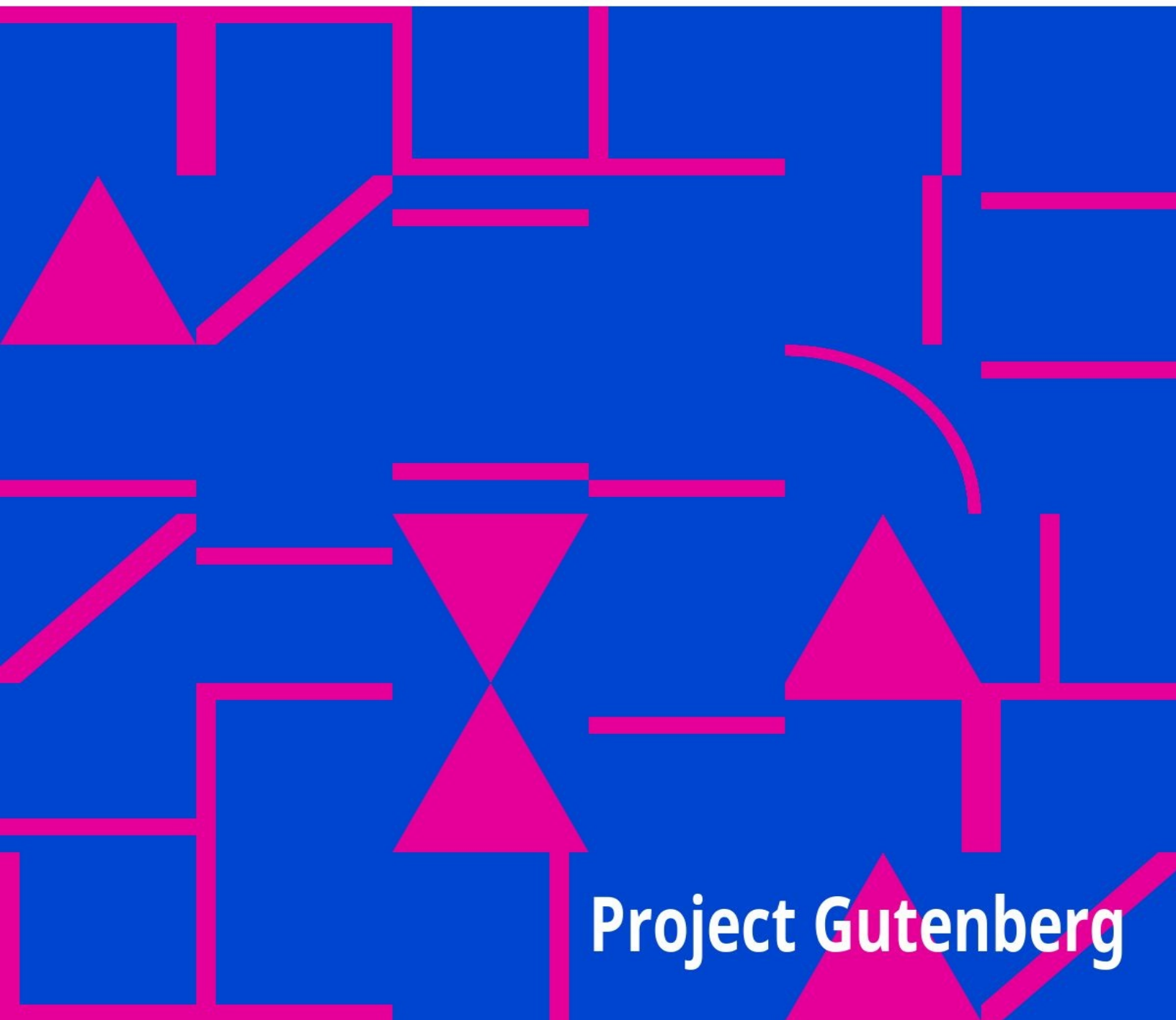


Polly and Her Friends Abroad

Lillian Elizabeth Roy

The background of the lower half of the cover is a solid blue color. Overlaid on this is a complex, abstract pattern of bright pink lines and shapes. The pattern includes various geometric elements: straight lines of different lengths and orientations, right angles, triangles (both pointing up and down), and a single curved line segment. These elements are scattered across the blue field, creating a modern, geometric aesthetic.

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*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK POLLY AND HER FRIENDS ABROAD ***

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MR. ALEXANDER IS INTRODUCED TO POLLY. Frontispiece—(Page 24)

MR. ALEXANDER IS INTRODUCED TO POLLY. *Frontispiece—(Page 24)*

POLLY AND HER FRIENDS ABROAD

BY

LILLIAN ELIZABETH ROY

Author of
POLLY OF PEBBLY PIT, POLLY AND ELEANOR,
POLLY IN NEW YORK, POLLY'S

BUSINESS VENTURE

ILLUSTRATED BY
H. S. BARBOUR

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POLLY AND HER FRIENDS ABROAD

CHAPTER I—THE ALEXANDERS

Eleanor Maynard left her friend, Polly Brewster, in the stateroom, cutting the stems of the gorgeous American Beauty roses, and arranging them anew in the tall glass of fresh water. As she was about to close the door behind her, she turned and said:

“Be sure and come up on deck, Polly, as soon as you are done with the roses.”

“All right, run along and I’ll be with you in a jiffy,” returned Polly, her thoughts engaged with the flowers.

So Eleanor strolled to the upper deck and tried to find an interest with which to amuse herself until Polly joined her.

Of course, you remember Polly Brewster of Pebbly Pit, and her chum, Eleanor Maynard, of Chicago? Mr. Fabian, their teacher in interior decorating, and the Ashbys from New York City, were escorting the two girls on this trip abroad, with the idea of visiting famous European museums and places where antiques of all kinds could be seen and studied.

Eleanor walked part way around the promenade deck before she was accosted by a decidedly plump woman of about forty, with decidedly blonde hair, and flashing—*most* decidedly—too many large diamonds from ears, fingers and neck.

“Excuse me, but aren’t you one of the young ladies I met at the Denver railway station last year when Anne Stewart and her friends were about to leave for New York?” questioned the lady.

Eleanor turned, glanced at the living representative of the newly-rich, and smiled delightedly—not with recognition but at the possibility of having fun with someone arrayed like a peacock.

“Oh yes, I was there! Do you know Anne Stewart?” said she.

“I should think I did! Didn’t we live next door to the Stewarts when Anne and Paul were little tots?”

“How nice to meet you, now,” returned Eleanor, noting the quality of the apparel and the approximate value of the gems adorning the lady.

“But that was before Ebenezer struck ‘pay dirt’ down in Cripple Creek. After that, we moved from the little house and bought a swell mansion in the fashionable part of Denver,” explained the lady, with pride.

“Did you say you met us last summer?” ventured Eleanor.

“Yes, don’t you remember me? I got off the train coming in from Colorado Springs, just as you-all stood waiting for the East-bound Express.”

“I have a faint recollection of Anne shaking hands with someone, and introducing Polly and me, but there were so many in our party that you must pardon me if I do not recall you now.”

“Oh sure! I know how it is,” giggled the lady, affably. “You *did* have a crowd waiting to see you off, I remember.”

“And now we meet again on the steamer bound for Europe! Well, it goes to show how small a place this world is,” remarked Eleanor, not knowing what else to say, but feeling amused at the hackneyed phrase she had to make use of.

“How comes it that you are sailing across? Is your Ma and family with you?”

“No, but Polly Brewster—she’s the girl you saw that day with Anne—and I are going to tour Europe with some friends, to study more of our profession.”

“Profession! Good gracious—didn’t that gold mine I read about pan out anything?” exclaimed the lady, astonished.

Eleanor laughed. “Oh yes, I believe it is going to pay even richer than we at first thought possible; so Polly and I can use our own money to improve our education.”

“And what are you going to take up?”

“We have taken it up—Polly and I have been studying Interior Decorating for two years, now.”

“Interior Decorating! Good gracious—Isn’t that the sort of work the upholsterers and painters have to do for you?” gasped the lady.

Eleanor laughed again. Here was fun indeed! So she carefully fed the fuel now beginning to take fire in her companion’s brain. “I am afraid it *has* been their work in the past. But Polly and I plan to try and uplift the work, and by investing our money in a first-rate business, we will try to create a real profession out of

what is merely a paint-brush and a tack-hammer job, nowadays.”

Eleanor glanced about to make sure her friends were not within hearing of the remarks she had just made to her new acquaintance. The expression on the lady’s face, as the young aspirant for a new ideal explained her plans, sufficed Eleanor for the story she had just told.

“And what did you say your name was, dearie?” asked the lady, finally.

“Eleanor Maynard—of the Chicago Maynards, you know.”

“Yes, yes, I know of them,” replied the lady, glibly. “I am Mrs. Ebenezer Alexander, of Denver. P’raps you’ve heard how Eben made a million in a night?”

Mrs. Alexander’s puckered forehead led Eleanor to understand what was expected of her in reply, so she fibbed as glibly as her companion had. “Oh yes! *who* has not heard of the Alexanders of Denver?”

The lady smoothed out her steamer-rug and smiled happily. Then the remembrance of this banker’s daughter going into a common trade, to better the conditions and reputation of the work, rose uppermost in her shallow mind again.

“I should think your Ma’d go wild to think that one of her girls wanted to work instead of getting married to a rich young man,” remarked she.

“Maybe my mother would object if I gave her time to think about it,” Eleanor said, smilingly. “But she’s too busy getting my sister Bob ready to marry, to bother about me.”

“Well, by the time your sister is settled down and having a family, you’ll be ready to turn your back on work and do as your Ma thinks best,” declared Mrs. Alexander, knowingly.

The very suggestion of Barbara’s having a family so amused Eleanor that she laughed uncontrollably, to the perplexity of her companion.

“Don’t you believe you will grow tired of work?” asked Mrs. Alexander, thinking her remarks on that subject had sounded preposterous to Eleanor.

“No indeed! Polly and I are tremendously interested in the study, and as we go into it deeper, the more absorbing it grows,” replied Eleanor.

“I didn’t know you had anything to study, except how to handle a paint-brush, or tuck in the furniture covering, before you tack the guimpe along the edges.”

“Oh yes, there’s a little more than that to learn first, before you can hang out a sign to tell folks you are a decorator, and wish to solicit their trade,” smiled Eleanor.

“Who are these Ashbys you spoke of? Are they New York trade people, or do they travel in society?” now asked Mrs. Alexander, as she remembered the escort Eleanor had mentioned.

“Mr. and Mrs. Ashby, and their daughter Ruth, are very nice people who know just the sort of folks Polly and I need to meet to help us in our business, later on. Mr. Ashby has a large upholstery and decorating business in New York City, but his wife goes into society, somewhat,” explained Eleanor, a twinkle in her eyes that would have warned one who understood her mischievous inclinations. But her companion did not understand.

“Oh—I see! Just a tradesman who’s made some money, I s’pose, and now his wife wants to climb. Did you ever read that novel about some ‘climbers’?”

“No, but I’ve heard of it. The Ashbys are not that sort.”

“But not the sort that can help me with Dodo, either, I see,” said Mrs. Alexander, thoughtfully for her.

“Dodo?”

“Yes, she’s my daughter. It’s because of her that I’m going over to the other side. I’ve heard say there are titles going begging for American millionaires since the war. And Dodo isn’t bad looking, even if she isn’t as prepossessing as I used to be—and am yet, I can say.”

Eleanor could hardly believe she had heard aright. An American mother from *Denver* going to exchange her child for a title! And the absolute egotism with which she mentioned her own looks and behavior!

“Well!” thought Eleanor to herself, “I was looking for entertainment, and here I have more of it than I dreamed of.”

“Does your daughter agree with you about marrying a title?” Eleanor could not help asking.

“She doesn’t say anything about it, one way or another. I told her what she had to do, and that settles it.”

“How old is she?” wondered Eleanor aloud.

“Past sixteen, but she looks more like twenty. If it wasn’t that it would make me

look so old, I'd dress her like twenty-one 'cause I hear the Europeans prefer a woman of age, and over there she can't be her own lawful self 'til twenty-one."

"Sixteen! Why—she isn't much older than Polly or I!" gasped Eleanor.

"No, but I said—she seemed older."

"Nancy Fabian is nineteen and *she* never thinks of getting married—not yet. Everyone thinks, nowadays, that twenty-five is plenty young enough for a girl to think of marriage. That gives her a chance to see the world and men, and then make a wise choice."

"Nancy Fabian—who is she?" asked Mrs. Alexander.

"Nancy is the daughter of Mr. Fabian who taught Polly and me interior decorating thus far. He is a wonderful teacher, and Nancy, his only child, has been studying art in Paris. Her mother went over with her to chaperone her, while there, and now we are going to meet them. Nancy managed to have several of her watercolors exhibited at the Academy this year, and one of them took a prize." Eleanor's tone conveyed the delight and pride she felt in Nancy Fabian's achievement, even though she had not met her.

"And this teacher is traveling with you?" was Mrs. Alexander's rejoinder.

Eleanor felt the condescension in Mrs. Alexander's tone and resented it. So she decided to answer with a sharp thrust.

"Yes; Mr. Fabian promised Anne and my mother to take good care of Polly and me, until he turns us over to his wife and Nancy, who are visiting Sir James Osgood, of London."

"Visiting a Sir James!" gasped Mrs. Alexander, sitting bolt upright for the first time since the interview began.

"Uh-huh! The Fabians and the Osgoods are very close friends, I hear. Nancy Fabian and Angela Osgood studied in the same class, in Paris; and Mrs. Fabian chaperoned Angela when her mother, Lady Osgood, had to return to England for the London Season." Eleanor had her revenge.

"Mercy! Then these Fabians must *be* somebody!"

"Why, of course! What made you think they were not?"

"From what you said," stammered Mrs. Alexander, humbly. "You said he was a teacher and that he was an intimate friend of the Ashbys who were painters and upholsterers."

“Oh no, I didn’t!” retorted Eleanor. “*You* said that. *I* said that Mr. Ashby was an interior decorator who helped Polly and me a lot, and that Mr. Fabian was our teacher. There is a vast difference between decorators and paint-slingers, you will learn, some day.”

Eleanor was about to walk away with that parting shot, when a very attractive girl came from a side-door of the Lounge and looked around. Catching sight of Mrs. Alexander, she started for her. She was over-dressed, and her face had been powdered and rouged as much as her mother’s was; her lips were scarlet as carmine could tinge them, and her hair was waved and dressed in the latest style for adults. As Mrs. Alexander had said, her daughter looked fully ten years older than she really was, because of her make-up.

She glanced casually at Eleanor, without expressing any interest in her, and turned to her mother. “Oh, Ma! I’ve been looking for you everywhere! Pa says he *won’t* come out and sit down, just to watch who goes by.”

Eleanor was severely tailored in her appearance, but her suit represented the best cut and fit that the most exclusive shop in New York could provide, and the broad-cloth was of the finest. Dodo, (whose real name was Dorothy but was cut to Dodo for a pet name) failed to recognize the lines and material of the gown, but she passed it over lightly because she saw no gorgeous trimmings to claim value for it.

“Dodo, dearie, do you remember those two girls we read about, out west? The ones who discovered that gold mine just below Grizzly Slide? Well, this is Eleanor Maynard from Chicago, who was with her chum Polly, when they sought refuge in that cave on the mountain-top. Isn’t it lovely for you to meet her, this way?”

At mention of the gold mine, and the unusual circumstances in connection with it, Dodo’s expression changed. She smiled politely at Eleanor and said: “So glad to meet you.”

“And Dodo being my only child, Miss Maynard, she is well worth knowing. She will inherit the million her father made,” added Mrs. Alexander.

Eleanor smiled cynically. “I’m sorry for you, Dodo. It spoils one’s life to be reminded of how much one has to live up to, when one is young and only wants to be carefree and happy.”

“Oh, do you feel that way, too! I thought it was only me who was queer. Ma says other girls would give their heads to be in my place,” exclaimed the girl,

anxiously.

Eleanor now took a keener look at the speaker. It was evident from her words that she was not what she was dressed up to represent. “You have a chance to be yourself, in spite of every one, you know,” said Eleanor.

“Well, I wish to goodness you would show me how! I hate all this fluffy-ruffle stuff and I wish we could get back to that time when I could go with my hair twisted at the back of my neck; and a cold water wash to clean my face, instead of all this cold cream business, and then the paint and flour afterwards!” declared Dodo, bluntly.

“Oh deary! I beg of you—don’t display your ignorance before strangers like this!” wailed her mother, fluttering a lace handkerchief before her eyes. “Eleanor Maynard is one of *the* Maynards of Chicago.”

“Why not! If Eleanor Maynard is half the girl I think she is—from what I read, that time they were lost on the Flat Tops and from what she just said, then she’ll appreciate me the more for my honesty,” asserted the girl.

“I do, Dodo. I never had much use for make-up, but I know society condones the use of it all. So I’m glad to find a real girl who dislikes it as much as Polly and I do.”

“There now, Ma! And I bet these girls will look at your pet hobby much the same as I do.” Then Dodo turned to Eleanor and added: “Ma’s bound to palm me off on some little stick of a nobleman in Europe, just to brag about my name with a handle to it. But *I* say I don’t want a husband—especially a foreign one. If I have to marry, let me choose a westerner! The kind I’m used to.”

Eleanor could have hugged the girl for her frank honesty so different from what she had looked for from the daughter of the silly woman before her.

“If only we could persuade Ma to see that this going to Europe does not mean just buying Paris dresses and parading them to catch a lord, I’ll be happy,” concluded Dodo.

“Poor child! How she does find fault with her little mother!” sighed Mrs. Alexander, wiping her eyes in self-pity.

Dodo turned her entire attention to her new acquaintance, at this. “Are you alone, or is your family with you?”

“Oh, I forgot to tell you, Dodo dear; Miss Maynard is going to study decorating in Europe; and her friend Polly, and their teacher, is with her. She just told me

that the teacher's wife and daughter are visiting a real English peer! Think of it—a teacher's family stopping with a live lady of quality!" exclaimed Mrs. Alexander, eagerly.

"I hope they are nice English folks," commented Dodo.

"Naturally they would be, if they belong to the peerage, Dodo," returned her mother, innocent of a "Burke" and the difference between a baronet and a peer. "But I was thinking, that it would be quite easy for us to get acquainted with dukes and lords, if a mere teacher got his family invited to one's house."

Dodo's lip curled sarcastically, and Eleanor learned that the daughter had nothing in common with these empty fads of her mother. Then Dodo said: "I hope the teacher's family know enough to make the lord's family appreciate a good old American!"

Eleanor laughed, and said: "If Nancy Fabian and her mother are anything like Mr. Fabian, you can rest assured that they'll do full justice to the United States, and the Stars and Stripes."

To change the subject from this dangerous ground that created more resistance for her to fight than she had to meet, recently, from Dodo, Mrs. Alexander hastily said: "Do you know, Dodo, Miss Maynard told me that Polly and she took up the study of Interior Decorating, in New York, in order to better the conditions of painters and upholsterers who work at that trade. NOT to make money."

Eleanor frowned. "I think you misunderstood me, Mrs. Alexander. I said we were studying the profession and that it took a great deal of application and perseverance to reach the high plane which was necessary for a good decorator to stand on. So few who call themselves interior decorators really know much about the art. And in order to increase our education and understanding of the profession, Polly and I are about to visit the great museums of Europe."

"Well, it is the same thing, isn't it?" pouted Mrs. Alexander.

"No, I think your idea of interior decorators is that any 'paint-slinger or tack-driver' is a professional. Whereas I see that *that* is the very error necessary to be reversed by us, before the public recognises the value of genuine decorators. In France and other European countries, an interior decorator has to have a certificate. And that is what we hope to do in the United States—put the real ones through a course of studies and have them examined and a diploma given, before one can claim title to being a decorator." Eleanor spoke with emphasis

and feeling.

“Well, I don’t know a fig about it, or anything else, for that matter,” laughed Dodo, cheerfully. “But I can understand how much more interesting it must be to trot around hunting up worm-eaten furniture, or examining ruined masonry, or admiring moth-holed fabrics, than to do as I have to—follow after Ma and sit with my hands idly folded waiting for some old fossil to pass by and say: ‘I choose her, because she’s got the most cash.’”

Eleanor laughed outright at the girl’s statement, but Mrs. Alexander showed her anger by twisting her shoulders and saying: “Dodo Alexander! If I didn’t know better, I’d believe you were trying to make Eleanor believe that you detested your opportunity!”

Dodo tossed her head and said: “Time will show!”

At that crisis in the conversation, another girl’s voice was heard across the deck. “Nolla! Are you there?”

Eleanor turned and called back: “No, I am not here!”

Then all three girls laughed. The newcomer, Polly Brewster, skipped lightly across the deck, and joined the group she had spied from the open doorway. Eleanor introduced Mrs. Alexander as an old friend of Anne’s, and Dodo her daughter, as an independent American who believed in suffrage and all the rights of American womanhood. At this latter explanation, Dodo grinned and her mother gasped in amazement at Eleanor.

Then Mrs. Alexander said politely: “How is Anne Stewart? I haven’t seen her for some time.”

“Anne is married to my brother John, now,” returned Polly. “And they are going to live home, with mother, while I am away. Anne’s mother is to live at the old home in Denver, and keep house for Paul.”

“It seems years and years since I lived next door to them,” remarked Dodo. “I always played with Paul Stewart.”

“Deary, it can’t be years and years, because I am not so old as you try to make me appear,” corrected Mrs. Alexander.

Polly, understanding from the words, saw how vain the woman was and stood looking at her in surprise. But Eleanor heard only Dodo’s speech.

“Did you say you always played with Paul Stewart when you were neighbors?”

“Yes indeed!” laughed Dodo, as she remembered various incidents of that childhood.

“We always played we were married, and Paul’s Irish Terrier and my kitten were our children. We dressed them up in old dust-cloths and tried to make them behave, but no parents ever had such trials with their children as we had when Terry and Kitty got to scrapping!”

Eleanor was deeply interested and Polly smiled at what she saw expressed in her friend’s face. Dodo continued her reminiscences.

“Paul used to draw me on his sled when we went to school, and he always saved a bite of his apple for me at noon-time. I gave him half of my cake in exchange. Oh, we had such fun—we two, in those days!” the girl sighed and looked out over the billowy sea.

“Then Pa struck that vein of gold down at Cripple Creek and everything changed. Ma got the social bug, so bad, we had to leave all our old friends, and move to a strange neighborhood where Pa never spoke to a soul and I felt out of place. But Ma said it had to be done to establish our position.

“The Stewarts rented their house and I heard that Paul went to Chicago to college, while Anne went to teach a school in New York. Then I never heard again, of any of them, until Ma met you-all at the Denver railroad station.” Dodo smiled at that crumb of comfort.

Polly and Eleanor were deeply touched at the girl’s tale, for they knew how lonely she must have been away from her old associations, in an atmosphere where she was not at home. And such a frivolous mother who could not understand the true blue of such an honest character as Dodo’s!

“Ma sent me to a swell seminary near our new house, but the girls snubbed me, and I never had a pal all the time I was there. When Ma ordered me to come to Europe with her to stock up with fine dresses and then try to make a match for me with some man with a title, I came, but goodness knows! I just hate the idea.”

“Oh, Dodo! You’ll break my heart, if you talk like that!” cried Mrs. Alexander, trying to impress the two other girls with her maternal sorrow.

“Nolla! I almost forgot what I came for,” laughed Polly, to change the subject. “Prof. says for you to come to the salon where they have used Adams period and Louis XIV furniture in the same room. He wants to show us a bad example of decoration.”

“May I come with you?” asked Dodo, eagerly.

“Of course! Come right along,” agreed Eleanor, thrusting her hand through the new friend’s arm and starting away with her.

The moment they were out of hearing, Eleanor said impressively to Dodo: “Don’t you ever give in to that idea of marrying a foreigner! Your mother will soon get over it if you just keep on making her see it’s no use. If you pretend to take up some study like we are doing, she will see you mean business.”

“That’s good advice, and I sure will follow it,” declared the eager girl.

“And Nolla and I will help along all we can,” promised Polly.

“Even if you have to make your mother believe you are in love with Paul Stewart and won’t marry anyone else—then do it!” declared Eleanor, in tones of brave self-sacrifice and renunciation.

“Oh, but I’m not! Paul is a dandy boy and we had good times when we were small, but I’ve seen other boys I like a heap better’n him, now! But I really don’t want to marry anyone, yet!”

“I shouldn’t think you would!” breathed Eleanor, in great relief. “So Polly and I will agree to help you out of all the plots your mother plans for you. Won’t we, Polly?”

“We sure will!” agreed Polly. And that is how Dodo came to travel about Europe with Polly and Eleanor. And why the two old friends felt it a duty to protect and save Dodo from the wily plans of her mother who wished to own a title in the Ebenezer Alexander family.

CHAPTER II—DODO MEETS POLLY’S FRIENDS

Dorothy Alexander was a good type of the healthy western girl. She was tall, well-built, and the picture of splendid health. Her hair was of a ruddy hue, with copper glints in it. Her complexion was like “peaches and cream,” and needed no cosmetic to enhance its charm. Her form was lithe and supple, and her features were good. Her bright eyes sparkled with good-humor, and her smile was contagious in its sweetness. When she was well-dressed, she would be a beauty, thought Eleanor, but her present overdressing depreciated her genuine good looks.

“Prof., we bring you a new convert,” laughed Eleanor, as the three girls approached Mr. Fabian.

“Dorothy Alexander, Mr. Fabian,” added Polly.

The two acknowledged the introduction and the girl thought: “What a fine face he has! Such wonderful expression and forehead.”

And Mr. Fabian thought: “There’s a great deal under all that sham.”

Shortly after the introduction, Mr. Fabian spoke of the flaunting mistakes some so-called decorator had made in the selection and furnishings of the salon. So they turned their attention to that interesting subject. Dodo stood by and listened to it all, as she wondered what these two good-looking girls could find to interest them in such a dry subject? But she confessed that both girls seemed more beautiful and attractive, when they were thoroughly interested and animated with the ideas they were exchanging with Mr. Fabian.

As they left the room, Mr. Fabian turned his attention to Dodo, particularly. And soon she was telling him freely, all about her life in Denver, and how hard her father had worked and suffered at Cripple Creek, to amass the fortune they now enjoyed. When Dodo described her father’s character and how simple and blunt he was in everything, her hearers fell in love with the unknown. She told how generous he was to every one, and how no one was left in need if he could help it.

“But he has one awful sin that Ma can’t forgive him,” added Dodo, glancing covertly around to make sure no one could hear.

Mr. Fabian shivered at what she was about to say, and he wished Dodo was not *quite* so frank as to reveal family skeletons. But she was launched and nothing could check her.

“Pa has a pet old pipe that’s as black as ink. He just won’t smoke any of the imported cigars Ma buys for him, and he won’t let her throw the old pipe away. He gets away by himself and smokes it until he feels happy—no matter what Ma says or does.”

All three of her audience bent double in merriment at what they just heard. Mr. Fabian was so relieved at the “sin” he feared to hear about, that he laughed louder than the two girls.

“S-sh!” warned Dodo, hurriedly. “Here comes Pa, now!”

Instantly they hushed and turned to watch the “grand being” they had just heard about. The shock of beholding the actual man who was the opposite of what Dodo had pictured him caused them to mumble confusedly when Mr. Alexander was introduced.

He was a little wiry man of about fifty years. The top of his head was bald, with a fringe of grey all about the crown. Right in front, on top, grew a stiff lock of stubborn hair that generally stood upright. This gave him the funny appearance that is often portrayed in the comic section of the Sunday papers. His hands were knotted with hard work, and his legs were bowed just enough to make him walk awkwardly. His eyes were small and merry, and his ears large and fan-like. But his mouth was the feature that attracted instant attention and held it wonderingly. It was a wide, good-natured mouth, and when he smiled he literally demonstrated that saying: “His head opened from ear to ear.” He wore a huge ulster of checks and a tourist cap with ear-tabs tied on top.

“Hello, Dodo! Who’s your friends?” called he cheerily, as he came up to them.

He was introduced, and Dodo followed up the introduction by saying: “I was just talking about you—telling my friends what a fine man you are.”

Mr. Alexander smiled happily. “It ain’t every man what has a gal that says that, eh?”

“You’re right there, Mr. Alexander,” agreed Mr. Fabian, glad to speak and express something worthy of himself.

“And Dodo is sure one fine gal, too. I wonder why she ain’t sp’iled like other gals I see.”

“Perhaps her father’s example is before her,” ventured Eleanor. And forever after that, Dodo swore allegiance to Eleanor.

“I’m right glad you-all met Dodo, ’cause I was fearin’ the missus might get her to give in to them foolish notions about gettin’ a furriner. Did you tell ’em, Dodo?” said her father.

“Yes, Pa, and the girls are going to help me cure Ma of that fad.”

“That’s the best news, yet! I hope you kin do it!” said he, slapping his knee. “You must be real gals, too, like mine, here.”

Polly laughed, and Eleanor said: “We like to ride and hike, and have good times, but we’re not out hunting for husbands. If we ever reach that place where we want to marry, we’ll take a man we know by heart, and not one who is buying a doll made up at a hair-dresser and beauty-doctor’s.”

“You’re the right sort, all right!” chuckled the little man, transferring the slap from his knee to Eleanor’s back.

Eleanor gasped for breath but she considered the sharp commendation a compliment that any *man* might be glad to get. Mr. Fabian had to smile at Eleanor’s sudden gasp and instant recovery, but Polly laughed outright, for she was accustomed to such pleasantries from the ranchers at home.

“Poor Pa. He’s so glad to meet some sensible folks, that he doesn’t stop to think how hard his hand is, with all the mining and picking at gold ore, out west,” added Dodo, smiling sympathetically at Eleanor, and then at her father.

“Right again! This traipsing to U-rope fer a title, isn’t my kind of work. But I jus’ couldn’t let Ma run off with Dodo and all my cash, when I knew Dodo didn’t want to. So I says, ‘Unless you lug me along wherever you go, my cash stays behind in America.’ You-all know, ‘cash makes the mare go,’ so I was included in the trip.”

The little man chuckled and caused the others to laugh at his amusing expression. Then he leaned forward and said confidentially: “But I’ll confess, all this tight-fittin’ clothes, and a boiled shirt with stiff collars and cuffs ain’t to my likin’! I have to pinch my feet into shiny tight shoes, and use a tie that has to be knotted every day, ’stead of a ready-made one that I can hook on to my collar-button.”

At that admission, the girls laughed merrily and Mr. Fabian simply roared, for he understood collar-buttons and the agony Mr. Alexander must endure.

The little man felt that he was making fine headway in his conversational powers, so he continued to practice the art.

“But say! let me tell you-all—when Ma carted me to Noo York and made me take dancing lessons to get graceful, I tried it twicet—then I balked! ‘No more of them monkey-shines for an old miner,’ says I. And I never did it again, did I, Dodo?”

Dodo laughed and shook her head, and the others renewed their mirth. Mr. Alexander was now encouraged to proceed.

“Ma went to a Madam Something-er-other fer to learn how to act in polite society and how to not do the wrong things at the right time, and vice versy, but she couldn get *me* to go there! I spent that time at the Movies or ridin’ on the Fifth Avenoo bus, and laughin’ at folks—the way they rushed around like ants.

“But here I am, mixin’ in as good comp’ny as I want, and it ain’t costin’ me a cent to sit in a little room and listen to a fat old woman who charges a dollar a throw.” As he concluded his speech, a group of people standing directly back of Mr. Fabian and the girls, joined the circle.

Mr. Alexander instantly froze up and felt uncomfortable lest they had heard him speak. Then Mr. Fabian eased his mind by saying: “Now you can meet the Ashbys, Mr. Alexander. Miss Dodo, this is Mrs. Ashby, and Ruth, and Mr. Ashby. And this is a new friend, Mr. Ashby, but an old acquaintance of Polly and Eleanor’s from Denver—Mr. Alexander and Miss Dodo.”

The introductions over, Mr. Ashby quickly smoothed the way for the nervous little man from the west; but Dodo wondered why her mother had the impression that these people were inferior because they were in business in New York. She had never met any one more refined, or who showed truer gentility than these people.

After an exchange of words, Mr. Alexander whispered to his daughter: “Dodo, do you think we’d better go out to Ma? She might get huffy, you know, when she finds out we’ve been meetin’ all the nice people and leavin’ her in the cold.”

“We’ll all go out, Mr. Alexander,” suggested Eleanor, seeing how much better it would be for the two culprits if Mrs. Alexander had to entertain a number of new-comers instead of her own people.

They started to go on deck, but Mr. Alexander hastily surveyed himself in a

mirror as he passed. Then he pulled at Mr. Fabian's sleeve.

"I reckon I'd better take off the ulster before the Missus sees me in it. She can't bear it, 'cause she thinks it looks like a workin'-man's coat."

So saying, the wrap was slipped off and Mr. Alexander straightened the cap on his shiny head. He brushed a speck from his pale grey spats, and tugged at his tie to have it correctly placed. Then he hurried after the others. In that time, Mr. Fabian saw how hen-pecked the poor little man must be, and he resolved to stand by him in his troubles. Thus Dodo won two allies, and her father unconsciously acquired a splendid friend for times of need.

"Have you ever been abroad before?" asked Mr. Ashby, as Mr. Alexander caught up with him.

"Not on your life! The States is good enough for me, but Dodo had to be saved, you see, and I come along."

Mr. Ashby knew nothing of Mrs. Alexander's hopes and aspirations, and he was in the dark about the little man's words.

"You have a great treat awaiting you, if you have never visited the famous old cities of Europe, before," added Mr. Ashby.

"Most folks go over for other things than to see the fine towns," remarked Mr. Alexander.

"I hear the women-folk mostly go to get clothes in Paris."

Everyone laughed; then the group crossed the deck to the steamer-chair occupied by Mrs. Alexander. Dodo introduced her mother to the strangers; she smiled loftily at the Ashbys, but was very effusive over Mr. Fabian. So much so, that he wondered at it.

But in a few moments she unconsciously showed her reason for it. "I hear you are going to visit at an English Peer's, in London, Mr. Fabian."

"My wife and daughter are visiting at Sir James Osgood's, I believe, but my visit there all depends on whether the Ashbys and my girls are included in the invitation. If they are not, of course I will have to decline, also."

"Oh, you wouldn't miss such a chance, would you?" cried the surprised woman.

"I'm missing nothing that I know of," replied Mr. Fabian; then Polly came to his rescue and changed the conversation.

In the next few days, Mr. Alexander and Dodo became great favorites with the

Ashbys and Mr. Fabian, while Polly and Eleanor declared that the girl was splendid! She had dropped all pretence and make-up, and had donned the simplest gowns she had in the trunk, much to her mother's disapproval, and to the girls' smiling approval.

In constant association with the quiet Polly, the well-bred Ruth Ashby, and the thoroughbred Eleanor, Dodo soon acquired better form in every way. She was quick and bright enough to recognise her shortcomings and eager to improve herself.

The last morning of the trip, after the English shore had been sighted, Mrs. Alexander suddenly changed her plans about going to Havre, and decided to land in England when the others did. This change of plan she confided to no one at the time. But she awaited a chance.

"Have you really decided to leave us, Mr. Fabian?" said she coyly, when she met that gentleman in the morning at breakfast.

"Yes, we take the lighter that comes off shore at Dover, and takes on those who wish to land."

"Dodo tells me that you got a wireless that your wife and daughter would meet you at the wharf, in Dover," continued Mrs. Alexander.

"Yes, and the invitation from Sir James, includes my party, I hear, so it is all right. We are all going there for an informal dinner-party and to spend the night. Then we will hire an auto and continue on our trip in the morning," explained Mr. Fabian.

"Dear, dear! I am so upset," sighed the amateur actress. "I find *my* car—it was shipped over before we left Noo York—was left in London instead of going on to France. So we have to get off when you do, and go to London just to get our car."

"Oh, really! I didn't know you had sent a car across," said Mr. Fabian.

"Dear yes! You might as well, when you have one, you know. But I expect to buy myself a new French car whiles I am in Paris. Just for myself, and a friend or two, to use, you know; and that lets Pa drive his own touring car, 'cause he is crazy about motoring."

Mr. Alexander had not mentioned a car, nor had Dodo said anything about the trouble in the delivery of a car to the wrong port, so Mr. Fabian mistrusted the truth of the statement made by Mrs. Alexander; but he forbore saying anything about the matter to any of his companions.

Evidently the lady's husband and daughter had just previously been warned about the car, also, for they looked troubled and made no comment when Mrs. Alexander surprised everyone by saying: "We find we have to land at Dover, also, as our car went astray during shipment and we have to see about it in London."

"Oh, how nice! Then Dodo can remain with us a bit longer," said Ruth, guilelessly.

"And her mother, of course," said Mrs. Alexander pointedly, lifting her shoulders as well as her eye-brows.

"And her old man, too," chuckled Mr. Alexander, causing everyone who heard him to laugh.

His spouse sent him a most disquieting look, however, and he subsided in his chair. But Eleanor, who sat beside him at the table, nudged him encouragingly when Mrs. Alexander was not looking.

So, when the lighter touched at the Dover dock, the entire party got off, and soon Mr. Fabian was encircled by four arms, while two heads were pressed close to his face. A younger woman stood a bit aside, smiling sympathetically at the reunion.

Then she was introduced to the Americans as Angela Osgood, Nancy Fabian's friend. And in turn, Mr. Fabian introduced his two protégées, Polly and Eleanor, and the Ashbys, and the Alexanders.

When Mrs. Alexander really found herself face to face with the daughter of an English Baronet, she was speechless with joy. Now she could write home and tell everyone she ever knew about meeting Sir James Osgood's daughter!

But Angela never dreamed of the disturbance she had caused in the breast of this unusual-looking woman.

"Now, how shall we dispose of all the passengers, Nancy?" laughed Angela, counting the heads of the party she expected to drive to the town house for dinner.

"The car only holds seven, you see," explained she, turning to the Ashbys. "I counted on Nancy's father and two girls driving with me, and the three Ashbys taking the seat in the road-car where the luggage will be placed. The groom drives that. Or we can rearrange it any way you say."

Mrs. Alexander instantly pushed herself forward and said: "Oh, how very kind

of you to include us in your party! I really can't accept a seat in the car if anyone else must be crowded."

Dodo looked like a thunder-cloud and pulled at her mother's arm, but Mr. Alexander spoke out bluntly.

"I ain't invited to nobody's house, so I'm going on to London to get that car you told me about. Dodo can come with me."

His spouse instantly silenced him with a glowering look, and Angela hoped to smooth matters out by what she now said.

"Mother and father will be delighted to have all of you come, and I'm sure they will feel *dreadfully*, if anyone is left out. We never stand on ceremony, you know, and this is an occasion where you all must come without formality."

"We're delighted, I assure you, Miss Osgood, and I will accept for my family and myself. The only question now, is, how shall we manage about the cars. If only my seven-passenger car was here instead of in London!" exclaimed Mrs. Alexander, eagerly.

"Why, the ladies will use this car, of course," said Mr. Fabian, "while we men go in the baggage-car. You may be uncomfortably crowded, but I see no other way."

So Mrs. Fabian, Mrs. Ashby and Mrs. Alexander sat in the back seat while Polly, Eleanor, Ruth and Dodo had to crowd upon the folding seats in the middle of the car. Nancy sat in front and Angela drove the car. The groom with the baggage and the three men followed directly after in his car.

Mrs. Alexander certainly was a general when she wanted to win a battle of wits, but it was a pity she had no better ambitions than the mere forcing a way into society and marrying her daughter to a title.

As they started for London, she leaned back in the seat and said: "If only the company hadn't mistaken the directions about my car. It is such a great roomy affair, that everyone could have traveled in it with the utmost comfort."

"But it wouldn't have been here at all, for us to travel in, if they had sent it as you directed—to Havre, instead of London," said Mrs. Ashby.

"Oh true! But I meant—if it had been left over at Dover instead of going on to London," quickly corrected the lady.

The conversation drifted to other topics but was switched back again when Mrs. Alexander remarked: "I was just thinking how nice it would be for the Fabians and Ashbys to tour Great Britain first instead of Europe; then they could use my

big car whiles Dodo and I go in my new runabout that I expect to buy immediately.”

“Why, Ma! you know you’re talking—” began Dodo, from the seat in front of her mother, but Mrs. Alexander interrupted instantly.

“Oh yes, deary, I know what you would say! That I must try a new car, first, and get acquainted with it. But I can select a make similar to our big one, can’t I? and that is quite familiar to me.”

“Oh yes, if you want to duplicate our old car, you can do it. But you said you wanted an up-to-date car with all the latest equipment, this time, and such a car won’t seem familiar to you, be——”

“Never mind, Dodo! Our friends are not interested in our old cars, or what we have done with them,” cut in Mrs. Alexander.

So Dodo subsided for the time, while her mother continued: “So there will be ample room for you to tour in my large car, ladies, while Dodo and I use the roadster and follow you.”

“We cannot say, one way or another, Mrs. Alexander, because nothing has been said about a change in the itinerary. It all depends upon Mr. Fabian and Mr. Ashby,” replied Mrs. Ashby, politely.

But Mrs. Alexander was satisfied with the progress she had made by mentioning the tour, and so she left the rest to time.

After a long drive through the highly cultivated countryside that spread out between Dover and London, Angela drove up in front of an imposing mansion on one of the avenues of England’s great city. As a uniformed man came down the wide marble steps to take orders from Angela, Mrs. Alexander sat breathless with pleasure at the success of her maneuvering.

The baggage-car came up shortly after the ladies had alighted from the first automobile, and the servants carried the bags indoors, then waited to be directed to the proper rooms.

Sir James and his wife welcomed the party of Americans, but Mrs. Alexander felt disappointed when she saw a plain little lady dressed in grey taffeta, and found Sir James to be a short fat man with a genial expression, but a horsy manner. The others seemed quite at home with these English people and all were soon exchanging opinions about the recent problems in politics.

Not a word or look from either Sir James, or his lady, led anyone to think that

three extra visitors were thrust upon the hospitable family, nor did any hint escape them that the unexpected guests were other than socially their equals. Mrs. Alexander was looking for some sign of this superiority in them because of the title, and felt most uneasy because she detected none of it; but finding she and her family were accepted on the same standard as the Fabians and Ashbys, she recovered her wonted habit of pushing a way to the foreground in everything.

As the group separated to go to their separate suites, Sir James reminded them: "Quite informal dinner, you know. We are only tarrying in town a few days, before going on to Osgood Hall, so we make no pretence at dressing formally."

The Ashbys and Fabians knew this to be a courtesy extended them because of their lack of baggage, but Mrs. Alexander thought Sir James meant that their own trunks had gone to the country and so they were not able to dress in dinner clothes. But she determined to show how *she* could dress, with her money.

Before Dorothy could lock the door of her room, her mother entered and handed her the dress she was to wear for dinner.

"Why, Ma! we were told *not* to dress!" exclaimed she.

"That's only bluff. You put this on and show folks that we know what's what, even if we haven't a title!" declared her mother.

Reluctantly Dodo took the beaded georgette evening dress and then closed the door after her mother's commanding figure. As she went to the toilet-table she thought: "I wonder what poor Pa will have to wear tonight!" But she was to learn about that sooner than she thought for.

CHAPTER III—THE TOUR IS PLANNED

“Ma, why did you speak of your car bein’ in London? You know durn well it ain’t!” exclaimed Mr. Alexander, as he soaped his head and gurgled in the water, then he ducked it up and down in the basin.

“That’s my business! If I plan it that way to get acquainted with a lot of fine folks, why should you care?”

“I don’t care, but I didn’t know you thought these folks so fine. I heard you say they was only decorators,” argued her spouse.

“Ebenezer, there are times when I could just choke you—you are so thick!” exclaimed Mrs. Alexander, impatiently.

“Mebbe I’m thick, Ma, but I can’t see how you can drive a party across England when your old car is on second-hand sale out in Denver!”

“That proves you’re thick—if you can’t see how! I am going straight to a shop, in London, tomorrow, where I can *buy* a car exactly the same as mine—only it will be up-to-date with self-starter and all. Then you can drive it back here and we will show the folks a seven-passenger car that we owned long ago.”

As Mr. Alexander swabbed his dripping face and hair on a damask towel, he shook his head dubiously. “Well, these days, a hull lot of stuff goes, but I always said such a game as you’re playin’ was fibbin’ and that’s callin’ it by a polite name, too.”

Mrs. Alexander humped her shoulders angrily and said: “You are the most aggravating man! I s’pose you’ll tell everyone we know, all about my plan to get a car in a hurry.”

“Oh no, I won’t tell no one, ’cause I don’t want folks to believe you ain’t as honest as you pretend to be,” said he meekly.

After that he wondered what he had said to anger his wife so that she would not speak to him; and when he asked her to help him with his collar-button, she ignored him entirely. Later, when he had trouble with his neck-tie and dared not

ask assistance of his mate, he was amazed that she caught hold of the two ends and began to tie it.

But she had a subtle reason for helping him. As she tied and untied it, she dinned into his ears all the rules and reminders he had heard often before—about his behavior at the table. At last, desperate with the nagging, he snatched the tie-ends from her hand and rushed from the room.

“Ebeneezer! Ebeneezer—I say! come back here!” called she.

But the little man fled down the stairs and dodged into the first room he found. It happened to be the library where Mr. Fabian was conversing with Sir James. Both men arose at the perturbed appearance of Mr. Alexander, as he ran breathlessly into the room.

“Why—what has happened?” asked Sir James, fearfully.

“Nothin’ much. My wife made me so nervous a-fussin’ over my manners and this tie, that I just had to run!” explained he.

“Allow me to help you, Mr. Alexander,” said Sir James, and his voice was so kindly and gentle, that Mr. Alexander decided that for true democracy you had to meet an English baronet.

As Sir James was adding the last touch to the tie, Mrs. Alexander swept into the room in search of her escaped husband. When she beheld him facing the host, who was adjusting the tie, she was speechless.

Mrs. Alexander caught the reflection of herself in a long mirror opposite where she stood, and immediately forgot, in admiring herself, her concern over her husband’s shortcomings. She waved her feather fan to and fro slowly and seemed absorbed in the vision seen in the glass.

Mr. Fabian smiled to himself, and Sir James engaged Mr. Alexander in conversation to make him feel more at ease. Then Dodo peeped around the corner of the portière, and saw her mother very much preoccupied, so she beckoned to Mr. Fabian without being seen by the others. He quietly moved over to the doorway.

“Just look at me, Mr. Fabian! Ma made me dress up like a monkey, just to show folks that she knew what’s what!”

Mr. Fabian felt sorry for Dodo, for he knew she wished to appear rational to the others at the dinner-party. So he hinted: “It is still very early for the others to appear. You’d have time to change your mind, Dodo.”

They both laughed at that, and the girl replied: "I will! I'll run up and change my dress, at the same time."

"Perhaps you'll feel better in a simple little silk," suggested he.

Dodo nodded understandingly and disappeared. Just as Mr. Fabian turned to walk back to the fireplace, Mrs. Alexander finished the contemplation of her satisfying appearance—satisfying to herself.

Sir James immediately came over and took such a deep interest in his guest that she had no opportunity, thereafter, to harass her poor little husband. The others came in, one by one, and finally, Dodo reappeared in a modest pale-blue taffeta silk.

Mrs. Alexander gasped at what she considered rank insubordination, but Lady Osgood managed to engage so much of her attention that Dodo escaped further persecution that night.

Just as the butler threw open the doors of the dining-room to announce dinner, Mrs. Alexander noticed her husband's lack of gems which she had insisted upon his wearing that night.

"Ebenezer! What did you do with those shirt-studs and the scarf-pin you were told to wear tonight? They are diamonds of the purest quality, and that stud weighs, at *least*, four carats!"

Even the butler looked shocked at the guest's lack of tact, and everyone wondered what little Mr. Alexander would say. It was a tense moment for all.

"Well, this time I speak out even if I lose my head for it!" retorted the badgered man, in a voice that plainly signified he expected to be tortured forever afterwards. "I saw that Mr. Fabian and Sir James didn't have no jooels of any kind shinin' around 'em, and I am as good as them, any day. Why should I look like pawn-shop, when I don't feel that way!"

It was hard work for the grown-ups to keep a straight face, but Dodo set the younger members the example of laughing outright. In a moment, the young folks were all enjoying the blunt repartee.

"Oh, Pa!" sighed Dodo, finally. "What would our life be without you to entertain us!"

"Miss Dodo is right, there, Mr. Alexander. You certainly are a valuable member to any party on a pleasure trip," added Mr. Ashby. And Mrs. Alexander smirked and nodded her head approvingly, so that everyone breathed easier, knowing a

catastrophe had been averted for the little man.

Sir James now turned the conversation into a different channel. As they enjoyed the excellent dinner, he told about the new car he had presented to his son Jimmy, on his twenty-first birthday, two weeks previous.

“Oh, have you a grown-up son?” asked Mrs. Alexander, eagerly.

“Yes indeed! And a very fine young man we think him, too,” returned Lady Osgood.

“He is not at home, is he?” asked Mrs. Alexander.

“He is dining with his latest love, this evening,” laughed Angela. “He has a new one every other week, but this one has lasted since Nancy refused him some time ago.”

“Refused him! Nancy Fabian refused Sir James’s son,” gasped the unbelieving hunter for a title.

The girls laughed, and Nancy shrugged her shoulders nonchalantly. Mrs. Alexander stared from her to each one about the table, as if the truth of the statement would not sink into her mind.

Again Sir James entered the breach and bridged over the yawning chasm in the conversation. “I gave Jimmy the car—which is a fine seven-passenger affair—with the understanding that he was to take Angela and the Fabians on a summer tour through England, but he spoiled all that by falling madly in love with Nancy and then being refused. Of course, he had no desire after that, to join any party. We are giving him ample opportunity, now, to recover from his broken heart. Then he and his car will be ours, again.”

Jimmy’s family did not express much concern over his damaged heart, and the guests considered that pity or sympathy for him would be useless. However, Mrs. Alexander began to feel an intense interest in the absent heir and, as usual, she suggested a plan which others would have weighed carefully before mentioning.

“If your son has a seven-passenger car and I have mine, wouldn’t it be just *too* lovely for anything, if we took all this party on the tour of England. He can drive his motor, and Pa can drive mine.”

Her very audacity caused sudden silence with everyone, although the younger members of the party felt that the plan would be perfectly wonderful if it could be carried out. Sir James finally answered.

“If Jimmy could be induced to join such a party, it certainly would be fine for all. But Lady Osgood and myself have to go down to our country house, in a few days, as there are so many things an owner of a large estate has to take charge of, in summer.”

“Perhaps Miss Angela will join us, and we can divide the party accordingly,” persisted Mrs. Alexander, eagerly.

“Oh yes, I’d love to be one of the touring party,” said Angela. “But what do the others say about this idea?”

“If we could make the trip and get me back to London in two weeks’ time, so I can keep the appointments with several men I agreed to see, I’d like it immensely,” said Mr. Ashby.

“As for us—we planned to tour England, anyway, and traveling with a party of friends will make it all the pleasanter,” added Mr. Fabian.

“Oh, how grand! Then it is all settled, isn’t it?” cried Mrs. Alexander, clasping her be-ringed hands ecstatically.

“That depends on Jimmy,” remarked Angela.

“Jimmy will agree to do anything, the moment he meets this new bevy of pretty girls,” laughed Sir James.

“You don’t seem to worry much over his susceptible heart,” ventured Mr. Fabian.

“No, because ‘there is safety in numbers,’ you know,” said Lady Osgood. “And Jimmy falls out of love quite as safely as he falls in.”

Mrs. Alexander listened intently whenever anyone spoke of the heir, and she made up her mind that that son must fall in love with Dodo if she had to take him by the neck and shake him into it. And once he was in love, she would see that Dodo accepted him and gave him no excuse to fall out again.

“What do you think of this touring plan, Angie?” asked Nancy Fabian of her friend Angela.

“Why I like it, Nan; don’t you think it will be heaps of fun? Much nicer than doing as we first planned, you know. With a large party of young folks there is always more sport.”

“Yes, I agree with you.” Then Nancy turned to her father: “Have we arranged about the expenses of the trip? Of course the guests will want to entertain the

owners of the two cars.”

“Oh decidedly!” agreed Mr. Fabian.

“Indeed not!” objected Mrs. Alexander. “What do you think of me, with all my money, letting others pay any of the bills?”

This shocked her hearers and she actually realized that she had committed a social error that time. So she hoped for some opening by which she could mend matters. Sir James gave it to her.

“It would seem better, if financial arrangements were left to the men, to settle. Ladies are seldom experienced enough to assume such responsibilities. So, if all agree, the cost and payment of bills will be attended to by the four gentlemen.”

That smoothed matters out agreeably for the time being, and the subject of the itinerary was taken up and discussed. Dinner passed with no other breach of etiquette by the Alexanders, and they all went to the drawing-room to complete the plans for the trip.

Dodo and her father were unusually quiet that evening, but Mrs. Alexander seemed the more pleased at it. In fact, she did so much talking about the car and how they all loved to drive it, that Dodo finally silenced her with a strange remark.

“Ma, suppose you wait until you find whether your car can be driven this summer. It may have disappeared from the garage in London, where you say it is waiting.”

Mrs. Alexander then remembered a very grave situation. “Did anyone remember that there would be thirteen in this party? Someone must drop out, or we’ll have to add an extra passenger.”

The others laughed, believing she was joking, and Sir James said: “Oh, that sort of superstition never worries one, these days.”

“Do you mean to say, you wouldn’t hesitate to do anything when there were thirteen in it?” wondered Mrs. Alexander.

“Of course not! Thirteen really ought to be a lucky number because it is made up of one and three—both very lucky numerals,” returned Sir James. “It is only the fear of a thing that gives it any power. And the sooner you overcome the fear of thirteen being unlucky, it turns out to be favorable for you.”

As long as a wise man like Sir James said so, Mrs. Alexander thought it must be so, and nothing more was said about the thirteen in the party.

Jimmy had not come in that night when the guests said good-night to their host and hostess and retired. But what Sir James and his wife said to him when he did let himself in in the ‘wee sma hours’ about the bevy of very wealthy girls who were waiting for him to choose a wife from, had due effect on the young man.

“And remember, Jimmy,” added his sister Angela. “These four girls have money by the bag! Nancy Fabian is a dandy girl, but she hasn’t a cent to bless her husband with.”

In the morning, when Mr. and Mrs. Alexander appeared in street costumes ready to go to the garage where they believed their automobile would be awaiting them, Jimmy said he would go with them.

“Oh dear no! I couldn’t think of such a thing,” declared Mrs. Alexander, anxiously, “Why, I am not even taking Dodo. But leaving her here for you to entertain.”

Jimmy grinned and thought to himself: “If Dodo is anything like her parents she’ll entertain *me*, not *me her*.” But he said aloud: “I really feel that your husband and I ought to get the car out, Mrs. Alexander, and spare you that trouble.”

“No trouble whatever, my dear boy, as I propose looking at a new roadster for myself, at the same time,” said the lady.

To escape further explanations, she managed to get her husband out of the house before the others came down to the morning meal.

As one girl after another appeared and was introduced to Jimmy, he thought: “Angie was right! here is as delightful a bouquet of lovely buds as I ever saw.”

And Nancy Fabian saw, to her satisfaction, that he had quite forgotten his broken heart that was caused by her refusal. Angela was nineteen in years, but older in experience than Jimmy who was twenty-one. She generally advised her brother in family problems that he would have shirked, had it not been for his sister.

With all the display of wealth and the semblance of riches that had to be carried

on by Sir James in order to maintain his new position, the Osgood estate was in sore need of help. The loss of much money invested in war speculations and the heavy taxes imposed since the war, had impoverished his estate. But the Osgoods bravely kept up appearances while their feet were marking time on a tread-mill that Jimmy could, and would have to, work for them by marrying money.

So it was with a sense of tremendous relief that both Sir James and his wife saw such pretty American girls descend upon them, that day, and the fact that each girl had a fortune coming to her, was no obstacle in the way of their welcome of them.

Because of this fact, and also because Mrs. Alexander plainly showed her hand to the Englishman, he overcame many scruples to herself and seconded her plan of the touring party. To Angela, he confided the hope that she would return home with Jimmy securely engaged to one of the rich girls—for Jimmy had to obey his family in this matter.

The first girl Jimmy met that morning was Polly, who was always an early riser. She came downstairs in a slow dignified way, and Angela introduced her to Jimmy, who was standing in the library. He thought he had never seen such wonderful eyes, and such a mass of bronze-glinting hair. He attended her to the breakfast room and watched every motion and manner of her perfectly poised form.

Before he could quite lose himself in her charm, however, Eleanor bounced into the room. Here was a bright merry girl, full of mischief, and dearly delighting to flirt and tease anyone who would give her the opportunity.

Eleanor was attractive and pretty in a different way from Polly. And now Jimmy found it hard to choose which of the two girls he preferred. Then before he could decide, Dodo came in.

Dodo was domineering in her grand beauty. She was so frank and sincere, too, that everyone liked her, but Jimmy felt afraid of her. The fact that she was the richest one of the girls, also caused him to fear to try his luck with her.

While he was considering all these facts, sweet pretty Ruth came in. Here was a type Jimmy fully understood. She was pensive and alluring, and her round baby-blue eyes appealed to his gallant heart. Her wavy chestnut hair and her dainty figure would look well when she received with Lady Osgood, thought he. And Ruth also had a fortune awaiting her because she was an only child. So he finally chose Ruth for his bride-to-be. And straightway he turned all his attention to her.

The young folks thoroughly enjoyed that morning while growing better acquainted with each other; and by noon, when the purr of an engine came to them from the driveway, they rushed to the front windows and crowded their pretty heads together, in order to see who was stopping at the house in this unusual season for London.

“My goodness! if it isn’t Ma in a splendiferous car!” exclaimed Dodo, laughing uncertainly at the sight.

Little Mr. Alexander sat behind the wheel, perfectly happy, there, with a black pipe between his lips. He was smoking like a factory chimney and his wife was not saying a word in protest. She sat beside him, trying to impress upon his mind some new rule or remembrance of etiquette that he had ignored.

“Now don’t forget, Eben,” she was heard to say. “We had it all done over for this very tour!”

And her husband grinned self-complacently as he looked at her, but he never admitted that she had any further authority to command him. He actually seemed to have gained some power over his wife that she dared not question.

The groom ran down the stone steps of the house and held open the door of the automobile while the lady got out, then Mr. Alexander locked the engine and followed her.

“No use talking, Ma is a wizard when she makes up her mind to do a thing,” said Dodo to her companions. “There’s a car, and there’s Pa driving it, so that shows it is just like our old one, or he couldn’t handle it so cleverly.”

The excitement caused by the appearance of the car that was to carry half of the party on the proposed tour, was the only thing that saved the Alexanders from discovery of the little plot. But Angela had taken notice of Dodo’s surprise and unconscious admission, and she soon ferreted out the fact that the Alexanders purchased the handsome large touring car that very morning. That it was up-to-date and of a sporty appearance, went without saying, for Mrs. Alexander would see to that, all right. And the fact that a fabulous price was paid for the new car solved the discovery made by Angela, for the price paid proved, to her satisfaction, that the Alexander fortune could easily stand a check like the one paid to the motor company.

At luncheon that day, Mrs. Alexander led the conversation without interruption. Sir James had gathered from his daughter that the car was a recent purchase, and he could approximate the sum paid for it. Now he felt relieved to find this

American lady so willing to be the victim of his carefully-laid plans.

"I saw just the kind of roadster I want," said she, "but I guess I won't buy it until we get back from the tour. Ebenezer says it will keep a couple of weeks, and I agreed with him. We'll go on with the old car, now, and I'll buy the new one, for myself, when we return."

Sir James and Angela exchanged glances when they heard this woman speak of buying high-priced cars as glibly as she would mention buying a new glove.

"Well, I won a point out of this business, too," chuckled Mr. Alexander. Everyone paid strict attention to what he was about to say, for he generally caused a general laugh with his remarks; and everyone liked him so genuinely that they would have listened eagerly whether he was amusing or contrariwise.

"Ebenezer, remember what I told you just before we came in!" warned his wife.

"Yeh, but I'm not alone with you now, Maggie," said he.

"*Please* don't call me 'Maggie,' Eben. You know my name is 'Margaret'," cried Mrs. Alexander, beside herself at her husband's shortcomings.

"Don't worry, Maggie. Us folks know it is a pet name," chuckled the little man. "But what I was goin' to say, is: I won a hard fight whiles I was out this mornin' with my wife. She's promised to let me smoke my old pipe if I agree to drive the car just like she wants."

His happy laugh was echoed by his friends, especially by the men who felt in sympathy with him. They say that a woman can never understand, because she cannot appreciate, the solace of an old pipe.

Then the interesting part of the programme of the tour began—the arrangement of the members of the party for the two cars.

"I say, let the girls go in my car, Pater, and let Mr. Alexander drive the adults," suggested Jimmy, eagerly.

"Yes, that sounds very good, if the youngsters will agree to follow our advice carefully, and behave as if a chaperone was in the car with them," added Sir James.

"Oh, so many chaperones in the second car will suffice," laughed Nancy.

"You arrange matters so independently in America, that I suppose it will be all right, from your point of view," admitted Lady Osgood, glancing at Angela for her opinion.

“Yes, and one young man with so *many* girls, must behave himself, you know. So everyone will see it is quite proper for us to travel without an older woman in the car.”

All this fuss about “Mrs. Grundy” made Dodo laugh, and she freely confessed how silly it all really was to a sensible girl.

The plans were perfected that they were to start on the tour early the following morning, driving southward from London and following the coast as far as Brighton. On the northward route they would travel as far as Holyhead and then cross to Ireland; then tour to the farthest northerly point on the Irish coast and cross over again to Scotland. And lastly, follow the automobile route to Edinburgh and southward again to London.

They figured that two weeks ought to be sufficient for this trip, but a few days more would not really make much difference, as Mr. Ashby could leave them at any time, if necessary, and go on to London by train.

That afternoon they used the two cars to drive about the city of London and visit the parks, and other famous sights. The exterior of The Tower of London, Nelson’s Monument in Trafalgar Square, the Houses of Parliament, the Museums and Art Galleries, and other noted places were seen on this drive, but the visiting of these individual buildings and their contents, was left until the return from the trip.

That night, Jimmy was carefully instructed as to his cue and part in this trip. Before he returned, he was to have proposed and been accepted by one of the rich girls he would have to choose from on the drive. There was not much difference between them, said his parents, but of the four girls, it was probable that Dodo had the most money and could be more agreeably handled, as her parents would prove to be easily influenced by the title.

CHAPTER IV—THE TOUR OF GREAT BRITAIN

Early the following morning, the two large cars were in front of Osgood House, ready for the start. Jimmy managed to get Ruth to occupy the front seat beside him, as he preferred her company to that of the other girls. His car was to lead the way, because he knew the roads quite well; the second car would follow with Mr. Alexander driving it.

They drove through the suburbs of London to Guildford, and then southward. As they went, the English Channel could be glimpsed from the knolls, every now and then, with the lovely rolling country on all sides except in front.

“Jimmy,” called Mr. Fabian at one of the stops made to allow the girls to admire the view, “if it will not take us too far out of the way, I’d like to visit Hastings where the historical ruins can be seen. My students will there see several unique lines of architecture that can never be found elsewhere in these modern days.”

“All right, Prof.; and after that I can take you to see Pevensky Castle, another historic ruin,” returned Jimmy.

So they turned off, just before coming to Brighton, and visited the ruins of the castle said to have been built by William the Conqueror. Cameras were brought forth and pictures taken of the place, and then they all climbed back into the automobiles.

“Now for Pevensky Castle, near which William is said to have landed in 1066,” announced Jimmy, starting his car.

Fortunately, this day happened to be one of the visiting days at the old ruins, and they had no trouble in securing an entrance. Mr. Fabian and his interested friends found much to rejoice their hearts, in this old place; but Jimmy had persuaded Ruth to remain in the car with him, so that he could have her companionship to himself.

As Mrs. Alexander was the last adult to leave her new car, she saw Jimmy hold to Ruth’s hand and beg her to stay with him. This was contrary to her scheme of things, but she had to follow the rest of the party at the time. While she went, she

planned how to get back immediately and frustrate any tête-à-tête of Jimmy's, unless Dodo was the girl.

Mr. Alexander had settled himself down in his car for a nice little smoke with his pipe, as per agreement with his spouse, so he was not interested in the lover-like scene Jimmy was acting in the other car. But all this was changed when Mrs. Alexander suddenly returned from the ruins, and joined the two young people in Jimmy's car.

"It's so very tiresome to climb over tumbled down walls and try to take an interest in mouldy interiors," sighed she, seating herself on the running-board of Jimmy's car.

That ended Jimmy's dreams of love for the time being, but in his heart the youthful admirer heartily cursed Dodo's mother. She sat unconcernedly dressing her face with powder and rouge, then she lined up her eye-brows, and finally touched up her lips with the red stick. When the toilet outfit was put away in her bag, she sat waiting for the others to reappear from the castle, feeling that she had done her duty by her family.

At Chichester, the next stopping place on the route, Mr. Fabian led his friends to the old cathedral; as before, Jimmy had Ruth wait with him while the others went to inspect the old place. This time, Mrs. Alexander made no pretence of leaving, but remained on guard beside the young people. Jimmy gritted his teeth in baffled rage, but he could say nothing to the wily chaperone.

After the tourists got back in the motor-cars, Portsmouth, Porchester, Southampton and Christ Church were reeled off speedily. At Christ Church they stopped long enough to see the carved Gothic door at the north entrance, and the Norman architecture of the interior of the Priory—a famous place for lovers of the antique and ancient.

Ruth jumped out and went with her friends when they visited the Priory, and Jimmy had to console himself with a cigarette. Mrs. Alexander endeavored to enter into conversation with him, but he was too surly for anything.

That evening they reached Exeter, and stopped for the night at the New London Inn, a veritable paradise for the decorators of the party. Its public-room and bedrooms were furnished with genuine old mahogany pieces centuries old. Settles, cupboards, and refectory tables stood in the main room downstairs, while old Sheraton tables, Chippendale chairs, ancient, carved four-posters, and highboys or lowboys, furnished the guest-chambers.

“Nolla, did you ever see so many lovely old things!” exclaimed Polly, as they admired one thing after another.

“I wish we could steal some of them,” ventured Eleanor, laughingly.

“Maybe the owner will sell some,” suggested Polly.

But Mr. Fabian learned later, that the inn-keeper was as great an enthusiast and collector of antiques as the Americans, and would not part for love or money, with any piece in his collection.

In the morning Mr. Fabian escorted his friends to the cathedral of Exeter, explaining everything worth while, as he went.

Jimmy had ascertained, the night previous, that Ruth purposed going with her friends, so he refused to get up in the morning, sending down word instead, that he felt bad. He hoped this might induce Ruth to remain and comfort him, but he learned later that she had gone gayly with the others, when they started out for the old edifice.

Shortly after the party left, a knock came upon Jimmy’s door and he gruffly called out: “Come in!”

Mrs. Alexander tip-toed in and immediately began to condole with him. “Poor Jimmy! I feel so concerned over you. Just let me mother you, if you are ill!”

Jimmy growled: “I’m not ill—just sleepy!”

“All the same, you dear boy, something must be troubling you to make you feel so ill-natured,” said she, pointedly.

“I should think it would!” snapped he, the patch-work quilt drawn up close about his chin so that only his face showed.

“Then do tell me if I can help in any way. My purse and heart are both wide open for you to help yourself, whenever you like.”

Jimmy was young, and had not yet realized that independence was a great privilege. But he had learned that poverty was not the virtue people called it. It meant doing without pleasant things, and constantly sacrificing what seemed most desirable. He knew Mrs. Alexander would buy her way into his good graces if she could, and he was just angry enough, and sulky at fate, to tempt him to take advantage of her offer. Even though he might regret it shortly after.

“Well, to confess—as I would to my own mother—I’m broke! And it’s no pleasant state of affairs on a long trip like this one, with a lot of pretty girls

wanting to be treated to candy, and other things,” growled Jimmy.

“Poor dear boy!” sighed Mrs. Alexander, seating herself on the edge of the great antique bed, and patting his head. “Don’t I understand? Now let me be your other mother, for a while, and give you a little spending money. When it is gone, just wink at me and I will know you need more. If there were a *number* of young men to assume the expenses of treating the crowd of girls with you, I wouldn’t think of suggesting this. But I remember that you are but one with a galaxy of beauties who look for entertainment from you.”

Thus Mrs. Alexander cleverly managed to induce Jimmy to believe he was justified in taking her money, and as she got up to go out, she said: “I’ll leave a little roll on the dresser. If you feel able to get up and come out, you will see that you will feel better for the effort and the air.”

So saying, she left a packet under the military brushes on the dresser and, smiling reassuringly at the youth, went out. But she did not leave the closed door at once; she waited, just outside, until she heard him spring from the bed and rush over to the place where the money had been left. Then she nodded her head satisfactorily, and crept downstairs.

Jimmy counted out the notes left for him, and gasped. He hadn’t seen so much money at one time, since the war began! And he felt a sense of gratitude, then repulsion, to the ingratiating person who thus paid him for his good-will.

Mr. Fabian and his party were examining the old cathedral, with its two Norman towers and the western front rich with carvings, without a thought of the two they had left at the Inn. Having completed the visit to the edifice, they all returned to see the old inn known as “Moll’s Coffee-house.”

“It was at this famous place that many of England’s noted people used to gather,” said Mr. Fabian, as they crossed the green. “Sir Walter Raleigh was a frequent visitor here, as well as many historical men.”

As they came to the place, they found Mrs. Alexander and Jimmy seated on a worm-eaten bench, chatting pleasantly about the ancient room they were in. But no one knew that the conversation had been suddenly switched from a personal topic, the moment the sight-seers appeared to interrupt the tête-à-tête.

Mrs. Alexander got up and crossed the room to meet the other members in the party, saying as she came: “I hear how folks used to come here and drink coffee—and a record is kept of who they were. It must be nice to have folks remember you after you are gone. I wish someone would say, years after I am dead, ‘Mrs.

Alexander was in this house, once’.”

“A lot of good that would do you, then!” laughed Dodo.

“I was just telling Jimmy that it would be a lot of satisfaction to us all if he became famous and this trip of ours was spoken of in years to come. He’s got a title in the family, you know, and the English think so much of that! The inn-keeper across the green might be glad to remember how Sir Jimmy stopped here when he toured England with his friends from America.”

Everyone laughed at the silly words but Mrs. Alexander was really in earnest. Her imagination had jumped many of the obstacles placed in her way, and she saw herself as Jimmy’s mother-in-law and revered as such by the English public.

During their tête-à-tête at Old Moll’s Coffee-house, she had impressed it upon Jimmy’s mind, that not a soul was to know about the money. And she extracted a promise that he would call upon her for more if he needed it. Feeling like a cad, still he promised, for he was in dire need of money to be able to appear like a liberal host.

“Well, Jimmy—are you ready to start along the road?” asked Angela, suspicious of this sudden change of front in Jimmy for the obnoxious rich woman.

“Yes, if Mrs. Alex and everyone else is,” agreed he.

“Mrs. Alex?” queried his sister, pointedly.

“Oh yes, folks! Dodo’s mother says ‘Alexander’ is such a lot to say, that she prefers us to cut it to Mrs. Alex. Every one else has nicknames, so why not nick Alexander?” said Jimmy.

The others laughed, and Mr. Alexander said quaintly: “I always liked that name Alexander ’cause it made me feel sort of worth while. I might be no account in looks, but ‘Alexander’ gives me back-bone, ’cause I only have to remember ‘Alexander the Great’!”

His friends laughed heartily and Mr. Fabian said: “What’s in a name, when you yourself are such a good friend?”

“Mebbe so, but all the same, I’ll miss that name. ‘Alex’ looks too much like a tight fit for my size. But I s’pose it’s got to be as the missus says!”

Now the cars sped through the charming country of rural England, with its ever-changing scenes, than which there is nothing more beautiful and peaceful. Cattle browsed upon the hillocks, tiny hamlets were spotlessly neat and orderly, the roads were edged with trimmed hedges, and even in the woods, where wild-

plants grew, there was no débris to be found. It was all a picture of neatness.

On this drive, the girls were made happy by being able to buy several pieces of old Wedgwood from the country people. Polly also secured a chubby little bowl with wonderful medallions upon its sides, and Eleanor found a “salt-glaze” pitcher.

“I believe lots of the people in the country, here, will gladly sell odd bits if we only have time to stop and bargain,” said Polly, hugging her bowl.

“And lots of them will swear their furniture is genuine antique even if they bought it a year ago from an installment firm,” laughed Jimmy.

“Oh, they wouldn’t do that!” gasped Polly.

“Wouldn’t they! Just try it, and see how they rook your pocket-book,” retorted Jimmy.

“Why James Osgood! Where ever did you learn such words—‘rook’ and the like?” gasped his sister.

“Oh, I’m going to be a thorough American, now,” laughed Jimmy, recklessly. “Mrs. Alex has agreed to take me West with her on her return, and let me run a ranch in Colorado.”

“What will mother say to that?” wailed Angela, as this was not what she had hoped for.

“Don’t worry, Angela dear,” quickly said Mrs. Alexander, soothingly. “Jimmy is only joking. I told him about our ranches but I have no idea of taking him away from England.” Neither had she.

At Glastonbury the tourists stopped to see the “Inne of ye Pilgrims” which proved to be very old and most interesting. Here King Henry the VIII and Abbot Whiting’s rooms are maintained with the old furnishings as in that long-past day.

Pictures were taken of the quaint Gothic carving on the front of the building, and then Mr. Fabian led them to inspect the ruined abbey which King Arthur favored above all other spots.

As the cars sped over the good hard roads, past little cottages with the most attractive thatched-roofs whose dormer windows were set deep back in the thatch, the tourists were delighted.

“Such lovely little places,” sighed Ruth, as she admired the rose-vines climbing high upon the roof of a place.

“Just big enough for two!” whispered Jimmy, for his “heart’s desire” was beside him on the front seat, once more.

“I wonder why American architects do not copy these lovely thatched roofs for us, more generally,” wondered Polly.

“Our climate would not permit them,” explained Mr. Fabian. “In England, the damp warm climate seldom changes to bitter cold, and the inmates of these cottages live in comparative comfort in the winter. In the States, they’d be frozen out in no time.”

Bath was the next stop, and Mr. Fabian sought out the famous Abbey, at once. But Ruth had come under the spell of Jimmy’s ardor again, and remained with him when the others walked away. Mrs. Alexander sensed the plot and also remained behind. But Mr. Alexander called to her when she would have joined the two young ones.

“See here—don’t you go interferin’ there. If them two want to keep comp’ny why should you care?” whispered he.

“They won’t, that’s all. That young man is for Dodo!”

“Huh! Is that so? Well, don’t you think *I* got something to say in that case? Dodo takes who she wants, and no one else!”

“Don’t say a word! All you’ve got to do is to pay the bills! I’m doing this match-making and you needn’t help!” snapped his wife.

As she walked away, the little man nodded his head briskly and muttered: “We’ll see! We’ll see, missus!”

Mrs. Alexander found she could not beguile the two young folks into doing anything that included her, so she went towards the Abbey to meet Dodo upon her return. When they all came out, Dodo was with Polly and Eleanor, but her mother drew her away to one side and had her say.

“What do you s’pose I brought you over here for, Dodo? Not to gaze at tumbled down churches or to go nosing about musty old places where queer things are stuck up for folks to admire. No sir! I brought you here to find a peer, and now, with the one all ready-made and at hand, you leave him to Ruth Ashby—a girl not half as good-looking, or rich, as you!”

“See here, Ma,” retorted Dodo angrily; “I told you, before, that I didn’t want to marry anyone. Now that I’ve met Polly and Eleanor, and I know how fine a career will be, I am going to go in business, too.”

“Not if I know it! And your Pa worth a million dollars!” exclaimed the irate woman.

“Polly and Eleanor are worth a lot of money, too, but that makes work all the pleasanter. You don’t have to worry about bread and butter; and you can travel, or do all the things necessary to perfect yourself in your profession,” explained Dodo.

At that, the mother threw up her hands despairingly, and wailed: “To think I should live to see this day! An only child turning against her fond mother!”

“Pooh! You’re angry because I won’t toddle about and do exactly as you say about Jimmy and his title,” Dodo said, scornfully.

“But he loves you, Dodo, and you are breaking his heart.”

Dodo laughed. “He acts like it, doesn’t he? Now if you go on this way, Ma, I’ll run away and go back to the States. Once I am in New York, I’ll stay there and earn my own living.”

That silenced her mother. “Oh, Dodo! I never meant you to feel like that. I’ll never mention Jimmy again, if you’ll promise me you won’t speak of business in front of anyone else?”

“I’ll only promise to do what any sensible girl would do under the same circumstances, so there!” agreed Dodo. And her mother had to be content with that crumb of comfort.

After a good dinner at Bristol, Mr. Fabian sat poring over a road-map, deciding where next to go. While the elders in the party listened to him, the young folks followed Jimmy’s beckoning hand and crept away. They all jumped into the car and he drove off to celebrate the runaway.

That evening Jimmy spent money lavishly, and Angela’s suspicions were convinced: he had borrowed or taken it from Mrs. Alexander at one of their tête-à-têtes. But the girl said nothing; she was sorry for herself and James, and felt that these despicable rich westerners could easily part with some of their wealth.

It was past midnight when the merry party returned to the hotel, where mothers sat up to scold their daughters for such an escapade. Youth laughed at all such corrections, however, and then ran off to bed.

In the morning, no young member of the party was willing to get up and start on the road. Hence it was quite late when they got into the cars preparatory to touring again. Just as the signal was given for Jimmy to lead off, an old man ran

up, wildly gesticulating.

“E’en hear’n say you folks like odd bits of old stuff. Coom with me and see my shaup daown in the lane.”

Mr. Fabian conversed with the old man for a few moments, and then asked the others if they cared to stop at the shop as they drove past. Everyone agreed, and the old man was asked to step up on the car and direct them where to go.

Finally they drew up before a place in the outskirts of Bristol—a veritable picture of a place. The one-story structure had its walls panelled in sections and the plaster of these sections was white-washed. The usual thatched roof and dormer windows topped the building, but the roses rambled so riotously up over the thatch, and greenish moss grew in spots, that the old place had a beautiful appearance.

Mr. Maxton rubbed his hands in delight, as he stood by and heard the cries of admiration from his visitors. He loved the old place and took a great pride in keeping it looking well.

Then they went indoors, leaving Jimmy and Mr. Alexander in the cars. The front room was crowded full of old china, lamps, silver and other curios, but Mr. Maxton led them directly to the rear room where the furniture was kept.

“Here be a rale Windsor chair you’ll like,” said he, moving forward a piece of furniture.

“My, Fabian! It must date back as early as 1690 to 1700,” whispered Mr. Ashby, as he examined the crown center of the flat head-rest that finished the comb-top at the back.

“It has the twisted upright rails at the back, and the turned rungs that go with that period,” admitted Mr. Fabian, down upon his knees to examine the chair.

“Girls, see that seat—scooped out to fit the body, but it is worn thin with age along its front edge; and even the arms and legs are splintered down from centuries of hard usage,” remarked Mr. Ashby.

While the two men and the dealer were bargaining over the chair, Mrs. Alexander wandered back to the front room. There she found Ruth upon her knees examining a wonderful, old carved chest.

“Isn’t this a darling, Mrs. Alex?” exclaimed the girl.

“What is it?” asked the woman, hardly interested.

“Why, it’s a fine old wedding-chest with exquisite panels on its front and sides. The carving, alone, is unusual.”

“A wedding chest, eh. What would you use it for?” asked Mrs. Alexander, taking a deeper interest in the article since the girl explained what the object was.

“Why, any girl would be glad to start a hope-chest with this,” laughed Ruth. “I’m going to ask Daddy to buy it for me, if it isn’t too costly.”

Mrs. Alexander’s fears took fire at that suggestive word, “hope-chest,” from Ruth, and she turned instantly to rejoin the dealer in the back room. He had just finished writing the directions for the shipping of the chair he had sold, when she hurried across the room.

“Mr. Maxton, you have a carved chest in the front room. I want to buy it—how much is it?” As she spoke, Mrs. Alexander took a purse out of her bag and displayed a roll of bills.

The clever dealer saw this opportunity to drive a good bargain, and he named his figure. Without demur, the lady counted down the money and asked for a receipt.

Meanwhile the others had gone to the front room to see the purchase Mrs. Alexander was making. She had shown no interest in antiques before, so this must be an exceptional piece to lure her money from her.

“Daddy, do come here and tell me if I may have this old chest?” called Ruth, still waiting beside the carved piece.

Then it became apparent that Ruth had wanted it for herself, but that Mrs. Alexander secured it. Everyone wondered why?

Well pleased with her purchase, the new owner of the chest came from the rear room and smiled complacently. Then she spoke to her daughter: “Dodo, when we go to Paris you can fill that old wedding chest with a trooso.”

“Oh yes? Whose is it, Ma?” asked the girl.

“Why yours, of course! That’s why I got it.”

“My very own! for keeps? Or are you only *lending* it to me?”

“Your very own, deary! I hope you’ll pass it along to the noble children I long to call my grandchildren, some day,” said Mrs. Alexander, sentimentally.

“I thank you, Ma, and I’ll put it to the best use I can think of. And I’ll pass it along—oh yes! but I doubt if grandchildren of yours ever see it,” laughed Dodo, with a queer look.

“I’m glad you got it, Dodo, because it is a lovely thing,” said Ruth to the fortunate owner, trying to hide her disappointment behind a smile.

“But you paid an outrageous price for it, Mrs. Alex,” said Mr. Fabian.

“Twice as much as he would have taken,” added Mr. Ashby.

“I don’t care what it cost. I’d have given ten times the price to have it for Dodo,” snapped Mrs. Alexander, not feeling the delight she had anticipated in the purchase.

Just then Mr. Alexander poked his bald head in at the doorway and said: “Ain’t you folks most ready to go on?”

“Come here, Ebenezer! I want you to give that address of the hotel in Paris to this Mr. Maxton. I bought a chest for Dodo and he is to ship it there, so’s I can fill it when I arrive,” said Mrs. Alexander.

“Have I got the address?” stammered her husband.

“Of course! In that red-covered leather memorandum book.”

Mr. Alexander searched in his pockets and finally brought out a little book from his inside coat-pocket. He fumbled the pages as he sought for the needed address, and murmured so that the others could distinctly hear.

“H—um, what’s this? ‘Go to the barber’s for a clean shave every day—don’t forget.’ It ain’t that.” Then he turned to the next page, and squinted at the writing.

“‘Ne—ver use a knife at table when you eat—only to cut.’ It ain’t that page, nuther.”

His wife remonstrated, and he suddenly said: “Wait now—here it ’tis: ‘Don’t go in front of others unless you say ‘excuse me.’ Don’t sit down with ladies standing.’ Wall now, it ain’t on that page, either,” he remarked, but Mrs. Alexander grew annoyed when she saw the sympathetic smiles of their companions.

They recognized the “teacher’s” rules for their friend, and they felt sorry for his lot in life. Then she snapped out: “Can’t you find it in there, Eben?”

“No, b’ gosh! It ain’t down. All’s I can find is ‘don’ts and do’s’ what you told me.”

“Give me the book—I’ll find it,” demanded his wife. “You never *could* read your own writing.” And she took the book and quickly turned to the last page.

Then she read off the address to the waiting dealer. This done she thrust the book back at her meek spouse.

“Well now! I never thought to look backwards first! I begun in the front of the book like I was taught at school,” said Mr. Alexander to his companions, in apology for his blunder.

The tourists finally got away from Bristol but they were too late to make Birmingham that night. So they planned to stop at Gloucester or Worcester, which ever was most convenient.

CHAPTER V—LOVE AFFAIRS AND ANTIQUES

While the cars were speeding over the long flat country that stretched away after leaving Bristol, Dodo entered into a confidential chat with Ruth who sat in the back seat beside her. Although it was against Jimmy's wishes, Angela managed to get in the front seat beside him, in order to give him some sound advice about his future.

"I just heard, Ruth, that you would have a birthday, shortly," began Dodo.

"Yes, but who told you so?" returned Ruth.

"Polly mentioned it, and I said that I hoped we would all be with you to help celebrate. When is it?"

"Not for three weeks yet, Dodo. And I expect to be at Uncle's, then. They'll give me a party, I suppose," said Ruth.

"Well, that's too bad—that we won't be together—as I have a little gift for you and I hope you'll like it."

"Oh, Dodo! How nice of you. I really did not look for anything from anyone, you know," cried Ruth, delightedly.

"Maybe not, dearie; and this isn't much—not what you deserve, but it is a little remembrance, as you will find when you get it. I'm not going to give it to you until the day arrives, but when you open it you'll understand everything that I can't explain to you, now," explained Dodo.

"Whatever it is, little or big, I will like it, Do, as coming from your generous heart. Even a flower from my friends is more than a jewel from someone who doesn't mean it," said Ruth.

"I know that, Ruth, and that's why I want to give you something you'll like. You are true blue, and you deserve all the joy one can give you."

"It's awfully good of you, Dodo, to say that," smiled Ruth, although tears of pleasure welled up in her eyes.

The other girls had overheard the conversation and now they chimed in. “Dodo’s right, Ruth. You’re just fine!”

Later in the afternoon, Jimmy stopped his car at a tiny farmhouse with the spoken intention of getting a drink of water. But his subtle reason was to get Angela *out* of the front seat and Ruth *in* it. “Who wants a drink?” called he, as he jumped out and started for the cottage.

“I do!” cried Polly, getting out to go after him.

At the open door of the humble dwelling, the two looked in and saw the housewife bending over a cook-stove, turning some doughnuts in a pan of hot fat. Jimmy waited until she had finished and then said: “May we have a drink, if you please?”

His smile and manner were very pleasing, and Polly saw how people fell before his winsome way. “Just a minute—I’ll draw some fresh cold water for you,” said the woman.

“Oh, do let me help you!” exclaimed Jimmy, whipping off his cap as he hurried through the room to carry the pail the woman had taken.

The two of them went out to the back-shed where the water ran, and filled the pail. Meanwhile, Polly gazed about the interior of the little house. She saw several objects which might be old pieces, so she wondered how she could get Mr. Fabian there to judge.

As Jimmy came in, carrying the pail, and the woman held a tin dipper for the tourists, he remarked as he passed the cook-stove: “My, how good those doughnuts smell.” And he sniffed.

“You shall hov some!” declared the woman, laughingly.

“Oh no! I couldn’t think of it,” objected Jimmy, hoping all the time to be persuaded into taking some.

“I knows what young boys’ appetites is like,” chaffed the woman, taking a large platter from the corner cupboard and piling a heap of doughnuts upon it.

Jimmy laughingly protested, but she waved him out and followed at his heels. When they reached the cars, she proffered the platter to the *gentlemen* first. Polly tried to get Mr. Fabian’s eye to tell him about the furniture in the cottage.

But his eyes were rivetted on the old Staffordshire platter that held the refreshments. He nudged Mr. Ashby and both men eagerly took the dish. As they gazed at it, and then passed it on to the ladies to help themselves first, they

exchanged opinions.

“It’s the rare old blue that seems etched on the ivory glaze,” whispered Mr. Fabian.

“Where that came from, there may be more,” added Mr. Ashby, eagerly.

The platter had reached Mr. Alexander on its return trip to the men, when the little man took two doughnuts, one in each hand.

“Ebenezer Alexander! How can you? Don’t you know what your red book says?” scolded his wife.

“I dun’t care, Maggie! I’m good and hongry and dunnits always was my temptation. These smell like your’n ust to before we got too rich for you to cook.”

Mrs. Alexander tried to hide the smile of satisfaction that tried to creep up into her face. She reached out her hand for one of his doughnuts, without saying a word. But Mr. Alexander moved away out of her reach.

He hurriedly held at arm’s length the hand that held one doughnut, while he took several great bites from the tidbit held in the other hand, lest his wife compel him to give up his treasure trove. The others laughed at him, and Mr. Ashby said:

“I don’t blame you, Mr. Alex. If our wives would cook, as once they did, we wouldn’t have to act so childishly when we travel.”

The platter was emptied and when the farmer’s wife turned to go back to her work, Mr. Fabian and Mr. Ashby insisted upon carrying the pail and dipper, to the amazement of those in the car. Polly understood and nudged Eleanor to follow, too.

“This is a very fine old dish, madam,” remarked Mr. Ashby.

“Oh yes, it’s a bit of old blue I’ve had in the kitchen for years. I remember how mother used to heap up this same plate with scones, for us chillern,” replied the woman, smiling at the platter.

“Are there many such pieces of blue in this section of the country?” asked Mr. Fabian, while Polly and her companions listened eagerly for the reply.

“Summat; but my gude mon stacked our’n up in the back-shed when us wanted to use the front cupboard for my new chiny.”

“Would you like to sell it?” was Mr. Ashby’s tense query.

“D’ye think it would be wuth summat? I’ do be thinking of laying by a few bits,

this year, to buy us a wool carpet.”

“Perhaps we will buy some pieces and pay you as much as anyone else you might meet,” suggested Mr. Fabian.

As they entered the low-ceiled room of the cottage, the woman said: “Come out back and we won’t have to carry so far to the front room.”

She went through a tiny door that opened to the small lean-to, and then began taking all sorts of old dishes from the corner cupboard that her husband had constructed to hold the accumulation of generations. As the collectors saw choice pieces so carelessly handled they held their breaths in dread.

“Now this old blue belonged to my gran’father afore it come down to us. He, and my father after him, lived on this same farm. Us had no son so the home come to me as eldest of the family.”

As she spoke, the woman carried armfuls of dishes out to the table in the middle of the room. Some was worthless trash, but there were several pieces of rare Staffordshire, and some fine bits of old lustre-ware. In the last armful she carried to the table, were some valuable Wedgwood jugs and bowls.

“Us got an old pink set, in the front room, but us don’ use it now that us got a fine new chiny set,” said the woman, turning to go for a sample of the pink ware.

“You pick out what you want here, and I’ll go and see if the pink is genuine pink Staffordshire,” whispered Mr. Ashby.

So Mr. Fabian soon set aside all the real good pieces on the table, and in so doing noticed the table itself.

“Why!” gasped he to Polly, “I verily believe this is the real Hepplewhite!”

Instantly he began a close examination of it, and smiled as he examined. “With careful restoring you would have as fine a Hepplewhite as any in America,” he said to Polly.

“Oh, then do let us take it!” exclaimed Polly, eagerly.

The table started them examining other broken down, or criminally painted, objects of furniture in the shed, and when Mr. Ashby returned, carrying a plate of pink Staffordshire, those who had remained behind in the shed were greatly elated over something.

“Oh, Mr. Ashby! just see what we found!” cried Polly.

“While you were away I discovered a Hepplewhite table, Ashby,” explained Mr.

Fabian. "And Polly got the girls to help remove all the paint-pots and trash from this bureau to make sure it was what she thought. Look!"

Mr. Ashby was taken over to the little bureau which had been used for a catch-all for years. Its drawers were over-flowing with rags and garden-tools, but nothing could hide the true lines of a genuine Sheraton piece.

"Well I never! To think such a gem should be so treated!" murmured Mr. Ashby. The others laughed delightedly at his amazement. But the owner now joined them again, and Mr. Fabian began bargaining.

"Are you satisfied with the prices paid you for the old china?" asked he, as an introduction to further dealing.

"Oh my! Us begin to see that wool carpet," laughed she.

"Would you sell this old table and bureau?" continued he.

"Them! I should say so!" retorted she, emphatically.

Instantly a price was offered and eagerly accepted between the two, and the table and bureau became the property of Polly and Eleanor. As Mr. Ashby said: "The basis of your business-to-come."

Dodo had found some old brass candlesticks and a china group that proved to be old Dresden. These she hugged tightly as they all left the cottage followed by the blessings of the woman.

"My goodness! see what's coming?" laughed Jimmy, as he watched the five collectors file down the pathway, each one loaded with china.

"Where do you expect us to sit?" added Mrs. Fabian.

"On the running-board, to be sure," retorted her husband.

"Yes, because this fine blue takes precedence over modern objects, even though they be mortals," chuckled Mr. Ashby.

"You-all just ought to see the pink set Mr. Ashby got!" exclaimed Dodo, intensely interested in this quest of the antique.

Mrs. Alexander noted the bright eyes and flushed face, and determined to keep Dodo away from such dangerous interests.

"And the old table and bureau that Nolla and I got for a song!" cried Polly, also highly pleased with the purchases.

"Best of all, that good woman is so happy to know she is able to get the 'wool

carpet' she has wanted for years, that her blessings will travel with us for many a year to come," added Mr. Fabian, turning to wave his hand at the farmer's wife as she stood in the doorway waving her apron at the tourists.

After the dishes were safely stowed away, Angela was induced to give her place, in the first car, to Mr. Fabian, so that he could talk to the other girls about the relative values of china.

Angela took no interest in these matters, so she willingly climbed in with the elders in the second car; and Mr. Fabian began a dissertation on blue, pink and brown Staffordshire; gold, silver, and bronze, or copper lustre-ware; Wedgwood, Derby, and Worcester ware, and salt-glaze—which was finest of all when it was genuine antique.

Jimmy had grown very impatient while waiting at the farmhouse and when Angela exchanged seats with Mr. Fabian to permit him to lecture the girls on china, the young man frowned. Finally he became so irritated at what he considered "bally mush," and not being able to flirt with Ruth who sat in the back seat, he ran the car through all the ruts and over all the rocks he found in the way. This shook up the passengers uncomfortably and interrupted the flow of eloquence from Mr. Fabian. But he and his girls were so absorbed in the subject that they never dreamed the roughness of the road could have been avoided by discontented Jimmy.

Angela, sitting beside Mrs. Alexander, made the most of her opportunity. She managed to ferret out just how much money Dodo would inherit, and what Mrs. Alexander might be persuaded to do for an acceptable husband for the girl. So cleverly was this information secured that the informer failed to realize she was being "put through the third degree."

Angela was a sweet pretty girl but had experienced so many unpleasant sacrifices since her father's tremendous losses that she had grown callous to all higher feelings. Her sole ambition, now, was to secure *her* future either by Jimmy's marriage to money, or by her own escape from the bondage of poverty by marriage.

She fully realized that most desirable young men in England were in the same position as her father and brother, hence she had not much choice of escape that way. But with Jimmy—upon him rested the salvation of the family and its debts.

Mr. Fabian was still talking "antiques" when the cars reached Gloucester, so Jimmy steered through, by way of side streets, and then drove through the famous cotswolds, on the way to Worcester.

A few miles this side of Worcester, Polly spied a very old-looking house standing under a group of giant trees which must have been hundreds of years old.

“Oh, I just know there will be old pieces in that place!” exclaimed she, leaning forward eagerly.

“Stop, Jimmy! Oh, do make him stop, Prof!” cried Eleanor.

“Do!” added Dodo. “We are almost in Worcester, anyway, so a few minutes more won’t matter.”

“Everyone is so tired with the drive, I don’t see why we must halt again,” complained Mrs. Alexander, impatiently.

“Suppose your car drives on, then, and we will stop to inquire if we can secure any old things,” suggested Mr. Fabian.

But no one wanted to do this, so both cars stopped while the two men and the girls went to the house. This time no subterfuge was used, but the question was plainly asked:

“Do you happen to have any old dishes for sale?”

“And furniture?” added Polly, anxiously.

The surprised woman laughed at the unusual query, but she nodded and said: “I got some black china, and several queer bowls and pots that I might sell—if you make it wuth while.”

The collectors all filed into the cottage, then, and the impatient travellers left in the cars had to cool their tempers well, before they saw their friends appear again. When they did come forth, however, they brought with them several old tobys, a few bowls, a number of pieces of black Staffordshire, an old knife-box of fine inlaid work, a mahogany dressing-mirror exquisitely stencilled and a knitted bed-coverlet with raised roses and scalloped edges.

“Oh now! This is expecting too much of Job!” called Mrs. Ashby, when she saw the consternation expressed on Jimmy and his sister’s faces.

“When we started on this tour you never said a word about founding a second-hand business,” added Mrs. Fabian, secretly amused at the collectors, and the chagrin so evident on the faces of their two “English cousins.”

“One never can tell what will happen when you take fanatics on a trip,” retorted Mr. Ashby, depositing his burden on the ground beside the car.

Then began another exodus of the passengers until a complete readjustment of all the various purchases could be made. While the two men were carefully packing away the precious objects, Polly said: "We had to leave behind the best piece of all—a chair of satin-wood with daintily turned legs and rungs. But they were splintered and the rush seat was broken through."

"Don't forget, Polly, that the thing that counted most—the beautifully stencilled back slats with their fruit and roses as clear as the day they were done, was in good preservation," added Eleanor.

"Then why didn't you buy it?" snapped Angela, angrily.

"Oh, we did!" replied Dodo. "At least, I did. But I couldn't carry it out, so it will have to be shipped home when the other things go."

"You got it?" cried her mother. "What for?"

"For my shop, of course. I'm going into decorating, too, and open a fine place of business," giggled Dodo, tantalizingly.

"Not on *my* money! You've got to make a good match over here," commanded her mother.

Little Mr. Alexander had not had much chance to speak during the day, as antiques and talks on such subjects were not in his line. But now he scented battle on his own preserves, and he threw out his chest and thrust his hands deep into his trouser pockets—a habit he had when he wished to impress his wife.

"Well, now, mebbe Dodo can't open shop on your money, Maggie, but she can on *mine*! If she wants to do that ruther'n get spliced to a furriner, who's going to stop her, I'd like to know!"

That effectually ended the tirade for the time being, and when everybody was seated again, Jimmy was made supremely happy to find Ruth beside him, once more.

The only subject that interested the majority of the tourists that evening, after dinner, was the discussion of the various pieces purchased that day, and the examination of them. Mr. Ashby and Mr. Fabian knew so much about collections of antiques that the stories they told were most interesting to the girls.

But Jimmy and Mrs. Alexander were bored to death by the conversation, so that they soon made their way out of the hotel, in search of distraction. Not long after they had escaped from the company of the others, another packet of bills passed from Mrs. Alexander's hands to the young man's pockets. But it was a personal

matter that concerned no one but themselves, said she, and Jimmy anxiously agreed to the condition.

“Of course you know, Mrs. Alex, that nothing on earth could make me accept this gift from you, if matters with the Pater were not awfully tangled, this year,” explained Jimmy, hurriedly.

“Don’t mention it, dear boy! I’m so glad I can give it to one I think so highly of. Some day you will be able to do a good turn for me,” replied Mrs. Alexander, affably.

Jimmy understood too well, both from Angela and Mrs. Alexander, what was expected of him, but he hadn’t a thought for Dodo, because he was infatuated with Ruth. And she, nice little girl, hadn’t a fortune to bless him with. So he forced the future still further into the background, and took the money that was offered him, the while he basked in Ruth’s sunny smiles.

In the morning the cars started for Birmingham, which was on the road to Lichfield. But the city was smoky and uninviting because of its factories and filth, so they chose a side-road that would bring them to the beautiful edifice that makes Lichfield a Mecca for lovers of the ancient and rare.

The cathedral, from a distance, looks like a fret-work of finest lace. And as one draws nearer, its patterns show up clearer, until one is quite close, when the outlined designs on the front of the building compel even the indifferent to stand and gaze in admiration.

Mr. Fabian pointed out the marvellous sculpturing of the arch, the tiers of niches with their protected figures, the two spires and other beauties, then he led his friends inside the cathedral. Here they saw the ancient Bible with its illuminated and designed pages, and then they visited the Chapter House.

Upon seeing the others follow Mr. Fabian indoors, Mr. Alexander remarked jocularly: “I’m afraid of visitin’ so many churches, ’cause the good I get will cure me smokin’ my old pipe. And I wouldn’t go back on that old pal for all the cathedrals in this wurrold.”

They left him sitting on the running-board, contentedly puffing at the black “evil” aforementioned; but when they all came forth, again, Mr. Alexander was nowhere to be seen.

After shouting and searching for ten minutes, or more, he was still absent and the natives could not say that they had even seen him about.

“I knew how it would be if Ebenezer came to Europe!” exclaimed Mrs.

Alexander, impatiently.

“Pa is able to take care of himself, never worry,” added Dodo.

“But he is always cutting such capers,” complained his wife. “One minute he’s here, and the next he isn’t!”

The remark caused a general smile and Mrs. Alexander thought she had said something very clever, so she smiled, too. Perhaps the smile made her feel better-natured, for she joined the men when they resumed their search for the missing man.

Jimmy went to the authorities to question what had best be done about the matter of finding Mr. Alexander; the other two men had gone in opposite directions to ask natives if they had seen such a man as they described and the women walked about, calling aloud or poking under shrubs, and back of cottages, where he might have taken a nap.

Finally a little man sauntered from the cathedral and stood gazing about in surprise at the ladies—they acted so queerly. He began loading his pipe from the old tobacco pouch and as he called out to his friends who were scattered far and wide, they looked up and started for him.

“Where *have* you been? You’ve made the most trouble—losing yourself in this ridiculous way!” scolded his wife.

“Why, I wasn’t lost! I kind’a thought it was wicked in me to sit with my pipe when I oughter be seeing that church, so I tucked away my old friend and follered you-all. I hunted most an hour for you-all, but I didn’ see hide ner hair of anyone I knew. But I did see a lot of figgers stuck up in the walls, and a lot of folks starin’ at ’em. So I come along out again.”

His description made everyone, but his wife, laugh. She shook her head despairingly at such behavior, and refused to look at her spouse for the rest of the day. But that seemed not to dampen his feelings a whit. Rather he felt relieved, he said.

From Lichfield the cars turned due west and drove to Wolverhampton. While driving through Wales, the tourists found great entertainment in trying to converse with the Welshmen they met along the road.

The country was beautiful with its rugged hills and heather-clothed fields. The road to Bangor ran through the most picturesque section of all this scenic beauty, and the girls took many snapshots of the artistic views.

The route planned led to Bangor, where the tourists stayed over-night. No one cared to cross St. George's Channel and arrive in Dublin at night, for they had been hearing too much about the Irish riots, to deliberately choose to stay at any hotel where bricks and shot might strike innocent heads at any time.

It was during the evening spent at Bangor, that Jimmy beheld Eleanor Maynard with different eyes. Ruth had suddenly palled on him, and his heart grew cold towards her charm and beauty. But Ruth paid no attention to his change of tactics. She had smilingly accepted homage, and she as smilingly waived it again. Jimmy's ardent protests of enduring faith and love were empty words to her. The candy and tokens were tangible delights.

What opened Jimmy's "love-eyes" to Eleanor's apparent value was her remark about butterfly lovers.

"I never could stand a man who buzzed about from one blossom to another like a butterfly," commented Eleanor.

"Nor I. But then, you and I, Nolla, always knew real *men*," added Polly.

"If other girls had the advantages we western girls have, of knowing great big heroes of the plains, they'd soon sicken of society idiots," declared Dodo.

Ruth and Nancy were the audience to these remarks, but Angela was having a tête-à-tête with Mrs. Alexander. Jimmy stood eagerly watching the five girls, comparing notes on each other.

"Well, I never was west, so I only know the kind of a beau that Jimmy Osgood represents," giggled Ruth. "As long as they are not serious, and are useful in giving you candy and flowers, they answer a certain purpose."

Ruth had been so cloyingly sweet and responsive to all his (Jimmy's) advances, that this speech from her suddenly broke the spell he had been under. From that moment on, Jimmy had no eyes for a girl who could be so unkind.

"Poor Jimmy! Ruth, you will break his heart if he ever hears of what you said," remarked Eleanor, and that sympathetic rejoinder to Ruth's heartless chatter drew Jimmy to a new star in the firmament of his hopes.

No one knew that Jimmy had been accidentally eaves-dropping, so when they began to climb into the cars the next morning, to go to Dublin, everyone was surprised to find how carefully Jimmy assisted Eleanor to the front seat—the place he considered a seat of honor.

CHAPTER VI—POLLY TAKES A HAND TO CURE JIMMY

Quite unabashed, and giggling at the incident, Ruth took a back seat with Polly and Dodo. But Polly felt jealous of Jimmy's demands on Eleanor's time. She felt that her chum and dear friend should divide her thoughts and attentions with others, and not sit in front listening to a boy's foolishness, all day long!

The road from Dublin, northwards, was rutty, and with wild vines over-growing the steep banks on both sides. But the blossoms seemed paler than those in England, and their perfume much less sweet. Even in size, they appeared poorly-nourished, when compared to their large robust English brethren.

The cottages they passed on this ride bore all the marks of neglect, poverty and dirt. Pigs were as much at home inside the house, as were the tenants, while troops of dirty children rolled around in front of the houses, mingling with the chickens, dogs, pigs and other domestic live-stock, in cases where the owner could afford them.

"Oh, let's get away from this part of Ireland," cried Angela, with disgust.

"It seems a waste of valuable time to have come here at all," declared Polly, holding a handkerchief to her nose as they passed a dreadful hovel where unkempt children played and fought.

The roads were so bad, however, that the cars could not speed very fast, so they had to stop at Belfast, that night, and resume the journey in the morning. The second day in Ireland they managed to travel as far as Port Rush, merely going aside before reaching that place, in order to see the "Giant's Causeway" and its rugged cliffs along the coast-line.

Another night was spent in Port Rush, as the boat for Scotland had left before the tourists reached the port. Jimmy had gone headlong into the new affair with Eleanor, and apparently had continued his love-making where he had suddenly terminated it with Ruth. There were no romantic beginnings for Eleanor, in his approaches to a declaration. So that when they were crossing from Ireland to Androssan, in Scotland, the infatuated lover managed to get Eleanor away from

the others and hide her in a steamer-chair, found in a nook, where he could give full expression to his gift of romance.

The others in the party saw the Giant's Causeway and the famous cliffs, from the sea, as they passed by in the steamer, but Eleanor never saw the least bit of them, because of Jimmy's screening form and his refusal to permit her to leave him.

Angela was delighted to find her brother had finally appreciated the recklessness of his attachment to Ruth, when there were far richer girls in the party. She would have selected Dodo or Polly, had he asked *her* to decide for him, but Eleanor was better than Ruth. So she seconded all her brother's attempts to kidnap Eleanor whenever the entire party wished to go anywhere or do a thing.

"It's a wonder your brother did not fall in love with these four pretty girls at one time—and save trouble," said Nancy Fabian, laughingly to Angela.

"Now, Nancy, don't show your jealousy," returned Angela.

"Me—jealous! Why, Angie, you know I refused Jimmy three or four times before these girls ever put in an appearance. To accuse me of jealousy when I hail the deliverance from his attentions is ridiculous of you."

Polly overheard these remarks and determined that she would spare her friend any further annoyances from Jimmy. "Here Nolla was losing all the wonderful sights they came expressly to Europe to see, and a foolish boy was using that time for a flirtation." Polly mentioned this to Eleanor the first time she got her away from Jimmy.

"Oh, but he heaps such good candies on one, Poll," laughed Eleanor, apologetically. "Let his love die a natural death, and then there will be no danger of its ghost ever bobbing up to frighten me."

"But you're giving this precious time to a bally fool, and missing Mr. Fabian's rare lessons on information you'll need to know," declared Polly, angrily.

"I can't help it, Poll. You'll see how it is when your turn comes with Jimmy," laughed Eleanor, teasingly.

Polly's eyes snapped fire. Then she threatened something that had been alluded to before, between Eleanor and herself. "I plan to write letters home tonight when we stop at Glasgow. I'm going to tell Paul Stewart what a dreadful flirt you have turned out to be!"

Eleanor gasped, but was brave. "Oh yes, and also tell him what a wonderful girl his old playmate, Dodo Alexander, is, and how, with all her money, he can easily

win her and live in ease the rest of his life!”

Eleanor turned away shortly after that, and Polly felt like crying. This was the first time, in years, that Eleanor and she had had words, and that horrid little fop was the cause of it!

But Polly’s threat, although vain, served to startle Eleanor in her passive acceptance of Jimmy’s attentions. She sat in the same seat on the road to Edinburgh, it is true, but she was a dull companion and never as much as glanced at her admirer.

Polly and she had not spoken to each other since the words they had had, but both girls revenged themselves on Jimmy—the cause of their quarrel. And he, unaware of what had caused the sudden change in Eleanor’s feelings for him, tried all the more to win her back to that former sweet companionship with him.

At Edinburgh, Mr. Fabian conducted his party through the fifteen famous castles and numerous other places of interest to lovers of the antique, and Eleanor was a member of the group in every instance. In order to be near his heart’s desire, Jimmy had to trail along, too, sighing in anguish and rolling his eyes in desperation, when Eleanor ignored him completely.

“He acts and looks like a comedian in the Movies,” said Nancy, impatiently.

Angela smiled wisely and tossed her head when she heard the remark. Nancy cared naught for that, but turned her attention to Polly who was flushing and fuming to herself.

“What’s the matter, Poll dear?” asked Nancy, softly.

“Oh, he makes me so mad! I could just slap his face for him! There’s your father giving us all this wonderful information on architecture and antiques, and poor Nolla not hearing a word of it, because of that fortune-hunting fool!”

“S-sh! Not so loud, dear! I feel as you do about him, but I have learned that it is best not to interfere in the matter. Let Jimmy and his sister ‘have rope enough.’ You know the rest.”

“Why, Nancy! I thought you were devoted to Angela?” gasped Polly.

“I was—once, dear, but don’t speak of it to anyone else. I thought Angie the most wonderful girl in the world until these past few days when I found that her entire heart and mind is set on getting wealth by some means or other. Her art, her friends, and her very self-respect, are being sacrificed to that one ambition. Hence I have had to crucify my friendship, too, and try to feel indifferent to the

past.”

“Dear Nancy!” condoled Polly. “I know just how I would feel if Nolla proved to be unworthy of my love and friendship.”

“But she won’t—she is a true American, Polly, and that makes a difference. Much depends on the way you have been trained to think, and poor Angie thinks society and wealth mean heaven.”

Having visited the principal points of interest in Edinburgh, Mr. Fabian took his party to Abbotsford, the home of Sir Walter Scott. Here the collection of wonderful objects and the interest created in them by the names of the donors to the famous novelist, gave the tourists much pleasure.

Polly saw that Jimmy still tormented Eleanor and kept her from enjoying the visit to Abbotsford as she should have done. So she waylaid the young man, as he followed Eleanor from the place.

“I’LL TELL YOU SOMETHING THAT OUGHT TO DO YOU GOOD!” SAID
POLLY.

“I’LL TELL YOU SOMETHING THAT OUGHT TO DO YOU GOOD!” SAID POLLY.

“James Osgood! What do you suppose Nolla Maynard came to Europe for? To amuse *you* with silly-mush, or to study art and try to become experienced against the time we go into business?” fumed Polly, striding in front of Jimmy and facing him so that he had to stop short.

Eleanor was surprised at first, then she began to enjoy the encounter. Jimmy was too amazed to answer, but he stared at Polly and her blazing eyes, as if she were an apparition.

“Well, I’ll tell you something that ought to do you good!” continued Polly, cracking her fingers under Jimmy’s nose. “There isn’t a man outside of Colorado, who can ever touch Eleanor Maynard’s heart, because she left it out there long ago! And what’s more—there isn’t a man like *you*, that can get one cent of American money from any girl who has sense to know what you’re after! Now take yourself and your love-making off, to a girl who doesn’t know better!”

The cutting scorn and fire with which Polly drove home her speech, caused Jimmy to shrink momentarily, but he also saw the glorious beauty of the girl with the flushed face, blazing eyes, and quivering form, and his impressionable heart took fire.

Polly had left him speechless, and Eleanor had hurried away to the other girls,

lest she burst out laughing in sheer enjoyment of the bout between the two. But Jimmy stood lost in thought. He had never in his life, had anyone speak so to him, and never had he seen such marvellous beauty as that which Polly scintillated as she fired her sparks of fury at him.

Then he suddenly recovered and shot ahead to reach his car. He waited at the side, where one who would sit beside him, had to enter. He waved Nancy, Ruth, and Eleanor on to the back, and bowed low when Polly came up.

“Humph!” was all she granted him, and flounced along to the other seats. Thus it happened that Angela had to sit beside her brother that day, much to the annoyance of both of them.

“What’s the matter with Nolla?” whispered she, as the car started.

“Nothing. She’s nice enough, but I’m going to get Polly Brewster if I have to kidnap her!” he hissed through his teeth. Meantime he made the car tear along at such a rate that the girls could hardly breathe.

“D-o—n’t kill—us—in—the—me-an—time!” gasped Angela.

“Better all dead, than let her get away!”

“I al-wa-ys kn-ew you—had co-ot-tton wh-ere br-rains ought—to—be-e——” Angela managed to jerk forth.

Jimmy made no reply to this stigma but tore along the road until a constable arrested him. That calmed him somewhat, for he had to pay a fine, and it took all the money Mrs. Alexander had recently given him.

When the second car caught up with Jimmy’s, Mr. Alexander shouted gleefully: “That was some race, Jimmy, old boy! I used to eat up the road that way, in Colorado, but they won’t stand for it over here, will they?”

As Jimmy had just transferred his little roll of bills from his pocket, to the constable’s hand, he grunted and started on slowly.

Mr. Fabian called out, however: “You rushed past all the towns I had planned to stop at and explore. Now shall we go back!”

“No, never mind, Prof! let’s get back to London and end this awful trip!” shouted Polly, anxiously.

Her friends laughed, but the tourists in the second car could not understand why the drive was so awful to Polly.

At Penrith the travellers stopped, as they planned to go cross country to visit

some fine old places located at Ripon. And they also wished to visit York, which was a few miles from Penrith.

That night, the moment Jimmy was washed and brushed, he took up his post at the foot of the stairs where the girls would have to come down. One after another of the party descended but Polly failed to appear. Eleanor smiled and took his arm to lure him away, but he shook off her hand just as a petulant child might.

Still smiling, Eleanor walked away and joined her friends in the parlor. Soon after that, they went to the dining-room for dinner, leaving Jimmy still on guard waiting for Polly.

It was a merry party that enjoyed dinner that evening, but Jimmy took no interest in it, as he still watched for the coming of his lady—as he called her to himself. During a lull in the conversation in the dining-room, Jimmy distinctly heard a voice telling of exploits in the Rocky Mountains, when Eleanor spent the Summer at Pebbly Pit.

Jimmy started! It was Polly's own voice! But how did she get down while he stood watching so carefully?

He hurried to the door of the room and looked in. There she sat, entertaining the whole assembly, with her stories—and he had been left out in the hall all that time! He could have wept!

When he took a seat at the table, everyone expressed the deepest concern for him. "Was he ill?" "Did he feel badly about the fine for speeding?" and many other questions to which he gave no reply.

When they left the room, Jimmy jumped up also, and just as Polly was leaving, he caught her hand.

"Won't you let me see you alone this evening—please?"

Polly lifted her head a bit higher—if that were possible—and deigned to glance at him. "What for?" snapped she.

"I—I want to tell you—oh, just give me a moment!"

"Very well—one moment right here! Let the others leave."

"No—no, not in this public room. Somewhere where I can speak——" begged Jimmy.

"Here or nowhere!"

"Oh, Polly, Polly! Why are you so cruel?" began Jimmy, as he forced a look of

agony into his eyes.

“Come now—that will do from you, little boy! If that is what you have to say, then just keep it. I’ve no time to throw away,” said Polly, in a voice like steel, and then she drew aside her dress and walked away.

Jimmy stood disconsolate, wishing he dared commit suicide before her eyes, and make her repent those unkind words. But he was awfully hungry, and he thought better of suicide so he went back to finish his late dinner.

Eleanor saw him, later, as he left the dining-room and, with the imp of mischief uppermost in her mind, waylaid him and spent the evening talking of nothing but Polly—her beauty, her accomplishments, and her tremendous wealth that no one as yet, had been able to compute.

Had Jimmy any doubt of who his soul-mate was, before, that talk settled it. He was now determined to have Polly, even if he had to steal her and keep her locked up until she consented to his offer of marriage.

The farce now amused everyone but Angela and Mrs. Alexander. Jimmy was so openly wild about Polly that he acted like a possessed idiot rather than a young man with a grain of sense. If Polly had fawned upon him, he might have wearied of her company, but because she scorned him so heartily and showed it plainly, he felt all the more attracted to her.

Mrs. Alexander snubbed Polly whenever she scorned Jimmy; and Angela made much of the lady because she showed her partisanship for the young man, so openly. Thus the two, Angela and Mrs. Alexander came closer together because of the common bond—Jimmy.

When Mr. Fabian suggested that all go to see the Minster of York, Angela and Mrs. Alexander refused. Jimmy saw the look Polly cast at him, and murmured something about drowning his sorrow. But he failed to say whether it would be in the river or in home-brew.

They viewed the ancient place and Mr. Fabian remarked: “It was here that the greatest disaster that ever befell man occurred in 306 A.D.”

“Why, I never heard of it—what was it?” asked Mr. Ashby.

“Perhaps you, like many others, never thought of it as a disaster,” replied Mr. Fabian. “Because I speak of the proclamation issued here by the Romans, that made Constantine an Emperor in 306. This emperor, understanding the tremendous advantages of a political nature, if he could gain full power and control of the religion that was gaining such an ascendancy with the people—the

Christ Truth that healed the sick, cured sin, and raised the very dead, as it *did* until three hundred years after Jesus ascended—bribed a few of the disloyal Christians to act in concord with him.

“For the reward of place and power conceded to them, the unscrupulous Christians sold out their faith and brethren to this Emperor. He, wily and crafty in diplomacy and politics, sent out word, far and wide, that Christianity would thenceforth be protected by him.

“In this place, that proclamation was hailed with a great celebration, and Christianity became the ruling religion here. But the power of the Spirit, as used by Christ Jesus, vanished when pomp and politics supplanted it, and soon the gift of healing was lost until recent years.”

“That is very interesting, Fabian,” said Mr. Ashby, while the girls listened to this unusual information, eagerly. “I have sometimes wondered why it was that the power demonstrated by Christ Jesus could not have been used by his followers.”

“It was, you see, until Constantine misused the gift. All such who use it for place or power will lose it,” said Mr. Fabian, earnestly.

“How did you ever learn about it, Prof?” asked Eleanor eagerly.

“The records of the entire transaction and the courageous though fearful stand the Early Christians took to defend their religion, can be read in the books called ‘The Anti-Nicean Fathers.’ There one can learn how wonderful were the cures and the over-coming of death for all who accepted Christianity, up to the time when it became defiled by greed and avarice and earthly taint.

“But, to me, the saddest part of all that sad event, is the fact that mankind, today, believes it *has* the Truth as taught and practised by Christ Jesus. Whereas they only have the form and farce of it, as it was changed from the pure spiritual power to that counterfeit endorsed by Constantine. And for this subterfuge, the world honors that unscrupulous politician!”

Mr. Fabian was so incensed at the thought of all the act meant to the world, that he stalked out of the Minster and went on silently, followed almost as silently by the others. They were all thinking earnestly of what he had said, and everyone pondered on what *might have been* had Constantine never interfered with the Truth.

After leaving York, the cars went through Selby, and stopped at Doncast long enough to give the tourists time to visit the gargoyle church. Then they sped on to Sheffield where Mr. Fabian showed the girls how the famous Sheffield Plate

was made.

The next stopping place was Haddon Hall, the home and burial spot of Dorothy Vernon. The country in this part of England is wild and ruggedly beautiful, with good roads for automobiles. So the cars sped smoothly along to Derby, where the collectors had dreams of old Crown Derby ware, but found nothing to materialize those visions.

Jimmy had been so annoying with his attentions to Polly, with his hang-dog expression, as he followed her everywhere, that the others began to feel impatient about it, instead of laughing as at a good joke as they had done. Finally Mr. Fabian spoke to him severely.

“See here, James, I can make allowances for a young man of your type, naturally, but when you make a beastly nuisance of yourself, I must interfere. Now leave Polly alone, and don’t annoy her further with your transitory love. Throw it away on some girl who wants it.”

But Mrs. Fabian felt that a better cure might have been applied. “If Polly would only hang on his arm and tell him how she loves him, he will drop her like an old shoe.”

“I don’t believe it! He has a double-edged axe to grind, and there’s no use getting Polly in wrong, in case he wanted to get her and what she owns,” returned Mr. Fabian, wisely.

Jimmy had not the character that would give perseverance and persistence for any problem, so he finally lost interest in the affair he had created for himself with Polly. Mrs. Alexander felt greatly elated when she saw him casting eyes at Dodo, oftener than he had in the past. And to show her appreciation of this, she quietly urged another roll of bills into his willing palm.

Perhaps it was the understanding that Polly and Dodo had had with each other that had caught Jimmy’s attention. To spare Polly any further annoyance, Dodo had offered to divert the silly affair to herself, if possible. So she dressed in her finest, and flirted with Jimmy, and tried in every way to attract his eyes to herself. And it was not difficult to do, either.

Before they started for London, having done the points of interest at Coventry, Kenilworth, and so on to Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon, Jimmy was recovering from his desire to die, and was taking notice of Dodo. By the time they reached Stratford he was able to act any lover’s part in the Shakespearian plays, provided Dodo was the lady-love in the scene.

His companions, excepting Angela and Dodo's mother, were out of all patience with him. He was such a weak-hearted lover who had no idea of the first principles of the game, that they had very little to say to him the last days of the trip.

Dodo bravely endured his soft speeches and smilingly accepted the bon-bons and blossoms her mother's money enabled him to shower upon her, but when they reached London, and the time came when the association could be severed, she ruthlessly did so.

The Americans stopped at one of the best hotels, while Angela and Jimmy drove to their home to get the directions left there for them by Sir James.

Shortly after everyone had decided to rest at the hotel after the long ride that day, Jimmy came rushing in to see the men.

"We found these letters at the house, so Angela made me come right in with them. Of course, you will all accept!"

There was a special invitation for each family, inviting them down to Sir James' country place for a week or two. When Mr. Alexander read and passed the letter on to his wife, she was so pleased that she could hardly wait to hear what the others would say.

"Very sorry, Jimmy, but I am booked for business interviews from now on until I sail for the States, again," explained Mr. Ashby, answering for his family as well as for himself.

"And we plan to leave London very shortly, Jimmy, to tour the Continent, as you know," added Mr. Fabian.

"But we will go down with you, Jimmy, and thank your dear father, again and again," exclaimed Mrs. Alexander, sweetly.

"How do you know we will?" demanded Mr. Alexander; "I don't want to be bothered with style and society when I can have a nice time in my car touring over Europe."

"We'll have to go for a week, at least," said Mrs. Alexander, positively. "There are many reasons why." Then turning to Jimmy she added: "So tell your dear parents that we will be pleased to accept, Jimmy."

Dodo hurried from the parlor where this meeting took place, and Jimmy could not find her when he tried to have a few words with her, alone.

"Never mind, now, Jimmy," whispered Mrs. Alexander as she followed him

from the room. “You will have Dodo all to yourself when we get down to Osgood Hall.”

Rolling his eyes dramatically and sighing with joy as he shook the plump bejewelled hands of his expectant mother-in-law, Jimmy hurried away to rejoin his sister Angela in the car.

CHAPTER VII—DODO’S ELOPEMENT

“Dodo, your mother says we got to go with her to visit the Osgoods,” Mr. Alexander informed his daughter, early the next morning at breakfast.

“Well, I won’t! so there! I’m going with Polly and her friends, to Paris. I just guess I can take up decorating if I want to, and Ma can’t stop me!” Dodo was really angry.

“I’ve been thinking, Dodo, that if we don’t go down with Ma, she can’t go there alone. Now she wants to go the worst way, but she won’t care so much whether we stay on or not—as long as she can hold on to the invitation.”

Dodo looked up quickly at her father’s tone. “What do you mean, Pa?”

“Well, you see, we plan to go down in the car. We can carry all the trunks and other traps, that way. But going down there doesn’t say we’ve got to stay, does it?”

“N-o-o,” agreed Dodo, beginning to see light.

“Well then, getting Ma down there, and you and I clearing out again, is all that I want to do. She will stay on and we will fly to Paris. How is that?”

Dodo laughed merrily at the plot, but she still had to hear further particulars. For instance, how did Pa expect to get away from the others without suspicion, and on what plea would he get back to London?

“Say now, Do—you don’t suspect me of telling to them people all I expect to do, do you? No, I’ll just wait for night, and then you and I will elope together.”

“Elope! Oh, Pa, how funny!” laughed Dodo, clapping her hands.

“Yeh, easy as pie, Do! Now listen to me. Ma gets all nicely settled the first night, and you have your little room by yourself. I go out for a smoke with my friend pipe—all by myself. I see you trying to steal away with your bundles, and a MAN! I hear a motor purr, and I see you and that man get in a car—and off you tear. I foller you to London, and keep right on your heels to Paris. There I catch you, and send word back to Ma to ease her mind.

“When she hears that you eloped with a *man*, and I went after, to catch you, before you married someone we don’t know about, she will be so glad that she’ll forgive me. And she won’t dare say a word to you, because that will spoil her little game for Jimmy, see?”

“The Osgoods will make her stay on with them, if they really plan to land our million, because they will need some link by which to win you back, see? If they think more of their *family* than of our money, they’ll let Ma go and join us in Paris.

“Now, Dodo, what you think of your Pa’s little scheme?” laughed the little man, as he rubbed his hands together in glee.

“Say, Pa! It’s a shame such a wonder as you should be hidden to the world,” exclaimed Dodo, admiringly.

“As long as it hides you and me until the storm blows over, will be enough to satisfy me,” retorted Mr. Alexander.

At this moment, the Fabians and Ashbys entered the room, and Mr. Alexander winked at his daughter for secrecy on the subject they had been discussing. Soon after the others sat down at the breakfast table, Mrs. Alexander joined them, and the conversation turned to their parting.

“When do you plan to leave London, Mrs. Alexander?” asked Mr. Ashby, politely.

“Tomorrow, I hope. I want to fit Dodo up in some decent gowns before I take her to such a fine place as Osgood Hall.”

“When do you leave, Mr. Ashby?” asked Dodo.

“I expect to take Ruth and my wife down to my cousin’s, at Brighton, this afternoon. Then I have to go to different towns, you know, to collect things for my customers in the States.”

“And you, Polly?” Dodo turned to the girl she liked best of those she had met that summer.

“We are going to remain in London for a few days more, and see the Museums and galleries, then go on to Paris.”

“I wish I was going with you,” said Dodo. “Maybe we can meet in Paris, soon, and I can go on with you-all to learn more of antiques and decorating.”

“That must be as your father and mother say, Dodo,” Mr. Fabian now remarked.

“I always said Dodo could do as she liked,” quickly said Mr. Alexander.

“But my daughter will be with me down at Osgood Hall, so you won’t be likely to cross each other’s path again, in Europe,” declared Mrs. Alexander, smilingly, although her tone expressed her determination.

The Ashbys left that afternoon, and Mrs. Alexander took Dodo shopping for more clothes. Then, in the morning, the car was brought to the hotel, and the girls went with Dodo to see her off.

“I sure feel as if I want to cry,” whimpered Dodo, pretending to dab her eyes.

“We-all will miss you awfully, Dodo. You’re a good pal and we had *such* good times with you!” sighed Polly.

“Let’s hope we *will* meet soon, in spite of Ma’s sayin’ our paths wouldn’t cross each other again,” grinned Mr. Alexander.

“Ebenezer, do get started, won’t you? Here we are sitting and holding up everyone else!” snapped Mrs. Alexander.

So the car drove off, with Dodo waving her hand as long as she could see her friends.

The Fabians and Polly and Eleanor visited the Victoria and Albert Museum that day, finding many wonderful pieces to admire. Among bronzes, ivories, tapestries and other art objects, Mr. Fabian pointed out various bits of costly and famous work.

There was a reading-desk of the 15th century; several Florentine coffers with fine carved panels; a beautiful cabinet decorated with Marquetry of the South German type, that hailed back to the 16th century. And in the Pavilion, Polly found a lovely dressing-table of satin-wood from the 18th century that reminded her of the piece she had bought down in Sussex.

The second day at the Museum—for it took several days to do it thoroughly—they visited the rooms where all kinds of furniture are exhibited, from stately William and Mary chairs down to the tiniest of foot-stools and ottomans.

They were passing an odd group of chairs when Eleanor laughingly drew their attention to two. “Just look at that fat old roistering chair conversing with the thin straight-laced prig of a side-chair, next to him.”

Her description was so true of the two chairs, that her companions laughed.

“Yes,” said Mr. Fabian, “the stiff-backed puritanical chair is telling the fat old

rascal what a coarse bourgeois manner he shows in such good company.”

“Daddy, how could such a clumsy chair ever get into this famous museum?” asked Nancy.

“Because it can claim antiquity,” replied her father. “In early English times, when Squires and over-lords ruled the land, they spent most of their time in drinking and gambling. This chair is a type of them, is it not?”

“It certainly is,” agreed the girls.

“So you will find almost every period of furniture. They tell, truer than one thinks at the time, of the type of people that makes and uses them. You will find effeminate pieces in the reign of the Louis’, and hard-looking furniture in German history. Our own American furniture tells, better than all else, of the mixing of nations in the ‘melting-pot.’ Our furniture has no type, or style, individually its own.

“The so-called sales advertised in department stores are symbolic of what Americans are satisfied with: hodge-podge ready-made factory pieces, quickly glued together, and badly finished. As long as it is showy, and can demand a high price, the average American is satisfied. And that is the great error we interior decorators have to correct—we have to educate the people away from confusion and into art and beauty.”

Having seen the best examples of old furniture on exhibition in the Museum, Mr. Fabian prepared to go. As they walked quietly through the corridor to the main entrance, he said impressively: “I consider you girls have seen some of the best products to be found in the world today. The results of many ideals and hard work.

“You must know, that a good ideal thought plans a perfect chair or table; and that thought eventually expresses itself in the object it sees in mind. If the object is a thing of beauty and a joy forever, it elevates the whole world just that much. If it falls short of the artist’s ideals and hopes, he must do it over again, sooner or later, to reach the perfect model in mind. Thus he expresses God (good) in his ideals. If he refuses to try again to perfect his work, he knows he has failed utterly and he has nothing but the result of lowering his ideal—failure and deformity.”

As he ceased speaking, Mr. Fabian found the girls were intensely interested in his little lecture, and he smiled as Polly cried: “Oh, tell us some more along that line, please!”

“Well, I wish to impress upon you that in your work you *must* express the highest ideal or be a failure. Now God, Good, is Mind, and this Mind must be expressed in countless manifestations to be seen by us. *Unexpressed* it is a non-entity, and does not exist. Art and beauty are forms of ideal manifestation, and this manifestation objectifies itself in divan, lamp, rug or ornament, for you.

“To be a perfect thing, it must have God, or Mind, as its Creator, but this God uses you, His child, as the channel through which He works. If you obey that idealistic desire and work the best you know how, God sends added understanding and assistance to help you perfect the object, thus it becomes good and true. Now evil works, too, but just in the opposite directions; hence, if you give in to greed, avarice, dishonesty, envy, or the multitude of weapons evil always has on hand to tempt you with, you inevitably must produce an inharmonious result, and the repelling effects that go to cause criticism and dissatisfaction with all who thereafter look at the object.

“That is why that roistering armchair displeases a true and idealistic artist. It was not produced by a true and high-minded individual who hoped to bring forth a model of line and color, but who had only in mind, at the time, the production of a stout piece of furniture that would withstand the tests and offer a seat to the drunkards of that time; and would also resist the fierce quarrels and fights so common between gamblers who frequented the taverns of that day.”

“I wish to goodness I knew as much as you do about all these interesting things, Mr. Fabian!” declared Polly, yearningly.

“That is the sweetest praise a man can have, Polly dear; to wish to stand in my shoes in experience,” smiled Mr. Fabian. “But the very desire when truly entertained, will bring about the thing you so earnestly desire. For you know, ‘Desire is prayer.’”

Mrs. Fabian smiling at her husband, now said, “Why not add a benediction to this little sermonette, dear?” Then turning to the girls, she quoted: “‘Give up imperfect models and illusive ideals; and so let us have one God (Good), One Mind, and that one perfect, producing His own models of excellence.’”

That evening, the clerk at the hotel office handed Mr. Fabian a card.

“Why, how strange!” remarked he, glancing again, at the pasteboard in his hand.

“What is it?” asked Nancy, trying to look over his shoulder.

“The Alexanders were here. As we were out they left a card saying that they were going on to Paris, at once, and would see us at the hotel where we said we

would stop.”

“How very strange!” exclaimed Mrs. Fabian, while the girls wondered what had happened to so suddenly change the minds of their friends.

“I never heard of anything like that. One day Mrs. Alexander was crazy to visit the Osgoods, and now they run away and are as crazy to reach Paris,” said Eleanor.

“I’m glad for Dodo’s sake. The poor girl didn’t want to go to Osgood Hall, at all, and I know how she felt about Jimmy,” said Polly.

“Maybe that’s what caused all the fuss. Dodo put down her foot and refused him outright, and that made his folks too angry to forgive her,” said Eleanor, romancing.

“Well, now she can go along with us, can’t she Daddy, and get all the information she wants, from visiting the places we go to.”

“With her parents’ consent, I should like to help Dodo to a higher plane for herself,” returned Mr. Fabian.

As they started again for their rooms, Polly laughed at a sudden memory. “Oh, maybe Ebenezer’s poisonous black pipe played such havoc at the first dinner at Osgood Hall, that the guests couldn’t stand it, and he was sent away with his friend.”

Everyone laughed merrily at Polly’s picture of Mr. Alexander and his old friend pipe.

The next day after the Fabian party returned from the last sight-seeing in London, a wire was handed the man of the group. He opened it hastily, and read aloud: “Send word when you leave for Paris. Will meet you at train with car. Alexander.”

“Now that is really nice of the little man, I say,” added Mr. Fabian, as he handed the message to his wife.

“Then you’d better wire him at once, for we plan to go tomorrow,” advised Mrs. Fabian.

Everything had been attended to in London, and the girls took a farewell look at the city as they sped away to Dover where they expected to take the Channel Boat for Havre.

Much has been said about the rough crossing of this little strip of water, but the

girls found it as quiet as a mill-pond, and the steamer skimmed the waves like a sea-gull. The ride in the dusty train, from Havre to Paris, was the most unpleasant part of the trip. But upon leaving the train at Paris, they saw Dodo and her father anxiously scanning the faces that passed by.

“Here we are, Dodo!” called Polly, eagerly, as she jumped forward and caught her friend’s hand.

“Dear me! I’m as glad to see you-all as I can be,” cried Dodo, shaking everyone eagerly by the hand.

“Yeh, you’re a sight for sore eyes,” remarked her father.

“We’ve only been in Paris a day and night, but Pa hasn’t any French with him, and I’ve only got a few words that I am always using mistakenly, so we’re happy to have someone who can speak and understand the lingo” laughed Dodo, happily.

They all got into the luxurious car that had carried them so many miles over England, and as they sank down upon the soft cushions, Polly said: “An automobile really is nicer than a hard old steam-tram.”

Mrs. Fabian, always polite, asked: “How is your mother, Dodo?”

“Last time we saw her she was first class, thank you.”

“She may be having high-sterics now, however,” added Mr. Alexander, chucklingly.

“What do you mean? Isn’t she well?” asked Mrs. Fabian.

“We *hope* she is well, Mrs. Fabian, but we left her at Osgood Hall, while we eloped to Paris,” laughed Dodo.

“Eloped! What *are* you talking about, child?” demanded Mrs. Fabian, while the girls sat up, eager to hear a story.

“Pa and I just *had* to elope, you know, to save our lives. We waited until Ma got nicely settled with the family, then we got in the car and ran away. We haven’t heard, yet, in answer to our telegram from here, so we’re frightened to pieces lest Ma packs up and comes after us,” explained Dodo.

But this fear was quieted when they all went into the hotel and the clerk handed Mr. Alexander a message. He opened it with trembling fingers, and suddenly sat down in a great chair.

“Goodness me, Pa! What is it? Is she coming for us?” cried Dodo, in an agony of

suspense.

“No—that’s why I caved in, Dodo. The relief was so turrible!” sighed the little man.

Everyone felt sorry for these two, but the situation was so funny that they laughed in spite of their trying not to.

“Yes, laugh,” giggled Dodo, “that’s just what Pa and I did when we got well away on the road to London. When I think of how they must have looked when they read the note I pinned on my cushion for Ma, I have to laugh myself.”

“What was in the note, Do?” asked Eleanor, curiously.

“I said I was eloping with the man I loved best on earth—which was true, you know. And I knew I could never be happy with a title, as long as I loved this everyday man. That was true, too. So I was fleeing with him, to Paris, where I hoped to meet her some day and ask her forgiveness.”

The girls laughed heartily at Dodo’s note, and Polly said she was awfully clever to think it out that way.

“Oh, but it was Pa who planned it all. And when we got to Paris, he wired back to Ma, saying: ‘Got Dodo in time. Never laid eyes on that young man, but will keep her safe with me. Better not try to join us yet, she may not want to be reminded of the good home and young man she ran away from.’”

“And this is what Ma wired back,” said Mr. Alexander, sitting up to read the message. “Just read Dodo’s note about her elopement. Glad you are after her, Eben. Don’t let her marry any man, while there is a chance of Jimmy. Maggie.”

“So now, folks, Ma is safe at Osgood Hall, and we are here, with our car, with you. What’s to hinder us from taking you all over Europe in the old machine, eh?” eagerly asked Mr. Alexander.

“Your offer is very attractive, Mr. Alex,” returned Mr. Fabian, “but I am not in a position to accept it without consulting further with my wife and the girls.”

“Why not? Here’s a car and a fine chauffeur for you-all to use as you like, and you admit that you’re going to visit the big cities of Europe, and that means travel in some sort of way.”

“Oh yes, that part of the plan is as you say,” admitted Mr. Fabian, “but there is more to it than mere travelling. You must understand that Mrs. Alexander has a claim on that car, too, and I don’t see how we can tour away from Paris in her car without her knowledge and willing consent.”

“Oh, as for that!” retorted the little husband, “she’d be only too glad to hear Dodo was safe with you folks on a tour. Diden’ I tell you-all that she’s happy where she is, and nothin’ can tear her away from the Osgoods, at present?”

“Besides that, I want to stay with you-all,” added Dodo, plaintively. “So that I can get more knowledge of decorating, because I’ve made up my mind, once and for all time, to go into a business as you girls propose doing.”

Mr. Fabian yearned to encourage the girl in her ambition, but he was adamant when it came to using the Alexander car under the circumstances. All the persuasions of father and daughter could not move him from what he considered to be a just decision.

There the matter was left for the time being, but Mr. Fabian was not so narrow-minded that he refused to drive about Paris with the little man, on the different occasions when he and his party were invited to go.

The day after their arrival at the hotel in Paris, Polly said to Dodo: “Did your wedding-chest arrive here safely?”

“Yes, it came, and it’s gone again.”

“Gone again! Where?” said surprised Polly.

“Gone to Ruth—for her birthday gift,” giggled Dodo.

“Not really! Why how wonderful for Ruth,” exclaimed the girls in a chorus.

Dodo smiled. “Don’t you remember what I said to Ruth about a little gift, the day we drove away from that old shop?”

“I remember, but no one dreamed you meant that *chest*,” replied Polly.

“I made up my mind about it, the moment I found how Ma got it from under Ruth’s nose. That’s why I made Ma say the chest was my very own—so she could not come back at me and say I had no right to give it away.”

“Dodo, you are splendid in your generous way of giving. If only everyone was like you!” cried Polly, giving her a hug.

“There! That hug means more to me than a wedding-chest,” laughed Dodo, pink with pleasure.

When Mrs. Fabian heard of the gift to Ruth she caught the girl’s hand and said: “Dodo, Ruth will be so happy, I know.”

“Dear me, you-all make as much fuss over that chest as if I had to earn the money for it. I can’t forget that we have more cash than we can ever spend

honestly,” declared Dodo.

When Mrs. Fabian told her husband about the gift and Dodo’s point of view about wealth, it had more influence with him than anyone could have thought for. He felt that Dodo and her father were really worth-while characters, but there was a roughness about them that needed some polishing before the purity and beauty of their souls would shine forth resplendently and make others appreciate them.

The streets of Paris were anything but good for motoring because of the broken cobbles, and deep ruts in the roads. The disagreeable odors, too, created by poor sanitation in the city, caused Polly and her chums to cover their noses many a time.

“I like the wonders of Paris, but I can’t say that I like the people and the everyday annoyances,” remarked Polly, one day.

“The shops are beautiful!” said Eleanor.

“And the signs—they are marvellous,” added Dodo.

Mr. Fabian laughed at the individual tastes, and Mrs. Fabian said: “Well, we can’t get away any too soon to please me.”

“‘Them’s our sentiments, too,’” laughed Polly.

“I’ll hate to leave the Bohemian Restaurants,” sighed Nancy. “I always did like to sit under a tall palm and watch the people parade by, so near me that I could reach out a hand and catch hold of them.”

“Now that all but Mr. Alex and I have had a say I’ll add, that I like Paris because of the marvellous collections for artists to visit, and profit by,” remarked Mr. Fabian.

“An’ I like the gay town because no one bothers you. You can smoke a pipe, or do any durn thing without someone’s kickin’,” added little Mr. Alexander.

His opinion drew a general laughter from the group.

From the first day of the arrival of Mr. Fabian and his party, little Mr. Alexander had daily exchanged messages with his wife, hoping in that way, to receive one that would convince Mr. Fabian that he must make use of the car for the tour of the Continent. But he could not read his wife’s confused statements and feel that the right one had yet arrived for him to use in this need.

The day the girls started for the Louvre, Mr. Alexander and his car had been

refused because, they said, they would be busy in the Galleries all day and could not ask him to sit outside waiting for their appearance.

So they left him sitting at a writing table in the hotel, and started for the Louvre. As they approached the grounds of the famous museum, they were thrilled with the magnificence of the place.

“It is considered the finest museum in the world, and contains rarest national collections of art and antiquity that date back as far as Philippe Auguste, in 1180,” explained Mr. Fabian. “Philippe Auguste built a fortress here to protect the walls of his hunting-box where it touched the river. This old foundation can be seen by visitors on certain days, and I arranged so that we would come on one of the days.”

So the girls followed their escort down to the cellars, where the old walls were seen. But they were not deeply interested in foundations with no claim to beauty or value for the world, so they soon returned to the Halls where the antiques were on exhibition.

To reach the Rotonde D’ Apollon, Mr. Fabian led the girls past Galleries filled with paintings, sculptures, ivories and other art treasures. Then having seen these collections, they passed through a seventh century iron gateway brought from the Chateau de Maisons, and entered the magnificent room which was sixty-one metres long and was built in the time of Henri IV. In this galerie, as in others following it, there were shown such placques, vases, dishes, and other objects of art, that the beholders were silent with admiration.

Beyond the Salle des Bronzes Antiques, where very fine examples of bronzes were to be seen, the girls visited five rooms containing 17th and early 18th century furniture. Here they also found several exquisite Gobelin and Mortlake tapestries.

That evening the hotel clerk handed Mr. Fabian a legal looking envelope, which, upon being opened, proved to contain the passes necessary for visitors to enter and see the famous tapestries woven by the Gobelin Society.

“Ah! Now you girls will see something worth while,” remarked Mr. Fabian, holding the slips of paper above his head. “I have here the ‘open sesame’ to the National Manufactory of the Gobelins which still is housed in the grounds of Louis the XVIth. There we may feast our eyes on some of the examples of weaving that has made this Society so famous.”

“When will we go?” asked Polly, eagerly.

“Tomorrow, the passes say.”

Everyone expressed an eagerness to see these looms and the method of making the tapestries, so it was planned that the entire party should go, excepting Mr. Alexander who preferred a drive in his car after leaving his friends at their destination.

CHAPTER VIII—DODO MEETS ANOTHER “TITLE”

The next day they visited the Gobelin Tapestries. There was but one word to express the wonderful work exhibited—and that was “Exquisite.” Some of these tapestries are “worth a crown.”

“It doesn’t seem possible that anyone could weave such delicate lace-like patterns with mere threads and human hands,” said Polly.

“And such colorings, too! Did you ever see such green velvety lichen as seems growing on those old grey monoliths?” added Eleanor.

“See the tiny dash of red that is necessary, given by the pigeon berry growing in that lichen,” remarked Polly.

The others said nothing, because they were so impressed by the beauty of the complete picture that the details failed to reach them. Then Mr. Fabian told the history of the Gobelins.

“In its foundation year there were two hundred and fifty weavers engaged in weaving these marvellous tapestries. But that number has dwindled, today, to sixty. And there used to be an annual appropriation of two hundred thousand francs that today has dwindled, also; to fifty thousand francs.

“The famous old Gobelins owned by the State, and exhibited at the Museums and at public buildings in Paris, are today worth fortunes. Few are owned by the Trade and such as are are the more modern pieces that date back to Napoleon III.

“Many pieces of rare Gobelins were sold because of royal vicissitudes previous to 1870, but since then no tapestries have been available to the public. This enhances the value of any Gobelin that was sold to assist the Treasury in 1852.

“One of the most famous series ever produced, known as ‘Portières of the Gods,’ consists of eight pieces, representing the four seasons and the four elements. Each design is personified by one of the gods or goddesses of Olympus. This series has been repeated until there are two hundred and thirty-seven sets that left the looms.

“When one of these portières of the gods appear in a sale there is most lively bidding for it, and prices soar higher than any other Gobelin usually brings.

“The ‘Don Quixote’ series of five pieces, is perhaps the most famous of all Gobelins recently sold. To show the keen appreciation of such tapestry, the price paid at a sale of such was six hundred thousand francs.”

As Mr. Fabian concluded, Polly laughingly remarked: “I wonder if Nolla and I will ever reach that degree in decorating where a customer will commission us to go and buy such a tapestry.”

“Of course you will! As soon as I marry that title that Ma is hunting up for me, I’ll give you the order for the whole set,” laughed Dodo.

“Let’s hope we may have to wait forever, then, if the commission depends on your misery,” retorted Eleanor.

After leaving the Gobelins, Mr. Fabian took his party to some of the old curio shops in Paris, where one can spend many interesting hours—if one likes antiques.

That evening Mr. Alexander insisted upon their going, as his guests, to one of the famous cafés. And as they sat at one of the way-side tables watching the stream of pleasure-seekers go past, Dodo suddenly drew the attention of her companions to a man who was strolling by.

“Now there’s what I call a really handsome Frenchman,” whispered she.

“Why, if it isn’t Count Chalmys!” exclaimed Nancy, jumping up to catch hold of the gentleman’s arm.

“What’s that! Another title?” asked Mr. Alexander with a frown.

“Yes, but don’t worry, Pa,” laughed Dodo, encouragingly. “If Ma’s not about there’s no danger for you and me.”

The others laughed at Mr. Alexander’s evident concern and Dodo’s instant rejoinder to his question. Then Nancy brought the gentleman over to meet her friends. He shook hands with Mrs. Fabian and then turned to acknowledge the introductions.

“This is Miss Polly Brewster and Miss Eleanor Maynard whom I told you about, when they discovered the gold mine on the mountains in Colorado—you remember?”

“Ah, to be sure!” responded the Count.

“And Miss Dorothy Alexander from Denver, Mr. Alexander her father, and my father, Mr. Fabian. This is Count Chalmers, of Northern Italy, friends.”

Everyone acknowledged the introduction, and the Count seemed over-joyed to meet so many of “Mees Nancy’s” friends. He sat down with the group and soon led the conversation. Mr. Alexander sat glowering at him but it was difficult to read the little man’s thoughts.

The Count seemed more attracted to Polly than to the other girls, but then he had heard of Rainbow Cliffs and that Gold Mine, thought Dodo. On the walk to the hotel, he mentioned a famous collector’s sale which would begin the following day at one of the Auction Galleries.

“Oh, are you interested in antiques, then?” asked Polly, eagerly.

“I like paintings—old masters and such things. I never lose an opportunity to secure one when it is offered for sale. My palace, near Venice, is a museum of paintings. You must visit it when you tour Italy,” responded the Count.

Mr. Fabian now asked: “Is it possible for us to secure an entrance to this sale, Count?”

“I can easily secure tickets and a catalogue for you, Monsieur Fabian. Will the young ladies be pleased to attend, also?”

“Oh yes, it is for their interests that I would like to attend, and explain various objects that might be found in the collection.”

“Then leave it to me, Monsieur. I will arrange everything for their convenience.”

The Count left the Americans at the hotel door, and said good-night. As they all walked laughingly through the main lobby, the clerk sent a page after them with a cablegram. It was for Mr. Alexander and he felt a tremor of apprehension as he took it.

He turned to the others and said (exactly as he had heard Mr. Fabian do) “Pardon me, whiles I read what the missus has to say now.” Then he quickly opened the envelope.

“Well, that settles my vacation!” exclaimed he.

“What’s the matter, Pa?” asked Dodo, anxiously.

“Ma’s gone and got that roadster for two—it is a Packard the same as our other car, but now she wants to tour around, and she thinks she will bring Jimmy over to Paris for a little jaunt.”

“Jimmy! Good gracious, why will she have to bring that child with her?” complained Dodo, poutingly.

“She wouldn’t bring him, Dodo, if she thought there were better ‘handles’ to be had on the Continent,” laughed Eleanor.

“That’s a good idea! Pa, we’ll wire Ma to leave Jimmy there, as she’ll have more fun selecting her future son-in-law from the crowd of titles she can have for the asking, over here,” eagerly suggested Dodo.

Mr. Alexander seemed to take the suggestion seriously, for he returned: “I’ll step over, now, and send a word that will keep that little Osgood boy at home with his folks.”

No one knew what Mr. Alexander said in his message, but the next day a reply came, saying: “I will do as you say, and not come over at once. Try and arrange everything satisfactorily for us.”

Even Dodo could not coax her father to tell what he had said, but it was evident that Mrs. Alexander felt satisfied to remain in England and leave other matters in the hands of her spouse.

The Count called on the tourists at the hotel, that morning, with the tickets of admission to the sale, and Mr. Alexander drove them to the Gallery, and left them there for the day.

They were given good seats in the front row of buyers, and the moment the sale began everyone was interested in the collection. That day, Polly secured a Gothic wedding-chest with ornamented and beautifully carved sides and lid. Mr. Fabian bought two panels from a XVI century door which he planned to use for two table-ends for his library table.

Eleanor and Dodo bought a few smaller trifles, but that day’s sale brought out such a conglomeration of beautiful objects, as well as dreadful imitations, that Mr. Fabian warned the girls about bidding injudiciously.

“This sale offers a fine opportunity of study for us, girls, but let me advise you before you bid on anything. I want you to look well at everything put up, and tell me why it is good, or what makes it impossible. In this way, you will learn a great deal, even though you may not care to buy the articles we criticise.”

Then he turned to Dodo and added: “One cannot train his eyes to recognize art and beauty at once, you see. Your eyes may criticise and your hands may accomplish art-work, but the inspiration that truly expresses art comes from Mind alone. Thus the finer and more harmonious the thoughts of the mentality

that thinks, the more beautiful and perfect will be his achievement in any line of work.

“Take our own line, for instance—interior decorating. The genius is one who has sympathy, tact, good sense, and practicality, *combined* with his talent to select, assort, group and arrange the numerous objects necessary to create an atmosphere.

“Wall-coverings and hangings, floor-coverings, pictures, lighting-fixtures and trim of rooms, are fully as important a feature in an effect, as the furniture of the room, for it all goes to make the complete picture of a home.

“No novice can win laurels in this line, Dodo. But one who earnestly studies and conscientiously applies the valuable experiences of other successful artists of the past, will win. That is why I wanted my girls to see the collections in Europe—to benefit them by the successes and hard work of others, whose work of past times is still found to be the best of its kind, and now are on free exhibition in museums and chateaux of the Continent.”

Turning to the other girls who were listening to him, he added: “Now gaze about and remember. Tell me how *not* to decorate with impossible objects on view here and elsewhere; and how to use what is really good that will combine to present a perfect interior.”

Then the girls took a new interest in studying and criticising the different pieces that were placed on sale. Dodo showed an aptitude that astonished Mr. Fabian and his students, for no one had given her credit for having such a critical sense on works of art.

The first piece exhibited for sale was a secretaire. The other girls were still musing over its form and construction when Dodo exclaimed impetuously: “Oh what a monstrosity! even though it has a beautiful grain in the wood, it is so awfully clumsy.”

“Why do you say that?” asked Mr. Fabian, highly pleased, while the Count turned to notice the girl he had paid no attention to, before this.

“Why just look at it! With its heavy thick-set legs that belong to a rhinoceros, and its slender graceful body that looks like a fawn’s.”

Everyone within hearing of this remark, laughed softly. Loud speaking or disturbing sounds were forbidden, so Polly and Eleanor had to hush their merriment with their handkerchiefs.

The Count suddenly adjusted the monocle he affected and whispered to Polly:

“You must be proud of your fellow-student.”

Polly instantly replied, without explaining the situation: “Oh yes, we are. Dodo is very remarkable in many ways.”

But Mr. Fabian said, as soon as he could control his sense of humor, “Dodo, you have a true eye for lines, and that criticism is worthy of a news-paper man—it is so graphic.”

Following the secretaire, were several pieces of nondescript furniture that was quickly bid upon and sold to people who wanted mere articles for use and not for beauty. Then a suite of furniture was placed upon the dais and the auctioneer began to point out its especial claims to beauty.

“Girls, is anything wrong with that furniture? Who would use it in a home, and what style of house does it belong in?” said Mr. Fabian.

Again Dodo was the first with her criticism. “Who wants doleful furniture, in a bed-room, to make you weep just as you lose consciousness in sleep? One needs cheerful objects to close one’s eyes upon, and also to bid you good-morning when you wake up.”

“Fine!” complimented Count Chalmys, still more interested in this precocious young lady of not yet seventeen.

“True, and who wants majestic pieces in a nursery?” said Eleanor.

“Or dainty personal lounges or chairs in the City Hall,” added Polly, smilingly.

“Exactly, girls! I am so proud of you all that I feel as if someone had presented me with a bouquet of flowers.”

The impossible set of furniture had been sold and now a Gothic armchair of carved deadwood, upholstered in faded tapestry with beautiful blends of colors that only great age could produce was brought out and placed on exhibition. The moment Polly saw it she made up her mind to have it. But she now knew how to go about bidding in a public sale, because of the experience Eleanor and she had had in New York, when they went about with Mr. Fabian.

The auctioneer started the chair at a reasonable figure and instantly there was lively bidding for it. Polly said not a word but waited eagerly. Then one bidder after another fell out of the contest, until it finally narrowed down to two men.

Polly’s companions knew that she was but waiting her time to speak out. And they were anxiously watching the two men who seemed bent on getting the chair. Finally one of the men shook his head to indicate that he would go no

higher, and the auctioneer said: "What! Is this all I can get for this fine example of cabinet-work?"

Very calmly and quietly, then, Polly raised the last bid.

Everyone turned to glance at the unexpected contestant, and the amazement expressed on many faces, as well as on that of the auctioneer because of the girl's youth amused Polly's friends. The auctioneer asked: "Did the young lady make a bid?"

Polly nodded affirmatively. But the man who was bidding thought to cut her out by raising his bid considerably higher. The salesman turned then to Polly to see if she still wished to bid.

"Double his bid!" called out Polly.

Again there was surprise shown by others, and the man who thought he had frightened off his youthful opponent, frowned.

When the auctioneer smilingly looked to the collector to increase his bid, the man carefully raised it a small sum. Polly now knew he was wary of spending his money, so she took advantage of the cue to call out a figure that was startlingly higher than the collector's; so that he instantly shook his head in refusal of any further bidding or interest in the chair.

"What! no higher bid from you when you want this chair?" coaxed the auctioneer.

Again the man frowned and shook his head positively, but he did this hoping Polly would weaken, and then he would come back and mention a slight increase on her price.

The auctioneer thinking his negative signal was final, turned to Polly and said: "It's yours, Miss. And allow me to congratulate you, not alone on having acquired the finest bit in this entire lot, but also on being a very clever and experienced buyer."

The moment the collector realized that the auctioneer had knocked down the chair to his adversary without again consulting him, he protested. "I claim that chair!" cried he.

"By what right?" demanded the auctioneer.

“Because I was bidding on it against this young lady, and you did not cry it three times as you should have done.”

“I asked you, and you shook your head. Then I told you it was worth higher bidding, but you denied going higher—a shake of the head is as legal a denial as a spoken word, in this case. I have witnesses that you refused to go higher, so I sold it to the young lady.”

The man who was a dealer and had a customer for such a chair, was furious at having lost it to a mere girl. He began an argument, but the auctioneer calmly remarked: “This is a public sale, and as such, order must be maintained. I shall have to ask anyone creating a disturbance to leave the premises.”

That quieted the disputant, and Polly kept her chair. Her companions congratulated her on securing it, but Mr. Fabian wished to know why she took such a sudden fancy for the piece of furniture, when there were other fine pieces that might appeal to a girl.

“Because, the moment I saw that chair tapestry it reminded me of my home at Pebbly Pit. We have just such wonderful sunsets as that chair covering represents. Glorious colors that flare in points at some places, and then fade away in the western sky like misty violets in a rivulet; or like the gray of twilight before night falls,” explained Polly, reminiscently.

“Oh yes, Polly,” assented Eleanor. “Just like we saw over Rainbow Cliffs, so many times.”

“Miss Polly is some artiste natural born, I think,” said the Count, who had been deeply impressed by the girl’s remark.

“Polly’s a poet and doesn’t know it!” declared Dodo, fervently. “If I ever could say such a lovely thing in words about an old chair, I’d begin to believe I had escaped Ma’s plans for a title in the family.”

Of course her companions laughed at her unconscious rhyme and, also, at her quaint expression of face, but the Count wondered what she meant by “a title in the family.”

After Polly secured the armchair, Eleanor bid upon and got a XVI century cabinet of the Lyonnaise school; and Dodo bought a Renaissance hall table. Mr. Fabian secured a Spanish Renaissance divan, and the Count managed to buy the pictures he wanted. Towards the end of the day, Polly and Eleanor secured a few odd things, such as an iron lock, chiselled from a solid block of metal that was said to date from the XV century; and Polly got an old door-knocker that was

more than two hundred years old.

The last group of furniture pieces put up for sale, that day, was arranged on the dais just as Mr. Fabian was preparing to go. He turned and saw it, then the auctioneer called out: "Here is a splendid suite of furniture for a bachelor's den. Now what am I bid for it?"

Mr. Fabian whispered to the girls: "It is a pity the man should try to sell that set by praising it as he did. He knows, only too well, that it is unsuitable for a man's room. But tell me why, girls?"

Dodo curled her lips in scorn at the elaborate pieces and remarked: "Would one wish to decorate a ball-room with black crêpe?"

Her friends laughed at the very sarcastic criticism, and the Count said, smilingly: "But that is not mourning furniture!"

"No, but it is just as bad taste for a man's room. Why should a bachelor's *den* use soft tints and motifs of Louis XVI period, when they are more appropriate in a reception room, or a lady's boudoir?"

That last retort from such a prepossessing girl, completed the havoc in the Count's susceptible heart. He thenceforth planned to lay his title and encumbered Italian estate at Dodo's feet. But he found it not as easy as he had thought for, when he took this fervent decision.

He invited the American party to be his guests that night, at dinner, and he arranged so that he could sit next to Dodo. But that was all the good it did him, for the girls were so full of the fun and joys of bargain hunting that they spoke of nothing else.

After the exultation of possession had calmed down, somewhat, Nancy Fabian said: "Daddy, why are some such atrocious pieces of furniture as we saw today flung to the people?"

"One reason why France has, of recent years, had some such uncouth furniture made, is because the Guild of Cabinet Makers is no longer in existence to enforce its laws. There was once a provision made, in 1645, that every piece of furniture made in France had to be passed upon by the Guild. And that is why old furniture from these French cabinet makers, is so highly prized by collectors, now.

"This Guild examined every aspirant to the title of Master Craftsman, and without a certificate signed by ten of the jurors of the Guild, he dared not establish himself; their regulations were very strict so as to protect art,

consequently but few atrocities were cast upon the market of France for more than two hundred years after the founding of this protective Guild.”

“Well, it’s too bad we haven’t a Guild in America,” said Polly, her tone causing her friends to laugh heartily.

CHAPTER IX—MR. ALEXANDER'S SURPRISE

The next day Mr. Fabian conducted his girls to various cathedrals and famous buildings in the city, and that night they returned to the hotel to find little Mr. Alexander standing in front of it waiting for them.

"I've got turrible news for you-all," said he in a most lugubrious tone. His face expressed the greatest sorrow and concern.

"My goodness, Pa! What's the matter?" cried Dodo, anxiously.

"It's worse than you-all can reckon, so I'll tell you. This afternoon when I come back from a little joy-ride, I saw a dandy little car out here, but when I took a good squint at it I saw it were a Packard Roadster. At that, my legs began to shake and I feared Maggie might have come over, in spite of my wire to her.

"And then, before I could get courage to go indoors, I heard her voice. I tried to hide behind that big pillar, there, but no use! So, Dodo, your Ma's here and is in the parlor talking to Count Chalmys."

As everyone had expected to hear dire news, the relief upon hearing that Mrs. Alexander had arrived was so great that it caused a general laugh. Nancy Fabian turned and asked of the little millionaire: "How did your wife meet the Count?"

"Oh, I figgered that she would be so glad to know a real live Count, that I saved my own head that way. She won't remember my misdeeds now," softly laughed Mr. Alexander.

When the exchange of effusive greetings on the part of Mrs. Alexander, and the quiet welcome from the other Americans, had subsided, she remembered something to tell Dodo, that concerned her deeply.

"What do you think, Dodo? About those Osgoods?"

"How should I know, Ma. Your tone indicates that you are not very well pleased with them, whatever it is," replied Dodo.

"I should say *not*! Why, I found out that the title of 'Sir' and 'Lady' does not mean *anything* in their family. Jimmy can't inherit the honor, either. His father

got it because he did something unusual with a factory that made munitions when the war first broke out. It wasn't an entailed title at all, and it stops with this Osgood. Dear me! When I think of it—you might have had to marry just a plain James Osgood, after all!"

"Oh no, I wouldn't, Ma. I said from the first, that I never would marry anyone I didn't like. And it would take an American to do that," declared Dodo.

"What happened when you learned about the title, Maggie?" asked Mr. Alexander, unusually gay over the information.

"Why, I just told Jimmy Osgood that I wouldn't *take* him to Paris in my new car, if that was the case. I think they might have told me how such matters were conducted in England, then I might have spared all my time in planning as I did." Mrs. Alexander's voice plainly expressed the disapproval she felt at keeping her in ignorance of the methods of Burke.

Her hearers managed to keep straight faces, however, and waited until the Count said good-day. Then they all went upstairs to plan about the tour in Europe.

"I invited Count Chalmys to accept the empty seat beside me in my new roadster," ventured Mrs. Alexander.

"You did!" gasped Dodo, unbelievably.

"But he refused, didn't he?" said Nancy, confidently.

"Oh no! he said he'd be delighted. He planned to go home to his castle, soon, and he said you-all were going to visit him there; so he felt he might accept my invitation to tour with me, as long as we were to be all in one party," explained Mrs. Alexander, greatly pleased with the outcome of her meeting with the Count.

Dodo groaned, and her friends smiled in sympathy, for they understood the reason of Mrs. Alexander's sudden interest in an Italian Count.

"When do you propose to start on this tour?" asked the lady, after a few moments of silence.

"Right away—tomorrow!" declared Dodo, angrily.

"Oh! surely not before we buy some nice gowns and things to wear?" cried her mother, tragically.

"Yes, at once! *I* don't want any new clothes!" snapped Dodo.

"But, my child! What about that trooso chest. It ought to be filled, you know, to be ready to send home," reminded the mother.

“Oh, I gave that chest away for a birthday gift,” said Dodo, indifferently.

“Gave it away! Why—what for?” gasped Mrs. Alexander.

“I didn’t want it, and it was my very own—you said so.”

As that was true, nothing more was said about the chest, at the time, but nothing could stop Mrs. Alexander from planning and scheming about her daughter’s future. As the other girls and Mrs. Fabian said nothing about shopping, but preferred waiting until they returned to Paris again, it was decided that they would start on the trip the following day. That evening was devoted to studying a road-map and selecting an itinerary.

Mr. Alexander had but one desire in the matter, and that began and ended with the first lap of the drive. “I want to see the war-zone, where our boys fit them Germans. I hear ’em tell in the hotel lobby, that the roads are fair all through them battle fields like Verdun, on the Somme, and others. So I want to drive there, and then, afterwards, you can do what you-all like on this tour with me as chauffeur.”

“Oh, we *all* want to pass through those famous places, too, so that is settled,” exclaimed Nancy Fabian, glancing at her friends for approval of this plan.

“All right. Put that down on your paper, Professor,” advised Mr. Alexander; then he leaned back and sighed as if he had done all that was expected of him.

After several hours of planning and writing, the route was mapped out, and the group felt that it was as good as any ever made by a number of tourists.

It was noon the next day before the party really started on its way, as the Count failed to appear on time, and an hour was lost in trying to get him on a telephone. When he did appear, he had a gorgeous bouquet of hothouse flowers for Mrs. Alexander, and a huge box of bon-bons for the girls.

That afternoon they drove over the famous sector where millions fought and fell for a Principle, in the greatest mortal combat the world has ever witnessed. After seeing the ruins the war made of Verdun, as well as of other villages, Mr. Alexander drove to Reims. Here they found quarters for the night, and waited to visit the cathedral in the morning.

From Reims they went through St. Quentin, and on to Boulogne. That night they stopped at a quaint inn in Normandy. The ancient hostelry was but two stories high, with upper windows overlooking a wonderful garden. The high stone wall that enclosed this garden had niches, every so often, in the thick wall.

Mr. Fabian spoke excellent French, and the other members in the party understood everything that was said, so all enjoyed the conversation that now took place.

“Have you been owner of this Inn very long?” asked Mr. Fabian, courteously.

“All my life, and my father and grandfather before me,” was the unexpected reply.

“Then you can tell me if this is an old house, or only modelled after the old style.”

“Ah!” breathed the old man, softly. “It ees so old that my grandfather knew not when it was built. It ees the gate-house of a convent that formerly was famous. When it was abandoned, because of the Order being abolished by law, my grandfather was left to supervise the work.

“He bought the property when it was sold, and since then his descendants have lived here. With the old stone gate-house this garden patch was included, but all the other buildings were razed and the land sold.”

“How interesting,” remarked Mr. Fabian. “Then that old garden was really part of the original convent grounds?”

“Yes, and those niches you see in the wall held statues and holy figures at one time. Some of them were carved by well-known men about here. I found several of them buried in the garden when I turned up the soil for my father. I was but a boy, then, and I remember he took them away and put them in the attic.”

The old host then showed the guests to their various rooms and left them to wash and dress for the evening meal. Polly stood gazing from her window for a time, picturing the life of past days in that garden, when Eleanor exclaimed suddenly and called to her.

“Just look at this heavy walnut bed. It has the most marvellous carvings on its head and foot boards.”

After examining the figures carved on the wood, Polly went to the toilet-stand and poured some water from a heavy ewer into the stoneware basin. As she was about to place the ewer on the tiled floor beside the stand, she saw the carved panels that formed the sides of the stand.

“Nolla! Do help me move this heavy stand out to the light—I verily believe it is an antique!” cried she.

Having satisfied themselves that the panels were genuine old pieces, they ran to

Mr. Fabian's room and called him forth. He examined the stand and the bed, and some of the old stoneware pieces in the room, and sighed. "We've stumbled over a veritable Mecca of antiques, girls," said he.

That night after supper, Mr. Fabian led the host to tell of how he acquired the pieces of furniture. And the result of that talk was the purchase of the stand, the bed, and many smaller pieces of stoneware and odd furnishings that had been replevined from the convent building, generations before. Even the few statues that had been stored in the low attic of the Inn were sold to the Americans; and the old couple were made happy at the knowledge that, at last, they were provided for in old age, through the sale of the objects that they could readily do without.

The Count was made supremely happy with the purchase of a holy picture which he declared was from the brush of an old master. And Mrs. Alexander smiled contentedly because the Count was so kind and chivalrous to her.

A group of humble peasants gathered, the following morning, to wish the tourists God-speed, for the entire village had heard of the good fortune that had come to their old friends at the Inn. When a few furlongs farther on from the Inn, Mr. Fabian read a sign that said "To Abbeville," he said aloud, "Well, of all things! We stopped at that famous old convent spot and never knew it, until this minute."

From Boulogne, where they wired Mr. Ashby about the bed and other articles they had secured, they drove to Ostend. Thence to Bruges, where Mr. Fabian showed the girls the famous Belfry that is three hundred and fifty feet high. The quaint irregular houses in the streets of the town were duly admired and snapshots taken of them by Dodo; then the two cars started for Antwerp.

Along the road, and in the villages they passed through, most of the peasants wore wooden shoes. One woman was seen driving a tiny milk-cart that was drawn by a large dog. The tourists stopped for a drink of the rich milk, and Mrs. Fabian noticed the bit of priceless Flemish lace pinned upon the peasant's head.

"How much do you want for that piece of lace, my good woman?" asked she, eagerly.

But the woman shook her head and smiled, saying: "My family lace. Gran'mudder make it."

Antwerp still displayed the scars left by the German occupation, so the tourists decided not to tarry there very long.

“When I see these things, I feel like I want to war all over again,” exclaimed Mr. Alexander.

Late that night they entered Rotterdam, and there found a fine Inn and a hearty dinner awaiting them. Having replenished the inner being, they started out to see the town by night.

“I don’t see much use in remaining for a day in Rotterdam, girls,” remarked Mr. Fabian. “There isn’t much of interest to us, here, and I don’t believe we can pick up any ‘old bits’ in the city. Bargains in antiques are more readily found in the country places.”

So, late the following morning, they started for Delft; along the road Mr. Fabian stopped several times and secured a few fine pieces of old Delftware.

The tourists remained at The Hague that night. It was a quaint, beautiful old place founded in the year 1250. The artistic-roofed houses, the funny dormer windows, the varied and picture-like gables of the buildings which were placed irregularly on either side of the narrow crooked streets, provided interesting scenes that the girls eagerly captured in the camera.

At an antique shop, on a side street not much wider than a country-lane, the girls found several old door-knockers with the ancient dates stamped in the metal. A great massive lock and key were bought by Mr. Fabian, and Dodo got an iron lantern.

Leaving The Hague, the cars drove along beautiful country roads, with low white-washed cottages having green wooden shutters at the windows, standing prim and pure beside the way. Everything was so clean and neat, though the owners seemed poor, that it was remarked by the girls.

“When you compare these peasants and their spotless homes, to the filth and shiftlessness of the peasants in Ireland, you cannot help but wonder what causes the vast difference in living,” said Polly.

“It is not poverty alone that does this, Polly,” said Mrs. Fabian. “One must go way back and seek deep for the causation of such conditions.”

The girls did not understand what she meant, then, but they could not help but remember her words later, when they began to question political and national problems. Then they understood.

At Leyden Mr. Fabian showed the girls the university that is erected on the ground where the Pilgrims landed after their flight from England, and before their historic sailing for America. And at Haarlem, the two girls Polly and

Eleanor, bought a lot of healthy bulbs to be sent home for planting in the Spring. As Haarlem is the center of the bulb-growing industry of Holland, it displayed more tulips to the square foot, than the girls had ever thought it possible to grow.

That evening the two cars entered Amsterdam. The hotel was good, and the stop-over most welcome, for the autoists were tired of the continuous ride for several days, resting only at night.

The Count managed to get in telephonic connection with Paris, that night, and immediately afterwards, he seemed ill at ease. So much so, that he finally left the others and they saw him no more that evening. Mrs. Alexander showed her disappointment at this unexpected action of her charming Count and refused to be consoled by anyone else.

At breakfast in the morning, Count Chalmys announced his unexpected desertion of the touring party. "I find I have to fly at once to my domain in Northern Italy, my dear friends. A most unexpected business affair there demands my presence. Ah, such is the tormented life of a land-owner. He can never enjoy freedom, but must always be at the beck and call of others."

"Good gracious, Count! Won't you join us again, as soon as you settle this business in Italy?" asked Mrs. Alexander, anxiously.

"I trust I may, dear lady. But *you* must surely visit me at my palace, when you tour Italy," returned the gallant Count. Then he gave minute directions to Mr. Fabian how they might reach his estates.

After Count Chalmys had gone the tourists had Mrs. Alexander to entertain; before this she had devoted her entire time to the Count as he was her guest in the small car. Now she insisted upon the girls taking turns to ride in her car, and this proved to be unappreciated by the three who wished to be with Mr. Fabian in order to hear his opinions on the places they passed. Finally Nancy offered to devote her attention to Dodo's mother until they could discover a new "title" to occupy her heart and mind and roadster.

While in Amsterdam they visited an old-fashioned coffee-shop with living-quarters back of it. When Mr. Fabian explained to the good woman who served, that his girls were decorators from America, and they wished to see the tiles he had heard of in her living-room, she smiled graciously and led the way to the rear rooms.

"Oh Nolla! Look at the funny little ladders one has to climb to reach the beds!" cried Polly, laughingly, as she pointed out the built-in beds about five feet above

the floor.

“I should think they’d smother—all shut up back of those curtains, at night,” remarked Dodo.

“And not a bit of ventilation that can get in any other way,” added Eleanor.

The hostess comprehended something of what was said, and she laughingly shrugged her plump shoulders and pointed to her two “younkers” who were as fat and rosy as Baldwin apples. Mr. Fabian was admiring the wonderful dado of tiles, that ran about the room from the floor to a height of four feet. Each tile presented a scene of Holland, and they were so set that a white tile alternated with a Delft blue one, making the whole pattern very effective. The windows were placed above the dado, thus being four feet above the floor. But instead of high narrow windows, they were square, or low and long, and opened in casement style.

While Mr. Fabian was conversing with the woman about old tiles and Dutch furniture, Polly spied a corner cupboard. She beckoned Eleanor over to it, and the two immediately began examining the old blue ware in the china-closet.

Dodo heard them and hurried over, and that drew Mr. Fabian’s attention to them, also. His hostess smiled, and led him across the large room to the cupboard.

Before the collectors left that room, they had acquired some fine old Delft pieces, and Mr. Fabian hugged an antique jug that he was not sure of, but its markings would prove its great age as soon as he could trace it, he was sure.

Mr. Alexander, who had been almost ignored during the past few days, excepting at night when they stopped at different towns for rest, now said: “Would you like to reach Cologne tonight? I figger we can do it easily, onless you want to stop anywhere?”

“The only place I want to stop and give the girls a peep into a porcelain factory, is at Bonn. But that is on the other side of Cologne; so let her go, if you like,” returned Mr. Fabian.

The roads, however, were too bad for speeding, and they had to be content with reaching Arnheim for the night. The next day they reached Cologne, but drove on to Bonn, as Mr. Fabian had planned. In the afternoon they reached Coblentz where the great Byzantine Cathedral was visited and pictures taken of it. The next day, on the trip southward, along the Rhine, were many picturesque castles and fortresses which made splendid scenes for the camera.

Mr. Fabian wished to conduct the girls from Frankfort to Nürnberg, a famous old

mediaeval city with unique houses still to be seen, although they were built hundreds of years ago. But the girls had no desire to visit any German cities, they said.

“But it is a famous place,” argued Mr. Fabian. “It was the very first town in Germany to embrace Christianity.”

“Maybe so, but later, they clearly demonstrated to the world that they never understood the fundamentals of Christianity,” retorted Eleanor.

“Well aside from that, Nürnberg is the place where white paper was first invented,” continued Mr. Fabian.

“I’ve heard said that an *American* invented white paper and the German who put up the money for the experiment, stole the formulae,” declared Polly.

“I never heard *that*, but surely you can’t contradict me when I say that sulphur matches first came to life there. They are a great convenience in the home and save us a lot of trouble; and the Germans discovered that use for sulphur,” continued Mr. Fabian.

“Maybe the world has *now* discovered that the Germans might have saved us a lot of trouble if they had used the sulphur for self-extinction purposes,” snapped Eleanor, who was a partisan for the Allies.

Her companions refused to laugh at her remark although they wanted to; but Polly, who was more lenient to an enemy, said: “I never can understand how it is that the Germans always invent such wonderful things.”

“Yes, Prof., especially as we Yanks are just as brainy and capable; yet you seldom hear of an American inventing such things,” added Dodo.

“Oh yes, we do, Dodo,” returned Mr. Fabian. “But the German nation push a thing with national zeal and make money out of the world, for themselves. America generally keeps quiet about her patents and uses them for her own benefit.”

“But there is a deeper causation for all this material inventiveness, too,” added Mrs. Fabian. “We must never lose sight of the fact that America is the cradle of Freedom where Eternal Truth lifted its banner. Whereas Germany brought forth only the material emblems of brain and earthly power, the New World has brought forth the Hope of Heaven—freedom in every sense of the word.”

CHAPTER X—A DANGEROUS PASS ON THE ALPS

Mr. Alexander drove through the Alsatian country with keen interest, for the costumes and beauty of the peasants were so attractive that the tourists liked to watch them and take snapshots of picturesque groups.

Mr. Fabian directed Mr. Alexander to take the road to Lyons as he wished to have the girls visit the factories where silk, velvet and velour were manufactured. Nancy Fabian had wearied of Mrs. Alexander's endless chatter about her million and the Count, and why anyone like the Osgoods should lift their heads when they were so poor and proud!

So the day the two cars started for the Alps, (Mr. Alexander hoping to cross them and stop over-night on the other side,) Mrs. Fabian took her place beside Mrs. Alexander, in the roadster. The small car usually trailed the seven-passenger car, but this day the order was accidentally changed, while climbing the mountains.

It was rough travelling at the best, but the higher the cars climbed the rougher became the road, and at last the steep trail narrowed so that it was almost impossible to pass another car on the same roadway.

But the views were so wonderful and the mountains so majestic, that everyone was silent and deeply impressed. The cars ascended one peak after another, and as each summit was reached the autoists sat and marvelled at the height of the mountain and wondered at the views. Then they would seem to drop sheer down again to the valley between the two peaks. This mode of travelling continued for a long rime, until one of the highest peaks of the Alps towered before them. This cloud-piercing mountain-top once passed over, they would reach the border line of Italy and begin descending the range again.

Mrs. Alexander was a fairly good driver, but she had more assurance in her ability than her understanding actually warranted. She was talking nonsensically, as usual, with half her mind on the road and the other half interested in what she was picturing to her companion, when she turned a sharp curve in the road.

“Oh-OH!” she screamed, as she tried to use the emergency brake and turn the wheel to avoid a great boulder which had rolled down upon the path.

But she had not held the machine sufficiently in hand to instantly benefit her, when the occasion unexpectedly arose that needed presence of mind. Consequently the new roadster struck the rock with enough force to crush in the radiator and headlights. The second car came around the curve, the passengers having heard the shrill scream and looking fearfully for the catastrophe they believed to have happened to the two women.

The shock of the collision had thrown Mrs. Alexander across the wheel while her head broke the wind-shield; but Mrs. Fabian had instantly clutched the side and back of the seat and was only badly shaken. Everyone in the touring car jumped out and rushed over to see if either of the ladies had been seriously hurt. Mrs. Alexander groaned and held her side but could not speak.

“This is a fine pickle!” exclaimed Mr. Alexander. “On top of the wurrold, and no sign of any help at hand to do anything for you. Even the blamed old knob on this peak had to roll down and block the way.”

Mrs. Fabian was trying to make her companion speak and tell them where she was injured, but she shook her head as if unable to speak. Dodo and her father addressed her by every affectionate name they could think of, and begged her to say what hurt. Her face was slightly cut but the blood made it seem appalling to others.

“If you’ll only get over this, Maggie, I’ll never put another straw in your way of hooking a title,” begged Mr. Alexander, his expression a mixture of renunciation and misery.

After many minutes filled with suspense for the motorists, and the same time filled by Mrs. Alexander’s groans and helpless rolling of her eyes from one to another of the distracted motorists, she gradually recovered enough to whisper: “The wheel must have fractured my ribs. I can feel the sharp ends of the splintered bones cut me everytime I breathe, or move a muscle.”

Mrs. Fabian then ordered the men to retire back of the big car, while she helped the girls in gently lifting the injured lady and placing her out flat on the comfortable seat of the roadster. With many a cry and catching of breath, the patient was finally stretched out.

“Now I shall have to cut your gown open in front to get at your stays,” said Mrs. Fabian, using the small scissors she kept in her large handbag.

Mrs. Alexander tried to object at having her expensive suit ruined, but Dodo held her hands while the scissors cut their way up and down. Once the outer clothing was opened the cause of the sharp point of the “fracture” was revealed.

“Thank goodness, Mrs. Alexander, that it is no worse!” exclaimed Mrs. Fabian, and the girls seconded that exclamation as they found the front steels of the stays had broken and were digging into the flesh under them.

The silken corsets were soon slashed through and the broken fronts removed, then Dodo said to her mother: “Take a deep breath, now.”

“O—oh—I’m afraid to, Dodo. It will hurt!” whimpered Mrs. Alexander.

“No it won’t! Mrs. Fabian managed to pull the steels out and she doesn’t believe any of your ribs are broken.”

So, holding tightly to her daughter’s hand to encourage her, Mrs. Alexander breathed lightly. As she felt no sharp dagger thrust of pain, she took a deeper breath, and finally reassured herself that her bones were as good as ever. At last she sat up and began fretting over her damaged travelling suit, in such a tone that everyone around her, knew she was fully recovered.

While this “first aid” had been going on, no one noticed the pebbles that were dropping from the over-hanging crags that seemed to bolster up the peak above them. But when Mrs. Alexander found she could move and get out of the car, some of the stones struck the girls. They gazed up but could see nothing beyond the high run of crag that faced the roadway, consequently, they moved from under the shower which kept getting worse.

Mr. Fabian ran up now and expressed deepest concern as he said: “Everyone try to get under that great rock, at once. I’ll shove the roadster under the cliff, too.”

“Where’s Pa?” cried Dodo, sensing some unusual danger.

“Here he comes!” called Polly, seeing Mr. Alexander driving his car close up under the rocks.

The moment the car was halted close in to the bank, Mr. Alexander jumped out and ran to help Mr. Fabian push and pull the damaged roadster under the cliff, also.

“What’s the matter, anyway?” asked Mrs. Alexander, looking about at the others for information. But they seemed as much at sea as she was. All but Polly, who knew from experience what the signs portended.

“It looks like a slide, but it may be diverted before it goes over us.” Her

trembling voice and awed expression impressed her companions more than the words she had spoken.

“That’s what I feared, and we’ve done the only thing possible—to crouch under the cliff and wait,” added Mr. Fabian.

Mr. Alexander now took out his old black pipe and tobacco bag. As he carefully pulled open the yellow cord at the top of the cheap cotton bag he smiled and gazed at his friends. “You-all don’ know how sorry I am for you, to think you-all can’t take a smoke to kill the time we has to sit here.”

Mr. Fabian felt encouraged instantly by the wonderful acting of the little man who could thus speak and smile and joke, in face of what was now thundering and rumbling overhead—ever coming nearer the group huddling under the cliffs.

“Nothin’ like tobac to soothe the feelin’s when you’ve had a punctured rib or tire! If Maggie could only enjoy a whiff of this old friend of mine, she’d soon have got over her pain.”

That irritated his wife so that she snapped back: “Yes, a whiff of that would have killed me outright!”

The others laughed uneasily but the tense spell caused by the imminent danger was broken. Mr. Alexander puffed contentedly, but during this short exchange of conjugal sentiments of husband and wife, the slide rolled onward, and the roar now became so deafening that no one could hear a thing other than the thunder of the avalanche. Polly was the only one who really comprehended the full danger, but she showed no fear or nervousness, although she was doubtful as to the outcome of this mountain disaster.

Rocks, roots, and all kinds of débris half-frozen in snow now rolled over the cliffs and dropped over down the sides into the ravine that ran along the other side of the narrow roadway. At the quaking caused by the onrush of the avalanche, the automobiles rattled like tin toys and the cowering humans who tried to push still farther back into the rocky wall, watched the fragments of rock fall from overhead and pile upon the roadway.

The whole dreadful occurrence, thus far, had not taken more than a few minutes since the first pebble struck the roadster, but now was heard a terrible splitting and crashing as if two planets were colliding; then the very cliff where they sat seemed to roll over and shake the earth. The frightened tourists clung to each other and screamed in a panic, but the worst was really over.

The last horror was caused by the sudden impact of the land-slide when it struck

the solid wall of rock that rose sheer up back of the cliff which skirted the road for tourists. This wall diverted the avalanche and threw it along the gully which had been made by other preceding snow-slides in the past. Had the present slide been able to crush the rocky wall and come straight on down the mountain sides, nothing earthly could have spared the tourists from being powdered under the grinding of rock and ice.

The roar and tumult of the avalanche continued a few minutes longer, but it gradually died away and Mr. Fabian stood tremblingly upon his feet and tried to see which way the slide had gone.

“Humph! ‘A miss is as good as a mile’!” quoted Mr. Alex.

“Maybe; but don’t you go out to survey until we-all are sure this shower of ice and trash is safely past us,” advised Polly.

“Don’t you think we had better get from under this cliff?” asked Eleanor, nervously.

“If it stood that shock, it will last a few moments more, I reckon,” replied Mr. Alexander.

The other members in the party were too frightened at seeing the rocks and ice that still poured over the cliff, to speak a word. When the dropping had ceased, however, and the roar was diminishing, Polly heaved an audible sigh.

POLLY WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO COMPREHENDED THE DANGER.

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“Well, folkses! That’s over! I’ve been in slides on the Rockies, but I never felt so queer as this one made me feel. When you understand your ground well, and can reckon on what might hold or what might give way, you feel easier. But on the Alps where all is new and strange to me, I wasn’t sure of this cliff being able to resist the impact.”

“Then it *was* very dangerous for us, was it?” gasped Mrs. Alexander, paling under the rouge on her face.

“Danger! Oh no—no more than jumpin’ off that precipice for a lark!” laughed Mr. Alexander, knocking the half-smoked ashes from his old pipe, and tucking the black friend away in his pocket.

“Well, Ebenezer, when I see you waste good tobacco like that, I know you are so unbalanced that you don’t know what you’re doing,” retorted Mrs. Alexander.

This remark caused a laugh and everyone felt better immediately. Then Mr. Fabian turned to the little man and said: "We had better see how much damage is done to the roadster. Perhaps it will have to be towed to the next stopping place."

It took another good hour to overhaul the little car and even then it was found to be too badly damaged to travel under its own power. While the two men were trying to repair the car, the girls worked to clear away the stones and débris that encumbered and blocked the road. The large rock that had caused the accident to Mrs. Alexander's car, could be avoided, with careful steering, if the other trash was out of the way.

Polly showed her companions how to construct rough brooms of the brush that had fallen over the cliff, and soon they were sweeping for dear life, with the queer-looking implements. But the brush-brooms did the work thoroughly, and when the cars were ready to continue on the way, the road was cleared.

"Prof., before we leave here, I think we ought to place a sort of warning on the other side of that awful heap and the chasms in the roadway that the avalanche caused. We might use the red-silk shirt-waist I have in the bag," said Polly, anxiously.

"Or go on to report to the nearest forester we meet," said Mr. Alexander, from his western experience.

"We'll do both," returned Mr. Fabian. "It won't take long to ram a pole in the débris and tie the red flag on it, but it may save others a great deal of danger."

"Better still, if we can crawl over the slide that is piled high up on the trail, I might tie the flag to a young tree far enough down the roadway to spare anyone the climb to this narrow pass where they cannot turn around," added Polly.

So Mr. Fabian and Polly managed to creep warily over the obstructions which were heaped over the roadway and, further down the trail, they found a tree that grew beside the road. Here the red blouse signal was left flying from the stripped young tree, and a warning was printed on the white silk cuff, telling of the dangers ahead in the path.

When the tourists were settled in the cars again, the large car leading and the crippled roadster being towed behind, they felt that they had done their duty and expressed their deep gratitude for their own safety, by leaving the signal flag for others to see and read.

It was slow work zig-zagging down the great height, as the little car could not work its brakes very well, and it had to be held back by the rear mud-guards of

the leading car. But the breathless descent was finally accomplished and in the valley they found a tiny garage, placed there for the repairing of damaged automobiles.

“I shouldn’t think it would pay you to keep up a shop in this isolated spot,” remarked Mr. Fabian, when the mechanic was working on Mrs. Alexander’s car.

“But you don’t know how many tourists cross the Alps in summer; everyone finds something wrong, or runs out of gas, by the time they reach this valley,” explained the man.

Before the tourists were ready to depart, a number of cars had driven up, asked for gas or repairs, and then were told of the land-slide on top of the peak. This spared them climbing, as they could go by another road. The passengers in these cars were most grateful to Mr. Fabian’s party for the information, thus several parties had been benefited, before a crimson car drove up and a handsome young man called to the mechanic.

“Is this the right road over Top Pass?”

“Yes, but you can’t pass,” returned the man, then he told of the experiences the people in the American party had just had.

“My, that must have been some excitement! Wish we had been there,” cried the other young man, eagerly.

“Are you an American?” asked Mr. Fabian, certain of it even as he spoke, because the accent and manner of speech was Yankee.

The two young men exchanged looks with each other, and one replied: “We lived in the United States for many years.”

This speaker was about twenty-two or three, but the other one was younger. They both were exceptionally good-looking and free in their manner. It could be readily seen that their car and clothes were of the best, and one would naturally conclude that they were wealthy young men touring Europe for pleasure.

The roadster was now repaired and ready to be used, so the bill was paid and Mrs. Alexander got in. Mrs. Fabian was rather timid about trusting herself with such a chauffeur again, so Mr. Fabian seated himself beside the owner of the car.

“Which way do you go from here?” called out one of the strange young men.

“On to Turin,” answered Mr. Alexander.

“Do you mind if we follow you? We lost our way to Turin, somewhere, back

there, and when we found ourselves here we decided to go on and not stop at Turin.”

This sounded rather lame for an excuse, but no one could refuse permission for the boys to follow, if they wanted to—so Mr. Alexander shouted back at them: “This air is free, and so is the earth! Foller what you like, as long as you don’t run us down and make us stop for another over-haulin’ of the cars.”

The young men laughed and thanked the sarcastic little man, but the girls smiled as they wondered if this change in route—or minds of the two young men—was caused by seeing a number of pretty misses in the touring car?

The day was far spent when the roadster was in a shape to continue the tour, and Turin was many a mile away. So it was found to be impossible to reach there that night. The recent experience with the avalanche had caused a reaction, too, and as everyone felt worn out with the tension, it was decided to stop at a small inn in the foot-hills of the Alps.

The automobiles had been left in the shed that was used for the cows and oxen, and the travellers entered the low-ceiled primitive room with ravenous appetites. The inn-keeper was cooking at a huge fireplace at the end of the room, and the odor of bacon and onions permeated the entire place.

“Oh!” sighed Eleanor, rolling her eyes upwards, “I never smelled anything so delicious!”

“Yet you abominate onions at other times,” laughed Polly.

“It all depends on the state of your appetite,” retorted Eleanor.

When the tourists were refreshed by washing and brushing, they returned to the great living-room. The two young strangers were there before them. The older of the two acted as spokesman and now introduced himself and his companion.

“This is my cousin, Alan Everard, of Winnipeg, Canada. And I am Basil Traviston, a resident of California, but not a native of that State.”

Mr. Fabian introduced his wife, and the other members of his party by name only, without mentioning the city or state whence they came. All through supper hour he maintained a dignified attitude which was meant to warn off any young men with dangerously good looks. But he might as well have tried to build a snow-man under the heat of a July sun.

Both young men were so charming, and told many witty stories which kept their audience in stitches of laughter that it was generally conceded, afterward, the

two were most desirable fellow-travellers. Mr. and Mrs. Fabian sat up a full hour after the girls were asleep, however, trying to pick a flaw in the behavior of the two strangers, which might form a basis for the separation from the touring party. When all was said and done, the only tangible excuse was the fact that they were both so handsome and unknown.

The next morning the three cars started for Turin, and during the tiresome ride the two young men managed to keep up an exchange of interesting remarks that amused everyone. When they stopped for luncheon in the middle of the day, the two boys insisted upon waiting on the ladies and making themselves generally useful.

The time came for the tourists to get in their cars again, but Mrs. Alexander had taken a decided liking for the younger of the two young men—Alan Everard. So she invited him to travel in her car, and that left Mr. Fabian without a place.

“It’s only as far as Turin, you know,” explained Mrs. Alexander, trying to smile sweetly on the guide of the touring party.

Rather than create any unpleasantness, Mr. Fabian got in beside Basil Traviston. But he was determined, as long as he was forced to accept the seat, to learn more about the two new additions to his party.

After a perfunctory exchange of sentiments, Mr. Fabian said: “Your name is very English, and the fact that your cousin is from Winnipeg, leads me to judge that you both are of English descent.”

“My cousin’s real name is not Everard—that is his first name; but we both are travelling incognito on the Continent, as our titles and names are so well-known that people stand to stare, and annoy us with their interest. So we decided to travel unknown, this season.”

Mr. Fabian frowned, and glanced side-ways from his eyes, to see if the young man was presuming upon his intelligence. But Traviston was driving with a most guileless expression. In fact, no handsome babe could have appeared more innocent than he.

“It really seems as if we have been unusually blessed—or cursed, I don’t know which—with young men who claim titles. Mrs. Alexander wished so intensely for titled young men to travel with, it looks as if she attracted them to our party,” said Mr. Fabian, smiling cynically.

“Is that so?” returned Traviston, but his tone and expression failed to show any resentment or interest in the information. Mr. Fabian wondered, and decided not

to tread on thin ice any more, just then.

But Mrs. Alexander was faring much better with the young man in her car. Almost immediately after they had resumed the tour she asked pointedly: "Your cousin's name, and yours as well, is very English. Perhaps you belong to an old family?"

"Oh yes," returned Everard. "Both of us came over, this year, on purpose to trace our family-trees. I have learned that my people go back to Adam without a break."

"Not really!" gasped Mrs. Alexander, astonished at such a long line of ancestry.

"Yes, and Basil now believes he can antedate Adam, and trace some facts about his ancestry that started with a missing link." Young Everard laughed softly as he spoke, but his companion never having heard of Darwin, believed every word he said; whereas he thought she knew he was joking.

"You and your cousin must be young men of leisure, or you couldn't spend a whole summer touring Europe in such an expensive car. I noticed how sporty the car was, before I saw either of you," said Mrs. Alexander.

"That's just it. When Basil and I work, we have to work like Trojans. But when we finish a contract we take life easy until the next job comes up."

"Oh, you work? I wouldn't have said so. What sort of contract work do you do?" asked Mrs. Alexander. The pedestal she had used for her two new heroes, seemed shaking dangerously.

Everard laughed. "Some people laugh at what we call work, but they don't realize that playing is the hardest kind of work. I sometimes think I will chuck the whole game and knuckle down to the real thing—work that is called work. But money is sweet, and if one likes to spend, then the weak little decision to work as others do, dies hard and I go on with the play."

Mrs. Alexander suddenly realized that she had misunderstood the young man's first words. Then he called "playing" his work, and with his money he found playing as hard a work as a poor man finds his labor. So she sympathized with his ideals and thought him a remarkable young man.

Before they reached Turin, she had her suspicions that he was a very *important* young man; for he had given her certain bits of information that told how well-known he and his cousin were, and how they dodged at certain places to travel incognito to avoid publicity.

CHAPTER XI—THE PLOT IN VENICE

That evening, at Turin, while the Fabian party were preparing to go out and see the city by night, the two young men excused themselves and were not seen again until the next day when the party were to start for Milan. Then they appeared as happy and ready to drive on as they were to join the tourists the day before at the foot of the Alps.

“I thought you had planned to remain in Turin?” said Mr. Fabian.

“We had, but upon getting in touch with Chalmys, we find he is now at his place near Venice, and we must meet him there. The rest of our crowd are there, too. So we will drive with you as far as you travel our road,” explained Traviston.

“Do you know Count Chalmys?” asked everyone in chorus.

“Of course—do you?” returned the handsome boys.

“He toured with me all through Belgium and Holland,” quickly bragged Mrs. Alexander, certain now that these two young men were “somebodies.”

“Why—I really believe you are the people he wrote us about!” exclaimed Everard, honestly surprised at his discovery.

“Yes—he said there were four of the prettiest girls in the party, but he never mentioned their names,” added Traviston.

Now the four girls smiled with gratification, and before they started for Milan, it was half decided to visit the Count at his Italian Estate, before going on to Rome, or other places south of Venice.

At Milan the young men said they would get in communication with the Count and arrange for their going there the next day, Mr. Fabian escorted his girls to the famous cathedral of Milan, and showed them the places of interest in the city, then they resumed the journey to Padua, where they purposed remaining overnight. From there they would drive to Chalmys Palace in the morning, just a few miles from Venice.

During the absence of Mr. Fabian and his companions on the tour of the city,

Mrs. Alexander had determined to get all the information she could from the two young men, when they came back to the hotel. And they, seeing how eager she was for them to develop into superior beings of quality, thought to please her that way.

When her friends joined her at the hotel again, the two young men were not there, but she was bubbling over with wonderful news.

“I knew it! *I* can tell the moment I see a young man with a title. That one who calls himself Basil Traviston, is really a Marquis of France. He came into the title a few weeks ago, but he doesn’t seem to fuss about it any. And his cousin Alan Everard is the son of Count Chalmys. That is why they know him so well.”

“The Count’s son?” gasped Nancy Fabian, unbelievably.

“Yes, and they were all in Paris together and had planned to join each other again at Venice. But they will meet at Chalmys Palace sooner than they had intended,” explained Mrs. Alexander.

“Why, Maggie, that boy Everard is only some years younger than the Count, unless the Italian looks much younger than he is; besides that, if the Count is from Italy how can the French Marquis be the boy’s cousin? And why do they come from the States?” asked Mr. Alexander deeply puzzled.

Mr. Fabian mistrusted the whole story, yet he had to admit that Traviston seemed most honest the day he spoke of his title and name. So he said nothing, but hoped to be spared further agonies from Mrs. Alexander’s worship of nobility as per her ideals.

Mrs. Fabian was back with Mrs. Alexander, and the two boys were in their car; all were travelling along the road at a good speed, and the girls were picturing what the wonderful old Chalmys’ palace would be like, when a long low car with splendid lines approached, coming from the opposite direction.

“If there isn’t Chalmys! Coming to meet us!” exclaimed Traviston, to the people in the other cars.

“How lovely of him!” sighed Mrs. Alexander, almost running her car into the ditch in her eagerness to see the Count.

The long-nosed car drew up beside the touring car and the Count leaned over the side.

“Well, this is a great pleasure, Mr. Fabian! And the ladies—how are they? As beautiful as ever, I warrant,” called he, gallantly.

The passengers in Mr. Alexander's car exchanged pleasant greetings with the Count who then asked pardon while he welcomed his two friends. He urged his car along a few feet further until it was opposite the boys' car, and there they conversed eagerly for a few minutes.

Mr. Alexander nudged Mr. Fabian and whispered: "Did you-all hear him say 'I want to speak to my two friends?' He didn't say 'I want to speak to my son.'"

Mr. Fabian nodded understandingly, but watched the Count closely. No look of paternal affection was given Everard, and if he was his son who had been absent from home so long, why wouldn't the impulsive Italian father greet him eagerly? It was a puzzle that became more intricate, to Mr. Fabian and Mr. Alexander.

The Count seemed to forget there were others nearby, and when he said: "The wire read for us to be ready for the scene at the Palace Dario, tomorrow night at nine. That is why I drove out to meet you. I'll be at the hotel tomorrow, myself, in time to go with you. Then we will all come back to the Palace the next day."

The two young men seemed regretful about something, but they nodded in acceptance of the Count's orders. Then the other members of the party were addressed.

"I find we all have to be present at Venice tomorrow night for an important engagement, and if you, my good friends, will pardon this change of plans, I will be under obligation to you if you go on to Venice now, and visit me at Chalmys Palace a few days hence."

Of course, everyone signified perfect satisfaction at changing the plans, so they all drove along the road together, towards Venice. The Count left them before reaching the city gates, and his last words were: "I will meet you at the hotel tomorrow evening, boys."

"Do you know, Fabian, it all sounds shady to me?" said little Mr. Alexander, puckering his forehead over the queer case.

"It may be that we think it is strange because we haven't the key to the situation," said Mrs. Fabian, always ready to make allowances for people.

It was a novel experience to exchange motor-cars for the picturesque gondolas of Venice. But it was a luxurious exchange. As they floated along, Mrs. Alexander was deeply annoyed because she was separated from the young folks, and placed beside her husband, who was concerned about so many pigeons living in a city; the boys entertained the girls with descriptions of romances which had a splendid setting in Venice; then they told of the prominent Motion Picture

companies who came all the way from America to take their pictures on the spot. The first evening was spent in passing through the Grand Canal and seeing the wonderful palaces on either side. Mr. Fabian knew the more famous buildings and called them out to his party in the other gondolas.

The gondolier pointed out the Custom House, the Mint, the Garden of the Royal Palace, and other buildings, before they came to a beautiful fairy-like palace.

“Isn’t that a lovely place,” remarked Polly, gazing at the very ancient-looking palace.

“That’s the Palazzo Dario, of the 15th century, famous for its beauty and preservation,” replied Alan Everard.

“Oh, is that where you are to——” began Dodo, but Polly nudged her suddenly and checked what she was about to say.

The two young men seemed not to have heard her unfinished sentence, and Mr. Fabian was all the more puzzled over the fact.

All the next day was spent in visiting the points of interest in Venice: the Palace of the Doges, the Museum and the famous old churches and palaces being on the list. The two young men had said they would have to be excused as they would be very busy all day, in order to be ready for the evening’s engagement with the Count.

The very lack of guile and duplicity in the words and the manners of the young men, caused all the more concern over what was now looming up in the fancies of the adults in the Fabian party, as a plot that had been accidentally revealed by the Count.

Mr. Alexander said he would remain about the hotel while the others were sight-seeing, as he had no use for old buildings. So he waited until everyone had gone—the two boys to their appointment and the Fabian party to the palaces and museums, then he went upstairs and boldly entered the rooms occupied by the two suspected young men.

After half an hour of careful searching he came forth with a huge bundle under his arm and an exultant expression on his face. Late that afternoon when the tourists returned to the hotel to dress for dinner and then take a sail on the Canal, Mr. Alexander beckoned in a strange manner to Mr. Fabian.

Mr. Fabian followed the little man to his room, and when the door had been carefully closed and locked, the latter said: “Well, I unearthed the foxes! I stayed

to home on purpose, today, to go through their belongings, and this is what I found!”

As he spoke, he lifted his coat from the pile on the table. Mr. Fabian wonderingly examined the articles displayed there. A number of brushes with silver backs were engraved with the name “Albert Brown.” Several handkerchiefs were initialed “B.F.S.” A fine Panama hat had a marker inside that read: “B.F. Smith.” Other small objects which evidently belonged to the two young men bore their names or initials—the same as those already read by Mr. Fabian.

“It’s all very queer, and I don’t know what to make of it,” remarked Mr. Fabian, thoughtfully.

“Well, I tell you what I’d do! I’d tell them what we know of this and then clear them out. It’s my opinion that that dark Count Chalmers fixed up something with these two good-lookers just to get us to visit his old palace and maybe play some tricks on us to get our cash,” said Mr. Alexander, rising to the very peak of tragic imagination.

Mr. Fabian laughed. “Oh no, I don’t think that; but it is all a strange experience, when you try to find a reason for it all.”

“Wall, just keep your eyes open, tonight, and see if I ain’t right in what I said. I bet those three men will get in trouble yet, and I’m going to do my part to protect the gals.”

At Mr. Alexander’s words, Mr. Fabian smiled but did not advise the little man to wait and watch before he took any further steps. He left the room to go and dress for the evening, and Mr. Alexander managed to return the articles he had taken from the boys’ rooms, without being discovered in the act.

At dinner that night, Mrs. Alexander had a very interesting story to relate.

“I was reading in the Grand Parlor of the hotel, when the Count came in. He was surprised to see me, but he said he was waiting for the two boys, who were going out with him.

“Well, we talked for a time, and then young Everard came in. He looked angry about something. He said he had had some things stolen from his room and Traviston was reporting the theft at the desk. They needed the brushes and toilet things and now they had to go without them.

“I thought it was funny, if they were only going out for an engagement, to take any toilet articles along, but I didn’t say anything. While we three were talking,

Traviston came in and, oh my! wasn't he dressed up to kill. I suppose it was the Court costume they wear when they visit royalty. He had the gold star on his breast and a wide ribbon crossed over his chest. He had a long ulster coat that his friends made him put on before they left. He never said a word about why he was dressed up, or where they were going, but I know he is going to visit some big noble—maybe a Prince."

"Maybe they're a lot of tricksters in disguise," sneered Mr. Alexander.

"Why, Ebenezer! How can you say such mean things before the girls. They know what nice young men they are," declared Mrs. Alexander.

"I must say," added Nancy Fabian, "that I met Count Chalmys in Paris just before the Art Classes disbanded, and I never saw anything out of the way. He was always very gallant and kind."

"You never told me how it was you met him, Nancy," said her father.

Nancy flushed but decided to speak out. "Well, he was studying art posing at the school, and having the dark beauty and magnificent form of a Greek, he was requested to pose as a gladiator. He explained to me later, that it was the first time in his life that he posed, but he did it for fun more than anything else. I believe him, too, because he certainly doesn't need the money which was paid for the posing."

Nancy's explanation added still other tangles to the maze, and the two men wondered what would be the final ravelling of it all.

While the girls went for their long cloaks to wear, that evening, in the gondolas, Mr. Alexander slipped away to converse with an official-looking man he had met in the corridor. The Fabians and Mrs. Alexander came downstairs first, but were soon joined by the four girls. As they passed the hotel office, Mr. Alexander followed after them.

It was a beautiful night, with a clear sky overhead and twinkling lights bobbing along the Grand Canal, as gondolas passed up and down filled with happy passengers. When the Fabian party in their gondolas drew near the Palazzo Dario, they wondered at the crowd gathered in gondolas along both sides of the Canal.

A row of gondolas was stationed across the Canal on either side of the Palazzo Dario, and Mr. Fabian learned that they could not pass without a permit.

"What's the matter? I haven't heard of any important event about to take place here tonight?" said Mr. Fabian.

“No! But ’tis so. Meester Griffet pay much money for use of Palazzo this night. You wait here on line and see the play go on,” said the officer, as he made an opening for the gondolas of the generous Americans to wedge in on the front line.

Thus it happened that not long after the Fabian party reached the spot, a cameraman climbed upon a platform built opposite the Palazzo Dario, and took his seat behind the apparatus. The blinding Cooper-Hewitt lights used in Studios, were so placed over the balcony and entrance of the Palazzo that they would reflect and bring out every detail in the picture about to be taken.

Not a word was heard from anyone in Mr. Fabian’s party, but when a Marquis of France challenged a handsome young nobleman of Italy to a duel over a lovely English girl, and the father of the handsome Italian youth intercepted, the girls in Mr. Fabian’s gondola laughed hysterically. Even Mr. Fabian had to smile.

It was most exciting to watch the two handsome young men they had known in everyday life, now play the leads in this Motion Picture Play. The Count was exceptionally good in playing his part, while the good looks of the two young men made up for any shortcomings in their acting.

“Well, that explains everything!” sighed Mr. Alexander, as the audience in the gondolas were allowed to travel onwards along the Canal.

“Oh, but I can’t believe those nice young men really have no titles!” cried Mrs. Alexander, tears of vexation filling her eyes.

“They have! Didn’t you see for yourself, Maggie?” laughed her husband. “Alan is the heir to the Count’s title, and Basil is a Marquis.”

“I wonder if their fancy names are only for stage use?” said Polly, smiling at the way everyone had been hoaxed.

“Sure! I know their real names,” returned Mr. Alexander, triumphantly. “I knew them before tonight, and I told Mr. Fabian, didn’t I, Fabian?”

“Yes, we know both their *reel* names,” laughed Mr. Fabian.

“Do tell us who they are? Maybe we’ve seen them at home,” said Eleanor.

“Well, one is Albert Brown and t’other is B. Smith. Both are from the States, and that one from Californy is likely from Hollywood, where this Comp’ny hails from,” chuckled Mr. Alexander.

Early the following morning, before the tourists left the breakfast room, Count Chalmys and his two friends hurried in.

“Well, when will you be ready to visit my palace?” said he.

“What palace?” asked Mr. Alexander, frowning at what he considered a Movie joke from the actor.

“Why, *my* palace. I expected you to come with me to visit at Chalmys Palace, today. You said you would!” wondered the Count.

“Have you really *got* a palace?” asked Dodo, innocently.

Her expression caused the others to laugh, and Count Chalmys returned: “Of course I have. Would I invite you to visit me if I had no place to entertain?”

Everyone looked at everyone else, and then at the three actors. Finally the Count began to understand that the Fabian party had not had the slightest inkling of the scene that took place the night before, and so the facts began to come forth.

Mrs. Alexander was the only member in the party who had no interest in visiting the Count, now. When he said that another scene in the play was to take place that afternoon at his palace, the girls were eager to go and watch the interesting picture-making.

So they all started out, Mrs. Alexander going, too; but she insisted upon having it understood that she was not interested in the visit other than to accompany her friends.

Count Chalmys had made elaborate preparations for the guests, and when they sat down to luncheon in the grand old palace, Mrs. Alexander stared in amazement at the crest embroidered on the napkins. The liveried servants came and went noiselessly, carrying services of old plate with the coat of arms in filigree on the engraved edges.

After luncheon the Count showed his visitors the gardens, and then they visited

the picture collection he had spoken of at the Paris Art Sale. Mr. Fabian recognized several Old Masters and felt still more puzzled over all he had learned.

Then the Griffet Company arrived and the scenes in the gardens of the Palace began, then several interiors were taken. After the Motion Picture Company had gone, Mr. Fabian said something about returning to Venice.

“Oh, not yet, surely!” exclaimed the Count. “I have ordered dinner for tonight, thinking surely you would remain and spend the evening.”

Thus persuaded, they remained and passed a very enjoyable time. On the way back to the hotel, that night, Mr. Alexander decided to ask the two young men outright, how it was their fellow actor called himself “Count” and lived in such a gorgeous manner.

B. Smith *alias* Basil Traviston laughed. “Why, Chalmys is a born Italian but he went to America as a boy. He was so handsome that he was engaged over there to take a lead in a picture where his type was needed. He never knew he could act until that trial, but he made so good that they offered him a wonderful salary to stay on with them.

“During the recent war the male line of descent in his family were killed off, so that he came into the title and property of the Chalmys. He never dreamed of such a possibility, as he was but distantly connected with the Count’s family.

“The estate is heavily taxed and debts are greater to pay, than the incomes to be collected, so the Count uses the palace for picture purposes and derives a nice little income that way, also. It is enough to pay the upkeep of the place, anyway, so that he does not have to draw on his own salary to maintain the estate.”

“Then he is a real live Count after all?” gasped Mrs. Alexander, sorrowing because she discovered it too late to avail herself of the information.

“A reel man in America, and a real Count in Italy,” laughed Alan Everard, *alias* Brown.

One more day was given to Venice, while the tourists visited the collections at the Accademia, took pictures of the beautiful churches and admired the wonderful paintings and sculpturings of San Marco, and other famous buildings.

The two handsome young men bid them good-by that afternoon, as they were going back to Paris to meet the rest of the Company and then go on to Havre where they were to sail soon, for America. And the touring party prepared to leave Venice and start for Florence, the Tuscan City where Mr. Fabian expected

to find many wonders to show his students.

CHAPTER XII—ESCAPING AN EARTHQUAKE

As the cars drew near Florence, Mr. Fabian described the natural protection afforded that city by the mountains surrounding it. This figured mightily in past ages, he said, when enemies of the Florentines tried to overcome the city and break the power of their trading.

“You’ll find everything about Florence savoring of antiquity,” announced Mr. Fabian, as they entered the city. “The winding narrow streets, the irregular roofs that break the sky-line, the ancient churches with bits of old carving in the least expected places, and last but not least, the folk of Florence with their quaint costumes of bright colors.”

The first day in Florence was spent in visiting the Pitti Palace, the basilica of San Miniato, which was of architectural value to the students, and then the Museo Nazionale.

The second day was given to visiting at the Piazzale Michelangelo, and to see the Cathedral Santo Maria del Fiore, with its beautiful façade.

Mr. Fabian conducted the girls to Pisa, the third day, but the elders in the party preferred to remain in the cars when the ardent admirers of antiquity visited the places of past glories.

Then they drove on from Florence and stopped over night at Arretzo; and in the morning they went to Perugia, a mediaeval town with ancient buildings and still more ancient churches.

From Perugia the route lay due south to Rome. It proved to be a delightful trip through the wonderful country-lanes and spreading fields which were cultivated to the last inch.

As they came nearer Rome, they began to feel the oppressive heat which had been gradually growing more intense all that day. Mr. Fabian had planned to spend a full week, or more, in Rome in order to give the girls ample time to see everything there, worth while.

The first day they visited the Coliseum, the Forum and other famous places. Then he escorted them to the Cloaca Maxima to study Etruscan Art. Next they visited the Museum in the Villa of Pope Julius; then the Etruscan Museum of the Vatican; also the Mamertine Prison, and many places famed for their collections of antiquities and art.

One day they went to see the famous façade and bits of architecture still to be found in Rome, such as the “Spanish Steps” of the Piazza di Spagna, and the Triumphal Arch of Septimus Severus. Mr. Fabian had unwillingly to end the day’s visits, however, because of the terrific heat.

The sun had been shining through a red haze for several days, and the reflection from the Mediterranean was so oppressive that the tourists decided to cut their stay in Rome short and drive on across Italy to Naples, which always boasted a fine breeze from the Bay.

So the hotel bill was paid that night, and the baggage made ready for an early start. The travelling trunk was locked on the rack of the automobile, and everything else was prepared that no time would be lost in the morning.

The heat that evening was even worse than at any time during their stay in Rome, and rumors were heard that the seismograph had registered tremors and slight earthquakes, all day. This was not encouraging to the Americans, and they retired at night with all apparel on excepting shoes and their coats.

Fatigue and the drowsiness produced by the heat overcame everyone after a time, and they slept until about one o’clock. A strange shaking of Polly’s bed woke her suddenly. She sat up and felt the room swaying. She reached out and called to Eleanor.

“Get up, Nolla! Get up—it’s the earthquake!” cried she, springing from the bed.

“Uh! Wh-a-d you s-ay?” mumbled Eleanor drowsily.

“Quick! We’ve got to get out. The earthquake’s here!” shouted Polly, trying in vain to catch hold of the bed-post while everything rocked as if on a vessel at sea.

A falling picture upon Eleanor’s feet startled her so that she jumped up and gazed in affright at Polly. “What is it?” asked she, seeing the toilet dishes on the stand roll upon the floor.

“Earthquakes! Hurry—hurry!” screamed Polly, almost too frightened to find the buttons on her dress.

Dodo and Nancy tumbled headlong into the room now, both crying and wishing they had “left this old Rome before this happened.”

The girls managed to get into their shoes in short order and when Mrs. Fabian rushed in to drag them forth, they were all dressed. Polly and Eleanor remembered to catch up their bags, and then ran after the Fabians who had roused the Alexanders and told them to run for the open street.

But the street presented such a scene that Mr. Fabian instantly decided to leave whatever they had forgotten in the hotel rooms and get away in the automobiles.

“Oh, see that chimney topple over!” cried Nancy, as the brick structure of a distant building was seen to fall in.

Screams and cries, pushing and huddling of the mobs in the streets, created a panic with the excitable Latin people, and Mr. Alexander quickly turned and said to his party: “I’m going to get out the cars. Dodo can go with me to handle Ma’s roadster. You-all follow Mr. Fabian through the safest streets and go out along the Appian Way. I’ll meet you there and pick you up. We’ll get out of Rome at once!”

He had not been gone a minute before another severe quake shook the city so that it seemed as if the earth rose and fell in billows. Collapsing buildings were heard crashing down upon the streets, dogs howled, other animals added their fearful noises to the panic-stricken cries of the populace, and a pandemonium was the result.

Mr. Fabian and his wife kept their presence of mind in all this distraction, but Mrs. Alexander wept loudly and dragged at her blonde hair in despair when she realized that this was her end. “Oh why did I ever want to come to Europe to be killed in Rome, when I could have lived a long life peacefully in Denver!” wailed she, hysterically.

It took all of Polly’s and Eleanor’s time and temper to soothe the fear-paralyzed woman. But she was able to follow the Fabians when they started for the Appian Way—in fact she wanted to run ahead and get out of the city.

It took a long time of trial and tortuous going before they reached the quieter sections of Rome; and finally they began to glimpse the Appian Way through the haze of fire and smoke that now spread a pall over the city.

They had just heard the welcome sounds of Mr. Alexander’s voice, when another tremor shook the city so that the girls clung to each other in support. Instantly a man’s genial voice called: “Well, I’ll be gol-durned if I had to come all the way

to Rome to get an earthquake! We can get these sort nearer Denver, without charge.”

In spite of their fear everyone smiled at the little man who could joke in the face of such disasters. But he created the effect of releasing the tension, and thus destroying much of the fear.

Mr. Alexander directed the Fabian party to their cars, and when they had climbed in and wished the tourists who crowded around, a safe escape from the city, the two drivers started away.

They had not gone more than a mile, when another very severe shock seemed to move the ground from under the cars. The screams from the crowded city streets could be heard at this distance from the scene, and Polly said: “It makes me feel like a criminal to run away and leave all those people to their doom.”

“It’s better for as many to get out of the city as can go, unless they are trained to help in this emergency,” said Mrs. Fabian.

Mrs. Alexander had calmed down considerably when she was seated in the car, and now she began to question her husband.

“Ebenezer, did you bring my travelling bag?”

“I dun’no. I grabbed up everything in sight, from my old razor strop to my scarf-pin,” returned her spouse, jovially.

“My bag held that new evening coat,” cried Mrs. Alexander.

“Never mind a little thing like that!” advised her lord.

“That’s all *you* care for a two-hundred dollar wrap, but I know you didn’t forget that horrid pipe!” retorted she.

“I *know* I didn’t, too, ’cause it’s goin’ in my mouth this minute!” chuckled Mr. Alexander, making his companions laugh.

“Call Dodo—stop her, this minute,” commanded Mrs. Alexander. “I must ask her if she took my bag. If she didn’t I’m going back for it!”

To pacify her, the cars stopped and Dodo was asked if she saw the bag that had held her mother’s evening wrap.

“No, but I thought I caught up one of Ma’s belongings,” Dodo called back. “When I got to the garage and turned the light on to see what I had saved I found it was a bed-pillow!”

A laugh greeted this reply, and Nancy then admitted: “I didn’t know what I was

doing when I first jumped out of bed, but I intended getting my hair-brush and comb in case of need. When we got out on the street I found I had the cake of soap and the telephone pad that was kept on the stand beside the bed.”

“Well, Ma,” asked Mr. Alexander, as Dodo started her car again, “are you going to get out and go back for them things?”

“You are a bad cruel man, Ebenezer Alexander, and I wonder that I could live with you as long as I have,” snapped his wife.

“I wonder at it myself,” chuckled the cheerful “cruel” man.

But they drove on and no more was said about the elaborate evening wrap that was lost in the earthquake that night.

As they sped away, determined to get as far from the scene of disaster as possible, that night, Eleanor spoke.

“I wonder if there is anything else I have to live through before I can settle down quietly.”

“Now what’s the matter?” demanded Polly.

“Oh nothing, but I was just thinking—I went through a snow-slide on Grizzly Peak; a land-slide on the Flat Top; a great mountain blizzard, on the Rockies; a hold-up in New York, one night; an avalanche on the Alps, and now an earthquake in Rome. What next, I wonder?”

“You ought to be grateful that you never experienced a sinking at sea caused by a German submarine,” said Polly, earnestly.

The very seriousness of her remark made her friends laugh, so that spirits rose accordingly, and just as they felt that the worst was over, another severe quake shook the ground they were speeding over.

Dodo’s car was ahead, with its headlights streaming in advance upon the roadway. Immediately after the last shake, a deep rumbling and crackling was heard as if something ahead of them had parted and fallen down. Dodo leaned forward anxiously and gasped.

Mrs. Fabian was with her in the roadster, and the girl quickly put on the brakes and reversed the wheel. “Just look out, Mrs. Fabian, and see if you can see a gap across the road.”

Even as she spoke, Mr. Alexander passed the little car and shouted to Dodo: “What’d you stop for—right in the middle of the road?”

The next moment he was biting his tongue when the front wheels on his car caved into the newly made crevice across the road. Everyone was jounced up and down frightfully as the wheels settled into the soft earth, and Dodo jumped out to see if anyone was injured.

“Oh, oh! I know Pa’s broken my neck!” cried Mrs. Alexander, as she caught her plump neck between two fat hands.

“Blame it all on the pesky earthquake!” shouted Mr. Alexander, thickly, while the end of his tongue began swelling where his teeth had cut into it.

Everyone was ordered out, while Mr. Alexander tried to back the touring car out of the cleft across the roadway. But it was a deep trench and the front of the car had settled into the earth.

“The only way to get her up is to plank down several rails and run her out on them,” said Mr. Alexander, lispingly, as he studied the situation.

“It’s too dark to hunt for rails or boards, and there isn’t a house in sight,” Dodo replied.

“What can we do, then?” asked the perplexed little man, scratching his head for an idea to start from his brain.

It was nearly dawn when the peasants started from their homes for the city, to sell their market-goods, so the tourists had not long to sit and wait, before a cart drawn by two sturdy oxen rumbled along.

“Hey, there! If you hook them beasts to my car and pull it out of this hole fer me, I’ll pay fer the animals!” called Mr. Alexander, hoping the man understood his English.

Mr. Fabian then interpreted what had been said, and the man examined the condition of the ditch before he replied. Then he gave Mr. Fabian to understand that he could remove two heavy side-boards from the cart and try in that way to help run the wheels out.

After strenuous labor and many pulls and tugs on the part of the oxen, the car was backed to the road again. But the ditch was still there, and it was too deep to cross without a bridge, or by filling it in.

By the time the peasant had been paid his price, a number of other carts had driven up and the men sat pondering how to get over. It was Mr. Alexander who waved his arms like a wind-mill in Holland, and shouted to make them understand.

“Let’s all get busy and scoop the earth into the ditch. Some of us can dig it from that field and others can carry it in their hats to fill in.”

Mr. Fabian tried to explain, but the peasants shook their heads. One man jumped out and ran back in haste along the road.

“What’s the matter? Is he afraid we’ll make him work?” demanded Mr. Alexander, impatiently.

“No,” explained Mr. Fabian, “he said he knew where he could get a shovel and other implements. There’s a farm a bit farther on.”

Shortly after that, the man returned and with him came two young men, all carrying shovels, and one pushed a cart. With these tools for work, every man went at the job, and in half an hour the crevice caused by the quake was temporarily filled up.

While they worked the men asked Mr. Fabian about the earthquake in the city, and he told them what havoc it had made. The sun had risen by the time the two cars were able to cross the bridged crevice, and then waited to allow the ox-carts to get past.

“Say, there! Are you going to take that stuff to Rome, to sell?” called Mr. Alexander, eagerly.

The men comprehended and nodded their heads.

“Well, here! We’re starved now and will buy the fruit and ready-to-eat stuff. Got anything cooked?” called he.

One farmer had fowl, another had fruit and still another had a load of vegetables, so the tourists bought all the fruit they wanted, and the peasants went their way, rejoicing at the good luck the quake had brought them in the form of rich Americans who paid so well for filling the ditch, and then selling them fruit.

As soon as the tourists reached a quiet spot beside the road, they halted the cars and enjoyed the fruit, for that was all the breakfast they would have until they reached Naples.

Late in the afternoon they stopped at a good hotel and sighed in relief to think they could have a good, long, night’s rest. The daily papers were filled with the account of the damage done in Rome by the recent earthquake, but the list of those dead or lost was not yet complete, as so many were buried under the débris of fallen buildings.

Suddenly Mr. Alexander threw back his head and roared.

“What’s the matter, Pa?” asked Dodo, frowning at his shout.

“Ho, I just read how we’re all dead. Did you know we were lost in the ’quake last night?”

They all stared at him. Mr. Fabian ran over to see the article for himself. Then he read it aloud: “Among those stopping at the Hotel —— in Rome, which collapsed at the third severe shock, were a party of American tourists who were with Mr. Fabian, the well-known authority on Antiques. Mrs. Fabian and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander and daughter, and two young misses, were members in this party. A few other guests of the hotel are also unaccounted for.”

“If that isn’t the strangest thing,” exclaimed Mr. Fabian, “to sit here and read our own death-notice. Now I’ll have to wire Ashby that we’re all right, and we’ll have to cable to the States that this report is false.”

The girls wanted to read the notice, too, and Nancy said they ought to keep the notice as a joke on journalism in Italy.

“No joke about it, say I. Now I have to wear crêpe for myself, because everyone out West will celebrate when they believe me done for,” said Mr. Alexander.

CHAPTER XIII—UNEXPECTED VICISSITUDES OF TRAVEL

The visit in Naples extended itself into a week, as the girls needed to replenish their wardrobes after the earthquake, and Mr. Alexander thought it best to have a new spring for the car ordered to replace the one that had received such a strain in the ditch.

A new schedule had been studied, and the route outlined a few weeks before, was revised. Mr. Fabian said it would be best to go to Brindisi and from there cross the Ionian Sea and visit Athens, as long as they were so near. Then, from Athens, they could go to Pompeii and other famous places, and finally take a steamer back to Genoa.

"I'll have to crate the cars, then, and ship them across country to wait for us at Genoa," said Mr. Alexander.

"Let the men at the garage attend to it for you. We will be away about a week, or so, and by that time the cars will have been delivered at Genoa," said Dodo.

"I should think it would save time and costs to send a chauffeur with each car, to leave them with a garage at Genoa," suggested Mr. Fabian, so his idea was acted upon.

Everything was packed and the ladies were in the cars ready to start, when Mr. Fabian turned to look for Mr. Alexander. He was not there.

"Did anyone see him during the last ten minutes?" asked he.

"No, he carried my suit-case downstairs fifteen minutes ago, but he did not come back," said Mrs. Alexander.

Mr. Fabian went to the hotel office again, and inquired of the clerk whether he had seen Mr. Alexander.

He had not been seen, nor had he left any message at the desk. "Well, then, I'll have him paged, as we are ready to start," said Mr. Fabian.

But the boys came back without any news of the missing man. Everyone got out of the cars again and started in different directions in search of their necessary

“chauffeur.” By-standers were asked but no information was gained of the man they all were seeking.

“Dear me, if that isn’t just like Ebenezer!” complained Mrs. Alexander, powdering her nose while she awaited results.

“I don’t see anything else to do, except to carry our luggage back to the hotel and postpone our trip until tomorrow,” said Mr. Fabian.

“Don’t worry, Pa’ll come along soon and wonder why we worried over his delay. He’s sure to give a splendid reason for this absence,” said Dodo.

A few moments after she had spoken, little Mr. Alexander was seen running at top speed along the street. His hat was in his hand and he was mopping his perspiring brow with a large silk handkerchief.

“Eben, what made you leave us? Didn’t you *know* we were ready to start?” complained his wife, the moment she saw him.

“Yeh, but I couldn’t help it, Maggie. Just as I got your duds to the car, I stepped on a little dog. He yelped so I had to see what ailed him, and that’s how I saw the child what owned the animal.

“If the little shaver hadn’t yelled as hard as the dog, I wouldn’t have gone wid him. But I had to quiet the boy, and the dog limped so I had to carry that. The boy lived a long way down a side street, and then through an alley. But when I got to his home, the dog could jump about and bark, so he is all right again.”

“Good gracious, Pa, did you waste all this time on carrying a mongrel home?” laughed Dodo.

“Um, not all the time!” admitted Mr. Alexander. “When I saw that boy’s home and his sick mother in bed, I hunted up a woman in the house and made her go out for some things to eat. It seems they ain’t had any money and so went hungry until she could work. I told the woman—but I reckon she didn’t understand me—that she could thank the dog for the food and help she got from me. Then I had to hurry back here.”

The tourists were on the vessel before Mrs. Alexander stopped nagging her spouse and allowed him to enjoy the sail across the Ionian Sea. It was a beautiful trip for the others in the party; they saw the blue sky reflected in the bluer water, inhaled the perfume of thousands of flowers blossoming riotously on the land and wafted by the balmy breezes across the Sea, and they wondered if it were really true that but a few days before, they were rushing frantically from an earthquake in Rome! The present peace and calm were so different an

experience—almost as if they were in another world.

The first sight of Athens, from the sea, was very impressive to the girls; they could see, upon the prominences that seemed to embrace the ancient city, the wonderful historic ruins so carefully preserved there. Mr. Fabian pointed out the Acropolis, the Temple of Hephæstus, the Propylæa, the Temple of Athena Nike, the Parthenon, and other noted architectural antiquities.

Several days were spent in Athens, visiting its vast wealth of past ages, then Mr. Fabian arranged to proceed, with his friends, to Pompeii, with its lure of restored ruins that had been buried for centuries.

From the scenes of Pompeii, they visited the Island of Ischia and its wilderness of vineyards; then they went on to Capri with its incomparable riot of color and natural beauties.

“I don’t see anything to keep us down here more than a day, or so, do you-all?” asked Mrs. Alexander, bored to distraction without the excitement of cities, or the speeding in her car.

“Oh Ma! we never saw anything so wonderful as these places, so don’t rush us away the moment we get here,” cried Dodo.

“But, Dodo, what is there here to see but a lot of wild greens, and poor people dressed in shawls and petticoats?” complained Mrs. Alexander.

“I ain’t saying a word, Ma, even if I can’t see all the fine things the others seem to enjoy,” remarked Mr. Alexander. “But it *must* be here, somewhere, so I’m hunting for it with might and main.”

His wife merely turned up her educated nose at his words, but refused to answer his earnest request for further time in which to find the hidden secret of his friends’ pleasure.

Having seen all that was possible of the beautiful Islands of olden times, the tourists boarded a steamer and sailed past Messina and Corsica, up through the Gulf of Genoa, to the City of Genoa where the two cars were awaiting them.

“My! I never was so glad to see a car in all my life!” sighed Mrs. Alexander, eagerly examining her roadster to see if it was in good condition for the continuation of the tour.

“From Genoa we can travel along the Coast of the Mediterranean and enjoy the drive to the utmost, for we still have plenty of time to complete our tour back to Paris, and meet Ashby when he plans to be there,” said Mr. Fabian, as they got

into the two autos and prepared to start.

The touring car led the way, Mrs. Alexander following, with Mrs. Fabian seated beside her. Perhaps that lady might not have felt quite so fearless with the chauffeur, if Mr. Fabian had not said that the road was splendid and that there were no dangerous places for Mrs. Alexander to run into.

They went through Savona, San Remo, and stopped at Monte Carlo to visit the place and see the famous gambling house.

“Ebenezer, don’t you go to that wicked house to play!” exclaimed Mrs. Alexander, after they had refreshed themselves at the hotel and were ready to walk about and see Monte Carlo.

“I wouldn’t *think* of doing such a thing, Maggie, with all these young girls to set an example for,” returned the little man, with a serious tone.

“I don’t want to go in there, at all,” declared Polly.

“It won’t hurt anyone to see it, Polly; they say it is one of the most gorgeous places in the world. The decorations and architecture are marvellous,” added Eleanor.

“Well, but don’t let us go near the gaming-tables,” Polly said, grudgingly.

“Oh, no, not one on us would think of such a thing!” said Mr. Alexander, but he watched an opportunity to make sure that a roll of money he carried in his pocket, was still there.

They had done the outside of the place, admiring the beautiful parks and the buildings, and then they thought they would have a peep inside, at the halls and various rooms of the famous house.

“Where’s Ebenezer?” suddenly asked Mrs. Alexander, as she trailed the others into the Grand Reception Room.

“Why—he was here but a moment ago!” replied Mr. Fabian, glancing around for the missing man.

“Didn’t I tell you what a care he was? I always have to keep him on a leash when I want him to go, somewhere, with me. This is the same trick he played on us at Brindisi—and almost made us miss the boat,” complained the lady.

“He didn’t make *us* miss it, Ma, but he ’most missed it himself,” laughed Dodo.

“But he did a fine deed for a poor human, which goes to exonerate him for being so late. Maybe he is helping someone, now,” remarked Mrs. Fabian, who was

sincerely proud of the little man's depth of character, even though he had never had the polish and opportunities given other men.

"That's what you-all think!" snapped Mrs. Alexander. "I bet you'll find him in the blackest gambling den of all this awful place."

"Ma, you wait right where you are, and Mr. Fabian and I will find that awful place and tell you if Pa is there," said Dodo with a stern expression.

"What! Let you go in such a place? No indeed! I'll go with Mr. Fabian myself if *anyone* has to go," declared Mrs. Alexander.

"I don't want you to; you always nag at Pa and if you start in in a crowd, I know just what he'll do. It is better for me to go with Mr. Fabian,—but I don't believe he's there!" declared Dodo.

"Perhaps Dodo is right, Mrs. Alexander. Let us go while you remain quietly here with the others," said Mr. Fabian.

So they hurried away, while the girls and the ladies walked about, or sat down to watch the lovely scene in the Park. The two had been gone about ten minutes, when Mr. Alexander was seen coming towards the group on the bench, but he was not alone. A very pretty girl of about sixteen years was with him. Dodo and Mr. Fabian were nowhere in sight.

"Hello there, Maggie," called out Mr. Alexander, genially, as he came within speaking distance of his wife. "I brought a 'Merican girl to you-all, to take care of her as far as Nice. She thought she was lost, but I soon showed her she was safe with us, until we landed her with her folks."

Everyone gazed at the well-dressed pretty girl in surprise. It was evident from her red eyes that she had been crying a short time before. But Mr. Alexander said no more about the incident at the moment, merely introducing his companion as Genevieve Van Buren, of New York City.

"Where's Dodo?" asked Mr. Alexander, suddenly missing his daughter when he wished to introduce her to the newcomer.

"She went with my husband," hastily replied Mrs. Fabian. "They'll be back in a few minutes. We are waiting for them, now."

"Ebenezer, where did you meet Miss Van Buren?" questioned his wife, suspiciously.

"Oh, just outside that door, where we all went, last," returned the little man, indefinitely.

Mr. Fabian and Dodo were now seen coming out of the large building, and Mr. Alexander glanced from them to his wife, with a knowing twinkle in his eyes. Before anyone could say a word to Dodo, he spoke: "Well, so you've been wastin' all *your* savings, too, eh?"

"Oh no! Mr. Fabian and I just wanted to see what the place looked like. It is the most gorgeous hall I ever saw, and Mr. Fabian says it is well worth seeing. Why don't you come and have a look at it, Polly?" replied Dodo.

When she was introduced to the strange girl, Dodo wondered how she came to join their party but she said nothing. At last, Polly consented to go and take a peep at the interior of the palace, but Miss Van Buren preferred to remain on the bench with Mr. Fabian, while Mr. Alexander escorted the ladies.

"That homely little man is wonderful, isn't he?" asked Miss Van Buren, in a humble little voice, when Mr. Fabian and she were quite alone.

"We think so. In fact, we like him so well that we fail to notice any shortcomings."

"I feel that I must tell someone what he did for me, a few moments ago, although he was a total stranger," continued the girl, her chin quivering.

"Were you both in the gambling hall?" was all Mr. Fabian asked.

"No, but I had been there last night, and lost all my money in gambling. Then I borrowed some cash, from a woman, on my jewels, and lost that money, too. I never played before, and it was so terribly exciting that I put aside every other thought but winning.

"The woman who had given me the money, had been very nice to me, when she met me at the hotel; she it was who invited me to go with her to visit the palace, just for fun. But it ended as such visits generally do," the girl's lovely blue eyes filled with tears and she dabbed at them, hurriedly.

"I was desperate, and wondered how I should get back to the party with which I am touring Europe. I had no money to pay my way to Paris, and I had nothing of value left with which I could get money.

"Mrs. Warburton who had been so kind, as I thought, had just proposed paying my way to Paris and keeping me at her hotel until my party arrived to call for me, when that little man walked slowly over and stood looking at both of us."

"'Maybe you-all are an American?' he asked Mrs. Warburton.

"She lifted her head and looked insolently at him. But she never said a word.

Then he went right on without caring how she looked. ‘I am an old miner from the West. I’ve been in lots of evil places, and seen all sorts of evil people, so I know one when I see and hear ’em. I’ve heard all you offered to this young girl, but I’ll go your offer one better. She comes with my wife and daughter and it won’t cost her a lifetime of regrets.’”

The girl bowed her head and her slender form shook with sobs. Mr. Fabian said nothing. He was too amazed to say a word.

Finally the girl continued, but her head was averted. “Something told me to trust that homely little man so I looked at him and said, ‘I believe you want to save me from some trouble?’

“‘That’s what I do, little gal. Just as I would want some one to help my daughter if she needed help. Now tell me what’s all this about, and maybe we can get down to brass tacks.’ He said it just that way,” repeated Miss Van Buren, looking up at Mr. Fabian.

The gentleman smiled, and nodded understandingly.

“Well, he made that woman give up the jewels and he paid her back the money for them, then he said to her: ‘You ought to be thankful that I am touring with a party, or sure as I am a man, I’d hand you over to the police for what I know you had planned in your evil mind.’ Then he made me come away from her.

“When we were out of hearing he told me that from his experience in mining-camps, and cities where miners go to spend their earnings, he could tell that the woman was not right. He thinks she actually led me *on* to gamble, to ruin my chances of getting back to my friends.”

The innocent girl gazed at her companion, and Mr. Fabian nodded his head understandingly, without saying a word. Then she continued: “But that is terribly wicked! Why do they permit such things to happen here?”

“Why will people come here to visit the place with the sole idea of going away with more money than they came? They ought to know that all this lavish expenditure and display has to be maintained, and the money for that comes out of the foolish gamblers who *always* lose at such tables,” said Mr. Fabian.

“I suppose I was very silly to leave my friends and come alone to Nice. They wanted me to go with them, but I preferred this place to the Alps and mountain climbing, so I agreed to meet them at Paris, later. I said I was going to visit with some friends at Nice, but I believed I could take care of myself. Now I think differently.”

Her voice was so repentant and meek that Mr. Fabian said: “Maybe this lesson will prove to be the best one of your life. Let it teach you that head-strong ways are always sure to end in a pitfall. And remember, ‘that a wolf generally prowls about in sheep’s clothing to devour the innocent lamb.’ Thank goodness that you escaped the wolf—but thank Mr. Alexander for being that goodness.”

The others returned, now, and as there was nothing more to visit at Monte Carlo, they drove on to Nice to spend the night. The girls found Genevieve Van Buren a most congenial companion and everyone showed a keen desire to befriend her.

A telegram awaited her at Nice, and Mr. Alexander had the satisfaction of reading it. Her friends, to whom he had wired from Monte Carlo when he heard Genevieve’s story, said they would be at Paris the following day.

Before Mr. Fabian and his companions drove away from Nice, they saw the repentant girl safely on the train to Paris.

Having said good-by to Genevieve, the tourists left Nice; they drove to Marseilles and the girls visited several mills where famous textiles are woven.

Cannes was the next place the cars passed through, and then Aix was reached. Mr. Fabian wished to stop long enough at this city, which was founded B.C. 122 by a Roman named Sextius Calvinus, to show his students the ruins and historic objects of antiquity.

At Avignon the tourists saw the famous bridge and the many notable and ancient buildings—some ruins having remained there since the town was founded by the Phœnicians in 600 B.C.

They stopped over-night at Avignon, and early in the morning, started cross-country for Bordeaux. The roads were heavy and the travelling slow, and they found it necessary to stop at the peasants’ homes and ask, to make sure they were on the right road. At several of these stops, Mr. Fabian and the girls acquired some old bits of pottery and porcelain which the poor people were glad to sell, and the collectors were over-joyed to buy.

All along the country route from Marseilles, the women seen wore picturesque costumes, with heavy wooden shoes on their feet. These shoes were lined with sheep-skin to protect the instep from bruises. The children playing about their homes were scantily clothed, but their rosy faces and plump little bodies spoke plainer than words, that they were healthy and happy, and cared naught for style.

Quite often, when the cars passed over a stream, or ran along the banks of a river, the occupants would see the peasant women washing linen in the water.

They knelt upon the bank, or upon a stone near the shore, and beat the clothes with sticks as the water flowed through the pieces. The garments were rinsed out and then wrung, before hanging upon the bushes nearby to dry.

Mr. Alexander remarked: "Good for dealers in white goods."

CHAPTER XIV—A HIGHWAYMAN IN DISGUISE

The roads were so poor that it was impossible to reach Bordeaux that evening, and Mr. Fabian said it would be better to stop at a small Inn in a village, should they find a promising one. Consequently they decided that the clean little inn at Agen would answer their needs that night.

The two cars were rolled under a shed at the back, and the guests were shown to the low-ceiled chambers with primitive accommodations. But the supper was good, and the host a jolly fat man.

While the tourists were finishing their coffee, a little bent man limped into the public room. He had great hoops of gold in his ears, and his costume was very picturesque. After he had been given a glass of home-made wine, he sat down in a corner and began playing softly on an accordion.

He had a marvelous talent for this instrument, and the girls crowded about him, listening intently. Soon the host's grown daughter came out and danced a folk-dance, and then others danced the old-time French dances. When the American girls were called upon to add their quota to the evening's entertainment, they gladly complied.

Polly and Eleanor, Dodo and Nancy danced the modern steps so popular with young folks of the present day, and the peasants, watching closely, laughed at what they considered awkward and ridiculous gambols. But the dancing suddenly ceased when a young man called upon the musician to have his fortune told; he held out his palm and waited to hear his future.

Fully two hours were spent in laughing at the "fortunes" the old gipsy man told—for he was one of the original Spanish gipsies, who had wandered to the southern part of France and settled there for life.

The girls giggled and reviewed their fortunes that night long after they had retired. As they had to occupy the two massive beds in one guest-room, it gave them the better opportunity to talk when they should have been fast asleep.

Finally they were ready to sleep and Polly was about to snuff the candle before

jumping into bed, when Nancy suddenly whispered: “S—sh!”

POLLY TIP-TOED TO THE WINDOW.
POLLY TIP-TOED TO THE WINDOW.

The four sat up and strained their sense of hearing. "I heard a queer noise just outside our door," whispered Nancy.

"I'll tip-toe over and see who it is," whispered Polly, acting as she spoke.

"No—no! Don't open the door! That gipsy may be there," cried Nancy, fearfully.

But another scratching sound under the low window now drew all attention to that place. Polly slowly tip-toed silently to the open window and tried to peer out. The trees and vines made the back of the garden shadowy and she could not see if anyone were under the window, or trying to get in somewhere else.

The other three girls now crept out of bed and joined Polly at the window. They waited silently, and were soon rewarded for their patience. They distinctly heard voices almost under their window, whispering carefully, so no one would be awakened.

"I think we ought to rouse Daddy, or Mr. Alexander," said Nancy, trembling with apprehension.

"You run and tell your father, while I get Pa out of bed," said Dodo, groping about for her negligee.

Meantime Polly and Eleanor watched so no one could get in at their window, and the two other girls ran across the hall to their parents' rooms. In a short time both Mr. Fabian and Mr. Alexander came in and crept over to the window where the girls had heard the burglars plotting.

Mr. Fabian understood French so now he interpreted what he overheard: "Drop the bundle and I'll catch it. Don't make a noise, and be careful not to overlook anything valuable."

"Dear me! If they are burglars where is the one who is told to drop a bundle? He must be inside, somewhere!" whispered Dodo, excitedly.

There followed a mumbling that no one could understand, and then a splash,—as if a bundle of soft stuff had dropped into water from a height. Immediately after this, the voice from below excitedly spoke to the companion above: "——It fell in the well! Now what is to be done?"

"Goody! Goody!" breathed Polly, eagerly, when she heard how the burglars had

defeated their own purpose.

But no sound came from the other burglar who was working indoors, and Mr. Alexander had an idea which he suggested to Mr. Fabian.

“You go downstairs softly, while I scout around up here and locate the room where the helper is working. When I give a whistle it means ‘I’ve got the other feller under hand’—then you catch your man, red-handed, out in the garden, and the girls will rouse the house and we will present our prisoners to the host.”

That sounded fine, so Mr. Alexander hurried to his room for his western gun, and started out to hunt up the indoor worker. Mrs. Alexander realized that he was about to do something unusual, or he never would have taken his big revolver.

“Ebenezer, what is wrong? Are we in danger of being robbed?”

“I’m going to catch one before we can think if there is any danger, for anyone,” said her husband, going for the door.

“Listen, Ebenezer! Don’t you go and risk your life for that! You promised to take care of me first! Let Mr. Fabian, or some of the Frenchmen here, try and catch the man!” cried Mrs. Alexander, hysterically, running after her spouse.

But the little man was spry and he was out of the door and down the entry before his wife reached the doorway. There was but one alternative for her, and that was to go to the girls’ room and pour her troubles forth into their ears.

But the four girls were too intent upon what was going on to sympathize with Mrs. Alexander. Dodo merely said, in reply to her mother’s complaints: “Get into my bed, Ma, and pull the covers over your head, if you’re so frightened.”

All this time, the man down in the garden was directing his associate above, and at last the girls indistinctly saw someone slowly descend, what seemed to be a rope hanging close to the side of the house. They held their breath and waited, for Mr. Fabian surely must have reached the garden by this time and would be ready to capture the escaping thieves, before they could get away.

But a loud shouting and a great confusion in the large public room drew their attention to the upper hall, where they could hear what was going on below. Mrs. Fabian joined her friends in the entry at the head of the stairs and they heard the host shout:

“So! You look like a decent gentleman and you creep down here to take my living from me! Shame, shame!”

Then to the horror of the girls, they heard Mr. Fabian remonstrate volubly and

try to explain his reason for going about the place so stealthily.

Mrs. Fabian rushed down the stairs, regardless of her curl-papers and kimono, and the girls followed closely upon her heels. Only Mrs. Alexander remained upstairs under the bed-covers, thinking discretion to be the better part of valor.

The host and some other guests were surrounding Mr. Fabian who tried to explain that Mr. Alexander and he were following burglars who were looting the place. The host smiled derisively, and told his guest to prove what he said was true.

Just then Mrs. Alexander screamed, and came pell-mell down the stairs. "Oh, oh! A gipsy man came out of the *girls'* room!"

Everyone ran upstairs to catch the trespasser, but he was not to be found. Then a scuffle, and confused shouts from the garden, reached the ears of the crowd who stood wondering what next to do. A clear shrill whistle echoed through the place, and Mr. Fabian turned impatiently.

"Now you've spoiled the arrest of those two burglars. I was to get the outside man when that whistle sounded, to tell me that Mr. Alex had the inside man safely in hand."

But the shouting and whistling sounded more confused on the garden-side of the house, so they all ran downstairs again, and went out to assist in any way they might.

Someone was hanging on to someone else who clung for dear life to a thick vine that grew up the side wall and over the roof of the inn. It was this rope-like vine that the girls had mistaken for a rope of escape for the thief. Mr. Alexander was in the garden, trying to drag down the escaping burglar, while that individual was trying to climb back into the room whence he had recently come.

Just as the others rushed out into the dark garden to assist Mr. Alexander, another man appeared at the upper window and caught hold of his associate's hands to pull him back to safety.

"Wait! I get my ladder!" shouted the host, running for the shed. But a howl of rage, and French curses tumbling pell-mell from him told the others that he had gone headlong into a new danger.

Mr. Fabian and the young man-waiter ran to help the poor inn-keeper, and to their amazement they found he had collided with Mrs. Alexander's roadster which was standing behind the bushes, facing towards the road.

“I’ll turn on the lights, in a moment, and see if all is right,” quickly said Mr. Fabian, jumping up to start the engine.

Before he could switch on the lights, however, a general shout of dismay came from the people assembled under the window, and the three men ran back to see what had happened.

The second-story windows were not more than eight feet above the garden at the rear, as the ground sloped down gradually to the front of the Inn. The first story was very low, too, so that anyone could climb up at the rear without difficulty.

When Mr. Fabian and his two companions reached the scene under the windows, they found three people rolling upon the ground in a tight clutch. The man from the inside of the room who had been finally pulled out and over the ledge; the man who had clung to the vine, for some reason or other, and the third man who had stood at the bottom of the vine and hung on to the climbing man’s heels.

From this mêlée of three, Mr. Alexander’s voice sounded clear and threatening. A deep bass voice gurgled as if in extremity, but the third voice was shrill and hysterical and sounded like a woman’s.

Lights were hurried to the spot, and the three contestants were separated, then Mr. Alexander had the satisfaction of turning to the inn-keeper and saying: “I caught them both without help. I saved your place from being robbed.”

But one of the two captured burglars sat down on the grass and began to sob loudly. The host seemed distracted for a moment, then tore off the big soft hat the gypsy wore. Down came a tangle of hair, and his daughter turned a dirt-streaked face up at her furious father.

“What means this masquerading! And who is the accomplice?” shouted he.

“Oh, father,” wailed the girl. “Pierre and I were married at the Fête last week, but you would not admit him to the house and I never could get away, so we said we would *run* away together and start a home elsewhere,” confessed the frightened daughter.

Pierre stood by, trembling in fear of his father-in-law, but when everyone realized that poor Pierre was but trying to secure his bride’s personal effects which she had tied in several bundles, they felt sorry for the two.

It had been Pierre’s idea to dress Jeanne in a gypsy’s garb that no one could recognize her when they escaped, and it was Jeanne who suggested that they use the roadster to carry all her effects, and then Pierre could drive it back and leave it near the inn without the owner’s knowledge.

The father led his two prisoners to the public-room and the guests trailed behind them, wondering at such an elaborate plan for escape when the two had been married a week and might have walked out quietly without disturbing others, at night.

In an open session of the parental court, the inn-keeper was induced to forgive the culprits and take the undesirable Pierre to his heart and home. Then everyone smiled, and the waiter proposed that the host open a bottle of his best old wine to celebrate the reception of the married pair.

“Why did you object to the young man? He looks like a good boy?” asked Mr. Fabian, when the young pair were toasted and all had made merry over the capture of the two.

“He has a farm four miles out, and I want a son who will run this inn when I am too old. He dislikes this business and I dislike farming. So there you are!” explained the host.

“But you won’t have to work the farm,” argued Mr. Fabian. “You have the inn and many years of good health before you to enjoy it, and they have the farm. I think the two will work together, very nicely, for you can get all your vegetables and eggs and butter from your daughter, much cheaper than from strangers.”

“Ah yes! I never thought of that!” murmured the inn-keeper, and a smile of satisfaction illumed his heavy face.

The next morning the young pair were in high favor with the father, and he was telling his son-in-law about various things he must raise on his farm so that both families might save money.

Then the tourists drove away from Agen with the inn-keeper’s blessings ringing in their ears, and after a long tiresome drive they came to Bordeaux. Various places of interest were visited in this city, and the next day they drove on again.

Brittany, with its wealth of old chateaux, was reached next, and time was spent prodigally, that the girls might view the wonderful old places where tourists were welcomed.

CHAPTER XV—AHOY! FOR THE STARS AND STRIPES AGAIN

Finally the tourists stopped at Nantes where the famous edict of Henri the IVth was proclaimed in 1598. Then they drove on to Angers, with the old Chateau d' Angers, built by Louis IXth, about 1250.

They stopped over night at Angers and drove to Saumur the next day, where several pieces of rare old tapestry were seen in the ancient church of St. Pierre.

That night they reached Tours where they planned to stop, in order to make an early start for Loches with its famous chateau. Adjoining this chateau was a thousand-year-old church of St. Ours which Mr. Fabian desired to show the girls.

The old keeper of the church mentioned the Chateau of Amboise which was only a short distance further on the road and was said to be well worth visiting. So they drove there and saw the chapel of St. Hubert which was built by Charles the VIIth. Here lies buried the remains of Leonardo da Vinci, the famous painter.

While at St. Hubert's Chapel, the tourists heard of still another ancient chateau of the 10th century, which was but a few miles further on, on the Loire. As this Chateau 'de Chaumont was only open to visitors on certain days and this day happened to be one of those days, they visited the place.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Alexander, when they came from the last ancient pile. "I'll be so glad to get back to Denver, where the oldest house is only half a century old, that I won't say a word if you'll agree to only use another precious week lookin' at these moldy old rocks and moss-back roofs."

His friends laughed, for they knew him well by this time. Mrs. Alexander, however, was not so thankful to go back to Denver, nor was she willing to see any more old chateaux. So she said: "Let's drive on to Paris where we have so much shopping to do."

"Oh no, Ma. The keeper of that last chateau told us there was the finest old place of all, a few miles on, so we want to see that as long as we are here," said Dodo.

"All right, then! You-all go on and see it, but I'll stay here," declared Mrs.

Alexander.

“I don’t want to see any more ruins, Maggie, so s’pose you and I drive in your car and let Dodo drive the touring car to any old stone-heap they want to visit,” said Mr. Alexander.

“All right, Ebenezer. I honestly believe I’d rather sit beside you, in my new car, than have to limp around these old houses,” sighed Mrs. Alexander.

Her words were not very gracious, but her spouse thought that, being her guest in the new car, was better than having to wait for hours outside a ruin. So Dodo drove her friends on to the Chateau de Blois, and they inspected the old place, then saw the famous stable that was built to accommodate twelve hundred horses at one time.

“Here we are, but a short distance from Orleans—why not run over there and visit the place, then drive back to Nantes to meet your father and mother,” suggested Mr. Fabian.

“It seems too bad that we have to go all the way back for them, when we are so near Paris, now,” said Dodo.

“Oh, but we haven’t finished the most interesting section of France, yet!” exclaimed Eleanor, who had been looking over Mr. Fabian’s road-map.

“In that case, I fear we will lose Ma for company,” said Dodo, laughingly. “As we come nearer Paris, she is more impatient to reach there. She may suddenly take it into her head to let her car skid along the road that leads away from us and straight for Paris.”

From Nantes they drove straight on without stopping until Caens was reached; Mr. Fabian pointed out various places along the road, and told of famous historical facts in connection with them, but they did not visit any of the scenes.

Caen, with its old churches and quaint buildings, was very interesting to the girls. Then at Bayeaux they went to see the wonderful Bayeaux tapestry which was wrought by Matilda and her Ladies in Waiting in 1062. This tapestry is two hundred and thirty feet long and twenty inches wide, but it pictures the most marvellous historical scenes ever reproduced in weaving.

From Bayeaux they went to Mont St. Michel to see the eight hundred year-old monastery which is so well preserved. Rouen, the capital of Normandy, was the next stopping place on the itinerary, and here they saw many ancient Norman houses as well as churches. But the principal point of interest for the girls, was the monument in Rouen, erected to the memory of Joan of Arc, who was burned

to death for her faith.

The night they spent at Rouen, Mr. Alexander had a serious talk with Mr. Fabian and his girls.

“You see, I want to please you-all, but Maggie won’t stand for any more of this gallivantin’ around old churches. I’m gettin’ awful tired of it, myself, but then I don’t count much, anyway.

“Maggie says she’s goin’ right on to Paris, whether you-all do so or not; and if I let her go there alone, she’ll buy her head off with fine clothes, and then Dodo and me won’t know what to do to cart them all back to the States. So I have to go with her in self-defense, you understand!”

They laughed at the worried expression on the little man’s face, and Mr. Fabian said: “Well, Mr. Alex, we are through sight-seeing for this time, anyway, so we may as well run back to Paris when you do.”

“Oh, that’s good news! Almost as good as if I won the first prize in the Louisanny Lottery!” laughed Mr. Alexander, jocosely.

So they all drove to Paris, where Mr. Ashby was to meet them, in a few days. As Mr. Alexander deftly threaded the car in and out through the congested traffic, he sighed and said: “I never thought I’d be so glad to see this good-for-nothin’ town again. But I’ve been so tossed and torn tourin’ worst places, that even Paris looks good to me, now.”

His friends laughed and his wife said: “Why, it is the most wonderful city in the world! I am going to enjoy myself all I can in the next three days.”

“You’d better, Maggie! ’cause we are leavin’ this wild town in just three days’ time!” declared Mr. Alexander.

“Why—where are you going, then?” asked Mrs. Alexander, surprised at her husband’s determined tone.

“Straight back to Denver, as fast as a ship and steam-cars will carry us!”

“Never! Why, Ebenezer, I haven’t succeeded in doing what I came over for,” argued Mrs. Alexander.

“No, thank goodness; and Dodo says she’s standin’ for a career now,” laughed Mr. Alexander. “I agree with her, and she can start right in this Fall to study Interior Decoratin’, if she likes.”

Mrs. Alexander did not reply, and no one knew what she thought of Dodo’s

determination, but when all the shopping was done, and Mr. Ashby met them at the hotel, she seemed as anxious as the others, to start for home.

“We are to pick up Ruth and Mrs. Ashby at Dover, you know,” said Mr. Ashby, when he concluded his plans for the return home.

“Well, we have had a wonderful tour out of this summer. I never dreamed there were so many marvellous things to see, in Europe,” said Polly.

That evening, several letters were handed to the Fabian party, and among them was one for Polly and another for Eleanor. Polly’s was stamped “Oak Creek” and the hand-writing looked a deal like Tom Larimer’s. But Eleanor’s was from Denver and Dodo cried teasingly: “Oh, I recognize Paul Stewart’s writing! It hasn’t changed one bit since he was a boy and used to send me silly notes at school.”

Eleanor laughed at that, but why should she blush? Polly gazed thoughtfully at her, and decided that Nolla must have no foolish love affair, yet—not even with Paul Stewart!

Then Eleanor caught Polly’s eye and seemed to comprehend what was passing through her mind. She quickly rose to the occasion.

“Polly, if I confess that my letter is from Paul, will you own up that yours is from Tom—and tell us the truth about the American Beauty Roses?”

Polly became as crimson as the roses mentioned, and sent her chum a look that should have annihilated her. But Eleanor laughed.

That evening, as the merry party sat at dinner in the gay Parisian dining-room, Mr. Alexander suddenly sat up. His lower jaw dropped. He was opposite a wall-mirror and in its reflection he could see who came in at the door back of him.

He had been telling a funny incident of the tour and had but half finished it, so his abrupt silence caused everyone to look at him. His expression then made the others turn and look at what had made him forget his story.

In the doorway stood Count Chalmys, looking around the room. Now his eyes reached the American party at the round table and he smiled delightedly. In another moment he was across the room and bowing before the ladies.

Mr. Alexander grunted angrily and kept his eyes upon his plate. He never wanted to see another man who had a title! But his wife made amends for his apparent disregard for conventions. She made room beside herself and insisted that the Count sit down and dine.

“I never had a pleasanter surprise,” said he. “I expected to see the Marquis here, but I find my dear American friends, instead.”

“Humph! What play are you acting in now, Count?” asked Mr. Alexander, shortly.

“That’s what brought me to Paris. I was to meet the Marquis here, and we both were to sail from Havre, day after tomorrow. We have accepted a long engagement with a leading picture company in California, so I am to go across, at once,” explained the Count, nothing daunted by Mr. Alexander’s tone and aggressive manner.

“Oh really! How perfectly lovely for us all!” exclaimed Mrs. Alexander, clasping her hands in joy.

Then she turned to her daughter who seemed not to be giving as much attention to the illustrious addition to the party, as Mrs. Alexander thought proper.

“Dodo, *must* you talk such nonsense with Polly when our dear Count is with us and, most likely, has wonderful things to tell us of his adventures since last we saw him at his beautiful palace?”

“Oh, I beg your pardon, Ma, but I didn’t know the Count had said anything to me,” hastily returned Dodo.

“I really haven’t, as yet, Miss Alexander, but there is every symptom that something is being mulled over in my brain,” was the merry retort from the Count.

“All the same, Dodo, I want you to give attention to the dear Count, now that he is with us, once more,” said Mrs. Alexander, with such dignity as would suit the mother-in-law of a Count.

“Aye, aye, Sir!” laughed the irrepressible Dodo, bringing her right hand to her forehead in a military salute.

“I joined the party, just now, merely to share a very felicitous secret with you. One that I feel sure you will all be pleased to hear. Perhaps the three young ladies in the group will be more interested in my secret than the matrons,” ventured Count Chalmers, with charming self-consciousness.

Instantly, Mrs. Alexander interpreted the secret as one that meant success to her strenuous endeavors to find a “title” for her daughter. She had heard that foreign nobility made no secret of love or proposals, but spoke to interested friends of intentions to marry, even before the young woman had been told or had accepted

a proposal of marriage. This, then, must be what Count Chalmys was about to tell them.

“Oh, my *dear* Count! Before you share that secret with every one, especially while the children are present, wouldn’t you just as soon wait and have a private little chat with me?” gushed Mrs. Alexander, tapping him fondly on the cheek with her feather fan.

The Count stared at her in perplexity for he was not following her mood, nor did he give one fleeting thought to such foolishness as she endowed him with entertaining.

“You know, my dear Count! I am speaking of certain little personal matters regarding settlements and such like, which I only can discuss with you, satisfactorily. After that, you can confide in the others, if you like. However, I should think you would speak to the one most concerned, before you mention it in public.” Mrs. Alexander spoke in confidential tones meant only for the Count’s ear.

“My dear lady! I haven’t the slightest idea what you mean. I was only going to tell my good friends, here, that——”

“Yes, yes! I know what you were going to say, *dear* Count,” hastily interrupted Mrs. Alexander, “but allow me to advise you: Say nothing until after I have had a private talk with you. I am sure Dodo will look at things very differently after I have had time to get your view-points and then tell them to her.”

Count Chalmys began to receive light on the hitherto unenlightening advices from the earnest lady. He now had difficulty in hiding a broad smile. But Mrs. Alexander paid no heed to him.

“You see, Count dear, we shall have several wonderful days on this trip across, in which you can make the best of your opportunities with Dodo, but really, I think it wise to consult with me first.”

“My dear Mrs. Alexander! won’t you permit me to explain myself, before you go deeper into this problem from which you will have chagrin in finding a pleasant way out?” asked the Count.

Mrs. Alexander gazed at him in frowning perplexity. “What is the happy secret you wished to share with us, if it is not your intention to propose to one of the young ladies in our party?”

“I am to have a third member in my party, this trip, although she is not one of the company in California,” said the Count, smilingly. “I mean the pretty girl who

played in the picture in Venice. We were married last week, and having settled all matters at Chalmys and leased the place for a term, we will remain in the United States for a long time.”

At this unexpected information, Mrs Alexander almost swooned, but her husband seemed to change his manners as quickly as if they were old clothes. He smiled cordially at the Count and suggested a toast to his bride—but the toast was given with Ginger Ale.

That evening the Count introduced his Countess, and Mrs. Alexander gritted her teeth in impotent rage. “Oh, how nearly had she plucked this prize for Dodo, and now he had married a plain little actress!” thought she.

But she never knew that the Count had been attentive to his lady-love for three years before Mrs. Alexander ever met him. Had it not been for the heavy debts of his Italian Estate, he would never have delayed his proposal. Even as it was, he found happiness to be more important in life than wealth and a palace.

The young countess was very pretty and promised to be a welcome addition to the group of young folks. Polly, Eleanor and Dodo liked her immensely, from the moment they saw her charming smile as she acknowledged the introductions. Evidently she was very glad to find a number of young Americans of her own age with whom she could associate on the trip across the Atlantic.

Everyone but Mrs. Alexander, made the young couple feel very much at ease. Ebenezer Alexander saw and understood his wife’s aloofness and straightway he decided to speak a bit of his mind to her as soon as they were in the shelter of their own suite at the hotel.

“Now, lem’me tell you what, Maggie! I ain’t goin’ to have you actin’ like all get-out, just because Chalmys went and married the gal he loved, disappointin’ you, thereby. Even if he had gone your way of plannin’, and ast Dodo to marry him, I’d have to say ‘NO!’ He’s saved me from hurtin’ his feelin’s, see?”

Mrs. Alexander tried to stare her insignificant lord into silence, but the little man had found his metal while traveling with appreciative people, and he was not to be downed any more by mere looks and empty words from his wife.

“Yeh! you kin sit there and stare all you like but stares don’t hurt and they ain’t changin’ the case, at all. Dodo wasn’t a-goin’ to marry no one, not even if you cried your head off for it, ’cause she’s made up her mind to try out decoratin’ for a time. So you jest watch your p’s and q’s when you’re mixin’ in with the Chalmys; and don’t show your ignerence of perlite society by actin’ upish and

jealous as a cat.”

Whether this sound advice actually had its effect upon Mrs. Alexander, or whether she forgot her chagrin, it is hard to say; but at all events, she smiled sweetly upon the Chalmys the next time she met them.

A few days later, the steamer stopped at Dover and Mr. Ashby was delighted to have his wife and Ruth with him again.

They were several days out, when Mrs. Alexander realized that Count Chalmys was only an ordinary mortal! She thought over this revelation for a time, and finally remarked to Dodo and the others: “I am so glad the Count didn’t fall in love with Dodo. The little dear would never have been happy with him.”

“When did you discover that fact, Maggie?” asked her husband, quizzically.

“Why, a long time ago. I was so disgusted with folks who claim a title, and then turn out to be factory men like that Osgood family. And now this Count is nothing but a play-actor! Dodo will be far better off if she falls in love with a first-class American, say I!”

“Hurrah, Maggie! You’ve opened your eyes at last!” cried little Mr. Alexander.

“But you will be made still happier, Ma, to hear that I am in love, now!” declared Dodo, teasingly.

“What! Who is he?” demanded her mother.

“Ask Eleanor and Polly. They introduced me to my future lord,” giggled Dodo.

“Oh, she means her career, Mrs. Alex,” said Polly.

“Oh, Dodo!” wailed her mother. “You won’t go to work, will you, when your father’s worth a million dollars?”

“All the more reason for it! I’m going to marry a profession, just as Polly and Eleanor are, and we three are going to be the most famous decorators in the world.”

“And I am goin’ to build a swell mansion in New York and turn the contract for fixin’s, over to these three partners!” declared little Mr. Alexander.

That trip across the Atlantic was a merry one for the girls, for the “Marquis” and his friend, aided by the Count and the young Countess, were a never failing source of entertainment for all. They mimicked and acted, whenever occasion offered, so that there was no time for dull care or monotony.

While abroad, the Count had secured a small motion picture outfit; this was

brought out and several amusing pictures made on the steamer. They were hastily developed and printed and shown at night, to the passengers. It proved to be very interesting to see one's self on the screen, acting and looking so very differently than one imagines himself to act and look.

After the second attempt at this form of amusement, Polly made a suggestion.

"Wouldn't it be heaps of fun if each one of us were to go away, alone, and write a chapter of a story for the Count to film. It will be a regular hodge-podge!"

"Oh, that's great!" exclaimed Eleanor, eagerly.

The others seemed to think it would be entertaining, too, so the Count gave them a few important advices to note.

"Let us decide upon the characters, the plot, and the place, of the scenario; then each one write out a condensed chapter, or reel, of the play. Follow these directions. Write your story in continuity; leave out all adjectives, but give us action as expressed by verbs; do not write more than two hundred words in a reel, or chapter. If you find you have more than that in your part of the programme, you'll have to cut it down. And let each one remember to keep her personal work a profound secret. That will insure a surprise when the whole picture is reeled off.

"Now, Miss Polly, you start the scenario, will you, and give us the first act, or reel. Then Miss Nolla will do the second act, or reel; Miss Ruth, the third; Miss Dodo, the fourth, Miss Fabian the fifth, and my wife can wind up the play, or picture, by writing the final reel. Any questions?"

"Who are the characters?" asked Polly, laughingly.

"Why, ourselves, of course. Because we must act in the photoplay, you see, in lieu of other performers. For instance, we will choose Miss Polly as the star lead, Janet Schuyler, in the play; Miss Nolla will be the vamp, Lois Miller, who is jealous of the lovely and prominent society girl; Miss Dodo will be the reporter, Miss Johnson, on a big daily paper who writes up the story for her paper; Miss Ruth can be the hard-working shop-girl, Esther Brown, who is made a scapegoat in the case. Miss Nancy could be the head of the department in the store, Miss Buskin, to whom the trouble is referred for adjustment; Alec will be the floor-walker and the Marquis can be the young man Reginald Deane—unless Miss Polly is too particular about her beaux."

This brought forth a laugh at Polly's expense.

"Mr. Ashby ought to make a good father for the society girl, and Mr. Alexander

will make a good man to adjust the lighting apparatus. I will need the artistic help of Mr. Fabian in directing the scenes while I have charge of the camera. Now, any more questions, before you go away to start your writing?"

The Count was greatly interested in this plan for fun and, finding there were too many questions instantly poured out for him to answer, he made a suggestion.

"Each one go and do the best you can, then come to me if you find any snags too hard to remove from your literary pathway. I will have to go over each reel, anyway, when the whole is done."

For the rest of that morning, no one saw nor heard of either of the young people, but at luncheon, there was such a babel of voices that Mr. Fabian rapped upon the table and called all to order.

"Hear, hear! The camera-man wishes to say a word!" laughed the Count.

There was instant silence.

"I have been handed three chapters of the scenario and I wish to say, if the other three are as good as the first ones, we will have a thriller. In the words of the publicity man, we shall produce a 'gripping, heart-melting drama of unprecedented greatness and magnificence.' For quintessence of perfection in pictures, this latest production of ours promises to 'skin 'em' all to the bone.' Fellow-craftsmen! Go back to your work as soon as this bit of sustenance for the inner man is over, and dream of the success your pen is bound to win!—the glory and honor about to rest upon your noble brows for achieving such a great thing as the breathless, throbbing, soul-moving, passionate story of 'Gladys the Shop-Girl'!"

The amateur play-wrights laughed merrily at their manager's comment upon their dramatic work, but they lost no time in gossiping at the table, that noon. Before the dessert had been served, the girls excused themselves and ran back to their work.

That evening all efforts were in Count Chalmys' hands and he was besieged for a report on the progress of the drama. He sent out word that he was to be left absolutely in peace for an hour and then he would appear with the hinged together chapters of a six-reel play.

After dinner, that night, a curious and impatient group of authors sat in one of the smaller saloons, watching the Count assemble the pages of the scenario. He had actually typed them on his folding typewriter and now came across the room, smiling encouragingly upon his company.

“Well, we haven’t such a tame play as everyone thought we would be sure to produce. All told, you will find the six reels fit in pretty good, one to the other, in continuity, but I shall have to exchange the chapters by Nolla and Dodo, as to priority. ‘Now listen, my children, and you shall hear’ etc.—you know the rest!” The Count laughed as he sat down.

“A-hem!” he cleared his throat as a starter. “The name of the play has been suggested by six writers, so I will have to have the title chosen by vote. A closed poll, probably, to avoid the usual fight in politics. First title:

“‘Life’s Thorny Road.’ This was submitted by Ruth Ashby.

“‘The Great Secret,’ is the second title, given by Nolla.

“‘His Easy Conquest,’ is third, submitted by Rose Chalmys.

“‘Her Friend’s Husband,’ is one suggested by Dodo Alexander.

“‘Greatest Thing on Earth,’ is given us by Nancy Fabian.

“‘Just a Nobody,’ is the one suggested by Polly Brewster. Now, friends, which of these titles do you think will draw the largest crowds and make the production a certain success,—financially, of course. That is all the corporations care about, you know.”

Count Chalmys smiled as he noted the faces in the semi-circle about him. Then Mr. Fabian spoke.

“Will you have to take a vote on that? I believe we can decide the question without going to all the trouble of having a box and officers to guard the voting.”

“How many are in favor of voting by a standing vote?” called the Count. Every hand went up.

“All right. Now, then, when I call off the different titles as they come in order, those in favor of said title please rise and remain standing until we can count.”

The suggestion of there being any work attached to the counting of one or two voters caused a ripple of merriment from the small group.

“How many favor title one, ‘Life’s Thorny Road’?”

Mr. and Mrs. Ashby stood up. Not even Ruth favored her own work but her doting parents did. This caused a general laugh at their expense and so they seated themselves, again.

“Who favors the second, ‘The Great Secret’?” asked the amateur manager.

Nolla had faith in herself, and so had Polly. But two votes could not carry the day, and they sat down again.

“Well, how about ‘His Easy Conquest’? Who wants that?”

No one stood up at this title, and every one laughed at the Countess; she laughed more merrily than the others.

“Next comes, ‘Her Friend’s Husband’—by Dodo Alexander.”

Dodo’s father and Polly voted for this title, but they were over-ruled by the others.

“‘Greatest Thing on Earth,’ by Miss Fabian—how about that?”

No one stirred at that invitation to vote, and the Count laughingly remarked, “Your talent is not appreciated, Miss Fabian.

“This is the last one, friends, and we have not yet had a majority of voters decide upon one of the others so you must be waiting for this one! Now, who wants ‘Just a Nobody’?”

At this, everyone but Polly stood up, and without further ado the manager acclaimed Polly’s title as the prize-winner.

“All right, then; the photo-drama about to be played will be called ‘Just a Nobody,’ title by Miss Polly Brewster; directed by Professor Fabian; assisted by Mr. Alexander; Camera-man, Chalmys, etc., etc.”

The very select audience laughed at the Count’s mimicry of all the first-snaps of a feature play, in which every one is mentioned, even the pet cat or canary which stood near when the reels were run off.

“Now for the gist of this whole thing—the story. I will open the picture by reading from Polly Brewster’s chapter.

“‘Janet Schuyler was a regulation young debutante in New York’s social circle—snobbish, arrogant, vain. Young admirer worth millions, not in love with her, but nearing that fatal crisis. Janet’s mother, usual social aspirant for daughter,—father reverse of such qualities. Scene in large department store, Janet accuses meek young saleswoman of taking her purse which had been placed on counter a moment before. Girl, frightened, denies the charge. Mrs. Schuyler creates scene—buyer of the department hurries to scene to defend girl. Mrs. S— demands floor-walker to take girl to dressing room and search her for purse. Being prominent charge-customer, Mrs S— has her way, and weeping Esther is forced to small sideroom to be ignominiously disrobed and carefully searched.

“At counter young vamp who stood near Janet Schuyler, leaves hurriedly and is about to make for the door when a bright-looking young woman placed detaining hand upon her arm. Vamp is persuaded to step to a corner of the store and answer questions, because she mistook woman for private store detective. Young woman, who is a reporter, takes notes of moment, then says peremptorily: ‘Hand over that purse or you’ll get more than you want!’ Vamp registers personal affront! Acts indignant. Reporter laughs, insists upon having purse. Vamp angry, threatens the law if she is detained. Reporter now ill at ease and lets vamp go. Hurries back to counter where Esther arrives, followed by gesticulating accuser and her daughter. Floor-walker promises to search further but insists that accused girl was innocent of the theft.

“Mrs. S— and daughter turn to leave store when reporter accosts them and hands them her card. Says she will write up this negligence of the authorities in a high-class shop. Mrs. S— decides to punish the firm for their carelessness and tells the reporter what she believes to be the truth—purse was stolen by girl.

“Miss Johnson, the young reporter, knows better than this, but assents with lady. She determines to have a talk with Esther and find out whether, or no, she saw the beaded purse claimed to have been stolen.

“Esther tells how Miss S— fumbled over many boxes of lace and then said to her mother: ‘Wait here—I’ll go across to the opposite counter and look at that net before I decide.’ Then the society girl turned her back and stooped over the display of net and beaded trimming. No clerk was near to wait on her, and the girl at the lace-counter was called upon to serve another customer, and that kept her from watching Janet Schuyler.”

This ended Polly’s allotment of words in the scenario, and then the Count announced, “I will proceed to read Dodo’s story because it fits in here better than elsewhere in the script.

“Pretty little shop-girl, while waiting for customer, has visions of comfortable home back on the farm. (Show scene of girl in rural life, walking home from district school-house with handsome lad of fourteen—evidently admirer.) Esther sighs, as she remembers the day Reggie’s father moved from the village to go to Texas to raise cattle. She had never heard again from Reggie, and believes he has forgotten her entirely.

“Then comes Mrs. Schuyler and her daughter to look at laces. Esther overhears society girl plan dress for conquest of young man, then hears mother mention name of Deane—and tells daughter she must capture such a prize as the heir to

his father's millions in oil-lands of the South-west. Esther, excited, is about to ask the two haughty ladies for Reginald Deane's city address, when the floor-walker frowns upon her and thus ends her attempt to secure the desired information.

“A young lady, waiting for her turn, watches the two rich customers and when they have gone she speaks to the shop-girl. ‘Who are they?’ Esther explains by showing name of charge account and address. ‘Well, I have my own opinion of them. I think they are nobodies, if you ask me. I’ve seen so many climbers that I can spot them at once.’

“This opens a pleasant chat between the girl and the young journalist, Esther speaking of Reginald Deane, and Miss Johnson giving Esther her card and asking her to come in some evening when she has nothing better to do. Esther promises and watches while Miss Johnson leaves.

“That evening, in her meagre little room, Esther takes up the card again, and dreams of an evening in the near future when she shall meet the pleasant young woman, again.

“Few days later—Esther receives invitation to small party at Miss Johnson's bachelor apartment, and is duly elated over the event. Dresses in her best frock, which is simple voile, home-made, and starts out. Miss Johnson has two other young women and four young men present, when Esther arrives and is introduced. One of the men gazes intently at her, during the evening, then whispers to his hostess, ‘That girl reminds me of someone I know or have seen, and I can't place her.’ Miss Johnson gives him Esther's history, and he exclaims ‘That's it! She's the school-girl my friend talks about—he has a picture of her taken years ago when he lived in the country.’

“Miss Johnson calls to Esther and tells her the news and the girl is thrilled at hearing where she can find Reginald, and then the young man promises to bring him soon, to see Esther. Esther walks home with William Stratford that night, talking of nothing but Reggie and their schooldays. But she is not aware of Reggie's inheritance of millions of dollars' worth of oil-wells.’

“The third installment by Ruth Ashby, works in here, all right, so I will read it,” announced the Count, and continued his reading.

“Miss Schuyler was giving a ball. Her new evening costume had not yet arrived from the exclusive importers on Fifth Avenue and she was storming around the house, driving everyone insane with her complaints against the Frenchman.

“The doorbell rang, Miss S— waited in the front hall to see if it might be a messenger with the gown. When she spied a meek little face peering over the great box, she called insolently, ‘Bring her right in here, James. I want to give her a piece of my mind for dallying this way!’

“Frightened little Esther tip-toed across the rich rug and waited to be told to open the box and remove the gorgeous gown. She obeyed with trembling fingers, kneeling upon the floor in order to undo the knot of twine. As she did so, a young man entered the front door and was told that Miss Janet was in the small reception room. He started for that room without waiting to be announced.

“The moment Janet saw the much desired young heir of millions, standing in the doorway, she hastily commanded the girl to stop removing the gown, for she did not wish to have her caller see the dress before the proper time that evening.

“Janet Schuyler went forward to speak to the young man and Esther sat back to rest and see who had interrupted the scene between herself and the society girl. She was astounded to find that the young man was no other than her old school-mate, Reginald Deane, whom she had not heard of since they were children at school.

“The moment Reginald recognized Esther, he ran forward and showed how delighted he was to meet her once more. He paid no heed to her shabby dress or meek behavior, but turned to introduce her to his young hostess. When he saw the expression of scorn and hauteur on Janet’s face he realized that she was not the sort of a girl he cared to have for a wife, so he helped Esther to her feet and said politely to Janet, ‘I will bid you good-afternoon, as I now have to escort my dear old friend to her home.’

“Then the two went out leaving the haughty miss in a fury.”

As the Count ended Ruth’s chapter, there were smiles on the faces of the audience, for it sounded exactly like Ruth—a genuine Cinderella Chapter.

“Now I will read the next installment, written by Miss Fabian. I shall have to edit more of this chapter in order to hinge it on to the preceding one,” explained the Count.

“Lois Miller was not a vamp by choice but by force of circumstances. She was so pretty that she had found it difficult to secure a position as saleslady in a store, for the reason that the other girls generally got jealous of the attention paid her. When she was offered a minor part in a Chorus on the stage, she accepted, although the salary was no more than enough to pay her room rent and scanty

meals. For clothes to keep up appearances she had to rely on her wit and ability to make over things.

“By chance, she happened to be in the large store just when Janet Schuyler and her mother were shopping there. Then she overheard Mrs. Schuyler command the little saleslady, Esther Brown, to send the lace for her daughter’s evening gown with special messenger. The address was given, and the two society ladies left the shop. Lois really had nothing to buy but she was killing time in the shops, hoping to gain some information that might give her a chance to earn some extra money.

“She pondered over the name and address of the obviously rich ladies, then decided to try for a position, as companion, because the wretched life of an underpaid chorus girl was palling on her. As she turned to leave the shop, she found a bright-eyed young woman watching her. Instantly she thought of the private detective, but she was innocent of crime and she gave back the look with interest added.

“As she went out she realized she was being followed, so she turned and said: Well, what do you want?’

““Aren’t you Lois Miller? Used to be stenographer at the office of *The Earth*?” asked the woman.

““Sure thing! But that was ages ago,” retorted Lois.

““I knew you there. I was just breaking in. What are you doing, now, Lois? I’ve got something to unravel.”

“Before she knew it, Lois was commandeered to follow the shop-girl, Esther Brown, and find out all about her, as the reporter had heard of a reward of \$500 offered for news of the girl described, who came from New Hampshire. Miss Johnson agreed to go fifty-fifty with Lois if the shop-girl turned out to be the one they were looking for.

“That is how Esther Brown met her rich husband and how Janet Schuyler lost a rich young admirer, and how Miss Johnson won not only the reward Reginald paid, but also had a fine story for her paper; and Lois Miller earned enough money to fit herself out in decent clothes and pay her arrears of room-rent and board.’

“Now comes the final reel, as written by Rose Chalmers,” said the Count, waiting until the merriment over the various phases of Janet and Esther’s reel life had subsided; then he continued:

“Janet Schuyler, being under heavy obligations to the shop-girl for having saved her life from the hold-up men in the park, remembered how she had snubbed the meek girl in the store, and had caused her to be reprimanded by the head of the department.

““I want you to come home with me, and receive my mother’s thanks and my father’s reward for your bravery in defending me,” said Janet, finally.

““I do not wish any reward for what I did, and your thanks are quite sufficient,” murmured Esther.

“The two girls walked along the street leading to the Schuyler home, however, and just before they reached the place, a sporty car drew up to the curb and stopped suddenly. A young man sprang out and ran over to greet Janet Schuyler. She was delighted to see Reginald Deane, after the long months he had been away from the city, but Deane could not take his eyes from Janet’s companion. It was her place to introduce the girl with her, yet she could not humble her pride to accept a salesgirl as her equal, and this she would do if she introduced her. Reginald ended the doubt.

““Aren’t you Esther Brown?” And the girl smiled as she replied, “And you are Reggie Deane, aren’t you?”

“Janet was forgotten after that, for the two who had been beaux in schooldays and had never heard from each other since Deane went to Texas with his family, were so engrossed with each other.

“Janet made the best of a bad bargain and invited both the young people to her home, but Esther pleaded her lack of time, and Deane offered to see Esther to her home. Thus ended Janet’s dream of capturing the richest young oil-financier in the country.”“

The young authors considered their work to be par-excellence, but the adults in the audience forbore to render an opinion.

“Of course, I shall have to edit, somewhat, but I think we may look forward to having a very successful run of this picture,” announced the Count, very seriously. “One important item is fortunate for the company—that is, we need not have costly costumes, nor scenes of Court Life in Europe. Our little play is simple to stage and inexpensive in production.

“Now I will retire to the Studio and edit the scenario, but I wish all the actors to be on time at the casting room at ten o’clock, sharp, tomorrow. Besides the star leads, I may need extras, so I would suggest that any one desiring a part in this

great melodrama, to report to me when we meet at the Studio.” The Count looked at the adults as he spoke, and they smilingly accepted the invitation to be on hand to act as supers, in case of need.

Well, the six-reel production went on apace, and on the last night of the voyage, the photo-drama was presented to a crowded salon. It had been suddenly decided to charge an entrance fee of a dollar each and devote the proceeds to charity. This detracted not a whit from the entertainment, but rather added to it.

Many a laugh echoed through that salon, at the pathetic scenes in the story, because of the amateur acting of the stars. In fact, the vamp was so full of mischief while playing the heart-stirring drama of her life when she was hungry and without a home, that the “pathos” acted upon the audience as if it had been comedy.

The “Marquis” as Reggie Deane, made not reel, but real, love to Esther Brown in the picture; so much so that Mr. Ashby felt relieved to think the two would never meet again, once the steamer landed at the New York dock.

So with bright plans for the future, Polly and her chums spent the last few hours on the steamer, and were ready for their “career” before they landed in New York City again.

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