SISTERS

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The Firebug

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By GRACE MAY NORTH

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CHAPTER I.
HOW IT BEGAN

Gold and blue were the colors that predominated on one glorious April day. Gold were the fields of poppies that carpeted the foothills stretching down to the very edge of Rocky Point, against which the jewel-blue Pacific lapped quietly. It was at that hour of the tides when the surf is stilled.

A very old adobe house surrounded on three sides by wide verandas, the pillars of which were eucalyptus logs, stood about two hundred feet back from the point. Rose vines, clambering at will over the picturesque old dwelling, were a riot of colors. There was the exquisite pink Cecil Brunner in delicate, long-stemmed clusters; Gold of Ophir blossoms in a mass glowing in the sunshine, while intertwined were the vines of the star-like white Cherokee and Romona, the red.

Mingled with their fragrance was the breath of heliotrope which grew, bushwise, at one corner so luxuriantly that often it had to be cut away lest it cover the gravel path which led around the house to the orchard. There, under fruit trees that were each a lovely bouquet of pearly bloom, stood row after row of square white hives, while bees, busy at honey gathering, buzzed everywhere.

Now and then, clear and sweet, rose the joyous song of mating birds.

A little old woman, seated in a rustic rocker on the western side porch, dropped her sewing on her lap and smiled on the scene with blissful content. What a wonderful world it was and how happy she and Silas had been since Jenny came. She glanced across the near gardens, aglow with early bloom, to a patch of ploughed brown earth where an old man was cultivating between rows of green shoots, some of them destined to produce field corn for the cow and chickens, and the rest sweet corn for the sumptuous table of Mrs. Poindexter-Jones.

Then the gaze of the little old woman continued a quarter of a mile along the rocky shore to a grove of sycamore trees, where stood the castle-like home of the richest woman in Santa Barbara township. Only the topmost turrets could be seen above the towering treetops. The vast grounds were surrounded by a high cypress hedge, and, not until he reached the wrought iron gates could a passer-by obtain a view of the magnificence that lay within. But the little old woman knew it all in detail, as she had been housekeeper there for many years, until, in middle-age, she had married Silas Warner, who managed the farm for Mrs. Algernon Poindexter-Jones.

For the past fifteen years the happy couple had lived in the old adobe house at Rocky Point, while at Poindexter Arms, as the beautiful estate was named, there had been a succession of housekeepers and servants, for their mistress was domineering and hard to please.

Of late years the grand dame had seldom been seen by the kindly old farmer, Si Warner and his wife, for Mrs. Poindexter-Jones had preferred to live in her equally palatial home in San Francisco overlooking the Golden Gate.

She visited Santa Barabra periodically, merely to assure herself that her orders were being carried out by the servants left in charge of Poindexter Arms and Rocky Point farm. Often Mrs. Si Warner did not catch a glimpse of their employer on these fleeting visits, and yet she well knew that the imperious mistress of millions was linked more closely than she liked to remember to the old couple at Rocky Point.

As she resumed her sewing, memory recalled to her that long ago incident which, by the merest chance, had made the proud woman and the humble, sharers of a secret which neither had cared to divulge.

It had been another spring day such as this, only they had all been younger by fourteen years.

While ploughing in the lot nearest the highway, Farmer Si had noticed a strange equipage drawn to one side of the road. He thought little of it at first, believing it to be a traveling tinsmith, as the canopied wagon was evidently furnished with household utensils, but, when an hour later, he again reached that side of the field and saw the patient horse still standing there with drooping head and no one in sight, his curiosity was aroused, and, leaping over the rail fence, he went to

investigate.

Under that weather-stained canopy a sad tragedy had been enacted. On the driver's seat a young man, clothed in a garb of a clergyman, seemed to be sleeping, but a closer scrutiny revealed to the farmer that the Angel of Death had visited the little home on wheels. For a home it evidently had been. In the roomier part of the wagon a beautiful little girl of three sat on a stack of folded bedding, while in a crude box-like crib a sickly looking infant lay sleeping.

Whenever Mrs. Silas Warner recalled that long ago day, she again experienced the varying emotions which had come to her following each other in rapid succession. She had been ironing when she had seen a queer canopied equipage coming up the lane which led from the highway. Believing it to be a peddlar, who now and then visited their farm, she had gone to the side porch, there to have her curiosity greatly aroused by the fact that it was her husband Si who was on the seat of the driver. Then her surprise had been changed to alarm when she learned of the three who were under the canopy. Awe, because she was in the presence of death, and tender sympathy for the little ones, who had evidently been orphaned, mingled in the heart of the woman as she held the scrawny, crying infant that her husband had given to her. Even with all these crowding emotions there had yet been room for admiration, when the little three-year-old girl was lifted down. The child stood apart, quiet and aloof. She had heard them say that her father was dead. She was too young to understand and so she just waited. A rarely beautiful child, with a tangled mass of light brown, sun-glinted hair hanging far below her shoulders, and wide, wondering brown eyes that were shaded with long curling lashes.

But still another emotion had been stirred in the heart of Susan Warner, for a most unexpected and unusual visitor had at that moment arrived. A coach, bearing the Poindexter Arms, turned into the lane, and when the liveried footman threw open the door, there sat no less a personage than the grand dame, Mrs. Algernon Poindexter-Jones, on one of her very infrequent visits to the farm which belonged to her estate. She had been charmed with the little girl, and after having heard the story, she announced that she would keep the child until relatives were found. Then she was driven away, without having stated her errand, and accompanying her, still quietly aloof, rode the three-year-old girl. A doctor and coroner soon arrived, having been summoned by Mrs. Poindexter-Jones. The latter had searched the effects of the dead man and had found an unfinished letter addressed to a bishop in the Middle West. In it the man had told

of his wife's death, and that he was endeavoring to keep on with his traveling missionary work in outlying mountain districts, but that his heart attacks were becoming threateningly more frequent. "There is no relative in all the world with whom to leave Gwynette, who is now three, and little Jeanette, who is completing her first year." No more had been written.

After the funeral Mrs. Poindexter-Jones had announced that she would adopt the older child and that, if they wished, the farmer and his wife might keep the scrawny baby on one condition, and that was that the girls should never be told that they were sisters. To this the childless couple had rejoicingly agreed. The doctor and coroner had also been sworn to secrecy. The dead man's effects were stored in the garret above the old adobe and the incident was closed.

Mrs. Poindexter-Jones left almost at once for Europe, where she had remained for several years.

Tenderly loved, and nourished with the best that the farm could produce, the scrawny, ill-looking infant had gradually changed to a veritable fairy of sunshine. "Jenny," as they called her, feeling that Jeanette was a bit too grand, walked with a little skipping step from the time that she was first sure that she would not tumble, and looked up, with laughter in her lovely eyes, that were the same liquid brown as were her sister's, and tossed back her long curls that were also light brown with threads of sunlight in them. And ever after, there were little skipping steps to her walk, and, when she talked, it seemed as though at any moment she might break into song.

Jenny had never questioned her origin. She had always been with Granny Sue and Granddad Si, and so, of course, that proved that she belonged to them. She was too happy, just being alive, to create problems for herself to solve, and too busy.

There had been too few children on the neighboring ranches to maintain a country school, and Jenny had been too young to send on a bus to Santa Barbara each day, but her education had not been neglected, for a charming and cultured young woman living not far away had taught her through the years, and she had learned much that other girls of her age did not know.

When the weather was pleasant Jenny, her school books under her arm, walked to the hill-top home of her teacher, Miss Dearborn, but during the rainy season

her grandfather hitched their faithful Dobbin to the old-fashioned, topped buggy and drove her to her destination in the morning, calling for her in the late afternoon.

But on one wild March day when Jenny had been thirteen, an unexpected storm had overtaken her as she was walking home along the coast highway.

Luckily she had worn her mackintosh, but as she was passing between wide, treeless meadows that reached to the sea on one side and a briary hill on the other, there had been no shelter in sight.

However, a low gray car had soon appeared around a bend and the driver, a youth whose face was hidden by cap, collar and goggles, had offered her a ride. Gladly she had accepted and had been taken to her home, where, to her surprise, Grandmother Sue had welcomed the lad with sincerest pleasure. That had been the first time Jenny Warner had met Harold, the only son of their employer, Mrs. Poindexter-Jones.

His visit had brought consternation to the little family at Rocky Point, for, inadvertently, he had told the old man that his mother planned selling the farm when she could find a suitable buyer.

The old woman sitting on the side porch dropped her sewing to her lap as she recalled that long-ago scene in the kitchen.

The farmer had been for the moment almost stunned by the news, then looking up at the boy with a pitiful attempt at a smile, he had said waveringly:

“I reckon you see how ’tis, Harry-boy. We’ve been livin’ here at Rocky Point so long, it’s sort o’ got to feelin’ like home to us, but you tell your ma that the Warners’ll be ready to move when she says the word.”

The boy had been much affected, and, after assuring them that perhaps a buyer would not be found, he had taken his departure.

When he had gone, Jenny had cuddled in her grandfather’s arms and he had held her close. Susan Warner remembered that the expression on his face had been as though he were thanking God that they had their “gal”. With her irrepressible enthusiasm the girl had exclaimed:

“I have the most wonderful plan! Let’s buy Rocky Point Farm, and then it will be all our very own.”

“Lawsy, child,” Susan Warner had remonstrated, “it’d cost a power o’ money, and it’s but a few hundred that we’ve laid by.”

But Jenny had a notion that she wanted to try out. “Granny, granddad,” she turned from first one to the other and her voice was eager, earnest, pleading: “Every Christmas since I can remember you’ve given me a five-dollar gold piece to be saving for the time when I might be all alone in the world. I want to spend them now.” Then she unfolded her plan. She wanted to buy hens and bees. “You were a wonderful beekeeper when you were a boy, granddad,” she insisted. “You have told me so time and again, and I just know that I can sell eggs and honey to the rich people over on the foothill estates, and then, when we have saved money enough, we can buy the farm and have it for our very own home forever and ever.”

The old couple knew that this would be impossible, but, since they had not the heart to disappoint their darling, the scheme had been tried. Every Saturday morning during the summer that she had been thirteen, Jenny, high on the buckboard seat, had driven old Dobbin up and down the long winding tree-hung lanes in the aristocratic foothill suburb of Santa Barbara. At first her wares were only eggs from her flocks of white Minorka hens, but, when she was fourteen, jars of golden strained honey were added, and gradually, among her customers, she came to be known as “The Honey Girl” from Rocky Point Farm. And now Jenny was fifteen.

Susan Warner was startled from her day-dreams by the shrill whistle of the rural mail carrier. Neatly folding her sewing (and Granny Sue would neatly fold her sewing if she were running away from a fire), the old woman went to the side porch nearest the lane where the elderly Mr. Pickson was then stopping to leave the Rural Weekly for Mr. Silas Warner and a note from Miss Isophene Granger for “The Honey Girl.”

“I reckon it’s a fresh order for honey or eggs or such,” the smiling old woman told him. The mail carrier agreed with her.

“I reckon ’tis! There’s a parcel o’ new girls over to the seminary,” was his comment as he turned his horse’s head toward the gate, then with a short nod he

drove away.

Susan Warner went back into the kitchen, and, feeling sure that the note was not of a private nature, she unfolded the paper and read the message, which was couched in the formal language habitually used by the principal of the fashionable seminary.

“Miss Isophene Granger desires six dozen eggs to be delivered this afternoon not later than five.”

The old woman glanced at the clock. “Tut! Tut! And here it’s close to three. I reckon I’d better be gatherin’ the eggs this once. Jenny says it’s her work, but it’ll be all she can do to get there, with Dobbin to hitch and what not.”

Taking her sunbonnet from its hook by the kitchen door, the old woman went out to the barnyard where, in neat, wired-in spaces, there were several flocks of white Minorka hens. After filling the large basket that she carried with eggs, Susan Warner returned through the blossoming orchard, and although she was unconscious of it, she smiled and nodded at the bees that were so busily gathering honey; then she thought of her girl.

“Dear lovin’ child that she is!” The faded blue eyes of the old woman were tender. “Si and me never lets on that her plan can’t come to nothin’. ’Twould nigh break her heart. All told there’s not more’n seven hundred now in the bank, an’ the farm, when they come to sell it, is like to bring most that an acre, or leastwise so Pa reckons.”

But later, as Susan Warner was sorting the eggs and placing them in boxes holding a dozen each, she took a more optimistic view of the matter.

“It’s well to be workin’ and savin’, how-some-ever,” she concluded. “Our darlin’ll need it all an’ more when her granddad an me are took.” Then, before the old woman could wipe away the tears that always came when she thought of leaving Jenny, her eyes brightened, and, peering out of a window near she exclaimed aloud (although there was only a canary to hear), “Wall now, here comes Jenny this minute, singin’ and skippin’ up the lane, like the world couldn’t hold a trouble. Bless the happy heart of her!”

CHAPTER II.
JENNY

Susan Warner turned to beam a welcome at the apparition standing in the open door of the kitchen. With the sun back of her, shining through the folds of her yellow muslin dress and glinting through her light, wavy brown hair, the girl did indeed look like a sprite of the springtime, and, to add to the picture, she held a branch, sweet with apricot blossoms.

“Greetings, Granny Sue!” she called gayly. “This is churning day, isn’t it?”

“That’s right, ’tis, Jenny darlin’, or leastwise ’twould o’ been ’ceptin’ for a message Mr. Pickson fetched over from Granger Place Seminary. There’s some new pupils come sudden like, I reckon, an’ they need eggs a day sooner than ordinary. I’ve got ’em all packed in the hamper, dearie. You’ve nothin’ to do but hitch Dobbin and start.”

“Righto, Granny Sue; but first I must put these poor blossoms into a jar. I found the branch broken and just hanging by a shred of bark on that old tree ’way down by the fence corner.”

Jenny took a brown jar from a cupboard as she talked and filled it with water from the sink pump.

“They’ll be lonely for their home tree, like as not,” she chattered on, “but perhaps they’ll be a bit glad when they find that they are to brighten up our home for a few days. Don’t you think maybe they will, Granny Sue? Don’t you think when we can’t do the thing we most want to do, we still can be happy if we are just alive and doing the most beautiful thing that is left for us to do?”

This last was called over her shoulder as she carried the jar and blossoming branch toward the door of the living-room. Luckily she did not pause for an

answer, for the little old woman always felt confused when her girl began such flights of fancy. Had she been obliged to reply, she no doubt would have said:

“Why, ’taint likely, Jenny, that branch of apricot flowers even knows it’s broken off, an’ as for that, the ones that are left will make all the better fruit with some of ’em gone.”

While the girl was placing the jar on the living-room center table, close to the book that she had been reading, Granddad Si entered the kitchen for a drink, and upon hearing of the message from Miss Granger, he hurried to the barn to hitch old Dobbin to the cart, and so, when five minutes later the girl skipped out, laughing over her shoulder at her grandmother’s admonition to go more slowly, lest she fall and break the eggs, there was Granddad Si fastening the last buckles. He straightened up, pushed his frayed straw hat to the back of his head and surveyed the girl with pardonable pride.

“Jenny, gal,” he began, and from the expression in his eyes she knew just how he would complete the sentence, and so, laughingly, she put her free hand over his mouth.

“Oh, granddad, ’tisn’t so, not the least bit, and you mustn’t say it again. A stranger might hear you some time, and what if he should think that I really believed it.”

But the old man finished his sentence, even though the words were mumbled behind the slim white hand of his girl:

“It’s the Gospel truth, Jenny. I’m tellin’ ye! Thar ain’t a gal over to that hifalutin seminary that’s half as purty as yo’ be. I reckon I know, ’cause I watch the whole lot of ’em when they go down the road on them parade walks they take, with a teacher ahead and one behind like they was a flock of geese and had to have a gooseherd along, which more’n like they are. A silly parcel, allays gigglin’.”

The last half of this speech had been more clearly spoken, for Jenny, having kissed him on the top of the nose from the wagon step, had climbed into the cart.

As she was driving away, she called back to him: “Wrong you are, Granddad, for I am only an egg and honey vender, while they are all aristocrats. Good-bye.”

Then, a second later, she turned again to sing out:

“Tell Granny I’d like a chocolate pudding tonight, all hidden in Brindle’s yellowest cream.”

Long after the girl had driven away, the farmer stood gazing down the lane. An old question had returned to trouble him:

Was it honest not to tell her that she wasn’t their own kin?

He couldn’t do it. It would break all of their hearts. She was their kin, somehow. No own grandchild could be dearer. Then he thought of the other girl, Jenny’s sister. He had heard something that day about her, and he had been mighty sorry to hear it.

When his “gal” disappeared from sight, up one of the tree-shaded lanes leading toward the foothill estates, Farmer Si turned and walked slowly back to the kitchen. He delivered Jenny’s message about the chocolate pudding to his wife, who, even then, was preparing the vegetables for supper. Crossing to the sink pump, the old man began working the handle up and down. A rush of crystal clear water rewarded his effort and, after having quaffed a long refreshing draught of it, he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

Then, after hanging his hat on its nail by the door, he sank down in his favorite arm chair close to the stove and sighed deeply as though he were very weary. His wife looked at him questioningly and he said in a voice and manner which were evidently evasive:

“Powerful poor weather for gettin’ the crops started. Nothin’ but sunshine this fortnight past.”

Susan Warner was briskly beating the eggs needed for her darling’s favorite pudding. When the whirr had ceased she turned and smiled across the room at the old man whose position showed that he was dejected. “What’s worryin’ yo’, Si?” The tone of the old woman’s voice promised sympathy if it were needed. “’Tisn’t about the farm yo’re really cogitatin’. I can tell that easy. Thar’s suthin’ else troublin’ yo’, an’ yo’ might as well speak out furst as last.”

“Wall, yo’re close to right, Susan, as I reckon yo’ most allays are. I was mendin’ the fence down by the highway when ol’ Pickson drove up an’ stopped to pass the time o’ day, like he generally does, an’ he says, says he, ‘Si, have yo’ heard the news?’ I w’a’nt particular interested, bein’ as Pickson allays starts off that a-

way, but what he said next fetched me to an upstandin', I kin tell you."

Susan Warner had stopped her work to listen.

"What did Mr. Pickson tell you, Si? Suthin' that troubled you?" she inquired anxiously.

"Wall, sort o' that way. Mabbe it won't be nuthin' to worry about, and mabbe agin it will. Pickson said as how Mrs. Poindexter-Jones had gone to some waterin' place over in France for her nerves, an' not wishin' to leave her daughter in the big city up north alone with the servants, she'd sent her to stay in the seminary down here for the time bein', an', what's more, a flock of her friends from San Francisco came along of her. Them are the new pupils you was mentionin' a spell ago, as being the reason extra eggs was needed."

The old woman stared at her spouse as one spellbound. When she spoke her voice sounded strained and unnatural. "Si Warner, do yo' mean to tell me our Jenny has gone to fetch eggs for her very own sister an' her friends? They're likely to meet up wi' each other now, arter all these years, an' neither will know who the other really is. Oh, the pity of it, that one of 'em should have all that money can buy, and the other of 'em ridin' around peddlin' eggs and honey."

But the old man took a different view of the matter. "Susan," he said, "if our gal had the pick of the two places, I reckon she'd choose stayin' with us. I reckon she would."

Susan Warner's practical nature had again asserted itself. "Wall, there's no need for us to be figurin' about that. Jenny shall never know that she has a sister. Who is there to tell her? An' what's more, she'll never have a chance to choose betwixt us and the Poindexter-Joneses." Then, as a tender expression crept into the faded blue eyes, the old woman added, "Jenny wouldn't leave us, Si. No, not for anyone. I'm sartin as to that, but I'm hopin' she'll never know as she isn't our own. I'm sure hopin' that she won't."

CHAPTER III.
FORLORN ETTA

Dobbin never could be induced to go faster than a gentle trot and this pace was especially pleasing to his driver on a day when the world, all the world that she knew, was at its loveliest. Having left the coast highway, she turned up the Live-Oak Canon road and slowly began the ascent toward the foothills.

There was no one in sight for, indeed, one seldom met pedestrians along the winding lanes in the aristocratic suburb of Santa Barbara. Now and then a handsome limousine would pass and Dobbin, drawing to the far side of the road, would put up his ears and stare at the usurper. He seemed to consider all vehicles not horse-drawn with something of disdain. Then, when it had passed, he again took the middle of the road, which he deemed his rightful place.

“Dobbin,” the girl sang out to him, “what would you think, some day, if you saw me riding in one of those fine cars?” Then, as memory recalled a certain stormy day two years previous, Jenny continued, “I never told you, Dobbin, but I did ride in one once. It was a little low gray car and the boy who drove it called it a ‘speeder.’”

Then, as Dobbin seemed to consider this conversation not worth listening to, the girl fell to musing.

“I wonder what became of that boy. Harold P-J, he called himself, and he said I mustn’t forget the hyphen. He laughed when he said it. There must have been something amusing about it. He was a nice boy with such brotherly gray eyes. He hasn’t been back since, I am sure, for he told granddad he would come to the farm the very next time his mother permitted him to visit Santa Barbara.” Then Jenny recalled the one and only time that she had seen Harold’s mother. It was when she had been ten. She had been out in the garden gathering Shasta daisies to give to Miss Dearborn, her teacher. She had on a yellow dress that day, she

recalled; yellow had always been her favorite color and she had been standing knee deep among the flowers with her arms almost full when the grand coach turned into the lane. Jenny had often heard Granny Sue tell about the coach, on the door of which was emblazoned the Poindexter-Arms, and the small girl, filled with a natural curiosity, had glanced up as the equipage was about to pass. But it had not passed, for the only occupant, a haughty-mannered, handsomely-gowned woman had pulled on a silken cord which evidently communicated with the driver's seat, for, almost at once, the coach had stopped and the woman had beckoned to the child.

"Are you Jeanette Warner?" she had asked abruptly. The child, making a curtsy, as Miss Dearborn had said all well-mannered little girls should, had replied that her name was Jenny. Never would the girl forget the expression on the handsome face as the eyebrows were lifted. The grand dame's next remark, which was quite unintelligible to the child, had been uttered in a cold voice as though the speaker were much vexed about something. "I am indeed sorry to find that you are so alike."

The haughty woman had then jerked on the silken cord in a most imperious manner and the coach had moved toward the farmhouse.

Jenny had never told anyone of this meeting, but her sensitive nature had been deeply hurt by the cold, disdainful expression in the woman's eyes. She had sincerely hoped she never again would encounter the owner of Rocky Point, nor had she done so. Time, even, had erased from her memory just what Mrs. Poindexter-Jones had said, since, at the time, the words had conveyed no real meaning to the child. All that was left in her heart was a dread of the woman, and she had been glad, glad that she lived far away to the north instead of next door.

Suddenly the impulsive girl drew rein. "Dobbin," she exclaimed joyfully, "stand still a moment. I want you to look at that wonderful stone wall around the Bixby estate. Isn't it the most beautiful thing that you ever saw with the pink and white cherokee roses, star-like, all over it?" Then she waved her hand toward an acacia tree beyond the wall that was golden with bloom, and called out to an invisible mocking bird that was imitating one lilting song after another, "I don't wonder that you shout hosannas of praise. It's such a wonderful world to live in. Trot along, Dobbin! We must get the eggs to the seminary before five."

The tree-shaded, lane-like road they were following had many a bend in it as it ascended higher and higher into the foothills, and, as they turned at one of them, Jenny again addressed her four-footed companion.

“Dobbin, do hurry! There’s that poor forlorn Etta Somebody who pares potatoes at the seminary. I see her all crouched down over a pan of vegetables every time I go into that kitchen to deliver eggs and honey, but not once has she looked up at me. I know she’s terribly unhappy about something. I don’t believe she even knows that she’s living in a wonderful world where everything is so beautiful that a person just has to sing. Please do hurry, Dobbin. I may never get another chance to speak to her and I want to ask her if she wouldn’t like to ride.”

Jenny slapped the reins on the back of the old dusty-white horse, and, although he at first cast a glance of indignation over his right shoulder, he decided to humor his young mistress, and did increase his speed sufficiently to overtake the tall angular girl who shuffled as she walked and drooped her shoulders as though the burden upon them was more than she could bear. She wore an almost threadbare brown woolen dress, though the day was warm, and a queer little hat which suggested to Jenny pictures she had seen of children in foreign lands. She had one day heard the cook address the girl as Etta in a voice that had expressed impatience, and so, pulling on the rein, Jenny called cheerily, “Etta, are you going up to the seminary? Won’t you ride with me? I’m taking the eggs a day early.”

The girl, whose plain, colorless face was dully expressionless, climbed up on the seat at Jenny’s side. “You look awfully fagged and dusty. Have you been walking far?” the young driver ventured.

The strange girl’s tone was complaining—“Far? Well, I should say I have. All the way to Santa Barbara railway station and back. Folks enough passed me goin’ and comin’, but you’re the first that offered me a lift.”

“Eight miles is a long walk,” the young driver put in, “on a day as warm as this” Etta’s china blue eyes stared dully ahead. She made no response and so Jenny again started Dobbin on the upward way.

From time to time she glanced furtively at her companion, wondering why she was so evidently miserable.

At last she said, “I suppose everyone was in a hurry. I mean the folks who passed

you.”

But her companion, with a bitter hatred in her voice, replied, “Don’t you believe it. Most of ’em don’t have nothin’ to do that has to be done. Rich folks ridin’ around in their swell cars, but do you s’pose they’d give me a lift. Not them! They’d think as how I’d poison the air they breathed if I sat too close. I hate ’em! I hate ’em all!”

Hate was a new word to Jenny and she did not like it. “I suppose some rich folks are that way, but I don’t believe they all are.” Then she laughed, her happy rippling laugh which always expressed real mirth. “Hear me talking as though I knew them, when I don’t. I never spoke to but one rich person in all my life, and just a minute ago I was wishing that I never would have to speak to her again.” Jenny wondered why Etta had walked to the railway station. As they turned the last bend before their destination was to be reached, she impulsively put her free hand on the arm of her companion and said, “Etta, would it help any if you told me why you are so dreadfully unhappy? I don’t suppose I could do anything, but sometimes just talking things over with someone who wishes she could help, makes it easier.”

The china blue eyes of the rebellious girl at her side were slowly turned toward the speaker and in them was mingled amazement and doubt. Then she remarked cynically, “There ain’t nobody cares what’s making me miserable.” But when Jenny succeeded in convincing the forlorn girl that she, at least, really did care, the story of her unhappiness was revealed.

CHAPTER IV.
A PITIFUL PLIGHT

“There ain’t much to tell,” Etta said bitterly, “but I haven’t always been miserable. I was happy up to the time I was ten. I lived with my grandfolks over in Belgium. My mother left me there while she came to America. She’d heard how money was easy to get, and, after my father died in the war and the soldiers had robbed my grandfolks of all they had on the farm, we had to get money somewheres. That’s why she came, takin’ all that she’d saved for her passage. How my mother got away out here to Californy, I don’t know, but anyway she did. She was a cook up in Frisco. Every month she sent money to my grandfolks. My mother kept writing how lonesome she was for me and how she was savin’ to send for me. The next year I came over with a priest takin’ charge of me, but when I got here they told me my mother had died and they put me in an orphanage. My grandfolks tried to save money to send for me to go back to Belgium, but what with sickness and they bein’ too old to work the farm, it’s seven years now, an’ the money ain’t saved. Last year, me bein’ sixteen, I got turned out o’ the orphanage and sent here to work parin’ vegetables. I don’t get but three dollars a week and board, and I’ve been savin’ all I can of it. But ’tain’t no use. That’s why I walked to the railway station over to Santa Barbara to ask how much money I’d have to save to take me home to my grandfolks.” The girl paused as though too discouraged to go on.

Jenny had been so interested that she had not even noticed that Dobbin had stopped to rest at one side of the steep road.

“Oh, you poor girl, I’m so sorry for you!” she said with a break in her voice. “I suppose it takes a lot of money for the ticket to New York and then the passage across the Atlantic in one of those big steamers.”

The tone in which her companion answered was dull and hopeless. “’Tain’t no use tryin’. I never can make it. Never! It’d take two hundred dollars. An’ I’ve

only got a hundred with what my grandfolks have sent dribble by dribble." The dull, despairing expression had again settled in the putty-pale face. "'Tain't no use," she went on apathetically. "I can't save the whole three dollars a week. I've got to get shoes an' things. Cook said yesterday how she'd have to turn me out if I didn't get some decent work dresses; a fashionable seminary like that couldn't have no slatterns in the kitchen." Then, after a hard, dry sob that cut deep into the heart of the listener. Etta ended with "I don't know what I'm goin' to do, but it's got to be done soon, whatever 'tis."

Jenny felt alarmed, she hardly knew why. "Oh, Etta, you don't mean you might take——" She could not finish her sentence. Her active imagination pictured the unhappy girl going alone to the coast at night and ending her life in the surf, but to her surprise Etta looked around as though she feared she might be overheard; then she said, "Yes, I am. I'm going to take one hundred dollars out of the school safe, and after I've got over to Belgium I'm going to work my fingers to the bone and send it back. That's what I'm goin' to do. I've told 'em at the station to keep me a ticket for the train that goes out tomorrow morning." Then, when she felt, rather than saw, that her companion was shocked, she said bitterly, "I was a fool to tell you. Of course you'll go and blab on me." To the unhappy girl's surprise she heard her companion protesting, "Oh, no, no! I won't tell, Etta. Never, never! But you *mustn't* steal. They'd put you in prison. But, most of all, it would be very, very wrong. You can't gain happiness by doing something wicked. I just *know* that you can't."

Then, after a thoughtful moment, Jenny amazed her companion by saying, "I have some money that is all my very own. If Granny and Granddad will let me, I'll loan you a hundred dollars, because I *know* you'll pay it back."

Radiant joy made Etta's plain face beautiful, but it lasted only a moment and was replaced by the usual dull apathy. "They won't let you, an' they shouldn't. I just told you as how I was plannin' to steal, and if I'd do that, how do you know I'd ever send back your hundred dollars?"

"I know that you would," was the confident reply. Jenny then urged Dobbin to his topmost speed, and since he had rested quite a while, he did spurt ahead and around a bend to the very crest of the low foothill where stood the beautiful buildings of the seminary in a grove of tall pine trees. The majestic view of the encircling mountain range usually caused Jenny to pause and catch her breath, amazed anew each time at the grandeur of the scene, but her thoughts were so

busy planning what she could do to help this poor girl that she was unconscious of aught else.

They turned into the drive, which, after circling among well-kept gardens and lawns, led back of the main building to the kitchen door.

“I’m awful late and I’ll get a good tongue lashin’ from the cook but what do I care. This’ll be the last night she’ll ever see me.” Jenny glancing at her companion, saw again the hard expression in the face that had been so radiant with joy a few moments before.

“She doesn’t believe that I’m going to loan her my money,” Jenny thought. “And maybe she’s right. Maybe Granny and Granddad will think I ought not.” But what she said aloud was: “Etta, let me go in ahead and I’ll fix things up if you’re late and going to be scolded.” And so, when they climbed from the wagon, it was the girl from Rocky Point Farm who first entered the kitchen. “Good afternoon, Miss O’Hara,” she called cheerily to the middle-aged Irish woman who was taking a roast from the huge oven of the built-in range.

“Huh,” was the ungracious reply, “so *you* had that lazy good-for-nothing out ridin’, did you?” The roast having been replaced, the cook turned and glared at Etta, her arms akimbo. “Here ’tis, five o’clock to the minute and not a potato pared. How do you suppose I’m going to serve a dinner for the young ladies at six-thirty and all that pan of peas to shell besides.”

Etta was about to reply sullenly when Jenny, who had placed her basket of eggs on one end of a long white table, turned to say: “Miss O’Hara, I want to ask you a favor. If I stay and help Etta get the vegetables ready, will you let her come over to my house to supper? Won’t you please, Miss O’Hara?”

Jenny smiled wheedlingly at the middle-aged Irish woman who had always had a soft spot in her heart for “the honey girl,” and so she said reluctantly, “Wall, if it’s what you’re wishin’, though the Saints alone know what *you* see in Etta Heldt to be wantin’ of her company.”

Ignoring the uncomplimentary part of the speech, Jenny cried joyfully: “Oh, thank you, thank you, Miss O’Hara! Now give me a big allover apron, please, for I mustn’t soil my fresh yellow muslin.”

Miss O’Hara’s anger had died away, confident that the peas would be shelled

and the potatoes pared on time. She went about her work humming one of the Irish tunes that always fascinated Jenny.

Etta, without having spoken a word, took her customary place and began to pare potatoes, jabbing out the spots as though she were venting upon them the wrath which she felt toward the world in general, but even in her heart there was dawning a faint hope that somehow, some way, she had come to a gate on the other side of which, if only she could pass through, a new life awaited her.

She looked up and out of the window by which they were seated, when Jenny, pausing a moment in the pea-shelling, exclaimed: “Oh, Etta, do see those pretty girls. Aren’t they the loveliest? Just like a flock of butterflies dancing out there on the lawn. There are eight, ten, twelve! Oh, my, more than I can count! How many girls are there now at the seminary, Miss O’Hara?”

“With the three that came in today, there’s thirty-one,” the cook answered as she broke a dozen eggs into a pudding which she was stirring.

“Did three new pupils come today? Isn’t it late in the year to start in school? Only two months more and the long vacation will begin,” Jenny turned to inquire.

“It is late,” Miss O’Hara replied, then suddenly she stopped stirring the batter and stared at Jenny with a puzzled expression in her Irish blue eyes. “When I saw one of ’em, a haughty, silly minx, I thought to myself as I’d seen her before somewhere’s though I knew I hadn’t. Now I know why I thought that. There’s something about you, Jenny Warner, as looks like her. Folks do look sort of like other folks once in a while, and be no way related.”

Jenny agreed brightly. “Yes, Miss O’Hara, that’s absolutely true. My teacher has often said that the reason she has kept on tutoring me is because I look like a sister she once had. That makes two folks I resemble, and I suppose likely there are lots more. What is the new pupil’s name. Miss O’Hara?”

Then it was that the cook recalled something. “Begorrah, and maybe you know her being as her ma owns the farm you’re living on.”

Jenny looked up with eager interest. “Oh, no, I didn’t even know Mrs. Poindexter-Jones had a daughter. But I do know the son Harold. That is, I met him for a few moments once two years ago, and now I do recall that he

mentioned having a sister." Then, returning to the shelling of the peas, she concluded with: "You know they have not lived in Santa Barbara lately. I never saw the mother, that is, only once."

"Well, you're not likely to do more than see the daughter. She wouldn't speak civil to a farmer's granddaughter." Jenny's bright smile seemed to reply that it troubled her not at all.

For another ten minutes the girls worked silently, swiftly; then Jenny sprang up, removed her apron and, as she donned her hat, she exclaimed: "Miss O'Hara, you just don't know how grateful I am to you for having said that Etta might go home to supper with me."

Although the cook regretted having given the permission, she merely mumbled a rather ungracious reply.

Etta went up to her room to put on her "'tother dress," as she told Jenny, but on reaching there she bundled all her belongings into an ancient carpet bag, stole out of a side door and was waiting in the buggy when Jenny reached it.

"Well, I sure certain don't see how 'twas the ol' dragon let me go along with you," Etta Heldt declared, seeming to breathe for the first time when, high on the buckboard seat at Jenny's side, old Dobbin was actually turning out of the seminary gates that had for many months been as the iron-barred doors of a prison to the poor motherless, fatherless and homeless girl. And yet not really homeless, for, far across the sea on a small farm in Belgium there was a home awaiting her, and a dear old couple (Jenny was sure that they were as dear and loving and lovable as were her own grandparents) yearning for the return of their only grandchild.

Jenny, who always pictured in detail anything and everything of which she had but the meagerest real knowledge, was seeing the old couple going about, day by day, planning and striving to save enough to send for their girl, but failing because of the privation that had been left blightingly in the trail of the cruel world war. Then her fancy leaped ahead to the day when Etta would arrive at that far-away farm.

Jenny's musings were interrupted by a querulous voice at her side.

"Don't you hear nothing I am saying? What do you see out there between your

horse’s ears that you’re starin’ at so steady?”

Jenny turned a pretty face bright with laughter. “I didn’t see the ears,” she confessed, “and do forgive me for not listening to what you were saying. Oh, yes, I recall now. You wondered what the old dragon would say when she found you were really gone.”

Then, more seriously: “Truly, Etta, Miss O’Hara isn’t dragony; not the least mite. I have sold eggs and honey to her for two years, long before you came to be her helper, and she always seemed as glad to see me as the dry old earth is to see the first rains.”

Then, hesitating and slowly thinking ahead that her words might not hurt her companion, she continued: “Maybe you didn’t always try to please Miss O’Hara. Weren’t you sometimes so unhappy that you let it show in your manner? Don’t you think perhaps that may have been it, Etta?”

“Oh, I s’posen like’s not. How could I help showin’ it when I was so miserable?”

Then, before Jenny could reply, Etta continued cynically:

“Well, I’m not goin’ to let myself to be any too cheerful even now. ’Tisn’t likely your grandfolks’ll let you loan me a hundred dollars. How’ll they know but maybe I’d never return it. How do you know?”

Jenny turned and looked full into the china blue eyes of her companion. The gaze was unflinchingly returned. Impulsively Jenny reached out a slender white hand and placed it on the rough red one near her.

“Etta Heldt,” she said solemnly, “I know you will return my money if it lies within your power to do it. I also know that when it came to it, you would not have stolen money from the Granger place safe. There’s something in your eyes makes me know it, though I can’t put it into words.”

As the other girl did not reply, Jenny continued: “I’m *not* sure certain that I *can* loan you my money, of course. I have been saving and saving it for two years so that I could add it to the money grandpa had if we needed it to buy Rocky Point Farm, but the farm hasn’t been put on the market, granddad says, and so I guess we can spare it for awhile.”

Suddenly and most unexpectedly the girl at her side burst into tears. “Oh, oh, how sweet and good you are to me. Nobody, nowhere has ever been so kind, not since I came to this country looking for mother. When they told me she was dead and had been buried two days before I got here, and all her belongings sold to pay for the funeral, nobody was kind. They just tagged me with a number and sent me with a crowd of other children out to an orphan asylum. And there it was just the same: no one knew me from any of the rest of the crowd.”

There were also tears in her listener’s eyes.

“Poor, poor Etta, and here I’ve been brought up on love. It doesn’t seem fair, someway.” Then slipping an arm comfortingly about her companion, Jenny said brightly: “Let’s keep hoping that you can borrow my money. Look, Etta, we’re coming to the highway now, and that long, long lane beyond the barred gate leads right up to my home. Don’t cry any more, dearie. I just *know* that my grandfolks will help you, somehow. You’ll see that they will.”

Thus encouraged, the forlorn Etta took heart and, after wiping away the tears which had brought infinite relief to her long pent-up emotions, she turned a wavering smile toward Jenny.

“I’ll never forget what all you’re trying to do for me. Never. Never,” she ended vehemently. “And I’m hoping I’ll have the chance some day to make up for it.”

“All the reward that I want is to have you get home to your grandfolks and be as happy with them as I am with mine,” Jenny called brightly as she leaped out of the wagon to open up the barred gate.

CHAPTER V.
FRIENDS IN NEED

Grandma Sue had been often to the side porch nearest the lane and had gazed toward the highway wondering why her girl did not return. The supper had been ready for some time and the specially ordered chocolate pudding was done to perfection. At last the old woman hurried back into the kitchen to exclaim: “Wall, I declare to it, if Jenny ain’t fetchin’ someone home to supper. I reckon its Mis’ Dearborn, her teacher, as she sets sech a store by.”

But, as Dobbin approached at his best speed (for, was he not nearing his own supper?) the old woman, peering from behind the white muslin curtains at a kitchen window, uttered an ejaculation of surprise. “Silas Warner,” she turned wide-eyed toward the old man, who, in carpet slippers, had made himself comfortable in his tipped back arm chair to read the *Rural News*.

“Yeap, Susan?” his tone was one of indifferent inquiry. He presumed that his spouse was merely going to affirm what she had already suspected. Well, even if that were true, all he would have to put on was the house coat Jenny had made for him. It never would do to go to the table in shirt sleeves if teacher—he rose to carry out this indolently formed decision when he saw his wife tip-toeing across the room toward him, her finger on her lips. “Shh! Don’t say nothin’, Si!” she whispered. “Jenny’s left the horse hitched and she’s comin’ right in and trailin’ arter her is a gal totin’ a hand satchel. Who do you cal’late it can be?”

The old man hastily slipped on the plaid house coat and stood waiting, trying not to look too curious when their girl burst in with, “Oh, Granny, Granddad, this is my friend Etta Heldt. You know I told you about the girl who pares vegetables up at the seminary and who always looked so—so unhappy.” Jenny did not want to say discontented as she had that other time. “Well, I’ve found out what makes her unhappy and I’ve fetched her over to supper. Etta, this is my Grandmother Sue and my Granddaddy Si.”

The strange girl sent a half appealing, half frightened glance at each of the old people and then burst into tears.

Jenny slipped a protecting arm about her new friend, as she said by way of explanation: “Etta’s all upset about something. I’ll take her into my room to rest a bit, and then I’ll come back and tell you about it.”

Left alone, the elderly couple looked at each other in amazement.

“I reckon that poor girl is like the stray kittens and forlorn dogs our Jenny fetches home so often,” the old woman said softly. “I never saw such a hungerin’ sort of look in human eyes afore.”

The old man dropped back into his armed chair and shook his head as much as to say that their “gal’s” ways were beyond his comprehension. A moment later that same “gal” reappeared and, going at once to her grandfather, she knelt at his side and held his knotted work-hardened hand in a clinging clasp.

“Tut! Tut! Jenny, you’re all a-tremble.” The old man always felt deeply moved when the girl he loved seemed to be troubled. He placed his free hand on her curls.

“I reckon you’d better start at the beginnin’. Me’n your grandma here is powerful curious.”

The girl sprang up. “Granny dear,” she pleaded, “you sit here in your rocker and I’ll be close between you on this stool. Now I’ll tell you all and please, please, please say yes.”

The two old people looked lovingly into the eager, uplifted face of their darling and wondered what the request was to be. They never had denied their “gal” anything she had asked for in the past, but they had always been such simple desires and so easily fulfilled. However, there was an expression in the girl’s lovely face that made them both believe that this was to be no ordinary request.

Jenny glanced from one to another of her grandparents anxiously, eagerly. Then, taking a hand of each, she fairly clung to them as her words rushed and tumbled out, sometimes incoherently, but the picture was clearly depicted for all that. The two old people could see the forlorn little Belgian girl coming alone to America to join the mother who had died and been buried only two days before the child

reached San Francisco. Then the long dreary years in a crowded city orphanage where no one really cared.

Grandma Sue began to wipe her eyes with one corner of her apron at that part of the story. She was thinking that their own darling might have been brought up in just such a place had not Grandpa Si happened to see the canopied wagon on that long ago day. The girl felt the soft wrinkled hand quivering in her clasp, and she looked up almost joyfully, for she believed she had an ally. Then she told of the time when Etta had reached an age where she could no longer be kept in the institution and how work had been procured for her paring vegetables at Granger Place Seminary. Food and a place to sleep were about all that orphan girls were given, and so, although she had tried and tried to save the little money she earned, she could not, for she had to buy shoes and clothes.

The old woman nodded understandingly. “What was she savin’ for, dearie? Anything special?”

“Oh, yes, Grandma Sue, something very special.” Then Jenny told about the feeble old grandparents far across the sea whose little farm had been laid waste by the war and how they longed for their granddaughter to be a comfort in their last days. At this point Grandpa Si took out his big red bandana handkerchief and blew his nose hard. He was thinking what it would mean to them if their Jenny was far away and couldn’t get back. Then, looking at their “gal” shrewdly, he asked, “Jenny, darlin’, what be yo’ aimin’ at? Yo’ ain’t jest tellin’ this story sort of random-like, be yo’?”

The girl shook her head. “No! No!” Her tear-brimmed eyes implored first one and then the other. Then she explained that it would take one hundred dollars to pay for Etta’s transportation in the steerage.

How the girl pleaded, her sensitive lips quivering. “Think of it, Grandma Sue, Granddad, only one hundred dollars to take that poor girl to her old grandparents who love her so. Won’t you let me loan her that much from the money I’ve made selling eggs and honey? Please, please say that you will. You’ve always told me that it is mine and oh, I do so want to help Etta.” Then, as her surprised listeners hesitated, she hurried on: “She’ll pay it back, every cent, and only the other day, Granddad, you said you didn’t think the farm was going to be sold, because nothing more had been heard about it.”

The old man’s eyes questioned his spouse. Still tearful, Grandma Sue nodded. Then drawing the girl to her, she held her close as she said, “Silas, I reckon we owe it to the good Lord to help one of His poor little children.”

“O, Granny! O, Grandpa! However can I thank you?” The flushed, happy girl sprang up, kissed each of them and ran toward the bedroom to tell the wonderful news to the waiting Etta.

CHAPTER VI.
WANTED, A WAITRESS

Such a supper as that had been. Etta's expression had so completely changed that Grandma Sue decided that she was almost pretty with her corn-colored hair and china blue eyes. It was the first time that Jenny had seen her smile and she found herself wishing that Miss O'Hara could see it also. They made their plans. Etta was to remain with them all night. Then early in the morning Granddad would drive both of the girls to Santa Barbara and take the money from the bank, then they would go to the railway station and buy a ticket, both for the train and the steamer. Jenny was sure that there were such tickets because she had heard her teacher, Miss Dearborn, tell about one that she purchased all the way through to Liverpool. Then there would be no fear that Etta would lose the money. When she reached Belgium, Etta promised, oh, so faithfully, that each month she would send back part of the hundred. She was so strong. She would work the farm again. The women over there all worked in the fields. She knew she would have money to send. Every time she thought of the great joy in store for the old couple, she began to cry and laugh at the same time. But once she had a thought which brought only frightened tears. What if this voyage should be like the other? What if her loved ones would be dead?

But Jenny had said that she must not think of that, though they all knew that she would, poor girl, till the very moment that she reached the farm and saw her grandparents.

"You'll write us all about it, won't you, dearie?" Grandma Sue said.

The chocolate pudding was eaten, but no one seemed conscious of it. They were all thinking the same thing and yet with wide variations. Grandma and Grandpa were being so thankful because they had Jenny, and that little maid was deciding how she would tell Miss O'Hara when Etta was gone.

Everything happened just as they had planned. The next day dawned in the silvery mist that so often veils the seaside mornings in California, but later it burst into a glory of sunshine, as golden as the oranges, and sweetly, spicily fragrant with the breath of the lemon groves they passed as they drove to Santa Barbara. The money was drawn from the bank, the ticket, a very long ticket, was procured. Etta, hardly able to believe that she was really awake, had expressed her thanks in all the ways that she knew, and the train at last bore her away.

It was not until Jenny was back in her own farm home that she told what she planned doing next. “I must drive right over to the seminary and tell Miss O’Hara what has become of Etta. Of course she hasn’t worried yet, because she knew that Etta was with us over here, but she’ll be getting impatient if there’s no one to pare the vegetables and help her get lunch.”

Grandmother Sue’s eyes were opened wide. “But, dearie, this is your very own Saturday. The one that’s for you to do with as you please. I thought you and Miss Dearborn were goin’ to drive way up into the foothills. Wasn’t that what you’d planned?”

The girl nodded brightly. “Yes, it was,” she said, “and maybe there’ll be time for that later, but first, I must tell Miss O’Hara about Etta’s having gone back to Belgium. I suppose she’ll send up to the orphanage for another helper, but that will take a day or two, maybe more.”

Granny Sue said no more and as Dobbin was not needed on the farm, Jenny again drove up the winding tree-shaded lane to the crest of the low hill on the broad top of which stood the picturesque buildings and grounds of the fashionable school for girls. This time Jenny drew rein before she entered the gate and gazed far across the valley to the range of circling mountains, gray and rugged near the peaks, but green and tree-clad lower down. Jenny always felt, when she gazed at those majestic mountains, the same awe that others do in a great cathedral, as though she were in the real presence of the Creator. “Father, God,” she whispered, “I thank Thee that at last Etta is really going home.” Then she turned in at the gate.

As Jenny had feared, Miss O’Hara was becoming very wrathful because of the delayed return of her helper, and when the kitchen door opened, she whirled about, a carving knife in her hand and a most threatening expression on her plain Irish face. When she saw who had entered, the expression changed, but her sharp

blue eyes were gazing back of the girl as though to find one whom she believed was purposely lingering outside until a just wrath were somewhat appeased. But when Jenny turned and closed the door, Miss O'Hara demanded: "Where's that wench? Are you tryin' to shield her? You can't do it! She'd ought to've been here two hours back. Me with all the silver to clean and the vegetables to pare." Then, noting a happiness like a morning glow in the face of the girl, the woman concluded: "Well, say it out, whatever 'tis! But first let me tell you, I'm *through* with that ne'er-do-well. I set myself down right in the middle of the mornin' and wrote to that orphanage place tellin' 'em they'd have to find work elsewhere for Etta Heldt, and I'd be obliged to 'em if they'd send me another girl as soon as they could. An' what's more, I made it plain that I didn't want any sour face this time. I want someone who's willin' and agreeable, that's what! So, if that minx is waitin' to hear what I'm sayin', you might as well fetch her in and let's have it out."

To the amazement of the irate woman, Jenny clapped her hands girlishly and then, skipping forward, gave Miss O'Hara an impulsive hug as she cried: "Oh, oh, I'm so glad you feel that way about it! Then you won't mind so terribly because Etta Heldt is gone—gone for good, I mean?"

Miss O'Hara stared blankly. "Gone?" she repeated. "Where's she gone to?"

Jenny glanced at the clock. It was nearing noon and she knew that the cook had little time for idle visiting, and so she said briskly: "I've come over to help. I'll put on Etta's apron and do anything you want done, and while we're working, I'll tell you the whole sad story, because, Miss O'Hara, it is awfully sad, and I do believe if you had known it, you would have been sorrier for Etta, and maybe, a little more patient." Then, fearing that this might offend her listener, the tactful girl hurried on with: "I know how kind you can be. No one knows better."

The cook, who had turned back to the slicing of cold meat, which had been the reason for the carving knife, merely grunted at this. She was not sure but that a little of her own native blarney was being applied to her. But she answered in a pleasanter voice to the girl's repeated inquiry: "What shall I do to help?"

"Well, you might be fixin' the salad. You'll find the mixin's for it all in the icebox up top."

"Oh, goodie!" Jenny skipped to the box as she spoke: "I adore making things

pretty, and salads give one a chance more than most anything else, don't you think so, Miss O'Hara?" She had lifted the cover and was peering in where, close to the ice, lay the cheesecloth bag of crisped lettuce and a bowl of tiny cooked beets. These she carried to the long white table as she asked: "May I prepare it just as I want to, Miss O'Hara, or have you some special way of doing it?"

"Fix it to suit yourself," was the ungrudgingly given response. "You'll find all sort of bowls for it in the pantry, you'll need four, there being four tables."

Jenny chose pretty glass bowls and set about making as artistic a salad as she could, and, while she worked, she told the whole story to a listener who at first was merely curious, but who gradually became interested and finally sympathetic. "Well, I sure certain wish I'd known about her comin' to this country and findin' her mother dead. Like as not I'd have tried some to cheer her up. As I look back on it now, I wasn't any too patient with her. It'll be a lesson to me, that's what it will. When the next orphan comes to this kitchen, I'll try to make it as home-like for her as I can." Then the cook recalled her own troubles. "How-some-ever, I wish Etta Heldt had given me notice. Here I'll be without a helper for no one knows how long, a week maybe."

Jenny, having heaped a glass bowl with a most appetizing salad, stepped back to admire it. Then she revealed her plan. "Miss O'Hara, if you'll let me, I'll come right over after school every day and do Etta's work until you can get another helper."

Miss O'Hara again turned, another knife in her hand, as she had been cutting bread. "Jenny Warner, are you meaning that? Will you help out for a few days? Well, the Saints bless the purty face of you as they've done already. I only wish I could have a helper all the time as cheery as you are. I could get on with after-school help. I'm thinkin', on a scratch."

Then, glancing at the clock, she continued: "Well, if 'tisn't eleven-thirty all ready. Here, cut the bread, will you, Jenny, while I go upstairs and see if one of the maids won't help with the servin' today? I can't be in the kitchen dishin' up, an' in the dinin' room at the same time."

Jenny, glad to assist in any way, finished the task, and then wandered to a window near to await further orders. She heard a gong ringing somewhere in the

big school. Then a side door opened and a bevy of girls, about her own age, trooped out on the lawn for a half hour of recreation before lunch. How pretty they were, nearly all of them, the watcher thought. By their care-free, laughing faces she concluded that they had none of them known a sorrow or felt a feather weight of responsibility. They had come from homes of wealth, Jenny knew, where they had had every pleasure and luxury their hearts could desire. But she did not envy them. Where in all the wide world was there a home more picturesque than her very own old adobe farmhouse, overgrown with blossoming vines, with the ever-changing ocean and the rocky point in front, and at the back the orchard, which, all the year round, was such a delight. And who could they have in their rich homes more lovable than Granny Sue and Grandpa Si? There couldn't be any one more lovable in all the land. Then the watcher wondered which one of the girls was Harold P-J's sister. "Proud and domineering," Miss O'Hara had said that she was. Maybe she was that tall girl who had drawn apart from the rest with two companions. She carried herself haughtily and there was a smile on her face that Jenny did not like. It was as though she were accompanying it with sarcastic comment about the other girls. The two who were with her glanced in the direction which their leader had indicated. Jenny did also and saw a shy-looking girl dressed far simpler than the others, whose light brown hair hung straight down, fastened at her neck by a plain brown ribbon. "She must be a new pupil, too," Jenny decided, "for she doesn't seem to be acquainted with any of the girls."

At that moment Miss O'Hara returned, more flustered than she had been an hour earlier, if that were possible. "The de'il himself is tryin' to fret me, I'm thinkin'," she announced. "That silly Peg Hanson's had a letter and there's somethin' in it that upset her so, she took a fit of cryin' and now she's got one of her blind headaches and can't stand. The other maid's in the middle of the upstairs cleanin', being as she had to do Peg's work and her own. Now, I'd like to know *who* is to wait on that parcel of gigglin' girls this noon? That's what!"

"O, Miss O'Hara, won't you let me? I'm just wild to have a chance to be near enough to them to hear what they say. It would be awfully interesting to me. Please say that I may?"

The cook stared her amazement. "Well, now, what do *you* know about waitin'?" she inquired.

"Nothing at all," was the merry reply, "but my teacher has often said that I have

a good intelligence, and I do believe, if you'd tell me what ought to be done, I could remember enough to get through."

The cook's troubled face broke into a pleased smile. "Jenny Warner," she commented, "you're as good as a pinch of soda in sour milk. Somehow mountain-sized troubles dwindle down to less'n nothin' when you take a hand in them." She glanced at the clock.

"Lunch is served at twelve-thirty," she continued. "We'll have to both pitch in and get things on the table, and, while we're doin' it, I'll tell you what you'll have to know about servin'."

* * * * * * * *

Jenny was in a flutter of excitement half an hour later as she donned the white cap and apron of the waitress uniform. They were really very becoming, and soft brown ringlets peeped out from under the dainty band-like cap which was tied about her head.

"There's very little waitin'-on to be done at noon, thanks for that," Miss O'Hara said. "Most things are on the table, but you'll have to go around and pour the chocolate and do the things as I told you. There now! The bell's ringing and I hear those silly girls laughing, so they're all in the dining room. Here's the chocolate pot. I haven't filled it full, fearin' it might be too heavy. You'll have to come back and get more when that's gone."

With cheeks flushed and eyes shining, as though she were about to do something which pleased her extremely, Jenny entered the dining room, where four tables, surrounded by girls, stood along the walls. Few there were who even noticed her as she went from place to place filling the dainty cups with steaming liquid.

At the first table the girls were chattering about a theatre party to which they were going with Miss Granger, and not one of them gave the waitress more than a fleeting glance. But at the second table Jenny found the girl she sought. The sister of Harold P-J, and the daughter of the proud owner of Rocky Point Farm.

The little waitress knew at once which she was, for a companion spoke her name. Jenny was disappointed when she heard her speak. There was a fretful, discontented note in her voice. And why should there be, she wondered, as she slowly approached the end of the table where Gwynette Poindexter-Jones sat

with an intimate friend from San Francisco at each side.

Surely she had everything her heart could desire. But evidently this was not true, for, as Jenny drew nearer, she could hear what was being said.

“Patricia Sullivan, you make me weary! You certainly do!” she addressed the girl on her right. “How can you say that this is a pleasant place? When I think of my mother in France luxuriating in the sort of life I most enjoy, it makes me rebellious. Sometimes I feel that I just can’t forgive her. What right has a mother to send her daughter to an out-of-the-way country boarding school if the girl prefers to be educated abroad?”

The friend who had been called “Patricia” now put in, almost apologetically: “But I merely said that it is a beautiful country, and I repeat that it is. I think that it is wonderful to be so high up on a foothill and have a sweeping view of the ocean from one side of the school and a view of the mountains from the other side.”

A shrug, accompanied by an utterance of bored impatience, then Gwynette’s reply: “Scenery isn’t what I want, and if I did, I prefer it in France.”

After glancing critically from one table to another, she continued:

“There isn’t a single girl in this room who belongs to our class, really. They are all our social inferiors.”

But Beulah Hollingsworth, the friend on Gwynette’s left, leaned forward to say in a low voice, which was audible to Jenny merely because she had reached the trio and was filling Patricia’s cup:

“I’ve heard that there is a girl in this school whose father is a younger son of some titled English family. She ought to be in our class, don’t you think?”

Patricia, whose back was toward the room, could not turn to look at the other pupils, but suddenly she recalled one of them, and so, leaning forward, she also said in a low voice:

“Look at Clare Tasselwood. She’s stiff enough at least to be a somebody.” Gwynette and Beulah agreed.

They both glanced at a tall blonde girl at the table across the room, whose manner was neither disagreeable nor pleasant, expressing merely bored endurance of her present existence. Gwynette's face brightened. "I believe you are right. Let's cultivate her!"

Jenny could hear no more of their conversation as she had to go back to the kitchen to refill the silver pot, and when she returned she began to fill cups at a third table, the one at which sat the supposed daughter of a "younger son." Clare Tasselwood was so deeply engrossed in her own thoughts that she seemed scarce aware that the timid girl at her left was offering her a platter of cold meat. She took it finally with a brief nod; absently helped herself to a slice and passed it to the neighbor on her right.

Jenny found herself feeling sorry for the little girl whom she had noticed at the recreation hour; the one so simply dressed in brown with whom no one had been talking, and about whom Gwynette and her friends had evidently been making uncomplimentary comment. When the new waitress poured that girl's cup full of chocolate, the little maid smiled up at her and said, "Thank you."

More than ever Jenny's heart warmed toward her. "Poor thing! I'd like to be friends with her if she were not a pupil of this fashionable school. She looks more like real folks than some of them do."

Then, having completed the round with the chocolate pot, the waitress went out to the kitchen to get the tray on which were to be heaped the plates after the first course had been finished. Jenny really dreaded this task, fearing that she would break something, and was relieved to find that the upstairs maid who had been cleaning had come down and was ready to assist.

"Here, Jenny," Miss O'Hara said, "you follow and give each girl her dessert. Then you come out and eat your own lunch. After that you can go. Tomorrow, being Sunday, I can get along alone, and probably by Monday the new helper'll be here."

An hour later Jenny drove away, laughing to herself over her amusing adventure and eager to tell Grandma Sue and Granddad Si all about it.

CHAPTER VII.
JENNY'S TEACHER

It was two o'clock when Jenny skipped to the side porch of the Rocky Point farmhouse. Her grandmother, who was sitting there with her mending basket at her side, looked up with the welcoming smile that she always had for the girl. Dropping down on the wooden bench, back of which hung a blossom-laden garland of Cecil Brunner rose vine, Jenny took off her wide, flower-wreathed straw hat and began fanning her flushed face. The sparkle in her soft brown eyes told the watcher at once that something of an unusual nature had occurred. The old woman dropped her sewing on her lap, pushed her spectacles up under her lavender-ribboned cap and then said with a rising inflection: "Well, Jenny dearie, what have you been up to?"

A peal of amused laughter was the girl's first answer, followed by a series of little chuckles that tried to form themselves into words but couldn't. Mirth is contagious and the old woman laughingly said: "Tut! Tut! Jenny, don't keep all the fun of it to yourself. What happened over to the seminary that was so amusing? I reckoned you'd have sort of a hard tune making things straight with Miss O'Hara, if she's as snappy as poor Etta Heldt said she was."

Jenny became serious at once, and, leaning forward, she began earnestly: "Miss O'Hara is kindhearted, Granny Sue, but she does seem to have a powerful lot to worry her. Etta didn't try to be real helpful, I know that, although I was so sorry for her, and when I told Miss O'Hara all about the poor orphan, there were tears in her eyes, honestly there were, Granny, and she said that when the next orphan came, she'd try to make that kitchen more homelike."

Her listener was pleased and nodded many times, as she commented: "Well, well, that's somethin' now that my Jenny gal has brought to pass, but it wasn't about that you were having such a spell of laughin', I reckon."

Again there were twinkles in the brown eyes as the girl confessed: “No, Granny Sue, it wasn’t, and in as many years as Rip Van Winkle slept, you couldn’t guess what it was.”

The old woman looked puzzled, as she always did when Jenny quoted from some of her “readin’ books.” “Wall, I reckon I couldn’t, bein’ as I don’t know how long the lazy fellow slept, so I reckon you’d better tell me what you’ve been up to over to the seminary.”

She had replaced her glasses and was again sewing a patch on an old shirt of Grandpa Si’s, but she looked up when the girl said: “You’ll be astonished as can be, because you never even guessed that your granddaughter knew how to wait on table, stylish-like, with all the flourishes.”

Down went the sewing, up went the glasses, and an expression of shocked displeasure was in the sweet blue eyes of the old woman.

“Jenny Warner, am I hearin’ right? Are yo’ tellin’ me that my gal waited on table over to the seminary?”

The girl looked puzzled. Grandma Sue was taking almost tragically what Jenny had considered in the light of a merry adventure.

“Why, yes, Granny, I did. You don’t mind, do you? You have always wanted me to help where help was needed, and surely poor Miss O’Hara needed a waitress. If we hadn’t spirited Etta away, she would have been there. You see, don’t you, Grandma, that I just had to help?”

“Yes, yes, I reckon like as not you did, but don’t do it again, Jenny, don’t! Promise, just to please your old Grandma Sue.”

The girl placed her hat on the bench and went to her grandmother’s side and knelt, her head nestled lovingly against the old woman’s shoulder. “Why, Granny, dearie,” she said contritely, “I didn’t suppose you’d mind. Why is it that you do?” She was plainly perplexed.

But the old woman had no intention of telling the girl she so loved that she could not bear the thought of having her act as a servant to her own sister, Gwynette. And so she replied with an assumed cheeriness: “Just a notion, dearie, like as not. I feel that our gal is as good, and heaps better’n a lot of them seminary

pupils, and I guess I sort of don't like the idea of you waitin' on 'em." Then anxiously: "It won't happen again, will it, Jenny?"

The girl kissed her grandmother lovingly. Then rising, she put her hat on her sun-glinted head as she replied: "It won't be necessary, because Peg, the real waitress, will be well again tomorrow. She had one of her blind headaches today, but I did promise to go over Monday after school and do Etta's work, preparing vegetables. You don't mind that, do you, Granny dear. The new orphan will be there by Tuesday surely."

"Well, well, you do whatever you think right. That heart o' yourn won't take you far wrong. You're goin' over to your school-teacher's now, aren't you, dearie? She'll be expectin' you."

The girl nodded, skipped into the house to get a book, returned, saying as she went down the path: "This is our mythology lesson day. Good-bye, Granny dear. I'll be home in time to get supper."

As Jenny drove Dobbin along the coast highway, she wondered why her grandmother had objected so seriously to the act of kindness that she had done. Her teacher, Miss Dearborn, had so often said: "Jeanette, it isn't what we do that counts, it is what we are." Surely Jenny had been no different from what she really was when she had been filling cups with steaming golden brown chocolate. Moreover, Granny Sue hadn't minded in the least that time, last year, when Jenny had gone over to the cabin home of the poor forlorn squatter family in the sycamore woods and had cleaned it out thoroughly.

She had found the mother sick in bed and the three children almost spoiling for a bath. Jenny smiled as she recalled how she had taken them, one after another, down to the creek in the canon below the cabin, and had washed them, showing the oldest, Rosa, who was eight, how to give future baths to Sara, aged five, and Elmer, aged two. And after that she had driven, at Miss Dearborn's suggestion, into Santa Barbara to tell the Visiting Nurse's Association about the poor squatter family. Grandma Sue had been pleased, then, to have Jenny serve others. Why did she object to a similar service for Miss O'Hara? This being unanswerable, the girl decided to drive through the Sycamore Canon Road, as it was really but a little out of her way, and see how the squatter's family was progressing.

It became very cool as she turned out of the sunshine of the broad highway, and the deeper she drove into the canon, the damper and more earth fragrant the air. Great old sycamore trees that had grown in most picturesque angles were on either side of the narrow dirt road, and crossing and recrossing, under little rustic bridges, rambled the brook which in the spring time danced along as though it also were brimming over with the joy of living. The cabin in which the Pascoli family lived had been long abandoned when they had taken possession. It stood in a more open spot, where, for a few hours each day, the sunlight came. It was partly adobe (from which its former white-washed crust had broken away in slabs) and partly logs. A rose vine, which Jenny had given to the older girl, was bravely trying to climb up about the door, and along the front of the cabin were ferns transplanted from the brookside.

When Jenny hallooed, there was a joyful answering cry from within, and three children, far cleaner than when they had first been found, raced out, their truly beautiful Italian faces beaming their pleasure. They climbed up on the sides of the wagon shouting, in child-like fashion, “O, Miss Jenny, did you fetch us any honey?”

“No, dearies. I didn’t! And I don’t believe you’ve eaten all that I brought you last week, have they, Mrs. Pascoli?” the girl looked over Sara’s head to the dark-eyed woman who appeared in the open door carrying a wee baby wrapped in a shawl. She replied: “No, ma’am! The beggars they are!” Then came a rebuking flow of Italian which had the effect desired, for the three youngsters climbed down and said in a subdued chorus, “No’m, we ain’t et it, and thanks for it till it’s gone.” the latter part of the sentence being added by Sara alone. Jenny smiled at them, then said to the woman:

“You’re quite well again, Mrs. Pascoli. I’m so glad! Grandpa tells me that your husband is working steadily now. Next week I’ll bring some more honey and eggs. Good-bye.”

The girl soon turned out of the canon on to a foothill road and after a short climb came suddenly upon a low built white house that had a wonderful view of the ocean and islands.

She turned in at the drive, the gate posts of which were pepper trees, and at once she saw her beloved teacher, Miss Dearborn, working in her garden.

The woman, who was about thirty-five, looked up with a welcoming smile which she reserved for this her only pupil. “Jenny Warner, you’re an hour late,” she merrily rebuked. “Hitch Dobbin and come in. I have some news to tell you.”

“O, Miss Dearborn, is it good news? I’m always so dreading the bad news that, some day, I just know you are going to tell me. It isn’t that, yet?”

The woman, whose strong, kind, intelligent face was shaded with a wide-brimmed garden hat, smiled at the girl, then more seriously she said: “Shall you mind so very much when the call comes for me to go back East?”

Jenny nodded, unexpected tears in her eyes. “East is so far, so very far away, and you’ve been here for—well—for as many years as I have been going to school.”

“Ten, to be exact,” was the reply. “But that isn’t my news today. It is something about you, and you’ll be ever so excited when you hear it.”

Miss Dearborn led the way into a long, cool living room which extended entirely across the front of the house. In one end of it was a large stone fireplace, on either side of which were glassed-in book shelves. There were Navajo rugs on the hardwood floor, a piano at the opposite end, deep, cozily cushioned seats under the wide plate-glass windows that framed such wonderful views of sea, rocky promontory and islands, mist-hung.

In the middle was a long library table and everywhere were chairs inviting ease. Great bowls of glowing yellow poppies stood in many places about the long room. This had been Jenny Warner’s second home, and Miss Dearborn a most beneficial influence in her development.

Having removed her garden hat, a mass of soft, light brown hair was revealed. Seating herself at one end of the table, the older woman motioned the girl to a chair at her side.

For a long moment she looked at her earnestly. “Jenny,” she said at last, “I believe you are old enough to be told something about me, but since it is not nearly as important as the something about you, I will begin with that.”

Jenny, not in the least understanding why, felt strangely excited. “Oh, Miss Dearborn, if only it hasn’t anything to do with your going back East.”

A strong white hand was placed over the smaller one that was lying on the table, and for a searching moment the gray eyes met the brown. “I believe, after all, I will have to tell you the part about myself first in order that you may more clearly understand the part about you,” Miss Dearborn said. “I never told you why I came West ten years ago. It was this way. When I was fifteen, I went to a boarding school in Boston and met there a girl, Beatrice Malcolm, who became, through the four years that followed, as dear to me as an own sister would have been. She was not strong and she never had been able to bear disappointment. I always gave in to her and tried to shield her whenever I could. She clung to me, depended on me and loved me, if not quite as devotedly as I loved her, at least very dearly. When we left boarding school we visited each other for weeks at a time. She came to my Cape Cod home in the summer, and I went to her New York home in the winter, and so we shared the same friends and were glad to do so, until Eric Austin came into our lives. Eric and I were unusually companionable. He loved books and nature and especially the sea. He had come to Cape Cod to write a group of poems and I met him at our Literary Club. He came often to my home and we read together day after day. Then Beatrice came for her annual summer visit, and, after that there were three of us at the readings. Eric’s voice was deep, musical and stirringly expressive. I began to notice that Beatrice hung on every word that he uttered as though he were a young god. There was something poetically beautiful about his fine face. Then, one day, she confessed to me that if she could not win Eric Austin’s love, she would not care to live. This was cruelly hard for me, because I also loved Eric and he had told me that my love was returned. Indeed, I had not allowed myself to really care, until I knew that he cared, but I had told him that I wanted to wait until we had known each other at least through one summer.”

Miss Dearborn paused and gazed out of the window at the blue sea shimmering in the distance, then turned and smiled into the sensitive, responsive face of the girl at her side. Almost tearfully, Jenny said: “Oh, Miss Dearborn, I know what you did. You gave up the man you loved for that selfish girl.”

The woman shook her head. “Not selfish! Just spoiled, and I had helped, for I had always given up to her, and that is what I did. I pretended not to care. I left them much alone, and then, when the summer was over, I closed my Cape Cod home and came West. Eric was deeply hurt, and wrote me that, although he never could care for anyone as he did for me, he was going to marry Beatrice and would try to make her as happy as he had hoped to make me. That was all. They were married while I was settling in this new home. Year after year

Beatrice has written that some day she wants me to come and visit them, and she has named her oldest girl after me. Little Catherine is now eight. That is all about me. Now I will tell the something about you."

Jenny, deeply affected by what she had heard, said with a little half sob: "Oh, Miss Dearborn, it makes my heart ache to think that you have lived all these years so alone when you might have had the companionship of that man who really loved you. I just know he never could have loved your friend Beatrice. She must have known you cared and she let you make that cruel sacrifice."

Before answering the older woman took the girl's hand and held it in a close clasp as she said earnestly: "Jenny, dear, I gave up much, very much, but think what I won. You, for instance. I had thought that I might have a daughter, as I suppose all girls, growing into young womanhood, dream that, some day, they will marry and have children, and that daughter, I now believe, would have been like you. So you see I gained something very precious." There were tears in Jenny's tender brown eyes as she replied: "Oh. Miss Dearborn, I am the one who has gained. I just can't picture life without you. I remember so well when you first came. You heard that our little schoolhouse down on the coast highway was to be closed because the board of education was not allowed to pay a teacher's salary unless there were eight pupils to attend the school. There were only five of us, the four from the Anderson Bean Ranch and me. You offered to teach us for nothing, saying that you wanted to do something for children. I didn't know that until long afterwards, then Grandma told me how it had all come about. We were too little to go on the bus to the big schools in Santa Barbara."

"I'm glad indeed that I did it," Miss Dearborn put in, "but, of course, when the Andersons moved back to their Iowa farm and you were the only pupil we closed that coast highway school and had our lessons here, and such an inspiration as they have been to me, Jenny Warner! I just know that you are leading up to an expression of gratitude. I've heard it time and again and I do appreciate it, dear girl, but now that you know the great loneliness that was in my heart when I came West, you will readily understand that having you to teach filled a void, filled it beautifully, and so, I also have a deep sense of gratitude toward you."

"And two years ago," Jenny continued retrospectively, "when we completed the work of the sixth grade, you can't think how unhappy I was, for I supposed that at last I would have to leave you and go by bus each day to the Santa Barbara

Junior High, and I never shall forget that wonderful day when you told me you had received permission to teach me through the eighth grade."

Miss Dearborn laughed happily. "What I never told you, Jenny, was that the board of education insisted that I take an examination at their State Normal to prove to them that I knew enough to teach one lone pupil the higher grade work. I brushed up evenings and passed creditably."

Impulsively the girl pressed the woman's hand to her cheek. "Oh, Miss Dearborn," she exclaimed tremulously, "to *think* that you did *all* that *just* for me."

"Wrong you are, Jenny girl!" the woman sang out. "I did it first of all for Catherine Dearborn. I felt a panic in my heart I had not dreamed possible when I thought that I was to be left all alone, day in and day out, with only memory for company. I wanted to keep you, to teach you, to love you, and I did keep you, but now along comes a letter from the same board of education. If we thought they had forgotten us, we are mistaken. That's my news about you."

Opening a small drawer in the end of the table, Miss Dearborn took out a letter and read:

"Miss Jenny Warner will be required to take the entrance examination in all the subjects at the High School of Santa Barbara during the week of June 10th. The results of these tests will determine where she is to continue her studies."

The girl's lovely face was the picture of dismay. "Oh, Miss Dearborn, I can't! I can't! I'd be simply frightened to death to even enter the door of that imposing building, and if any of the pupils as much as spoke to me, I'd simply expire." Her teacher laughed. "Nonsense!" she declared. "Not only must my pupil enter the door but she must pass the tests with high grades if I am to be permitted to teach her another year."

Then to change the girl's thought, Miss Dearborn continued brightly: "Saturday is our mythology day, isn't it? But since you came late and we have spent so much time visiting, we will not go up into the hills as we usually do for this lesson. Let me see. Weren't you to write something about Apollo, Diana and Echo that I might know if you fully understand just what each stands for in poetry and art?"

“Oh, Miss Dearborn,” Jenny laughed as she drew a paper from her book, “I don’t know what you will say about the composition I tried to write. It isn’t good, I know, but I ever so much wanted to write it in verse. Shall you mind my trying?” The girl’s manner was inquiring and apologetic at the same time.

“Of course not,” was the encouraging reply. “We all reach an age when we want to write our thoughts in rhyme. Read it to me.”

And so timidly Jenny began:

At Sunrise

Gray mists veil the dawn of day,
Silver winged they speed away,

When across a road of gold
In his shining chariot rolled

Young Apollo. Day’s fair King
Bids the birds awake and sing!

Robin, skylark, linnet, thrush
From each glen and flower-glad bush

Burst their throats with warbles gay
To welcome back the King of Day.

Diana, huntress, Apollo’s twin,
Standing in a forest dim,

A quiver on one shoulder fair
Filled with arrows. (In her hair

A moonlike crescent.) Calls her hounds
To new adventures with them bounds,

While lovely Echo in the hill,
Though grieving for Narcissus still,

Must need call back their song or bay,
And so is dawned a glad new day.

Miss Dearborn smiled as she commented: “Dear girl, there is no need to blush about this, your first effort at verse. I am going to suggest that you write all of your compositions on this poetical subject in rhyme. Keep them and let us see how much better the last will be than the first.” Then after a thoughtful moment: “Dawn is a subject much loved by the poets.”

Then she quoted from Byron:

“The morn is up again, the dewy morn,
With breath all incense and with cheek all bloom;
Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn
(Living as if earth contained no tomb)
And glowing into day.”

“Oh, Miss Dearborn,” was Jenny’s enthusiastic comment, “how happy I will be when my memory holds as many poems as you know. It will add to the loveliness of every scene to know what some poet has thought about one that was similar.”

“You are right, dear, it does.” Then rising, Miss Dearborn said: “Come with me to the porch dining room. I hear the kettle calling us to afternoon tea.”

CHAPTER VIII.
AN ADVENTURE FILLED DAY

It was late afternoon when Jenny returned from Miss Dearborn's home high in the foothills. As she drove up the long lane leading to the farmhouse, she saw three young ladies from Granger Place Seminary on horseback cantering along the highway toward the mansion-like home of Mrs. Poindexter-Jones. She was too far away, however, to be sure that among them was the girl whom she believed to be the daughter of the rich woman who owned the farm.

Going to the barn, Jenny unhitched Dobbin, patting him lovingly and chatting in a most intimate friendly manner as though she were sure that he understood.

"We've had a red letter day, haven't we, Dob? First, early this morning we drove that poor Etta Heldt to the station and loaned her money to help her buy a ticket to Belgium." Then, in silent meditation, the girl thought: "How I wish I had a magic carpet like that of The Little Lame Prince. I would love to be over on that quaint Belgian farm when the old people first see their granddaughter arriving."

Then as she led the faithful horse out to the watering trough under a blossoming peach tree, another thought presented itself. "Dobbin." she again addressed her companion, "now that we have loaned part of the honey and egg money, wouldn't it be dreadful if Mrs. Poindexter-Jones should decide to sell this farm?" She sighed. "Though I suppose that hundred dollars wouldn't go very far toward buying it." For a contemplative moment the girl gazed across the meadow where a pale green of early grain was beginning to show, and then at the picturesque old adobe partly hidden by the blossoming orchard. It was all the home she had ever known and it was hard to even think of moving to another. "Don't climb over a stile till you get to it," Grandpa Si had often told her. Remembering this, she turned her attention to her companion, who had lifted his dripping head. "My, but you were thirsty, weren't you, Dob? Come on now into your nice cool stall. I'm eager to tell Grandma about that dreadful examination I am to take."

Later, as she walked along the path which led past the rows of beehives where there was ever a cheerful humming, through the orchard and to the side porch, her thoughts were varied. “How I wish I could tell Grandma Sue about Miss Dearborn’s romance, but *that* was meant just for me. Maybe it’s wrong, but I can’t help wishing that something will happen *some day* which will make it possible for that romance to end happily, as stories always should, whether they are real or in books.”

At the corner of the porch she stopped to breathe in the fragrance of the heliotrope blossoms that grew on a riotous bush which seemed to be trying, vine-fashion, to reach the roof.

“Home again, after a day crowded full of unusual happenings,” her thoughts hummed along. “I don’t suppose that anything more *can* happen in it.”

But Jenny Warner was mistaken, for something of vital importance to her (though she little guessed it) was yet to happen on that day.

Skipping into the kitchen, the girl beheld her grandmother busy at the ironing board. Self rebukingly she cried: “Oh, Grandma Sue, why did you iron today? You promised me faithfully, since I had to go over to the seminary, and then to my teacher’s, that you wouldn’t iron until next week, when I could help. Now you look all hot and tired, and as thirsty as Dobbin was. Please stop and rest while I make us some lemonade.”

The flushed face of the old woman was smiling contentedly as she protested: “I like to iron, dearie. I’m not doing much, just pressin’ out our church-goin’ things. Grandpa Si needed a fresh shirt and I reckoned as how, mabbe, you’d like to wear that white muslin o’ yourn with the pink flowers on the bands, so I fetched it out an’ washed it an’ ironed it, an’ there ’tis, lookin’ as purty again this year as it did when it was furst made. Shouldn’t you think so. Jenny?” This a little anxiously—“or do you reckon we’d better buy you a new Sunday dress for this comin’ summer?”

Jenny whirled toward the clothes-horse where hung the pink sprigged muslin which had been “church goin’” dress for the past three summers. The hem had twice been let down, but, except that the pink had somewhat faded, it was as pretty as it ever had been. “Oh, it’s a love of a dress.” The girl was sincere. “I hope I never will have to give it up. I’ve been so happy in it, and then it matches

that sweet parasol Miss Dearborn gave me and the wreath on my white leghorn hat. I'm glad I may begin wearing it tomorrow, Grandma Sue, and it was mighty nice of you to iron it for me, but now, as soon as we've had our drink, I'm going to iron your Sunday go-to-meeting lavender dress. Please say that I may. I'll do the ruffles just beautifully. You will be so vain!"

"Tut! Tut! dearie." Susan Warner sank down in Grandpa's armed chair to wipe her warm face and rest while her beloved Jenny made lemonade. "It wouldn't do to wear that dress to meetin' if it's goin' to make me vain."

How the girl laughed as she squeezed the juicy lemons that grew on the big tree close to the back porch. Nearly all the year round that tree was laden with blossoms, green and ripe fruit at the same time. "The most obliging kind of tree," Jenny had often said. "It provides a perfume, delicious lemon pies and a refreshing drink whenever its owners wish."

"There now, Granny Sue, if only we had ice to clink in it as Miss Dearborn has we'd think that we were rich folks, but it's real nice as it is." The girl drank her share with a relish.

"That was mighty good tastin'," Susan Warner commented. "I wish your Grandpa could have a drink of it. He's cultivatin' close to the high hedge. That's a hot place when the sun is beatin' down the way it has been all day. Couldn't you carry a little pailful over to him, dearie?"

"Of course I can and will, Mrs. Susan Warner, if you will promise me one thing." The girl gazed down into the smiling face of the old woman. "I have my suspicions that you're trying to get rid of me so that you may iron the lavender dress. Is that the truth?"

"Maybe 'tis," was the smilingly given confession, "but if you'll let me iron that one while you're gone, you can do Grandpa's best shirt when you come back."

Filling a quart pail with the lemonade, Jenny snatched her garden hat from its nail by the door and skipped away, although she had to walk more carefully when the ploughed ground was reached. "It makes me think of Robert Burns, and how, in far-away Scotland, his plough turned over the home nest of a poor little old field mouse," she thought. "Oh, how glad, glad I am that Miss Dearborn is teaching me to love poetry. I can just see that tender-hearted young poet leaning over, ever so sorry because he had destroyed the little creature's home

and telling it not to be frightened.

"'Wee, sleekit, cowrin', tim'rous beastie,
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou needna start awa' sae hasty
Wi' bick'ring brattle.
I wad be laith to rin and chase thee
Wi' murd'ring prattle.'"

"Jenny gal, what air yo' sayin', talkin' to yourself that a-way?" The girl suddenly looked up, realizing that she had neared the high hedge that separated the farm from the mansion-like home and its grounds. Laughing happily, she replied: "What you'd call up to my old tricks, Granddad, reciting poetry that Miss Dearborn has had me learn. See, here is a pail brimming full of cool lemonade, if it hasn't warmed while I crossed the field. I'm sure you must be as thirsty as Grandma and Dobbin and I were." For answer the old man pushed his wide brimmed straw hat to the back of his head, lifted the pail to his lips and drank it all without stopping. Then said gratefully: "I reckon I kin keep on now fer a spell longer. I was most petered out an' I do want to finish this field afore I quit."

The girl left at once, as she wished to hurry home to help with the ironing. She followed the hedge, as the walking was easier, but suddenly she paused and her hand went to her heart. She had heard the voices of girls talking on the other side of the evergreens and what one of them was saying greatly startled the listener.

"Oh, yes, indeed," a proud voice was saying, "we own about one hundred acres, Ma Mere, brother Harold and I. Our property extends along the seacoast to the highwater mark, then back across the highway up into Laurel Canon, and includes the farm just beyond the hedge."

Another voice commented, "If your mother should die, you and your brother would be very rich."

"Oh, yes, fairly," this with a fine show of indifference. "But if I had my way, all of our country property would be turned into money, then we could live abroad ever after. Mother promised that when she comes in July she will consider selling the farm and the canon property at least. She would have sold the farm two years ago had it not been for my brother Harold. For some reason, which Ma Mere and I cannot in the least understand, he pleaded to have the farm kept. He even offered to take it as part of his share, that and the canon acreage, and let me

have the home and estate."

"What did your mother say to that?" a third voice inquired.

"Too utterly ridiculous to consider, and that, since she wishes to turn something into cash, if we are to live abroad, she will sell one or the other, and, of course, there will be a more ready market for the farm. It's a most picturesque old place. That is, from a distance. I have never really been there. You see, we have practically lived away from our country home ever since I was born. I have always supposed that, because of our father's long lingering illness here, Ma Mere has dreaded returning to stay, so imagine my surprise when she wrote that we were all three to spend this summer at the old place."

Jenny, who had stood transfixed, listening, though against her will, for she scorned eavesdropping, started to run across the ploughed field, stumbling and almost falling in her haste. Oh, what should she do? Should she tell Grandma and Grandpa the terrible possibility that, after all, Rocky Point Farm might be sold, and that very summer? No! No! She couldn't do that. Oh, if only she had not loaned Etta Heldt part of the honey and egg money, and yet, with a crushing sense of depression, Jenny realized that it did not in the least matter about that paltry sum. If Mrs. Poindexter-Jones wished to sell part of her land, all that her grandfather had saved or could procure would be no inducement to her.

When the orchard was reached, she stood very still for a moment, her hand again on her heart, as though to quiet its anxious beating that was almost a pain. "Jenny Warner," she said to herself, "you *must* not let Grandma suspect that anything is wrong because, perhaps, nothing really is. If Harold does not want the farm sold, his mother may heed his wishes."

Two moments later a smiling girl entered the kitchen, hung her hat on its nail by the door as she said, "Well, Granny Sue, I was longer than I expected to be and you have started on the shirt. Let me have the iron. I'll promise not to scorch it, the way I did that towel you let me iron when I was just head above the ironing board. Do you remember it? You were so sweet about it when I cried. I recall, even now, how you comforted me by saying that the two ends of the towel would make such nice wash cloths, hemmed up, and that it was lucky the scorch was in the middle of the towel because that would make the wash cloths just the right size." The old woman had relinquished the iron, and, sitting near in Grandpa's armed chair, she smiled lovingly at the girl, who continued: "That's

just the way you've overlooked all the mistakes I ever made. I do wish that every girl in all the world had a grandmother like you." Jenny was purposely chattering to keep from telling what was uppermost in her mind.

"What a proud, vain girl that Gwynette Poindexter-Jones must be!" Jenny's thoughts were very different from her spoken words. "How cold and superior the tone of her voice when she informed her friends that she had never visited the farm, but that it looked very picturesque from a distance." Jenny's cheeks flushed as she indignantly told herself that she certainly hoped that the farm never would be visited by——. Her thought was interrupted by her exclamation of dismay. "Grandmother Sue. *Here* they come!"

The old woman rose hastily from the armed wooden chair. "Who, dearie? Who is it you see?" No wonder she asked, for the girl with the iron safely upheld, that it might not scorch the shirt front, was staring with a startled expression out of the window toward the long lane.

Susan Warner had not seen the missionary's older daughter in many years, and so she did not recognize her as being the young lady in the lead mounted on a nervous, high-stepping black horse. Following were two other girls in fashionable riding habits on small brown horses. But the old woman did not need to be told who the visitor was, for at once she knew. There was indeed a resemblance to her own Jenny in the face and the very build of the girl in the lead. However, a stranger who did not know the relationship would think little of it because of the difference in the expressions. One face indicated a selfish, proud, haughty nature, the other was far more sensitive, joyous and loving. Jenny was again ironing when the old woman turned from the window to ask, "Do yo' know who they be?"

"Why, yes, Granny; the one ahead is Gwynette Poindexter-Jones, and the two others are her best friends, the ones who came to Granger Place with her from San Francisco. You know I saw them all close up this noon when I waited on table over at the seminary."

Susan Warner had stepped out on the side porch when the young lady in the lead drew rein. She wanted to close the door, shutting Jenny in, but since the door stood open from dawn until sunset each day, she knew that such an act would arouse suspicion. But *how* she did wish she could prevent Jenny's meeting her very own sister and being treated as an inferior.

The girl at the ironing board listened intently, strainingly, that she might hear if the selling of the farm was mentioned.

Gwynette was saying, “My mother told me to ride over to our farm some day and ask you to see that the big house is put in readiness for occupancy by the first of July. Ma Mere said that you could hire day labor to have the cleaning done, but that she prefers to engage our permanent servants after she arrives.”

How unlike her dear grandmother’s voice was the one that was coldly replying: “I reckon your ma’ll write any orders she has for me. She allays does.”

If Gwynette recognized a rebelliousness in the remark and manner of the farmer’s wife, she put it down to ill-breeding and ignorance, and so said in her grandest air, “Kindly bring us each a drink of milk.” Then, turning to her friends, she added, “All of the produce of the farm is for our use, but since we are seldom here, it is, of course, sold in the village. I suppose Ma Mere receives the profits.”

“Aren’t you being unnecessarily rude?” Beulah Hollingsworth inquired. Gwynette shrugged. “Oh, nobody heard,” she said in a tone which implied that she would not have cared if they had. But she was mistaken, for Jenny had heard and her cheeks flamed with unaccustomed anger.

“Are the bees yours also?” Patricia Sullivan inquired, glancing back at the orchard where a constant humming told that swarms of tiny winged creatures were gathering sweets.

“Why, of course,” was the languidly given reply. “We’ll take some of the honey back with us. These people have to do as I say. They are just our servants.” To the amazement of the three, a flashing-eyed girl darted out on the porch as she cried, “You shall *not* call my grandmother and my grandfather your servants. And those bees *do not* belong to you. I bought them, and the white hens, with my *very own* Christmas and birthday money.”

Susan Warner, coming from the cooling cellar with three goblets of milk, was amazed, for very seldom had she seen a flash of temper in the sweet brown eyes of her girl.

“Never mind, dearie, whatever ’twas they said,” she murmured in a low voice. “Go back to your ironin’, Jenny; do, to please your ol’ granny.”

Obediently the girl returned to the kitchen, but she felt sure, from the fleeting glance she gave the companions of Gwynette, that *they* were not in sympathy with her rudeness.

After drinking the milk, the three rode away, and from the indignant tones of one of them the listeners knew that the proud daughter of Mrs. Poindexter-Jones had been angered by the attitude of her mother's servants.

Jenny's heart was indeed heavy as she contemplated the dreary possibility that her angry words might hasten the day when her loved ones would lose their home.

Sadly she finished her task and put away the ironing board. Then she recalled that an hour before she had assured herself that nothing else of an unusual nature was apt to happen in that day already crowded with events, but she had been mistaken. She had met Harold's sister and had quarreled with her. Then, and for the first time, she realized that she had half hoped that the daughter of their next door neighbor and she might become friends. Jenny had never had a close girl friend, and like all other girls she had yearned for one.

"Dearie," her grandmother was making an evident effort at cheeriness, "if you'll be settin' the table, I'll start the pertatoes to fryin'. Here comes your grandpa. He looks all petered out, and he'll want his supper early."

Jenny smiled her brightest as she began the task of consoling herself with the thought that Harold Poindexter-Jones was their true friend, and how she did wish that she might see *him* and ask him if the farm was to be sold.

CHAPTER IX.
AN OLD FRIEND APPEARS

The next morning, while Jenny was standing in front of her mirror in her sun-flooded bedroom nearest the sea, she reviewed in memory the events of the day previous. She found it hard to understand her own anger or why it had flared so uncontrollably. After all Grandpa Si *was* the farmer in Mrs. Poindexter-Jones' employ and, what was more, Grandma Sue *had* been housekeeper over at the big house for years before Jenny had been born, and there was no disgrace in that. The girl challenged the thought that had recalled this almost forgotten fact. Didn't Miss Dearborn say that it is not your occupation but what you are that really counts?

Determinedly she put from her the troubling memory and centered her attention for the first time on the reflection before her. She did indeed look pretty in the ruffled white muslin with the pink sprig embroidery, and tender brown eyes looked out from under a wide white hat, pink wreathed. There was no complaining thought in her heart because both dress and hat were many summers old.

Opening a drawer in her old-fashioned bureau, Jenny took out her prized pink silk parasol and removed its soft paper wrappings.

A mocking bird just outside her open window poured one joyous song after another into the peaceful sunlit air. For a thoughtful moment the girl gazed out at the shimmering blue sea. "I'm sorry I flared up at Harold's sister," she said aloud. Then hearing her grandmother calling from the side porch, she sang out: "Coming, Granny Sue."

Jenny could not have told why everything and everyone revolved around Harold P-J. She thought of the proud woman, whom she had once seen in the long ago, as "Harold's mother," and of the girl whom she had defied as "Harold's sister,"

yet she had not seen the boy since that stormy day two years before.

Skipping to the side porch, she found Grandma Sue looking very sweet in her lavender muslin, and tiny black bonnet with lavender ribbons, already up on the wide seat of the buggy. Breaking a few blossoms from the heliotrope at the corner of the house, Jenny handed them up to her. “Put them on, somewhere,” she called merrily, “and I shall have a cluster of pink Cecile Brunner roses for my belt. Granddad, how dressed up you look in the shirt that I ironed. Do you want a buttonhole bouquet?”

“Me?” the old man’s horrified expression amused the girl. Standing on tiptoe, she kissed his brown, wrinkled cheek, then clambered up beside her grandmother.

Silas Warner climbed over the wheel and took up the loose rein. Dobbin was indeed a remarkable horse. He seemed to know that on Sunday he was to turn toward the village, and yet he stopped after having cantered about two miles and turned down a pine-edged lane that led to St. Martin’s-by-the-Sea. It was the only church in all that part of the country, and so was attended by rich and poor alike. The seminary girls attended the service all together and filled one side of the small church. Jenny, near the aisle, close to the back, was kneeling in prayer when a late arrival entered and knelt in front of her. It was a young man dressed in a military school uniform.

Grandpa Si was the first to recognize the stranger and he whispered to his companion: “Ma ain’t that little Harry?”

Discreetly the good woman nodded, her eyes never leaving the face of the preacher who was beginning his sermon. Jenny’s heart was in a flutter of excitement. Surely it was her friend Harold P-J, and yet, two years before he had been just a boy. Now he was much taller with such broad shoulders and how straight he stood when they rose to sing a hymn. She had not seen his face as she was directly behind him. Perhaps, after all, she was mistaken, she thought, for she had plainly heard his sister tell her friends that Harold was not expected until the mother returned from France in July and it was only the first week in May. But she had not been wrong, as she discovered as soon as the benediction had been said, for the young man turned with such a pleased expression on his good looking face, and, holding out his hand to the older woman, he said with ringing sincerity in his voice. “It’s great, Mrs. Warner, to see you looking so well.” Then,

after giving a hearty handshake, and receiving two from the farmer, the boy turned smilingly toward Jenny. “You aren’t, you *can’t* be that little, rubber-hooded girl whom I picked up two years ago in the storm!”

“I am though.” Jenny’s rose-tinted cheeks were of a deeper hue, “But you also have grown.”

Standing very straight and tall, the boy looked down beamingly upon all three. “I’ll say I have,” he agreed, “but honestly I do hope I’m not going up any higher.” Then after a quick glance across the aisle, where the Granger Place Young Ladies were filing out, he said hastily. “Mrs. Warner, won’t you invite a stranded youth to take dinner with you today? I’ve got to see sister this afternoon, and return to the big city tonight, but I’m pining to have a real visit with you.” Then to Jenny, by way of explanation. “Perhaps you never heard about it, but your Grandma Sue took care of me the first three years of my life and so I shall always consider her a grandmother of mine.” Susan Warner’s mind had flown hastily back to the home larder. What did she have cooked that was fine enough for company. But the youth seemed to understand. “Just anything that you have ready is what I want. No fuss and feathers, remember that. I’ll be there in one hour. Will that be time enough?”

Grandpa Si spoke up heartily. “I reckon you’ll find a dinner waitin’ whenever you get there, Harry-boy.”

Gwynette received her brother with a sneering curve to her mouth that might have been pretty. “Well, didn’t you know that everyone in the church was watching you and criticizing you for making such a fuss over our mother’s servants,” was her ungracious greeting. A dull red appeared in the boy’s cheeks, but he checked the angry words before they were uttered. Instead he said: “Gwynette, may I call at the seminary this afternoon? I have had a letter from Mother and I want to talk it over with you.”

“This afternoon?” a rising inflection of inquiry. “Aren’t you going to take me to The Palms to dine? I’m just starved for a real course dinner and the minute I saw you I made up my mind that was what we would do.”

The boy hesitated. His conscience rebuked him. He knew that their mother would expect him to be chivalrous to his sister. He also knew that a vision in pink and white, a pair of appealing liquid brown eyes had, for the moment

caused him to forget his duty. “All right, sis,” he said, trying not to let the reluctance in his heart show in his voice. “Ask your chaperone if you may go with me now.”

As soon as he was alone, Harold hurried around the vine-covered church to the sheds where he hoped to find the Warner family. They were just driving out of the lane, but the old man drew rein when he saw the lad hurrying toward them.

“I’m terribly sorry, Mrs. Warner,” he began with a ring of sincerity in his voice, which carried conviction to the listeners. “Gwynette wants me to take her to The Palms for dinner, and, of course, *that* is what our mother would wish me to do.”

“Wall, wall, that’s all right, Harry,” Grandpa Si put in consolingly. “’Taint as though you can’t come again. You’re welcome over to the farm whenever you’re down this way.”

Harold’s last glance was directed at the girl as also was his parting remark. “I’m going to run down from the city real soon. Good-bye.”

Jenny was truly disappointed as she had hoped to have an opportunity to ask the lad if it were true that his mother planned selling the farm during the summer.

She consoled herself by recalling his promise to come back soon. And then as Dobbin trotted briskly homeward, the girl fell to dreaming of the various things that might happen during the summer.

CHAPTER X.
BROTHER AND SISTER

“The Palms,” architecturally a Mission Inn, was gorgeously furnished and catered only to the ultra-rich. It was located picturesquely on a cliff with a circling palm-edged drive leading to it.

Santa Barbara was both a winter and summer resort and its hostelries were famed the world over.

Gwynette led her brother to the table of her choice in the luxurious dining room, the windows of which, crystal clear, overlooked the ocean. She was fretful and pouting. Harold, after having drawn out her chair, seated himself and looked almost pensively at the shimmering blue expanse, so close to them, just below the cliff.

“You aren’t paying the least bit of attention to me,” Gwynette complained. “I just asked if you weren’t pining to be over in Paris this spring.”

The lad turned and looked directly at the girl, candor in his clear grey eyes.

“Why no, sister, I do not wish anything of the sort,” he replied sincerely. “What I *do* hope is that our mother will be well enough to return to us, and that the quiet of our country home will completely restore her health.”

Gwynette shrugged her shoulders, but said nothing, until their orders had been given; then she remarked:

“I don’t see why our mother needs to rusticate for three months in this stupid place. If *we* could have a house party, of course, that would help to make it endurable for *me*, but in her last letter Ma Mere distinctly said that we were to invite no one, as her nerves were in need of absolute quiet.”

The boy, who had folded his arms looked at his sister penetratingly, almost critically. Suddenly he blurted out:

“Do you know, Gwynette, sometimes I think you do not care, really care, deep in your heart for our mother as much as I do. In fact, I sometimes wonder if you care for anyone except yourself.”

The girl flushed angrily. “Your dinner conversation is most ungracious, I am sure,” she flung at him, but paused and looked at a young man also in uniform, who was hurrying toward their table with an undeniably pleased expression on his tanned face. Harold rose and held out his hand, glad of any interruption.

“Well, Tod, where did you drop from?” Then to the girl he said: “Sister Gwynette, this is a chap from the same San Francisco prison in which I am incarcerated—Lieutenant James Creery by name.”

The girl held up a slim, white hand over which the youth bent with an ardor which had won for him the heart of many a young lady in the past and probably would in the future, but in the present he was welcomed as a much-needed diversion from a most upsetting family quarrel. Having accepted their invitation to make a third at the small table, apart from the others, the young man seated himself, saying to the girl: “Don’t let me interrupt any confidences you two were having. I know you don’t see each other often, since we poor chaps have but one free Sunday a month.”

Gwynette smiled her prettiest and even her brother conceded that if Gwyn would only take the trouble to smile now and then she might be called handsome.

“Our conversation was neither deep nor interesting to anyone but me. I was wishing that we were to spend the summer—well, anywhere rather than in our country home four miles out of this stupid town.”

“Stupid?” the young man, nicknamed Tod, glanced about at the charmingly gowned young women at the small tables near them. “This crowd ought to keep things stirring.”

Gwynette shook her head. “Nothing but weekend guests motored up from Los Angeles or down from San Francisco. From Monday to Friday the place is dead.”

And so the inconsequential talk flowed on, until at last James Creery excused himself, as he had an engagement. Again bowing low over Gwynette's hand, he departed. The smiling expression in the girl's eyes changed at once to a hard glint.

"Well, you said that you came down especially to talk over a letter from our mother. You might as well tell me the worst and be done with it."

The lad made no attempt to hide his displeasure. "There was no worst to it, Gwynette. I merely hoped that you would wish to plan with me some pleasant surprise as a welcome to our mother's homecoming. I find that I was mistaken. Shall we go now?"

The girl rose with an almost imperceptible fling of defiance to her shapely head. "As you prefer," she said coldly. "I really cannot say honestly that I feel any great enthusiasm about we three settling down in humdrum fashion in our country place, but, if it is my duty, as you seem to infer, to *pretend* that I am overjoyed, you may plan whatever you wish and I will endeavor to *seem* enthusiastic."

They were again in the small car before the lad replied: "Do not feel that it is incumbent on you in any way to co-operate with me in welcoming *my* mother." There was an emphasis on the my which did not escape the notice of the girl, and it but increased her anger. She was convinced that her brother meant it as an implied rebuke, and she was right.

Gwynette bit her lips and turned away to hide tears of self pity. When the seminary was reached, the lad assisted the haughty girl from the car with his never-failing courtesy, accompanied her to the door, ventured a conciliating remark at parting, but was not even rewarded with a glance.

Harold was unusually thoughtful as he rode along the highway. He passed the gate to the lane leading to the farm, assuring himself that he was in no mood for visiting even with friends.

CHAPTER XI.
VIEWS AND REVIEWS

Monday morning dawned gloriously, but it was with great effort that Jenny made her mood match the day. Often her grandparents glanced at her and then at one another as they ate their simple breakfast. At last her grandfather asked: “What be yo’ studyin’ on so hard, dearie? Is it anything about yo’re schoolin’ that’s frettin’ you?”

The girl, who had been gazing at the bowl of golden poppies on the middle of the table with unconscious abstraction, looked up with a bright smile. Luckily her grandfather’s remark gave her a suggestion to enlarge upon. Turning to the little old woman whose sweet blue eyes were watchfully inquiring, the girl said: “Something has happened, or rather it is going to happen.” She paused a moment, but her grandfather urged: “Do go on, Jenny. Don’t let’s stop for no guessin’ contest this time. I’ve got to get out early to the cultivatin’.”

Jenny told how the Board of Education had required Miss Dearborn to take a teacher’s examination before she had been permitted to continue instructing her one lone pupil.

“Tut! Tut! Wall now, yo’ don’ tell?” Grandma Sue was much impressed. “Did Miss Dearborn go an’ take them teachin’ examinations jest so she could keep on helpin’ yo’ wi’ your studies?”

The girl nodded. “She must set a power by you,” the old woman concluded. Grandpa Si spoke up. “Huh, how could she help it? I reckon every critter as knows Jenny sets a power by her, but thar must be more to the yarn. I don’ see anything, so far, for you to fret about.”

“Yes, there is more,” Jenny agreed, “Miss Dearborn has had a letter from the Board of Education saying that I must take the high school examinations next

month. Think of it, Granny Sue! I've got to go to that big new high school over in Santa Barbara where I don't know a single soul, and take written examinations, when I never have had even one in all my life."

Again the grandfather's faith in his "gal" was expressed. "It's *my* notion when them examinations are tuk, *your's* 'll be leadin' all the rest. Thar ain't many gals as sober minded as *yo'* be, Jenny, not by a long ways."

The girl's merry laughter pealed out and the twinkle in her liquid brown eyes did not suggest sober-mindedness. Rising she skipped around the table kissing affectionately her grandfather's bald spot.

"Here's hoping that you won't be disappointed in your granddaughter. But really she isn't half as wise as you think she is." Then turning toward the smiling old woman, she concluded, "Is she, Mrs. Susan Warner?"

The sweet blue eyes told much more than the reply. "Wall, I reckon yo' won't come out tail-end."

Again the girl laughed, then donning her hat and taking her books, she merrily called "Good-bye." But her expression changed when she reached the lane and started walking briskly toward the highway.

The real cause of her anxiety returned to trouble her thoughts. "Oh, I *must* study so hard, so hard," she told herself. "Then I will be able to be a teacher and make a home for my dear old grandparents. How I hope the farm will not be sold until then."

Jenny did not follow the highway, but took a short cut trail to Miss Dearborn's hillside home. It led over a rugged upland where gnarled live oaks twisted their rough barked branches into fantastic shapes. Jenny loved low-growing oaks and she never climbed through this particular grove of them, however occupied her thoughts might be as they were on this troubled morning, without giving them a greeting. "I'm glad that Miss Dearborn is teaching me mythology, for otherwise I wouldn't know that each of these trees is really the home of a dryad, beautiful, slender graceful sprites, born when the tree is born and dying when the tree dies. How I would love to come here some moon-lit night in the spring and watch them dance to the piping of Pan. They would have wide fluttering sleeves in their garments woven of mist and moonbeams and they would be crowned with oak leaves, but how sad it would be if a woodchopper came and chopped down

one of the trees, for that night there would be one less dryad at the dance on the hill."

Beyond the trees there was a long sweep of meadowland down the hill side to the highway, and beyond to the rocky edge of the sea. On this bright, spring morning it was a glittering, gleaming carpet of waving poppy cups of gold.

Joyfully the girl cried, pausing on the edge of it, "O, I know the poem Miss Dearborn would quote. I thought of it right away." Then she recited aloud, though there was no one to hear.

"I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of shining daffodils
Beside the lake, beneath the trees
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine,
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never ending line,
Along the margin of the bay.
Ten thousand saw I at a glance
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee.
A poet could not but be gay
In such a jocund company.
I gazed and gazed, but little thought
What wealth to me the show had brought.

For oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude.
And then my heart with rapture fills
And dances with the daffodils.

"If only Wordsworth had lived in California," she thought as she continued on

her way, “he would have written just such a poem about these fields of golden poppies.”

Ten minutes later, the girl, feeling an inward glow from so close a communion with Nature, the greatest of artist-poets, skipped between the two graceful pepper trees that were the gate posts of Miss Dearborn’s attractive hillside home.

“Well, dearie, how bright you are this morning,” was the greeting the woman, digging about in her garden, sang out. Then, standing her hoe against a rustic bench, she began taking off her gloves, as together they walked toward the house. “I am indeed glad,” she concluded, “for you are to have a hard testing today.”

Instantly the morning glow faded from the girl’s face and a troubled expression clouded her eyes. “Miss Dearborn, what now?”

The older woman laughed. “No need of high tragedy,” she said. “It’s only that I have paid a visit to the principal of the high school, and have obtained from him the questions used on examinations for several years past, and today I am going to give you your first written test. We have nearly a month for review, and each week I shall ask you one complete set of questions of previous years and then, at least, you will be familiar with written examinations.”

“Oh, Miss Dearborn, how kind, how wonderfully kind you are to me. It would be most ungrateful of me to fail.”

“Fail? There is no such word for the earnest student who has worked faithfully day by day all through the term as my pupil has. There will be no need of that nerve-racking system called cramming for you.” Then, as they ascended the steps to the wide veranda, Miss Dearborn exclaimed, “See, I’ve put a table in the glassed-in corner. I’m going to shut you in there until noon with the questions, and I shall expect your average to be 90 at least.”

Jenny felt a little thrill of excitement course over her, and she started at her new task with a determination to try her best to be worthy of the faith placed in her by the three who loved her so dearly.

CHAPTER XII.
PLOTS AND PLAYS

Meanwhile a very different scene was being enacted in the Granger Place Seminary.

Gwynette Poindexter-Jones occupied the largest and most attractively furnished room on the second floor of the dormitory building, and her two best friends shared the one adjoining. There was a bath between with doors opening upon a narrow private corridor.

Gwynette had not liked the room when she first arrived, as it was, she declared, too “barnlike” in its barrenness. Miss Granger regretted this, as she assured the daughter of her richest patron, but she really could not furnish the rooms to please the young ladies, and there was no other apartment available at that late period of the term.

The haughty Gwynette had then requested that the furniture in the room be removed. After this had been done, she brought from her mother’s home by the sea handsome mahogany pieces upholstered in rich blue. There were portieres and window hangings to match and priceless pictures adorned the walls. The furnishing in the room of her friends had remained unchanged and was far more appropriate, in that it suggested studiousness rather than indolence and luxury.

Gwynette, in a velvet dressing robe of the same rich blue embroidered with gold in chrysanthemum design, was lying at full length on a many-cushioned lounge, a blue and gold slipper dangling from the toe of one foot. She was reading a forbidden novel, and eating chocolate creams, when there came a soft tap on the door leading into the main corridor. Gwynette always kept it locked that she need not be surprised by the appearance of Madam Vandeheuton, monitor of the dormitory, or by one of the infrequent visits of Miss Granger herself. Sitting erect, the girl’s eyes narrowed as she pondered.

Should she keep very still and pretend that she was out, or——

Her thought was interrupted by a low voice calling: “Gwyn, let us in, can’t you!” Languidly the girl rose and, after unlocking the door, she inquired of the two who entered: “What’s the idea? You know the door between our rooms is always unlocked. Couldn’t you come in that way?”

Beulah Hollingsworth reached down to the little blue velvet stool near the couch and helped herself to a chocolate. “Of course we could have come the usual way, only we were passing through the corridor and so this door was nearer.”

“Well, don’t do it again. I implore.” Gwynette once more stretched at full length and ease as she remarked indolently, “It’s easier for you to go around than for me to get up. Well?”

She looked inquiringly at Patricia Sullivan. “Did you call on the sphynx and get at her secret? Sit down, do! It makes me tired to see you standing so stiffly as though you had ramrods for backbones.”

Both of the girls sat down, one on a Louis XVI chair and the other on one of recent and more comfortable design. Beulah began—

“Yes, we called and found Clare Tasselwood as uncommunicative as she was when we met her in the garden and tried to draw her out.”

Patricia continued—

“But I am more than ever convinced that the secretive Clare is the daughter of a younger son of a noble English family. My theory is that she is going to keep quiet about it until the older son dies, and then those who befriended her when she was unknown will be honored as her guests when she takes her rightful place.”

“Well, I for one shall cultivate her. An invitation to visit the castle home of Lord Tasselwood would be most welcome to me. You girls may do as you please about it.” Gwynette was again in a sitting posture and she glanced inquiringly at her companions. They both declared that they wished to be included. “Then, firstly, we must obtain permission to give a spread worthy of her presence, at The Palms, no less, even if it costs our combined allowances for a month.”

Then they planned together what they would wear and whom they would invite. “We’ll ask my brother to bring down as many cadets as we have girls,” was Gwyn’s final decision.

When Clare Tasselwood received the gilt-edged invitation, there was a little twist to one corner of her month which was her way of smiling when she was amused, and cynical. She had overheard a conversation the day they had met in the garden. “The Lady Clara of Tasselwood Manor accepts with pleasure,” she told her reflection in the mirror.

CHAPTER XIII.
FERNS AND FRIENDS

True to her promise, Jenny Warner went to the seminary on Monday, after her lessons were over, to see if she could be of assistance to Miss O'Hara.

The kindly Irish woman saw the girl coming and met her at the open kitchen door with so beaming a face that the newcomer was convinced that something of a pleasant nature had occurred, nor was she wrong.

"Colleen, it's true blue you are, keepin' your word so handsome, but there's no need for you to be stayin'. Another of them orphans blew in along about noon-time, and it did me heart good to set eyes on the bright face of her. She went to work with a will, not wishin' to rest even. Her name's Nora O'Flynn, and her forebears came from the same part of old Ireland which gave birth to mesilf. 'Twon't be hard to be makin' the kitchen homelike for *this* orphan," she concluded.

Jenny went away joyfully. Things had turned out wonderfully for them all. Miss O'Hara could never have been happy with Etta Heldt, who was of a race she could not understand, but now that she was to have with her one of her own people, her long days of drudgery would be lightened and brightened.

As Jenny tripped down the box-bordered path leading from the seminary to a canyon trail that would be a short-cut to the farm, she passed the tennis courts, where several games were in progress. She glanced at the players, wondering if any of them might be the haughty sister of Harold P-J. But tennis was altogether too strenuous a pastime for the ever indolent Gwynette.

The back trail led along the Sycamore Canyon creek, where ferns of many varieties were growing; some were as tall as the girl who was passing them, while, among the moss-covered rocks, close to the brook, were the more

feathery and delicate maiden hair ferns. It had been very warm in the sun, but there was a most welcome damp coolness in the canyon. For a moment Jenny stood still at the top of the trail gazing down, listening to the quietness, broken only by the constant gurgling rush of the water. Then she started walking slowly along the trail, picking her way carefully, as it was rough and rocky, and at places very narrow. It amused her to note the different sounds of the brook. At one spot there was a whirling little eddy, then a sudden fall over a steep rock, then a hurried rushing till a broad pool-like place was reached. There the waters were deeper and quieter, as though pausing for a moment's rest before taking a plunge of many feet to the lower part of the canyon. Just above the Maiden-hair Falls, a rustic bridge crossed from one great boulder to another, and, as Jenny came in sight of it, she stopped, amazed, for there, sitting on one end of the bridge and leaning against the bending trunk of a great old sycamore tree, was a girl of her own age. Who could she be? Jenny had not heard of anyone new moving into the neighborhood. In fact, there were no houses in the canyon except the one occupied by the Pascoli family.

A small stone, disturbed by Jenny's foot, rattled noisily down the trail, struck the bridge and bounded away into the lower canyon.

The stranger glanced up with an expression that was almost startled and Jenny saw that it was the girl in brown whom she had twice noticed: once in the yard of the seminary, when she had been left so alone, and again in the dining hall when she had passed a dish, almost shyly, to the grand appearing Clare Tasselwood. Jenny remembered that this girl had said "Thank you," and had smiled pleasantly when her cup had been filled with chocolate. She was smiling again, a bright welcoming smile, which assured Jenny that the stranger wished to speak to her, nor was she wrong, for, as soon as the bridge was reached, the girl in brown exclaimed: "Isn't this a wonderful place that I've found? It's the first time since I came to this school that I haven't been depressingly lonesome."

Jenny's heart rejoiced. This girl must also love nature if she could feel real companionship in an almost silent canyon. Impulsively, she said, "Shall you mind if I sit here with you for a time?"

"Mind?" The other girl's brown eyes gladdened. "I was hoping that you would."

Jenny seated herself on the rustic bridge directly over the rushing falls. "Oh, hadn't you better move over near this end?" her companion asked anxiously.

“Won’t the hurrying whirl of the water underneath make you dizzy?”

Jenny shook her head. “We’re old friends,” she explained. “I am acquainted with Sycamore Canyon brook from its very beginning way up in the foothills, and it flows into the sea not far from the farm where I live.”

“Oh, good!” Again the bright upward glance. “I’m so glad you live on a farm, for I do also, when I’m at home in Dakota. My father is a farmer. I haven’t told it before, fearing the seminary girls might snub me if they knew. Not that I would care much. All I ask of them is to let me alone, and they certainly do that.” Then in a burst of confidence, “I really don’t know what to say to girls, nor how to act with them. I have lived so many years on an isolated farm and, would you believe it, I never, actually never, had a flesh and blood girl friend. I’ve had steens and steens of book-character friends, and I honestly believe, on the whole, I like them best.” Then with a shy side glance, “Do you think I am queer? Tell me so truly if you do.”

Jenny moved closer to the girl in brown as she exclaimed, “Yes, I do think you are queer, if queer means different from those other girls.” Then she laughingly confessed, “The truth is I never had a girl friend either, not one, but I have lots of make-believe friends, so, you see, I also am queer.”

The girl in brown beamed, “O, I am so glad, for maybe, do you think possibly you and I might become friends, being both queer and all that?”

Jenny nodded joyfully. “Why, of course we can be friends if you wish. That is, if Miss Granger would want you to be friendly with any but the gentry. Perhaps she doesn’t allow the pupils of her school to make acquaintances on the outside.”

This thought was not at all troubling to the strange girl. “You see,” she began seriously, “I am not subject to the rules governing the other pupils.”

Then, noting the puzzled expression in the listener’s eyes, she leaned back against the tree as she laughingly continued: “Suppose I begin at the beginning and then you will understand about me once for all.”

“We don’t even know each other’s names,” Jenny put in. “Mine is Jeanette Warner. I have always lived with my grandparents on Rocky Point farm, which belongs to the estate of the Poindexter-Jones family.” A shadow passed over the speaker’s face, which, a moment before, had been so bright. “I want to be real

honest before we begin a friendship. We are not farmers in our own right. We are hired to run a farm, therefore we are servants in the employ of the mother of one of your classmates. At least that is what Gwynette Poindexter-Jones calls us."

The observant listener saw the flush mounting to her new friend's cheeks, and, impulsively, she reached out a hand and placed it on the one near her. "What does *that* matter? I mean so far as our friendship is concerned," she asked.

Jenny was relieved. "Doesn't it really? Well, then I'm glad. Now please tell me all about yourself from the very beginning."

Jenny noticed that her companion looked frail and so she was not surprised to hear her say that she had been very ill. "Lenora Gale is my name," she began, "and my family consists of an unequalled father, and of a brother who is just as nice only younger. My dearest mother died of lung trouble years ago, and every time since then when I have caught cold, it has taken my vitality to an alarming extent, and last fall, when the bitter winter weather set in, and oh, how cold our northern winters are, father wanted me sent to California, but he could not come himself. Brother Charles wished to attend an agricultural college near Berkeley and so I was put in a boarding school up there, just as a place to stay and be well cared for. I was not to attend classes unless I desired. But the rainy season continued for so long that Brother thought best to bring me farther south, and that is why I am now in the Granger Place Seminary."

Jenny rose and held out a hand. "Lenora Gale," she said seriously, "the damp coolness of this canyon will not do at all for you. I'm going to walk back with you to the top of the trail. I can see quite plainly that you need a friend to look after you." And evidently Jenny was right, for the rough upward climb was hard for the girl who had not been well, and she scarcely spoke until they said good-bye at the side door of the seminary. Then she turned and clung to the hand of her new friend as she said imploringly, "You won't just disappear and forget me, will you? I do so want to see you again."

"Indeed not," Jenny assured her. "I'll come up and get you tomorrow, if I may have Dobbin, and take you home to supper. I want you to meet Grandma Sue and Grandpa Si."

Lenora's pale face brightened. "Oh, how wonderful that will be. I wish today were tomorrow."

Again Jenny descended the Sycamore Canyon brook trail, but this time she skipped along that she need not be late to help get supper. At the bridge, though, she stopped for one moment as at a shrine. “Here,” she said aloud, “is where I met my first girl friend.” A lizard on a stone near lifted its gray head and looked at her with bright black eyes, but Jenny, with a song of gladness, passed on down the trail, for once without noticing the wild life about her.

CHAPTER XIV.
DEAREST DESIRES

On the day following the meeting of the two girls on the rustic bridge over Maiden Hair Falls, Jenny, true to her promise, drove to the seminary ostensibly to deliver an order of honey and eggs, but a girl in brown rode with her on the high front seat when Dobbin turned out of the school gates. Another girl was watching them from her wide, upper window. Turning back into the room, she remarked to two others who were trying to study: “That Lenora Gale must belong to the bourgeoise. She is actually going for a ride with the granddaughter of my mother’s servants.”

Patricia Sullivan turned a page in the book she was conning and remarked without looking up: “Gwyn, how can you expect to win honors if you never open your books?”

The girl addressed sank languidly into a comfortable chair, picked up her novel and replied, as she found her place: “*Me*, win honors? *Why should I*, pray? Does it make one a more winsome debutante? You must know that this is to be my last year of confinement within the walls of a seminary. Ma Mere has promised to give me a coming-out party when I am eighteen which will dazzle even blasé San Francisco.”

Beulah arose, as she said rather impatiently: “Well, Gwyn, just because *you* do not wish to learn is no reason why Pat and I should follow in your footsteps. I’m going to our own room where I can study uninterrupted.”

“I’ll go with you.” Patricia arose to accompany her friend. “*Au revoir!*”

Gwynette, having found her place, was too absorbed in her story to reply.

Meanwhile Jenny and Lenora were having the happiest kind of time riding down

the gently sloping hill, now in the sunlight and again in the shadow of great overhanging trees.

“Has anything pleasant happened since yesterday?” Lenora asked with a side glance at the beaming face of the driver.

“Yes, indeed,” the other girl nodded gleefully. “I passed 100 per cent in two subjects and over 90 per cent in all the others.”

The brown eyes of her companion were questioning. “Why, I didn’t know you were going to have examination. In fact, I didn’t know anything about your school. Is there one near or do you have to go to Santa Barbara?”

Jenny told the story of her schooling from its beginning to a most interested listener. “Oh, how I do envy you.” Lenora exclaimed. “If I had had a teacher like your Miss Dearborn, I would be wiser than I am. We always lived too far away from a school for me to attend one. Dad has tutored me when he had time and so has Brother during his vacations.” Then the girl’s face brightened. “But my best teachers have been books themselves. How I have enjoyed them! Dad ordered all of the books in a graded reading course for me, and I have shelf after shelf filled with them around the walls of my room. I especially like nature poetry.”

Jenny flashed a bright smile at her companion. “Oh, I am so glad!” she cried. “Miss Dearborn is teaching me to love it. She wants me to be able to quote some poem that will describe every beautiful thing in nature that I see. Of course, I can’t always think of one, but then I store the scene away in my memory and ask Miss Dearborn what poem it would suggest to her.”

“I would love to know your teacher,” Lenora said. “I believe I could learn rapidly if I had her to teach me.”

“It’s almost the end of the school year,” Jenny commented, as she looked up and down the Coast Highway before crossing it, “and, anyway, I suppose it would hardly do for a pupil of the seminary to be taught by someone outside when they have special teachers there for all subjects.”

“No, of course not,” her companion agreed. Then, as they started down the long narrow lane leading to the farmhouse, the girl in brown exclaimed: “Oh, Jenny, do you live in that picturesque old adobe house so near the sea? I adore the ocean and I haven’t been real close to it since I came. It’s so very warm today,

don’t you think we might go down to the very edge of the water and sit on the sand?”

Jenny nodded brightly: “We’ll go out on Rocky Point,” she said. “You’ll love it, I’m sure.” Then impulsively, “Oh, Lenora Gale, you don’t know what it means to me to have a girl friend who likes the same things that I like.”

“Yes, I do know,” the other girl replied sincerely, “for it means the same to me.”

Grandma Warner was delighted with Jenny’s new friend, and, as for Lenora, she was most enthusiastic about everything around the farm. She thought the old adobe house with its heavy beams simply fascinating, and when she saw Jenny’s very own room with its windows opening out toward the point of rocks and the sea, she declared that she knew, if only she could sleep in a room like that, she would not be troubled with long hours of wakefulness as she had been since her last illness. “The ocean sings a lullabye to you all of the time, doesn’t it?” she turned to say.

Jenny, who was indeed pleased with her friend’s phrase, nodded, then she laughingly confessed that sometimes, when there was a high wind or a storm, the song of the sea was a little too wild and loud to lull one to slumber. But her listener’s eyes glowed all the more. “How I would love to hear it then. I would want to stay awake to listen to the crashing of the waves.” Then she said: “I suppose you think me foolishly enthusiastic about it, but when one has lived for years and years on an inland prairie, the sea is very strange and wonderful.”

Jenny nodded understandingly. “I don’t believe I could live far away from the coast,” she commented. “I would feel as though a very important part of my life had been taken from me. I have always lived within sound of the sea, but come, I want to take you down to the Rocky Point.” The girls went again through the kitchen, and Jenny said to the dear little old lady who was sitting on the vine-hung side porch, busy, as always, with her sewing, “Grandma Sue, please let Lenora and me get the supper. We won’t be gone more than an hour and after that will be plenty of time.”

Lenora’s face brightened. “Oh, Mrs. Warner, how I wish you would let us. It would be such a treat to me. I love to cook, but it has been perfect ages since I have been allowed in a kitchen, and yours is so homey and different.”

Susan Warner nodded a pleased consent. “I reckon you may, if it’s what you’re

wantin' to do," she said. Then she dropped her sewing in her lap, pushed her spectacles up among the lavender ribbons of her cap and gazed after the two girls as they went hand in hand down the path that led toward the Rocky Point. "It's a pleasant sight," the old woman thought, "Jenny having a friend of her own kind at last, and her, being a farmer's gal, makes our darlin' feel right at home wi' her. Not one of the upstandin' sort like Gwynette Poindexter-Jones." There was seldom a hard expression on the loving old face, but there was one at that moment. The spectacles had been replaced and Susan Warner began to stab her needle into the blue patch she was putting on a pair of overalls in a manner that suggested that her thoughts were of no gentle nature.

"What *right* has *one* of 'em to be puttin' on airs over the other of 'em? That's what I'd like to be told. They bein' flesh and blood sisters even if one of 'em has been fetched up grand. But I reckon there's a justice in this world, an' I can trust it to take keer o' things."

Having reached this more satisfactory state of mind, the old woman again glanced toward the point and saw the two girls climbing out on the highest rock. Jenny was carefully holding her friend's hand and leading her to a wide boulder against which the waves had crashed in many a storm until they had cut out a hollow resembling a canopy-covered chair wide enough for two to sit comfortably.

It was low tide at that hour, and, when they were seated, Lenora exclaimed joyfully: "Oh, isn't this the nicest place for confidences? Let's tell each other a secret, shall we? That will make us intimate friends."

Jenny smiled happily. "I don't believe I have any secrets, that is, none of my own that I could share." Miss Dearborn's secret was the only one she knew.

"Then let's tell our dearest desires," Lenora suggested, "and I will begin."

Then she laughingly confessed: "It will not take long to tell, however. I want to grow strong and well that I may become father's housekeeper. It is desperately lonely for him with both Mother and me away, and yet, since his interests are all bound up in our Dakota farm, he cannot leave it, and so, you see, I must get well as soon as ever I can."

Jenny nodded understandingly. "My dearest desire is to find a way by which I can help Grandpa Si buy Rocky Point farm. I have thought and thought, but, of

course, just thinking doesn't help much. There are ten acres in it, from the sea back to the highway, and then to the tall hedge you can see over there. That is where the Poindexter-Jones' grounds begin, and in the other direction to where the canyon brook runs into the ocean."

"It is a beautiful little farm. I wish you could buy it. How much do you suppose it will sell for?" Lenora asked, but Jenny did not know. Then she sighed as she added that she supposed they would know soon, for the daughter of Mrs. Poindexter-Jones had said that it was to be sold in the summer when her mother returned from France. But, as it was not natural for Jenny to be long depressed, she smilingly announced that she had two other desires that were very dear. One was that she did so want her wonderful teacher to remain in California another winter. "If she doesn't, if Miss Dearborn goes back East, I will have to go to the Santa Barbara High School next year, and no one knows how I would dread that. I even dread going there for a few days next month to take the written examinations."

Jenny had one more desire, which she did not mention, but, as she glanced across the green field and saw the turrets of the deserted Poindexter-Jones home, she thought of Harold and wondered when he would come again. He had said that he would run down some time soon and have dinner with them. Then, surely, she would have an opportunity to be alone with him long enough to ask about the farm.

Arousing herself from her thoughts, Jenny glanced at her companion and saw, on the sweet face, an expression of infinite sadness. Impulsively she reached out a strong brown hand and placed it lovingly over the frail one near her.

"Lenora, aren't you happy, dear?"

The brown eyes that were lifted were filled with tears. "There is something sad about the ocean and Tennyson's poem makes me think of my dear mother. No one can ever know how I miss her. We were more like two sisters, even though I was so very young. Mother died when I was twelve."

"What poem is it, dear? Shall you mind repeating it to me? I haven't had any of Tennyson's poetry yet." Then Jenny added hastily, "but don't, if you would rather not."

"I would like to." In a voice that was almost tearful, Lenora began:

“Break, break, break
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea.
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman’s boy
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill!
But O for the touch of a vanished hand
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.”

Then, before Jenny could comment on the poem, Lenora said, smiling through her tears, “That is what the poets do for us: they express our emotions better than we could ourselves.” Not wishing to depress her friend, she arose, held out a hand as she entreated: “Please help me down to that shining white sand.”

Such a happy half hour as they spent and when at last they started back toward the house, Jenny, in the shelter of the rocky point, impulsively kissed her companion. “I love you,” she whispered. “I have always wished that I had a sister. I’d like to adopt you if you will let me.”

“Of course I will let you. I would rather have you for a sister than anyone I ever knew.” Then, mischievously, Lenora inquired, “Now, what relation is my brother Charles to you?” “We’ll let *him* decide when he comes,” was Jenny’s practical answer. “He may not want to be adopted.” Then, as the house had been reached, she added impulsively, “but Grandma Sue and Grandpa Si would love to be, so I will let you share them. Now, Sister Lenora, it’s time for us to get supper.”

CHAPTER XV.
PEERS OR PIGS

The day of the party to be given in honor of Clare Tasselwood arrived and the three most interested were in Gwyn's room dressing for the occasion. "There is something very queer about Clare," Beulah announced. "I just passed her room a moment ago. The door was open and I saw her sitting in front of the mirror brushing out that mass of long yellow hair of hers, and I am positive that she was laughing. She saw my reflection, I suppose, for the moment I had passed she got up and closed the door so quickly that it sounded like a slam."

Gwynette, bemoaning the fact that they were not permitted to have maids assist them with their dressing, said impatiently: "Pat, you'll simply *have* to help me with these hooks." Then, to Beulah: "What are you driving at? Why do you think it is queer that Clare Tasselwood should be laughing? You laugh sometimes yourself, don't you?"

"Why, of course I do, if I think of something funny," Beulah agreed, "but what I can't understand is why Clare Tasselwood should laugh all alone by herself when she is dressing to go to our party. Of course she can't have any idea that we are giving it because we believe her to be the daughter of a younger son of the English nobility, can she?"

"Of course not!" Gwyn declared. "We three are the only ones who know that and we have not told. I am more than ever convinced that it is true, for yesterday, when Madame Vandeheuton asked me to take Clare's mail to her room there was a letter with what appeared to be a crest on it."

Patricia, having finished hooking up the blue satin gown of her friend, remarked with energy: "Well, I'm certainly glad to hear that. I've had 'ma doots' lately about the whole thing, and now and then a faint idea penetrates my brain that we're idiots whichever way it is. Here we are squandering not only this month's

spending money but next month's as well, and what is to come of it?"

Beulah sat on a low stool to put on her gilt slippers. "Oh, we'll have to take a gambler's chance. Pat, be a sport. We know for a fact that there is a pupil at this seminary who is the daughter of a younger son of a noble English family. Miss Granger was only too glad to let *that* much be known. I've no doubt it brought her several pupils whose vain mothers wished them to be associated with such a girl even if they could not know which one she was."

Pat agreed. "And didn't we study the qualities of every girl in this establishment, beginning with Clare and ending with that timid, sickly-looking creature who always wears brown?"

"And who associates, by choice, with the granddaughter of my mother's servants," Gwyn scoffed as she surveyed her beautiful party gown in the long gilt-framed mirror. "Wasn't it adorable of Ma Mere to send me this creation from Paris? She knows how hurt I am because she put me in this detestable prison instead of permitting me to accompany her to France, and so she sends me presents to sooth my wounded spirits, I suppose."

"Your mother is mighty good to you," Pat remarked in rather a critical tone, "better than I think you deserve. I have never yet heard you say that you wish you could do something to add to *her* pleasure."

Gwynette crossed the room, watching the swing of the soft satin folds in the mirror over one shoulder. Her lips were pressed together as though she were trying to keep from retorting to her friend's speech, but her mounting anger caused her to stop in front of Pat's chair and flare at her. "I can't understand *why* you continue to associate with me at all, since you disapprove of me so entirely. If you feel that it is an idiotic thing for us to try to do homage to the daughter of nobility, why didn't you say so at first? It is too late now to make any changes in our plans, but after tonight I shall no longer expect you to be one of my intimate friends."

Beulah said conciliatingly: "Gwyn, we aren't any of us perfect, and we certainly don't want our friends to pretend they think we are, do we?" Then, in an entirely different tone, she continued: "For myself, Gwyn, since your brother and fifteen other cadets are coming to our party, I shall consider my money well spent. I'm pining for a dance. And, as for the Lady Clare Tasselwood, I don't care a fig

whether she is or isn’t. Hark, what’s the commotion without?”

The palatial bus from The Palms was arriving and on the high seat with the driver, resplendent in his gold-trimmed blue uniform, sat Cadet Harold.

Beulah, who had skipped to the front window, hurried back to don her cloak and tie a becoming cherry colored scarf over her short light brown curls. “Gwyn, I wish you would be the one to tell Lady Clare that the hour of departure has arrived. Pat and I will round up the other twelve.” Gwynette lifted her eyebrows as she adjusted her swansdown-trimmed cloak about her slim shoulders. “Sometimes, Beulah, from your choice of English, I might think you a cowgirl.”

The rebuked maiden chuckled mischievously. “I ain’t, though,” she said inelegantly, “but if ever there was a romance of the Wild West written that I haven’t read, I hope I’ll hear of it soon. I’m daffy about the life. Truth is, I’d heaps rather meet a cowgirl than I would a younger daughter of——”

But Gwynette, with a proud toss of her handsome head, had swept from the room, leaving Beulah to mirthfully follow, accompanied by Pat, whose dark looks boded no good. Beulah drew her friend back and closed the door. “Child,” she remonstrated, “don’t take Gwyn’s loftiness so much to heart. I think she is just as superlatively selfish as you do, and I also think she treats her invalid mother shamefully, but you know we can’t go around this world telling everyone *just* what we think of them. It isn’t done in the best society. Gwyn has her good points, too, otherwise we wouldn’t have been chumming with her, would we?”

“Well, take it from me. I’ve chummed my last. After tonight I’ll choose my friends, not have them chosen for me.”

“Meaning what?”

“You know as well as I do that because our three mothers were in the same set at home, we were all packed off here together, but come, I’ll try to get some pleasure out of this idiotic party.”

When they reached the lower hall, they found all of the girls who had been invited waiting for Madame Vandeheuton, who was to be the evening’s chaperone. She was a timid little French woman who felt that the girls were always making fun of her efforts at speaking English, and so she usually kept quiet, except when she was teaching her dearly loved native tongue. Gwynette

had especially asked that Madame Vandeheuton be permitted to accompany them, since they could not go without one of the teachers.

Clare Tasselwood was gorgeously arrayed in a brocaded gold velvet gown with a crownlike arrangement of pearls bound about her mass of soft yellow hair. She looked more than ever regal. Gwynette sat beside her in the bus and was her constant companion throughout the evening. The ballroom of The Palms had been reserved for this party and the fifteen cadets were charmed with the pretty girls from the select seminary, but handsome Clare was undeniably the belle.

Each time that a dance was concluded, Gwyn asked her partner to take her to that part of the salon to which Clare's partner had taken her.

Harold Poindexter-Jones noticed this after a time and asked slangily: "What's the big idea, Sis? Is the tall blonde a new crush?"

Gwyn's haughty reply was: "Harold, I consider your language exceedingly vulgar. If you wish to know, this party is being given in honor of Clare Tasselwood, whose father is a younger son of English nobility."

Her brother looked at her in wide-eyed amazement, then burst into a laugh. Indignantly Gwyn drew him through an open door, out upon a deserted porch.

"What do you mean by such an ill-mannered explosion?" she inquired wrath fully.

Harold became very sober. "Sis," he said, "are you in dead earnest? Has that girl been telling any such yarn about her family?"

"Why no," Gwyn had to confess, "she didn't tell it, but——"

Again the boy laughed: "That's too good to keep. I'll have to tell the fellows. Old Hank Peters, the chap who has danced with her so much, comes from her part of the globe—Chicago, to be accurate, and he said that her father made his pile raising pigs—and they aren't English at all. They are Swedes."

Gwynette was angry with herself and everyone else. "Don't you dare to tell; not a single soul!" she flared. "If you do, I'll get even with you some time, some way."

The boy, suddenly serious, took his sister's hand. "Gwyn," he said, "I have no desire to make this a joking matter with the fellows. Of course I'll keep it dark, but I do hope it will teach you a lesson."

Beulah and Pat wondered at Gwynette's altered manner toward the guest of honor, but, not even to them did she confide the humiliating information she had received.

On the ride back to the seminary in the bus Gwyn had very little to say and the others attributed it to weariness.

Gwynette noticed a merry twinkle in the blue eyes of Clare Tasselwood when she effusively bade the three hostesses good-night, assuring them that she had spent a most delightful evening. Gwyn went sulkily to her room almost *sure* that the daughter of that pig-raising Westerner had known all along *why* the party had been given. She had indeed learned a lesson she decided as she closed her room door far less gently than she should have done at that hour of night. Before retiring she assured herself that even if she found out who *really was* the daughter of a younger son of English nobility, she wouldn't put *herself* out to as much as speak to her.

CHAPTER XVI.
GOOD NEWS

Sunday morning dawned gloriously, and although the sun rose at an early hour, Jenny was out on the Rocky Point to watch the crimson and gold shafts of light flaming up back of the mountain peaks; then she looked out at the sea with its opalescent colors. Turning, she saw someone walking along the beach from the house beyond the high hedge.

It was not hard to recognize the military bearing of the youth. As the girl had not known of the party given on the previous evening at The Palms, she had no knowledge of the near presence of the lad whom she had so longed to see, that she might ask about the farm. Harold had said nothing to his sister Gwynette of his determination to remain over night, but when his comrades had departed for the big city far to the north, he had climbed into his little gray speeder and had gone to the deserted mansion-like home belonging to his mother.

Being without a thought of fear, the lad had not in the least minded the ghastliness of the spacious rooms where the furniture wore coverings of white and where his footsteps awakened echoes long silent. He had slept in his own bed, but had aroused early, meaning to breakfast with his old nurse and her family.

When he saw the girl standing on the highest rock of the points with the shining morning sky back of her, he snatched off his cap and waved it, then broke into a run, which soon took him scrambling up the rocks to her side.

Holding out a strong brown hand, he exclaimed, real pleasure glowing in his eyes: “Why, little Jenny Warner, how tall you are, and graceful, like a flower on a slender stem.”

The girl laughed merrily. “Do boys always feel that they must say pretty things

to their girl acquaintances?" she asked.

As he gazed into her liquid brown eyes with their tender depths, the lad suddenly found himself wishing that he were a poet, that he might say something truly fitting, but as words failed him, he confessed that most girls seemed to like to receive compliments. How innocent was the expression of the sweet face that was lifted toward his.

"Really, do they?" Then she confessed: "I don't know many girls, only one—a farmer's daughter who is over at Granger Place Seminary."

The lad raised his eyebrows questioningly. Then he began to laugh.

"A farmer's daughter, is she? Well, I'm glad there is *one* pupil at that school who is honest about her family."

Then noting that his companion was looking at him as though wondering what he meant, he explained in an offhand way, not wishing to break his promise to his sister: "Oh, I just heard that some one of the girls in that school is supposed to be the daughter of a younger son of the English nobility." Adding quickly: "You say that you are acquainted with only one girl. Hasn't my sister Gwyn been over to call on the Warners yet, and haven't you met her?"

A color that rivaled the rose in the sky flamed into Jenny's face. Harold saw it and correctly concluded that the girls *had* met, and that Jenny had been rudely treated.

"Gwyn is a snob," was his mental comment. Aloud he said: "Do you suppose that your grandmother will invite me to stay to breakfast? I'll have to start for the big town by ten, at the latest, and so I cannot be here for dinner."

"Of course she will." Jenny glanced back at the farmhouse as she spoke and saw that the smoke was beginning to wreath out of the chimney above the kitchen stove. "They're up now, and so I'll go in and set the table."

But still she did not move, and the lad watching her expressive face intently, exclaimed impulsively: "Jenny, is something troubling you? Can't I help if there is?"

That Harold's surmise had been correct the lad knew before the girl spoke, for

her sweet brown eyes brimmed with tears, and she said in a low, eager voice:

“Oh, how I have wanted to see you to ask about the farm. I heard, I overheard your sister telling her two friends from San Francisco that when your mother comes from France the farm is to be sold, and if it is, dear old Grandpa and Grandma will have no place to go.”

An angry color had slowly mounted the tanned face of the boy, and he said coldly: “My sister presumes to have more knowledge of our mother’s affairs than she has. The farm is *not* to be sold without my consent. Mother has agreed to that. I have asked for Rocky Point and the Maiden Hair Falls Canyon for my share of the estate.”

He looked out over the water thoughtfully before he continued: “Mother, I will confess, thinks my request a strange one, since the home and the fifteen acres about it are far more valuable, and she will not consent to the making of so unequal a division of her property, but she did promise that she would not sell the farm until I wished it sold. I believe she suspects that when I finish my schooling I may plan to become a gentleman farmer myself.”

The lad laughed as though amused, but as he looked intently at the lovely girl before him, he became serious and exclaimed as though for the first time he had thought of considering it:

“Perhaps, after all, I might do worse. I simply will not go into the army. I should hate that life.”

Then, catching the girl’s hand, he led her down the rocks as he called gayly: “Come on, little Jenny Warner, let’s ask your grandfather if he will begin this very summer to teach me how to be a farmer.”

And so it was a few moments later, when Grandpa Si came from the barn with a pail brimming with foamy milk, that he was almost bumped into by a girl and boy who, hand in hand, were running joyfully from the other direction.

“Wall, I’ll be dod-blasted!” the old man exclaimed, “if it ain’t little Harry!”

Then he called: “Grandma Sue, come an’ see who’s here!”

The bright-eyed old woman appeared in the open door, fork in hand. The lad

leaped up the porch steps and kissed her on a flushed, wrinkled cheek.

“Grandma Sue,” he asked merrily, “have you room for a starved beggar boy at your breakfast table?”

“Room, is it?” was the pleased response. “Thar’ll allays be that, sonny, whenever you’re wantin’ a bite to eat.”

Such a merry meal followed. No one could make pancakes better than Susan Warner, and when the first edge was taken from his appetite, Harold insisted on helping Jenny turn the cakes for the other two. He wondered what Gwynette would think and say, if she could see him, but for that he cared not at all. Then, when they were seated, the boy astonished the farmer by asking if he were willing to take him on that coming summer as a helper.

“Tush! Nonsense it is yo’re talkin’ now, Harry boy. Yo’ wouldn’t want to be puttin’ on overalls, would ye, an’ be milkin’ ol’ Brindle?”

But Harold was in dead earnest, they were finally convinced, and when at last he started away along the beach it was with the understanding that he was to return the first of June to be Farmer Warner’s “helper.”

CHAPTER XVII.
PRIDE MEETS PRIDE

“Well, thanks be there are only two more weeks of incarceration in this prison.”

Gwynette Poindexter-Jones was in no pleasant mood as her two companions could easily discern. “I would simply expire of ennui if I had to remain here one day longer. When I think that Ma Mere, after having had a wonderful winter in France, is now arriving in San Francisco, where I suppose she will remain for a time, I feel as though I never can stand the stupid routine of this place even a fortnight longer. And the truth is, I don’t know as I will. I wrote Mother that I had refused to take the final tests. I cannot see why I should care for a diploma from this seminary, or any other, since I am next year to become a debutante in San Francisco’s best society. One doesn’t have to pass an examination in history, thank heavens, to make an eligible marriage. Beauty is far more requisite.”

“And I suppose you are quite satisfied with yourself on that score.” It was Beulah Hollingsworth who made this sarcastic remark. The three girls were seated in the summer-house on the lawn of the seminary waiting for the arrival of the rural postman. A box of chocolates lay open on the table before them, and, spread about it, were books and magazines. Patricia Sullivan, to the displeasure of at least one of her friends, was reading a romance of the West. She had not heard the remarks of her companions until the last sentence had been uttered and the tone in which it had been said made her look up and exclaim: “What is the matter, Beulah? Your disposition used to be quite amiable, but it certainly is changing. Are you living on vinegar?”

Gwynette tossed her head. “Her favorite pastime seems to be finding something to be sarcastic about. Of course I know that I am no rare beauty, but I do believe that I can hold my own.”

Beulah reached over and took an especially luscious looking chocolate. As she

did so, the driveway for a moment was in her vision. A crunching of wheels attracted her attention and she saw an old-fashioned wagon drawn by a heavy white horse. A girl, dressed in yellow and wearing a wide-brimmed hat wreathed with buttercups, was the driver. Beulah said: “If you would like to see a girl who has real claim to beauty, cast your glance out of the summer-house.”

Patricia closed her book and, rising, sauntered to the rose-hung doorway. Turning, she said in a low voice: “Gwyn, isn’t that the girl we saw at your Rocky Point Farm?”

Indignant, because Jenny Warner’s beauty had been compared with her own, Gwynette replied with great indifference, as she purposely turned her back: “I neither know nor care. I have no interest in my mother’s servants.”

But it was quite evident by Jenny’s manner that she had some interest in the summer-house, for she drew rein, and called in her prettiest manner: “Can you tell me where I will find Miss Poindexter-Jones? I have a message for her.”

Patricia good-naturedly replied: “You won’t have far to hunt. Her highness is holding court in this very summer-house.”

Gwynette’s groundless anger against the world in general but increased when she heard the inquiry, and she snapped as Patricia turned toward her: “If that girl has a message for me, tell her to bring it to me at once, though I am sure I cannot conceive what it can be.”

Jenny, who had clearly heard every word that had been spoken, as indeed Gwynette had intended that she should, replied, not without pride in her tone: “Kindly tell Miss Poindexter-Jones that I will send the message to Miss Granger and she may receive it from her.”

But this was not all pleasing to the haughty girl. She did not wish to have a needless audience with the woman who disapproved of her conduct as she well knew. Appearing in the doorway, she said angrily: “Why don’t you bring me the message, if you have one for me? I shall report your behavior to my mother.”

Jenny said nothing, but, picking up the reins, she was about to drive on to the school when Gwynette stepped out of the summer-house saying: “Kindly give me whatever message you have for me. I do not wish it taken to Miss Granger.” Jenny took from her basket a letter, which she handed to the girl, and for one

moment, and for the first time, they looked straight into each other's eyes.

Gwynette glanced at the envelope, then, handing it back toward the girl on the high seat of the wagon, she said disdainfully: "You are mistaken, this letter is addressed to your grandmother and not to me."

Jenny, undisturbed, nodded her agreement. "That is why it came to the farm, but Mrs. Poindexter-Jones made a mistake. The message is for you." The girl, standing in the drive, flushed angrily when she found that this was true. "Well, I certainly hope your grandmother was not snooping enough to read it," she flashed, desiring to hurt someone's feelings in an endeavor to relieve her own.

It was Patricia who protested, as she saw the flaming color in the face Beulah had called beautiful. "Gwyn," she said sharply, "I hope the time will come when you meet someone who will hurt your feelings as you so enjoy hurting other people's."

Jenny Warner made no response, but drove around to the kitchen door to deliver the honey and eggs. When she returned, Gwynette was not in sight, as she had at once gone to her room to be alone when she read the letter. She instinctively knew that it contained a message that would increase her already belligerent mood.

As she was passing the summer-house, Jenny saw Patricia Sullivan leap out of the doorway and beckon to her. "Miss Warner," she called, "won't you have a few of my chocolates? They're guaranteed to be sweet clear through."

Beulah appeared at her side. "That's more than can be said of Gwynette Poindexter-Jones. No one knows how glad I am that at the expiration of a fortnight I shall have no further need to associate with her. You, Miss Warner, will be the unfortunate victim, as you are to have her for a neighbor all summer, I believe."

Jenny, seeing that these girls evidently wished to be friendly, had again drawn rein and had taken one of the proffered candies.

Patricia looked rather longingly at the old-fashioned wagon and then at the placid old white horse. Her gaze returned to the driver and she said in her impulsive way: "Maybe you won't believe that it can be true, but it is! I have never ridden in a conveyance of this kind, and I'd just love to try it. Should you

mind if I rode down the canyon road part way with you?”

“Of course I wouldn’t mind,” Jenny replied with her brightest smile. “There is plenty of room for both of you.” She included Beulah in her invitation. Then added with a glance at the seminary, “if you are sure that Miss Granger will not mind.”

Patricia scrambled up as she merrily replied: “Why should she care?”

Beulah remarked: “It does seem to me that there is some archaic rule about not going beyond the gates without a chaperone, but we each have one. Miss Warner may chaperone me and I will chaperone Pat.”

They laughed gleefully as though something really clever had been said. “But who will chaperone Miss Warner?”

“Dobbin will,” the driver replied. “He usually does.”

“This is jolly fun,” Patricia declared a few moments later when she had requested to drive. Beulah burst into unexpected merriment. “Oh, don’t I hope her beautiful highness saw us when we drove away. Her wrath will bring down a volcano of sparks on our heads when we get back.”

Patricia retorted: “Beulah, I sometimes think that you like to stir up the embers in Gwyn’s nature, even when they are smouldering and might die if they were let alone.”

Instead of replying, the other girl exclaimed after a glance at her wrist watch: “Great moons! I must go back on a run! I have a French test at 4.”

Jenny took the reins and brought Dobbin to a stop. When they were in the road, Patricia asked: “May we come down and see you some day? I wanted to go out on that rocky point when we were there before, but when Gwyn’s along, everything has to be done her way.”

“I’d be glad to have you,” was Jenny’s sincerely given reply.

CHAPTER XVIII.
A NEW EXPERIENCE

May was a busy, happy month for Jenny. Never had she studied harder and her teacher, Miss Dearborn, rejoiced in her beloved pupil's rapid advancement. Then, twice a week, on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, when she drove around to the beautiful country homes of the rich delivering eggs and honey, on the high seat at her side rode her very first girl friend, Lenora Gale. Jenny was jubilantly happy on these occasions, and, as for Lenora, she spent the hours in between the rides in anticipation of the next one or in dreaming over the last one. She wrote long letters to her far-away farmer father or to her nearer brother, Charles, telling all about this new friend who seemed to the readers of those letters to be a paragon indeed.

"I just know that you will love my dear Jenny when you see her," she wrote indiscriminately in either letter, and Charles smiled to himself. He might like this Jenny Warner in a general way, but he was not at all afraid that he would "love" any girl in particular, soon or ever. He was convinced of that. He had met many girls, but he had never felt strongly appealed to by any of them, and since he would be twenty-one on his next birthday he decided that he was immune, but of this he said nothing in his letters to his beloved little sister, for he well knew that she did not refer to romantic love when she so often prophesied that her brother would love Jenny Warner.

But, as the weeks passed, Charles found that he was looking forward with a new interest to the middle of June, when he was to go to Santa Barbara to get his sister and take her, if she were well enough to travel, back to their Dakota farm for the summer.

As for Harold P-J. he had returned to the military academy jubilantly eager for the beginning of his duties as Farmer Warner's "helper." He wrote a long, dutiful letter to his mother each week, and, after that visit to Rocky Point, he told his

plan for the summer not without trepidation and ended with a description of the flower-like qualities of the granddaughter: “Mother mine, there’s a girl after your own heart. You’ll just love Jenny Warner.”

Perhaps it was because of this letter that Mrs. Poindexter-Jones changed her plans and decided to leave for Santa Barbara at an earlier date.

At last there came a day when Jenny did not look about her at the gnarled old oaks or at the carpet of wild flowers in the uplands as she walked along the familiar trail which led to Miss Dearborn’s pepper-tree guarded gate, for she was conning over and over a lesson. Nor was her teacher in the garden where she so often busied herself as she awaited her pupil. Instead she stood in the drive with her hat and jacket on.

When at last the girl lifted her eyes from her book, she stopped—an expression of dread and consternation in her eyes. “Miss Dearborn,” she exclaimed, “you aren’t going back East, are you?”

The pleasant-faced woman laughed. “Not yet,” she replied. “How you do dread that event, which I can assure you is not even a remote possibility. Why should I go East, dear?”

Jenny Warner could not explain why she seemed so often to be oppressed by that dread. “Do you believe that coming events cast their shadows before?” she asked, putting her hand to her throat. “Honestly, Miss Dearborn, I feel as if something terribly awful is about to happen. And seeing you just now with your hat and jacket on made me think that you might have had a telegram and that you were just leaving.”

Miss Dearborn merrily put in: “I *am* just leaving, and for that matter so are *you*. I received a telephone message half an hour ago that the date of the first examination had been changed and is to take place at 10 o’clock *this morning*.”

Jenny’s books fell to the path and her look of consternation would have been comical if it had not been tragic. “Miss Dearborn, I knew it! I have felt just perfectly miserable as though I had lost my last friend with fifty other calamities added. Now I know coming events cast their shadows before. I thought we were going to have all this day for review.”

Miss Dearborn’s reply was cheerfully optimistic. “I’m glad that we are not. I

object to the system of cramming. You would tire your brain and be less able to answer questions tomorrow than you are today. Now take your books into the house, dear, and leave them on the library table, then hurry back. We are to catch the nine o'clock stage."

Poor Jenny's heart felt heavily oppressed. Together they went down to the Coast Highway, and, as they had a few moments to wait for the bus in the rustic little roadside station, Jenny ventured, "Don't you think, Miss Dearborn, it would be a good plan for you to ask me questions or explain to me something that you think I do not understand very clearly?"

"No, I do not." Miss Dearborn was emphatic in her reply. Then she inquired: "How is your little friend Lenora Gale? You promised to bring her up to have a tea-party with me soon. You haven't forgotten, have you?"

A shade of sorrow passed over the girl's pretty face. "Miss Dearborn," she said earnestly, "Lenora isn't as well as she was. I am ever so troubled about her. She seemed so much better after we met, and then, last week, she caught another cold. Now she is worse again, and has to stay in bed. I was up to the seminary Saturday to take the eggs and honey, and I asked if I might see her. Miss O'Hara went to inquire of Miss Granger, but she came back without the permission I wanted. The doctor had requested that Lenora be kept perfectly quiet. Oh, I just know that she is fretting her heart out to see me, and she doesn't like it at the seminary. It's such a cold, unfriendly sort of a place. The girls never did take to Lenora, partly because she is retiring, almost timid, I suppose, and, besides, they may have heard that her father is only a farmer."

Their conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the bus. Then, when they were seated within, Jenny continued, almost with bitterness: "Rich girls are haughty and horrid, that is, if they are all like Gwynette Poindexter-Jones."

"But they aren't, dear. Don't judge the many by the few. I had many wealthy classmates and they were as simple and sweetly sincere as any poor girl could be."

Miss Dearborn purposely kept Jenny's thoughts occupied with her friend Lenora. Then she asked if Etta Heldt had been heard from. Jenny shook her head. "We should have heard, at least two weeks ago. Grandpa Si thinks we never will hear. He said the best way to lose a friend is to loan him money, but I have faith in

Etta Heldt. I just know she will write some day soon if she reached Belgium alive." Miss Dearborn had visited Belgium and she described that interesting little country, and at last the bus reached the high school in Santa Barbara. Jenny, with a glance of terror at her teacher, took one of her hands and held it hard.

Throngs of bright-eyed girls, many of them in short sport skirts and prettily colored sweater coats, trooped past the two who were strange. Some few glanced at Jenny casually as though wondering who she might be, but no one spoke.

Fragments of conversation drifted to her. "Gee-whiliker!" a boyish-looking girl exclaimed. "I'd rather have the world come to an end than take the geom exam from Seer Simp."

Professor Simpson, as Jenny knew, was the instructor in charge of that morning's exams.

"Say! Wouldn't I, though?" her companion replied with a mock shudder. Then these two passed and another group hurried by. The leader turned to fling over her shoulder: "O-o-h!! My hands are so cold now I won't be able to hold a pen, but if Monsieur Simpson so much as looks at me with his steely blue eyes, I'll change to an icicle."

A moment later Jenny found herself confronted by that same dreaded professor. Miss Dearborn was introducing her and a kindly voice was saying: "Miss Warner, we are expecting much of you since you have had the advantage of so much personal instruction."

The eyes of the small elderly gentleman were, it is true, a keen grey-blue, but there was friendliness in their expression.

Then it was that Jenny realized that since her tutor had done so much for her, she, in turn, must do her best, and be, if only she could, a credit to her beloved friend.

A gong was ringing somewhere in the corridor. As one in a dream, Jenny bade good-bye to Miss Dearborn, who promised to return at noon. Then the girl followed her new acquaintance into a room thronged with boys and girls and sat at the desk indicated.

CHAPTER XIX.
A WELCOME GUEST

Three days later, when Jenny entered the farmhouse kitchen, Grandpa Si, who was washing at the small sink pump, looked up twinkling-eyed to inquire: “Wall, Jenny-gal, them examinations are over now, ain’t they? I reckon they wasn’t nigh so terribul as yo’d figgered, when you got plumb up to ’em, was they now?”

Jenny, looking very pale and weary, dropped into the big armed chair opposite her grandmother, who was shelling peas for supper.

Then, unexpectedly, she burst into tears. Instantly the pan of peas was placed on the table and her grandmother had comforting arms about the girl. “Dearie, what is ailin’ yo’? Warn’t yo’ able to get the right answers for them examination questions?”

The distressed grandfather also hovered about, saying huskily: “Now look a-here, little un, we don’t keer, not a farthing’s worth, whether you knowed them answers or didn’t know ’em. I reckon you’re smarter’n most, how-so-ever, ’twas.” Jenny, who had been clinging to her grandmother, astonished them by saying between sobs: “’Tisn’t the examinations I’m crying about. It’s Lenora. They let me see her for a moment this afternoon and she is so weak and oh so unhappy. She thinks she will never get well, not if she has to stay in that cold, dreary old seminary, and Oh, Grandma Sue, how I do want her to get well. I have always longed to have a sister, and when I found Lenora Gale, I made believe she was the sister I had so wanted. No one knows how I love her.”

The old couple were greatly distressed. All these years their “gal” had so longed to have a sister of her very own, and all that time she had had one, whom she didn’t know. Grandma Sue smoothed the rumpled hair and kissed Jenny on the forehead. “Go to your room, dearie, and rest till supper time,” she said

soothingly. “You’re all tired out with them examinations. You’ll feel better after you’ve had suthin’ warm to eat.”

Jenny permitted her grandfather to help her out of the chair and to lead her toward her room. There she flung herself down on her bed, and the loving old man drew a cover over her. Then he tiptoed back to the kitchen. “Ma,” he said, “I reckon us and Mis’ Poindexter-Jones have got suthin’ to answer for, makin’ it so them two gals grew up not knowin’ as they was sisters.”

“Mabbe so,” the old woman had resumed her pea-shelling. “Mabbe so, Silas, but it’s too late now. That proud, haughty gal wouldn’t thank no one to tell her she’s our Jenny’s sister, and she wouldn’t be no comfort to our gal, bein’ as she’s been fetched up so different. But that sweet Lenora Gale, her as is a farmer’s daughter, she’s a friend more suitin’ to our Jenny.” For a few moments the old woman’s fingers were busy, but she was silent and thoughtful. When the peas were ready for the pot, she poured them into the boiling water, then turned and said: “Silas Warner, you and me keer more to have Jenny happy than anything else, don’t we?”

“I reckon we do, Ma. What be yo’ aimin’ at? I kin see easy thar’s suthin’ yo’ want to say. I’m agreeable to it, whatever ’tis.”

The old woman seemed relieved. “I was thinkin’ as how it would please our Jenny if we was to let her invite her friend Lenora to visit her here a spell. Jenny could sleep on the couch in the livin’ room, and let the sick gal have her bed. I think more’n half what’s the matter with Lenora Gale is that she’s pinin’ for a place that’s home wi’ folks in it to keer for her. Jenny says she’s allays speakin’ of her ma, lonesome-like, because she’s dead.”

The old man blew his nose hard, then said blinkingly: “Pore little gal! I was jest a thinkin’ how it might o’ been our Jenny that was sick up to that school prison wi’ no one as really keered.”

Jenny’s joy knew no bounds when she learned that she might invite her dear friend Lenora Gale to come to her home and make her a real visit. So sure was she that the sick girl would accept, Jenny was up the next day with the sun. Tying a towel about her curly light brown hair and donning an all-over apron, she swept and scoured and dusted her very own room until it fairly shone. Then she brought in a basket of flowers and put a tumbler full of them in every place

where it would stand, with a big bowl of roses on the marble-topped center table. When Grandma Sue called her to breakfast, she skipped to the kitchen and, taking the old couple each by an arm, she led them to the door of her room, singing out: “What do you think of that as a bower for the Princess Lenora?”

“Wall, now,” said the old man admiringly, “if our gal ain’t got it fixed up handsome. I reckon your little friend’ll get well in no time wi’ you waitin’ on her, and so much cheeriness to look at.”

It was not until they were seated about the table eating their breakfast that Jenny suddenly thought of the possibility that something might happen to prevent Lenora from coming that day. “Maybe she’ll have to write and ask her daddy or her brother and wait for an answer.” For a moment this fear shadowed the shining face, but it did not last long. As soon as the breakfast was over she sprang up and began to clear things away, but her grandmother gently took a dish from her hand. “Thar now, dearie, you have no need to help. I reckon you’re eager to be drivin’ over to the seminary. You’d better start right off.”

Impulsively the girl kissed a wrinkled cheek of the old woman. “Oh, Granny Sue, was there ever any other person quite so understanding as you are? I’ll go, if you’ll promise not to do a single thing but the dishes while I am away. Please leave the churning for me to do when I come back with Lenora.”

“Tut! tut!” said her grandfather. “Don’t get your heart set on fetchin’ that Lenora gal back with you right to onct. Like as not she won’t be strong enough to ride along of Dobbin today.”

But Jenny would not allow herself to be discouraged. “Time enough for that when I find Lenora can’t come,” she confided to Dobbin while she was harnessing that faithful animal. He looked around at her, not without curiosity, as though he wondered why it was his little mistress was so often elated. Impulsively, Jenny hugged him as she said: “Oh, Dob, you old dear, you have no idea how happy I am, nor who it is you are going to bring back to Rocky Point Farm. Have you, now?” She peered around his blinder, but seeing only a rather sleepily blinking eye, she climbed upon the high seat of the wagon, backed from the barn and, turning to wave toward the house, she drove out of the lane singing at the top of her sweet voice.

No vehicle was in sight as she carefully crossed the wide Coast Highway. Her

granddad had told her always to come to a full stop before driving across, as there were often processions of high-powered cars passing their lane. It was, however, too early for pleasure-seekers to be abroad and so Dobbin started climbing the canyon road leading to the seminary, and even there they met no one. Jenny's heart was so brimming over with joy that she could not be quiet. When she was not confiding her hopes to Dobbin, she was singing.

Suddenly she stopped, for, having reached a turn in the road, she saw ahead of her a young man on horseback. He had drawn to one side and was evidently waiting for the singer to appear. Jenny flushed, for she knew that he must have heard, as she had been trying some high soprano arias of her own composing. The young man had a frank, kind face with no suspicion of a smile, and so the girl decided that he was merely waiting for someone whom he expected, but, as she drew near, he lifted his cap and asked: "Pardon me, but can you tell me if I am on the Live Oak Road? You have so many canyon roads about here leading into the foothills. I am looking for the Granger Place Seminary, where my sister Lenora Gale is staying."

Jenny impulsively put her hand to her heart. "Oh!" she gasped. "Are you going to take Lenora away? Please don't!"

Charles Gale, cap in his hand, gazed inquiringly at the girl, who hurried on to explain: "You see, Lenora and I are best friends and she is so unhappy up at that school, where she doesn't know anyone, really, and she has been so sick, my grandmother told me I might bring her over to our house to make a visit. Granny Sue said just as I left, 'Jenny, tell your little friend she may stay with us as long as she wants to, until she is real well, anyway.'" So this was Jenny Warner.

The girl paused for breath and the young man, smiling at her, said sincerely: "I am indeed glad to learn that my sister has so true a friend, indeed, more than one, I judge, since your grandmother sent such a kind message to her, but I have come to take Lenora back with me."

Jenny's ever expressive face registered such disappointment and sorrow that the young man could not but add: "Suppose we go up to the seminary together and talk the matter over with my sister. Perhaps, if she is not strong enough to travel, it may be well for her to remain with you for a week or two. I would be glad to leave her in a pleasant place at least that long, as I shall not be through at the agricultural college for two weeks yet. Then I can accompany Lenora back to

Dakota where our father so eagerly awaits her coming."

Realizing that, as he had not introduced himself he said: "I presume that my sister has mentioned her brother Charles."

"Oh, yes, I knew you at once." Jenny's clear brown eyes gazed out at him with friendly interest. "You look like Lenora, though I can't say just how." Then, as she again started Dobbin up the hill road, she beamed at her companion as she said: "This is going to be a happy day for your sister. How surprised she will be, and how glad! And I'm glad that I met you, for Miss Granger might have said that Lenora could not visit me, but if you say that she can, no one else will have any authority." Then impulsively: "I'm going to be your friend forever and ever." Then with one of her sudden changes, Jenny flashed a bright look at him, as she pointed ahead: "There, did you ever see a view like that before?" They had reached the top of the hill road and were near the seminary gate.

The view across the valley to the towering mountains was indeed magnificent. Then Jenny looked back of her and again pointed, this time toward the sea. "That is Rocky Point, just below the canyon road," she said, "and that old adobe is our farmhouse."

Charles was much impressed with the beauty of it all, and, as his gaze wandered back to the glowing face of the girl, he heard rather than thought, "You'll just love Jenny Warner."

Aloud he asked: "And is this the seminary?" His companion nodded and led the way between the high stone gate posts.

"Maybe I'd better wait outside while you go in and see Miss Granger," Jenny suggested when they drew rein at the front of the seminary.

But Charles Gale would not agree to that. Having dismounted, he fastened the reins about a hitching post and asked if his companion could safely leave her horse.

"Oh, yes, indeed," Jenny replied brightly. "Dobbin wouldn't move until I came again, if it was never."

Together they went up the wide stone steps and Charles lifted the iron knocker. A maid admitted them, staring in amazement when she saw the girl, who delivered

eggs and honey at the kitchen door, arriving at the front with a fine-looking young man in a golfing costume.

Charles, not knowing of this, could not understand the surprised expression directed at his companion. Jenny smiled and said “good morning” in her usual pleasant way. Having asked to see Miss Granger, he presented his card.

“Walk in,” the maid said. “I’ll tell Miss Granger that you’re here, sir.”

When they were alone in the prim little reception room, Jenny confided:

“Maggie has never seen me coming to the front door. My grandfather raises chickens and bees, and I often deliver honey and eggs around at the back door. Perhaps Miss Granger may think it queer if——”

“Of course it isn’t queer!” Charles interrupted with emphasis. “My sister’s best friend has the right to enter the front door of——” He did not complete his sentence, but rose instead, for a stately, rather haughty appearing woman had appeared. The visitor was warmly received.

“Mr. Gale, I am indeed pleased that you have come. Poor little Lenora has not been at all well of late, and that is why I sent for you. She has been at perfect liberty to do as she wished, as you requested, but she contracts frequent colds, and this last one has lingered.”

Miss Granger hesitated, then confessed. “The truth is, your sister does not seem to be real happy here. She is timid and does not care to mingle with her schoolmates.”

Then she added frankly: “I find that, on the whole, the young ladies are rather heartless. They do not make an effort to include in their pleasures one who is naturally reserved and who, in turn, seems to care nothing at all about being included.”

Miss Granger, on entering the room, had bowed somewhat distantly to Jenny Warner, whom she did not recognize, as she had seldom seen her. Charles, noting this, asked: “Miss Granger, are you acquainted with little Miss Warner, whose grandfather is a farmer in this neighborhood?”

The woman, whose manner was rather frigid at all times, lifted her eyebrows

ever so slightly as though marveling that a young man whose sister attended her select seminary should be found in the companionship of a hired farmer's granddaughter.

Their own father, Mr. Gale, might own a farm, but that was very different, as he had countless acres of wheat lands, she understood, and was very rich, while the Warners were merely hired to conduct a small farm belonging to the Poindexter-Jones estate. All this went quickly through the woman's thoughts and she was astonished to hear the young man saying:

"I have decided, Miss Granger, to remove my sister to the farm home of Miss Warner for the two weeks remaining before I complete my studies at the Berkeley Agricultural College. My sister is very fond of Miss Jenny, and I feel that the companionship she will have in that home will do much to help her recover the strength she will need for the long journey to Dakota."

Miss Granger prided herself on being able to hide all emotions, and on never expressing surprise, but she could not resist saying:

"I was unaware of this friendship, which is the result, no doubt, of the freedom of action which you wished your sister to have, but if it is a friendship sanctioned by Lenora's brother, I, of course, can say nothing concerning it."

Rising, she held out her hand: "I will have Miss Gale's trunk packed at once, and shall I have it sent to the Poindexter-Jones farm?"

"Yes, if you please, and thank you, Miss Granger, for your many kindnesses to my sister."

With a cold nod toward the girl and with a formal reply to Charles' polite speech, she swept from the room. The lad turned with an amused smile toward his companion. In a low voice he said:

"I understand now why Sister never wrote me that I would be sure to love Miss Granger."

Charles was shocked indeed at the appearance of the sister who was dearer to him than life itself. Pale and so wearily she came into the room leaning on the school nurse. Throwing her arms about her brother's neck she clung to him. "I've been so lonely for mother lately," she sobbed. "I dream of her often just as

though she were alive and well. Then I am so happy, but I waken and realize that mother is never coming back."

The young man, much moved, pressed his cheek close to the tear-wet one of the girl. "I know, darling, I know." Then, striving to keep a break out of his voice, he said cheerily: "See who is here, Sister. Someone of whom you have often written me. And she has a wonderful plan to suggest."

Lenora smiled wanly and held out a frail white hand. "I love Jenny Warner," she said as though informing her brother of something he already knew. Then she asked, looking from one to the other: "Where am I going? Home to father?"

"Not quite yet, dear girl," her brother replied. "Jenny's grandmother has invited you to visit them for two weeks, or rather, until I am through with my studies, then, if you are strong enough, I will take you home to Dad."

Before Lenora could express her pleasure, the ever watchful nurse stepped forward, saying: "Miss Gale ought not to be kept standing. Miss Granger has ordered the closed carriage and bade me accompany my patient to her destination."

"That's fine." Charles found it hard to keep a note of anxiety out of his voice when Lenora sank into a near chair and began to cough. He followed the nurse from the room when she went to get her wraps. "Please tell me my sister's condition," he said in a low, troubled voice. "Her lungs are not affected, are they?"

"No, I am glad to say they are not. The trouble seems to be in her throat." Then, after a thoughtful moment, the nurse added, glancing about to be sure that no one was near: "I would not wish to be quoted, but I believe Miss Gale's recovery depends upon her being in an environment which she will enjoy. Here she is very lonely and broods continually for the mother who is gone."

"Thank you for having told me." Charles was indeed grateful to the nurse, whose name he did not know. "I shall see that such an environment is found for my dear sister if it exists anywhere. Our mother has been dead for several years, but, as time goes on, we miss her more and more."

"I understand," the nurse said as though she, too, had had a similar loss, then she glided quietly away.

On returning to the reception room, Jenny suggested that she would better go at once to the farmhouse that she might be there to welcome Lenora and the nurse. Charles agreed that the plan was a good one, and so, tenderly kissing her friend, Jenny went out; the young man opening the door for her.

When she had driven away, Charles returned to his sister, who smiled up at him faintly as she said: “Wasn’t I right, Charles? Isn’t Jenny the sweetest, dearest girl you ever saw?”

But her brother shook his head. “No, indeed,” he said, emphatically, taking one of the listless hands from the arm of the chair. “The sweetest, dearest girl in this world to me is your very own self, and, although I am quite willing to like any girl whom you may select as a best friend, you will never get me to acknowledge that she is sweeter than my very own sister. However, I will agree that I am pleased with Miss Jenny Warner to the extent of being willing, even glad, to have you in the same house with her until you are strong enough to travel to our home with me. I’ll wire Dad tonight. I have purposely kept your illness from him. It would be unwise for him to come here at this time of the year. We cannot both be away from the farm at seeding time.”

The nurse reappeared, saying the coach was waiting. The young giant of a lad lifted his sister and carried her out of the seminary which she was indeed glad to leave.

Jenny and her grandmother were on the side porch of the picturesque adobe farmhouse when Charles Gale on horseback rode up, immediately followed by the closed carriage. Susan Warner with tender pity in her face and voice, welcomed the pale girl, who was lifted out of the conveyance by the strong arms of her brother. Lenora’s sweet gray eyes were brimmed with tears and her lips trembled when she tried to thank the old woman for her great kindness. “There, there, dearie. Don’t try to be sayin’ anything now. You’re all petered out with the ride.” Then cheerily: “Jenny’ll show you where to fetch little Lenora, Mister—” she hesitated and the girl at her side hastened to say: “Grandma Sue, this is Charles Gale, Lenora’s brother. Miss Granger had sent for him.”

The pleasant-faced young man bowed as he apologized for his inability to remove his hat. His sister having recovered from her first desire to cry, smilingly did it for him. “Haven’t I a giant for a brother?” she asked; then holding out a frail hand to the nurse, who had descended from the carriage carrying the wraps

and a satchel. Lenora said: “Mrs. Warner, this is Miss Adelaide Wells, who has been very kind to me.” Then, as memory of the place she had left surged over her, the tears again came: “Oh, brother,” she half sobbed, clinging to him, “promise me I’ll never, never have to be sent to a seminary again.”

“Why, of course not,” he assured her. “When I have finished my schooling you and I will go back to our farm home and stay there forever and forever. If you need any further instruction, I can help you, so put that fear quite out of your thought.”

The girl smiled, but seemed too weak to make a reply. Charles followed Jenny through the kitchen and the cheerful living room into the bedroom which had been decked in so festive a fashion only that morning. After the nurse had put Lenora to bed, she returned to the seminary. The weary girl rested for a while with her eyes closed, then she opened them and looked about her.

She found Jenny sitting quietly by her bedside just waiting. Lenora smiled without speaking and seemed to be listening to the rush of the waves on the rocks, then she said: “That is the lullabye I once said I would like to hear in the night. It’s like magic, having it all come to pass.”

She smiled around at the flowers. “How sweet they are! I know that each one tells me some message of the thoughtfulness and love of my friend.” Holding out a frail hand, Lenora continued: “Jenny Warner, if I live, I am going to do something to make you glad that you have been so kind to me.”

A pang, like a pain, shot through the listener’s heart. “If I live.” She had not for one moment thought that her dear, dear friend might die. She was relieved to hear the other girl add in a brighter manner, as though she felt stronger after her brief rest: “I believe now that I shall live, but truly, Jenny, I didn’t care much when I lay all day up there in that cold, dreary seminary with no one near to mind whether I stayed or went. But now that I am here with you in this lovely, cheerful room, somehow I feel sure that I shall live.” Before her companion could reply, she asked: “Where is brother Charles?”

Jenny glanced out of the window. “Oh, there he is, standing on that high rock on the point, the one that canopies over our seat, you know, where we sat the last time you were at the farm. Shall I call him, dear?”

Lenora nodded and so Jenny, bareheaded, ran out toward the point of rocks.

Charles, turning, saw her and went to meet her. “Has my sister rested?” he asked. Jenny said that she had, then anxiously she inquired: “Mr. Gale, what does the nurse think? Lenora is not seriously ill, is she?”

There was a sudden shadowing of the eyes that looked down at her. “I don’t know, Miss Jenny. I sincerely hope not. At my request Miss Wells will send me a daily report of my sister’s condition. The nurse takes a walk every afternoon, and, if your grandmother is willing, she will stop here until our little Lenora is much better.”

“I think that a splendid plan. It will be better than having a doctor call every day.” Then brightening: “Oh, Mr. Gale, I am sure Lenora will get well. She is better, come and see for yourself.” And so together they went indoors.

CHAPTER XX.
INGRATITUDE PERSONIFIED

“What do you suppose is the matter with Gwyn? Ever since Jenny Warner delivered a note from her mother Saturday afternoon, she has been as glum as a —well, what is glum, anyway?” Patricia looked up from the book she was studying to make this comment.

Beulah mumbled some reply which was unintelligible, nor did she cease trying to solve the problem she was intent upon. Pat continued: “I have it figured out that Gwyn’s mother wrote something which greatly upset our never-too-amiable friend. She kept shut in her room yesterday, tight as a clam in its shell. I rapped several times and asked if she had a headache and if she wished me to bring tea or anything, but she did not reply.”

“Take it from me, Pat, you waste your good Samaritan impulses on a person like Gwyn. She is simply superlatively selfish.”

Pat leaped up and put a hand over her friend’s mouth. “I heard the knob turn. I think we are about to be honored with a visit. Don’t be sarcastic, Beulah. Maybe Gwyn has a real trouble.”

This whispered remark had just been concluded when there came an imperative rapping on the inner door. Pat skipped to open it. Gwynette, dressed for the street, entered. “What’s the grand idea of locking the door between our rooms?” she inquired.

“Didn’t know it was locked,” Pat replied honestly. Beulah was again solving the intricate problem, or attempting to, and acted as though she had not heard.

Patricia, always the more tender-hearted, offered their visitor a chair. Then solicitously: “What is the matter, Gwyn. You look as though you had cried for

hours. Bad news in the note Jenny Warner brought you?”

There was a hard expression in the brown eyes that were turned coldly toward the sympathetic inquirer. Slowly she said, “I sometimes think that I hate my mother and that she hates me.”

There was a quick protest from Pat. “Don’t say that, Gwyn, just because you are angry! You have told me, yourself, that your mother has granted your every wish until recently.”

Gwynette shrugged her proudly-held shoulders. “Even so! Why am I now treated like a child and told what I must do, or be punished?” Noting a surprised expression in Patricia’s pleasant face, Gwyn repeated with emphasis: “Just exactly that! If I do not take the tests, or if I fail in them when they are taken, I cannot have my coming-out party next year, but must remain in this or some other school until I obtain a diploma as a graduate with honors. So Ma Mere informed me in the note brought by that despicable Jenny Warner.”

Beulah could not help hearing and she looked up, her eyes flashing. “Gwynette, if you wish to slander a friend of Pat’s and mine, you will have to choose another audience.”

The eyebrows of the visitor were lifted. “Indeed? Since when have you become the champion of the granddaughter of my mother’s servants?”

Beulah’s answer was defiant. “Pat and I both consider Jenny Warner one of the most beautiful and lovable girls we have ever met. We went for a ride with her on Saturday, and this afternoon, if we aren’t too exhausted after the tests, we are going to walk down to her farm home and call on her and upon little Lenora Gale, who has been moved there from the infirmary.”

Gwynette rose, flinging over her shoulder contemptuously, “Well, I see that you have made your choice of friends. Of course you cannot expect to associate with me, if you are hobnobbing at the same time with our servants. What is more, that Lenora Gale’s father is a wheat rancher in Dakota. I, at least, shall select my friends from exclusive families. I will bid you good-bye. From now on our intimacy is at end.” The door closed behind Gwyn with an emphatic bang. Beulah leaped up and danced a jig. Pat caught her and pushed her back into her chair. “Don’t. She’ll hear and her feelings will be hurt.”

“Well, she’s none too tender with other people’s feelings,” Beulah retorted.

A carriage bearing the Poindexter-Jones coat-of-arms and drawn by two white horses was waiting under the wide portico in front of the seminary when Gwynette emerged. The liveried footman was standing near the open door to assist her within, then he took his place by the coachman and the angry girl was driven from the Granger Place grounds.

She did not notice the golden glory of the day; she did not glance out as she was driven down the beautiful Live Oak Canyon road, nor did she observe when the wife of the lodgekeeper opened the wide iron gates and curtsied to her. She was staring straight ahead with hard, unseeing eyes.

When the coach stopped and the footman had opened the door, the girl mounted the many marble steps leading to the pillared front porch. Instantly, and before she could ring, a white-caped maid admitted her. It was one who had been with them for years in their palatial San Francisco home, as had, also, the other servants. “Where is my mother, Cecile?” the girl inquired with no word of greeting, though she had not seen the trim French maid for many months. The maid’s eyes narrowed and her glance was not friendly. She liked to be treated, at least, as though she were human. She volunteered a bit of advice: “Madame is veer tired, Mees Gwyn. What you call, not yet strong. Doctor, he say, speak quiet where Madame is.”

Gwyn glared at the servant who dared to advise her. “Kindly tell me where my mother is at this moment. Since she sent the carriage for me, it is quite evident that she wishes to see me.”

“Madame is in lily-pond garden. I tell her Mees Gwyn has come.” But the girl, brushing past the maid, walked down the long, wide hall which extended from the front to the double back door and opened out on a most beautiful garden, where, on the blue mirror of an artificial pond many fragrant white lilies floated. There, sheltered from the sea breeze by tall, flowering bushes, Mrs. Poindexter-Jones reclined on a softly cushioned chair. Near her was a nurse in blue and white uniform who had evidently been reading aloud.

When Gwynette approached, the older woman said in a low voice: “Miss Dane, I prefer to be alone when I receive my daughter.”

The nurse slipped away through the shrubbery and Mrs. Poindexter-Jones turned

again toward the girl whose rapid step and carriage plainly told her belligerence of spirit. The pale face of the patrician woman would have touched almost any heart, but Gwyn's wrath had been accumulating since her conversation with Beulah and Pat. She considered herself the most abused person in existence.

"Ma Mere," the girl began at once, "I don't see why you didn't let me come to you in France. If you aren't any stronger than you seem to be, I should have thought you would have remained where you were and sent for Harold and me to join you there."

"Sit down, Gwyn, if you do not care to kiss me." There was a note of sorrow in the weary voice that did not escape the attention of the selfish girl. Stooping, she kissed her mother on the pale forehead. Then she took the seat vacated by the nurse. "Of course I am sorry you have been sick, Ma Mere," she said in a tone which implied that decency demanded that much of her. "But it seems to me it would have been much better for you to have remained where you were. I was simply wild to have you send for me while you were at that adorable resort in France. I can't see why you wanted to return *here*." The last word was spoken with an emphasis of depreciation.

Mrs. Poindexter-Jones leaned her head back wearily on the cool pillow as she said, more to herself than to her listener, "I just wanted to come home. I wanted to see the trees my husband and I planted when we were first married. I felt that I would be nearer him someway, and I wanted to see my boy. Harold wished me to come home. He preferred to spend the summer here and I was glad."

The pity, which for a moment had flickered in the girl's heart when she saw how very weak her mother really was, did not last long enough to warm into a flame. "Ma Mere," she said petulantly, "I cannot understand why you never speak of your husband as my father." There was no response, only a tightening of the woman's lips as though she were making an effort to not tell the truth.

"Moreover," Gwyn went on, not noticing the change in her mother's manner, "why should Harold's wishes be put above mine? Perhaps you do not realize that he has become interested, to what degree I do not know, but nevertheless really interested, in the granddaughter of your servants on the farm."

Mrs. Poindexter-Jones turned toward the girl. There was not in her eyes the flash of indignation which Gwynette had expected, only surprise and perhaps inquiry.

“Is that true?” Then, after a meditative moment the woman concluded, “Fate does strange things. What was it they called her?”

Gwyn held herself proudly erect. At least she had been sure that her mother would have sided with her in denouncing Harold’s plan to become a farmer under the direction of Silas Warner. She hurried on to impart the information without telling the name of the girl whom she so disliked, although without reason.

“I recall now,” was the woman’s remark. “Jenny Warner. Jeanette was her name and yours was Gwynette.”

Angrily her companion put in, “Ma Mere, did you hear me say that Harold has decided to become a farmer, a mere laborer, when you had planned that he should become a diplomat or something like that?”

“Yes, I heard.” The woman leaned back wearily. “My boy wrote me that was why he wanted to stay here, although he would give up his own wishes if they did not accord with mine.” Then she added, with an almost pensive smile on her thin lips, “He is more dutiful than my daughter is, one might think.”

Gwynette flung herself about in the chair impatiently. “Harold knows you will do everything to please him and nothing to please me.”

The woman’s eyes narrowed as she looked at the hard, selfish face which nevertheless was beautiful in a cold way.

The woman seemed to be making an effort to speak calmly. “Gwynette,” she said at last, “we will call this unpleasant interview at an end. The fault probably is mine. Without doubt I do favor Harold. He is very like his father, and I seem to feel that Harold cares more for me than you do.” She put up a protesting hand. “Don’t answer me, please. I am very tired. You may go now.”

The girl rose, somewhat ashamed of herself. Petulantly, she said, “But Ma Mere, must I take the horrid old test? I will fail miserably and be disgraced. I supposed I was to make my debut next winter and I did not consider a diploma necessary to an eligible marriage.”

The woman had been watching the girl, critically, but not unkindly. Her reply was in a softer voice. “No, Gwyn, you need not take the tests. Somehow I have

failed to bring you up well." Then to the listener's amazement, the invalid added: "Tell the coachman, when he returns from the seminary, to stop at the farm and bring Jenny Warner over to see me. I would like to know how Susan Warner succeeded in bringing up her girl."

Gwynette was again angry. "You are a strange mother to wish to compare your own daughter with the granddaughter of one of your servants."

With that she walked away, and, with a sorrowful expression the woman watched her going. How she wished the girl would relent, turn back and fling herself down by the side of the only mother she had ever known, and beg to be forgiven and loved, but nothing was farther from Gwynette's thought.

Glad as she was to be freed from taking the tests, she was more than ever angry because she would have to remain at the seminary until the close of the term, which was another week. Why would not her mother permit her to visit some friend in San Francisco? Then came the sickening realization that she no longer had an intimate friend. Patricia and Beulah had both gone over to the enemy. Why did she hate Jenny Warner, she wondered as she was being driven back to the school. Probably because Beulah had once said they looked alike with one difference, that the farmer's granddaughter was much the more beautiful. And then Harold actually preferred the companionship of that ignorant peddler of eggs and honey to his own sister. Purposely she neglected to mention to the coachman that he was to call at the farm and take Jenny Warner back with him. But Fate was even then planning to carry out Mrs. Poindexter-Jones's wishes in quite another way.

CHAPTER XXI.
A SECOND MEETING

“Lenora, dearie, can you spare Jenny a spell! I want her to tote a basket of fresh eggs over to Poindexter Arms, and a few jars o’ honey. Like as not the poor sick missus will be glad of somethin’ different and tasty. Don’t let her pay for ’em, Jenny-gal. Tell her they’re a welcome-home present from all of us. Tell her how we’re hopin’ the sea air’ll bring back her strength soon, and that ol’ Susan Warner will pay her respects as soon as she’s wanted. Jenny, dearie, can you recollect all that?”

The girl, who had been seated on the top step of the seaward veranda shelling peas and reading to her best friend, had leaped up when her dear old grandmother had appeared. Laughingly she slipped an arm about her, when she finished speaking, and kissed both of her cheeks. Then she peered into the faded blue eyes that were smiling at her so fondly as she entreated, “Granny Sue, wouldn’t it do as well if I left the basket at the kitchen door and asked a maid to give the message?”

The old woman looked inquiringly into the flower-like face so close to her own. “Would you mind seein’ the missus, if you was let to? I’d powerful well like to hear the straight of how she is, and when she’d like to have me pay my respects. You aren’t skeered of her, are you, dearie?”

“Of course not, Granny Sue. Although I must confess I was terribly scared of her when I was little. I thought she was an ogress. I do believe I will put in some of our field poppies to golden up the basket. Would she like that, Granny, do you think? I gathered ever so many this morning.”

“I reckon she’d be pleased, an’ if I was you. I’d put on that fresh yellow muslin. You look right smart in it.”

Lenora was an interested listener. She had heard all about the proud, haughty woman who was owner of the farm, and mother of the disagreeable Gwynette and of the nice Harold. She knew *he* must be nice by the way all three of the Warners spoke of him.

She now put in: “O, Jenny, do wear that adorable droopy hat with the buttercup wreath. You look like a nymph of sunshine when you’re all in yellow.”

“Very well, I will! I live but to please.” This was said gaily. “Be prepared now for a transformation scene: from an aproned sheller of peas to a nymph of sunshine.”

In fewer minutes than seemed possible, Jenny again appeared, and spreading her fresh yellow muslin skirt, she made a minuet curtsy. Then she asked merrily, “Mistress Lenora, pray tell how a nymph of sunshine should walk and what she should say when she calls upon the most Olympian person she knows. Sort of a Juno.”

“Just act natural, dearie,” the proud grandmother had appeared with the basket of eggs, poppies and honey in time to reply to this query, “and no nymphs, whatever they be, could be sweeter or more pleasin’.” Then she added, “Your grandpa’s got Dobbin all hitched an’ waitin’ for you. Good-bye, dearie! Harold’ll be glad to have you kind to his ma. He sets a store by her.”

It was the last remark that gave Jenny courage to ask if she might see Mrs. Poindexter-Jones, twenty minutes later, when she had driven around to the side door of the mansion-like stone house. Cecile looked doubtful. “Ef eets to give the basket, the keetchen’s the place for that.”

Jenny smiled on Cecile, and the maid found herself staring in puzzled amazement. Who was this girl who looked like that other one who had just left; looked like her and yet didn’t, for she was far prettier and with such a kindly light in her smiling brown eyes. “Please tell Mrs. Poindexter-Jones that Susan Warner, on the farm, sent me over and would like me to deliver a message myself if she wishes to see me.”

There was nothing for Cecile to do but carry the message, and, to her amazement, Mrs. Poindexter-Jones looked pleased and requested that the maid show the girl at once to the pond-lily garden.

Almost shyly Jenny Warner went down the box-edged path. The elderly lady, not vain and proud as she had been in her younger days, lying back on soft silken pillows, watched her coming.

How pretty the girl looked in her simple yellow muslin frock, with her wide drooping hat, buttercup wreathed, and on her arm a basket, golden with field poppies.

As she neared, Mrs. Poindexter-Jones felt a mist in her eyes, for this girl looked very like the other only there was such a sweet, loving expression in the responsive face, while Gwynette's habitual outlook on life had made her proud, critical and cold. The woman impulsively held out a hand. "Jenny Warner," she said as she lifted the mist-filled eyes, "won't you kiss me, dear?"

Instinctively Jenny knew that this invalid mother of Harold was in real need of tenderness and love. Unhesitatingly she kissed her, then took the seat toward which Mrs. Poindexter-Jones motioned. The basket she placed on the table. "Grandmother wished me to bring you some of our strained honey and fresh eggs and to ask you when you would like her to come and pay her respects."

The woman smiled faintly. She seemed very very tired. Thoughtfully she replied, "Tomorrow, at about this hour, if the day is as pleasant as this. I will again be in the garden here. Tell Susan Warner I very much want to see her. I want to ask her a question." Then she closed her eyes and seemed to be resting. Jenny wondered if she ought to go, but at her first rustle the eyes were opened and the woman smiled at the girl. "Jenny," she said, somewhat wistfully, "I want to ask your grandmother *how* she brought you up."

The girl was puzzled. Why should Mrs. Poindexter-Jones care about the simple home life of a family in her employ.

But, before she had time to wonder long, the invalid was changing the subject. "Jenny, do you like to read aloud?" she asked.

There was sincere enthusiasm in the reply. "Oh, Mrs. Poindexter-Jones, I love to! I read aloud every day to my dear friend Lenora Gale, who is visiting me. We are reading poetry just now, but I care a great deal for prose also. Books and nature are the two things for which I care most."

As she spoke Jenny glanced at the book lying on the small table where she had

placed her basket. Almost shyly she asked. “Were you reading this book before I came?”

“My nurse, Miss Dane, was reading it to me. She is a very kind, good woman, but her voice is rasping, and it is hard for me to listen. My nerves are still far from normal and I was wishing that I had some young girl to read to me.” Jenny at once thought of Gwynette. Surely she would be glad to read to her mother while she was ill. As though she had heard the thought, the woman answered it, and her tone was sad. “My daughter, unfortunately, does not like to read aloud. She does not care for books—nor for nature—nor for——” the woman hesitated. She did not want to criticize Gwynette before another, and so she turned and looked with almost wistful inquiry at the girl. “Jenny Warner, may I engage your services to read to me one or two hours a day if your grandmother can spare you that long?”

Jenny’s liquid brown eyes were aglow with pleasure. This was Harold’s mother for whom she could do a real service. “Oh, may I read to you, Mrs. Poindexter-Jones? I would be so glad to do something—” she hesitated and a deeper rose color stole into her cheeks. She could not say for “Harold’s mother.” Mrs. Poindexter-Jones would not understand the depth of the girl’s gratitude toward the boy who was making it possible for her dear old grandparents to remain on the farm. And the woman, gazing at her, found that just then she could not mention remuneration.

“Suppose you come to me day after tomorrow at ten.” Miss Dane had appeared to say that it was time for the invalid to go into the house.

“Is it noon so soon?” the woman inquired, then turning back toward the girl who had risen, she added: “Seeing you has done me much good. Good-bye. Tell Susan Warner I want to see her tomorrow.”

Jenny returned home, her heart singing. She was to have an opportunity to thank Harold, and she was glad.

When Jenny reached the farmhouse she found her family in the kitchen, and by the way they all stopped talking when she entered, she was sure that something had happened during her absence which they had been discussing, nor was she wrong.

She looked from one interested face to another, then exclaimed: “You’re keeping

a secret from me. What is it, please tell!”

Lenora, who had been made comfortable with pillows in grandfather’s easy chair, drawn close to the stove, merrily replied: “The secret is in plain sight. You must hunt, though, and find it.”

Jenny whirled to look at the table, already set with the supper things, but nothing unusual was there; then her glance traveled to the old mahogany cupboard, where, behind glass doors, in tidy rows, the best china stood. There, leaning against a tumbler, was an envelope bearing a foreign stamp.

With a cry of joy Jenny leaped forward. Instinctively she seemed to know that it was the long watched-for letter from Etta Heldt, nor was she wrong.

With eager fingers the envelope was opened. A draft fluttered to the floor. Jenny picked it up, then, after a glance at it, turned a glowing face toward the others.

“I knew it!” she cried joyfully. “I knew Etta Heldt was honest! This is every penny that she owes us.”

The handwriting was difficult to read and for a silent moment Jenny studied it, then brightly she exclaimed: “Oh, such wonderful news!” Then she read:

“Dear Friend:

“I would have written long ago, but my grandpa took sick and was like to die when I got here, and my grandma and I had to set up nights, turn about, and days I was so tired and busy. I didn’t forget though. Poor grandpa died after a month, but I’m glad I got here first. He was more willing to go, being as I’d be here with grandma.

“Now I guess you’re wondering where I got the money I’m sending you. I got it from Hans Heldt. He’s sort of relation of mine, though not close, and he wanted me to marry him and I said no, not till I paid the money I owed. He said he’d give it to me and then we’d make it up working grandpa’s farm together. So we got married and here’s the money, and my grandma wishes to tell your grandma how thankful she is to her and you for sending me home to her. I guess that’s all. Good-bye.

Your grateful friend,

ETTA HELDT."

There were tears in Jenny's eyes as she looked up. "Oh, Grandma Sue," she ran across the room and clung to the dear old woman, "aren't you glad, glad, glad we brought so much happiness into three lives?" Later, when they were at supper, Jenny told about her visit to Poindexter Arms.

There was a sad foreboding in the hearts of the old couple that evening. Although they said little, each was wondering what the outcome of their "gal's" daily readings would be. "Whatever 'tis, 'twill like to be for the best, I reckon," was Susan Warner's philosophic conclusion, and the old man's customary reply, "I cal'late yer right, Ma! Yo' be mos' allays."

CHAPTER XXII.
REVELATIONS AND REGRETS

Susan Warner reached Poindexter Arms at the hour appointed and found her employer in the lily-pond garden. The old woman curtsied. Her heart was filled with pity. How changed was her formerly haughty mistress. There were more lines in the pale, patrician face than there were in the ruddy countenance of the humbler woman who was years the older. Hesitatingly she spoke: “I reckon you’ve been mighty sick, Mis’ Poindexter-Jones. It’s a pity, too, you havin’ so much to make life free of care an’ happy.” But the sad expression in the tired eyes, that were watching her so kindly, seemed to belie the words of the old woman who had been nurse for Baby Harold and housekeeper at Poindexter Arms for many years.

“Be seated, Susan. Miss Dane, my nurse, has gone to town to make a few purchases for me. Some of them books—” the invalid paused and turned questioningly toward the older woman. “Did your Jenny tell you that I wish to engage her services for an hour or two each morning—reading to me?”

Susan Warner nodded, saying brightly, “She was that pleased, Jenny was! She didn’t tell me just what she was meaning, but she said, happy-like, ‘It will give me a chance to pay a debt.’”

“A debt.” The invalid was perplexed. “Why, Jenny Warner is in no way indebted to me.” Then a cold, almost hard expression crept into her eyes, as she added, “If Gwynette had said that, I might have understood. But she never does. She takes all that I give her, and is rebellious because it is not more.” She had been thinking aloud. Before her amazed listener uttered a comment, if, indeed, she would have done so, which is doubtful, the younger woman said bitterly: “Susan Warner, I have failed, failed miserably as a mother. You have succeeded. That is why I especially wished to talk with you this morning. I want your advice.” Then Mrs. Poindexter-Jones did a very unusual thing for her. She acknowledged her

disappointment in her adopted daughter to someone apart from herself.

“The girl’s selfishness is phenomenal,” she continued, not without bitterness. “She is jealous of the least favor I show my own boy and wishes all of our plans to be made with her pleasure as our only consideration.”

The old woman shook her head sympathetically. “Tut! tut! Mis’ Poindexter-Jones, that’s most unfeelin’ of her. Most!” She had been about to say that it was hard to believe that the two girls were really sisters, but, fearing that the comparison might hurt the other woman’s feelings, she said no more.

The invalid, an unusual color burning in her cheeks, sighed deeply. “Susan Warner,” she said, and there was almost a break in her voice, “don’t blame the girl too much. I try not to. If you had brought her up, and I had had Jenny, it might have been different. They——”

But Susan Warner could not wait, as was her wont for a superior to finish a sentence. She hurriedly interrupted with “Our Jenny wouldn’t have been different from what she is—no matter how she was fetched up. I reckon she just *couldn’t* be. She’d have been so grateful to you for havin’ given her a chance—she’d have been sweeter’n ever. Jenny would.”

The older woman was not entirely convinced. “I taught Gwynette to be proud,” she said reminiscently. “I wanted her to select her friends from only the best families. I was foolishly proud myself, and now I am being punished for it.”

Susan Warner said timidly, “Maybe she’ll change yet. Maybe ’tisn’t too late.”

“I fear it is far too late.” The invalid again dropped wearily back among her silken pillows. She closed her eyes, but opened them almost at once to turn a keenly inquiring glance at her visitor. “Susan Warner, I wanted to ask you this question: Do you think it might break down Gwynette’s selfish, haughty pride if she were to be told that she is your Jenny’s sister and my adopted daughter?”

The older woman looked startled. “Oh, I reckon I wouldn’t be hasty about tellin’ that, Mis’ Poindexter-Jones. I reckon I wouldn’t!” Then she faced the matter squarely. Perhaps the panic in her heart had been caused by selfish reasons. If the two girls were told that they were sisters, then Jenny would have to know that she was not the real granddaughter of the Warners. Would she, could she love them as dearly after that? The old woman rose, saying quaveringly, “Please, may

I talk it over with Silas first. He's clear thinkin', Silas is, an' he'll see the straight of it." And to this Mrs. Poindexter-Jones agreed.

On the day following, at the appointed hour, Jenny Warner, again wearing her pale yellow dress, appeared in the garden by the lily pond, and was welcomed by the invalid with a smile that brightened her weary face.

There were half a dozen new books on the small table, and Mrs. Poindexter-Jones, without preface, said: "Choose which one you would like to read, Jeanette."

She glanced quickly at the girl, rebuking herself for having used the name of long ago, but it evidently had been unnoticed. The truth was that Miss Dearborn, her beloved teacher, had often used that longer name.

"They all look interesting. O, here is one, 'The Morning Star.' I do believe that is poetry in prose. How I wish Lenora might hear it also."

"Lenora?" the woman spoke inquiringly; then "O, I recall now. You did say that you have a visitor who is ill. Is she strong enough to accompany you to my garden for our readings?"

"She would be, I think. The doctor said that by tomorrow I might take her for a drive. I could bring her chair and her cushions." But the older woman interrupted. "No need to do that Jeanette. I have many pillows and several reclining chairs." Then she suggested: "Suppose we leave the book until your friend is with us. There is a collection of short stories that will do for today."

Jenny Warner read well. Miss Dearborn had seen to that, as she considered reading aloud an accomplishment to be cultivated.

The invalid was charmed. The girl's voice was musical, soft yet clear, and most soothing to the harassed nerves of the woman, broken by the endless round of society's demands.

When the one story was finished, the woman said: "Close the book, please, Jeanette. I would rather talk. I want to hear all about yourself, what you do, who are your friends, and what are your plans for the future."

Jenny Warner told first of all about Miss Dearborn. That story was very

enlightening to the listener. She had felt that some influence, other than that of the Warners, must have helped in the moulding of the girl who sat before her. “I would like to meet Miss Dearborn,” was her only comment.

Then Jenny told about Lenora Gale and the brother, Charles, who was coming to take her back to Dakota.

“But Lenora will not be strong enough to travel, perhaps not for a month, the doctor thinks. I do not know what her brother will do, but Lenora will remain with me.” Such a glad light was shining in the liquid brown eyes that the older woman was moved to say, “It makes you very happy to have a girl companion.”

Jenny clasped her hands, as she exclaimed: “No one knows how I have always longed to have a sister. I have never had friends—girl friends, I mean—I have been Miss Dearborn’s only pupil, but often and often I have pretended that I had a sister about my own age. I would wake up in the night, the way girls do in books, and confide my secrets to a make-believe sister. Then, when I went on long tramps alone up in the foothills, I pretended that my sister was with me and we made plans together.”

The girl hesitated and glanced at her listener, suddenly abashed, fearing that the older woman would think her prattling foolish. She was amazed at the changed expression. Mrs. Poindexter-Jones was ashen gray and her face was drawn as though she were suffering. “Dear,” she said faintly, “call Miss Dane, please! I would like to go in. It was a great wrong, a very great wrong—and yet, every one meant well.”

Puzzled, indeed, the girl arose and hastened toward the house. Mrs. Poindexter-Jones must have become worse, and suddenly she was even wandering in her mind. Jenny found the nurse not far away lying in a hammock, just resting.

She hurried to her patient. The woman leaned heavily on her companion as she walked toward the house. The girl, fearing that her chattering had overtired Harold’s mother, followed penitently.

At the steps the woman turned and held out a frail hand. There were tears on her cheeks and in her eyes. “Jeanette,” she said, almost feebly, “I am very tired. Do not come again until I send for you. I want to think. I must decide what to do.”

Then, noting the unhappy expression on the sweet face of the girl, she said, ever

so tenderly, “You have not tired me, dear, dear Jeanette. Don’t think that. It is something very different.” Puzzled and troubled, Jenny returned to the farm.

CHAPTER XXIII.
MOTHER AND SON

The news from the big house on the day following was that Mrs. Poindexter-Jones had had a relapse and was again very weak and ill. The same doctor who visited Lenora was the physician at Poindexter Arms. The son, Harold, had been sent for, and, as his examinations at the military academy were over, he would not return. That, the doctor confided to Susan Warner, was indeed fortunate, as his patient had longed to see her boy. “The most curious thing about it all,” he concluded, “is that she has not sent for her daughter, who is so near that she could reach her mother’s bedside in half an hour.”

“Not yet,” Mrs. Poindexter-Jones had said. “I wish to talk with my son. He will know what is best to do.”

Harold, arrived and went at once to his mother’s room. With infinite tenderness they greeted each other. “My dearest mother,” the lad’s tone expressed deep concern, “I was so happy when your nurse wrote that you were rapidly recovering. What has happened to cause the relapse? Have you been overdoing? Now that I am home, mother, I want you to lean on me in every way. Just rest, dearest, and let whatever burdens there are be on my broad shoulders.” With joy and pride the sick woman gazed at her boy.

“Dear lad,” she said, “you know not what you ask. The cause of my relapse is a mental one. I have done a great wrong to two people, a very great wrong, and it is too late to right it. No, I am not delirious.” She smiled up into his troubled, anxious face and her eyes were clear, even though unusually bright.

Then the nurse glided in to protest that Mrs. Poindexter-Jones would better rest before talking more with her son. But the sick woman was obstinate. “Miss Dane,” she said, “please let me do as I wish in this matter. I will take the responsibility with the doctor. I want to be alone with my boy for fifteen

minutes. Then he will go away and you may come."

The nurse could do nothing but retire, though much against her better judgment. Harold seated himself close to the bed and held one of his mother's hands in his cool, firm clasp.

"What is it, dearest?" he asked. "What is troubling you?"

Then she told the story, the whole of it, not sparing her own wrong training of the girl, concluding with her disappointment in her adopted daughter. The lad leaned over and kissed his mother tenderly. "You meant so kindly," he said, "when you took an orphan into your home and gave her every opportunity to make good."

He hesitated and the woman asked: "Harold, did you know? Did you ever guess? You do not seem surprised."

"Yes, dearest. Long ago. Not just at first, of course, for I was only five when Gwynette came into our home and she was three, but later, when I was grown, I knew that she was not my own little sister, or she would have come to us as a wee baby."

"Of course, I might have known that you would reason it out when you were older. I wish now that you had spoken to me about it, then I could have asked your advice sooner."

"My advice, mother?"

"Yes, dear lad. It is often very helpful to talk a problem over with someone whose point of view naturally would be different. You might have saved me from many mistakes. What I wish to ask now is this: If I can obtain the permission of the Warners (we made an agreement long years ago that the secret was never to be revealed by any of us), but if now they think it might be best, would you advise me to tell Gwynette the truth?"

The lad looked thoughtfully out of the window near. His mother waited eagerly. She had decided to abide by his advice whatever it might be. At last he turned toward her. "Knowing Gwynette's supreme selfishness, I fear that whatever love she may have for you, mother, would be turned to very bitter hatred. She would feel that you were hurling her from a class, of which she is snobbishly proud,

down into one that she considers very little better than serfdom. I hardly know how she would take it. She might do something desperate." The boy regretted these words as soon as they were spoken. The woman's eyes were startled and because of her great weakness she began to shiver as though in a chill. The repentant lad knelt and held her close. "Mother, dear, leave it all to me, will you? Forget it and just get well for my sake." Then with a break in his voice, "I wouldn't want to live without *you*, dearest." A sweet calm stole into the woman's soul. Nothing else seemed to matter. She rested her cheek against her son's head as she said softly: "My boy! For your sake I will get well."

Harold, upon leaving his mother, went at once to his room, and, throwing himself down in his comfortable morris-chair, with his hands thrust deep into his trouser pockets, he sat staring out of a wide picture-window. He did not notice, however, the white-capped waves on the tossing, restless sea. He was remembering all that had happened from his little boyhood, especially all that associated him with the girl he had long realized could not be his own sister.

Had he been to her the companion that he might have been, indeed that he should have been, even though he knew she was not his father's child? No, he had really never cared for her and he had avoided her companionship whenever it was possible. Many a time he had known that she was hurt at his lack of devotion. Only recently, when he had so much preferred taking Sunday dinner at the farm, and had actually forgotten Gwyn until the haughty girl had reminded him that it was his duty to take her wherever she would like to dine, he had recalled, almost too late, that it would be his mother's wish, and now, that his father was gone, his mother was the one person whom he loved above all others. His conclusion, after half an hour of relentless self-examination, was that he was very much to blame for Gwynette's selfishness. If he had long ago sought her confidence, long ago in the formative years, they might have grown up in loving companionship as a sister and brother should. This, surely, would have happened, a thought tried to excuse him to himself, if she had been an own sister. But he looked at it squarely. "If my mother wanted Gwynette enough to adopt her and have her share in all things with her own son, that son should have accepted her as a sister." Rising, he walked to the window, and, for a few moments, he really saw the wind-swept sea. Then, whirling on his heel, he snapped his fingers as he thought with a new determination. "I shall ask our mother (he purposely said 'our') to give me a fortnight to help Gwyn change her point of view, before the revelation is made to her. The fault, I can see now, has not been wholly her own. Mother has shown in a thousand ways that I am the

one she really loves. Not that she has neglected Gwyn, but there has been a difference." He was putting on his topcoat and cap as he made the decision to take a run up to the seminary and see how his sister was getting on.

As he neared his mother's room, the nurse appeared, closing the door behind her so softly that the lad knew, without asking, that the invalid was asleep. Miss Dane smiled at the comely youth.

"My patient is much better since you came home. I believe you were the tonic, or the narcotic rather, that she needed, for she seems soothed and quieted."

The lad's brightening expression told the nurse how great was his love for his mother. She went her way to the kitchen to prepare a strengthening broth for the invalid to be given her when she should awaken, and all the while she was wondering why a son should be so devoted and a daughter seem to care so little. It was evident to the most casual observer that Gwynette cared for no one but herself.

Harold was soon in his little gray speedster and out on the highway. He thought that, first of all, he would dart into town and buy a box of Gwyn's favorite chocolates. She could not but greet him graciously when he appeared with a gift for her. On the coast highway, near Santa Barbara, there was a roadside inn where motoring parties lunched and where the best of candies could be procured. As he was about to complete his purchase, a tall, broad-shouldered young man, with the build of a college athlete, entered carrying a suitcase. He inquired when the next bus would pass that way, and, finding that he would have to wait at least an hour, he next asked how far it was to the farm of Silas Warner. Harold stepped forward, before the clerk could reply, and said, "I am going in that direction. In fact I shall pass the farm. May I give you a lift?"

"Thanks."

Together they left the shop and were soon speeding along the highway, neither dreaming of all that this meeting was to mean to them.

CHAPTER XXIV.
HAROLD AND CHARLES

Harold was frankly curious. He had not heard of the guest at the Warner's. Indeed, having arrived but that day he had heard nothing except his mother's anxiety about Gwynette. Could it be possible that the fine-looking chap at his side was a friend of Jenny's? He could easily understand that anyone, man or woman, who had once met her would, ever after, wish to be counted as one of her friends.

When they were well out in the country, the lad at the wheel turned and smiled in his frank, friendly way. "Stranger hereabouts?" he inquired.

"Yes and no," the young man replied. "This is my third visit, though the other two could hardly be called that. I came here when the rainy season began up north to put my sister, who is not strong, in the seminary here. I hoped that your more even climate might help restore her strength. Dakota is our home state. We have a ranch there, but the winters are very severe. Sister, I am sorry to say, was not happy at the seminary, and, when she did take a severe cold, she did not recover, and so I made my second flying trip with the intention of taking her to Arizona if that seemed best, but, when I arrived her nurse told me that she believed a pleasant home atmosphere would do more for my sister than a dry air. This, I was glad to find, had already been offered to Lenora. She had met a girl, Jenny Warner is her name, and the two had become fast friends. On the very day that I arrived Miss Jenny was also going to the seminary with an invitation from her grandmother which was to make my sister a guest in their home until she should be strong enough to travel. That was two weeks ago. This, my third visit, is for the purpose of determining if Lenora is well enough to accompany me to our home in Dakota. My name is Charles Gale, and I have just completed the agricultural course connected with the state college at Berkeley."

Harold reached out a strong brown hand which was grasped heartily by another

equally strong and brown.

“Great! I’d like well to take that course. Harold Jones is my name. Mother and Sis put a Poindexter and a hyphen in the middle. Women like that sort of thing. It was mother’s maiden name. Well, here we are at the long lane that leads up to the farm.”

Charles leaned over to pick up his suitcase. “Don’t turn in. I can hike up to the house.”

“Nothing doing.” Harold swung into the narrow dirt lane. “I was planning to pay a visit to Susan Warner. She took care of me when I was a small kid, you see, and so I claim her as sort of a foster grandmother, and, as for Silas Warner, there’s no finer example of the old school farmer living, or I miss my bet.”

Charles looked interested. “I’d like to meet him. I was here such a short time on my last visit that, although I met Mrs. Warner, I did not see her good spouse.”

Harold, eager to create some sort of a stir, caused his sport siren to announce their arrival with shrill staccato notes. It had the desired effect. First of all dear old Susan Warner bustled out of the kitchen door, then from around the front corner of the house came Jenny with her friend, frail and white, leaning on her arm. Lenora’s face brightened when she saw her brother and she held out both arms to him as he leaped from the low car. Harold chivalrously sprang up on the side porch to shake hands first of all with his one time nurse, then he went to Jenny, and although he did not really frame his thought in words, he was conscious of feeling glad that it was *his* arrival and not that of Charles Gale which was causing her liquid brown eyes to glow with a welcome which, at least, was most friendly.

“Come in, all of you, do, and have a glass of milk and a cookie.” Grandma Sue thought of them as just big children, and, by the eagerness with which they accepted the invitation, she was evidently not far wrong.

Jenny skipped to the cooling cellar to soon return with a blue crockery pitcher brimming with creamy milk. Susan Warner heaped a plate with cookies. Charles led his sister to Grandpa Si’s comfortable armed chair near the stove. When they were all seated and partaking of the refreshments, the older of the lads said, “Sister, you are not yet strong enough to travel, I fear.”

“O, I think that I am! We could have a drawing room all of the way and I could lie down most of the time.” But even the excitement of her brother’s arrival had tired her.

Jenny went to her friend’s side and, sitting on the broad arm of the chair, she pleaded: “Don’t leave me so soon, Lenora! Aren’t you happy here with us? You’ve been getting stronger every day, and only yesterday Grandma Sue told the doctor that she hoped you would be here another fortnight, and he said, didn’t he, Grandma Sue, that it would be at least that long before you would be able to travel.”

Lenora looked anxiously at her brother. She knew that he was eager to get back to their Dakota ranch home, knowing that their father needed him and was lonely for both of them. But the young man said at once, “I believe the doctor is right. I will wire Dad tonight when I go back to the hotel that we will remain two weeks longer.” Then, turning toward the nodding, smiling old woman, he asked: “Mrs. Warner, you are quite sure that we are not imposing upon you? I could take my sister with me if——”

Susan Warner’s reply was sincerely given. “Mr. Gale,” she said, her ruddy face beaming, “I reckon there’s three of us in this old farmhouse as wishes your sister Lenora was goin’ to stay all summer. Jenny, here,” how fondly the faded blue eyes turned toward her girl, “has allays had a hankering for an own sister, and since it’s too late now for that, next best is to adopt one, and Lenora is her choice and mine, too, and Si’s as well, I reckon.”

The young man’s relief and appreciation were warmly expressed. Then he said, “Father will want us to stay under the circumstances. I will remain at the hotel ——” Grandma Sue interrupted with, “I do wish we had another bedroom here. It’s a powerful way from the farm to town and Lenora will want to see you every day.”

Harold had been thoughtfully gazing at the floor. He now spoke. “Charles,” then with his half whimsical, wholly friendly smile he digressed, “you won’t mind if I call you that, will you, since we are merely boys of a larger growth,” then continued with, “Don’t decide where you will bunk, please, until I have had an opportunity to talk the matter over with my invalid mother. I’d like bully well to have you for my guest. I have a plan, a keen one if I can carry it out. I’ll not reveal it until I know.” Harold stood up, suddenly recalling that he had a duty to

fulfill which was being neglected for his own pleasure. That had always been his way, he feared, when he had to choose between Gwynette and someone who really interested him.

To Mrs. Warner he said, “I’m on my way over to the seminary to see my sister. Poor kid! There are two more days of prison life for her, or so she considers it. Mother requested that she remain at the seminary until the term is over and it’s being hard for her.” Then to the taller lad, “Charles, you want to stay here with your sister until evening anyway, don’t you?”

The girl quickly put out a detaining hand, as she said, “O please do stay. I haven’t asked you a single question yet. It will take you until dark to answer half that I want to know.” The big brown hand closed over the frail one. To Harold he replied, “Yes, I’ll be here if I can get a bus to town in the evening.”

“You won’t need the bus, not if my little gray bug is in working order.” They had all risen except Lenora, and Susan Warner said hospitably, “Harry-lad, if your ma don’t need you over to the big house, come back in time for supper. I’ll make the corn bread you set such a store by.”

“Thanks, I’ll be here with bells,” the lad called as he leaped into his waiting car.

CHAPTER XXV.
A JOLLY PLAN

Harold's little gray "bug," as he sometimes called the car which he boasted was the speediest of its kind, made the long upgrade in high, and that, being a feat it had not accomplished on its last ascent, so gratified the youthful owner that he swung into the seminary grounds with a flourish. Upon seeing his sister sitting moodily in the summer-house with a novel, unread, on her knee, he ran in that direction, waving his cap gleefully.

"Hello, there, Sis!" he called. "Get on your bonnet and come for a ride. The bug is outdoing itself today."

The girl, whose eyes were suspiciously red, turned toward him coldly. "Harold, how many times have I asked you not to call me Sis. It savors of kitchen mechanics, and, what is more, I do not wear a bonnet. Finally, I most certainly do not wish to ride in that racer of yours."

The boy dropped down on the bench on the opposite side of the summer-house and gave a long whistle which equally aggravated his companion. Then, stretching out to be comfortable, he thrust his hands deep into his pockets, as he inquired: "Well, then, Sister Gwynette, will you enlighten me as to why your marblesque brow is darkly clouded?"

The girl's frown deepened and she turned away from him petulantly. "You know just as well as I do that you care nothing whatever about my troubles," she flung at him. "You wouldn't be here now if Mother hadn't sent you, and I'm sure I can't see why she did. She cares no more for me than you do, or she would not force me to stay in this prison until the close of the term just for appearance sake. I'm not taking the final tests, so why should I pretend that I am?"

The boy drew himself upright and, leaning on the rustic table which was

between them, he said, trying not to let his indignation sound in his voice: “Gwynette, do you know that our mother is very, very ill? She is again in bed and I could only be with her for a few moments.”

Harold paused, hoping that his announcement would cause his listener some evident concern, but there was no change in her expression, and so more coldly he continued:

“Mother said nothing whatever about her reason for asking you to remain here until the term is over, but it is my private opinion that when she did send for you, some sort of a scene was stirred up which made Mother’s fever worse. The nurse probably thought best for Mums to be undisturbed as long as possible.” Suddenly the lad sprang up, rounded the table and sat on the side toward which his petulant sister was facing. Impulsively he took her hand as he asked, not unkindly, “Gwyn, don’t you care at all whether our mother lives or dies?”

There was a sudden, startled expression in the girl’s tear-filled eyes, but, as the lad knew, the tears were there merely because of self-pity.

“Dies?” she repeated rather blankly. No one whom she had ever known had died, and she had seemed to think that those near her were immune. “Is Ma Mere going to die?”

The boy followed up what he believed to be an advantage by saying gently, “We would be all alone in the world, Gwyn, if our mother left us, and, oh, it would be so lonely.”

Suddenly and most unexpectedly the girl put her arms on the table and, burying her head upon them, she sobbed bitterly. Harold was moved to unusual tenderness. He put his arm lovingly about his sister as he hastened to say, reassuringly, “Miss Dane, the nurse, told me this morning that Mother’s one chance of recovery lay in not being excited in any way. Her fever must be kept down. We’ll help, won’t we, Gwyn?”

The girl sat up and wiped her eyes with her dainty handkerchief.

“I suppose so,” she said dully. The boy, watching her, could not tell what emotion had caused the outburst of grief. He decided not to follow it up, but to permit whatever seeds had been sown to sprout as they would.

Springing up, he exclaimed: “Snapping turtles! I forgot something I brought for you. It’s in the car.” He ran back, found the box of choice candies, returned and presented them. Gwyn was still gazing absently ahead of her. “Thanks,” she said, but without evidence of pleasure.

The boy stood in the vine-hung doorway gazing down at her. “Gwyn,” he said, “if you want to come home, I’ll be over after you tomorrow. Just say the word.”

“I prefer to wait until my mother sends for me,” was the cold answer. The lad went away, fearing that he had accomplished little.

It was five-thirty when the “bug” again turned into the long lane that led to the farmhouse near Rocky Point.

“Here comes Harold,” Jenny turned from the window to inform the other occupants of the kitchen. Grandma Sue was opening the oven to test her corn bread. Lenora was again in the comfortable armchair near the stove. For the past hour she had been asleep in the hammock out in the sun, and she felt stronger and really hungry. Charles, having been told that there was nothing that he could do to help, sat on the bench answering the questions his sister now and then asked.

Grandpa Si had not yet returned from a neighbor’s where he had gone to help repair fences.

Jenny, dressed in her white Swiss with the pink dots, had a pink butterfly bow in her hair. Her cheeks were flushed and her liquid brown eyes glowing. She was wonderfully happy. Her dear friend Lenora was to remain with her another two weeks. She was convinced that this was the sole reason for her joy. It did not remotely enter her thought that perhaps the return of Harold might be adding to her happiness.

Charles, hearing the siren call, leaped to the porch and the boys again shook hands like old friends who had not met in many a day.

Harold was plainly elated. He detained Charles on the porch long enough to tell his plan.

“I’ve been over to see Mother since I left and she is quite willing that I open up the little cabin on the cliff that used to belong to my Dad when he was young.

It’s been closed since he died and I didn’t know how Mother would feel about having it occupied. But when she heard about you, she said she was glad indeed that I was to have a companion, as she knew the big house would seem lonely while she is ill, so we’ll move right over there after supper.”

“That’s great!” the Dakota boy was equally pleased. “Honest, I’ll confess it now; I did dread going to that barren Commercial Hotel, and I couldn’t afford to spend more than ten minutes at The Palms, not if I had to pay for the privilege.”

“Come on, let’s tell our good news.” Harold led the way into the kitchen where his jubilant enthusiasm was met with a like response. Lenora clapped her hands. “Oh, won’t you two boys have the nicest time! Tell us about that cabin. How did your father happen to build it?”

“I don’t believe I ever really knew. Gwyn and I were such little things when he died.” Turning to the older woman, who had dropped on the bench to rest, he asked, “Grandma Sue, you, of course, know all that happened. You were living near here, weren’t you, when my father was a boy?”

“Indeed I was. My folks had the overseein’ of a lemon grove up Live Oak Canyon way. First off I did fine sewin’ for your Grandma Jones. That’s how I come to know your family so well. But she didn’t live long arter I went there, and your grandpa was so broke up, he went to pieces sort of, right arter the funeral an’ pined away, slow like, for two years about. Your pa, Harry, was the only child, and he give up his lawin’ in the big city and come home to stay and be company for his pa. I never saw two folks set a greater store by each other, but the old man (your grandpa wasn’t really old, but grievin’ aged him), even his boy seemed like couldn’t cheer him up, he missed his good woman so. ’Twant long afore he followed her into the great beyond. That other Harold, your pa, was only twenty-two or thereabouts and he was all broke up. He didn’t seem to want to go back to the lawin’ and it was too lonesome for him to stay in the big house, so he sent the help all away, giving ’em each a present of three months’ pay. That is, he sent ’em all but Sing Long. Sing was a young Chinaman then, and he wanted to stay with your pa. That’s when he had the cabin on the cliff built. He was allays readin’, your pa was, so he filled one big room with books and with Sing Long to cook for him and take care of him, there he stayed until he was twenty-five. Then he went ’round the world and came back with a wife.”

Grandpa Si’s entrance interrupted the story. The old man was surprised to find

company in the kitchen. “Wall, wall, I swan to glory!” He took off his straw hat and rubbed his forehead with his big red bandanna handkerchief. “If ’tisn’t my helper come so soon. Harry-lad, it’s good for sore eyes to see you lookin’ so young, like there wa’n’t no sech thing ahead as old age.”

Harold shook hands heartily as he exclaimed with his usual enthusiasm: “Old age! Indeed, sir, I don’t believe in it. All I have to do is to look at you and Grandma Sue to know that it doesn’t exist.” Then turning toward the young visitor, he continued: “Silas Warner, may I make you acquainted with Charles Gale?” The weather-bronzed face wrinkled into even a wider smile as the old man held a hand toward the young stranger.

“Wall, now, you’re a size bigger’n our little Lenora here, ain’t you? Tut, tut. We’ve allays boasted about how big we can grow things down here in Californy, but I reckon Dakota’s got us plumb beat. Harry, you’ll have to eat a lot to catch up with your friend.”

That youth laughingly replied that he was afraid that eating a lot would make him grow round instead of high. The old man good naturedly commented, “Wall, Harry-lad, you ain’t so much behind or below whichever ’tis, not more’n half a head, an’ you may make that up. Though ’tain’t short you be now.”

Then he began to sniff, beaming at his spouse, whose cheeks, from the heat of baking, were as ruddy as winter apples. “Ma,” he said, wagging his head from side to side and smacking his lips in anticipation, “that there smell oozin’ out of the oven sort of hits the empty spot. Cream gravy on that thick yellar cornmeal bread! Wall, boys, if there’s rich folks with finer feed ’n that I dunno what ’tis.”

He was washing at the sink pump as he talked.

“Neither do I,” Harold agreed as he sprang to help Jenny place the chairs around the table. Their eyes met and Harold found himself remembering that this lovely girl was own sister to his adopted sister. What relation then was he to Jenny? But before this problem could be solved, Grandma Sue was placing the two plates of cornbread on the table and Jenny had skipped to the stove to pour the steaming gravy into its pitcher-like bowl.

Charles led Lenora to her place, although she protested that she really could walk alone. Harold leaped to the head to draw Grandma Sue’s chair out, and then Jenny’s, while Charles did the same for his sister. Then the merry meal began.

Grandpa Si told all that had happened during the day to Susan, as was his custom. Never an evening meal was begun without that query, “Wall, Si, what happened today. Anythin’ newsy?”

It didn’t matter how unimportant the event, if it interested the old man enough to tell it, he was sure of an interested listener. Indeed, two, for Jenny having been brought up to this evening program, was as eager as her grandmother to hear the chronicalings of the day, which seldom held an event that a city dweller would consider worth the recounting.

“Wall, I dunno as there’s much, ’cept Pete says the lemon crop over on that ranch whar you lived when you was a gal, Ma, is outdoin’ itself this year. Tryin’ to break its own record, Pete takes it. He’s workin’ over thar mornin’s and loafin’ arternoons, lest be he can pick up odd jobs like fence-mendin’.” Then, when the generous slices of corn bread had been served and were covered with the delicious cream gravy, there was not one among them who did not do justice to it and consider it a rare treat. After the first edge of hunger was appeased, the old man asked what kind of a year ranchers were having in Dakota. This answered, he smiled toward the frail girl. “Lenora,” he said, “yo’ ain’t plannin’ to pull out ’f here soon, air yo’? It’ll be powerful lonely for Jenny-gal, her havin’ sort of got used to havin’ a sister.” Then, turning to the smiling Charles, the old man said facetiously: “Ma an’ me sort o’ wish you an’ your Pa didn’t want Lenora. We’d like to keep her steady. Wouldn’t we, Ma?” The old woman nodded, “I reckon we would, but there’s others have the first right an’ we’ll be thankful for two weeks more.”

Directly after supper Harold said to his hostess: “Please forgive us if we eat and run. I want to move into the cabin before dark.” Then, to the old man: “I’ll be ready to start work early in the morning.”

CHAPTER XXVI.
A RUSTIC CABIN

It was just before sunset when the two boys reached the cabin on the cliff close to the high hedge which separated the farm from the rest of the estate. It was a rustic affair with wide verandas on three sides. From the long front windows there was an unobstructed view of the coast line circling toward the Rincon Mountain which extended peninsula-wise out into the ocean.

Sing Long opened the front door and beamed at them. He greeted Harold and his friend, saying good naturedly, “Me showee. Alle done.” He led the way at once upstairs. A very large bedroom was most comfortably furnished with severe simplicity. The Chinaman opened a closet door and showed Harold his clothes hanging there.

“Great!” the boy was indeed pleased to find that he was being so well cared for. “You may sleep up at the big house, just as you have been doing, Sing,” Harold told him, “but be back to prepare our breakfast by five tomorrow morning.”

The Chinaman grinned, showing spaces between yellowed teeth. “Belly early, him. Fibe ’clock.” It was quite evident that he was recalling former days when it had been hard to awaken his young master at a much later hour.

Harold laughed. “Oh, times have changed, Sing. No more late sleeping for me. Tomorrow I’m going to begin to be a farmer.”

They could hear the Chinaman chuckling as though greatly amused until he was out of the cabin. Harold at once became the thoughtful host. “I’ll budge my things along and make room for yours in the closet,” he said. “We’ll have your trunk brought over from The Commercial tomorrow.” Then, going to the window, he stood, hands thrust in pockets, looking out at the surf plunging against the rocks. For some moments he was deep in thought. Silently Charles

unpacked the few things he had with him. Harold turned as the twilight crept into the room. “Dear old Dad loved this place,” he said, which showed of what he had been thinking.

“Even after he and Mother were married, when there was a crowd of gay folk up at the big house, one of Mother’s week-ends, Dad would come here and stay with his books for company most of the time. I suppose the guests thought him queer. I’m inclined to think that at first Mother did not understand, for she has often told me how deeply she regrets that she had persuaded him to give up coming down here. She wishes that instead she had given up the house parties. Oh, well, there’s a lot to regret in this old world.” Charles, knowing nothing of his new friend’s self-reproach because of having neglected his adopted sister, wondered at a remark so unlike the enthusiastic conversation of the earlier evening. The truth was that Harold was saddened by this first visit to his father’s cabin. Suddenly he clapped a friendly hand on the older lad’s shoulder and said, “But come, the prize room is downstairs. I don’t wonder Dad liked to be in it more than in any room over at the big house. I used to visit him when I was a little shaver, but the place has been locked since his death. I was ten when Dad died.”

They had descended a circling open stairway which led directly into the large room, a fleeting glance at which Charles had had on their entering.

It was indeed an ideal den for a man who loved to read. A great stone fireplace was at one end with bookcases ceiling high, on either side.

There were Indian rugs on the floor, low wall lamps that hung over comfortable wicker chairs with basket-like magazine holders at the side. A wide divan in front of the blazing fire on the hearth invited Charles, and he threw himself full length, his hands clasped under his head. “Harold, this is great,” he exclaimed. “I’ve been in such a mad rush these last days getting the finals over, packing and traveling down here, that it seems mighty good to stretch out and let go for awhile.”

“Do you smoke?” Harold asked. “If you want to, go ahead. I never learned. Dad was much opposed to smoking and even though I was so young I promised I wouldn’t, at least not until I was twenty-one.” Then, after a moment of thought, the younger lad concluded: “In memory of Dad, I shall never begin.”

“Glad to hear it, old man! If a chap doesn’t start a bad habit, he won’t have to struggle to break it when it begins to pull down his health. I much prefer to breathe fresh air myself.” Charles changed the subject. “What’s this about getting up at five o’clock to start in being a farmer? Don’t tell me, though, if you’d rather not.”

“Oh, there’s no secret to it. Sort of thought I’d like to learn how to run a farm since I am to own one.”

“Surely! But I didn’t know you were to inherit a farm. Where’s it located?”

It was evident that Charles did not know that the Rocky Point farm belonged to Harold’s mother and the boy hesitated to tell, not knowing but that the older lad would think less of the Warners and Jenny if he knew that they were what Gwyn called his “mother’s servants.” A second thought assured him that this would be very unlikely.

Simply Harold said, “Silas Warner is my mother’s overseer.”

“Oho, I understand. You’re lucky to have such a splendid man to look after your interests.” Then, “I like ranching mighty well. Dad suggested that I take up law, thought I might need it later, when—” Charles never finished that sentence, and, if Harold thought it queer, he made no comment.

They talked of college, of ambitions and plans for the future, until bed time. For the first time in his life Charles was lulled to sleep by the rhythmic breaking of the waves as the tide went out.

CHAPTER XXVII.
FUN AS FARMERS

Grandpa Si and Grandma Sue were alone at a five o'clock breakfast. They did not wish Jenny to get up that early as there was really nothing to do, but make the morning coffee, fry the bacon and flapjacks, which constituted the farmer's breakfast menu every day in the year.

Silas Warner often tried to persuade his good wife to sleep later, telling her that he could well enough prepare his own breakfast, but he had long since desisted, realizing that he would be depriving her of one of their happiest hours together. It was then, when they were quite alone, that they talked over many things, and this morning Susan found her hands trembling as she poured the golden brown coffee into her husband's large thick china cup. Silas had asked for three days to meditate on the serious question of whether or not they should tell Jenny that she was not their own child, and Susan well knew that this morning she would hear his decision.

It was not until the cakes were fried and she was seated opposite him that he looked over at her with his most genial smile, and yet the silent watcher knew him so well that she could sense that he was not happy in the decision which he evidently had reached. "Pa, you think it's best to tell, don't you? I can sort o' see it comin'."

"I reckon that's about what my ruminatin' fetched me to, Susan. You'n me know how our gal's hankerin' for an own sister, and now that Lenora is goin', she'll be lorner 'n ever, Jenny will." He glanced toward the closed door which led to the living room where their "gal" slept since she had given her bed to her guest. "I cal'late we'd better keep it dark though till Lenora's gone, then sort of feel our way as how best to tell it. Thar's time enough. While Lenora's here, there ain't no need for any other sister for our gal."

Susan Warner sighed, even while she smiled waveringly. “Wall, Si, if you think it’s best, I reckon ’tis. But it’ll be powerful hard to have Jenny thinkin’ the less of us.”

The good man rose and walked around the table and placed a big gnarled hand on his wife’s shoulder. “Tut! Tut! Susy,” that was the name he had used in the courtin’ days, “our gal ain’t made of no sech clay as that. She’ll stick by us all the tighter, you see if ’taint so.”

Further conversation on the subject was prevented by the arrival of Harold and Charles decked in overalls, which the former lad had obtained from his mother’s gardener.

Silas Warner stepped out on the side porch to greet them and his grin was at its widest. “Wall, I swan to glory, if here ain’t my two helpers. Ready to milk the cow, Harry-lad?”

Mrs. Warner appeared in the open door, her blue checked apron wound about her hands. She smiled and nodded. “Speak quietly, boys. We like Lenora to sleep as late as she can,” was her admonition.

The farmer led the way to the barn and there he again stood grinning his amusement. The boys laughed good naturedly. “Say, them overalls of your’n, Harry, are sort o’ baggy, ’pears like to me. You could get one o’ Ma’s best pillars in front thar easy.”

The younger lad agreed. “Charles has the best of it. Our gardener is just about his size. Now if only we had a couple of wide straw hats with torn brims, we’d look the part.”

Shaking with mirth, the old man led the boys to a shed adjoining the barn, where on a row of nails were several hats ragged and tattered enough to suit the most exacting comedian. “Great!” the younger lad donned one and seizing the milk pail from the farmer’s hand, he struck an attitude, exclaiming dramatically “Lead me to the cow.” But he was to find that a college education did not help one to milk, and after a few futile efforts he rose, and, with a flourish, offered the bench to Charles, who, having often milked, had the task done in short order. Harry watched the process closely, declaring that in the evening he would show them.

That same morning Mrs. Poindexter-Jones awakened feeling better than she had

in a long time.

While Miss Dane was busying herself about the room, the older woman lay thoughtfully gazing at a double frame picture on the wall. It contained photographs of two children, one about eight and the other about five. How beautiful Gwynette had been with her long golden curls and what a manly little chap Harold. She sighed deeply. The boy had not changed but the girl——.

Another thought interrupted: “Now that you and Harold both believe that it may be partly your fault, you may feel differently toward Gwynette.”

“I do love her,” the woman had to acknowledge. “One cannot bring up anything from babyhood and not care, but I was not wise. I overindulged the child because she was so beautiful, and I was proud to have people think her my own, and, later, when she was so heartlessly selfish, I was hurt. Poor Gwynette.”

Aloud she said: “Miss Dane, please telephone the seminary and tell my daughter that I am sending the carriage for her at four this afternoon. I want her to come home. Then, when my son comes, tell him I wish to see him. He told me that he would be here in the early afternoon.”

“Very well. I will attend to it.” The nurse glided from the room to telephone Gwynette. Half an hour later she returned. The woman looked up almost eagerly. Miss Dane merely said, “The message was given.”

She did not care to tell that the girl’s voice had been coldly indifferent. Her reply had been, “Very well. One place does as well as another!”

At noon, after a morning cultivating in the fields, the boys were not sorry when the farmer advised them to take it easy during the afternoon. The day was very warm.

“Well, we will, just at first, while hardening up.” Harold was afraid the farmer would think that he was not in earnest about wanting to help, but there was no twinkle evident in the kind blue eyes of Silas Warner.

The boys, hoes over their shoulders, walked single file through the field of corn toward the farmhouse. The girls had not yet seen them and they expected to be well laughed at. Nor were they mistaken. They found Jenny and Lenora out in the kitchen garden. The former maiden had been gathering luscious, big, red

strawberries, while her friend sat nearby on a rustic bench. Jenny stood upright, her basket brimming full, and so she first saw the queer procession.

“Oh, Lenora, do look! Is it or is it not your brother Charles?” The grinning boys doffed their frayed straw hats and made deep bows. Jenny pretended to be surprised. “Why, Harold, is that you? I thought Grandpa had hired a tramp or two to help out. My, but you look hot!”

“Indeed, young ladies, it does not take much perspicacity to make that discovery.” He mopped his brow with his handkerchief as he spoke.

Charles laughed. “It’s harder on Harold than on me. We do this sort of thing every day up at the Agricultural School.”

Then, to tease, he added: “Why don’t you invite the girls to watch you milk this evening?”

“Well, I may at that,” the younger boy said, nothing daunted by their laughter. “But just now we must hie us to our cabin. I promised to visit Mother about two.” Then to Charles he suggested: “Before we eat the good lunch Sing Long will have for us, suppose we go swimming, old man, what say?”

“Agreed! It sounds good to me!” Turning to his sister, Charles took her hand lovingly. “I’ll be over to spend the afternoon with you, dear?”

Harold, glancing almost shyly at the other girl, wished he could say the same thing to her. Then it was he recalled something. “Charles,” he said, “Mother wanted me to bring you over to the big house this afternoon. I call it that to designate it from the cabin. She is eager to meet my new friend.”

“Indeed I shall be very glad to meet your mother.” Then smiling tenderly at the girl whose hand he still held, he said: “You do feel stronger today, don’t you, sister?” She nodded happily, then away the two boys ran.

An hour later, refreshed and sleek-looking after their swim, they sat at a small table on the pine-sheltered side porch and ate the good lunch Sing Long had prepared for them.

“This is great!” Charles enthusiastically exclaimed. “I’d like Lenora to see it.”

“Better still, in a few days, when she is able to walk this far, we will invite the girls to dine.” Harold hesitated, flushed a little and added as an after thought: “Of course we’ll ask my sister, too.” Again he had completely forgotten Gwynette. His good resolution was going to be hard to put into effect, it would seem.

“I shall be glad to meet your mother and also your sister,” Charles was saying.

An impulse came to Harold to confide in Charles. Ought he or ought he not? He knew that he could trust his new friend and his advice might be invaluable. And so he began hesitatingly: “I’m going to tell you something, Charles, which I never told to anyone else. In fact, it’s only recently that Mother realized I knew about it. But now a complication has risen. We, Mother and I, don’t know *what* is best to do, and what is more, Silas and Susan Warner have to be considered.”

“Don’t tell me unless you are quite sure that you want to, old man,” Charles said in his frank, friendly way, adding, “We make confidences, sometimes, rather on an impulse, and wish later that we had not.”

“Yes, I know. There are fellows I wouldn’t trust to keep the matter dark, but I know that you will. We especially do not wish Jenny Warner to know or Gwynette, my sister, until we have figured out whether or not it would be best. Of course, my mother and the Warners thought they were doing the right thing. Well, I won’t keep you wondering about it any longer. I’ll tell you the whole story as Mother told it to me only two days ago.”

Charles listened seriously. They had finished their lunch and had sauntered down to the cliff before the tale was completed.

“That certainly is a problem,” was the first comment. “I can easily understand that your mother wished to keep the matter a secret, but I do feel sorry for the girls. No one knows the comfort my sister has been to me. I would have lost a great joy out of my life if she had been taken from me—if we had grown up without knowing each other.”

“Of course you would, old man,” Harold agreed heartily. “But, you see, I early figured out that Gwynette couldn’t be my own sister, and I have never really cared for her nor has she for me. Well, she’ll be coming home tomorrow and then you can tell better, perhaps, after having met her, how to advise me. Mother said she would abide by my decision. I asked Mums to postpone for two weeks

an ultimatum in the matter." Then, placing a hand on his friend's shoulder, he added: "Now I must go over and see Mother. If you care to wait in the cabin, I'll be back in half an hour. I'll find out when my mother will be able to see you."

"Of course I'll wait. Lenora ought to rest after lunch, I suppose. I'll be glad to browse among the interesting books. Don't hurry on my account."

Ten minutes later Harold was admitted to his mother's room.

"I am keeping awake just for this visit," the smiling woman said when he had kissed her. "Is your friend with you?"

"No, he is at the cabin. I thought perhaps at first you would rather see me alone. I will go back and get him if you would like to meet him now."

Instead of answering him, the woman turned to the nurse, who was seated at a window sewing: "Miss Dane, if I sleep for two hours, I might meet Harold's friend about five, don't you think?" The nurse assented.

To her son she then said, "I would like you and your friend to dine here every evening. Please begin tonight."

She purposely did not tell Harold that his sister would be at home and would need his companionship.

CHAPTER XXVIII.
A DIFFICULT PROMISE

When the boys reached the farm, they saw Jenny dressed in her sunny yellow with the buttercup wreathed leghorn hat shading her face, and, as she was walking down the lane carrying a basket, it was quite evident that she was going away. Harold felt a distinct sense of disappointment. Lenora was lying in the hammock under two towering eucalyptus trees. Charles went to her at once and sat on the bench near, but Harold, excusing himself, ran toward the barn where he could see that Jenny was already in the old buggy backing Dobbin out into the lane.

Hatless, he arrived just as the girl turned toward the highway. “Whither away, fair maid?” the boy sang out.

“To see my very nice teacher, Miss Dearborn. I had a message from her this morning. She wishes to see me before three. My heart is rebuking me, for it is over a week since our classes ended and I’ve been so busy I haven’t been over to Hillcrest. I’m glad, though, that she has sent for me, and I hope she will scold me well. I deserve it.”

The boy hesitated. “Would I be much in the way if I went with you?” Then eagerly, “I’d love to drive old Dobbin.”

Jenny, of course, could not deprive him of that pleasure, and so, at her smilingly given assent, the lad went around to the other side, leaped over a wheel and took the seat and reins abandoned by the girl.

Dobbin, seeming to sense that all was ready, started on a trot toward the gate. Harold turned to wave back to Charles, who returned the salute. He was glad to be alone for a time with Lenora. They were planning to write a combination letter to their far-away and, as they well knew, lonely father.

“You care a lot for this Miss Dearborn, Jenny, don’t you?” Harold turned to one side of the highway to give the automobiles the right of way on the pavement.

“Indeed I do! I love her and I am always fearful that I may lose her before my education is completed.”

“Wouldn’t you like to go away to school somewhere? Most girls do, I understand.”

“Oh, no! I couldn’t leave Grandma and Grandpa. They are old people and need me. At any time something might happen that either or both of them would be unable to work as they do now. I want to be right here, always, to be their staff when they need one.”

The boy, glancing at the girl, could readily tell that what she had said had come from her heart. It had been neither for effect nor from a sense of duty.

The boy changed the subject. “You will miss Lenora when she is gone.”

There was an almost tragic expression in the liquid brown eyes that were turned toward him. “No one can know *how* I shall miss her. It has been wonderful to have someone near one’s own age to confide in.”

“Wouldn’t I do when Lenora is gone?” Harold ventured. “I’m not such a lot older than you are.”

“I’m afraid not,” Jenny smilingly retorted. “Girl confidences would seem foolish to you.” Then, as they drove between the pepper-tree posts, she exclaimed, “I surely deserve a scolding for having so long neglected my beloved teacher.”

Miss Dearborn did not scold Jenny. There was in her face an expression which at once assured the girl that something of an unusual nature had occurred. Harold had remained in the wagon and the two, who cared so much for each other, were alone in the charming library and living-room of Hill-Crest.

“Miss Dearborn. Oh, what has happened? I know something has.” Then seeing a suitcase standing near, locked and strapped, the girl became more than ever fearful. “You are going away. Oh, Miss Dearborn, are you?” Tears sprang to the eagerly questioning brown eyes.

“Yes, dear girl, I am going to Carmel. I had told you that Eric Austin and his family are living there. Last night a telegram came, sent by that dear sister-friend herself. She is ill and wants me to come at once. Of course I am going.”

The telephone called Miss Dearborn to another room. When she returned she said, “A taxicab will be here shortly.” As she donned her hat, she continued talking. “No one knows how sincerely I hope my schoolmate will recover. She is so happily married, she dearly loves her husband and her children. Oh, Jeanette, it is so sad when a mother is taken away. There is no one, *just no one* who can take her place to the little ones.”

The girl asked, “How many children are there, Miss Dearborn? I remember you said one girl had been named after you.”

“Yes, then there is a boy, a year or two older, and this baby, the one that has just come!” She took up the suitcase, but Jenny held out her hand. “Please let me carry it.” The teacher did so, as she had to close and lock the front door. Harold sprang from the wagon. “Miss Dearborn,” the girl said, “you have heard me speak of our neighbors, the Poindexter-Jones. This is my friend Harold.” The lad, cap under his arm, took the outstretched hand, acknowledging the introduction, then reached for the suitcase.

Sounds of an automobile laboring up the rough hill-road assured them, before they saw the small closed car, that the taxi was arriving.

Jenny held her teacher’s hand in a close clasp and her eyes were again brimmed with tears. This time for the mother of the little new baby.

“Good-bye, dear girl.” The woman turned to the boy and said, “Take good care of my Jeanette. Even she does not know what a comfort she is to me.”

The boy had replied something, he hardly knew what. Of course he would take care of Jenny. With his life, if need be. When the taxi was gone he took the girl’s arm and led her back to the wagon. He saw that she was almost crying and he knew that her dear friend must be starting on some sad mission, but Jenny merely said, when they were driving down the canyon road, “Miss Dearborn has a college friend living in Carmel and she is very ill and has sent for her.”

After a time he spoke aloud his own thoughts. “Jeanette, that is what your teacher called you. It reminds me of my sister’s name somewhat.” He hesitated.

He was on dangerous ground. He must be very careful of what he said. The girl turned toward him glowingly. “How lucky you are, Harold, to have a real sister. She must be a good pal for you. Is she to be at home soon?”

“Yes, tomorrow.” The boy hesitated, then he said slowly, thinking ahead: “Jenny, Mother and I feel that we haven’t brought Gwyn up just right. We have helped her to be proud and selfish. I’m going to ask you a favor. Will you try to win her friendship and be patient and not hurt if she seems to snub you just at first? Will you, Jenny?” The boy was very much in earnest, and so the girl replied, “Why, Harold, I will try, if you wish, but I know that your sister does not want my friendship, so why should she be forced to have it?”

“Because I wish it,” was all the lad would reply. Jenny knew better than the boy did how difficult it would be.

CHAPTER XXIX.
THE HAUGHTY GWYNETTE

True to his promise, Harold took Charles to the “big house” just before five, the hour of his mother’s appointing.

“You have a beautiful home,” the visiting lad remarked as he was led along box-edged paths and paused to gaze into the mirror-clear, sun-sparkled water in the pond lily garden. Lotus flowers were lying on the still blue surface, waxen lovely and sweetly fragrant.

They went up the marble steps, crossed the portico and entered a long wide hall which led directly to the front door through the windows of which the late afternoon sun was streaming.

“The library is my favorite room,” Harold said. “I will leave you there while I go up and see if mother is ready to meet my new friend.”

They were nearing a wide door where rich, crimson velvet portiers hung, when Harold heard his name spoken back of him. Turning, he saw Miss Dane beckoning to him. After speaking with her he said: “Charles, wait in the library for me. I won’t be gone long. Mother wishes to speak to me alone for just a few moments.”

Charles stopped to look at a very beautiful painting before he stepped between the velvet portiers. At once he saw that the room was occupied. “Pardon me!” he exclaimed. A girl had risen and was staring at him with amazement, but her momentary indignation was changed to interest when she saw how good-looking and well-dressed he was. With a graciousness she could always assume when she wished, Gwynette assured him: “Indeed you are not intruding. I heard my brother tell you to wait here until he came. Won’t you be seated? I am Gwynette, Harold’s sister. He may have told you about me?” The lad was amazed. Even

while he was assuring the girl that he had indeed heard of her his thought was inquiring, “How could Harold find it hard to care for such a graceful, beautiful sister, even though she was adopted.”

Gwynette had resumed the seat she had occupied formerly, a deep softly upholstered leather chair drawn close to the wide hearth on which a drift log was burning with flames of many colors.

“And I,” the lad sat in the chair on the opposite side of the hearth to which she motioned him, “since Harold is not here to introduce me, will tell you who I am and how I happen to be here.” Then he hesitated, gazing inquiringly at the girl whose every pose was one of grace. “You probably know my sister, Lenora Gale, since she was at the Granger Place Seminary for a time.”

If there was a stiffening on the part of the girl, it was not perceptible. If her thought was rather disdainfully “another farmer”, she did not lessen her apparent interest. Her reply, though not enthusiastic, was in the affirmative, modified with, “I really cannot say that I knew your sister well, however. She was not in my classes and our rooms were far apart.”

Then, with just the right amount of seeming solicitude, “She is quite well now, I hope. I understand that she went to stay at my mother’s farm with our overseer’s family.”

Charles glanced up at her quickly. Gwyn could not long play a part without revealing her true self. “Very wonderful people, the Warners,” was what the young man said. “It has been a privilege to meet them. Lenora, I am glad to say, is daily becoming stronger and within a fortnight we will be able to travel to our far-away home.”

He paused and the girl said, now with less interest, “A ranch, I understand.”

“Yes, a ranch.” Silence fell between them. Gwynette gazed into the fire, torn between her scorn for her companion’s station in life and her admiration of his magnetic personality. Suddenly she smiled at him and Charles felt that he had never seen any girl more beautiful. “Do you know,” she said with apparent naivete, “it is hard for me to believe that you are a farmer; you impress me as being a gentleman to the manner born.”

The lad, who was her senior by several years, smiled. “Miss Gwynette,” he

retorted, “I am far more proud of being a rancher than I would be of inheriting a title.”

Harold returned just then to say that his mother was ready to receive their guest. The younger lad was amazed at the graciousness with which his usually fretful sister assured Charles Gale that she was indeed glad he was to be with them for dinner.

When the two boys were quite out of hearing, Harold gave a low whistle. Clapping his friend on the shoulder, he said softly: “Charles, you’re a miracle worker. I haven’t seen such a radiant smile from Gwyn in more days than I can remember.” The other lad replied in a low voice, “I’m glad you took me into your confidence. I may be able to help you solve your problem.”

Harold asked with sincere eagerness, “You think that perhaps Gwyn can be changed without taking the extreme measure of telling her that she is Jenny Warner’s own sister?”

Charles nodded. “The ideal thing would be to so change Gwynette that she would be glad to learn that she had a sister all her very own.” Harold shook his head. “Can’t be done, old man, unless that sister proved to be an heiress or an earl’s daughter.” The boy laughed at a sudden recollection. “Poor Gwyn had a most unfortunate experience and sort of made herself the laughing stock of her crowd over at the seminary,” he confided. “She heard that there was a girl in the school whose father was a younger son of English nobility who might some day be Lady Something-or-other. Gwyn decided that *that* girl should be cultivated, but, unfortunately, the young lady had requested that her identity be kept a secret. No one but Miss Granger knew it. The principal had been proud, evidently, of the fact that a member of a noble English family attended her school, and had let that much be known.” Charles smiled. “I thought America was democratic and cared nothing for class,” he said.

They had stopped on the circling, softly-carpeted stairway while they talked. Being far from the library, they had no fear of being overheard by Gwyn. Harold replied: “Well, there are some of us who care nothing at all for class, but every country has its snobs and Gwyn is one, unfortunately.”

Charles appeared interested. “Did she manage to identify the girl who might some day have a title?”

Again Harold laughed. “Poor Gwyn, it really was very funny. She selected a big, handsome blonde who ordered the maids about in an imperious manner and, more than that, she gave a dance at The Palms, inviting her to be the guest of honor. I brought down a bunch of cadets from the big town and it happened one of them hailed from Chicago, and so did the handsome blonde. He told us that she was a Swede and that her father had made a fortune raising pigs!”

Charles could not refrain from smiling. “That was hard on your sister, wasn’t it?” he said.

The other lad nodded. “I wouldn’t dare refer to it in Gwyn’s hearing, but come on! Mother will wonder where we are all this time.”

Mrs. Poindexter-Jones was as much pleased with Harold’s new friend as Gwynette had been, and, in the brief ten moments that the boys stayed with the invalid, she became convinced that he was just the lad she would like to have in the cliff cabin with her son. When the nurse appeared with a warning nod at Harold, the boys at once arose, and the woman, reclining among her pillows, smiled as she held out a frail hand. “Charles Gale,” she said kindly, “we are glad indeed to have you with us. Remain as long as you can, and, when your sister is stronger, I would like to have that dear little Warner girl bring her to call upon me.”

On the way down the wide circling flight of stairs Charles said softly, “Your mother seems to like Jenny Warner.” The other nodded. “Yes, she does. She wonders if, had she chosen Jeanette, as she calls her, and the Warners had taken Gwynette, the girls would have been different. Susan Warner declares that if her Jenny had been brought up as a princess she would still have been simple and loving, going about doing good as she does now. She is the bright angel to a family of Italians living in Sycamore Canyon.”

Soft chimes from the dining-room told them that the dinner hour had arrived, and so Harold went to the library to escort his sister, Charles following. Again the bright smile greeted them. Rising, the girl said, “Brother, Ma Mere told me, when I arrived from the seminary this afternoon, that I need not remain here this summer unless I so desire.”

To Charles she explained, “I did feel so neglected when Mother sent me to this out-of-the-way country school. I wanted to be with her in France. The resort

where she was staying is simply charming, and one meets people there from the very best English families. For some reason, however, I had to be buried out here." Then, after an expressive shrug, she added with renewed interest: "Ma Mere has heard of a select party sailing from San Francisco next week, and if I wish, I may join it."

While Gwyn had been talking, they had sauntered to the dining-room and were seated in a group at one end of the long, highly-polished table. Charles, listening attentively, now realized how truly selfish the girl was. He was recalling another girl in a far-distant scene. When their mother had been ill, Lenora could hardly be persuaded to leave her bedside long enough to obtain the rest she needed, and that illness had lasted many months. Indeed, it was not until after the mother had died that the girl could be persuaded to think of herself, and then it was found, as Charles and his father had feared, that she had used up far more vitality than she could spare and she had not been strong since. He tried not to feel critically toward the beautiful girl at his side. Purposely he did not glance at Harold. That boy had flushed uncomfortably, and, at, last, he spoke his thoughts, which he evidently had tried to refrain from doing. "Gwyn, don't you suppose, if you stayed at home, you might make our mother's long hours in bed pleasanter for her?"

The girl's tone was just tinged with irritation. "No, Harold, I do not. Mother does not find my companionship restful and Miss Dane surely does for her all that is humanly possible." Gwyn was distinctly uncomfortable. She felt that the conversation was not putting her in an enviable light and she had truly wished to impress Charles Gale, for the time being, at least. She had no desire to have the admiration a lasting one, since he was merely a rancher's son.

Gwynette had one ambition and that was to make a most desirable marriage soon after her eighteenth birthday, which was not many months away. She was convinced that, after her debut into San Francisco's most select "Younger Set", she would soon meet the man of her dreams. She never doubted but that *he* at once would love her and desire to make her his wife. But just now it would be gratifying to her vanity to have so handsome a young giant as Charles Gale admire her. Poor Gwyn at that moment was far from having accomplished this. Charles *did* admire beauty, and thought how charming she would be, were she not so superlatively selfish.

Harold changed the subject. "Gwyn, we boys are going to the farm after dinner.

Will you go with us? Charles naturally wishes to spend the evenings with his sister."

Both boys waited, though not appearing to do so, for the girl's reply. Her brother well knew that she would not want to go to the farm and associate with her mother's servants, as she called Susan and Silas Warner and their granddaughter, but, on the other hand, Harold could easily see that his sister was much impressed with Charles Gale and might wish to accompany them for the sake of his companionship if for no other reason.

Gwyn *did* accept, after a moment's thought. She knew that, all alone in the big house, she would be frightfully bored. And so, half an hour later, the three started out across the gardens, under the pines and along the cliff, where in the early twilight a full moon, rising from the sea, was sending toward them a path of silver. Gwynette paused and looked out across the water for a long silent moment. When she spoke, it was to her brother. "Harold, I've never before been along this cliff. In fact," this to Charles, "all of my life has been spent either in San Francisco or abroad. This is the first year that Mother has seemed to want to come to Santa Barbara. I always supposed it was because it reminded her of our father, who died here so long ago."

"Then you do not know the beautiful spots that are everywhere around your own home," Charles said, and his voice was more kindly than it had been. He was sorry for the girl who had been brought up among people who thought that ascending the social ladder was the one thing to be desired. He knew, for Harold had told him, how sincerely the mother regretted all this, but now that the girl's character was formed, they feared that only some extreme measure, such as revealing to her who she really was, could change her. Charles, who was a deep student of human nature, felt that the girl's sincere joy in the loveliness of the path of silver light on the sea was a hopeful sign. Harold was thinking, "That is the first resemblance to Jenny Warner that I have noticed. *She* loves nature in all its moods." At their first tap on the front door, it was flung open and Jenny, in her yellow dress, greeted them joyfully, pausing, however, and hesitating when she saw by whom the boys were accompanied. One glimpse into the old-fashioned farm "parlor", with its haircloth-covered furniture, its wax wreath under a glass, its tidies on the chairs, its framed mottoes on the walls, beside chromo pictures of Susan and Si Warner made when they were married, filled Gwynette with shuddering dread. She couldn't, she wouldn't associate with these people as equals. Had she not been an honored guest in the homes of

millionaires in San Francisco and abroad? But, distasteful as it all was to her, she found herself advancing over the threshold when Charles stepped aside to permit her to enter ahead of him. Jenny, remembering her promise to Harold, held out her hand, rather diffidently, but Gwynette was apparently looking in another direction, and so it was Harold who took it, and, although his greeting was the customary one, his eyes expressed the gratitude that he felt because Jenny had *tried* to fulfill her promise to him. “Don’t bother about it any more,” he said in a low voice aside, “it isn’t worth it.” Of course the girl did not know just what he meant, but she resolved not to be discouraged by one failure.

CHAPTER XXX.
GWYN'S AWAKENING

"Wall, wall," it was Silas Warner who entered the parlor five moments later, rubbing his hands and smiling his widest, "this here looks like a celebration or some sech. 'Tain't anybody's birthday, is it, Jenny-gal, that yer givin' a party for?"

"Oh, don't I wish it were, though," Harold exclaimed, "then Grandma Sue would make one of her famous mountain chocolate cakes." He looked around the group beseechingly. "Say, can't one of you raise a birthday within the next fortnight. It will be worth the effort."

Lenora flashed a smile across the room at her brother. "Charles can," she announced. "He will be twenty-one on the twenty-fifth of June."

"Great!" Then turning to the smiling old woman who sat near Jenny in the most comfortable rocker the room afforded, "Grandma Sue, I implore that your heart be touched! Will you make us a cake twenty-one layers high, with chocolate in between an inch thick? I'll bring the candles and the ice cream."

Jenny, who for the first time was surrounded by young people, caught Harold's holiday spirit and clapping her hands impulsively, she cried, "Won't that be fun! Grandma Sue, you'll let us have a real party for Charles' birthday, won't you?"

Of course the old woman was only too happy to agree to their plans. While she and Jenny were talking, Harold sat back and looked at the two girls, the "unlike sisters" as he found himself calling them. Gwynette sat on the edge of a slipper haircloth chair, the stiffest in the room. There was an unmistakable sneer in the curve of her mouth, which was quite as sensitive as Jenny's but lacking the sweet cheerful upturn at the corners. Nor was Harold the only one who was thinking about this very evident likeness, or unlikeness.

Farmer Si, chewing a toothpick (of all plebeian things!), stood warming his back at the nickel-plated parlor stove, hands back of him, teetering now and then from heel to toe and ruminating. “Wall,” was his self-satisfied conclusion, “who wants her can have ’tother one. Ma and me got the best of that little drawin’ deal.”

“But that birthday is a whole week away,” Harold was saying, “and here is a perfectly good evening to spend. The question before the house is, how shall we spend it?”

“O, I know,” Lenora leaned forward eagerly. “Let’s make popcorn balls. Brother and I used to call that the greatest kind of treat when we were children.”

Gwynette’s cold voice cut in with: “But *we* are *not* children.”

Harold leaped up exclaiming, “Maybe you are not, Gwyn, but the rest of us are. Grandma Sue, may we borrow your kitchen if we leave it as spotless as we find it?”

Gwynette rose, saying coldly, “I am very tired. I think I will go home now.” Harold was filled with consternation. He, of course, would have to accompany his sister, but, before he could speak, Charles was saying: “I will walk over with you, Miss Gwynette, if you will permit me to do so. I haven’t had nearly my usual amount of outdoor exercise today, and I’d be glad to do it.”

Gwynette flashed a grateful glance at him, and, wishing to appear well in his eyes, she actually crossed the room and held out her hand to the old woman, who, with the others, had risen. “Goodnight, Mrs. Warner,” she began, then surprised herself by ending with—“I hope you will invite me to the birthday party.” She bit her lip with vexation as soon as she was outdoors. She had not meant to say it. Why had she? It was the same as acknowledging that she considered herself an equal socially with the Warners and the Gales, who also were farmers. She knew the answer, even though she would not admit it.

“What a warm, pleasant evening it is,” Charles said when the door of the farmhouse had closed behind them. “Would it bore you terribly, Miss Gwynette, to go out on the point of rocks with me for a moment? I’d like to see the surf closer in the moonlight.”

“Oh, I’d love to.” Gwynette was honest, at least, when she made this reply. She liked to be with this good-looking young giant who carried himself as a Grecian

god might have done.

Taking her arm, the young man assisted the slender, graceful girl from rock to rock until they had reached the highest point. There Charles noted the canopied rock where Lenora and Jenny sat on the first day of their visit to the point together.

“Is it too cool, do you think, to sit here a moment?” Gwynette asked somewhat shyly. For answer, the lad drew off his outer coat, folded it and placed it on the stone. “Oh, I don’t need it,” he said, when she protested. “This slipover sweater of mine is all that I usually wear, but I put on the coat tonight in honor of the ladies.” Then, folding his arms, he stood silently near, watching the truly inspiring scene. One great breaker after another rolled quietly in, lifting a foaming crest as it neared the shore, glistening like fairy snow in the silver of the moonlight.

“The surf doesn’t roar tonight, the way it does sometimes,” the lad said, dropping at last to the rock at the girl’s side. “Watch now when the next wave breaks, how all of the spray glistens.”

For a few moments neither spoke and, in Gwynette’s starved soul something stirred again, this time more distinctly. It was an intense love of nature that she had inherited, with Jenny, from a wandering poet-missionary father. She caught her breath when spray and mist dashed almost up to them. “O, it is lovely, lovely!” she said, for once being perfectly sincere and forgetting herself. “I never saw anything so exquisite.”

Charles was more than pleased. Perhaps he was to find the soul of the girl at his side. Harold did not believe that she had one. As he glanced down at her now and then her real joy in the beauty of the scene before them, he concluded that she was fully as beautiful as her sister.

“I wonder where the silver path leads,” she said whimsically.

“I wish I had a sailboat here,” the lad exclaimed, “and if you would be my passenger, we’d sail over that silver stream and find where it leads.”

The girl looked up at him. Her new emotion had changed the expression of her face. It was no longer cynical and cold. “Our father had a sailboat, but for years it has been hanging to the rafters of the boathouse. Perhaps Harold would like to

take it down, now that he is to be here all summer."

"Good. I'll ask him!" the lad was enthusiastic. "I suppose you wonder how I, a farmer from the inland, learned to sail. It was the year before mother died that we all went to Lake Tahoe, hoping that the change of air would benefit her. A splendid sailboat was one of the accessories of the cabin we rented, and how I reveled in it. I do hope Harold will loan me his boat. It seems calm enough beyond the surf. In fact I saw several boats today evidently racing around a buoy over toward the town."

"Yes, there is a yacht club at Santa Barbara and they have a wonderful harbor. Harold has been invited to join the club. I would like to attend one of their dances."

The girl hesitated to ask her companion if he could dance. Probably not, having been brought up on an isolated ranch. To her relief the question was answered without having been asked.

"I believe I like skating better than dancing, but, when the music pleases me and my partner, I do enjoy dancing." Gwyn found that she must reconstruct her preconvinced ideas about Dakota farmers. Then, after silently watching the waves for a thoughtful moment, he turned toward her as he smilingly said: "Miss Gwynette, do you suppose that you and I could go to the next Yacht Club dance?"

"Oh, yes, of course." The girl's eyes were glowing. Now indeed the resemblance to Jenny was marked. "We have the entree everywhere."

As they walked side by side toward the big house. Gwyn was conscious of being happier than she had ever been in all her seventeen years. Then she realized, with a pang of regret, that in two weeks this companion who seemed to understand her better than did anyone else, would be gone.

At the foot of the steps she turned and held out her hand. "Goodnight, Mr. Gale," she said simply. "Thank you for escorting me home."

CHAPTER XXXI.
CONFLICTING EMOTIONS

Harold was more than glad to grant his sister's request that the sailboat, which for years had been suspended in the boathouse, should be lowered and launched. Naturally, after having dried for so long leaks appeared as soon as it was afloat in the quiet cove sheltered by the little peninsula, Rocky Point. Again it was drawn up and a merry morning the two boys spent with the help of an old man about the place who at one time had sailed the seas. The cracks were caulked and again the pretty craft floated, seeming to dance for joy, over the smoothly rolling waves, when it was tied to the buoy a short distance from shore. The rowboat had been used by the gardener for fishing excursions, and so that was in readiness. The boys had been glad to find that, though the sails were somewhat yellowed, they had been so carefully rolled away and covered that no repairs were necessary.

"We'd better make a trial trip in the craft before we take the ladies," Charles suggested when, dressed in their overalls, they paused on their way to the farm the next morning to look out at the boat.

It was that very day that Mrs. Poindexter-Jones again decided that she would like to be taken to the pond-lily garden and have Jenny Warner read to her. When, leaning on Miss Dane's arm, she arrived in the charming shrub-sheltered nook, she saw Gwynette lying in a hammock which was stretched between two sycamore trees near. The girl at once arose and went forward to greet her mother with an expression of real solicitude which the woman had never before seen in her daughter's face. She even glanced again to be sure that she had not been mistaken. Brightly the girl said, "Good morning, Ma Mere. I'm glad you are able to be out this lovely day. I was just coming to your room to ask if you'd like me to read aloud to you. I found such a good story in the library, a new one."

The pleased woman glanced at the book the girl held. It was the one in which

Jenny Warner had read a few chapters.

There was a glad light in the eyes of the girl's foster-mother.

Gwyn saw it, and for the first time in her life her conscience stirred, rebuking her for having never before thought of doing anything to add to her mother's pleasure.

What the older woman said was: "I shall be more than glad to have my daughter read to me. I was just about to send for Jenny Warner. Before you came home she started to read that very book to me, but we were only at the beginning." Gwynette flushed. "Oh, if you would rather have—" she began. But her mother, hearing the hurt tone and wishing to follow up any advantage the moment might be offering, hurriedly said: "Indeed I would far rather have you read to me than anyone else, dear Gwynette. I had not asked you because I did not know that you would care to." There was an almost pathetic note in the voice which again carried a rebuke to the heart of the girl.

Miss Dane left them, after having arranged her patient in the comfortable reclining chair.

Gwynette, having read by herself to the chapter where Jenny had stopped, began to read aloud and the woman, leaning back luxuriously at ease, listened with a growing tenderness in her eyes. How beautiful Gwynette was, and surely there was a changed expression which had come within the last few days. *What* could have caused it? Why did she seem more content to remain in the country? The girl had not again mentioned the party for European travel which she had seemed so eager to join when her mother had proposed it. Half an hour later she suggested that they stop reading and visit.

"Dear," she said, and Gwynette actually thrilled at the new tenderness in her mother's voice, "it isn't going to bore you as much as you thought to remain here with us?"

The girl rose and sat on a stool near the reclining chair. "Ma Mere," she said, and there were actually tears in her eyes, "I have been very unhappy, miserably dissatisfied, and I sometimes think that what I am yearning for is love. I have had adulation," she spoke somewhat bitterly. "I have demanded a sort of homage from the girls in my set wherever I was. I think often they grudgingly gave it. I've had lots of time to think about all these things during the last two weeks

when Beulah and Patricia, who had been my best friends in San Francisco, were busy with final tests. I knew, when I faced the thing squarely, out there in the summer-house where I spent so many hours alone. I knew that neither of those girls really cared for me—I mean with their hearts—the way they did for each other, and it made me feel lonely—left out. I don't know as I had ever felt that way before, and then, when I came over here, that first day after you came home, you talked about Harold with such loving tenderness, and again I felt so neglected." She looked up, for the woman had been about to speak. "Let me finish, Ma Mere, please, for I may never again feel that I *want* to tell what I think. I have been locked up so long. I've been too proud to tell anyone that I *knew* Harold did not really care for me, that every little thing he did for me was because he considered it a duty."

His mother knew this to be true, for her son had made the same confidence the day he had arrived from school. Her only comment was to lay her hand lovingly on the brown head. A caress had not occurred between these two, not since Gwynette had been a little girl.

There were unshed tears in the woman's eyes. How blind she had been. After all, Gwynette was not entirely to blame. Well the foster-mother knew that she had encouraged the high-spirited girl to be proud and haughty. For many years Mrs. Poindexter-Jones had considered social standing of more importance than all else, but, during the long months that she had been ill, an idle watcher of the throngs who visited the famous health resort in France, something of the foolishness of it all had come to her and she had readjusted her sense of real values, scarcely knowing when it had happened. She had much to regret, much to try to undo.

"Dear girl," she said, and there was in her voice a waver as though it were hard for her to speak, and yet she was determined to do so, "I fear I have done you a great wrong. I have taught you to be proud, to scorn worthiness in your fellow-men, or, if not exactly that, to place class distinction above it. Now I know that character is the true test of what a man is, not how much money he has or what his place in society. Of course, it is but right that we should choose our friends from among those people who interest us, but not from among those who can benefit us in a worldly way. Gwynette, daughter, is it too late for me to undo the wrong that I have done in giving you these false standards and ideals?"

Now there were indeed tears quivering on the lashes of the older woman. The

girl was touched, as she never before had been. “Oh, Mother!” It was really a yearning cry. “Then you *do* love me. You do care?”

Miss Dane appeared at the moment and the older woman merely smiled at the girl, but with such an expression of infinite tenderness that, when the invalid had been led away, there was a most unusual warmth in Gwynette’s heart. She rose and walked down to the cliff. She wanted, oh, her mother could not know how very much she wanted to free herself from the old standards, because she admired, more than she had ever before admired anyone, the son of a mere rancher. She stood gazing at the boat and thinking so intently of these things that she did not hear footsteps near, but how her heart rejoiced when she heard a voice asking, “Will you go to the Yacht Club dance with me this evening, Miss Gwynette? Harold has procured the necessary tickets.”

Would she go? Gwynette turned such a glowingly radiant face toward the questioner that he marveled at her beauty. How could he know that it was the magic of his friendship which had wrought this almost unbelievable transformation.

“Oh, how splendid! The Yacht Club is a beautiful place and the music they have is simply divine.” Then she hesitated and looked doubtful, “but I haven’t a new party gown and I wore my old one there last month.”

How trivial and unimportant the young man’s hearty laugh made her remark seem, and what he said might have been called brutally frank: “You don’t suppose that anyone will recall what Miss Gwynette Poindexter-Jones wore on that particular occasion?”

The girl flushed, although she knew the rebuke contained in the remark had not been intentionally unkind. Yet she could not resist saying, with a touch of her old hauteur, “You mean that no one will remember me.” Then the native common sense which had seldom been given an opportunity to express itself came to save her from petty displeasure. “You are right, Sir Charles,” she said lightly, “of course no one there tonight will recall the gown I wore; in fact they won’t remember *me* at all.”

The lad had glanced quickly at the girl when she had called him “Sir Charles,” but, noting that it had been but a teasing preface to her remark, he stood by her side for a silent moment gazing out at the boat.

“Harold and I are going for a sail this afternoon,” he said, “if the craft doesn’t leak. We want to try it out before we take the young ladies for a sail. My sister Lenora used to love to be my passenger when we were up at Lake Tahoe.”

Gwyn did not know why she asked, just a bit coyly, “Was your sister your *only* passenger?”

The reply was frankly given: “No indeed! There were several young ladies at a nearby inn who accompanied us at different times.”

Harold came up just then and said: “Well, Gwyn, are you going to watch the famous sailors perform this afternoon? Jenny and Lenora have promised to be out on Rocky Point to encourage us with their presence, so to speak.” Charles looked keenly at the girl as he said: “I would be pleased if you would join them, Miss Gwyn. I would like you to know my sister better. You will love her when you do.”

They had turned and were walking toward the house. Gwynette did not in the least want to go. After hesitating, she replied: “I planned looking over my gown. It may need some alterations.”

Even as she spoke, she knew that her words did not ring true. She sensed, more than saw, that Charles was disappointed in her. He began at once to talk about sailing to Harold, and, for the rest of the walk she might have been quite alone. Her brother realized that Gwyn had not been courteous. She should, at least, have replied that she was *sure* she would like the sister of Charles. He, Harold, had said nothing of Jenny. He was not going to have his friend again humiliated by Gwyn’s haughty disdain. He was almost glad that she had invented an excuse for remaining away.

Gwyn lunched alone in the big formal dining-room. The boys had departed for their cabin, where Sing Long had prepared their midday meal as usual. The girl had hoped they would invite her to accompany them, but they had not done so.

After lunch she went to her room and took out the gown. She well knew that it was in perfect repair, for had she not worn it to the party she had given at The Palms in honor of the girl she had *supposed* was related to nobility? How foolish she had been! She did not much blame Patricia and Beulah for laughing at her. In all probability there had been no such girl in the seminary, and if there had been, what possible difference could it make to her? Then she recalled what her

mother had said: “It is *character* that counts, not class distinction.” Gwyn was decidedly unhappy. She laid the filmy, truly exquisite gown on her bed and stood gazing out of her window. She saw the sailboat gliding past. She decided that at least she would go out on the cliff.

CHAPTER XXXII.
THREE GIRLS

Gwynette, dressed in a corn-yellow linen with tailored lines and wearing a very becoming sport hat of the same material and color, trimmed with old blue and orange, sauntered out to the cliff. She had intended to remain there on a rustic bench to watch the boys sail to and fro, hoping, though scarcely believing, that they would eventually land at the small pier at their boathouse. Another thought prompted: “They are far more apt to land nearer the Point of Rocks. Charles will want to be with his sister, and Harold cares much more for that—that——” She hesitated, for even in her thought she did not like to connect her brother’s name with the granddaughter of her mother’s servants.

Rising, and without definite decision to do so, she sauntered along the cliff in the direction of the rocky point. She saw the two girls seated on the highest rock, and just at that moment they were waving seaward, and so Gwyn decided that the sailboat must be nearing the shore. A low-growing old pine hid the water from her view. When she had passed it, she glanced quickly out at the gleaming, dancing waves, and there, turning for a tack, was the boat she sought. Charles, at the rudder, saw her at once and waved his hat. She flushed. He would know that she was going over to the point to be with the other girls. Half angry with herself, when she realized that she was doing it merely to please him, and not in the least because it was her own desire, she actually paused, determining to turn back, but before she had done so, Jenny, having glanced around, saw her, and so it was too late to retreat even if she had really wished to do so. Remembering her promise to Harold, Jenny called in her most friendly manner, “Oh, Miss Poindexter-Jones, won’t you come over on the Reviewing Rocks, as Harold calls them? We have a wonderful view of the boat from here.”

Gwynette went, and if her smile was faint, it was at least a smile, and Jenny felt encouraged. She gave up her own position. “Do sit here,” she said, “this seat is really as comfortable as a rock can be. I would offer to go to the house for a

cushion, but Lenora has the only two that we own and she needs them both."

"Indeed, I do not." The seated girl protested, and she was about to draw out the one against which she was leaning, but Gwyn had the good grace to at once declare that her gown washed nicely and she did not in the least mind sitting on the rocks. Then they turned to watch the antics of the sailboat.

"Charles is in his element now." It was evident from her tone that Lenora was very proud of her brother. "When we were at Tahoe the daughters of the wealthy cottagers and guests at Tahoe Inn were always eager to have him accompany them, not only sailing but everywhere." With a little laugh she concluded, "As you may guess, I have a very popular brother." Then, more seriously, as she recalled why they had been at the lake, far-famed for its beauty: "But Charles refused nearly all invitations that he might remain with our dear mother, who was frail. In fact, the only ones he accepted were those that Mother and I insisted that he should not refuse. But, oftenest of all, Charles would take me with him for a sunrise sail before Mother would need us, and I shall never, never forget the beauty of the awakening day on that mountain-circled lake." All this was told to Jenny, who had seated herself on another rock a little apart from the others.

Gwyn found herself thinking it strange that ranchers from Dakota should have the entree to Tahoe Inn, which she knew to be exclusive. Then she had to confess that she, herself, had always associated with only the first families, and yet she now was seated on the rocks with two girls far beneath her socially. She flushed as she had to acknowledge that she was there just to please Charles Gale. He probably had attracted the girls who had been at Tahoe Inn as he did her. Her lips, though she did not know it, were taking on the customary scornful lines, when Jenny stood up.

"They're coming in close this time. Harold wants to tell us something. Everyone listen hard."

The lad, making a trumpet of his hands, was shouting: "We'll land next tack. Have some lemonade for us, will you?"

The standing girl nodded her head: then, holding out a hand to Lenora, said: "That command shall be obeyed."

More formally, though in a tone of friendliness, Jenny turned to the other girl: "You will go with us, will you not, Miss Poindexter-Jones? I'll gather some fresh

lemons and——” her face brightened as she added: “Let’s set the rustic table out under the trees near the hammock, and serve some of those little cakes Grandma made this morning, and we might even have strawberries. I gathered many more than we’ll need for the shortcake for dinner.”

“Oh! That will be jolly fun!” Jenny’s enthusiasm was contagious as far as Lenora was concerned, and so all three girls walked toward the house, two of them eagerly, but one reluctantly. Why didn’t she have the courage to say that she must go to her own home? What excuse could she give that would be the truth, for, strangely enough, Gwynette scorned falsehood. She had been angry with herself ever since she had made the excuse of the dress, knowing that it had not been true. Though they did not know it, that high sense of honesty these two girls had inherited from their missionary father.

While she was struggling with her desire to be one of the party when Charles should have landed, and her disinclination at being with girls far beneath her socially, Jenny, who was a little in the lead, turned and smilingly addressed her:

“Miss Poindexter-Jones, what would you prefer doing—hulling strawberries, making the lemonade or setting the table under the trees?”

Lenora, who was bringing up the rear of the little procession, smiled to herself. Jenny surely was daring, for, as they both well knew, Gwynette would not *prefer* to do anything at all. Surely she would now find some excuse for hasty retreat. She might go home and read to her mother if she had awakened. This Gwyn decided to tell them, but when she did hear her own voice it was saying: “If I may choose, I prefer to set the table.”

“Good!” Jenny turned to Lenora: “Dearie, shall you mind staining your fingers rosy red?”

“Strawberry red, you mean, don’t you?” Lenora dropped down on the top step of the front porch, adding with an upward smile: “Sister Jenny, bring the fruit and I will hull with pleasure.”

“All right-o.” Then to the other girl, who stood stiffly erect, Jenny said very sweetly: “If you will come with me, I’ll show you where Grandmother Sue keeps her best china. I know that she will let us use it for this gala occasion.” Then pointing: “See over there, by the hammock, is the little rustic table. There are five of us. I’ll bring out five chairs.”

“Don’t!” Lenora put in. “I’d far rather luxuriate in the hammock. Anyway, four chairs even up the table better.”

Gwyn removed her hat, and followed Jenny toward the kitchen, where in an old-fashioned china closet there were some very pretty dishes. The ware was thin and the fern pattern was attractive, and suitable for an out-of-door tea party.

For the next fifteen minutes these three girls were busy, and to Gwynette’s surprise she was actually enjoying her share of the preparations. After setting the table with a lunch cloth and the pretty dishes, she gathered a cluster of pink wild roses for the center.

“I love those single roses!” Jenny exclaimed when she brought out a large glass pitcher of lemonade on which were floating strips of peel. “They are so simple and—well—just what they really are, not pretending anything.”

Lenora appeared with a glass dish heaped with luscious strawberries. Their hostess was surely in an appreciative mood. “O-o-h! Don’t they look simply luscious under all that powdered sugar? Those sailors don’t know the treat that’s in store for them.”

“And for us!” It was Gwyn’s first impulsive remark. “I didn’t know that I was hungry, but I feel now as though I were famished.”

“So are we!” A hearty voice behind caused them all to turn, and there were the two boys who had stolen up quietly on purpose to surprise the girls. “We landed at the cabin, so we are all washed up and ready for the ‘eats’.”

And it truly was a feast of merriment. Gwyn was surprised to find herself laughing with the others.

Lenora, half reclining in the hammock, was more an observer than a partaker of the active merriment. From her position she could see the profiles of the two girls at the table. They were both dressed in yellow, for Jenny had on her favorite muslin. The shade was somewhat different from Gwyn’s corn-colored linen, but the effect was startlingly similar. They had both removed their hats and their hair was exactly the same soft waving light brown, with gold glints in it. Indeed, it might have been hair on one head. Charles and Harold, of course, had also noted this at an earlier period, but it was Lenora’s first opportunity to study the two girls. What *could* it mean? *It* was too decided a likeness to be merely a

coincident. She determined to ask Charles.

That lad was devoting his time and thought to drawing Gwyn out of the formal stiffness which had been evident when the little party started. This he did, for Gwyn had had years of practice at clever repartee, and so also had Charles, for, as she knew, he had associated with the daughters of cultured families and also, of course, with the sons.

Jenny and Harold, seated opposite each other, now and then exchanged glances that ranged from amusement to gratification. They were both decidedly pleased that the difficult guest was being entertained.

When at last the strawberries, cakes and lemonade had disappeared, Harold sprang up, announcing that, since the young ladies had prepared the party, the young gentlemen would do the doing that was to follow. Charles instantly began to pile dishes high, saying in a gay tone, directly to Gwyn, “I suppose you hadn’t heard that I am ‘hasher’ now and then at our frat ‘feeds’.”

The girl shuddered. “No, I had not.” Her reply was so cold and her manner again so formal that Lenora put in rebukingly: “Charles, why do you say that? Of course I think it is splendid of boys who have to work their way through college to do anything at all that they can, but father insisted that you pay your way, that you might have your entire time for studying.”

“I know, Sis, dear, but it’s the truth, nevertheless, that we all take turns helping out when there is need of it, and so I have learned the knack and I’m glad to have it. One can’t learn too many things in this old world of ours.”

Gwyn rose, saying not without a hint of her old disdainful hauteur, “I am going now. Mother may be awake and wishing me to read to her.”

“That’s right, she may,” Harold put in. “Otherwise I would remind you that it is not mannerly to eat and run.”

His sister flushed, and Charles, suspecting that an angry reply was on the tip of her tongue, hurried to suggest: “Miss Gwyn, if you will wait until I have finished helping clear up, I’ll sail you home, with Harold’s permission. We left the boat at the cabin dock.”

“Suppose you go at once,” the other lad remarked, “I’d a whole lot rather have

Jenny wipe the dishes while I wash them."

"Good! Then I can take a nap in this comfy hammock," Lenora put in. "This is the most dissipating I've done since I was first taken ill."

Charles was at once solicitous and Jenny half rebukeful. "Oh, Lenora. I do hope you aren't overtired," they both said in different ways.

Lenora curled down among the pillows that she always had with her. "Indeed not! I'll be well enough to travel home one week from today," she assured her brother. "Now do go, everybody, and let me sleep." And so, after bidding good-bye to Jenny and Lenora in a far more friendly manner than her wont, Gwyn, her heart again singing a joyous song she could not understand, walked along the cliff trail, a young giant at her side. "He's only the son of a Dakota rancher," a thought tried to whisper to Gwyn. "What care I?" was her retort as she flashed a smile of good comradeship up at the young man, who, she found, was watching her with unmistakable admiration in his eyes.

"It's good to be alive this beautiful day, isn't it?" was all that he said.

When Charles returned to the farm, he found Lenora still in the hammock awakening from a most refreshing nap. She held out a hand and took it lovingly as he sat on one of the chairs that had been about the rustic table. Lenora spoke in a low voice. "Jenny isn't near, is she, brother?" she inquired.

"Nowhere in sight Why? Shall I call her?"

The girl shook her head. "I wanted to ask you a question and I didn't wish her to hear." Charles was puzzled; then troubled to know how to answer when he heard Lenora's question: "Have you noticed the close resemblance between Jenny and Harold's sister? They might almost be twins if Gwynette were not two years the older. I think it is simply amazing. Their profiles are startlingly similar."

"Yes, I think I noticed the resemblance at once." Charles was glad to be able to add, "Here comes Harold!" Excusing himself, he ran lightly across the grass to meet his friend. In a low voice he explained that his sister had discovered the resemblance and was amazed at it. His listener said: "Suppose we let her into the secret. Perhaps she can help us to induce Gwyn and Jenny at least to like each other." Harold was sure that his mother would not mind, as she had said she would trust everything to his judgment. "I will carry the chairs in. That will

leave you alone to explain as you think best," he concluded after a merry greeting to the girl in the hammock. Harold took three of the chairs and went back to the kitchen. Charles sat again in the fourth chair and took his sister's hand. "Dear girl," he said, "I have received permission from Harold to share with you a secret which is of a very serious nature." Lenora glanced up puzzled and interested.

Then, very simply, Charles told the whole story. The girl's first comment was, "Poor Gwyn! She has had a most unfortunate bringing up, and, if she were now to learn the truth, it would crush her. She might run away and do something desperate."

"That is just what Harold fears, and so he has asked his mother to permit him to have two weeks to think over what would be best to do. He feels encouraged for Gwynette has twice been over here quite of her own free will."

But Lenora shook her head. "There is nothing really encouraging about that, for she did not come to be with Jenny. She came because she likes you."

Charles smiled and surprised Lenora by replying, "And I like Gwynette. She's nicer, really, than she knows." Again there was an interruption. This time both Jenny and Harold appeared. "It's time to milk the cow," the younger lad announced with the broadest smile. "Charles, it's your turn tonight."

"You are both too late," Jenny told them, "for Grandpa Si took the pail out of the milkroom ten minutes ago and by this time it is brimming, I am sure."

Charles rose. "Well, I'm rather glad, as I wish to take a swim before arraying myself for the ball." Noting his sister's questioning expression, he informed her that Gwynette and he were going to a dance at the Yacht Club House that night. "Why don't you go with them, Harold?" It was Jenny inquiring. "I have often heard you say that you like to dance."

"So I do. If you and Lenora will accompany me, I'll go only too gladly."

Lenora shook her head. "I'll be asleep before it would be time to start," she said. "Why don't you go with him, Jenny?"

That pretty maid's laughter was amused and merry. "Would I wear my yellow muslin or my white with the pink sprig? Lenora Gale, you know that I haven't a

party dress, nor do I know how to dance."

Harold put in: "We'll not go tonight, but if Grandma Sue has no religious scruples, I'll come over after dinner and give you a first lesson in modern dancing." Then the two boys went cabin-ward for their afternoon swim.

CHAPTER XXXIII.
GWYNETTE'S CHOICE

Jenny Warner could not guess why there were so many mysterious smiles and head noddings that night at supper and the next morning at breakfast.

"I just know that you're all up to mischief," she accused as they were leaving the table.

"Guess what we four are going to do this morning," Lenora beamed at her friend.

"Well, I know Granddad is going into town."

"And Grandma Sue, you, and I are going with him," Lenora laughingly told Jenny.

Jenny caught the glance that passed between Grandma Sue and Lenora and knew they had a secret.

When an hour later Grandpa Warner stopped Dobbin in front of the most fashionable store in Santa Barbara, Jenny was more puzzled than ever.

"Come on, sister mine." Lenora took Jenny's hand and the two girls and Grandma Sue entered the store.

It was all very mysterious and exciting to Jenny. She looked at Grandma Sue who gazed about at the rainbow-hued silks piled high on the counters, at the display of exquisite laces, and at the dainty silk lingerie, as though she were visiting a museum. "There's a power o' pretty things in this here shop," she confided to her companions.

Lenora, having spoken to a uniformed attendant, led them at once to an elevator

and they were silently and swiftly lifted to an upper floor.

There Jenny saw a handsomely furnished room with glass cases around the walls, and in them hung dresses of every color and kind. She decided that Lenora needed something new to wear on her long journey, which was only five days away, and so she sat with Susan Warner on a velvet upholstered sofa while the other girl spoke quietly with a trim-looking clerk who was dressed in black with white lace collar and cuffs.

“Yes, indeed. We have the very latest things in party gowns.” Jenny could not help overhearing this remark. The clerk continued: “If you will come this way, I will show them to you.” Susan Warner was on her feet as soon as Lenora beckoned. Jenny was more mystified than ever. Lenora did not need a party gown, of that she was sure, for were there not two as pretty as any girl could wish to possess hanging in her closet at the farm?

The saleswoman led them to a small room furnished in old gold and blue. The walls were paneled with gilt-framed mirrors, and here the attendant left them. Susan Warner sat down smiling as she noted Jenny’s perplexity. That little maid could keep quiet no longer. “*Who* is going to buy a party gown,” she inquired. “Lenora doesn’t need another, and Grandma Sue, I’m sure it can’t be *you*.”

“It’s for you, Miss Jeanette Warner,” Lenora whispered. “Sssh! Don’t act surprised, for if you do, what will the saleswoman think? Now, what color would you prefer, blue or yellow are both becoming to you.”

Jenny turned toward the older woman. “Grandma Sue,” she began, when the clerk reappeared with an armful of exquisite gowns of every hue. So there was nothing for Jenny to do but try on one and then another. How lovely, how wonderfully lovely they were, but with a blue silk, the color of forget-me-nots, she had fallen in love at once. It was trimmed with shirred blue lovers’ knots, looping it in here and there, and with clusters of tiny pink silk roses. “We’ll take that,” Grandma Sue announced, not once having asked the price. Jenny gasped. The saleswoman’s well-trained features did not register the astonishment she felt. Susan Warner did not give the impression of wealth or fashion, but one never could tell. The truth was that Lenora had told the clerk not to mention the price, fearing that Jenny would refuse the party dress, which was to be a gift to her from the two Gales. When they emerged from the shop, the lovely gown carefully folded in a long box, Jenny was again surprised to find Harold and

Charles standing by the curb visiting with her grandfather.

“Wall, wall, Jenny-gal, did they get you fixed up with fancy riggin’s?”

Grandpa Si beamed at the darling of his heart.

The girl looked as though she were walking in a dream. It all seemed very unreal to her. “Oh, it is the loveliest dress!” she exclaimed, “but wherever am I to wear it? I *never* went to a party, so why do I need a party gown?”

“You shall see what you shall see,” was Harold’s mysterious reply. Then he added briskly, “Now since we happened to meet you, will you not honor us with your company for lunch?”

“Yes, indeed we will.” Lenora, twinkling-eyed, was evidently carrying out a prearranged conversation. “Just lead the way.”

An attractive café being near, the party, led thither by Harold, was soon seated at a table in a curtained booth.

Silas Warner beamed across at his good wife. “Sort o’ hifalutin doin’s we’re up to, hey, Ma?”

Susan Warner’s cheeks were flushed, her eyes sparkling. “It sure is a treat to me to know what’s on the inside of these places. Will yo’ hear that now? There’s a fiddle startin’ up somewhars.”

The “fiddle” was not alone, for an orchestra played during their entire stay. The boys were told to order the lunch, and they seemed to get a good deal of enjoyment out of doing it. They selected delicacies with long French names, but Grandpa Si, who by that time had removed his hat, since the boys had done so, ate everything that was brought to him with a relish, smacking his lips appreciatively and asking, “Wall, Ma, do yo’ reckon *you* could make one o’ them concoctions if the waiter’d tell you what the mixin’s was?”

“Silas Warner, don’t yo’ go to askin’ him,” Susan warned. “He’ll think we’re greener than we be, even though that’s green enough, goodness knows, when it comes to puttin’ on sech styles.”

The old man leaned over and patted his wife’s hand, which was still partly

covered with the black lace mit. “Ma, don’ yo’ go to frettin’ about me. I ain’t goin’ to ask nothin’ an’, as fer the vittles, thar’s none as can cook more to *my* likin’ than yerself, even though thar be less trimmin’s.”

It was while they were eating their ice cream and cake that Harold suggested that they go to the theatre. It was quite evident that the old people were delighted and so were the girls. “It’s a splendid play,” Charles put in. “I do wish your sister had come with us.” Harold had purposely neglected to tell his friend of the conversation he had had that morning with Gwynette.

As they were leaving the café, Charles asked, “Should you mind, Hal, if I borrow your little gray car and go back after Gwynette? I’m sure she would enjoy the play.”

“Go by all means.” Harold drew his friend aside, although not seeming to do so, as he added, “I’ll get a box for the Warners and Lenora. You would better get seats somewhere else for you and Gwyn.”

“Why?” Charles questioned. “There is usually room for eight at least in a box. Are they smaller here?”

“No-o, but——”

“Hmm! I understand. Well, just leave that to me. So long!”

Meanwhile Gwyn had been feeling decidedly neglected. She had read to her mother in the garden as had become their morning custom but the older woman noted that the girl was listless and disinterested. “Ma Mere,” Gwyn had said, dropping the book to her lap, and showing by her remark that she had not been thinking of the story. “If it isn’t too late I believe I will go on that tour you were telling me about. I am desperately unhappy. Something is all wrong with me.”

Mrs. Poindexter-Jones sighed. “I am sorry, Gwyn. It is too late dear, but perhaps I will hear of another. I will make inquiries if you wish.” Then Miss Dane had come to take the invalid indoors, and Gwyn spent a lonely hour lunching by herself in the great formal dining-room.

It was in the library that Charles found her. She had been trying to read, but oh, how eagerly she glanced up when she heard his step. The lad bounded in, both hands held out. There was an expression in his fine eyes that rejoiced the girl’s

heart.

“Oh, I’ve been so dismally lonely,” Gwyn said, and there were tears of self-pity on her long curling lashes.

“Poor girl I know what it is to be lonely.” Then, with one of his most winsome smiles, Charles added, “That’s why I have come back for you, Gwyn.” It was the first time he had called her that. “The others were going to the theatre. Harold’s to get a box. I couldn’t enjoy the play without you there—that is, not if you would like to go.”

Gwyn was torn between a desire to be with Charles Gale and a dread of being seen in a box with these impossible Warners. “Oh, Charles!” They were calling each other by their first names without realizing it. “I want to go with *you*! I am always *proud* of you anywhere, but—” she hesitated and looked up at him almost pleadingly, “you won’t like me when I tell you that I would be *ashamed* to be seen in a box—with my mother’s servants.”

Charles released her hands and walked to a window, where he stood silently looking out. “Gwyn,” he said, turning toward her, “I didn’t think I would ever meet a girl for whom I would care—*really care*, but I know now that I have met one, but, since she scorns farmers, I shall have to cease caring, for I by *choice* am, and shall remain, a farmer, or a rancher, as we are called in the Northwest.”

Gwyn’s heart beat rapidly. Was this handsome young man, who stood so proudly erect, telling her that he loved her? And in that moment she knew that she cared for him. She felt scornful of herself, for, had she not often boasted that the most eligible bachelor in San Francisco’s younger set would be the one of *her choice*, nor, had she any doubt but that *she* would also be his, and here she was silently acknowledging that she loved a mere rancher. However, it might be with her but a passing fancy. He would be gone in another week; then she would visit the city and meet men of her *own* class and forget. Yes, that is what she really *wanted* to do, *forget* this unsuitable attraction.

Charles broke in upon her meditations with, “Well, Gwyn, time is passing. Do you care to go to the matinee with me and occupy a box with the Warners, my sister and Harold?”

The proud girl felt that he was making this a test of whether or not she could care for him as a rancher. “No,” she heard her voice saying coldly. “I would

rather be lonely than be seen in a box with those back-woodsy Warners."

"Very well, I must return at once or I will be late." Charles started for the door. Gwyn sensed, and truly, that her "no" meant a refusal of more than an afternoon at the matinee.

"Good-bye!" he turned in the portier-hung doorway to say. He saw that she had dropped to the sofa and, hiding her face in a cushion, was sobbing as though her heart would break. One stride took him back to her. "Gwyn! Dear, dear girl!" He sat beside her and took both of her hands, but she continued to look away from him. "Why won't you try to overcome these petty false standards? I *want* to ask you to be my wife, but I can't, when you think a rancher so far beneath you."

For answer, she lifted a glowing face. "*I want* to be a rancher's wife. Charles, please let me."

The curtain had gone down on the first act when Gwynette and Charles appeared in the box. They were welcomed with smiles and nods and a few whispered words. Harold, from time to time, glanced back at his sister. She was positively radiant. Then he caught a look full of meaning that was exchanged by the girl and the man at her side.

It told its own story. Gwynette, the proud, haughty, domineering girl, had been won by a rancher. Her brother well knew how she had struggled against what she would call a misalliance, but Cupid had been the victor. Then he wondered what his mother would say. Involuntarily Harold glanced at the girl near whom he was sitting. Feeling his glance, she smiled up at him, and yet it was merely a smile of good comradeship. He would have to wait. Jenny was two years younger than her sister, and had never thought of love.

CHAPTER XXXIV.
AN AGREEABLE SURPRISE

Gwynette went about in a dream. She and Charles had been for a sunrise sail (as Lenora had said that she and her brother had so often been on Lake Tahoe) and they had made their plans. Charles was to return to the Dakota ranch on scheduled time and work with his father during the summer, then, in the fall, he would return for his bride.

“Unless you change your mind and wish to marry someone in your *own* class,” he said, as hand in hand they returned to the big house. The girl flushed. “Don’t!” she pleaded. Then, “I want to forget how worthless were my old ideals.”

“And you wouldn’t even marry the younger son of a noble English family, in preference to me, I mean, if you knew one and he asked you?” Gwyn thought the query a strange one, but looked up, replying with sweet sincerity: “No, Charles, I shall marry no one but *you*.” Then she laughed. “What a queer question that was. A young nobleman is not very apt to ask *me* to marry him.”

There was a merry expression on the lad’s handsome, wind and sun tanned face as he said: “Wrong there, Gwynette, for one *has* asked you.” Then, when he thought that he had mysterified her sufficiently, he continued: “Did you ever hear it rumored that a pupil of the Granger Place Seminary might, some day, have the right to the title ‘My Lady’?”

Gwyn flushed. Even yet she did *not* suspect the truth, and she feared Harold had told of her humiliation in giving a ball at The Palms in honor of a supposed daughter of nobility whose father proved to be a pigraiser. Rather coldly she said, “I had heard such a rumor, but we all decided that it was untrue.”

“But it wasn’t. Were my sister in England she would be called ‘Lady Lenora.’

Our uncle died last winter and father is now in possession of the family estates and title."

The girl flushed and tears rushed to her eyes. "Why didn't you tell me all this sooner?" she asked, and the lad replied: "I had two reasons. One was that I wished to be loved just for myself, and the other was that I do not care to marry a snob."

Then he had bounded away to breakfast with Harold at the cabin and to don his overalls, for, not one morning had the boys neglected to appear at the farm, on time, to help Grandpa Si.

* * * * * * * *

It was the hour for Gwyn to read to her mother, who was already waiting in the pond-lily garden. The woman, much stronger than she had been, was amazed to see the joy so plainly depicted on the beautiful face of her adopted daughter. She held out a hand that was as white as the lilies on the blue surface of the water.

"Gwynette, dear girl, what *has* so transformed you?" To the woman's surprise, Gwyn dropped down on the low stool and, taking her hand, pressed it close to her cheek. "Mother dear, I am so happy, so wonderfully happy! But I don't deserve it! I have always been so hateful. How could I have won so priceless a treasure as the love of Charles Gale?"

There were conflicting emotions in the heart of the listener. She had had dreams of Gwynette's coming-out party which they had planned for the next winter. Mrs. Poindexter-Jones had often thought over the eligibles for whom she would angle, after the fashion of mothers with beautiful daughters, and here the matter had all been settled without her knowledge and Gwyn was to marry a rancher's son. "Dear," she said tenderly, smoothing the girl's sun-glinted hair, "are you *sure* that you love him? With your beauty you could have won wealth and position."

How glowing was the face that was lifted. "Mother, I *chose* love, and have won a far higher social pinnacle than *you* ever dreamed for me."

When the story had been told Mrs. Poindexter-Jones, notwithstanding her changed ideals, was nevertheless pleased. She leaned forward and kissed her daughter tenderly. "Dear girl," she said, "I am especially glad that, first of all,

you chose love. I did when I married your father, but the great mistake I made was continuing to be a snob."

Gwyn arose. "I shall *not*, Mother, and to prove it, I shall go this afternoon to call upon the Warners."

CHAPTER XXXV.
A BIRTHDAY CAKE

Miss Dearborn had returned to Hillcrest, and with her were a small girl and boy, the children of her dear college friend, who, with her baby, had been taken from this world. Jenny, with Lenora, had gone that afternoon to see her and had learned that Miss Dearborn was to make a home for the little ones for a year, during which time their father was to tour the world, then he would return and make a home for them himself. Neither Miss Dearborn nor Jenny spoke their thoughts, but oh, *how* the girl hoped that there would then be a happy ending to Miss Dearborn's long years of sacrifice. If the young woman were thinking of this, her next remark did not suggest it. "Jenny, dear, we will have three classes in our little school next year to suit the ages of my three pupils."

Then it was that Lenora said impulsively, "How I do wish, Miss Dearborn, that you could take still another pupil. My father and brother think best to have me spend the winter in California. Our Dakota storms are so severe. I am to live with the Warners just as I have been doing this past two months." Miss Dearborn's reply was enthusiastic and sincere: "Splendid! That will make our little school complete. I know how Jenny will enjoy your companionship. She has often told me that if she had had the choosing of a sister, she would have been just like you."

Lenora glanced quickly at the speaker, wondering if Miss Dearborn *knew* who Jenny's *real* sister was, but just then the little Austin girl ran to her "auntie" with a doll's sash to be tied, and the subject was changed.

On that ride home behind Dobbin, Lenora wondered if Jenny would ever learn that Gwyn was her real sister. Charles had confided in her, and so she knew that in the autumn Gwynette would be *her* sister by marriage and that would draw Jenny and Lenora closer than ever. How she wished that she could tell Jenny everything she knew, but she had promised that she would not. When the girls

returned home they found Susan Warner much excited about something. Gwynette had been over to call, *actually* to call, and she had remained on the side porch visiting with Grandma Sue even when she had learned that Jenny and Lenora had driven to Miss Dearborn's.

"More'n that, she left an invite for *all* of us to come to a party Mrs. Poindexter-Jones is givin' on Charles' birthday. Gwyn said she hoped I'd make the chocolate cake with twenty-one layers like Harold wanted, just the same, but we'd have the party over to the big house."

Jenny, at first, looked disappointed. Then her expression changed to one of delight. Clasping her hands, she cried, "Oh, Grandma Sue, *that* will be a *real* party, won't it, and I can wear the beautiful new dress Lenora has given me. I was afraid I never, *never* would have a chance to wear it."

The old woman nodded. Then she confided: "Thar's some queer change has come over Gwynette Poindexter-Jones, and I'll say this much for her, she's a whole sight nicer'n she *was*, for it, whatever 'tis. I reckon her ma's glad. I cal'late, on the whole, she's been sort o' disappointed in her."

Then Jenny astonished them by saying: "Gwyn is a beautiful girl. No one knows how I want her to love me." Susan Warner looked up almost suspiciously from the peas that she was shelling. That was a queer thing for Jenny to say, and even after the girls had gone indoors, that Lenora might rest, Susan Warner thought over and over again, now of the yearning tone in which Jenny had spoken, and then of the words, "No one knows how I *want* her to love me." *What* could it mean? There wasn't any possible way for Jenny to know that she and Gwyn were sisters. Tears sprang to Susan's eyes unbidden. "If she ever learns that, she'll have to know Si and me ain't her grandparents." Then the old woman rebuked her selfishness. "I reckon Si was right when he said 'twouldn't make a mite o' difference in Jenny's carin' for us. Si said *nothing* could." But her hands shook when, a few moments later, she dumped the shelled peas into the pot of bubbling water that was waiting to receive them. Taking up one corner of her apron, she wiped her eyes. Jenny had entered the kitchen. At once her strong young arms were about the old woman, and there was sweet assurance in her words: "Grandma Sue, I love you." Then, after pressing her fresh young cheek for a long, silent moment against the one that was softly wrinkled, the girl held the old woman at arm's length as she joyfully cried, "Oh, Grandma Sue, isn't it wonderful, *wonderful*, that you and Grandpa Si and Lenora and I are going to a

real party, the very first one that I have ever attended?”

But the old woman protested. “Now, dearie, Grandpa Si an’ me ain’t plannin’ to go along of you young folks. ’Twouldn’t be right, no ways you look at it, us bein’ hired by Mrs. Poindexter-Jones.”

The brightness faded from Jenny’s flower-like face. She stepped back and shook a warning finger at her companion. Her tone expressed finality. “Very well, Mrs. Susan Warner, then we might as well take the party gown back to the shop it came from, for, if you and Granddad aren’t good enough to attend Gwynette’s party, neither am I. So the matter is settled.”

“What’s the argifyin’?” a genial voice inquired from the open door, and there, coming in with a brimming pail of milk, was Grandpa Si.

Jenny turned and flung at him her ultimatum. The old man pushed his straw hat back on his head and his leathery face wrinkled in a smile. “Ma,” he said, addressing his wife, “I reckon I’d be on your side if ’twan’t that I give my word of honor to Harry and Charles, and now it’s give, I’ll not go back on it. They said ’twouldn’t be no party to them if you’n me weren’t at it. An’ what’s more, Mrs. Poindexter-Jones sent Harry over special to give us a bid.”

Jenny nodded her golden brown head emphatically. “There, now, that’s settled. Oh, good, here’s Lenora, looking fresh as a daisy from her long nap.” Then, beaming at the pretty newcomer, she exclaimed, “Come this way, Miss Gale, if you want to see Grandma’s masterpiece.”

“Tut, tut, Jenny-gal; ’twan’t me that prettied it up,” the old woman protested. Jenny threw open a pantry door, and there, on a wide shelf, stood a mountain of a chocolate cake. “Honestly, there are twenty-one layers. They’re thin, to be sure, but light as feathers, for I ate up the sample. And the chocolate filling is just foamy with whipped cream.”

“How beautiful it is.” There were tears in Lenora’s eyes, as she added wistfully: “How I wish our dear mother could see the cake you have made for her son’s twenty-first birthday.”

Then, going closer, she added, admiringly, “Why, Jenny, however did you make those white frosted letters and the wreath of flowers? They look like orange blossoms.”

Jenny flashed a smile of triumph around at her grandparents. “There,” she exclaimed, “doesn’t *that* prove that I am an artist born? Miss Gale recognizes flowers. See, here is the spray I was copying. We’re going to put a wreath of real blossoms around the edge of the plate.”

“But I thought orange blossoms meant a wedding—” Lenora began. She wondered if Charles’ secret was known, but Jenny, in a matter of fact way, replied: “A twenty-first birthday is equally important. Our only other choice would have been lemon blossoms, and, somehow, *they* didn’t seem quite appropriate.”

Grandma Sue had again busied herself at the stove, while Grandpa Si strained the milk.

“Come, girls,” she now called, “everything’s done to a turn. You’ll be wantin’ a deal o’ time to prink, I reckon.”

The old man removed his straw hat, washed at the sink pump, and, as he was rubbing his face with the towel, his eyes twinkled above it.

“I cal’late it’ll take quite a spell for me’n you to rig up for this here ball, Susie-wife,” he said as he took his place at the head of the table.

The old woman, at the other end, shook her gray curls as she protested: “I sort o’ wish yo’ hadn’t been so hasty, makin’ a promise on your honor like that to Harry. We’ll feel old-fashioned, and in the way, I reckon.”

“Wall, I’m sort o’ squeamish about it myself, but the word of Si Warner can’t be took back.” The old man tried to assume a repentant expression.

“You’re a fraud, Grandpa Si!” Jenny laughed across at him. “I can see by the twinkle in your eyes that you intend to lead the dance tonight.”

* * * * * * * *

Such a merry, exciting time as they had in the two hours that followed. Jenny insisted on helping her grandparents to dress in their best before she donned her party gown. Grandma Sue had a black silk which had been turned and made over several times, but, being of the best of material, it had not grown shabby.

“Old Mrs. Jones gave it to me,” she told Lenora, “when Si and I were figgerin’ on gettin’ married.” Susan Warner’s cheeks were apple-red with excitement.

“Oh, Grandma Sue,” Lenora suddenly exclaimed, “I have the prettiest creamy lace shawl. It belonged to my grandmother, and there’s a head-dress to go with it. She’d just love to have you wear it. Won’t you, to please me?”

“I cal’late I will if you’re hankerin’ to have me.” Lenora darted to her trunk and soon returned with a small but very beautiful shoulder shawl of creamy lace, and a smaller lace square with a pale lavender bow which she placed atop of Susan Warner’s gray curls. Grandpa Si arrived, dressed in his best black, in time to join in the general chorus of admiration.

“Grandma Sue, you’ll be the belle of the ball!” Jenny kissed both of the flushed cheeks, then flew to her room, for Lenora was calling her to make haste or their escort would arrive before they were ready. And that was just what happened, for, ten minutes later, wheels were heard without, and a big closed car stopped at the side porch. Harold bounded in, and, when he saw Grandma Sue, he declared that none of the younger guests would be able to hold a candle to her. “It’s a blarneyin’ batch you are.” The old woman was nevertheless pleased. A moment later Jenny appeared, arrayed in her blue silk party gown, her glinting gold-brown hair done up higher than ever before, and her flower-like face aglow. For a moment Harold could not speak. He had not dreamed that she could be so beautiful. Then Lenora came, looking very sweet indeed in a rose chiffon.

“Silas,” Grandma Sue directed, “you’ll have to set up front, along of Harry, an’ hold the cake on you’re knees. I do hope ’twon’t slide off. It’s sort o’ ticklish, carryin’ it.”

But in due time the big house was reached, and the cake was left at the basement kitchen door. Jenny felt a thrill of excitement course over her, yet even she could not know how momentous *that* evening was to be in her *own* life.

CHAPTER XXXVI.
SISTERS

The big house was brilliantly illuminated and yet there were delightful twilight nooks, half hidden behind great potted palms which had come from a florist's in Santa Barbara. Guests had been arriving in motors from the big city all the afternoon. Gwynette was in her element. Tom Pinkerton, the roommate of Charles, had been summoned by phone to round up a few of their classmates, and be there for the gala occasion. Gwyn had asked Patricia, Beulah and a few other girl friends, while Harold had sent telegraphic invitations to his pals at the military school. There had only been two days to perfect arrangements, but had there been a week, the big house could not have been more attractively arrayed, for the wisteria arbor was in full bloom and great bunches of the graceful white and purple blossoms filled every vase and bowl in the house.

There were flowers in each of the ten guest rooms where the young people who had arrived in the afternoon had rested until the dinner hour.

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The musical chimes were telling the hour of eight when Harold led his companions into the brilliantly lighted hall and up to the rooms where they were to remove their wraps. Jenny glanced through the wide double doors into the spacious parlors and library where the chairs and lounges had been placed around the walls, leaving the floor clear for dancing. Beautifully dressed girls and young men in evening clothes sauntered about in couples visiting with old friends and meeting others. Jenny did not feel real. She had often read stories describing events like this one, and she had often imagined that she was a guest. She almost had to pinch herself as she was ascending the wide, softly-carpeted stairway to be sure that *this* was real and not one of her dreams.

When they had removed their wraps and had descended, they were greeted by

Mrs. Poindexter-Jones, who, beautifully gowned, sat in her wheeled chair, with Gwynette, lovely in a filmy blue chiffon, standing at her side. Miss Dane had reluctantly consented to permit her patient, who had grown stronger very rapidly in the last few days, to remain downstairs for one hour.

When the hidden orchestra began to play, Miss Dane pushed the invalid chair to a palm-sheltered nook, wherein Susan Warner and her good man had at once taken refuge, and there, at their side, the patrician woman sat watching the young people dance, talking to her companions from time to time. Then she asked Miss Dane to tell her daughter that she would like to speak to her. “I don’t see her just now. You may find her in her room. She had forgotten her necklace.”

Miss Dane, after glancing about at the dancers, went upstairs. There was someone in the room where the wraps had been removed. Rushing in the open door, the nurse said: “Miss Gwynette, your mother wishes to speak to you.”

The girl turned and, smiling in her friendly way, said, “You are mistaken, Miss Dane. I am Jenny Warner.”

Miss Dane hesitated, gazing intently at the apparition before her. “Pardon me, Miss Warner,” she then said. “It must be because you and Miss Gwynette are both wearing blue that you look so much alike.”

She turned away and met Gwyn just ascending the stairway. The nurse had been so impressed with the resemblance that she could not refrain from exclaiming about it. “Really,” she concluded, “you two girls look near enough alike to be sisters.”

Gwyn did not feel at all complimented, and her reply was coldly given. “Tell Mother that I will come to her as soon as I get my necklace.”

Jenny was leaving the bedroom, whither she had gone for her handkerchief, just as the other girl was entering. One glance at the haughty, flushed face of her hostess and the farmer’s granddaughter knew that something of a disturbing nature had occurred, but she did not dream that she was in any way concerned in the matter. She was very much surprised to hear Gwyn saying in her haughtiest manner: “Miss Warner, my mother’s nurse tells me that she spoke to you just now, believing that you were me. I recall that the girls in the seminary once alluded to a resemblance they pretended to see. Will you do me the favor to stand in front of this long mirror with me, that I may also find the resemblance,

if there is one, which I doubt!”

Jenny, her heart fluttering with excitement, stood beside the older girl and gazed directly at her in the mirror.

Gwyn continued, appraisingly: “Our eyes are hazel and we both have light brown hair, but so have many other girls. I cannot understand, can you, why Miss Dane should have said that we look near enough alike to be sisters.”

On an impulse Jenny replied, “Yes, Gwynette, I can understand, because we *are* sisters.”

Instantly Jenny regretted having revealed the long kept secret, for Gwynette sank down on a lounge near her, her hand pressed to her heart, every bit of color receding from her face until she was deathly pale.

Jenny, all solicitude, exclaimed: “Oh, are you going to faint? I ought not to have told you. But you asked me! Forgive me, if you can.”

There was a hard, glinting light between the arrowed lids of the older girl. “Jenny Warner, I do *not* believe you! Why should *you* know more of *my* parentage than I do myself?”

Sadly Jenny told the story. She deeply regretted that her impulsiveness had rendered the revelation necessary. “One stormy day, several years ago, while I was rummaging around in the attic of the farmhouse, I found pushed way back in a dark cobwebby corner a small haircloth trunk which interested me. I did not think it necessary to ask permission to open it, as I did not dream that it held a secret which my dear grandparents might not wish me to discover, and so I dragged it over to the small window. Sitting on one of the broken backed chairs, I lifted the lid. The first thing that I found was a darling little Bible, bound in soft leather. It was quaint and old-fashioned. Miss Dearborn had taught me to love old books, and I at once looked for the date it had been published, when two things dropped out. One was a photograph. There were four in the group. The man was young and reminded me of Robert Burns; his companion was a very beautiful girl, and yet under her picture had been written ‘Mother’ and under the other ‘Father.’ I judged that was because with them were two children. Beneath them was written, ‘Gwynette, aged three; Jeanette, just one today.’ And then there was the date. The other was an unfinished letter, written in purple ink that had faded. Its message was very sad, for it told that the girl-mother had died and

the young wandering missionary, our father, feared that he had not long to live because of frequent heart attacks. He wanted his little girls to know that they came of a New England family that was above reproach, the Waterburys of Waltham, Mass.

“How well I remember the last message that dear hand had been able to write. ‘My darling little baby girls, I have had another of those dread attacks, but I do want to say with what strength I have left, as the years go by, love ye one another.’ That was all. Then the pen had fallen, I think, for there was a blot and an irregular blurred line of ink.”

Gwyn, crushed with an overwhelming sense of self-pity, had buried her head in the soft silken pillows at one end of the lounge and was sobbing, but Jenny did not try to comfort her, believing that she could not, and so she continued: “I put the letter and the photograph into the little old Bible and replaced it. Then I dragged the haircloth trunk back into its dark corner. I was greatly troubled to know whether or not I ought to tell grandmother what I had learned. I asked the advice of my dear teacher and she said: ‘Do not tell at present, Jeanette. If your grandmother does not wish you to know, perhaps it would be wiser to wait until she tells you. Then she told me that she had a college friend living in Waltham, and that she would make inquiries about our family. In time the reply came. Our father’s father and grandfather had been ministers in high standing, philanthropists and scholars. Our father had been the last of the family, and, as they had given all they had to the poor, there was no money to care for us. Oh, Gwynette!”

Jenny touched the other girl ever so tenderly on the shoulder. “How grateful I have been; how very much more I have loved my dear adopted grandparents since I realized what they had saved me from. Had they not taken me into their home, and shared with me the best they had, I would have been sent to a county orphanage, and no one knows to what fate.”

Gwynette was sitting erect, her hands crushingly clasped together. Jenny paused, wondering what she would say. It was a sincere cry of regret. “Oh, to think how ungrateful I have been to that wonderful woman who has given me every advantage and who would have loved me like an own daughter if I had not been so selfish, ever demanding more.”

Gwyn turned and held both hands out to her companion. “Jenny, forgive me. I

am not worthy to call you sister. From this hour, forever, let us carry out our father's last wish. Let us truly love one another."

Rising, she went to her jewel box, took from it the necklace for which she had come, and turning, she slipped it about the neck of her companion. Kissing her flushed cheek, she said: "Sister, this is my first gift to you. Keep it forever in remembrance of this hour." Then, after removing all traces of tears, she held out her hand, saying: "Come, dear, let us go down together."

Mrs. Poindexter-Jones had wanted to ask Gwynette if she would like to have her engagement announced at this party. The woman was amazed to see the girl's lips quivering. Gwyn bent low to listen, then, after assenting, she said in a low voice, tense with feeling. "Mother, I love you."

Jenny had slipped at once to the side of Susan Warner, and held her wrinkled old hand in a loving clasp. There was an expression in her face they had never seen before.

Charles Gale, seeing that his fiance had returned, went at once to her side. The music had stopped, and Miss Dane pushed the invalid chair forward. The dancers, standing in groups about, were hushed, realizing that an announcement of some kind was to be made.

Mrs. Poindexter-Jones spoke clearly: "Friends of my daughter and of my son, I have the great pleasure of announcing Gwynette's engagement to a young man of whom we are very proud, Charles Gale of Dakota." Not one word about English ancestry. Mrs. Poindexter-Jones truly had changed. Then before the guests could flock about the young couple to congratulate them, Gwynette had quickly stepped back, and taking Jenny by the hand, she led her out to where Charles was standing. Slipping an arm lovingly about the wondering girl, Gwyn said, "And I wish to introduce to you all my own dear sister, Jeanette."

THE END

Transcriber’s Notes

- Copyright notice provided as in the original printed text—this e-text is public domain in the country of publication.
- Added a Table of Contents.
- Silently corrected palpable typos and inconsistent proper names; left non-standard spellings and dialect unchanged.

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