a narrow, rather dirty street. Upon being admonished by Babbie that he was wrong he pointed inexorably at the number on the wall, and even Babe, most ardent admirer of Madeline's theories, gave a gasp of dismay. The two girls were with Mrs. Hildreth, while Betty and Madeline were behind, and Marie was in a third carriage with most of the baggage.

"Careful, Babe," Mrs. Hildreth whispered. "We don't want to hurt Madeline's feelings—nor Mademoiselle's." For Madeline had written ahead for rooms, and when the porter opened the door in the high and dingy wall, a pretty Frenchwoman was running across the graveled courtyard inside, eager to greet her guests.

"We'll stay here to-night," Mrs. Hildreth decided hastily, "and then in the morning I can easily make an excuse to change."

Mademoiselle was certainly charming, if her front door—or front gate—was not. Smiling and chatting, she led the way across the court to the old stone mansion and helped her two little maids show the party up-stairs and settle each one's baggage in the room she chose.

Madeline, Babe and Betty had single rooms, all looking out on still another court. This one was shut in on three sides by ivy-covered stone walls, and shaded by a great magnolia tree; and enticing little green tables, like those in the cafés at Saint Malo, stood about here and there. The rooms themselves were long and narrow—just like cells, Babe declared with a shiver—and as soon as she was dressed she went down into the courtyard to wait for dinner. When the girls found her she was sitting on the gravel scratching the back of a big turtle, which, she joyously informed her friends, was attraction number one of Madeline's pension.

"Its name is Virginia—no, that's not right. What's the French of Virginia? Virginie, then. And it knows its name, only it won't answer unless it knows you. At least, that's what I understood Mademoiselle to say. I'm scratching its back so beautifully that it ought to follow me around like a dog hereafter."

Attraction number two was a very good dinner, and attraction number three was going to bed by candle-light, which made the tiny rooms seem more like cells than ever. But

Betty suggested that they were more like nuns' cells than prisoners', and Babe said she liked the idea of being a nun—it was very much like being a man-hater when you came to think of it.

Attraction number four was the best of all ; it was having breakfast in the garden. Mademoiselle had explained that they could have "petite déjeuner," which means coffee or chocolate and crusty rolls, whenever they liked, and they had all agreed to be ready at half-past eight—which is really very early indeed in Europe—so as to have a long day for sightseeing. Betty got down first and was going into the dining-room to wait for the others, when a servant asked her to sit in the garden instead, and before she knew what was happening, her breakfast appeared on a tray. Just then Babe pulled back her curtains and stuck her head out of the window to see how the garden looked so early ; and giving a shriek of delight, she rushed down to eat, too. Mrs. Hildreth hadn't been much impressed by Virginie or the candles, but she was as delighted as the girls with breakfast under the magnolia tree, and she readily agreed to

wait a little before deserting Madeline's pension.

The first thing that every one wanted to do after breakfast was to call at the American Express Office for mail. It had been accumulating ever since they left London, so there was plenty to go around—letters and papers from home for all the party, and for Babbie a note from Billy Benson.

"He got here last night, too," she explained, "and he's still with Mr. Trevelyan, so evidently it's all right about the name. He wants our address and says he'll be around to see us late this afternoon, and possibly Mr. Trevelyan's sister may come, too. He was telephoning her while Billy wrote. Oh, dear, I don't believe mother's going to want me to go to the dance, after all. But I'll answer this so they'll know where to find us."

Initiating Betty and Babe into the delights of Paris was an exciting task, and by the middle of the afternoon they were all quite ready to go home, put on their thinnest dresses, and drink iced tea under the magnolia tree while they waited for the advent of Billy and Mr. Trevelyan. It was [six o'clock, however, be-

fore the men arrived, hot, tired, and in Billy's case, somewhat out of temper.

"It's an awfully out-of-the-way street," he complained. "Why, Trevelyan knows Paris like a book, but he couldn't find it. We've walked and walked and asked and asked. We were late starting in the first place, though, because Trevelyan's sister didn't come."

"It's very odd," Mr. Trevelyan put in. "She was to have come to our hotel at three, after doing some shopping with her friend. It was perfectly understood, but we waited till four and she did not come. I am sure only some unavoidable accident has prevented her joining us."

"Surely your mother will let you go all the same to-morrow?" Billy asked Babbie.

Babbie looked doubtful. "I don't know. Not that she would blame your sister, Mr. Trevelyan; but she's awfully particular about chaperons and she isn't strong enough to chaperon me to dances and things herself. She's lying down now, but I'll write you the first thing in the morning. Will that be soon enough to decide?"

"Sure," said Billy gaily, "only we thought

—Trevelyan has errands to do in the morning, but he suggested that we meet in the early part of the afternoon for a little sight-seeing. You could let us know then, you see.”

“If you haven’t been to the Louvre yet, we might have a look at that together,” suggested Mr. Trevelyan gravely. “I understand some of the finest galleries are to be closed next week for repairs.”

“Oh, I’m so glad you warned us in time,” said Madeline. “I’m always missing things at the Louvre because they’re closed for repairs. Where shall we meet and when?”

Mr. Trevelyan suggested two o’clock, at the main entrance by the umbrella stand, and then he rose to go. “I am worried about my sister. If she has sent no word I must wire,” he said.

Billy rose too. “I should never find my way back alone,” he said. “I’m dumb as an oyster over here. It’s great being with some one who knows the ropes.”

The girls protested against their going so soon, when they had expended so much time and trouble in coming, but Mr. Trevelyan

insisted that he must get back at once, and Billy laughingly declared that the girls would have to see him safely home if he stayed and then he would have to see them safely back, and so ad infinitum.

When Babbie consulted her mother about the dance, Mrs. Hildreth listened to the story of the boys' call, and after a little consideration decided that she couldn't allow Babbie to go.

"Billy is a dear boy," she said, "and his friend seems a thoroughly nice fellow, but I couldn't think of letting you go to a dance with them out in some suburb of Paris, unless I knew you were in charge of a sensible, careful chaperon. Mr. Trevelyan's sister may or may not answer the description. We have no idea how old she is, or what sort of person she is, or whether she even understands from her brother that you would be in her charge. Evidently you wouldn't be while you were going and coming. Oh, it's quite impossible."

And Babbie admitted sadly that it was. She brightened at once, however. "If I'm as sleepy to-morrow night as I am to-night,

I shouldn't enjoy it. After all, you can go to plenty of dances at home, and you can't go to these fascinating galleries and museums and churches. I should waste to-morrow and perhaps the day after if I went to the dance. Now I can go ahead and get as tired as I like seeing things."

So Babbie and Madeline conducted the novices to Notre Dame, took them up in the tower to get a near view of the gargoyles, and then hunted up the shop on the Rue Bonaparte where you can buy small plaster gargoyles, exactly like those on the cathedral for two francs and fifty centimes each. It took so long to decide which Roberta would prefer, and which was best suited to K.'s taste and to Rachel's, that the girls had to snatch a hasty luncheon at an English tea-room near the Louvre in order to be at the appointed rendezvous by two o'clock. But they did get there exactly at the appointed time, in spite of a little dispute between Babbie and Madeline about which was the "main entrance" to the Louvre. However, Babbie was speedily convinced that the main entrance was the one that had been built for the main entrance

—the one with the splendid façade and not the one at the opposite side that happened to be more conveniently situated and was consequently most used by visitors. However, when they had waited fifteen minutes and the men had not appeared, the subject began to be agitated again.

“Well, what does it matter?” demanded Babbie, who hated to be kept waiting and was consequently rather out of temper. “They can reason the thing out just as well as we can. If they’ve gone to the other entrance and don’t find us there, they can come here. It’s their place to find us, not ours to hunt for them.”

“I think it’s silly to stick here, just the same,” said Babe. “Why don’t Madeline and I walk through to the other entrance and see if they’re there?”

“Because they ought to do the walking,” persisted Babbie. “They asked us to come and meet them, and anyhow it’s always the man’s place to do the hunting. I’m not going to have you chase up Billy Benson to tell him whether or not he’s going to take me to a dance to-night.”

Whereupon Madeline murmured that it was Babbie's party, not hers, and Babe and Betty declared they would wait until exactly quarter to three and then they were going to see the Mona Lisa.

And at quarter to three they went, Babbie giving a reluctant consent to their making a detour past the other possible rendezvous. But Billy and Mr. Trevelyan were not there, and when Madeline inquired of the very stolid guard he only shrugged his shoulders and said there had been any number of young men passing in since two o'clock. Some had waited, some not.

"Seems to me Mr. Trevelyan isn't such a good conductor as he has the reputation for being," said Betty. "Yesterday he didn't meet his sister, and nearly didn't find us, and to-day his arrangements haven't worked out very well."

"Well, fortunately it doesn't matter," said Babbie, sitting down with a rapturous little sigh before the Mona Lisa. "The pictures are here, and after we've seen a few we can go and have some of those little boat-shaped strawberry tarts that we saw in the patisserie win-

dow. If they'd taken us somewhere to eat we should probably have had to have stupid ices."

"And the moral, as our friend Mary would say," laughed Madeline, "is that when you're hunting alone you can do as you please, which is an advantage that our friend Mary has forever forfeited. Who votes to have the strawberry tarts soon?"

"Maxim for travelers," said Babe, dejectedly, "'when you've had enough, stop,' and enough is what you can see in just a little more than half a day."

So the girls had crossed the Seine on the top of a lumbering tram, and walked from the Louxembourg Gardens, where a concert was going on, to the queer little street where Madeline's pension was hidden; and they had cooled off, rested, and dressed for dinner before a maid brought Babbie a card—Billy Benson's.

"Ask him into the garden and say I'll be there in a moment," Babbie ordered, and went down after a perfectly needless delay, by way of preliminary discipline, prepared to receive Billy's excuses coldly and to give him a very

unhappy quarter of an hour in return for the annoyance he had caused her earlier in the afternoon.

But Billy made no excuses. Instead he announced blandly, "Well, I'm two hundred dollars poorer than I was last night and a good deal wiser, and I feel like a young idiot; but it certainly makes a good story, if that's any consolation."

Babbie stared. "What do you mean? Why aren't you on your way to your dance?"

Billy grinned. "Dance is off—that is, Trevelyan is dancing somewhere, I guess, but all I get is a chance to pay the piper. You see, it was this way—well, I'll have to begin with this morning."

"Wait," commanded Babbie, crossing to Babe's window and giving the B's familiar trill. "Come down, all three of you," she called, when Babe's head appeared between the curtains. "Mr. Benson has had a real adventure, and we're on the edge of it ourselves."

"You're the causes of the final catastrophe," accused Billy smilingly, as Babbie came back to him. "If you'd made the proper connec-

tions with us this afternoon, Trevelyan couldn't have pulled off his grand dénouement. Where were you, anyhow?"

"Right where we belonged," said Babbie firmly. "You begin with this morning, and we'll fill in our part when the time comes."

CHAPTER XV

A NOISY PARISIAN GHOST

"MAKES me feel like the greenest variety of green freshman," said Billy, when he had shaken hands all around, "but still I do think he managed awfully well, and that he'd have taken in almost anybody with his smooth stories. Of course I haven't traveled much, but still ——"

"Do go ahead and tell us about his taking your money," begged Babbie impatiently, "and then we can discuss him to our hearts' content."

Billy nodded assent. "Well," he began, "you all know about our coming over to Paris together. Naturally, as I can't speak French, Trevelyan chose the hotel—one he knew about on the Rue de Rivoli—and our rooms opened together." Billy chuckled. "I thought of that when I gave him the money. Made me feel extra sure about getting it back."

"Do go straight along," commanded Babbie. "If you don't you'll never get to the robbery part."

"Oh, it wasn't a robbery," laughed Billy. "It was something much smother. I'll get to it in a minute. You know already about our going sightseeing yesterday and then coming here. Well, when we got home there was a note from Trevelyan's missing sister." Billy paused. "Come to think of it, I didn't see that note. But if I had, it might have been faked just the same. Anyhow Trevelyan said there was a note from his sister to say that the countess was prostrated by the heat, and they'd had to hurry home right after lunch. That sounded perfectly reasonable. It was a beastly hot day, and of course if the countess was sick, somebody had to go home with her. The sister said also that she was beginning to be in a hurry to get into her own house, and Trevelyan said that if I didn't mind he guessed we'd better do a little shopping this morning. It seems that his sister had ordered different things for the house put aside for his approval, and he was to go to the shops and look at them and have them sent out." Billy

paused reflectively. "Sounds reasonable enough, doesn't it?"

The girls nodded. "Do go on," urged Madeline.

"Well," Billy took up the tale, "this morning we started out in a taximeter cab. First we went to two or three big stores and Trevelyan looked at rugs and curtains and one thing and another that his sister had selected and ordered them sent out to their house. At least he said so. My not speaking French made me an easy mark for any tale he wanted to tell me. Once or twice he counted his money to see if he had enough to do one more errand with before we went to the bank. It was too early to go when we started."

"Did he actually pay for the curtains and things?" asked Babe.

Billy hesitated. "I—well, I guess I didn't notice. Judging by the sequel I'm pretty sure he didn't. But he pretended that he had, and finally he said we must go to the bank next. I waited in the carriage. When he came back he was awfully put out. It seems there is a rule in this town that you

can't draw money from a bank—from that one where he had his account anyway—until you've been here three days. Something to do with the police regulations about foreign visitors. His three days wouldn't be up till to-morrow, so he couldn't draw any money. He said he'd known the rule before but he'd forgotten about it."

"Well, couldn't his shopping wait a day?" asked Babe.

"All but one item," answered Billy solemnly. "You see the ball to-night was to be in honor of his sister's birthday, and he wanted to take her a birthday present. She'd chosen that, too, at his request, and we went to look at it. It was a beauty of a pearl pendant. Trevelyan told the shopkeeper how he was fixed, and ordered the pendant kept for him until to-morrow. Naturally I asked if I couldn't accommodate him with a little loan, so we could take the pendant out with us to-night. But he thanked me and said he couldn't think of borrowing of me, and we drove off. He was awfully cut up about the pendant, though he kept saying it didn't matter at all, only, as he put

it, 'You know how women are about such things. They like a present at the time. If they're going to have a birthday, they want their gifts on the day. By the next day they've forgotten all about it.' But this time it couldn't be helped, he said, and it didn't really matter. And then he'd remark again that he was afraid his sister would be awfully disappointed, especially as he'd made a point of her picking out the pendant and all. But when I offered to lend him some money again, he seemed almost hurt and refused quick as a flash. Finally he changed the subject, said it was a shame to make me waste a morning in Paris over his private affairs, and asked me where we should go sightseeing. It made me feel awfully small to think how considerate and unselfish he was, and I pulled out all the money I had and fairly forced it into his hands. He seemed pleased and thanked me but said it wouldn't be any use to him because it wasn't enough. The pendant cost fifty pounds, and he needed forty to make up what he had. So I thought how we were to be together all the afternoon at the Louvre with you girls and at the ball in the evening, and

then sleeping in adjoining rooms, and in the morning he could get his money all right. So I stuffed my beggarly thirty dollars into my pocket, and told him to tell the man to drive straight to the American Express, so I could get two hundred dollars' worth of checks cashed."

"And that time he didn't object?" asked Betty.

Billy shook his head. "Told me I was a good fellow, wrung my hand till it ached, and assured me that it was only a day's loan or he wouldn't think of taking it. Then we got the money, had a gay little lunch, and stopped at our hotel on our way to meet you. I didn't go in. Trevelyan wanted to change his coat for a lighter one, because it had turned so hot. He stopped for the mail to be distributed, so he was gone some minutes, and we were ten minutes late in meeting you."

"And then you went to the wrong place," said Babbie severely.

"You can't blame me for that," returned Billy. "I asked right away if there could be any mistake about the meeting-place and Trevelyan said no. Later he explained that

there was another principal entrance, though he didn't suppose any one would consider it the main one, and he suggested that I wait while he went to look for you at the other entrance and in some of the galleries. He'd been gone about five minutes when I remembered my two hundred dollars, saw through his little game, and started in hot pursuit."

"And he got away?" demanded Madeline eagerly.

"Without trying. You see, he'd packed up his traps while he waited for the mail to be distributed, and he had probably kept the cab waiting to drive him back to our hotel whenever he managed to shake me off. It's almost across from the Louvre and I didn't see a cab, so I ran. But when I got there he was gone, bag and baggage—by a back way at that, so the hotel has lost a little to keep me company. It was a perfectly reliable hotel, you understand—one of the first few in Baedeker."

"And have you been to the police?" asked Babe excitedly. "They ought to help you catch him."

Billy smiled delightedly. "Then you don't see the joke, either. The hotel people prom-

ised to inform the police, and I went to see the American consul. He put me on to the fact that I haven't a thing against Trevelyan. I lent him the money voluntarily—pressed it upon him, in fact. The police can't help me. I've 'done' myself."

"You're awfully cheerful about it," said Madeline approvingly.

"I wasn't at first," laughed Billy, "but it's such a good story—or it would be if we knew all the fine points, such as whether or not there is a sister or a countess."

"But he telephoned the sister," suggested Babe.

"May have telephoned thin air," said Billy. "It was in a booth, so no one knows what he did."

"But the countess sent the invitation," put in Betty.

"And I saw Trevelyan mail the answer," added Billy. "But he may have redirected it on the sly to some of his confederates. He must have at least one in Paris, I think, to manage getting the mail back and forth."

"Do you still think it's all right about his having two names?" asked Babbie. "Did

you depend on what he told you about that, or did you make other inquiries?"

"About his having two names?" repeated Billy questioningly.

"The two that Betty wrote John about," Babbie reminded him.

"I haven't the least idea what you're talking about," Billy persisted. When Betty had explained, he assured her that John never got her letter. "But Trevelyan must have counted on your letting us know," he said. "Gee! but he had nerve to keep on when he knew he was suspected. I wonder—do you suppose that had anything to do with his not finding you sooner yesterday? My cab-man didn't have the least trouble to-day, I noticed."

"And he sat near you while you were here. I remember that," contributed Babe. "But how about the dance? What was his object in planning that?"

Billy hesitated. "The consul gave me a good fatherly talk, and he had a pretty gruesome suggestion about that ball. He says Fontainebleau—that's where the countess lives, you know—is on the edge of a great forest,

and that you could get a stranger out there and drive him off somewhere and rob him without half trying." He turned to Babbie. "Do you remember our guying him about your money and your ring? Well, I think that was undoubtedly his scheme. But when you hung back and he knew that you had probably heard Miss Wales's story, why then he cooked up a substitute. My checks wouldn't have been safe plunder, so there was no use in holding me up."

Babbie shivered. "I guess on the edge of a real adventure is as near as I want to be. Think of being driven into a forest and robbed!"

Billy looked very solemn, too. "Please don't think of it," he advised her. "I'd have given a lot more than two hundred dollars to keep you out of a thing like that."

"Have you got your passage home?" asked Betty, so seriously that every one burst out laughing.

"I have," Billy assured her, "all nicely paid for. And I shan't send home for more money, not if I have to pawn the beautiful garments that I had made on Bond Street, expressly for the countess's ball. How Trevelyan

must have enjoyed watching me order those clothes! Well, he deserved to get some fun out of it. Sightseeing with me probably bored him awfully, if he wasn't as new to London as he pretended to be, and all his clever little contrivances must have kept him working overtime. Lots of honest men earn two hundred a month without taking half the trouble."

"I'm confirmed in my belief that he was French," declared Madeline. "He certainly must have plenty of friends in Paris. He probably was in hiding in Australia while one of his bold, bad adventures was being forgotten over here."

"Then he must have been there some little time," said Billy, "for his stories certainly had local color all right. But I don't think I should depend much on his advice if I were John Morton. John and he got quite chummy over the prospects for sheep-raising out there. By the way, John ought to be over here before long. Won't it be fun springing all this on him?"

"The best of it is," said Madeline, "that the more you think about it the nicer it gets.

It's all so clever and finished—and—well, typically adventurous, from the minute he inquired of you about that London Club until he vanished down the passage at the Louvre this afternoon. It's so interesting to wonder what he thought and how he felt as he played his cool little game."

"Only it wasn't a game," Babe objected. "It was business. Think of making friends with people just so you can rob them afterward! I always thought chewing gum was about the silliest kind of a business, but I'd rather have my father in chewing gum than in adventures."

Mrs. Hildreth came into the garden just then and the girls pounced upon her with their exciting story, making Billy stay to dinner to help them tell it properly. At her plate Betty found a letter which had been sent direct to the pension instead of to the express office.

"I wonder who knows I'm here," she said, tearing open the envelope, which was addressed in a strange hand.

"Probably an advertisement," suggested Madeline.



THE GIRLS POUNCED UPON HER

But it wasn't. It was Betty's letter to John Morton, with "not found" written boldly across the address.

Billy inspected it eagerly. "That's not his writing, but it's his work. Nobody else could have sent it here. So he did scheme to keep us apart! That was why he took us to the wrong station to see you off."

"And why he kept you out so late the night before," put in Madeline. "We might have tried to telephone you about the name then. But I don't see why he returned Betty's letter. He might just as well have thrown it away."

"Things you throw away leave tracks behind," said Billy wisely. "But more likely he did it for the joke—timing it to get here to-night and all. Following all his moves is like going to a cobweb party. It will take us weeks, and then we shall miss some of the best points."

As he was saying good-night Billy gave a sudden exclamation. "I've got to go back to London to-morrow to meet the crew, and I'd forgotten all about it. Well, I guess I've seen as much of some sides of Parisian life as

most fellows could in three days, even if I didn't get further than the front entrance of the Louvre."

That night Babbie Hildreth slept lightly and dreamed strange dreams. About midnight she knocked the B's knock on Babe's door.

"No, I'm not sick, and I haven't been robbed," she said, in answer to Babe's plaintive inquiries. "But there's a ghost on my side of the house, and all the rooms around me are empty, so you couldn't expect me to stay there all by myself."

"Ghosts are your specialty," murmured Babe, sleepily.

"Well, we're not supposed to pursue our specialties alone," objected Babbie. "I thought you'd be interested. Honestly it's the funniest thing," she went on earnestly. "Some one knocked on the gate, because he was locked out, I suppose, softly at first and then louder and louder. But now the gate has been opened, and still the person stands and knocks and knocks. It's a man, I think."

"Perhaps he's drunk and doesn't know enough to come in," suggested Babe.

"No, he knocks as if he had a definite, sensible reason," said Babbie decisively. "Hark! He's actually pounding now. I hope Mademoiselle will turn him out in the morning, that is if he's a boarder and not a ghost trying to wake up the person that it has come back to haunt."

"Whatever he is, he's stopped to rest," said Babe. "If he doesn't begin again you'd be willing to go back to bed, wouldn't you? Or I'll go back and you can stay here."

"Listen." Babbie clutched Babe's arm. "There's a noise on the stairs."

There was, and presently it came nearer down the hallway to the door. It was a queer noise like a stealthy step with a dull thump accenting it sharply now and then. Presently it stopped, somewhere out in Babbie's hallway, there was the click of a key in a lock, and then the steps began again, coming slowly back through the hall and down the stairs.

"Does sound ghostly," admitted Babe, "and it doesn't sound a bit drunk. And it can't be a boarder because it's going out again."

"Well, as long as it's gone, I guess I dare

to go back," said Babbie presently. "You watch me down the hall, Babe."

"Stay here, if you'd rather," Babe offered again, but Babbie insisted that she wasn't afraid and went off, her candle flickering in the draughty passageway. The next thing Babe knew the sunshine was sifting through the branches of the magnolia tree and her watch said half-past eight o'clock. So, forgetting that it had been half an hour fast the night before, she dressed in a tremendous hurry and was astonished when she peeped out from behind her curtains as usual to see who was down, to find only a solitary gentleman breakfasting in the farthest corner of the garden.

"Why it looks like—it is John Morton," she said to herself. "Now what in the world is he doing here, I should like to know?" And she sat down on the edge of her bed in a fashion that seemed to say, "If any one thinks I'm going down to breakfast now, he's much mistaken." But the very next minute she jumped up again, surveyed herself anxiously in the glass, and, without stopping to get Madeline and Betty, as the first one to be

ready always did, marched down-stairs and out into the court. Her start of surprise when she came into sight of John would have secured her a part in the senior play at Harding, but John was so surprised himself that any bungler could have taken him in.

"You here?" he gasped.

"Yes," said Babe, coolly. "Didn't you know it?"

"Of course not. Some friend of Dwight's gave us the address. It's very near to the big library where he's got to bone."

"I see," said Babe. Then there was a long and dreadful pause. At last Babe broke it. "I presume he won't care to move. Don't let's act like sillies. Let's be perfectly nice and friendly, so no one will know how you—how we feel. For instance, if I go off now into another corner of the garden every one will want to laugh at us."

"Do sit down here by all means," said John politely, springing to draw up a chair for her.

There was another pause.

"I suppose we've got to talk," said John doggedly at last. "How are the—what do

you call them?—oh, yes, the dominant interests? How are they coming on?"

"We had a ghost last night," said Babe primly. "It was trying to haunt some one in the house apparently. It banged and banged——"

"Why that was me," said John with an ungrammatical suddenness that broke the ice. "You see Dwight and I got here about eight and after we'd settled our traps we went for a walk. Dwight got sleepy and came back, but I tramped pretty nearly all over Paris, I should say. And when I got here at last, I happened to think that I didn't know the way to my room well enough to risk finding it alone. So I called up the porter. He thought I only wanted the gate opened, and it seems he has it fixed so he can do that without getting out of bed. But I pounded and pounded until he decided I was crazy, and came to put me out. And I finally made him understand the fix I was in."

"You made the queerest noise coming upstairs," said Babe. "It sounded too ghostly for anything."

"The porter has a wooden leg," explained John, "so he can't go quietly. He made all the noise that was made inside the house. I'm very sorry I woke you all up and frightened you."

"Oh, we aren't so nervous as all that," Babe assured him gaily, and was frightened to see how friendly her words sounded. "Babbie," she called hastily, as Babbie appeared in the doorway, "come and see the noisy Parisian ghost and tell him about the ghostly disappearance of his dear friend Mr. Trevelyan."

Under cover of the story, Babe disappeared.

"You silly, silly thing," she whispered, in the seclusion of her nun's cell, "you're glad to see him when you're not sure he's glad to see you. Don't try to deny it, because it's true. But don't you dare to let him know it. When he says he's sorry he was so horrid you can decide what to say, but not before. I hope you've got pride enough to be a man-hater as long as he is a woman-hater."

Having relieved her mind to this extent, Babe went to find Betty and told her about John.

"I rely on you to stick by me," she said.

"The others will all try to leave us alone together, and that's just what I don't want. It's queer how easy it is to tell you things, Betty. I suppose that's one reason why Mr. Morton calls you Miss B. A."

CHAPTER XVI

THE PROGRESS OF ROMANCE

WHEN Babe and Betty joined the others, they found them still talking about Mr. Trevelyan.

"Do you think now that he's an authority on sheep-raising in Australia?" inquired Babe blandly of John.

John flushed a little. "No, I don't believe I care to use his letters of introduction." He produced a bulky packet. "His friends would probably give me the same sort of send-off that he gave Billy. I suppose Billy told you that I'd consulted him about chances out there," John added, looking inquiringly around the circle.

"But you weren't serious about going, were you?" demanded Madeline incredulously.

"I certainly was," returned John in his stiffest manner, and Babe's little proud face hardened. He wasn't sorry that he had been disagreeable; he was just giving up Australia

because Mr. Trevelyan had proved unreliable.

After breakfast Mr. Dwight suggested that they should all go and inspect the Pantheon, which was so near by that the girls, thinking they could go there "any time," hadn't yet been to see it. As they started off across the court Mr. Dwight happened to engage Betty's attention, and Madeline and Babbie marched off arm in arm, leaving Babe and John together.

But—"Here, Babbie," Babe called after her, "you're forgetting to take care of your property. Ghosts are your dominant interest, and John is a ghost. Therefore you ought to look after him, Q. E. D."

"Don't you want to change interests with me?" asked Babbie demurely. "You've been going to get a new one all summer in place of your inaccessible chimney-pots."

"Thank you," said Babe coolly, "but I don't want a second-hand interest. If I change, it will be for something that nobody else has tried. Come on, Madeline."

John accepted Babe's prompt solution of their difficulties, and in the rôle of "Babbie's

tame Parisian ghost"—it was Madeline's name, of course—coöperated with Babe and Betty to avoid embarrassing tête-à-têtes. Madeline and Babbie on the other hand, objected strenuously to Betty's enrolling herself in Babe's faction.

"I suppose she's told you all about it," Babbie said dolefully, "and made you promise to help her. She won't tell me a thing, but I can see for myself that in spite of her trying to appear so gay and lively, she's worried and nervous and growing thin. Just because you discovered that match-making won't work you needn't try the other thing."

"I'm only keeping her good natured," explained Betty laughingly. "She told me a little, but she left out all the important points, just as people in love always do. She doesn't know what she wants, and John doesn't. Something will turn up before long, I hope, to help them decide."

"Of course it will," agreed Madeline easily, "and meanwhile all Paris is before us. Where shall we go to-day?"

"Let's leave it to the man from Cook's," suggested Betty.

"Victor Hugo's house, then," announced Madeline promptly. "John particularly wants to go there."

But John had promised to meet a college friend that afternoon, and Mr. Dwight was busy, so the four girls and Mrs. Hildreth went off alone. When they got back John was in the garden with a formidable collection of railway guides and Baedekers piled on a green table before him.

"Have to be in Antwerp to-morrow at ten," he explained impressively, and handed Mrs. Hildreth a telegram.

"If you can really speak Dutch and French decently," it read, "meet me Antwerp, hotel St. Antoine, ten Thursday morning. J. J. Morton."

"I can't imagine what he wants of me," John went on, trying to be perfectly matter of fact, "and I'm dead sure that my Dutch and French won't suit him, but there's nothing like trying, so I shall go. See here, which one of you told the governor that I could speak Dutch and French?"

"I did," Betty confessed, timidly. "I hope you don't mind."

"Oh, not at all," said John, who was evidently trying not to appear obnoxiously elated. "The thing I don't understand is why he believed you. You must have an awful lot of influence with him to make him think that I can do anything. Will you lend me your precious French dictionary for the trip?"

Betty promised and went off to find the book, while the other girls said good-bye, and wished John a successful journey. The telegram, it seemed, had come before he went out for the afternoon, and he had looked up trains and packed, and was starting in a few minutes more for the station.

When Babe got up-stairs, Betty was waiting to waylay her. "I don't see how I was so stupid," she said, "but my collar stuck into me and it hurt so while I burrowed around in my trunk tray for my dictionary, that I took it off. Would you mind carrying this to John? I'm afraid he's in a hurry."

Babe eyed her suspiciously. "I never knew you to be so absent-minded," she said.

"If you don't want to go back, I can ask Madeline." Betty started toward the door,

but Babe reached out a hand for the little dictionary.

"I can go as well as not," she said, and hurried off.

"Say good-bye to him for me," Betty called after her, and after a discreet interval went off to find Madeline and Babbie and tell them what she had done.

Meanwhile Babe had delivered the dictionary, with explanations, and said good-bye again.

"You'll be back soon, of course?" she asked, and in spite of all her efforts there was a little quiver of eagerness in her voice.

"I can't be sure." John looked at her hard and held out his hand. "I say, Babe, let's shake and be friends—real friends, not friends for show, as we have been lately. I was a goose about the Australian business. Even if Trevelyan had been all right, it was a wildcat scheme. I don't know what my father wants of me, but I'm hoping it's help with a business deal of some kind. That will give me an opportunity to show him that I'm not quite so no-account as he thinks, and maybe he'll give me a good chance next year,

if he won't this. If I should make good with him, will you reconsider?"

Babe put her small brown hand into John's big one. "I'd—well, I'd consider reconsidering, I think," she said slowly. "Remember, I don't promise anything but that, and—come back as soon as you can. Good-bye." Babe dashed across the garden and up-stairs like a whirlwind.

John was gone three days. The girls spent most of the time in hunting a present for Bob. "Some queer old thing that looks as if it came from Europe" sounded easy enough to find, and it was—too easy; so that each girl had her own pet idea and couldn't bear to give it up. Finally, Madeline suggested drawing lots.

"Each fix a piece of cake for Virginie. Put the four in a row, and the one whose piece Virginie gobbles up first can have the say about the present."

All but Babe were satisfied to save a bit of the cake they had for luncheon. Babe, who evidently understood Virginie's tastes, went out to a bakery near by and brought back a beautiful little frosted cake with a cherry on

top. And Virginie made straight for the cherry.

Mademoiselle happened to come through the garden just then, and Babe, who was beginning to be as proud of her French as Betty had been, rushed up to her triumphantly and announced, "Nous avons mangé Virginie."

Mademoiselle looked horrified and amazed until Babe pointed out the family pet and the row of cake crumbs. "Avec gateaux," she added pleasantly.

Mademoiselle mildly suggested that they had "given Virginie to eat of cake," and Madeline asked Babe how Virginie tasted.

"I don't care," said Babe sturdily, when she had seen her mistake. "I eat; I feed. It's exactly the same thing. I eat Virginie; I feed Virginie. Well, that isn't, is it? Anyhow I know how to feed a turtle if I don't know how to talk about it. Now come and buy Bob's candlesticks."

But while Madeline and Babbie were bargaining with the shop-keeper for the pair of candlesticks that Babe had chosen, Betty, poking about in a dark corner, discovered a queer thing that Madeline told her was a

Flemish lamp; and everybody liked it so much better than the candlesticks that Babe renounced the privilege of choosing and joined the unanimous movement in favor of the Flemish lamp. Then everybody wanted one for herself, and the afternoon sped away in the pursuit, for no antique store boasted many of the lamps. There was a great difference in the gracefulness of the tall standards and the quaintness of the small hanging lamps, and each girl insisted upon being exactly suited before she made her choice.

"A perfect nuisance to pack," laughed Betty on the way home, "and absolutely useless. I can just hear Will say it."

"Not half so bad to pack as the flossy hats you girls have been buying; they are warranted not to break, and will make excellent substitutes for hammers," Madeline defended their purchases. "Let's take them into the garden and see how they look all together."

Arranged on two little tables, the five lamps looked so imposing that Mrs. Hildreth had to be called down to inspect them and admire the "points" of each, as its fond owner dilated upon them.

In the midst of the "show," as Babbie called it, John appeared. His greetings were so subdued and formal that no one dared inquire about his trip until Betty broke the ice by asking if any one had mistaken him for a Dutchman again.

"Not quite," said John modestly. "I guess you are the only ones who ever did that; but my Dutch was all right and so was my French. You should have seen my father stare."

After that it was easy to see that, as Madeline put it, he was wearing the air of the conquering hero, decently disguised. Mr. Morton had sent boxes of hopje, which is a delicious kind of Dutch candy that can be bought nowhere but at the Hague, to Betty and Babe, and they all sat in the garden eating it while John told his story.

"Dad says he's felt all right ever since the day he disobeyed all his doctor's orders at once down in Saint Malo, so he's kept on disobeying them ever since. He had a big business deal on at Antwerp—buying an interest in a steamship line was the principal part—and as he wanted to buy straight from

the men who owned the line he needed an interpreter that he could trust. So he cabled home, but the man he wanted was off on a fishing trip and missed the boat." John chuckled. "I'm afraid he'll pay pretty high for those fish. Then, having implicit confidence in Miss Wales's judgment, he sent for me." He looked at Betty. "You've been 'Miss B. A.,' as dad calls you, to me this trip, I can tell you. It's been all my fault, I know, the way my father has felt about me, and I don't blame him for not believing that I've braced up. Now that he does believe it, you can be sure I shan't give him the faintest excuse for changing his mind. He's a brick, when he gets started." John stopped to laugh at his absurdly mixed metaphor.

The girls drifted away with their precious Flemish lamps, and this time Babe made no pretence of not wishing to be the last to go.

"Well, I've made good," said John when they two were alone, "and if my father insists upon it I shall go back to college and do my best to make good there, too. Will you wait for me, Babe?"

Babe flushed and gasped. "I thought

you'd talk about your trip awhile first. I haven't decided. It's so much more serious somehow, now that I've had time to think it over longer. Let's just be friends for awhile, and I guess I can decide before very long. Don't ask me again till I say you may."

It was now that Madeline's pension developed a new advantage. The garden was certainly an ideal one for promoting a romance. John was always down early for breakfast. Mr. Dwight considerably came very late. Betty and Madeline, when they were ready, peeped surreptitiously out between the magnolia branches, and if John hadn't come or was still alone they went down, ate hastily, and found it absolutely necessary to go upstairs again at once. If Babe had joined him—of course Babe never, never peeped nowadays—they loitered in Babbie's room until the two in the garden had had ample time for a leisurely tête-à-tête. Before and after dinner the garden was the favorite loitering place, and then again there were chances for judicious management. But the days sped by, and still Babe hesitated. One afternoon she had an inspiration.

"Maxim for travelers: 'When in doubt drink afternoon tea.' I'm certainly in doubt, and we haven't had a real tea-drinking for ages."

She was dressing for dinner, so she slipped on a kimono and made a dash through the hall to Madeline's room.

"I think we ought to have a tea-drinking," she announced. "Can't we, to-morrow afternoon?"

Madeline nodded. "It's a queer coincidence that I've just heard of the most fascinating tea place. Also I had decided to make you girls give me a going-away party there to-morrow. I simply must be off for Sorrento."

"Is it a real tea place?" Babe inquired anxiously. "I insist upon tea this time—not lemonade or ices."

"Since when have you gotten so fond of tea?" asked Madeline curiously. "In England you always fussed ——"

"We haven't had it so much lately," explained Babe, and departed in haste to finish dressing.

"And I never told her I was sorry she was going," she reflected as she brushed her hair.

"Oh, dear, it's dreadful to have something on your mind!"

Madeline refused to give her hostesses much idea of "the most fascinating tea place."

"I've never been there," she said, "but the woman who sits next me at dinner said it was awfully jolly. It's out at Robinson, a little suburban place. There are cafés in the trees, and you climb up as high as you like among the branches and enjoy the prospect and the tea."

"But mother could never climb up in a tree," protested Babbie.

"You don't climb trees," explained Madeline placidly. "You climb stairs to little landings built among the branches, just like the 'Swiss Family Robinson' house. That's what gives the place its name."

The Robinson party, which as a matter of course included John and Mr. Dwight, started out the next afternoon in high spirits. A short train ride brought them to Robinson, where they found a feature that Madeline's informant had not mentioned—sleepy little donkeys waiting to carry them up the hill to the tree-top cafés. To be sure Madeline and

Mr. Dwight, in their eagerness to secure the top story of the very tallest trees for the party, abandoned their donkeys half-way up and went ahead on foot, with the result that they discovered it to be a very hot day, much more suitable for lemonade than for tea.

"But we're giving you a tea-drinking," objected Babe, when they were seated around the table on the top platform, with the green of the trees to shelter them from the western sun and yet not hide the wonderful view of Paris and the country between. "I shall have tea anyway."

"Have it iced," suggested John, but Babe shook her head.

"Regular tea," she insisted.

"Then you can have lemonade to cool off on later," put in Betty. "You know somebody has got to have a second course, so we can have something to pull up in the basket. The first time you order, the waiter comes up; but the second time he puts the things in a basket, and we pull. I speak to do the pulling."

"Why can't we start this kind of tea-room in New York, Madeline?" asked Babbie

eagerly. "A three-story tea-room is even nicer than a two-story tram. And the basket is a beautiful feature. People would just flock to see it work." She pulled it up herself by way of illustration.

"Be sure to have strawberry tarts on the menu, and I'll flock for one," said Mr. Dwight, helping himself to another of the tarts in question.

"Things are more expensive in New York," Madeline warned him. "You won't be able to afford ten tarts, even if you are ravenously hungry."

"You could call it the Peter Pan Tea-Rooms," put in Betty. "It's exactly like the last scene in the play, except that there aren't any fairies."

"You can't ever be sure of that, you know, Miss Wales," Mr. Dwight took her up.

Babe listened absently to all the idle chatter, drinking her hot tea conscientiously and thinking hard. And because she was serious and silent John was also, trying to guess at her thoughts.

"The best way to tell whether you want a thing is to think how you would feel to

have to get along without it all your life." Babe came out of her brown study to hear Madeline saying it. She gave a little start, caught Betty's eye fixed upon her as much as to say, "Listen to that now," and blushed furiously; then she looked at John and blushed hotter still.

"What in the world are you all talking about?" she demanded. "I was thinking of something else."

"Babbie's elegant new clothes," explained Madeline coolly, "and my philosophy of clothes, which is not to bother with them."

Babe jumped up. "I want to see the view from the story below this, don't you, John? The trees are cut away more down there."

John murmured something about being rather tired of sitting still and followed her.

"Chaperon's cue is to descend to lower story," laughed Mr. Dwight; but Mrs. Hildreth decided that in this case the chaperon would better stay where she was.

The two were back in five minutes, enthusiastic over their view.

"I'm ready for my lemonade now," announced Babe gaily.

"I'm going to have another glass, too," added John. "You must all have another. Babe and I want you to drink a toast."

Which is how Madeline's going-away party was suddenly transformed into Babe's announcement party—not one bit fair, Madeline said, but amusing enough to make up. Anyway Babe always declared that Madeline said what she did on purpose and that Betty coughed to attract her attention to it.

"And I knew I didn't want to do without John all my life," she said, "and making up your mind is such a bother that I wanted to have it all over with. Whenever I'm in doubt again I shall drink afternoon tea."

CHAPTER XVII

TELLING THE MAGNATE

It wasn't a real announcement party, Babe explained carefully.

"Only a private view," suggested Madeline, "which is not to be so much as mentioned until Babe gives the word."

Meanwhile Babe, who had no serious doubts of the continued approval of her family—she had basked in it unquestioned ever since she could remember—wrote a long letter home and spent her last days in Paris in the garden with John and Virginie.

"You ought to be making a specialty of a trousseau," Babbie told her severely. "Maybe you're not going to be married for a whole year, but just the same there are lots of things you can get here much better than at home."

But Babe refused to be diverted to shopping excursions. "I prefer fiancés for my dominant interest," she said. "They're much less

wearing. Besides you've all given me such lovely engagement presents. My trousseau will have a Parisian touch from them."

Mr. Jasper J. Morton was automobiling furiously through Germany. He wired Babe to remind her of the boat-race and to invite her whole party and John and Mr. Dwight to be his guests; but he gave no address, so John finally tore up the long letter he had written, deciding to tell his news in person when he and his father met in London.

A day or two after the going-away party Madeline appeared at breakfast in her traveling suit.

"My trunk has gone," she announced, "and my carry-all-and-more-too is strapped as neatly as its bursting condition will permit. And the man servant has gone to hunt me a cab. Tell you sooner? If I had, you'd have persuaded me to stay a day longer. Don't deny it, Betty Wales; I see it in your eye."

"But you'll be back in New York in time to start the tea-room?" inquired Babbie anxiously.

Madeline laughed. "If I don't come, you may have all the ideas, Babbie dear, and I

promise not to open a rival establishment. Father is thinking of a winter in Egypt, and I've 'stayed put' at Harding so long that it sounds very tempting indeed. But so does a tea-room. I'll write you when I decide. Good-bye. No, I hate to have people come to the train with me."

And Madeline was off on her long journey, blithely confident that each new experience in life is amusing, if only you expect it to be and waste no time in regretting such sad necessities as missing a Harvard-Cambridge race that you would give the world, if you had it, to see.

The others crossed to London the day before the great event. Billy Benson met them joyously at the station.

"Sold my Bond Street clothes," he announced, "for just what they cost me, to a nice little chap on the Harvard subs. Told him he'd need 'em for the celebrations after the race. Didn't tell him that I was down to my last little express check. How are you people going to see the race?"

John explained, and Billy chuckled. "Bet I've seen your father. He was down at the

American Express Offices this morning trying to buy up the boat they've advertised as especially for American spectators. Said he'd pay whatever they liked if they'd refund the money on the tickets they'd already sold and let him have the whole thing for his party. But they wouldn't do it—couldn't, of course. He was in an awful rage."

John and the girls laughed at the description, and Mrs. Hildreth despatched John in haste to his father's hotel to explain that such magnificent accommodations were quite unnecessary. Jasper J. Morton was still peppery over his defeat.

"Boats are all partly sold; desirable anchorages all taken. Nothing to do but scramble aboard with the rest of the crowd. Maybe the girls don't mind it; I do. When I ask ladies to go to a boat-race, I want to do the thing up properly."

John decided that the time was not propitious for making his announcement, but led up to it gently by suggesting that dinner at one of the big hotels on the Embankment would be a luxurious enough ending to the afternoon's pleasures to make the girls forget

any slight discomfort they had experienced earlier in the day.

"That's not a bad idea," Mr. Morton admitted grudgingly. "Something in the nature of a celebration of Harvard's victory, I suppose you mean. The London papers don't seem to think we'll win, but of course they're prejudiced. I hope those Harvard fellows haven't come all this distance just to show the English that Americans can't row, eh?"

"Benson thinks they have a chance," John said, and repeated Billy's lively account of the crew's practice records. "But if we don't win," he added tentatively, "we can celebrate something else."

Jasper J. Morton sniffed scornfully. "The Harvard spirit and a good race and all that? No sir, a defeat is a defeat. If we lose, there'll be nothing whatever to celebrate. Don't let me hear you talking any nonsense of that sort. A man who means to succeed in business mustn't get himself muddled about success and failure. Be a good loser if you have to; but don't you ever boast about it, or celebrate it."

So John's mild effort to introduce the sub-

ject of his engagement proved futile, and he decided to wait till morning. But morning found Mr. Morton spinning out to Windsor in his car, because some one at his hotel had told him that it would be madness to go back to America without seeing the finest royal residence in England.

"And when I got there this wasn't a day when it's open to the public," he explained to Mrs. Hildreth on the wharf, with a stoicism born of despair. "Well, if I live till to-morrow, I shall be on my way to a country where I'm glad to say that sightseeing isn't the main business of life. Where's your crimson streamer, Miss B. A.? You promised me a bow, didn't you?" He turned to Babe, who blushed so red, as she pinned on the crimson rosette, that if he hadn't been watching so impatiently for the boat, he would have guessed her happy secret and saved John an anxious afternoon.

"For if we lose," John confided solemnly to Babe, "my father will be in a horrible temper this evening. And if I wait and tell him on shipboard, he won't like my doing that. And if he's huffy about it to begin with, he'll never really like it."

Betty was standing apart from the others, talking to Mr. Morton, who forgot to look at his watch and mutter that they should be late for the race after all their trouble, as he watched her bright face and listened to the story she was telling.

"Wish she'd break the news to him," said John, gloomily.

"I do, too. I'll ask her," volunteered Babe; and as their boat touched the wharf just then, and the rush for good places tossed them together, she did.

But Betty only laughed at her. "Babe, dear, you're absurd. Run right up to him, the two of you, and have it over. He'll be awfully pleased. But there'd be no sense at all in my telling him."

"Yes, there would be, too," protested John, who had come up behind them. "I'm sorry for you, Miss Wales, but it's your destiny. You shouldn't have such a magic influence on my father's feelings if you don't want to exert it. Having benevolent adventures for your special line, you've got to live up to the responsibilities involved."

"But I didn't choose that for my specialty,"

Betty persisted. "The girls just gave it to me."

"It's just like a 'Merry Heart' election," declared Babe solemnly. "If Harvard loses this race, you are elected to tell. There's no getting out of an election, you know."

Babe wriggled in between two portly Englishmen, pounced upon a desirable group of chairs, sat down in one, and smoothed out her huge crimson bow with the air of happy irresponsibility that had won her her sobriquet at Harding.

With Mr. Morton between her and Babe, and John at the other end of the group, there was nothing for Betty to do but wait patiently for another chance to remonstrate with "those silly children." For she quite agreed with them that it would be very foolish indeed to delay telling Mr. Morton any longer. He would naturally feel hurt to think that John had let his friends and Babe's into the secret, but had kept his father outside the charmed circle of intimates. It would put them back upon the old footing of distrust and misunderstanding.

It seemed as if everybody in London was

in a boat on the river that afternoon, or hanging over one of the bridges, or waving energetically from one of the banks. All along the course these were black with people, and beside them, crowded boats fairly jostled one another at anchor. "The Siren" steamed up almost to the finish line before she came to her allotted station, and John explained, on Billy Benson's authority, that even if they couldn't see the actual finish, they could be practically certain that whoever had the lead here would win the race.

"It's simply got to be Harvard," said Babbie vigorously, and then suddenly noticing that outside of their own party everybody on board was wearing the English colors, she laughed. "I suppose we ought to be willing to be disappointed, because there aren't so many of us—only a few hundreds in all these millions of English people."

"If the Harvard crew has come all this way only to lose," began Mr. Morton testily, and then looked at Betty and laughed. "That's just like me, isn't it, Miss B. A.? Always looking on the dark side of things, eh? Always ranting about things going wrong?"

Betty laughed and her eyes danced mischievously as she looked from Babe to John. "Never mind the race," she began impulsively. If she told, she certainly had a right to choose her own time. "We've got something to tell you that will make you forget there is a race. Whether or not the Harvard crew wins, the Harvard man you are most interested in has won the biggest kind of a race—no, not a race exactly,"—Betty stumbled over her metaphors,—“but, well, the thing he wanted.”

“The Harvard man I'm most interested in,” repeated Mr. Morton blankly. “That's John. What's he won?”

“This is an awfully public place,” Betty murmured. “Lean over and I'll whisper it.”

There was a breathless moment while Jasper J. Morton blinked hard, then looked at John for confirmation of the news, and having received a friendly little nod in answer, turned to Babe with a smile on his grim face.

“Well, I can certainly congratulate John,” he said, “and from the reports I've had lately I can congratulate myself on John's having got hold of just the right person to manage him and keep him up to the mark, so if you're

satisfied I guess it's all right. And I hope you'll never regret it."

"I shan't," said Babe blithely.

"And you don't mind waiting a whole year?"

Babe shook her head smilingly. "It takes a long while to get ready to be married, you know."

"Because," Mr. Morton went on, "there's a very good place in my business waiting for a young man that knows how to talk ten different languages, more or less. If he wants it this September, he can have it. If he isn't ready then, why I guess we'll have to keep the place for him. Fellows that can talk ten languages don't grow on every bush."

John and Babbie had moved their chairs so that the party now sat in a close, confidential circle of its own.

"Thanks awfully, father," John began, "but we've talked it over, Babe and I, and we've decided that I ought to go back. If I leave college now, I've been flunked out. I'd rather not have that kind of record behind me."

Jasper J. Morton nodded. "That would be my idea, but I'd leave almost any kind of

record behind me, I guess, sooner than disappoint this young lady."

Far down the river there rose the faint sound of cheering.

"They're coming!" cried an excitable English gentleman with a white umbrella. He lowered the umbrella and poked Mr. Morton's shoulder with it vigorously. "You'd better stand on your chairs. It's the only way to see."

Nearer and nearer came the roar of applause—a great wave of sound that caught Betty and tossed her up on her chair and fairly took her breath away as she saw one—two black specks come into sight around a curve and dash forward, until, before she knew it, they were alongside.

But just before that something had happened in the second boat—the American boat, alas! The third man had caught a crab.

"Hi! Hi! They're down and out now," shouted the excitable Englishman.

"It's Benson," cried John.

"He's all crumpled up in a heap," cried Babe in anguished tones. "Oh, he mustn't give out now!"



SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED IN THE SECOND BOAT

Babbie Hildreth caught at the Englishman's white umbrella for support—it happened to be the nearest thing she could reach—and leaning far forward waved her crimson streamer wildly.

“Billy! Billy Benson! Row for Harvard!” she cried in a shrill, strained voice.

“Benson! Harvard!” John and Mr. Dwight took up her cry.

The little Harvard coxswain who was pouring water on Billy's white face turned his head at the cry, and Billy raised his inquiringly and then calmly slipped back into his place and caught his oar.

“Go it, fellows!” he panted, and the crew took up its stroke.

The whole thing had taken scarcely an instant, but the English boat was three lengths ahead.

“Go it, Harvard!” cried the party on “The Siren.”

And how they went! Nothing like that spurt was ever known on the Thames before or since. The English were bound to win, but the crowd on the banks and in the boats forgot that as they cheered the plucky Har-

vard crew, whose superhuman effort was bringing their boat in barely a length behind the Cambridge craft.

As they passed the finish line Billy's oar dropped from his limp hand and he fainted quietly into the bottom of the boat.

"Tell 'em I ended game," he murmured to the little coxswain as he went off, and the coxswain himself came round in the evening to deliver the message and to assure Miss Babbie Hildreth that she had saved the honor of the college and that Billy would be on hand next day to thank her in person for keeping him from the "fluke" that every athlete dreads.

"Wasn't it lucky we came?" said Betty Wales, climbing carefully down from her chair, while "The Siren" whistled madly and the crowd cheered for Cambridge's victory, with a shout so deafening that it made all the noise which had come before seem like child's play.

"Why couldn't they have begun to pull a little sooner?" demanded Jasper J. Morton grimly. But the next minute he had caught the Englishman's hand and was shaking it cordially. "Glad you've won, I'm

sure," he declared. "You ought to win on your own river. I'm glad our fellows gave yours a good race."

Then he turned to John. "Let's cheer for Cambridge,—a real American tiger."

So John jumped on his chair again and led the cheer, and the English passengers responded for Harvard.

"There, Miss B. A.," Mr. Morton turned to Betty, "is that your idea of looking on the bright side of things? All the same, John, I'm disgusted with that crew. Don't tell your friend Benson, because he's probably upset enough as it is, but I'm sure I can't see what those boys came over here for if they couldn't win their race."

"If they hadn't come they couldn't possibly have won it," Babe reminded him gravely, whereupon Mr. Morton glared at her and then, remembering that the race was not the main feature of the day after all, laughed good naturedly and told such comical stories of his motoring experiences in Germany and Holland that the defeated Americans were quite the merriest party on board during "The Siren's " homeward trip.

The dinner, which was a celebration in spite of the race, was served on a little balcony overlooking the river, gay with lights and noisy with belated merrymakers. Then Mr. Morton announced that he had a box at one of the theatres, where moving pictures of the afternoon's race were to be the feature of the program.

"Well, it was a good race," he admitted, after he had seen the pictures. "They got ahead several times and they rowed well even when they had to take the other crew's water, and that last spurt was all right, only it came too late. I hope Benson understands that we aren't at all ashamed of our crew, John. You might mention it when you see him."

It is to be feared that Billy cared very little for Jasper J. Morton's opinion of him. He had come out of his faint in a state of unwonted and pathetic melancholy, only to find himself, to his amazement and almost to his disgust, the hero of the occasion. For awhile he argued manfully against such an idiotic idea, but finally he submitted to the popular notion that his "crab" had made no difference in the final result and that it had ac-

tually proved an advantage because it had inspired that wonderful spurt that was the talk of all London and probably of all New York. And since Babbie Hildreth was responsible for this turn of events (and for some other reasons) Billy resolved to cast enforced economy and doctor's orders to the winds and beg or borrow enough money to give her "the time of her life" during his last day in London.

As for Betty Wales, her eyes sparkled with happy excitement as she went to bed that night. A regular trip abroad would have been fun enough, but a trip with Madeline to hunt up the queer things, Babe to furnish a romance, and Mr. Morton to play the good angel and then pretend it was all her doing—so that Dick Blake and now Babe and John had insisted upon thanking her extravagantly—that was a trip to make you hold your breath and wonder how you happened to be such a lucky, lucky girl. Betty's last few letters from home had been rather short and unsatisfactory.

"I'm afraid I ought to have kept house for mother this summer and let her rest," she re-

flected. "And perhaps father couldn't easily afford to let me come. But I haven't spent nearly all the money he gave me, and I'll make mother take the grandest rest she ever had as soon as I get home. And I can't help being glad I'm here."

CHAPTER XVIII

HOME AGAIN

THREE busy days in London, and it was all over but the voyage home. Billy and the crew and John and Mr. Morton had left by different routes the evening after the race, so only Mr. Dwight was on hand to wave the girls off at their boat-train. They were all tired from trying to see too much and shop too hard just at the last, and Babe was of course forlorn with only a long steamer letter to console her for John's absence. So nobody minded lying about on deck for the first day or two, and after that a real storm added a sad chapter to the girls' seagoing experiences, keeping all but the dauntless Babbie close in their berths for the rest of the voyage.

On the last morning Babbie and Marie got all their charges upon deck, where they lay, rather pale and listless from their long confinement, enjoying the air and the sunshine.

"Mummie dear," began Babbie gaily, "do you know what I think? I think that, if you want to keep your reputation as a chaperon, you'd better spruce up your young charges before you return them to their adoring families."

Mrs. Hildreth smiled faintly. "I have a chance, haven't I, since Babe's mother and Betty's father have both had to give up meeting the boat, and John and his father are in Boston. How shall I do it, daughter? What is the most effective method of sprucing up storm-tossed collegians?"

"Send them to Harding to recuperate for a day or two," answered Babbie with suspicious promptness. "The freshman rains will be just over and Mary's house will be settled, and it will be simply scrumptious seeing her and Georgia Ames and everybody, won't it, girls?"

"Rather," agreed Babe. "We could wire Roberta to meet us there, and give her her gargoyle and Mary her Flemish lamp. That would be a great saving of expressage."

"And we could display Babe, the tamed and affianced man-hater," laughed Betty. "Only—I'm in a dreadful hurry to get home."

"What's a day?" demanded Babbie. "We can run up this afternoon. Bob's going to be at the boat, and we'll drag her along as a beautiful impromptu feature. Honestly, I don't think you girls ought to start on a long journey west without getting rested a little; it would make you horribly land-sick. Wouldn't it, mother?"

"It might," admitted Mrs. Hildreth, smilingly. "But seriously, girls, I meant to treat you all to a side-trip to one of Babbie's adored villages, and we stayed on in Paris so long that I lost my opportunity. So if you'd like to substitute Harding, I want you all to go as Babbie's guests."

"I was just going to say that I hadn't any money," Babe explained smilingly. "I shall have just exactly a quarter left after I've paid my steamer fees. But when the mail comes I shall have enough for my ticket home, because I told father to send it. And I thought possibly that knowing me he might put in something extra," she added hopefully.

"You could have borrowed of me," Betty told her proudly. "I'm so pleased to think that I can give father back my whole 'emer-

gency fund,' as he called the extra that he gave me to have in case I needed it. Nan always spends her emergency fund; she says it attracts emergencies instead of keeping them away. But I didn't quite know whether you could honestly call a trip to Harding an emergency or not."

"You don't have to," put in Babbie summarily. "You're to call it an adorable little out-of-the-way village. Now who packed the gargoyles for Bob and Roberta, and where is Mary's lamp? You two be thinking while I find the purser and borrow a time-table of Harding trains."

So it happened that the three travelers, reinforced by Bob Parker and Georgia Ames, dined sumptuously at Cuyler's and invaded the Hinsdale mansion in time to catch Mary, enveloped in a big gingham apron, washing dishes.

"The cook took French leave this afternoon," she explained cheerfully, when the noisy greetings were over, "and we couldn't have much of anything for dinner because she took my cook-book with her, the wretch! I've sent my husband off to buy another, so

I can find out about boiling the eggs for breakfast. You wipe, Betty; and Bob, you and Babe go down cellar and find some driftwood for the library fire. It's piled up near the furnace. Georgia, you can be putting away the dishes."

"The same old Mary!" laughed Bob. "Does your husband enjoy being ordered around?"

"Of course," said Mary sweetly. "He considers it a privilege just as you always did, Bob. Be sure you bring up plenty of wood."

Five minutes later Mary divested herself of her apron, unpinned her train, and explaining sorrowfully that if she sat on the floor it always attracted faculty callers, established herself in a carved oak chair and ordered her guests to "fire away."

"Well, to begin with, Babe's engaged," announced Bob.

"Oh, you mean thing!" cried Babe. "I wanted to tell that myself."

"No, you ought to have let Betty," declared Babbie with decision, "as her reward for telling Mr. Morton, you know."

"All right," agreed Babe. "You tell the rest, Betty."

"Somebody tell it quick," begged Mary plaintively. "I'm dying of curiosity."

So Betty "told quick," and Bob aroused Babe's wrath by reminding her how it had all been prophesied just after Mary's wedding.

"As if that had anything to do with it," Babe sniffed. "Besides, we're not going to be married for a year. You may all be married before that—Helen Chase Adams may be."

Then Mary suddenly discovered that the girls had some trunks with them, and she insisted upon seeing their foreign trophies immediately. So Bob pulled the drift-wood fire to pieces and the other girls locked doors and hunted Mary's wraps, while Mary scribbled a note of explanation to her husband.

"I've said we'd be back here for supper," she told them. "Roberta ought to come at nine-thirty and she's sure to be hungry for gingersnaps."

On the way they met and annexed Lucile Merrifield and Polly Eastman, who invited them to sit with the seniors in chapel next morning, offered them their choice between

dinner at Cuyler's or the Belden, whose matron, they declared, would be "pleased as punch" to have such distinguished guests, and reproached Mary hotly for not being willing to conspire against the ten o'clock rule by inviting them to join her supper party.

"And the moral of that," said Mary sadly, "is that only sedate persons with no wicked little friends in college ought to marry Harding professors. I hope you'll remember that before it's too late, children, and not fall in love with one. And I hereby invite Lucile, Polly and Georgia to dinner the very first night I have a cook."

It was great fun going through the trunks, but it took a long time, because Mary was constantly being reminded of desert island experiences, which in turn suggested fresh-air child anecdotes to Bob, and they got back to Europe again only to be switched off on to Harding news by Lucile or Georgia. But by running most of the way they managed to meet Roberta's train,—which is Harding style, because one never has time there to waste on an early start.

And after supper, which was also Harding style, the stay-at-homes promised to be quiet and give the travelers a chance to tell their adventures, and Dr. Hinsdale considerably retired to his study so that the talk also might be strictly Harding style.

When she had listened breathlessly to the details of the "real adventure," and to snatches of all the others, Mary smiled her "beamish smile" around the circle. "Well," she said, "you've all lived up to your Harding reputations, as far as I can see—Babbie the Butterfly, Madeline the Bohemian, Betty a Benevolent Adventurer."

"And the moral of that is," put in Babbie quickly, "what you are at home, that you will be abroad."

"Unless you drop all your individuality and become a Tourist, with a capital T," added Roberta.

"Or change your spots and turn from a man-hater into a fiancée," suggested Bob.

"That's not changing your spots," declared Mary wisely. "It's just making up your mind, isn't it, Babe?"

"How in the world did you know that,

Mary Brooks?" demanded Babe in such awe-struck tones that her friends shrieked with laughter, and Dr. Hinsdale came out from his study to ask about the joke.

The girls had intended to leave early the next afternoon, but when Georgia Ames appeared, hovering in the Belden House hall, before dinner was over, and announced that she was giving a gargoyle party for them that evening, why of course there was nothing to do but insist that the gargoyle party should be a "small and early," and rush to the station to countermand orders for carriages, and find out about making connections with sleepers at the junction.

"For we're not so young as we were once," said Roberta, hugging Betty. "We don't have to be met at Harding by the registrar, and we may travel at night if we like, as long as two go one way and three the other."

The gargoyle party was as mysterious as Mary Brooks's historic hair-raising had been. Mary almost wept when Georgia asked her, and she was obliged to decline because of a previous dinner engagement—not to mention the dignity of her position. She solaced her-

self by making an elaborate costume for Eugenia Ford, a pretty little freshman who, when Georgia asked her to the party, thanked her gravely and explained that if gargoyles had anything to do with gargles she wouldn't come, because she never could manage to do it—her throat must be queer. Most of the other guests professed hapless ignorance of what a gargoyle might be, but Georgia referred them easily to Bob's cherished imp, which she had borrowed for the occasion, together with some post-cards of other grotesque figures.

"Just run in any time this afternoon, and look them over," she urged, "and come in costume to-night, if you can. If not, it doesn't matter. Mrs. Hinsdale is going to offer a prize for the best one, though."

So the chosen few cast English Lit. papers and a possible—nay, probable—written review in Psych. to the winds, journeyed down-town to buy masks and draperies, and preëmpted all the desirable perches in Georgia's room, marking them with big "Engaged" signs, which came loose when the wind blew in next time the door was opened, and gave the room a

disconcerting air of having been snowed under, when Georgia got back to it just before tea.

"But we had to do it," Eugenia Ford explained, as she helped Georgia put things to rights for the evening, "because the whole point of a gargoyle is that it stands somewhere. Lucile Merrifield said so. And the way you put on your costume makes a difference about where you are to sit. No, the other way around."

"Conversely, you mean, my child," amended Georgia, pleasantly, putting Mary's five-pound box of Huyler's on the chiffonier.

"But that's got to be cleared off," objected Eugenia. "That's Miss Bob Parker's place. We all wanted it, but she got it tagged first. Belden House Annie promised her a step-ladder to climb up by, but she said a chair would do."

Georgia sighed and dumped the ornaments of the dresser top, cover and all, into her upper drawer. "A gargoyle party is a thing that grows on your hands," she said sadly. "Let's go and eat. If there's anything else to clear off, we'll do it later."

When the gargoyle party opened it was certain that, whether or not it had grown on Georgia's hands, it was every bit her room could hold. Betty and Babbie, who had been too busy enjoying Harding to bother about costumes, were the only guests who were not wearing some sort of fantastic disguise. Bob had bought a box of paints and made her own mask, modeling it and her drapery of brown denim after the imp that the "B. A.'s Abroad" had given her. Eugenia Ford was a gryphon, —or at least Mary Brooks said so,—with the most beautiful pair of wings that had ever appeared at a Harding party. Polly Eastman was the elephant that sits on the tower of Notre Dame. Georgia had planned to be the other half of the elephant, in accordance with Harding usage in the matter of elephants and other four-footed creatures. But at the last minute she discovered that the Notre Dame elephant wasn't four-footed.

"Gargoyles never are," said Lucile wisely—it was she who had pointed out the mistake. "But never mind, Georgia. You can be one of my two heads. I was going to be a two-headed beast if I could. Only Vesta White

changed her mind afterward and wanted to be an eagle."

There were other gargoyles, as impossible to classify as the real ones, and they squatted in rows on Georgia's bed and her big window-box, popped up mysteriously from behind her desk, or lounged in strange attitudes in her easy chairs. Bob Parker actually did get up on the chiffonier, off the edge of which she hung in such realistic gargoyle style that the judges, Babbie and Betty, unhesitatingly awarded her the prize.

"Not a bit fair," objected young Eugenia, flapping her beautiful gryphon's wings disconsolately. "We should all have looked a lot grander on chiffoniers."

"But you weren't all clever enough to grab the one there was," put in Georgia pacifically.

"Having a gargoyle of your own makes you notice the attitudes more," declared Bob proudly. "Never mind, Miss Ford. The prize is candy, and we'll pass it around while we wait for Georgia's refreshments to materialize."

"You haven't forgotten your Harding manners, Bob," said Betty severely.

"No, you don't any of you act a bit like alums," declared a tall junior, taking off her mask to breathe.

"You lovely thing!" cried Bob, scrambling down from the chiffonier to give the appreciative junior first choice of the prize candy.

And then the gargoyles had a dance and a parade, and delicious "eats," on which Georgia had rashly spent all that was left of her month's allowance. And after that, when the five 19—'s were having the very best time of all, just sitting around talking and realizing what a dear, dear place Harding was, it was time to pull Bob out of her beloved costume and rush for trains.

Later in the evening the five classmates sat in the station at the junction, Babe and Betty waiting to go west, Bob, Babbie and Roberta bound for New York.

Babbie looked critically at Babe and Betty. "I shall tell mother that it worked," she said. "You went to bed at three, and got up at seven this morning to go canoeing. You've eaten four meals to-day and as many ices. You've been horseback and trolley-riding.

You've made dozens of calls. It's now ten p. m., and you're fresh as the daisies in Oban. How's that for the Harding cure?"

"Don't you feel exactly as if it was some June?" demanded Bob. "Not last June, but a regular June, you know, and we were all just going home for the summer."

"Exactly," agreed everybody, and then a sleepy silence settled upon the group.

"What were those things we had in the 'Rise of the Drama' course?" asked Betty Wales suddenly. "Not intervals, but something like that."

"You mean Interludes, don't you?" asked Roberta. "They came right after the Moralities."

Betty nodded. "That's what this summer has been—an Interlude."

"With Babe for the fascinating heroine," put in Babbie.

"Yes," agreed Betty hastily. "And when I get home to-morrow the real business of life is going to begin."

"Act I, Scene I, Life of Betty Wales, B. A.," said Roberta. "Doesn't that sound serious? But it won't be. You'll play tennis

with Nan, and go to dances with your brother and other people's brothers, and amuse that darling little sister of yours, and be nice to everybody who needs it, just as you always have, except that you won't be home on a snippy little vacation."

"Oh, I hope so," said Betty, laughing at Roberta's choice of details. "But then I want to do something that counts, too."

"You're always doing things that count," Babe declared, giving her a loving little squeeze.

"That was just fun," Betty reminded her for the hundredth time at least.

"But if fun counts, it counts," declared Roberta. "Just ask Madeline Ayres if it doesn't. If you can make fun out of hard work, then, according to Madeline, you really know how to live."

"But we're not the working contingent," objected Babbie. "K. and Rachel and Helen are the workers."

"They are!" breathed Bob indignantly. "Just try taking care of certain fresh-air youngsters for two weeks."

"Or typewriting most particular briefs for

your most particular father, who always wants things in a terrific hurry," added Roberta.

Betty considered. "I've helped in little ways of course, but I never did any one big thing. I'm going to now, though."

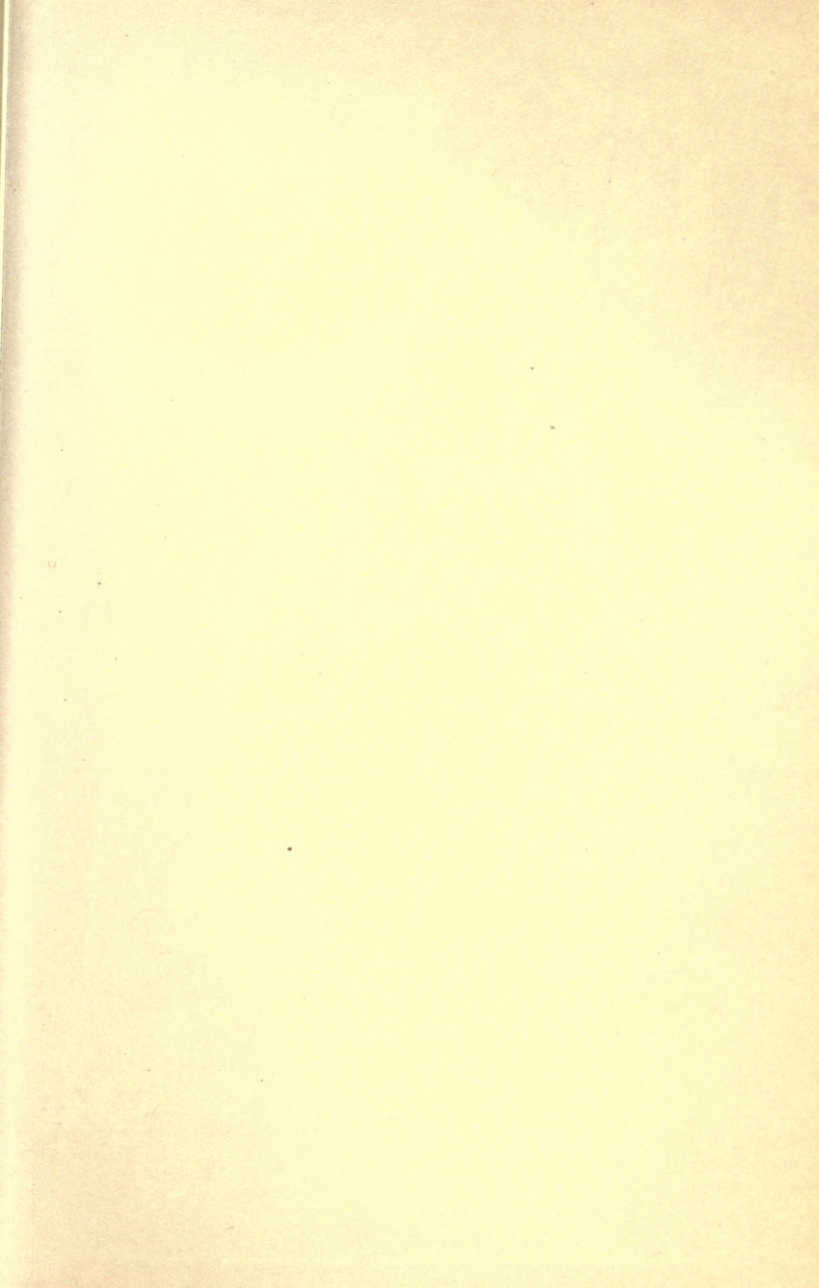
"Here's to a winter of hard work!" cried Babe. "I shall have to sew, and I hate it."

"But you must make fun out of it all the same," Betty told her, with the flash of gay courage in her eyes that had won over Mr. Morton. "I shall, no matter what happens, and whatever we do, think of the fun we'll have talking it over when we all get together again. Oh, is that our train, Babe?" And with her curls flying and her eyes dancing with eagerness Betty Wales turned merrily from her happy summer's Interlude to "the real business of life."

THE END







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