LARKSPUR

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LARKSPUR

BY

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TO THE FLOWERS OF MY OWN
GARDEN I DEDICATE THIS STORY

CONTENTS

CHAPTER

LARKSPUR

CHAPTER I
AN OCTOBER DAY

On an October day–a sunny day, and except for the yellow leaves that quivered on rapidly bearing branches, very like spring–Patricia Everett, from the window

of her home, watched an automobile drive out of sight, carrying her mother and sister away to Florida, and confided to the empty room that she was the very unhappiest girl in the whole world!

Conflicting emotions tormented the soul of the little lady. She disliked very much seeing anyone depart from anywhere without her! Then, too, so hurried had been the departure that nothing in the shape of candy, books or toys had been left behind to comfort her! And saddest of all, at the last moment her mother had decided that she must not return to Miss Prindle's because of an epidemic of measles!

The curious quiet that had fallen upon the house after the bustle of departure added to Patricia's loneliness. With a heart bursting with pity for herself, she wandered up the stairs to her room–a pretty room, its windows hung in flowered chintz, a bird singing from a cage hanging in the sunshine.

When his little mistress walked into the room Peter Pan trilled more gayly than before–it was as though he bade her come to the window and look across the way!

If she had looked she would have seen in the kitchen window of the shabby brick house, across the intersecting street, Mrs. Mary Quinn and her daughter Sheila rocking in one another's arms and laughing like two children!

Mrs. Quinn's house was old and shabby, its fences tumbling down; hard times often knocked at her door, but with it all her smile was always as bright as the gay geraniums blooming on the spotless sill of the kitchen window that faced the Everett house.

Fortune had come to the Quinns that day in the guise of a new lodger. He had taken the second floor bedroom which stretched across the back of the house. Because this room was very big and had a queer, rickety stairway leading to it from the outside of the house, it had never been rented. But with the other lodgers who lived in the front rooms and the tiny side bedroom and the parlor, which had been converted into a "light housekeeping suite," Mrs. Quinn managed to keep her little family most comfortably and to have a bit left over for such luxuries as the flowers, a few books, pretty pictures and crisp muslin curtains.

"Faith, Sheila," she had cried, coming into the kitchen where her daughter was preparing apples for the oven. "It's just as though Dame Fortune knew it was your birthday! Now you shall have your music!"

"Oh, mother!" cried the girl, dropping her paring knife. "How wonderful!" Then, hesitating: "But maybe I hadn't ought to! That much each week would make things easier if—-"

But Mrs. Quinn snatched bowl, apples and knife from her daughter's hands. "Don't let's be worrying over what's ahead, sweetness! We'll just take what comes! Didn't I have my bit of music when I was a girl and don't I know the

longings that are in you to have things that other girls have, lassie? It's a good daughter you are to me and it's you that has always made the hard things easier—-" She stopped suddenly as though something in her throat choked the words. For answer Sheila caught the rough hands that knew only work now and kissed them.

Then these two, arms around one another, the bowl tipping dangerously between them, laughed together as though there had never been a single hardship in the world.

"We're two sillies–that's what we are! Now we must be about our work or the gentleman will come and the room won't be ready!"

"Who is he, mother?"

"Sure, child, and I scarcely asked him! His name is Marks and he said he was employed at the Everett Works. I only thought of you, dearie! After supper you run over and see Miss Sheehan about the lessons; two a week–and we'll have a man come to tune up the old piano and we'll just pull it out here where it will be warm and where I can listen to you!"

So their work–and there was much for their quick fingers to do before the room could be put in readiness for the new tenant and the supper prepared for the younger Quinns, would be made lighter by their happy plans!

But Patricia was too miserable to even glance across at the window where the pink geraniums bloomed. She did not want to think that there was anyone happy anywhere in the world.

Sighing deeply she curled herself on her bed, drew from underneath her pillow her beloved diary and wrote upon its open page:

"This is such a cruel, sad moment in my life that I must write about it although it is too bad to put it in my nice diary." (Monthly she and Angeline Snow, her dearest friend at Miss Prindle's, exchanged diaries.) "I have been left alone here by a fond but heartless mother and sister who thinks only of herself and her troubles and my father is here at home and he is left, too, only of course my father is a man and he has his business. But the very worst of all because they are afraid of measles and Cis says my hair will come out and that it will never be thick like hers anyway though I remember you and I said that we hated thick hair when it was yellow like hers they will not let me go back to my dear Prindles and so I am a prisoner in a gilded cage. My Aunt Pen is coming to live with us while my mother is away and I love her and she always lets me do everything I want to do but she is not like you or the other girls at school. And though I have lived here many summers as the poets say, I have no friends because there are only the children I used to meet at silly parties and my mother's friends who are polite and stupid and I shall pine with loneliness. It is all Celia's fault though mother says she is very ill and that she has worn herself out doing war work

and she looked very pail and interesting and I guess maybe she worried when Lieut Chauncey Merideth fell out of his airplane but I guess he'll be more careful next time. You remember I never liked him though when he comes back from war though he is only in Texas I guess he'll treat me a little different for he will realise I am almost fourteen if he comes back in time and does not fall out again. I do love my mother but she has been most heartless leaving me sad and lonely and with nothing to do. But as old English Sparrow says there is always work for idle hands to do and I shall find something so as to write to you all about it. I am too old to spend my hours repining. I remember the words of E. Sparrow how we are captains of our souls and I shall keep saying that in my loneliness. I guess now I will go down and order the dessert for dinner—-"

This sudden thought so comforted Patricia that she closed her diary quickly, put it back under the pillow, slipped off the bed and ran downstairs to the kitchen.

She found that Melodia, the cook, had already prepared mince tarts for dinner. They were spread temptingly upon a shelf. Patricia tasted one and immediately ordered Melodia to make nothing but mince tarts for dessert during her mother's absence! Perched on a stool Patricia asked several questions concerning the pleasant odors that came from the big oven. But Melodia seemed to be very indifferent as to the importance of her presence in the kitchen; Patricia was glad to remember that she had promised her mother to carry a report to the Red Cross Headquarters that very afternoon. So, slipping off her stool she stalked majestically away.

Now almost at the same moment that Sheila and Mrs. Quinn were laughing in their kitchen over their wonderful fortune and lonely Patricia was cheering her heart by tasting mince tarts, kind-hearted Mrs. Atherton, the official in charge at the Red Cross Headquarters on this October day, was wrinkling her pretty brows over an unusual situation.

Before her, watching her face anxiously, stood a man in the uniform of a captain of the United States Army.

"Perhaps I acted too hastily–bringing the child here, to leave on your hands, but–you can see how it happened; I'd given my word to that boy to take care of his little sister. If you could have known him! Why, there wasn't a fellow in my company that wouldn't have given up his life for him! They didn't need to–he did it first!" Capt. Allan's voice broke. "I got my orders back to the States and I just had time to go and find Renée."

"Wouldn't it have been better if you had left her somewhere in Paris?"

"You see you don't know the whole story, madam. This Emile LaDue was in the French uniform but he was sort of an American. And that was my promise–that I'd bring her back to America–somewhere. He didn't have time to say any-

thing more–he gave me the address when we were in a shell hole waiting until it was dark enough to creep over to the enemy lines. We went out a few seconds afterwards–crawling along on our stomachs, he one way, I another. I–never saw him again."

Mrs. Atherton openly wiped her eyes.

The soldier went on: "I'd keep the little girl–just because I loved Emile LaDue, but I haven't any folks or any place to leave her and I have to report back over there! When I'm home for good—-"

"If Mrs. Everett was here I am sure we could arrange something, but she is out of town."

It was at that moment that Patricia walked past the open door on her way from the Secretary's office where she had left her mother's report. Mrs. Atherton's rather high-pitched voice reached her ear. She stood quite still.

"The child would make any home happy–she's a dear little thing! Has plenty of clothes, I guess, but right now more than anything else she needs friends and love–quite a bit of that."

"A baby!" thought Patricia excitedly; "a war orphan!"

Patricia's mother had already adopted six French orphans; Patricia and her classmates at school were supporting several Belgian families and Celia was a godmother to ever so many disabled French soldiers. That all meant only sending money away just so often, but this was quite different–the baby was right here! Patricia had no time to think just what her mother might do in such a case! There was an offended tone in the man's voice as though he might take his war-orphan and go away and not come back! So she walked straight into the room.

"Mrs. Atherton, I will take this child immediately."

Both Mrs. Atherton and the captain gasped at the sudden appearance of Patricia. Patricia, seeing doubt in Mrs. Atherton's eyes, turned to the soldier.

"My mother is away, but if you will bring the–the baby to my home I will ask my father, and I know he will let her stay!"

Mrs. Atherton hurriedly explained. "This is Miss Patricia Everett, the daughter of the lady of whom I was speaking. Perhaps—-" she hesitated. She was thinking rapidly–something, of course, must be done with the child! "This might solve our problem–until you return and wish to make other arrangements."

"Oh *please* bring her," cried Patricia in quite her natural manner. "I can't go back to school because of the measles there and I'd lose my hair and I am dreadfully lonesome, and I should *love* a baby! We'll go home and I'll send Watkins after Daddy and then we'll tell him."

It sounded so logical that even Mrs. Atherton nodded approvingly.

"Where is she?" asked Patricia, looking around the room as though some corner might conceal a bundle that would prove to be the little war-orphan.

"I left her outside, in the taxi. I wanted to find out what could be done."

"Well, let's hurry!" commanded Patricia, turning toward the door. "I know Daddy'll say yes, for you see my mother and sister have ever so many orphans and this will be mine and Daddy's." She was running eagerly ahead of Capt. Allan out of the door and down the long flight of steps.

"Can she walk yet?" she whispered excitedly.

"I should say so!" he laughed, throwing open the door of the taxicab.

And within Patricia beheld staring gravely at her from a corner of the automobile, her small hands clasped tightly in her lap, her pale face framed by a wealth of golden hair that hung in soft curls over her shabby coat–not the war-orphan she had pictured, but a little girl of her own age!

"Miss Renée LaDue," the Captain said with a sweeping gesture. "And this young lady—-" he hesitated a moment, as though the name Mrs. Atherton had spoken had slipped his mind.

Patricia, almost too astonished and too delighted to make a sound, stammered:

"I'm Patricia Everett, but please, just call me Pat!"

CHAPTER II
THE CAPTAIN'S STORY

Certain that some serious catastrophe must have happened, Thomas Everett ran up the steps of his house with the speed of a schoolboy. Watkins, the chauffeur, had found him at his office.

"Miss Pat, sir, says you are to hurry home at once–that it is awfully important." He had repeated her exact words and even imitated her imperative tone.

When Mr. Everett had anxiously asked him "what had happened," he had shaken his head and had said: "I don't know, sir, what it is, sir, but I'm sure it is something because I've never seen Miss Pat so excited!"

Patricia was awaiting her father in the hall. There were not many things that she had ever wanted that he had refused her–but then this was very different and he might say "No!" She greeted him with a violent hug and, talking so fast that he could not make out one word that she was saying, she dragged him toward the library door.

"They're in there, Daddy, and oh, *please* do let her stay!" she whispered.

Within the room Mr. Everett found a tall soldier holding a shy little girl by the hand. The officer introduced himself with a word or two, and with the same directness he had used in telling his story to Mrs. Atherton, he now plunged straight to the point.

"I have brought this little girl from France. She is one of–those many–who has lost everyone and everything–through this war!" He was trying to choose his words carefully so as to spare the little girl as much as he could.

Realizing his embarrassment Mr. Everett interrupted him. "Pat, dear, take the little girl and show her the birds." Patricia, rather reluctantly led the little stranger off to the small conservatory beyond the dining-room where, in beautiful cages, many different kinds of birds sang joyously.

"Thanks, sir," the officer drew a breath. "Taking care of this small lady has been the most difficult thing I ever attempted. I'll tell you the story, sir, so that you can understand. About six months ago a young French officer was attached to our company. He directed the scouting. There were six of us picked out to work with him. I was one of them. We did some mighty ticklish work, sir–for a few weeks there." Almost involuntarily the man's fingers went to the small cross of honor he wore on his tunic. "And we fellows get pretty well acquainted, you know–just lying hours in a shell hole next to another man is like knowing him for years and years back home. It was like that with this Emile LaDue and me. I found out that his father and mother had been born in America–they were both dead, for one night he told me that if anything happened to him–and there was plenty of chance for something to happen any minute–it would leave his little sister all alone in the world. He never talked much about himself–back in the lines he was the bravest, cheeriest one in the crowd, laughing at every sort of hardship, but when we'd get out he'd get quiet and I knew what was on his mind. He'd tell little things at different times. It seems he'd made a promise to his mother that he'd bring the little girl to America to live–and he'd kept putting it off, and then the war came along and he thought it might be too late! That bothered him more than anything else. The last night I was with him we were hiding in a dirty hole–four of us–almost covered with mud and water. He and I lay close together; we could only whisper, for some of the Boche had seen us and we had to keep low until it was darker. We'd been there for hours, not more'n just breathing when he whispered suddenly in my ear: 'Allan, I may not come out of this–and you may. Will you—-' You know some of the boys over there have premonitions and they're pretty nearly always true and I suppose he had one! I knew what he wanted to say, and he'd been the bravest and best pal a man could ever find and we'd faced death a hundred times, side by side, and he'd never flunked once, so I whispered: 'Don't you worry–just tell me where I can find your little sister.' He twisted around until he could get a hand into his pocket. He gave me a card. He

said: 'She's all alone in the world! Take her back to America–I didn't make good! All her life my mother planned that and when she died I promised to do it!' He tried to tell me something about a box, but a star shell burst right next to us and we had to dig down into the mud and we scarcely breathed for fear the Boche snipers would hear us!" Capt. Allan's voice, halting through the story as though it hurt him to recall the bitter memories, suddenly broke.

"Just after that we crawled out–we had to do our job and get back with the stuff the Colonel wanted to know! We divided up–two of us went one way and two the other. I got over and through and back to our lines with the information and I won this"–touching his cross–"and got a sniper's bullet in the shoulder. I was put out of business then–for three weeks." He stopped again–it was very hard for him to tell his tale. Mr. Everett was giving occasional nods of sympathy.

"When I got back to my company they told me the Jerries had caught LaDue! He had almost gotten away when he was killed by a hand grenade. The other man with him was made a prisoner. The boys found LaDue when they advanced–they buried him out there with a lot of others! That was always the worst, sir–these good pals that you'd messed with and bunked with under the same muddy blankets and lived with through hours and hours of waiting for no one ever knew what–and then–just flesh and bones out in that desolation and buried–any old place—-" He pulled himself together. "Excuse me, sir–I loved the boy–I'd have liked to have just said–oh, good luck, old chap–or something like that! Well, I asked for a furlough to hunt up the little sister and what did they do but order me back to the States on a special mission to the Intelligence Department. I had just twenty-four hours to find the child. I had no trouble, though–she was at the address out in St. Cloud, living with a queer old couple–the man was a veteran of the Franco-Prussian war and the wife raises flowers–only no one in France is buying flowers now! I suppose they were all living on what Emile was sending to them. They didn't want to let the child go–I think they were truly fond of her, but when I told them what I had promised Emile they never said another word. I had to break it to them that he had been killed! I was afraid of Renée crying and wondering how I'd comfort her and then I wished that she *would* cry! She was such a pathetic little thing–all she'd say was 'He told me it would be for America and France!' I tell you, sir, even the little ones are as brave as any!"

"Well, old Susette packed her clothes and I started back with her, though I hadn't the ghost of an idea where to take her! I haven't a home or any folks of my own, sir, but I said to myself–there's the Red Cross, they'll tell me! I had come to this town first, sir, so I just brought her along with me and–here we are!" He laughed ruefully. "I guess I didn't think the thing out very much! Over there, you know, homes are smashed up in a twinkling, and so many kiddies–like this little

one–are left along by the wayside, that you don't stop to think but just gather 'em in! Our boys can't stand seeing the children suffer, sir–why, I've watched many a one just turn his whole mess right over to a bunch of kids–they're so hungry looking." He paused for a moment. "That's all, sir, and if you can find a place for Renée to live where she'll be safe and–happy, I'll gladly give half my pay and take her when I come back!"

The story of Renée LaDue finished, the officer stood very straight and looked anxiously at his listener.

Often during the story Mr. Everett had brushed something suspiciously like tears from his eyes. He rose quickly now and held out his hand.

"With what you boys are doing–and giving up–there isn't anything we who have to stay at home could refuse to do! Renée shall be taken care of–I promise you that! Nothing must be said about money. When the war is over and you return–then you shall come and claim her if you wish!"

The soldier's face beamed with pleasure.

"Oh, sir, that is splendid! You can't imagine how responsible I feel about my promise to Emile–or what a fine chap he was!"

Mr. Everett took a notebook and a pencil from his pocket.

"Please give me some of the facts concerning this child," he said in a business-like manner.

As Capt. Allan repeated them he entered each in the little book.

"And you know nothing more concerning Emile's family?"

"Only a little more–back in the hospital I talked with a French surgeon who had known Emile's father. He said he had been a sculptor–until he grew blind. I imagine they were very poor. The doctor said that Emile had been studying, too–in Paris. I remembered he had said something once to me that had made me think he was just waiting to finish his studies to keep his promise to his mother–to come to America to live!"

Thomas Everett shook his head. "Oh, what this war has done! The boy was doubtless gifted!" He sighed deeply. "When it is possible go to Paris and, for the child's sake, find out all you can of her family. In the meantime—-"

But at this point Patricia, too impatient to longer await her father's decision, burst into the room!

CHAPTER III

RENÉE FINDS A HOME

At her first introduction in the taxi-cab Patricia had undertaken to converse with Miss Renée in the stilted French she had learned at Miss Prindle's. But Renée had answered in perfect English.

Now, with the singing of the birds to tune their voices to a happy note, with the pretty flowers bringing a smile to Renée's sad little face, it was easy to bridge over the formality of "getting acquainted." Renée exclaimed in delight over the birds and the flowers and Pat rattled on like a small magpie, though all the while straining her ears to catch a single word or tone of her father's voice from the library.

She had her own way–sometimes a rather naughty way–of getting what she wanted from her family, but this was so different, and she wanted it so very much that she felt very anxious and uncertain! So after she had waited what seemed to her a very long time she abruptly led Renée back to the library. As they entered the room her father held out both hands. One took one of hers, with the other he drew Renée close to him.

"My dear little girl, Capt. Allan is going to leave you with us for a little while! And I have given him my promise that you shall be as safe and happy as it is possible for us to make you—-" He wanted to say a great deal more to make Renée feel at home but Patricia interrupted him with a tempestuous hug that almost swept him from his feet.

"Oh, you dear, dear Daddy!" Then she threw her arms around Renée's neck. "Oh, I am so happy!" she was crying over and over, as though she had been the homeless one and Renée had taken her in.

"Don't forget me, Miss Everett," the soldier put in so comically that Patricia almost embraced him, too! Instead she shook both his hands delightedly. As Renée turned to Capt. Allan her lips trembled a little, for she had learned to love and trust him and already looked upon him as her guardian.

"Just you be brave and happy, little sister!" he said softly to her, "and as soon as I can I will come back!"

Then he shook hands with each one of them and Renée shyly kissed him. Mr. Everett went with him to the door. Patricia, knowing how hard the parting was for her little guest, seized her hand and dragged her toward a door at the end of the big hall.

"Let's go and find Melodia! I know something she's got!"

Only a few moments before Melodia had been telling the butler and the upstairs maid about "that Miss Pat's giving her orders so comical" and they were all laughing merrily over it when Miss Pat burst in upon them, leading Renée by the hand.

"Melodia, I have a guest only she's going to live with us! Please make lots of tarts, and can't Renée have just a little one now? Jasper, carry Miss Renée's trunk

to my room–it's in the front hall! Maggie, please get a cot from the storeroom and put it right next to my bed." She turned toward the pantry. "I'll take some tarts now, Melodia, for Miss Renée is hungry! Don't all stand and stare like that, but please do as I tell you!" She helped herself as she spoke to two of the juiciest of the tempting tarts.

"Well, I never!" Jasper and Maggie and Melodia all exclaimed.

Patricia turned with dignity. "Miss Renée has come from France. She is a–a—-" She was going to say "war-orphan" but suddenly it occurred to her that that might make Renée unhappy. So she finished: "Her brother has died for us in France and left her all alone!" Patricia used an expression she had heard often. "You three and Daddy and me have a debt to pay–and we are going to pay it!"

The three servants were deeply impressed by the grandness of Patricia's words and manner; and, too, Renée's sad little face won their hearts in an instant. Jasper coughed violently and hurried away to find the trunk. Melodia wiped her eye with the corner of her apron.

"The dear little thing! Well, we'll just make you happy and put flesh on your bones, bless your heart, missy!"

Patricia, satisfied that she had properly established Renée in the household, then led her upstairs to her own room. Renée, accustomed to the tiny chamber under the gable at St. Cloud, exclaimed with admiration when Patricia opened the door. Already Jasper had put down the queer old trunk and was busily engaged unfastening its buckles and straps. Maggie was watching, much disturbed.

"Miss Pat, I wish your mother was home! I know she wouldn't want me to bring a cot in here a-cluttering up the tidiness of your room when there's the blue room and the violet room empty and that room on the third floor—-"

Alarmed that Maggie might separate them, Patricia exclaimed quickly: "I don't–*care*! We *won't* make things untidy! I *want* her in here!"

"What's all this about?" interrupted Mr. Everett, coming at that moment to the door.

Patricia, Renée, Jasper and Maggie all turned to him. But Patricia, catching his coat, pulled him to her so that, by reaching on tip-toe, she could whisper in his ear:

"You see, Daddy, I want her right in here! Maggie says that it will make things untidy but we can't let her get homesick or–or unhappy, and she might if she's left all alone in the blue room or the vi'let room—-" Patricia rubbed her cheek coaxingly against her father's shoulder, then added solemnly: "I guess *I* know what it is to be lonesome, for I have been lots and lots of times–just because everyone was so grownup and I hadn't anyone to be with like a little sister, and now–please, Daddy, we will keep the room as neat as can be!"

Renée's eyes echoed Patricia's pleadings.

"Well, well, Maggie, we'll have to let them decide things, I guess," he laughed, "at least until Miss Penelope comes!"

In all the excitement Patricia had quite forgotten the approaching arrival of Aunt Pen.

"Aunty Pen, Aunty Pen," she cried, catching Renée's hands and, swinging her around. "I'd just clean forgotten she was coming! You'll *love* her!"

Certainly little Renée had not time to be unhappy–each moment seemed to bring something new! While Patricia was explaining all about Aunty Pen and why she was coming, and her story had, of course, to include Celia and even the Lieut. Chauncey Meredith and his fall from his airplane, Maggie, scolding a little under her breath, was spreading snowy sheets over a bed-lounge which Patricia had drawn up close to her own little bed.

In the next moment, Aunt Pen again forgotten, Patricia was tumbling her own possessions from one of the drawers of the mahogany chest to make room for the contents of Renée's little trunk.

"We'll just share everything," she cried. "We'll have just the same halves! And let's hang up your dresses now!"

Poor Renée did not need the generous space of one-half of Patricia's wardrobe for her shabby dresses–they were only four in number and sadly worn! But she hung them away proudly, telling Patricia that no one in France now wore new things!

"Poor Susette used to spend hours mending my clothes, trying to make them hold together," laughed Renée, tenderly recalling her good old friend at St. Cloud.

"Tell me all about her!"

So, sitting cross-legged on the floor beside the almost empty trunk, Renée described Susette and the cottage at St. Cloud and the wonderful flowers that had used to sell so well before the war, and the school where she had gone after her mother had died; how she and Emile always talked in English because her mother had made them promise, and how in the long, anxious, lonely days after Emile had gone, she had used to teach simple English words to Susette as they sat together among the flowers that nobody wanted to buy!

From the bottom of the trunk Renée drew a box covered with worn leather, tooled and colored like the binding of a beautiful book. So old was it that the colors blended and looked all blue and gold and green. Renée lifted it tenderly, as though it was precious!

"Oh, how queer and how be-*ut*-iful!" cried Patricia, all admiration and curiosity. "What do you keep in it?"

Renée held the box very close to her.

"I don't know! It was my mother's and now it's Emile's and mine, or"–she

carefully corrected herself–"I suppose it's just mine. But we don't know what is in it for we never had the key! My mother died before she could tell Emile where it was! And Emile made me promise before he went away that I would keep the box and never let anyone open it!"

"And you haven't even the teeniest idea what is in it? Didn't you ever just shake it?"

"Oh, lots of times!" confessed Renée. "But nothing makes any noise. And of course I would keep my promise to Emile."

Patricia rocked back and forth on her heels in joy.

"Oh, what a *spliffy* mystery! I can't wait to write to the girls!" Then she laughed at Renée's bewilderment. "Spliffy is a word we learned at Miss Prindle's and it means scrumptious or delicious or grand! Don't you *love* a mystery? And isn't it the lov-li-est box?"

"Emile said it must have been made by some Italian master years and years ago. I have this queer locket, too–it was my mother's," and from a little bag, wrapped in folds and folds of tissue paper, Renée drew a curious gold locket. "It is much too big to wear but I am very careful of it–it is all I have! I pretend that the box and the locket both once upon a time belonged to some royal prince in Venice! Once, when I was little, mother took Emile and me to Venice–she had been sick and she had to go where the sun was warm!"

Patricia, who had always considered herself an experienced and much traveled young lady, suddenly felt very small and young compared to Renée and all that she had done!

"Is Venice like the pictures–all colors like shells and funny boats and people singing?"

But Renée had no chance to answer. The doorbell clanged and in a moment they heard a cheery voice answering Mr. Everett's greeting.

"It's Aunt Pen–*come* on!" cried Patricia, rushing headlong down the stairs.

CHAPTER IV
GARDENS

"I'm certainly very glad you've come, Penelope; my family, which has so suddenly increased, is going to need a guiding hand!"

Penelope Everett, called by some a "strong-minded woman" because she

had, since her college days, worn low-heeled shoes, boyish coats, comfortable hats and simple dresses, was Thomas Everett's favorite sister. Though many years younger than he, there was a directness about her, a something in the way she carried her head, poised squarely, that made him feel he could put anything upon her shoulders.

She gave a cheery laugh now in response to the seriousness of his manner.

Patricia and Renée had long since gone to bed, side by side. Renée had cuddled down under the soft coverings with a little sigh of content. Very tired with long days of travel she had dropped off to sleep quickly, while Patricia's voice, pitched to a low tone, had gone on in an endless account of "what we'll do to-morrow!" Aunt Pen, tiptoeing in a little later, had found Patricia's hand clasping Renée's tightly under the covers.

She recalled that now as she sat with her brother before the library fire.

"Do you know, Thomas, you've done the most wonderful thing in the world for Pat?"

Pat's father stared at her. He had thought she meant to praise him for taking in the lonely little girl from France!

"Why–what do you mean?"

"Just this–Pat's going to have something now that she's never had before–true comradeship!"

Thomas Everett nodded his head. "That is so! Pat said something queer to me, about being lonely lots of times!"

"Of course she's been lonely–often! She's almost a stranger in her own home! You whisk her from school to the seashore or some such place and then back–to another school! And everything on earth is done for her, she doesn't have to think of anything for herself, let alone for anyone else!"

Pat's father laughed. "Why, I thought we were bringing her up along the most model lines! But perhaps you have some new fads now!" He liked to tease Penelope.

"Poor Pat has been the victim of too many fads already! I tell you, brother, this war has shown us a whole lot of silly mistakes we were making in our living!"

"Before you go one bit further, Penelope dear, do promise to speak in words of one syllable! I know all about steel but I must admit I'm very stupid about girls!"

"Thomas, you're not stupid–you just don't think about them and yet your two girls are more precious to you than the whole steel market! And what are you doing with them? Look at Celia–how has she stood the trials of this wartime? Goodness knows, you've spent enough money on her to have made a strong woman of her!"

"But she's young, Pen—-"

"Celia's twenty-one–that's the age they've been drafting the boys to go and fight for us! She's a few years older than some who have died over in France. And now she's had a nervous breakdown! Why in the world should Celia have any nerves at all?"

"You're right, Pen, but—-"

"This draft we have had in this country has been a wonderful thing; it has sorted out our manhood. But I'm sorry the women couldn't have had it, too, I wonder how many would have measured up to the standards, and why not? Because we older ones make mistakes with the girls–like Pat!"

Penelope was standing now, very straight, before the fire, her eyes bright in her earnestness.

"I tell you we've reached a wonderful day, brother–we can see things as we never saw them before! Silly old prejudices and habits and notions have been swept aside. Do you know one thing we've learned? That it is something even greater than love for one's country that has made men go out and fight–to victory; it's a love for right and justice! And in one of John Randolph's books he tells us that it is that love for right and justice that will make the real brotherhood of men and nations! Who is going to carry on this ideal as we have found it? Why, our boys and girls–girls like Pat!"

"Pen, your eloquence makes me feel as though I had never known the real meaning of the word duty!"

"Oh, it isn't half so much–duty, Tom, as it is plain common sense. I've often thought that raising girls and boys is something like a garden! If you were planning a garden and wanted to grow something beautiful–oh, say larkspur, for I don't think any garden is perfect without it and no flower is harder to get started–wouldn't you want to know that you were putting in seed that would grow into hardy blossoms, blooming year after year, keeping your garden lovely and the world richer for their beauty?"

Penelope paused long enough to draw a deep breath.

"There at Miss Prindle's Pat is learning to speak French and Latin and how to use her hands and feet and walk out of a room properly and a dinner-table-speaking acquaintance with art and the masters and ancient history–and that's all very well, but how much will she know of the problems she must face by and by unless she begins to mingle with the sort of people that make up this world? And above all else–unless you build up for her a strong body that will mean a brave heart and a clear head, what service, I ask you, can she give to her fellowmen and her country?"

"You're certainly right, Pen! And now, if you've finished a very good sermon, let's get down to business. I take it you want to–raise larkspur! I don't know much about 'em, even in gardens! I've left these things to the children's

mother!"

Penelope dropped into a chair with a little, ashamed laugh.

"My sermon does sound as though I was criticizing Caroline dreadfully! I know she is devoted to the girls. And so am I–and so are you. She's bringing them up just the way she was brought up!"

"Well, what shall *we* do?" asked Pat's father with the tone of a conspirator.

"You've started doing right now the very best thing in the world–bringing that poor little girl into the family! Patricia loves her already and she'll learn for the first time to consider another child before herself. She's never had to do it before! Why, to-night I found her carefully dividing her clothes so that Renée might have just as many things as she had."

"Does Renée need clothes? I'll—-"

"Now don't spoil it all by buying new things–let Patricia give up some of her own! It is making her very happy. Through Renée she is going to know something of the trials that come to others and she is going to learn to want to be helpful. She has gone to sleep now holding Renée's hand."

Both their minds turned to Renée.

"A curious tragedy–this, that has brought this child into our circle! Caroline might have made some other arrangement, but Pat's heart was set upon keeping her–and she *will* have her own way!"

"Pat's mother is too absorbed now in Celia to think much about it and when she returns Renée will win her love with her little face! What a story the child's life makes with just what we know! The family must have been American–evidently exiled; they loved this country, else why would the mother have made the brother promise to come back? I hope sometime we will know more about them!"

"Capt. Allan has promised to look them up as soon as he can!"

"Captain Allan—-" Penelope breathed, her face flaming, then turning white. When her brother had told her Renée's story, so intent had she been upon the tragedy of little Renée and the poor Emile that she had not heeded the name of the American officer.

"Can it be the same?" she thought now, a wild fluttering at her heart. Then she sternly admonished herself. "Of course not! Don't be silly! There are hundreds of Allans and I don't even know that he joined the army!"

She said aloud, very calmly: "Love has given to Renée what money couldn't–she has been well educated, I believe! Her mother taught her, she says, and after her mother's death she went to a communal school near St. Cloud. She will help our Pat a great deal!"

"Yes, I'm very glad we have her with us! And now, Pen, I'll put you in command–head gardener, or whatever you want to call yourself! Raise your

larkspur–only let a mere father be of what help he can! Things are pressing pretty hard at the Works–I can't help but fear that the winter may bring serious problems of unemployment and we must be ready to solve them! A few weeks will see the end of this war–it is in sight now! By the way, we are just completing the formula for a new explosive–more powerful than any the world has ever known! If the enemy knew it the war would end to-morrow!"

Penelope shuddered. "Why do we need it?"

"My dear, that little formula alone, scrap of paper as it is, will be a safeguard against future wars! The government is sending on experts to go over the experiments and the formulas. And, if they are satisfied, it will be my gift–the gift of my men–to our country!"

Penelope listened with divided attention, her mind not so much upon the wonders of shot and shell as upon the problems of the two little girls upstairs. She stared into the crackling flames.

"Do you think Miss Pat will fall into your plans, sister? Remember she is sadly spoiled!"

Pen laughed. "She'll never know we're making plans–wait and see! The first thing we must do is to make Renée feel that this is home and then–well, we must fill their days with sunshine–flowers and children grow better with that, you know! And I promise you, Thomas, that after a few months–if I'm let alone that long–you'll agree that my hobbies are commonsense things after all!"

"You're generally right, sister–I've found that out from long, sad experience! Grow your larkspur and I'll help! And now I move that we call the plot finished and go to bed–you've worn me out!"

With two fingers he tipped her face toward him and kissed her good-night. Each was very fond of the other–it was this affection that bound Penelope's heart so closely to her brother's children.

Long after he had gone she sat alone before the fire, her elbows on her knees, her chin dropped into the palms of her hands. And as she mused over her plans, between her and the flames danced pictures of what she would like to do to help Pat, and now Renée, grow into "hardy blossoms, blooming year after year, keeping the garden lovely and the world richer for their beauty!"

CHAPTER V
FIRST AID

Renée wakened to find the sun streaming through the pink-flowered curtains and Patricia sitting bolt upright in bed, staring at her. She had been dreaming of Susette and Gabriel; she had to rub her eyes once or twice before she could remember that this was America and her new home!

"I thought you'd *never* wake up! I was just sitting here thinking how nice it is to have you here. Miss Prindle would never let any of us have a room-mate. Let's dress fast–there's *so* much I want to show you! I'll ring for Maggie."

As she spoke Patricia sprang from her bed and ran barefooted across the floor to the bell. With the sunshine and Pat's enthusiasm, the little homesick feeling that had begun to ache its way into Renée's heart disappeared in an instant.

Aunt Pen answered the bell instead of Maggie.

"Lazy girlies!" she cried cheerily. "I have been waiting an hour to eat breakfast with you! Melodia has a touch of her "rheumtics" and I've told Maggie that she may stay downstairs and help her. You and Renée can put away your things and make your beds." She was throwing back the bedclothes as she spoke and did not notice the surprise that flashed across Pat's face. Pat did not guess that this was one of Aunt Pen's "plans" because she did not know, yet, that Aunt Pen was "planning"; she had never made a bed in her life, nor had she ever had to hang away her clothes! But already Renée was neatly tucking into a corner of the wardrobe her warm, comfy slippers and was hanging her nightgown upon a hook, so, although Patricia had opened her lips to utter a protest, she closed them, suddenly ashamed.

Over their breakfast Aunt Pen and Pat made the plans for the day. It must be like a holiday to celebrate Renée's coming! She must be taken about the city and shown every spot of interest.

"It will seem stupid to you after Paris," declared Pat.

Renée smiled. "Oh, it couldn't! Paris is beautiful but–this is America! Always my mother told us stories of America. She loved it and she wanted us to love it, too! She used to say that America was like a splendid, growing boy! I think she meant that everything here is young and over there in France it is so old! But I love France!" The child's eyes grew dark with feeling. "Only I feel so sorry for France! She's like poor Susette and her flowers!"

"It's Susette's cheery, brave soul that you love, my dear–as we love the cheery, brave soul of France," finished Aunt Pen.

"Well, maybe France has a soul but does she have pancakes like these?" put in Pat, for she felt that Renée and Aunt Pen were growing far too serious for such a glorious morning.

The day was full of interest for them both; for Patricia, because she suddenly found a new pride in showing to her little guest the various things in her home city of which she was justly proud. Then Aunt Pen gave bits of historical

information that added to everything they saw. Pat had not known that over the stretch of pretty park near her home the early settlers had once fought with the Indians; that the huge boulder in the park, shadowed by old elms, marked the grave where some unknown soldiers, who had given their lives in the war of 1812, were buried. Aunt Pen also pointed out the street, thronged now with trucks, wagons and street-cars, that had once been the trail through the forest over which, when the Indians had burned the village, Patricia's great-great grandmother had escaped, hidden under sacking and straw in the back of the old farm wagon, drawn by oxen.

"Oh, how thrilling!" cried Pat with a little shiver of delight. "What fun it would be to have to escape now! Only we'd just go in this car with Watkins driving about fifty miles an hour!"

Later in the day Patricia begged that she might take Renée again along the river road, past the old fort that had once leveled its wooden cannon toward the shore of Canada, past the huge factories with their countless chimneys belching forth flame and smoke. Aunt Pen had let them go alone and the ride had been one of endless interest. They were returning swiftly along the maple-shaded street that led toward home when the car swerved sideways, Watkins gave a quick laugh, and the air was pierced by the sharp cry of a dog in pain.

"Watkins–it was a dog!" cried Patricia.

"I know it. He'll be more careful next time!"

Renée had covered her eyes. Pat sprang from her seat and leaned toward the chauffeur.

"*Stop!*" she cried so commandingly that he ground on the brake. "I think you're–you're *awful* to go on and leave the poor dog!" Tears threatened her voice. She opened the door and sprang out, followed by Renée.

But another little girl had gone to the dog's rescue. Sheila Quinn, walking homeward from school, had seen the accident. She had run out into the street and had gathered the dog into her arms. When Pat and Renée had reached the spot she had laid Mr. Dog upon the grass and was examining him.

"Is he dead?" cried Pat and Renée in one voice.

"Oh, no! See him try to lick my hand! He knows we want to help him! I guess he's more scared than hurt! Here, it is his leg. See, it is broken."

"How can you tell?" asked Pat, filled with admiration at the quick careful way Sheila had examined their patient.

"Run your hand gently over his body; see, it doesn't hurt him! But look at his leg–how it hangs! And watch him, he'll wince if I just move as though to touch it! We won't hurt you, doggie dear, just keep quiet and we'll fix you up all nice."

"What will we do?" asked Pat anxiously.

"We must put it in a splint and bandage it," promptly answered Sheila, looking around her as though to find the necessary things.

"I know–I know! There's the white stuff Aunt Pen got at the Red Cross, we can use that! She forgot it–it's in the car."

"That will be just the thing!"

"Get it, Renée! And here are some sticks–won't they do for splints?" asked Patricia eagerly.

"It ought to be something firmer, at least until the bone is set." Sheila was straightening out the poor little leg with so gentle a touch that the dog only whimpered. "If you'd let me use your scarf we could make a sort of pillow—-"

For answer Pat snatched the woolen scarf from her shoulders. Sheila, rolled it tightly into a firm pillow. Renée had returned with Aunt Pen's package and she and Patricia commenced tearing it into strips. Their fingers, eager though they were, made awkward work of it.

"Let *me* do it! You hold his leg," exclaimed Sheila. She tore off strips two inches wide. Then she neatly covered the woolen scarf with a wider piece. Renée and Pat, deeply concerned, leaned over the dog and watched. Pat held the injured leg and Renée gently stroked the dog's head.

"Isn't he a darling?" cried Pat. "I just *hate* Watkins for hurting him!"

"It wasn't Watkin's fault–he might have saved the dog and had a serious accident and hurt–you girls! The dog ran out in front of the car! This will be a lesson to him."

The splint ready Sheila gently placed it under the dog's leg and instructed Pat how to hold it in place. She wound the bandage around and around, careful to avoid the break, but firmly, so as to hold the splint securely in place. Then she straightened up from her kneeling position with a long breath.

"There, now–that will do nicely, until someone can set it!"

"I think you're wonderful–the way you can do things!" cried Pat, always generous in her praise. "Where did you ever learn? And oh, I forgot, we don't know your name and we'd like to—-"

The three girls, grouped about the injured dog who lay very contentedly with his head pillowed on Renée's lap, presented striking contrasts. Pat, like a picture in a fashion book in her trim green broadcloth coat and turban set jauntily on her smooth dark hair, had a frankness and sunniness in her face that was invariably winning despite a slight imperiousness of manner; Renée, small for her thirteen years, her delicate face, framed in golden curls, touched by the shadow of the sorrows she had known, seemed like a fragile flower. And Sheila Quinn, a head taller than even Pat, her black hair neatly braided in two tight pigtails reaching almost to her waist, her face and form showing the vigor gained from healthy exercise and simple living, had something both of Patricia's win-

someness, Renée's quiet poise and a happy contentment all of her own which came from the Quinn philosophy of "just make the best of everything, sweetness, there's sure to be some sunshine somewhere!"

Sheila laughed. "Which question shall I answer first? I'm Sheila Quinn! I know you are Patricia Everett, but—-" she hesitated as she glanced toward Renée. Patricia added:

"This is Renée LaDue who has come way from France to live with us!"

"Oh, how nice!" Sheila glanced with friendly curiosity up and down the little figure. "And I learned bandaging and all that at the scout meetings. I was highest in my first-aid test," she concluded proudly.

"Scouts—-" queried Pat.

"Girl Scouts," explained Sheila. "I belong to Troop Six and it's the best troop in the city!"

"Les Eclaireuses!" cried Renée. "There were some in the School of St. Cloud. I loved them–they used to bring the soldier's coats and socks to Susette for us to mend! They were like little girl soldiers."

Again Patricia felt small and insignificant before the greater experience of Renée and now, Sheila! But her nature was too sunny to show the moment's sting of pride. Besides, she was immensely curious.

"What do you have to do to be a Girl Scout?"

"Why, just want to join! I mean just want to be all that a scout must be and then put in your name. I wish you'd join Troop Six–it's the best and everyone just loves Captain Ricky–she's the scout captain."

"What do you have to want to want to be a scout?" asked Pat.

Sheila squared her shoulders. "This is what you have to want," and she repeated with dignity, for she was leader of her patrol and felt the responsibility of her position, "to do my duty to God and my country, to help other people at all times, to obey the scout law. There are lots of laws but they're the kind you just *like* to obey. Captain Ricky says the real meaning of scouting for girls like us is service to God and our country; that it helps each one of us to build strong characters that anyone can depend upon! And when girls are scouts why, we don't stop to think that one, maybe, is rich and another poor and one's black and one's white or one's a Jew and one's a–a Baptist–we're just all scouts and loyal! Oh, I love it!"

"Renée, *let's* be scouts!" cried Pat. "Let's tell Daddy we want to join Troop Six–it's the best in the city!"

Mr. Dog, his patience exhausted, had commenced to stir restlessly and lick his bandaged leg. The three girls exclaimed in dismay:

"We've forgotten the dog!"

"What shall we do with him?"

"I'd better take him home. I am sure my mother can set his leg and then we'll put it in a stronger splint," said Sheila.

Pat and Renée could not dispute Sheila's claim to the interesting patient.

"Then we'll come over to-morrow to see him. I think he's a nice dog because he looks just like Miss Prindle's General who has all kinds of prizes, only dirty!" Patricia motioned to Watkins who, resigned to waiting, had become more concerned in the afternoon newspaper than in the fate of the dog.

He looked a little angry now when Pat explained that they intended to carry the dog in the automobile to the Quinn home, but there was something in Pat's face that stilled the protest on his lips.

Pat exclaimed with delight when she found that Sheila lived in the old brick house whose windows were in sight of her own. With Renée and now Sheila, the world that had seemed only the day before to be so lonely, now seemed full of friends. Sheila did not tell Pat that she had often watched her come and go from the house that was so like a palace compared to her own. Sheila knew that there had been just a little envy in her heart at times and she was ashamed of it. For, after all, not for worlds would she exchange her dearest mother and the three small brothers for the wealth of the Everetts!

"Let's have lots of good times together," Pat called in parting, "and we'll come over first thing to-morrow to see the dog!"

So much had Pat and Renée to tell of their day that Mr. Everett quite forgot an after-dinner engagement he had made with a business acquaintance. All four of them, Aunt Pen and Daddy, Pat and Renée sat before the fire. Pat, with a diplomacy not suspected by her innocent family, led up very carefully to what she wanted "more than anything else in the world!" That was always the way she put it. She used the very words now as she told of Troop Six–the best in the whole city!

"Bless Pat!" cried her father, using Melodia's favorite expression, "*I* can't keep up with you! Yesterday it was one thing and to-day it's another, and it's always what you want more than anything else in the world!"

"Yes, Daddy–*this* is!"

"A Girl Scout—-" he glanced over the children's heads at Penelope and his brows lifted as much as to say, "Well, this is *your* garden–what have you to say?"

Aunt Pen answered his look.

"Do you know, Thomas, I think it's just the thing! It will bring the girls in touch with joys and responsibilities they've not known before!"

"It makes us build up–oh, something about character!" In her excitement Pat could not remember Sheila's grand words. "Renée says that in Paris they are like girl soldiers. And Sheila says we'll love the girls in the troop; there's Keineth Randolph and Peggy Lee and True Scott and a lot of others—-"

"I know Mrs. Lee, and if Peggy is like her mother she is a fine girl," added Aunt Pen.

"Keineth is John Randolph's girl," put in Pat's father.

"Then we may?" Pat asked anxiously.

"You may," laughingly answered Mr. Everett and Aunt Pen in one voice, covering their ears that they might not be deafened by Pat's boisterous "hurrah!"

Upstairs Pat chattered on, although Renée's eyes were almost shut with sleep. They opened their beds and each laid out her nightgown and slippers.

"You know I'm glad Maggie's downstairs now–we ought to take care of things ourselves; we'll *have* to, if we make good scouts! Oh, good gracious!" Pat whirled a stocking in midair. "We'll have to try exams and I'm always scared to death. But you'll help me, won't you, Renée?"

And little Renée, her heart overflowing with gratitude, glad to do the smallest service within her power, answered heartily, though sleepily, "'Deed I will!"

CHAPTER VI
EAGLES AND GOLDEN EAGLETS

"A bun fell on my kitten,
She died where she was sittin'—-"

sang Sheila, holding up for inspection the blouse she had just finished ironing.

The front doorbell rang, its rusty tone resounding through the house.

"Goodness gracious," exclaimed Mrs. Quinn, smoothing out her apron. Few came to the sombre front door of the old house; somehow instinct seemed always to lead visitors along the flagged walk to the door leading into the cheery kitchen.

Sheila, flying to the door, had guessed in an instant who the callers were! She led Pat and Renée back through the long hall and the injured dog, comfortably established in a basket near the stove, set up a vigorous barking by way of welcome.

"He's all right, or will be as soon as the break mends, mother says! This is my mother, Pat," and Patricia turned from the dog to Mrs. Quinn, who greeted the girls with her cheery smile.

"The children would have him here and I guess the poor dog is glad enough to find a home," she explained, nodding toward the basket which the younger

Quinns, with scraps of old carpeting, had made most comfortable.

"Mother says he's an Irish terrier, so let's call him Paddy!" And Paddy, as though he liked and accepted the name, barked and wagged his stump of a tail and tried to jump out of his basket.

With little effort to conceal their curiosity Patricia and Renée were staring about them. Patricia had never seen a kitchen like this before! She could not tell just what made it so different–it might be the neat rows of pretty china dishes on the shelves of the open cupboard, or the shiny tins and pots and pans in the stove corner, or the bright rag rugs on the spotless floor, or the gay patterned cloth across the table at the window, or the blooming plants on the sills framed by crisply ruffled muslin curtains! And Mrs. Quinn, a pink bow at her neck brightening her faded dress and heightening the color of her thin cheeks, looked as though she belonged there with the geraniums and the bright rugs and the spotless dishes! Patricia was thinking that it was just the sort of a room one felt like staying in–and anyone could feel sure that–if there was any sunshine anywhere–it would be slanting across that floor.

Renée was standing with her hands quaintly clasped.

"It is like home," she cried. She caught sight of a little wooden stool and exclaimed: "Oh–like Susette's!"

Sheila had told Mrs. Quinn that Renée had come way from France. The motherly woman now drew the child to her and let her tell of Susette and the cheery kitchen at St. Cloud so that the tiny shadow of homesickness might pass from her heart.

Patricia was joyously announcing that her Daddy and Aunt Pen had said they might join Troop-Six!

"And I saw Captain Ricky and she told me to bring you girls to-day! Scout meeting is at three o'clock at Lincoln School," Sheila added.

"Renée–do you hear that? Goodness, I'm scared! What do we have to do first?"

"Form in patrols for inspection. I hope you can come into the Eagle Patrol with Keineth Randolph and Peggy Lee and myself!"

Patricia had innumerable questions to ask. She and Renée sat upon the floor, one on each side of Paddy's basket which had been drawn out into the middle of the room. Sheila resumed her ironing, explaining that it must be done before she could do anything else. Mrs. Quinn commenced a vigorous beating and stirring that promised goodies of some kind, joining now and then in the merry chatter. This was the beginning of many such pleasant hours in the kitchen of the old brick house!

As the girls were going home Patricia said suddenly to Renée, speaking out of a moment of deep thought: "What was it made it so jolly–there? I believe it

was the piano! Who'd ever think of having a piano in the kitchen?"

"No!" declared Renée. "It was the rocking chair and the piece-work cushions and the stool!"

At the scout meeting Renée, unused to large groups of children, felt a wave of shyness grip her. She was grateful for Pat's vivacity–no one would notice how quiet she was! At first there seemed to be a great many girls and as though they were all talking at once, but soon she made out through Sheila's rather offhand introductions that the girl with the nice eyes and jolly smile was Peggy Lee, that the smaller one with the golden hair was Keineth Randolph and that these two with the three girls standing near Pat made up the Eagle patrol.

Capt. Ricky, who was really Miss Fredericka Grimball, only no one ever called her anything but Capt. Ricky, greeted warmly the new recruits. She was a tall young woman, her fine face made beautiful by beauty of character rather than feature and with a personality that won her girls' liking and at the same time their respect.

She whispered to Sheila that she would place Pat and Renée in the Eagle Patrol! A shout went up in answer which was quieted by Capt. Ricky's whistle and her command to "fall in!"

Pat felt delightfully like a soldier as she drew up her slender five feet of body between Renée and True Scott. But she was an absurdly awkward soldier as she obeyed the commands and her pride met a sad fall when upon inspection she had to hold out ink-stained fingers!

After a brief drill the Captain gave the command to the Color Guard to form. From the ranks three girls stepped forward and with military precision brought from its place at one end of the room the Troop flag. Every scout's hand went instantly to the forehead in salute! Together they repeated:

"I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the country
for which it stands;
One nation indivisible, with liberty and justice
for all!"

Renée could not follow their words, but in a clear, sweet voice she sang with them the "Star Spangled Banner," and as the words rang out, "Then conquer we must when our cause it is just," there was an added brightness in her eyes, for she had come closer than the others to "war's desolation."

In Sheila's kitchen the girls had studied the scout laws; they repeated them now, carefully. To Pat, whose life so far had had few "laws" or "rules" of any kind, they seemed to mean more, now, as she repeated them in chorus, and she wondered deep within her heart if she could really keep them all! But just at that

moment she caught a glance and a smile from Capt. Ricky that put courage in her heart where the faintness had been! It would be well worth trying!

A business meeting followed. The business on hand to be discussed ranged in character from reports on "war savings," "thrift kitchen work," "city beautiful plans," a "back-to-school" campaign, knitting and sewing, to a noisy argument over a coming hike. The girls all tried to talk at once, and but for Capt. Ricky's whistle might have succeeded; nevertheless, out of the jumble of words Pat and Renée caught the impression that these merry girls were really doing a great deal of earnest work as well as play! In these khaki clad youngsters strong characters were in the building, "that anyone could depend upon" as Sheila had put it!

"Sheila, I know something un-us-u-al is going to happen!" whispered Peggy Lee, leaning across Pat and Renée. The Eagle patrol had grouped together, sitting cross-legged on the floor. "When Capt. Ricky looks like that she's got some grand surprise—-"

"Maybe it's an overnight hike! We take our ponchos and blankets and dog-tents and sleep outdoors!"

"It's too cold for that now, Ken! Perhaps it's a real party like the one we had last spring!"

But none of them had guessed right! Capt. Ricky had a surprise for them but it was even better than the overnight hike or the "real party!"

When the business of the meeting was over she stepped before them, her hands clasped behind her back in a most mysterious manner. She began:

"Scouts, I have been given a great privilege–and you shall all share it with me! An honor has come to Troop Six!" She had to wait, then, for a moment; loud cheers interrupted her! She did not seem in the least disturbed. "But like all the honors that have come to Troop Six this has been won through merit, earnest effort and hard work. We may well be proud of her who has brought us this honor; we can all follow her example and seek the standard she has attained! We can hail her as a leader among us! Sheila Quinn, please step forward!"

A ripple of "oh-h-h" ran through the girls! Sheila's face turned crimson. Peggy and Keineth excitedly pushed her forward.

Capt. Ricky's left hand clasped Sheila's and with her right she held up a glittering badge.

"Sheila, it is my happy privilege, upon the recommendation of the National Commissioner, to award to you the Golden Eaglet, the highest honor that can be won by a Girl Scout!"

A din of cheering drowned out anything more that Capt. Ricky might have wanted to say. Peggy and True Scott were capering about like jumping-jacks. There were shouts of "What's the matter with Sheila! She's all right," "Three cheers for Troop Six," "Now a tiger for the Eagle Patrol," and through it all Capt.

Ricky stood smiling, clasping Sheila's hand, and Sheila, the color of a red poppy, looked wildly about as though seeking some corner that might swallow her up.

Someone called "speech"; Peggy took it up, then it came from every corner! Capt. Ricky nodded to Sheila. Sheila swallowed hard to clear her voice of the tight band that seemed to choke it.

"I'm awfully glad I won–just for the sake of the Troop! It was hard work at first but afterwards one thing helped another. I hope you'll all be Golden Eaglets and I'll help anyone that wants to work for it and–Oh, I can't say another word!" and poor Sheila made a dash for the corner where the Eagle patrol awaited her with eager arms.

There were "eats," then, for it was of course a great occasion, and Peggy insisted that Sheila must eat six of the raisin cookies that were served. Pat, feeling now as though she had always belonged to Troop Six, asked, humbly, "if plain Eagles might not have just five?" and helped herself as she spoke!

The girls walked home together, a merry troop! Peggy Lee and Keineth Randolph turned after a few blocks; as Pat, Renée and Sheila went on Pat slipped her hand through Sheila's arm.

She had been deeply impressed by Sheila's modesty of manner. She was certain if she had been awarded such high honor she would have strutted like a peacock!

"Doesn't it feel grand to be a Golden Eaglet?" she asked Sheila solemnly.

Sheila hesitated. "I–don't–know! It makes me sort of–scared! I must live up to it, you see, and sometimes–it's awfully hard!"

For a few paces the girls walked along in silence. Serious thoughts had crossed each mind. An honor won was not enough–it must be lived up to!

Pat, who could not be still for very long, was the first to break the silence. She gave a merry chuckle.

"Well, I guess Pat Everett has a long way to go before she can be a Golden Eaglet! I've got to learn to be just a good scout first and you can believe that the next time I go to a scout meeting–I'll wash my hands before I go!"

CHAPTER VII
AUNT PEN PLANS

The Everett family was holding a "pow-wow." That was what Pat called the after-

dinner hour when they gathered about the library fire. Renée thought it quite the jolliest time of the day; almost always Mr. Everett had so many funny or exciting things to tell and he and Aunt Pen never shut the girls out of their conversation; when sometimes their talk became serious and of problems which the girls could not understand, then either Mr. Everett or Aunt Pen carefully explained. And in turn Aunt Pen and Pat's father would listen with deep interest to the girls' account of their day.

"It's not nearly as jolly when Celia's home," Pat had confided to Renée, "'cause she always talks and won't pay any attention to me!" Although Aunt Pen, overhearing her, had laughed and said, with a world of meaning: "Poor chatterbox!"

Letters had come from the south that day. They read them over now as they sat in the "pow-wow." In her letter to Pat's father Mrs. Everett had told him how glad she was they had taken Renée and how eagerly she looked forward to knowing the little girl! As Mr. Everett read this Pat squeezed Renée's hand and Aunt Pen patted the fair head. To Pat her mother had enclosed a little note.

* * * Be a dear good child and help your Aunt Pen by doing whatever she wishes you to do. Keep your father from being lonely without us, and remember that sometimes he is very tired when he comes home at night and likes to have some one read to him! And be very considerate of the little stranger you have taken into your circle. * * *

"Mother needn't worry! I'll just like to do all of those three things, you'll see!" cried Pat, folding her precious note and tucking it away in her pocket.

But Aunt Pen's letter was the one that claimed their deep attention!

* * * If everything goes along all right at home–and I know it will with you there, dear Pen–we may stay until spring. We are very comfortable, the hotel is quiet and the food is good. Celia seems brighter and is quite contented. Chauncey is out of danger, too, and in a short time we may go to the hospital and see him. * * * It was very hard for me to make up my mind to leave home just now, but I could not hesitate when I knew that it was for Celia's good. And you, dear girl, made it easier for me by taking my place. * * * I am worried about Pat's school. I really don't think she ought to go back to Miss Prindle's at all–there is so much sickness everywhere, and I simply cannot stand any more worry. I think I'd rather she stayed right at home. But she ought to have some work–dear Pen, please plan this out for me! I feel so helpless way down here! I will leave it all to you, knowing that whatever you do will be for Pat's good. * * *

"Read that last again," broke in Pat's father with a twinkle in his eyes. Pat was looking rather anxiously at Aunt Pen.

Penelope read it again and then folded the letter.

"It's just exactly what I wanted Caroline to say!"

"But, Daddy, I don't care–now–about not going back to Miss Prindle's, but I'd hate a tutor or anything like that!"

"All play and no work—-"

"But I do work! Ask Aunt Pen if I haven't made my bed every morning!"

"I have some plans," Aunt Pen began slowly, "the girls ought to have some studies and—-"

"And a tutor, Aunt Pen?" Aunt Pen nodded. "Not that awful Miss Gray–please, Aunt Pen!"

"No, not Miss Gray! I think I know someone whom you'll like–or at least you are very fond of her now!"

Amused at the real distress in Pat's face her father broke in:

"Aunt Pen says she has some plans! Her plans are generally very interesting," with a sidelong glance at his sister, "though I admit that sometimes she is very heartless! Let's hear them! Then if you don't like them, why—-"

"Well, then," cried Pat resignedly, "let's hear them!"

Renée was listening with deep interest. She had never gone to school except for the three years following her mother's death when she had on pleasant days gone to the communal school at St. Cloud. Before that her mother had taught her; she had stored away, too, in her mind valuable knowledge from the books which had been always about her. Now the thought of going to an American school filled her with terror!

Aunt Pen assumed a comically serious air. "I will tell the girls my plans and they shall decide, for unless they go into the work with all their hearts it will do them little good! First, each day must be divided into periods, the first to begin at eight o'clock. Between eight and nine there will be instruction in household arts"–she could not resist a sly wink at Pat's father–"that includes making beds without wrinkles and tidying the corners; of the room, especially behind the wardrobe where things collect–"

"Aunt Pen, you are *just* joking!"

"No, my dear! I never was more serious in my life! To my thinking accuracy in such work is as important as accuracy in algebra or geometry! And I am sure you did not get it at Miss Prindle's!"

"What then?" cried Pat and her father.

"An hour of out-of-door exercise in the morning and one in the afternoon, or at least two hours out-of-doors each day, regardless of weather!"

"Oh, I *like that*!" interrupted Pat.

Aunt Pen continued severely: "And that does not mean riding with Watkins! That leaves six hours for study, classes and indoor recreation."

"Study what?" demanded Pat, still suspicious that there must be something unpleasant somewhere.

"Well, different things for each of you. Besides the classes in bed-making, sweeping and dusting, cooking and home-nursing, I think you should study Algebra and spelling, Renée may study English and she will help you with your French, and you will both have Latin. Then in the evening you may read American history from books selected by your tutor—-"

"Did ever anyone hear of a school like that?" cried Pat, clapping her hands. "I love it, Aunt Pen, and I'll work hard–honest! Oh—-" her face fell. "Who will be the tutor?"

"Where can you find anyone who can make bread and teach Latin infinitives?" put in Mr. Everett mischievously.

"Well," Aunt Pen tried to look modest, "how would I do?"

"You!" cried Pat incredulously, certain now that the whole plan was only a joke. "You–really, truly?"

"Really, truly, my dear! I will dearly love to teach you and help you both!"

Pat threw both arms about her neck in a strangling hug. "Oh, Aunt Pen, it will be such fun and I'll really, truly try to learn Latin and I won't stuff things behind the wardrobe any more–that was my half of the room, you know! And maybe, with Renée to help me, I can soon speak French as well as Celia!"

"And I'll offer a prize for the best loaf of bread that one of my girls makes!" added Mr. Everett.

"No, there shall be no prizes in this school! If one of the girls can do something better than the other then she is going to help the other! More than all the French and Latin, in the world I want my pupils to learn unselfishness! And we will keep reports and the reward will come when Pat and Renée show these reports to Pat's mother."

"What do you think about it, Mouse?" That was the name Mr. Everett had given Renée. Her eyes were shining with delight.

"Oh, I will like it very much! And there is so much I want to learn if I am to live in America and I will try so hard! I was afraid to go to school!" she confessed.

"It is very natural that you should have dreaded it, my dear! After a little that shyness will wear off and you will find many staunch friends and playmates."

"I want to learn to iron as nicely as Sheila can," announced Pat with her accustomed enthusiasm. "And cook, too–make tarts and things! Why, Aunt Pen, all that is what we'll need to be second-class scouts!" The thought suddenly brought concern to her face. "Will we have time, Aunt Pen, to study for the tenderfoot test? Peggy Lee and Keineth Randolph are going to teach us to tie knots and, you

know," she added hastily, "that is important! Everybody should be able to tie all sorts of knots–it's very useful, lots of times!"

Aunt Pen nodded. "Of course! You shall have a chance to learn all that!"

"Peggy says her brother will teach us how to semaphore, too! Oh, we'll be *so* busy, Renée! I think I'll write to Angeline all about it!"

She ran to the spinnet desk across the room and pulled out paper and pen. Her head was whirling with Aunt Pen's delightful plans! She wrote furiously for a few moments, with a loud scratching of her point. But as she wrote into her mind slowly crept a vivid picture of the girls at Miss Prindle's and of the life there! With the page half written she stopped. Then she caught up the paper and tore it across, dropping the pieces one by one into the waste-basket. From the divan before the fire Aunt Pen was watching her, wondering at the fleeting shadow that had crossed the brightness of her face.

"What is it, Pat?" she asked gently.

Pat hesitated. "Oh–nothing!" There was a note of defiance in her voice. She did not add that into her heart had suddenly come the illuminating conviction that the girls she had known at Miss Prindle's would laugh at Aunt Pen's "school!"

"There was just so much to write about that I couldn't seem to begin!"

CHAPTER VIII
BREADWINNERS

A perplexing problem confronted Pat. Her scout uniform must be bought out of money she had earned herself. And she had never earned a penny in her life!

"I earned my money knitting mittens and selling them and True Scott crocheted tam-o'-shanters. They were awfully pretty and all the girls ordered them. Peggy Lee worked on Saturdays in a grocery store–taking telephone orders," Sheila explained.

"I can't knit well enough or crochet or do anything," Pat wailed afterwards, in gloomy consultation with Renée and Sheila.

Then at Sheila's suggestion the girls studied the "Help Wanted" column of the newspaper. They spread it out upon the floor and knelt around it; Renée reading off each advertisement and Sheila and Pat passing upon its possibilities. After considerable discussion it was decided that on the next afternoon Pat should go to a certain office address where, as the advertisement read, any refined lady, young

or old, would be told how to make ten dollars a week, in pleasant occupation, in her spare hours!

"That will be just right for me!" Pat declared enthusiastically. "It won't interfere with 'school.'"

Aunt Pen's "school" was well started. At first Pat had been inclined to treat rather lightly the schedule of "household arts," but she realized very soon that Aunt Pen was in earnest and that she intended to demand the same thoroughness and accuracy in the simple tasks about the house that were necessary in the sums in Algebra! At the beginning Pat had detested what Melodia called "the upstairs work," but under Aunt Pen's pleasant instruction and with Renée's cheerful company–that little lady was a true housewife and her hands flew eagerly about her work–Pat began to feel more interest and to try very hard to do everything just right! And at the end of the first week Aunt Pen had allowed the girls to make apple pies which Mr. Everett had declared were better than any apple pies he had ever tasted!

"And ten dollars a week!" Pat went on, "I will be rich very soon! Now we must find something for Renée!"

"Perhaps I might earn a little arranging flowers in shop windows; often I helped Colette Voisin, who had a stall at St. Cloud, and I loved it!"

"Just the thing!" cried Pat, delighted with anything out of the ordinary. "Most of the flower shops look hideous and they'd probably pay you well! While I go for my position to-morrow afternoon, you and Sheila can stop at each one of the florists and offer to trim their windows!"

The fortune-seekers spent an excited hour preparing for their adventure. Aunt Pen had gone out for the afternoon, so they were undisturbed. Pat insisted upon fastening her hair tightly back from her face so as to give to herself an appearance of mature severity! At the last moment she donned a long coat of Aunt Pen's which concealed her own kilted skirt and then for a finishing touch added Celia's last year's sable furs!

"There–I'm sure anyone would take me easily for twenty-one!" she declared, surveying herself with satisfaction. And to Pat twenty-one seemed old enough to suit the most exacting employer!

They had arranged to meet Sheila at her gate. Renée was frightened to death, and as the three girls trudged on toward the business section of the city she repeated over and over, after Pat, just what she must say upon entering each florist's shop!

"Be sure to tell them that you used to fix that flower stall in France!" warned Pat as they parted. She waved her hand, calling "good luck," and walked on with a brave step. Sheila was to stay with Renée because Renée was not acquainted with the city streets.

But two hours later it was a crestfallen trio who met–as they had agreed to do–in Sheila's kitchen. Pat, in spite of her ridiculous make-up, looked like an unhappy, thwarted child! She had waited over an hour in a stuffy office, packed in with dozens of other "refined lady" applicants who had–although Pat would not tell this even to Sheila or Renée–openly laughed at her!

"And by the time it was my turn to go in I was so tired waiting that I got all sort of scared and couldn't say a word," she explained in deep disgust. "Anyway, it was to sell "Beauty Packages" at people's houses–things that'd make straight hair curly and remove freckles and everything else and you had to deposit twenty-five dollars before they'd even let you begin!"

"And all the flower shops said they had experts to decorate their windows–they would not even let me tell of Colette's stall! I think they thought I was too little," sighed Renée; "often they laughed!"

"Well," Pat tossed her head, "we just mustn't get discouraged but try, try again!"

Renée shuddered. "Oh, I can't–not like that!" she cried vehemently.

"Would you rather not be a scout?" demanded Pat. "You never get anything without trying for it and I guess I'm not going to let one failure discourage me!" In the pleasant shelter of the Quinn kitchen she felt very brave! But a threat of tears in Renée's eyes softened her. "Don't worry, Ren, we'll find something! Maybe," she hesitated, "maybe we'd better consult Aunt Pen!"

"Oh, I wish you would!" Renée cried eagerly. Pat's adventurous spirit frightened her a little.

"I'll think about it and maybe to-morrow—-"

For Pat was not quite sure, in her own mind, just what Aunt Pen might think of the borrowed coat and Celia's furs!

By countless little signs Aunt Pen knew that her girls had something on their minds! Hurrying down to dinner she had caught a glimpse, as she had passed Pat's door, of her own coat and Celia's furs thrown on Pat's bed; the girls had been unusually silent during the evening meal and she had twice intercepted an appealing glance from Renée to Pat which had drawn a nod of assurance from Pat in answer! Pat's room work the next morning had been sadly careless and her Latin recitation had found her abstracted! Aunt Pen was too sensible to force a confidence–she was sure that it was only a matter of a little time before Pat would bring to her anything that troubled!

So she was not surprised when after the morning's work was over Pat came to her door.

"Renée and I want to talk to you, Aunt Pen!" she said so seriously that for a moment Penelope was startled.

The two stood before her, Pat with her hands clasped behind her as she had

often seen her father stand.

"You see it's like this, Aunt Pen–Renée and I have got to earn some money to buy our uniforms! We can't just use allowances! It's about six dollars and a half apiece! We can't knit well enough to sell things and Peggy Lee worked in a grocery store, but it was where her mother traded and they were nice about it! But we–can't–find–any work!"

"Then you've tried?"

Pat colored. "Yes–we tried yesterday!" Without going too much into detail and carefully giving their experience as much dignity as possible, she recounted the efforts of the afternoon before to find employment. Aunt Pen was suddenly seized with a violent coughing fit which left her tearful!

"I *hope* you're not laughing," Pat ended with some wrath in her voice. "I'm sure we're old enough to earn money–*boys* do at our age! And I am not in the *least* discouraged!"

"That is right, Pat," cried Aunt Pen admiringly. "But perhaps you have not gone about it the right way! Let's sit down now and go over the whole thing!"

Afterwards Pat told Sheila that one thing she always liked about Aunt Pen was that she treated a person as though that person *knew* something!

And Pat never dreamed that it was not her own mental processes that, after a few words, arrived at the conclusion that she and Renée must content themselves with just trying to do what they were qualified to do!

"Renée is too young to be employed even for any part of a day in a store–we have a law that forbids it! And you, Pat, could scarcely sell enough Beauty Packages in what spare time you have to replace the shoe leather you'd wear out!"

"But what *will* we do?" cried Pat, humble now.

Aunt Pen thought for a long time. Pat's earnestness was a very precious thing–she must guard it!

Suddenly she clapped her hands with the girlishness that made her such an understanding companion.

"I have a brilliant idea! You remember the box of apples that came last week from my farm? We must have at least fifty bushels of them! My farmer said he was going to take them to market next week. Instead, you and Renée may go around and take orders! You can sell them for a dollar and seventy-five cents a bushel–even then it'll be under the grocer's price–and you will pay the farmer a dollar and a half, which is all he'd get wholesale, anyway."

"Then we'll make a quarter a bushel?"

"Yes. If you sell the whole lot, you'll have twelve dollars and a half to divide between you, besides lots of exercise and some experience! And you can take orders for potatoes, too, up to twenty bushels."

"Oh, great!" cried Pat. She danced around Indian-fashion. "May we begin this afternoon? And may I take some of the apples that came here around in a basket to show people?"

"That is a good idea! I think you'll find it pleasanter than selling Beauty Packages! Then other ways of earning money may turn up. You know one thing you can learn, even when you are little girls, that will help you all through life is to know and grasp opportunities when they come."

"I don't know what we'd do without you, Aunt Pen! I'll keep accounts in a little book, for I love putting down and adding figures. Let's call ourselves 'LaDue and Everett, Agents.'"

Renée, whose face reflected her pleasure and approval of the new plan and her relief that the afternoon need not bring further search for employment, spoke now, shyly:

"I want so much to earn some money so as to send a little to Susette and Gabriel. I have so much here and they may need many things! Do you think I could sell Christmas cards?"

"What kind, child?"

Renée told, then, of the little cards she had painted and sold in St. Cloud. She ran to her room to bring a few that she had. Penelope exclaimed with real admiration over them:

"Why, my dear, they are beautiful! Of course you can sell them! And you must make more! And dinner cards, too!"

"Then valentines!" cried Pat. "And I'll sell them, 'cause you see I am bigger! We can buy your paints and cardboard out of our apple money and–"

"What a business woman you have suddenly become!" Aunt Pen declared.

"We'll need a great big account book and an office—-" Pat stopped suddenly and clapped her hands to her head, a motion which always indicated that she had an idea!

"Oh, spliffy! Renée–come on! I've the *best* plan!" That it was to be a secret was certain! She caught Renée's two hands and dragged her from the room, leaving Aunt Pen convulsed with laughter.

There ensued, then, from the third floor, between the lunch hour and the afternoon study period, a rumbling like thunder, mingled with pounding and scraping and bursts of laughter. To add to the mystery Pat rushed downstairs to return shortly with broom and dustpan and a mob cap over her dark head.

Not until the next afternoon was the secret revealed! Then with much ceremony Pat and Renée escorted Aunt Pen to the third floor. For years the low-gabled room stretching across the east wing of the house had served as a sewing room where the Archer sisters had worked stitching frocks for Celia and Pat and mending the household linen. The Archer sisters–Pat had always thought they

looked like gnomes—were dead now and Mrs. Everett had the girls' dresses made by a downtown dressmaker. The room had not been used for a long time.

Now upon its door had been nailed an imposing and elaborately decorated sign which read: "*Eagles' Eyrie*." And beneath that, emphasizing its warning with a skull and crossbones, was another sign: "*No Admittance*."

"Three knocks and then a quick one is the signal," explained Pat mysteriously; "and you and Sheila and Peggy and Keineth and True Scott are the only ones that will know it–except, of course, Ren and me!"

Pat was unlocking the door as she spoke. She threw it open proudly. "This isn't going to be any silly club!" she explained. "Everyone that comes here must work! That desk over there is mine and Renée has this table because she can paint on it and the light's good. And that big table is for the other girls, only we have to keep it against the wall 'cause one leg's off!"

A few hours' work had utterly transformed the room and had removed all traces of the patient Archer sisters and their livelihood. The floor, very dusty in spots, was covered with strips of an old hall carpeting which, when hardwood floors had been laid, had been stored away. Pat had also resurrected from the storeroom the antiquated desk and tables and a dilapidated assortment of chairs. Over one of these, to add a note of elegance to the room, she had thrown an old Bagdad lounge cover and across the windows the girls had hung pieces of faded velour, replaced a few years before in the living rooms below. The air was heavy with the smell of camphor and dust; the three-legged table had a pathetically helpless look, a corner of the wall was stained from a leak in the roof, but to Pat and Renée it was an inspiring retreat!

"My account books are there in my desk, and I'll have you know, Aunt Pen, that 'LaDue and Everett' have gotten orders for ten bushels of apples which wasn't bad for one afternoon's work and for girls, too!" declared Pat.

"Oh, that reminds me!" Aunt Pen's voice was as enthusiastic as that of the junior member of the firm. "I have an order for LaDue and Everett! Miss Higgins will take twelve of the Christmas cards! I showed her one this morning. She is going to put them on sale in her tea room. She may order more! You must decide as to your prices, Renée."

Renée was too delighted to answer. Pat fairly bubbled with excitement. She caught Aunt Pen and Renée in a whirling step that almost completely demolished an ancient chair that lay in her mad path.

"Hurrah for the Eagles' Eyrie! And won't we just have fun? You, know"–she quieted suddenly–"the day mother and Celia went away I was awfully miserable and I wrote the silliest things in my diary! But that was before I found Renée! And now we've got Sheila and you and our jolly school and our business and I'm glad's can be they left me home and I didn't go back to Prindle's!"

Aunt Pen, for lack of breath and a chair had sunk down upon the floor. She looked up laughing.

"I'd hate to have to analyze that sentence of yours, Patsy! But even if your English is constructed badly your heart is gold and I say–good luck to you and your Eagles' Eyrie!"

CHAPTER IX
THE NEW LODGER

"Whatever in the world are all those whistles blowing for?" asked Pat, springing from her bed and running to her window. "Something's happening–I know!"

The girls listened. The early morning air was filled with incessant sound; the shriek of sirens, shriller blasts, the heavy tones of boats' whistles from the harbor, intoning bells.

"It makes you shiver!"

"Let's dress quickly!" Pat reached out for a stocking. "Maybe it's peace!" she declared suddenly.

"Oh-h!" was all Renée answered, but there was a world of meaning in the single sound. "Listen! There are more bells! Aren't they beautiful? Perhaps they are ringing all over the world."

Downstairs they found everyone wildly excited. Even Jasper, who had not been over from England for so many years that he had forgotten his relatives there, was talking volubly to Aunt Pen and passing her sugar for her boiled egg!

"What is it, Aunt Pen?" cried Pat and Renée in one voice.

"My dears–the fighting has stopped–at last!" Mr. Everett answered. He seemed too moved to say more.

"I don't know whether I feel more like praying or shouting," laughed Aunt Pen with two tears rolling down her cheeks.

From the extra which Jasper had brought in Mr. Everett read to them all the terms of the armistice to which Germany had agreed. Melodia and Maggie listened from the door.

"I feel all queer inside!" announced Pat.

Renée's breakfast lay before her, untouched. Aunt Pen, seeing the real distress on the child's face, divined the ache that lay in her heart. So that when Renée, unable to control herself longer, rushed toward the door she felt two quick

arms fold about her and draw her close to a friendly shoulder.

"Dearie, tell us! Don't grieve by yourself!"

Then poor Renée buried her face; it was several moments before she could speak.

"I wish I was–there! Home, I mean–poor Susette is old–and has–only Gabriel! We worked so hard–we made a flag, Susette and I, and we tried to make it just like your Stars and Stripes; we put in the thirteen bars, 'cause I had counted–but not–nearly–enough stars! We'd promised Emile when peace came–he said that the Germans *would* be beaten–we'd hang it from the corner of the roof, 'long side of Gabriel's old French flag! And"–the head went back against Penelope's shoulder–"I'm 'fraid Susette–will forget–and it–will not–be there!"

"She will remember, Renée, because right at this moment I know her heart and her mind are full of thoughts of you, just as you are homesick for her and the little cottage!"

Mr. Everett, who had been deeply moved by Renée's story, interposed some practical comfort.

"Renée, will you let me–by way of celebrating this day–send a money order to Susette in your name? Remember, child, how little we have suffered as compared to you and Susette and countless others–over there! You shall write her a little letter to go with it!"

"Oh, I will *like that*! And then Susette will surely know that I am with kind, generous friends!" The child's eyes were bright again. "And I will remind her where we put the flag and she can hang it out, for I think now there will be flags flying in France for a long time!"

"This must, of course, be a holiday," declared Aunt Pen.

"And let's just do things we've never done before," cried Pat.

At that moment Mr. Everett was called to the telephone. He returned greatly excited.

"Burns telephones from the Works that the men are forming a monster parade! They've got a band and helped themselves to every flag in the place! The city's gone mad! I must hurry away. Take the girls downtown! This November eleventh must be a day we will never forget–as long as we live!"

And as he hurried off he said to Renée in parting:

"Have that letter ready, my dear, and I will send the money order home at noon-time."

The girls rushed away to put on their wraps.

"May we stop for Sheila?" called Pat over the banister.

"Of course!" assented Penelope, glad that Pat wanted to share all her joys with her friends.

By the time they reached the downtown section the walks were thronged

with people and the streets had been cleared of traffic for the marching hosts. The girls found a place on the curb. It seemed to them as though everyone had gone mad all at once and that they were as mad as anyone else! At every corner processions were forming, headed by any sort of a makeshift band and where not even a drum could be commandeered, tin pans and pails had been pressed into service! And through it all the incessant, deafening tumult of whistles!

Everyone was smiling! The sun had burst through the accumulated clouds of long years of war!

A group of men and girls from a shipyard marched by. Some of them were drawing a huckster's wagon they had seized and upon its load of potatoes and apples and cabbages they had placed a big ship's bell! One of their number rode on the wagon and with a huge sledge pounded the bell at regular intervals. They were all carrying flags, big and small, and one grimy man had a baby in his arms! The crowd on the curb cheered wildly and the man held the baby high in the air!

The marchers had to halt and while the man with the bell rested, they sang the Star Spangled Banner. Others took it up–it was carried down block after block, a rising wave of sound, a chorus of triumph! Pat and Sheila and Renée sang lustily and as they sang Pat felt her hand suddenly caught in a warm, tight clasp! It was her neighbor, a little bent woman with the dark eyes of the Italian race and a worn shawl over her head and shoulders. Her eyes were brimming with tears, but through them she was smiling like the others! Pat was too young to guess the tragedy of sacrifice that might lie behind those tears, but she was not too young to sense the common joy and thankfulness and privilege they shared! So she squeezed the worn fingers and smiled back into the little old woman's face!

"Here come the men from the Works!" cried Aunt Pen, standing on tiptoe to look over the crowd. The shipbuilders had passed on. Along surged the approaching host, fifteen thousand strong, men and women! They had stripped the works of flags and carried them now high in the air with arms that could not tire! The discordant blasts of their band was heavenly music to their ears! Old men stepped along like boys; scattered through the lines were hundreds of girls in their working overalls and caps.

Renée was puzzled. These men, many of them, did not look like the Americans she had seen! One of them shouted out in a strange tongue, but he carried a banner that said "We are for the U.S.A." Perhaps, like herself, he had come to America for refuge and was giving now of his strength and loyalty to the mother country he had sought.

"Can't we march, too, Aunt Pen?" cried Pat.

Some one from the lines shouted to them to come in! They made a place in the ranks for them and even the little old woman with the shawl joined the

procession. A voice from behind hailed them and Pat saw her father marching with his men.

"Could a day be more wonderful? But I am as hungry as a bear," declared Pat at luncheon. "And, oh joy, chicken and biscuits! What shall we do this afternoon, Aunt Pen?"

"Dear me, Pat, do you think as fast as you talk? For the sake of your digestion I shall keep the plans for this afternoon a secret until you are through luncheon! But it is going to be something you'll *just* love!" and Aunt Pen imitated perfectly Pat's characteristically enthusiastic tone.

"Aunt Pen, I'll choke if you don't tell even a *teeny* word! Let us guess!"

But Aunt Pen was firm, and not until the last crumb of luncheon had been eaten would she say one word!

Then: "Your father says we may all go through the Works!"

"All–Sheila and Keineth and Peggy?"

"Yes. And we will start in half an hour. That will give Renée a chance to write her letter to Susette." For Renée had found on her plate an envelope containing a money order for one hundred dollars!

Because of the day's celebration the Works were almost deserted and for the first time in months the great wheels were still and the furnaces smouldering. Mr. Everett met the girls and took them himself from building to building, explaining carefully every process of manufacture. Peggy and Sheila were intent listeners; Keineth, more imaginative than the others, thought that the wheels were like great giants, harmless now as they slumbered! And Renée loved the empty, dusty spaces, the gleaming metals of the engines and dull glow of the furnaces! Pat's most lasting impression was pride that her father should know so much!

Sheila became particularly absorbed in the pattern shop. She had lingered behind the others to examine more closely a series of beltings. Of an inquiring and inventive mind, she was always deeply interested in the putting together of any piece of mechanism. Suddenly she realized that she was alone and hurried out of the building to overtake the others. They had gone on through a long, enclosed alleyway to the main shop. She could still hear Mr. Everett's voice.

As she rushed through the passage she ran headlong into a man who appeared suddenly from a doorway letting into the passage. He was as startled as she! "*Du verdamte dumkopf!*" he snarled, under his breath, hurrying on. Sheila stood motionless.

"That was *German*!" she thought. She turned quickly. The man was disappearing at the end of the passage. And in a flash she recognized him as her mother's new lodger!

Pat's voice came to her from the other direction.

"Shei-la! Come along!"

A multitude of thoughts were whirling in Sheila's head! She did not hear one word of the light chatter about her, for the exploring party had ended now in Mr. Everett's office. That man had certainly cursed in German and there had been an evil look in his face; she had frightened him so that he had lost control of himself for an instant! And what could he have been doing there–like that–when all the other men were off celebrating?

Down deep in her heart a voice told her that she ought to tell Mr. Everett immediately! But another voice warned her that that would surely mean the man would be discharged and her mother would lose her lodger! The back room would be empty again–and the music! She had begun her lessons and Miss Sheehan had said she "was learning quickly!" It had been a precious dream come true–

She listened to the second voice–it was very coaxing! "Perhaps he is a German who has become a loyal citizen of the United States," it told her, and that sounded very reasonable! She had startled him and he had spoken in the old, forgotten language! And the evil look she had caught in his eyes might have been imagined–for she had been startled, too! Besides, had the fighting not ended this very day? What harm could an enemy do now! If she told Mr. Everett and he laughed she would feel very foolish! Mr. Everett was placing them in the automobile and instructing Watkins to take them to Huyler's where they would have chocolate and cakes to end the great day. She could not tell him now!

But the doubt in her heart made her sweets taste bitter, and while the others chattered merrily Sheila sat silent and absorbed. She had listened within herself to the pleasanter voice, but in her ears still rang that muttered "*Du verdamte dumkopf*," and she was haunted by the gleam of evil eyes.

CHAPTER X
A SCOUT'S HONOR

That night Sheila dreamed all the great wheels she had seen in the Everett Works were rolling down the street after her and, though she ran as fast as she could, they advanced more quickly and came nearer and nearer; then they began to roar and to wave arms of hot metal towards her! The nearest reached out and caught at her with fiery fingers and just as she felt them close about her, she wakened!

Paddy was barking furiously, running from her bed to the door and back,

as though to implore her to come!

Her fingers clutched at the bedclothes–with terrified eyes she peered into the darkness of the room! It had been a dream–she was safe in her bed!

"Woof! Woof!" growled Paddy.

Sheila crept out of bed, scolding Paddy in whispers, that she might not waken her mother who slept in the next room. Barefooted she stole down the stairs to the kitchen, Paddy leaping on ahead of her. The kitchen was dark; it was a moment or two before Sheila's eyes could make out the familiar objects. Paddy growled and barked again! A sound outside startled Sheila so that she had to clap her hand over her mouth to still a scream! Then she realized it was the lodger going up the outside stairway! Each step creaked under his foot; she heard the door above close and a key turn in the lock!

But Paddy was not satisfied! He did not bark again, for Sheila had soundly rapped his nose, but he ran to the window, and placing his fore-paws on the sill, looked out and whined. Sheila, following him, peeped through the curtains. A light snow had covered the ground in the small backyard; it was still falling. Not an object was visible except the bare lilac bush in the sorrier.

"I s'pose it's a cat–you bad dog!" Sheila muttered crossly. "Come right upstairs, now, and be quiet!" So the two scampered back to Sheila's room and Sheila cuddled down under the bedclothes, pulling them well up over her face. Paddy jumped upon the bed and laid down very close to her feet and, though Sheila knew this was against the Quinn rules, she was grateful for his company and did not drive him away!

In the morning Sheila was not her cheerful self; she helped prepare the breakfast, clear it away and get the three small brothers ready for school in an abstracted manner. Her mother watched her start off herself with an anxious heart.

"Land o' goodness, what's got into my sweetness this morning?" she thought. "Never mind–if it's anything wrong she'll be telling her mother!"

Which was exactly what, at noon-time, Sheila ran all the way home from school to do. Not for a moment longer could she bear the self-reproach and doubt that was tormenting her! And her mother gave her the counsel she expected!

"You go just as straight to Mr. Everett as you can, dearie! And don't worry!"

Sheila found the Everett family in a state of intense excitement. She needed only to glance once at Mr. Everett's stern face to know that something terrible had happened! And with incredible instinct, born of remorse, something within her told her what it was! She stood quite still and looked from one face to another down the length of the table upon which the day's luncheon had been spread.

"Oh, Sheila, somebody has stolen some dreadfully important formulas from the Works—-" began Pat.

"No–no–no!" cried Sheila, as though her protest must stop the truth! Then she realized that they were staring at her in amazement! She clutched the back of a chair and tried to speak but not a sound would come.

"It is true," explained Mr. Everett in a tired voice. "It must have been the work of a very clever band of spies! All three copies of the formula have been taken! Each one had been put in a place we considered absolutely safe! We had just completed them and were ready to turn them over for the examination of the government experts!"

"And think of it, Sheila, Daddy says that it was for an explosive so dreadfully powerful that just having the formula and knowing how to make it would help prevent wars! Isn't that what he said, Aunt Pen?" Pat was greatly excited.

"To keep the secret in our country will certainly help to prevent future wars! There is no doubt but that the theft is the work of German agents," Mr. Everett answered. "And I did not know that we had a man we could not trust!"

Then Sheila swallowed hard. As she began to speak she felt as though her voice was coming from a great way off–that it did not belong to her at all! Everything in the room began to whirl around her excepting Mr. Everett.

In broken words she told her little story. And at the end she burst out, tears choking her voice: "I just hate myself for not having told you right then and there!"

It seemed to Sheila that long minutes of silence followed her outburst and as though every face in the room was turned upon her in condemnation. Her own eyes were fixed on the rug at her feet. But presently Mr. Everett's voice answered with a hopeful ring it had not had before and, gaining courage, Sheila looked up to find Aunt Pen nodding in approval and Pat regarding her with open envy.

"My dear girl," exclaimed Mr. Everett, "I believe you've given us an important clue! I'll call up the secret service detectives and will ask you to repeat your story to them–if you will wait!" He quickly left the room as he spoke.

"Sheila Quinn, you're just like a real detective! Isn't it grand and exciting? I'd never have thought a thing about that awful man!" Pat cried.

And Aunt Pen was solicitous that Sheila should have some hot luncheon immediately!

From that moment on everything happened with exciting rapidity. Sheila repeated her story to the two detectives who came at Mr. Everett's call. It was too late to return to school, so, hurrying home, she went grimly about various little household tasks, constantly listening for a knock at the door, starting at every sound!

"Do you know, Sheila," her mother whispered, "I'm as nervous as can be! I'm sure I heard Mr. Marx go upstairs the front way! He's never done that before!

I believe he just doesn't want a body to know he's in the house! Hark!" Holding hands tightly they listened; a soft pad-pad overhead made them certain someone was moving about in the room above.

"I wish they'd hurry and come and arrest him," Sheila groaned. And scarcely had the words left her lips when the front doorbell gave out its rusty clang.

Mrs. Quinn met three men at the door who briefly explained that they came with a warrant for the arrest of one Mr. John Marx who they thought might be found in her house. With a nodding of the head that set awry all sorts of little gray curls, Mrs. Quinn made it known that she was very certain the gentleman was at that moment right up in her back room! She started up the stairs with two of the men while the third lingered uncertainly in the hall below.

"Quick–come and watch these stairs outside," cried Sheila running to him. She led him back to the kitchen. They reached there just in time to hear the outside door above close quietly and quick steps on the rickety stairs. Not quick enough, though, for as Mr. John Marx opened the door at the foot of the stairs he faced the muzzle of a revolver!

Sheila, frightened and unnerved, shrank to a corner of the kitchen. She heard quick, angry voices, a sharp command, a click of metal as of a lock snapping shut! Her mother and the two other officers had come into the kitchen. Then the one man and his prisoner went away and the others returned to the room above to search its contents.

"Dear me, I feel almost as though we'd done something ourselves," sighed Mrs. Quinn, worn out with excitement. "And he was a nice appearing man, too, with always a pleasant word when he brought me the—-" she stopped. For the first time it came to her that she had lost her lodger!

And as though the same thought tormented Sheila the girl dropped her work and went to the old piano. It had been tuned and polished and Mrs. Quinn had draped a linen and lace square over one end of it. Sheila sat down and slowly, with a lingering touch, ran her fingers up and down the scale. Then she rose abruptly and closed the cover over the keys with a resolute bang.

"It's not half the punishment I deserve–but I did want to learn!" and bursting into tears she, rushed off to her room to fight out by herself the disappointment she must face.

And as though the day had not brought enough to "just clean tucker one out," as poor Mrs. Quinn put it, that evening, after the boys had gone to bed, Mr. Everett and Pat came to the door! Mrs. Quinn's hospitable soul was greatly distressed that she could not invite her guest into the parlor–occupied now by old Mr. Judkins at twenty-five dollars a month–but Mr. Everett declared that he could not ask for a more comfortable chair than the old rocker nor for a more

cosy room! With his usual tact he made Mrs. Quinn feel that they were old acquaintances.

He told them–keeping Pat's voice out of the story with difficulty–how the arrest of John Marx had led to the rounding up of the entire band; how they had been quickly proven to be Germans and paid agents of the German government and how–although as yet the formulas had not been found and their whereabouts remained a deep mystery, it must be only a short time before they *would* be discovered, as some of the best secret service men in the United States were working on the case!

Mr. Everett's face looked worn and worried. Nevertheless he spoke cheerfully, as though to relieve Sheila's concern.

"And now, my dear," he concluded, "you have helped us so much in this matter I want you to tell me frankly–is there not some way in which I can show my appreciation? Is there not something you want to do? Girls like you and my Pat here have so many air castles and I would like—-"

"Oh, *please* stop!" Sheila sprang to her feet, her face burning. "I just can't *bear* it! If I had done what I knew, right then, I *ought* to do–and told you, there at the Works–they might have been stopped–in time! But I didn't! I waited! The only way I can bear thinking about it is knowing that–I'm being punished!" Her shame-faced glance went from the piano to her mother's face. "So please don't say anything to me about—-" she stopped, held by a sudden thought, and drew from the pocket of her blouse a small, flat package of tissue paper. With trembling fingers she unwrapped it and held up to view her badge of the Golden Eagle.

"I didn't live up to it! I didn't keep my Scout's honor! Mr. Everett, please, will you take it and keep it for me–until the formulas are found? I cannot wear it!"

There was no doubting the resolution in Sheila's face. The man marveled at the courage with which this mere girl inflicted upon herself the punishment she thought she deserved! In spite of a half-smothered exclamation from Pat, he took the badge, carefully re-wrapped it, and put it away in his pocket.

"Sheila, you are evidently determined not to forget this lesson! Many of us make mistakes often by hesitating to heed the voice of our conscience, but I know one girl that isn't going to let it happen again!" He patted her affectionately upon her shoulder. "I don't know," he added, enigmatically, "but that this all may not be worth more than the formulas–for us all!"

Then he shook Mrs. Quinn's hand warmly in parting.

"I congratulate you, madam." And though Mrs. Quinn was too flustered to

know what in the world for, nevertheless she beamed with pleased pride!

CHAPTER XI
YOUNG WINGS

"Tat! Tat! Tat! T-tat!"

The mystic door of the Eagles' Eyrie opened wide enough to admit Peggy Lee and Keineth Randolph.

All sorts of greetings assailed them. "Hello, Eagles!" "We were afraid you wouldn't come!" "A half-holiday and such a storm," regretfully from Pat.

"We'd come through flood and fire!" cried Peggy, with magnificent expression. "We are the bearers of good tidings!"

"What? What? What?" came at once from three throats.

"The Wasps have challenged us to another game, and if we don't beat the pigskin right off of 'em–I'll resign as captain of the team!"

"Peg–you talk more and more like Billy!"

"Garrett, if you please," and Peggy struck a fine pose! "Now that he has come into the dignity of long trousers, my dear brother desires to be called Garrett! Billy is far too childish for him and William would confuse him with his respected father who is also my dear daddy—-"

"Well, Garrett, then," Keineth laughed, "only I heard you promise your mother you would not use any more slang!"

"So I did, and I am trying, and what I really mean is that if my dear little Yellowbirds do not play an exquisitely nice game and defeat the Wasps I shall be prostrated with chagrin and shall send in my—-"

"Oh, for goodness sake, Peg!" they begged.

Peggy now became very earnest. The Wasps, Troop Nine's basketball team, was the only scout team that Troop Six had not been able to beat. Now the Yellowbirds were going to have another chance! For the next two weeks they must practice as they had never practiced before! They *must* uphold the honor of Troop Six!

Pat's face, as she listened to the plans, wore a wistful look. She wanted so much to make the Troop team! No one of the scrubs worked harder at practice! And Peggy had told her, too, that she was beginning to play a good game. Of course it was wicked to wish that anything might happen to any of the valiant

Yellowbirds, however–

Renée interrupted the plans of the young athletes by abruptly pushing back the one sound chair in the room which she had been occupying.

"It's too dark to work!" she declared, shutting her paint box.

"Let's just sit around and talk," suggested Pat "I feel lazy! Anyway, Ren, you work too hard! I heard Aunt Pen say so."

Against the windows of the Eyrie the storm beat relentlessly–rain and hail; gusts of wind, sounding like witches' voices around the gable. The girls stretched out on the floor. Sheila shut the book she had been reading. Pat pulled Keineth's head into her lap that she might "play," as she called it, with the bright curls escaping from the band that held them back.

"You'd almost think there were fairies around! Listen!" Keineth held up her hand. "It makes me think of a story poor Tante used to tell me about the kind fairies who came to whisper to the princess what she should do when she had been shut in the tower of the castle by the wicked prince. Tante used to try and make me understand how one could learn something from all those fairy tales–the wicked prince was our own selfish natures, the beautiful princess was, of course, our bestest selves that we'd shut away in the prison tower and the fairy voices that whispered and sang 'round the tower were the voices of Opportunity! But, dear me, I used to think it was more fun just to believe that the princess was a real princess!"

"I wish a fairy would come right now and tell me what *would* rhyme with "long" besides "song!" sighed Pat.

"And *I* wish a fairy would just guide my fingers for me," put in little Renée from her corner.

"Let's all tell what we want to be," cried Peggy. "I've always said I was going to be an actress! I was in a play once and did awfully well! But Barbara met Ethel Barrymore when she visited college and she told the girls that only a few of the women who go on the stage are really happy or become famous! I don't believe Barb told her about me but Barb got the idea that she sort of–meant me! And Billy–or Garrett–says my feet are too big, anyway, and I guess he's right! So now I'm trying to decide whether to be a chemist or a doctor! I love to fuss with the cunning little dishes and mix up all sorts of things, and if I don't blow myself up Dad says I'll be all right. But I'd like to be a doctor, too!" Poor Peggy's forehead wrinkled in a deep frown over the perplexing problem of her future.

"My father says that after four more years of school he will take me abroad to study my music from great masters! And I will learn to play and to write beautiful music!" said Keineth softly, looking as though off in the shadows of the room she could see her dearest dreams come true.

"Your turn, Ren!"

Renée blushed under the serious glances turned toward her. "I've wanted ever since I was a little girl, to make things out of clay and marble, like my father used to make–and Emile. Emile had promised to teach me when I was older. My mother could never bear to see the clay and tools around, it made her very sad, I think because it made her think of my poor father. One summer mother and Emile and I went to the sea, and when we'd sit on the beach Emile would help me make rabbits and cats and birds out of the wet sand. I love to draw and paint, but when I am older I shall learn to carve, too!"

"Now, Sheila!"

Sheila laughed. "Goodness, girls, I've never had a moment to make nice dreams like yours! I *did* want to learn to play the piano—-" she stopped short; the hurt of disappointment and the smart of remorse had not healed in her heart. "But I never could have earned any money–with it! I just want to hurry through school as fast as I can so that I do something that will help the boys and mother along! They'll want, maybe, to go to college! I think I'd like sometime to be a nurse! I'm awfully big and strong, you see, and mother has taught me a lot of sensible things!"

"You be a nurse and I'll be a doctor!" exclaimed Peggy.

"We've all told but you, Pat!"

"What are you going to be?"

Pat looked around the circle of earnest faces. It was a moment of noble thoughts, of precious confidences!

"Girls, I'll tell you all a secret if you'll *promise* not to tell!"

"We'll promise!"

"Cross your hearts?"

"Cross our hearts and on our scout's honor."

"Well"–Pat hitched along to the center of the circle–"I'm going to be a poet! And I'm writing a ballad–*right now*," she mysteriously tapped her pocket from which protruded a long pencil and a corner of paper. "And it's about Aunt Pen!"

"Aunt Pen!" cried Renée.

"Yes–*that's* the secret! You think she's happy but she has a secret sorrow and *I found it out*!"

"Oh, tell us! What is it? *Do* hurry, Pat!"

Pat's voice dropped to a fittingly sorrowful note. "It was a disappointed love, I think! That silly malady even attacked poor Aunt Pen, though she isn't like lots of people and doesn't go round with a broken heart within her bosom and sighing and weeping like they do in stories! I guessed it when she asked me so many questions about Captain Allan, Renée's guardian, you know, and she looked so funny and red when she was asking them just like I do when I'm saying one thing but really wanting to say another! Then she wanted to see a

letter he had written to Renée and Renée brought it, and I watched her face *and then I knew*! It turned fiery red and then white and she did the *queerest* thing–she *kissed* that letter, real quick–just a plain letter he'd written to Renée! I couldn't believe my eyes that it was Aunt Pen! She *knew* I saw her and she began to laugh and then to sort of cry! She told us that she was *sure* it was a Mr. Allan she had known her senior year in college! I begged her to tell more but she just said 'there isn't any more to tell!' and we couldn't get another word out of her! Of course Aunt Pen has a right to hide her own secret sorrow away but she can't stop my putting it into a ballad! Only I can't think of anything to rhyme with 'long'–except 'song' and I've used that!"

"Go right through the alphabet, Pat! Bong, cong, dong—-"

"Now *don't* you girls tell a *soul* that I'm going to be a poet!" Pat admonished.

Peggy sprang to her feet. "Girls–let's make a solemn pledge to stick to our ambitions and not let a single thing stop us! And we'll help one another!"

"We must have a pass-word! Let's have it 'Steadfast!'"

"We ought to have a motto, too!"

"I know a Latin one, 'Labor omnia vincit!' How's that?"

"Spliffy! Now to do this right, girls, we must have a ceremony! Stand up–in a circle! Hold hands–thumbs in–like this! Now all say the motto together! What was it, Keineth?"

Keineth repeated, "Labor omnia vincit!" and the girls said it with her.

"Now, altogether–'Steadfast'–so we'll get used to it!"

"Steadfast!" in hissing whispers.

Sheila was so thrilled that she was moved to oratory! "Girls, I know some day we're all going to be *great*! I just *feel* it! And we'll look back to this afternoon in our youth and say—-"

"Steadfast!" giggled Peggy.

"Tat! Tat! Tat! Tat!"

"Sh-h! It's Aunt Pen!"

Aunt Pen, deserted below, had blackened her face and put on her head a bright yellow turban, to look as nearly as possible like Aunt Jemima of pancake fame! Now on a huge tray she bore a plate of doughnuts and a pitcher of cider. A noisy greeting welcomed her into the Eyrie!

That night Renée was wakened by Pat's insistent call in her ear. The lights were burning and Pat was standing over her, tragedy written in every line of her face. Alarmed, Renée sat bolt upright, her eyes wide.

"Sh-h! Don't be frightened! It's just–I've *lost* my ballad!"

Renée thought she must be dreaming–or was Pat stark crazy?

"I couldn't sleep and I was thinking I'd change that 'long' for 'carry,' 'cause there'r so many words rhyme with that–and I looked in my pocket and it was

gone!"

Renée was aghast at the seriousness of the loss! Putting on their slippers they stole down the stairs and made a thorough search. But they could find no trace of the missing ballad! At last Renée persuaded the disconsolate Pat to go back to bed.

"Well, I'll *just* have to write it again!" she sighed, digging her tired head into the pillow. "Maybe this time I'll write it in prose 'cause it's *such* a bother making words rhyme! Only, poets are *so* much nicer than just authors, don't you think so, Renée? Renée—-"

But for the first time Renée failed to meet her friend with sympathetic understanding–she soundly sleeping!

CHAPTER XII
THE GAME

"Renée! Aunt Pen! Guess!" Pat climbed the stairs two steps at a time.

"I'd guess that you had been running every inch of the way home," laughed Aunt Pen, for Pat's cheeks were scarlet from the outdoor air and her hair was tumbling down about her ears.

"I should say I had! Such *good* luck! Or"–she attempted to correct herself–"of course it isn't exactly *good* luck, only–True Scott sprained her ankle and I'm to play guard in the game tomorrow!"

"Oh, Pat, I'm so glad! I *know* you'll win!" and Renée looked as though she believed that the Yellowbirds needed only Pat as one of their guards to rout the Wasps in an overwhelming defeat!

"I'm glad you've been chosen to substitute, for you have practiced so faithfully," declared Aunt Pen. "It is hard on True, though!"

"Peggy says that maybe it's a kind Providence that sprained her ankle, 'cause True didn't play as well in the last game! Of course, as Peg says, when you're captain of a team you can't let friendship make a *bit* of difference! And she says if I play all right in this game she thinks I'll be put on the team! You can just know I'm going to *try* my best!"

Aunt Pen had decided that Renée was not strong enough as yet for the basketball practice. Sometimes she went with Pat to the gymnasium, carefully keeping out of the way of the players but watching with interest Pat's progress

in the game; more often she spent the hours when Pat was at practice, in painting, working out new designs for her cards, reading or walking with Aunt Pen. Each day found the little girl happier, more contented in her new home and more passionately devoted to her new friends who had brought into her life a wealth of affection and interests she had never dreamed could exist. Day by day Aunt Pen saw the fragile body develop into girlish strength and the timid spirit gain in courage and confidence. The shadow of her sorrows would never completely leave her, but it had helped in moulding and maturing the young mind and strengthening it to meet whatever the future held for her.

Aunt Pen had found a fascination in Renée's quiet company.

"One gets the impression that never a word passes her lips quickly! Sometimes she makes me feel ashamed of my impulsiveness!" Penelope told her brother one evening. They had been talking of her work with the girls. Mr. Everett had asked:

"Well–is our larkspur budding?"

Aunt Pen, taking his question very seriously, had answered modestly: "I don't know about the Latin and Algebra but I *do* know that Pat is a healthier, happier girl than she has ever been before, and we may feel very proud of Renée when we turn her over to Captain Allan!"

Pat was not there to see the color flood Aunt Pen's face as she said these last words.

"We ought to hear from him soon! I hope he has been able to find out more concerning the child. I do not like to question her too closely–I can see that it makes her unhappy and homesick."

Penelope would have liked to have asked her brother more concerning Renée's guardian but he began to talk of something else. Often, as she and Renée sat or walked together, she allowed to creep into her thoughts a rosy day-dream of that time when the officer would come to claim his ward!

Pat upset her entire family with her preparations for the all-important game! She must have her dinner early in order that a sufficient time for proper digestion might elapse before her bed hour! As authority on this point she quoted rules which seemed to have been laid down by their tyrannical captain. She must have eggs, too; for her supper, and could not dream of eating the steam pudding, rich with dates and raisins, which Melodia had prepared. It would surely lie heavily in her stomach, make her restless all night and stupid and sluggish the next day! A nice custard–Pat detested custards–she must have!

Then for ten minutes early the next morning the chandeliers of the house rattled in their brackets and the pictures danced on the walls–not an earthquake, only Pat, guard of the Yellowbirds, "just loosening her muscles" in a process of gymnastics that included everything she had ever heard of!

As the hour of the game approached the gymnasium of the Lincoln School was a-flutter with color and noisy with life. Enthusiastic rooters from Troop Nine, gaily decked with the green, gold and black colors of the Wasps, were packed solidly against one side of the room. Equally brilliant and boisterous were the upholders of the Yellowbirds! As they sang their troop songs they waved small yellow flags and strands of ribbon.

An older girl from Troop Nine acted as umpire and Captain Ricky as referee. Peggy's face was a comical mixture of sternness and entreaty as she whispered a few last commands to her team. Pat, outwardly proud and calm, was inwardly quaking! What if she should fail at any moment! As the game began she was seized with a terrible giddiness–the room swam about her, she saw only a ridiculous composite of eyes and noses and mouths and color against the dancing walls! Her feet were heavy like lead and a long way from her!

Afterwards Pat could not have told at what time or why this curious sensation left her! She only knew that suddenly everything cleared and she felt that the only thing in the whole wide world that mattered was keeping the alert forward, whom she was guarding, from throwing a basket! And the faces and colors that had whirled a moment before faded and left these two alone, in deadly combat!

The cheering that had been constant suddenly ceased; the circle of spectators sat with bated breath while the ball passed backward and forward, now a basket thrown for the Wasps, in another moment one for the Yellowbirds. Occasionally a particularly good play would bring forth a loud shout only to have it hushed immediately in the suspense of watching. Renée and Aunt Pen sat side by side. Aunt Pen had played basketball in her college days; now she watched eagerly, admiring the splendid guarding of the Wasps as generously as Peggy's swift center work. Renée just sat very still, saying over and over to herself: "Oh–oh–oh!" with her eyes fastened upon Pat's every move!

At the end of the first half the score stood twenty-four to twenty-six in favor of the Wasps. Peggy had a whispered word with Keineth who was playing forward. Her guard was a girl a head taller than she; a little overwhelmed by this Keineth had been slow in one or two of her plays!

The second half went on with quick, even play, that now and then drew forth shouts of approval from the spectators. The Yellowbirds scored four baskets only to have the Wasps, with brilliant team work, recover their lead with four baskets! The Wasps' center shot the ball with a low throw to her forward. As she caught it the linekeeper sharply pounded the floor with an Indian club. "Over the line," the referee declared. "Yellowbirds have an unguarded throw!" Patricia was given the ball. Renée shut her eyes–she could not watch! But she knew when Aunt Pen sprang to her feet that her Pat had not failed. With a movement quick as lightning she had passed the ball to the other guard who in turn had shot

it back to center! And while Aunt Pen was still on her feet Peggy had thrown it to Keineth who, with a low, lithe movement of her body, ducked the wildly waving arms of her guard and threw a basket!

"A tie! *Now* for the test!" whispered Aunt Pen, clutching Renée's hand so hard that it hurt.

For the next few minutes the ball passed swiftly backward and forward, the guards and forwards leaped and ran! Each player, keyed to the utmost effort, was everywhere at once, arms waving, eyes alert to the slightest advantage or weakness in defense! A dreadful stillness held the room broken only by the occasional low, sharp exclamations–like pistol shots–of the players. Peggy's face was pale; again and again Keineth eluded her guard only to find her, in a second, again towering before her!

The ball passed toward the Wasps' basket; Patricia caught it and threw it toward the center; Sheila, playing side-center, with a swift leap, gripped it and threw it to Keineth. But Keineth's guard sent it hurtling back to the Wasps' center! While the spectators, conscious that this was the last and crucial moment, rose to their feet in a body, the Wasps' forward caught it and, swift as lightning, threw it backward over her head straight down through the basket! The referee's whistle ended the game–the Wasps had won!

It was always customary, following the Troop games, to have a spread for the contesting teams. Almost always the players laid aside immediately all joy of victory, sting of defeat and bitterness of contest and threw themselves heart and soul into a general frolic! But this afternoon the atmosphere was charged with resentment! While the triumphant Wasps gathered noisily in their corner the Yellowbirds sulked in another part of the room. Captain Ricky and her assistants had gone to prepare the goodies. There was no one to check the rapidly rising tide of complaint and criticism!

"She *did* only have one hand on the ball–I could swear now!" "The line watchers *weren't* fair, I *saw* her foot go over!" and "She just shoved me!" "Who'd *ever* expect her to throw over her head!" and "I *saw* that center walk *three whole steps* with the ball and the umpire *never* called a foul!" The mutterings grew louder and the word "cheat" penetrated to the corner.

Captain Ricky, coming into the room, heard it, too. She guessed in a moment, by the expression of the girls' faces, what had been happening! She drew them close about her.

"*Girls! Girls!*" They had never heard just that tone in their captain's voice. "What is this spirit you are showing! I have *always* been so proud of you–so *sure* of you! And I was very proud to-day! You played a brilliant game! You were only defeated because the other team played even a better game! If each one of you feels that she played her very best, then there is not a complaint that can be

made! You were outplayed–and just because you are the good players you have shown yourselves to be–why, you should be quick and generous in your praise of the better work of the other team! I am disappointed, my scouts! I want you to remember always that I'd lots rather have you good losers–if you've done your best–than winners! If you will learn that it will help you years from now when you are playing more serious and difficult games than basket-ball! And it will teach you to turn defeat into a real blessing!"

The Yellowbirds had stood with drooping plumage while their leader spoke. Each one was ashamed. Peggy was the first to speak. Throwing back her dark head she stalked across the room to where Cora Simmons, who had played center for the Wasps, stood in a group of Troop Nine scouts.

"I'm *just* ashamed of myself!" she cried, "'cause I didn't shake hands with you the moment the game was over and tell you how well you played!" There was no questioning the sincere ring in Peggy's voice.

The other Yellowbirds followed her example, and soon there was a babble of voices going over in most friendly discussion the crucial moments of the game. Now the defeated players were determined that there should be no stint to their praise of the work of the Troop Nine girls!

"Let's have a cheer-ring!" cried Peggy, and immediately each Yellowbird caught a Wasp by the shoulder and formed a close circle. The room rang with their cheers; Troop Six cheered for Troop Nine and Troop Nine cheered for Troop Six, and then, they all cheered for the Girl Scouts!

Pat, wanting to free her soul before her whole world of whatever guilt might lie between it and Captain Ricky's approval, loudly clapped her hands and demanded that they all listen while she confessed to them that she was sure she had once even pinched the forward she was guarding and that "she had been a perfect *peach* not to tell!"

Pat's declaration caused peals of laughter which quickly burst into shouts of delight when Captain Ricky's lieutenant called loudly from the doorway, "*Eats!*" And the afternoon ended with the happiness and contentment found in good fellowship!

CHAPTER XIII
THE CHRISTMAS PARTY

Christmas was drawing near with all its promise of joy. And the world wrapped for so long in the gloom of war, took on a new gladness; weeks before the holiday, doors and windows were hung with holly, stores spread out a fascinating array of giftwares; a new light shone in smiling faces as though "Peace on earth" was ringing through the souls of the people!

Pat's head was bursting with plans for the blessed holiday. It must be a different Christmas from any Renée had ever known! For days they had busied themselves preparing the box that had gone to St. Cloud–a dress for Susette and some aprons that Renée herself had made, tobacco for Gabriel and warm slippers and shoes for them both; sugar, coffee, and canned goods and dried fruits until Renée was sure Susette's neat shelves would groan under their weight. And in a heart-shaped silver frame a picture of Renée!

Pat declared that they must have a Christmas tree, for Renée had never had one! And even though they were quite grown-up they must also hang up their stockings! Aunt Pen and Daddy promised to hang theirs, too, so that Pat and Renée spent many an afternoon in secret shopping tours, returning with mysterious packages which were carefully hidden away in the Eyrie.

Then a letter from the south, whose usual cheery tone was tinged with a little homesickness, made Mr. Everett decide to join his wife for the holiday season. At first Pat rebelled stormily, lamenting that his going would spoil everything; then for days she sulked like a naughty child until Aunt Pen came to the rescue! From spending the afternoon with Peggy Lee's mother, Aunt Pen returned, with a "secret!"

"What is it, Aunt Pen? *Can* we know?" the girls asked eagerly.

"Yes, you will be *in* the "secret!" It's a–*real* Christmas party! And it will be different from any you've ever heard of before! I'll tell you the plans we discussed and then we'll get your father's permission. I know when you hear all about it you'll smile again, Miss Pat, and declare that this *is* going to be the best Christmas you've ever had–even with Daddy away!"

"Will the party be here?" asked Pat, recalling on the instant some very lovely parties given for her sister which she, because she was too little to go downstairs, had had to watch over the stair banister.

"No, I don't believe the house would be big enough for this one," and Penelope laughed at the mystified expression on Pat's face.

Then Aunt Pen unfolded the plans she and Mrs. Lee had made. The girls of the Troop would be the hostesses of this party and the guests would be the men, women and children in the neighborhood of the Works. There must, of course, be a tree, and the girls could arrange tableaux and then everyone could sing and dance! And there would be sandwiches and coffee and ice cream and cake and a gift for each one.

Gradually into Pat's face crept a deep interest so that when the last small detail had been explained the smile that Aunt Pen had prophesied came back once more. It would be a *wonderful* party, and could they begin planning the tableaux right away and couldn't they run over this very minute and tell Sheila?

So that Mr. Everett's going made scarcely a break in the exciting preparations, the rehearsals, the arranging of costumes, the planning of the party "supper" and the gifts for the guests. In desperation Aunt Pen declared that the holidays might as well begin at once as it was impossible to hold Pat down to any lessons! And Renée, too, was working feverishly, completing a rush order for Christmas cards that had come to "LaDue and Everett" from Miss Higgin's tea room!

On Christmas Eve the Eyrie was emptied of the treasures it had held, the stockings hanging over the library fireplace were filled and little piles of tissue paper packages of all sizes were made for Jasper, Melodia and Maggie. The rooms were filled with a spicy odor of hemlock; holly hung over window and door.

"Oh, isn't it fun?" laughed Pat, stepping back to survey the bulging stockings. "Can you *guess* what's in anything, Ren? And don't you wish you were little again and really truly believed in Santa Claus?"

"Susette used to tell me stories of the real St. Nicholas–she said he was the patron saint of children!"

"Well, *I* like to think of him as a jolly old fellow driving his reindeers faster'n Watkins can drive the car–and lots of jingling bells! I think about it and then I can most hear them!"

Renée had gone to one of the windows at the end of the room to peer out into the darkness. Snow had fallen which dulled the sounds of the city to a musical tone not unlike distant bells of the good Santa. Suddenly she called to Pat:

"Come and look–over at Sheila's!"

There on the strip of lawn before the old brick house was a Christmas tree, hung with tinsel and twinkling with lighted candles that swayed and blinked in the darkness.

That was Mrs. Quinn's merry Christmas! She and the children had hung ropes of tinsel, red and gold balls, sparkling hearts and rings and little candles out on the old spruce that grew in the corner of the yard.

"To give to any poor body going by that maybe hasn't any Christmas just a bit of the brightness!" she had explained.

Renée, watching from between the library curtains, thought it very beautiful! It was like a fairy tree, placed there in the darkness by spirit hands, breathing from its fragrant brightness a joy that all could share! Even at that moment they could see a bent old man, leading a little boy by the hand, lingering to stare at the twinkling lights!

Many years before this the Everett Works had been moved from the modest factory not far from the Everett home, where it had had its beginning, to the great pile of steel and concrete buildings distantly removed from the business center of the city. Immediately there sprang up on the stretches of fields intervening between the smoky walls of the new plant and the quiet shaded streets where the Lees and the Everetts and the Randolphs lived, a community of small, shapeless houses, one exactly like the other, divided by half-paved streets with their rows of sickly infant elms and maples; with muddy backyards barricaded by miles and miles of clothes-line, and thousands of window-panes blackened by the incessant rain of soot from the belching chimneys. Though the suburb had the beautiful name of Riverview, suggestive of cool breezes and open spaces, it was always and more fittingly known as "The Neighborhood."

To the hundreds of little dingy homes had come men, women and children from every land of the globe–here Liberty offered them asylum and the Everett Works an honest living. In the center of the community the Works had erected a splendid schoolhouse and had presented it to the city. Although its outer walls were soon stained and blackened like the rows of houses, its interior was as fresh and attractive as clean paint, pictures and many growing plants could make it! Here the children of the foreign-speaking parents were taught to be true Americans. And in its big assembly room, whose windows looked out over the rows and rows of railroad tracks with their solid wall of motionless freight cars, to the river and open fields beyond, the girls of Troop Six held their Christmas party.

Even before the last holly wreath had been fastened in place the guests began to come–whole families at a time, in holiday attire that to Pat made them look like pictures in some fairy-tales; old men and old women, younger men with hands still grimy from their work, younger women with tired faces and babies in their arms; some eager, some a little shy, all smiling.

Pat, peeping out from behind the curtain, declared that there were hundreds there and that they were talking in every language known–except Latin! But when some one at the piano began to play "America," in some way or other the strange words melted into a common tongue–the high treble of the children carrying the song along!

A hush fell on the audience when the curtains of the stage slowly parted to show the first of the tableaux. Briefly John Randolph, Keineth's father, told in Polish the story of the landing of the Pilgrims on "the stern and rockbound coast" while on the stage the Pilgrims, with painfully suppressed laughter, struggled to keep the *Mayflower*, made out of old canvas and chairs, from falling to pieces!

The next picture showed the early colonists making treaties with the Indians. Sheila, grave and dignified in Puritan collar and hat, was holding out strings of gay beads to an Indian chief, resplendent in paint and feathers, who carried

over his arm the hides that the colonists needed. Then in simple words Mr. Randolph explained how the first purchases of land in the United States came about.

Peggy made an impressive George Washington at Valley Forge, while Garrett Lee and some of his friends sat about a smouldering camp-fire. Again she appeared with Betsey Ross, who was stitching on the first American flag, which part Keineth played. But Washington's dignified manner was sadly spoiled when his wig suddenly slipped to one side, so that poor Betsey had to bite her lips very hard to keep from giggling at his rakish appearance! Nevertheless the audience–especially the children who recognized in the picture a favorite school story–clapped loudly with genuine enthusiasm.

The last tableau, everyone declared, was the best of all! Captain Ricky was America, standing in white robes against a big American flag, her arms outstretched to the eager pilgrims who approached her! And these were dressed in the national costumes of almost every country on the globe; some had approached, apparently, with brave step, heads high and shoulders straight, others had come wearily; some were old and some were young; many had been carrying heavy burdens which they had cast aside. And from the wrists of each hung the broken links of the shackles that had bound them!

The tableau told its own story! For a moment there was a hushed silence, then a mighty applause shook the room. And Captain Ricky, as though she indeed embodied the gracious spirit of America, smiled back from the stage at the men and women who, like the pilgrims in the picture, had come to this land of freedom!

After this tableau the curtains at the back of the stage were drawn back, displaying a beautiful Christmas tree, trimmed only by the many lights half-concealed in its branches and by a huge, gleaming star at its top. Some of the scouts at one corner of the stage began a simple Christmas carol–the guests took it up, humming where they could not speak the words. A group of young men broke into a Polish song; other songs followed–songs that these people had brought with them across the sea.

"They are more beautiful than ours!" cried Keineth to her father.

Then, under Captain Ricky's direction, the trimming of the tree began. This was a surprise even to the girls of the Troop, who sat with bright eyes watching. For each one in the room who had had a son, a brother, a husband or a father in the service of the country, was given a silver star to hang upon the branches of the tree. One by one they went up–at first shyly, then proudly; bent old men with uncertain step, young wives, blushing, with children tugging at their skirts; old women, scarcely understanding it all but eager to hang their symbol, until the tree was a-twinkle with the gleaming stars!

From long tables in one of the classrooms adjoining steaming, fragrant cof-

fee in big cups and turkey and chicken sandwiches were served, then ice cream and cake. Everyone talked at once–the children ran round in complete abandonment to the joy of the moment; some of the guests, too excited to eat, had already begun the dancing!

And Mrs. Lee and Aunt Pen were busy distributing among them all the small silk American flags which were the gifts of the evening!

"It's the *best* party *ever*," Pat stopped long enough in a whirling dance to whisper to Aunt Pen.

"Where's Renée?" Aunt Pen answered.

After a moment's search she found her alone behind the big tree. She was fastening upon one of the branches her silver star! Tears dampened her cheeks.

"Oh–*my dear*!" cried Aunt Pen. Over her swept the realization of what Renée had given that "peace might come upon this world!" She caught the small hand and held it.

"Not *there*," she whispered, "but *here*!" and taking the star she hung it close to the big Star at the top.

"He gave his Son for us, too," she added softly.

CHAPTER XIV
HILL-TOP

"Picnics," explained Peggy, with a conviction born of experience, "are just as much fun in the winter as they are in the summer, 'specially when they are at Hill-top!"

For the four days following Christmas snow had fallen steadily. Each moment of the holiday time had been filled with out-of-door fun: now Mrs. Lee had suggested that–as a sort of climax–the Eagle Patrol have a picnic at Hill-top!

Pat had never heard of a picnic in the middle of the winter!

But Peggy's enthusiasm was contagious! Hilltop–Pat had never been there–was a very old farmhouse ten miles from the city, back in the hills near Camp Wichita, where Captain Ricky took her girls in the summer-time. It belonged to an old man and his wife who had been friends of Mrs. Lee's father. During the winter months they preferred to move into a more sheltered cottage nearer the barns. The house–a short walk from the lake on which the young people skated in the winter and canoed in the summer–had great square rooms

and many of them, warmed by fire-places like caverns that consumed whole logs at a time. Often Mrs. Lee, who found real recreation in such little excursions with her young people–had taken the girls and boys there for week-end picnics!

"Mother says we may stay three whole days this time! We can skate and coast and have all kinds of fun! Garrett has a new bob that he made and he says he'll bet anything it can beat all the others."

"Do the boys go, too?" broke in Pat.

"Oh, yes, mother likes to have them go! They help a lot, you see, and she says it wouldn't be nearly as much fun if they weren't along. Jim Archer and Bob Slocum and Ted Scott and maybe Wynne Meade will go–and Garrett! They're *sort* of fun!" for Peggy read disappointment in Pat's face.

"*I* think boys are a nuisance!"

Sheila came promptly to the defense. "Perhaps–sometimes! But brothers are nice!"

Pat's experience had been limited to the bashful young brothers, miserable with too much scrubbing and stiff collars, who had occasionally visited the other girls at school.

Peggy thought it a decided waste of time to be bothering over such a point when there was so much to plan and do! So, with a conviction intended to end the discussion, she said: "Well, they carry the logs and the water and go out and open the house and I guess we'll find them mighty useful!"

And, indeed, Pat *was* to find one of the boys more than useful before the picnic was over!

A few hours' well-organized activity put everything in readiness for the house-party. Garrett Lee appointed himself chief of the commissary and flew tirelessly between his home and the grocery store until he had assembled enough cans of soup, bacon, weiners and other eatables peculiar to scouts' appetites to feed a regiment! Sheila and Mrs. Lee, after a brief consultation, added to the equipment many little necessities that Garrett in his masculine ignorance had overlooked. Two of the other girls collected the necessary kitchen utensils and a simple first-aid kit. Loaded down with all these and with extra blankets and the bobs, the boys and Mrs. Lee went on out to Hill-top a day in advance to open the house and prepare it for the others.

Pat, inspired by the activities of the others and not having been pressed into troop service, busied herself by packing and repacking almost every garment that she and Renée possessed!

"Patsy, dear, you *won't* need all those things," Aunt Pen had laughed, pointing to the bulging suitcase.

Pat admitted this. "Well, it's fun packing 'em and I just had to do something," she confessed.

The next day eight merry girls boarded the funny little train that puffed off slowly toward the hills. To Renée the picnic was the most exciting of adventures! She had seen little snow–never in her life anything like the great piles, snowy white, through which the train was snorting its way! She had never had on a pair of skates in her life, nor had she ever coasted down a hill! And as Peggy told of Garrett's new bob, "Madcap," and its lightning speed, she shivered with an ecstasy of fear and wondered–if they made her ride on it–what it would feel like to fly over the snow and whether she might not just die outright of terror!

The boys, in rollicking spirits and muffled to the tips of their noses, met them at the station; together they trudged back through the snow to the farmhouse. Logs were crackling merrily in the big fireplaces and a table had been spread ready for an early supper. The girls fell to unpacking the equipment and spreading their blankets over the funny old beds and the cots which had been brought up from the nearby camp. Sheila, who had been appointed officer-in-charge, promptly, in accordance with the custom of scout outings, posted in a conspicuous place, the "standing rules."

"Oh, they're the kind of rules any good scout'll keep," Peggy exclaimed to Pat, who was regarding the slip of paper in amazement with a look on her face that said plainly "this is the funniest picnic I ever knew!" "Come on and find the others!"

For supper they ate many baked potatoes and weiners and hot biscuits, which Mrs. Lee had mixed and baked by magic–"just to have a nice beginning!" At the table the boys announced the schedule for the skating and coasting races which they had planned for the next day and fell to arguing with friendly violence over the speed of their different bobs! Garrett then insisted that the four who had grabbed the last of the biscuits should make up the Kitchen Police, whose duty it would be to clear away the supper dishes! And to the accompaniment of a mighty rattle of china plates and cups the others gathered around the blazing fire and sang.

Pat and Renée slept together in a huge four-posted bed. Gradually the big house had grown very quiet. "Isn't it fun?" Pat giggled into Renée's ear. "I've never been in the country in the winter-time before! And doesn't it feel *queer* sleeping without sheets?" Then she sighed. "I wish I could skate well!" She was thinking of the races planned for the morrow. Renée was apprehensive, too. "Do you suppose they'll make me go down on one of those dreadful bobs?" and she shuddered at the very thought!

Poor Pat, her pride–cropping up now and then–was her besetting sin! And the next morning, when she should have been gloriously happy, it mastered her! She *hated* the races, because she was always lagging along in the rear! She declared to herself that the boys were silly, tiresome stupids, because they made

such a fuss when Peggy beat them all in a race down the lake and back! Finally, disgusted, she took off the hateful skates and joined Renée near the bank.

"I think they're *stupid*," she grumbled, digging her heel into the ice and not explaining whether she meant the boys, or the skates or the races!

The coasting in the afternoon comforted her a little! Jim Archer let her steer his "Gypsy!" They beat Garrett's "Madcap" and Pat secretly rejoiced at Garrett's chagrin!

Renée, from the top of the long hill, had watched the flight of the bobs with trembling fascination.

"Come along on Madcap," Garrett had called out. The three girls on it waved entreatingly to her. She had not the courage to refuse! White with terror she slipped in between Garrett and Peggy. The others shouted wildly as the bob began to move slowly down the hill but poor Renée's breath caught in her throat. As it went faster and faster she hid her face against Garrett's wooly back.

"Hang on!" cried Peggy behind her. Renée was certain they were flying! But just as she felt she *must* die with terror a wild "hurrah" went up, she opened her eyes–they were sliding over the ice at the bottom of the hill and the Madcap had won!

And to Renée's utter amazement she wanted to go down again–*right away*!

Afterwards Garrett let her steer the bob, and although they ended in a snowdrift and were almost buried in the soft snow, it did not in any way dampen her enthusiasm over the new sport she had learned!

"Oh, it was *wonderful*!" she exclaimed to Pat as they walked with the others toward Hill-top. "I thought I'd be so frightened and I wasn't!"

"Jim Archer's bob is much the best," Pat answered in such a disagreeable voice that Renée looked at her in hurt astonishment! How *could* there be enough difference in two bobs to make Pat speak to her in that tone!

However, hot oyster soup and pancakes scattered for a time the little cloud that threatened and through the meal Pat's voice was as merry as the merriest. After supper, leaving the Kitchen Police to their sad lot, the others again donned caps, sweaters and mittens and fell to building in front of the old farmhouse door two great snow forts, between which, in the morning, a mighty battle would be waged!

And Jim Archer, one of the self-appointed generals, asked Pat–before he asked any of the others–to be on his side!

This was balm to Pat's hurt vanity. Perhaps she couldn't skate as well as the others, but she guessed Jim Archer knew she could throw a snowball as straight and as hard as any boy! Anyway, Garrett Lee was too conceited! So that night, as she slept cuddled down in the big four-posted bed, she dreamed that she stood alone on the frosty breastwork of the fort she had helped build and by

an onslaught of snowballs, thrown with unerring aim, drove Garrett Lee and his army to complete and ignominious surrender!

Poor Pat–the next day was to bring to her pride a sad fall!

CHAPTER XV
PAT'S PRIDE AND ITS FALL

The next morning a bright sun peeped up over the hills touching field and lake, trees and house-tops with a frost of diamonds. At an early hour hungry boys and girls were demanding their breakfast "quick" and were hurling orders over the banister at the sleepy Kitchen Police, toiling below.

The snow-ball fight ended in a complete rout of Garrett's army, which put Pat in high spirits, and, although it had not been quite like her dream of the night before, Jim Archer *had* said to her, to her secret joy:

"Say, you throw as good as a boy!"

The remainder of the morning was spent playing hockey and coasting; the boys allowing the girls to race the bobs down the hill. Renée, quite by herself, steered the beautiful Madcap twice to victory! Perhaps never in her life had she felt so keenly alive or so happy! She stood looking over the little lake and the surrounding hills and drawing in long breaths of the frosty air. Its keenness made her cheeks and fingertips tingle, put a ringing note in the youthful voices around her and an added brightness into happy eyes!

"Let's all just skate this afternoon–no races or anything like that!" declared Peggy at luncheon and the suggestion met with instant approval.

"Oh, *don't* you wish we were just coming? Did you ever know days to go by so fast?" lamented one of the others.

"This hasn't gone by yet! To-night we're going to toast marshmallows!" put in Bob Slocum.

"And have a good sing! We always end a picnic that way!" explained Peggy to Pat.

"And breakfast bright and early to-morrow, so that we will be all packed in time for the—-"

"Lightning mail train!" Garrett added to his mother's injunction.

Mrs. Lee was never happier than when she was with her "boys and girls!" She loved each and every one of them as though they had all been hers from

babyhood. She watched them now as they trooped away toward the lake, skates jingling over their arms. Something within her quivered with pardonable pride as her eyes rested for a moment on Garrett's manly young figure striding on ahead of the others. And when Peggy's voice, always boyishly loud, reached her ears as she shouted back to one of the other girls, her mother shook her head and laughed: "Oh, Peggy child, what a tomboy!"

For Pat the skating was much more fun, now, when there were no races! More accustomed to her skates she managed to get over the ice in better and easier fashion than she had on the day before. She was pleasantly conscious, too, that she made a rather pretty picture in her scarlet sweater and tam-o'-shanter–several of the girls had declared that they were going to immediately make red tams.

"Let's have a turn, Pat!" and Garrett Lee extended two warmly mittened hands in genial invitation. So Pat linked her arms with his and together they flew over the glittering stretch. With her balance supported by Garrett's strong grasp she skated easily; as they sped along down the length of the lake the wind whipped her breath and sent the blood bounding through her veins!

At the end of the lake they stopped "to take in air," as Garrett put it.

"Let's skate down there," cried Pat, pointing to the Inlet just beyond. There a narrow gorge, cutting deeply through the hillsides, let into the lake. Garrett knew that, because of its steep banks, its changing depths of water and strong eddies, the ice there was very unsafe.

"Oh, no, it's dangerous there! We never go into the Inlet, even in the summer! That's a rule!"

Poor Pat–she fancied Garrett was treating her like a little child! So she answered with a toss of her head:

"I haven't bothered to read the rules! I'm not afraid–if you are!" and she turned toward the Inlet.

"Pat–don't! It *isn't* safe–honest!"

The more earnest and concerned Garrett grew the more headstrong Pat! She started toward the Inlet, calling over her shoulder: "Oh, you're just a 'fraidy-cat'!"

Garrett watched her for a moment. There was no doubting her intention! He started after her and at the mouth of the Inlet overtook her.

"Pat," he begged, "mother'll be angry! I tell you it's one of the rules!"

But Pat simply shrugged her shoulders.

"*Dare* you to come with me, little boy!" she laughed teasingly. The Inlet, its banks rising steeply on each side, filled with dancing shadows made by the sun through the bare branches meeting overhead, looked very inviting! Thrilled with a sense of adventure, Pat skated with short strokes into the narrow opening.

Garrett had no choice but to follow her! Deeply alarmed, he again begged her to turn back! Now she pretended not to hear him!

But in a few moments she suddenly screamed and wildly waved her arms! At a bend in the narrow gorge the ice had cracked under her weight!

"Garrett!" she cried, turning.

"*Go on! Keep moving!*" he shouted. But Pat, terror-stricken, stood still, stretching out her arms imploringly. Garrett reached her just as the ice with a sharp crackle broke into pieces, dropping them both into the water.

Its iciness for a moment stunned Pat. Then she slowly realized that Garrett was supporting her with one arm and begging her to cling to the thin edge of the ice, to which he was holding with his other hand. His steady voice gave her courage! She tried to say something but her teeth only chattered together.

"We'll get out all right!" Garrett said, hopefully. "Hold on as lightly as you can!"

"Oh, don't let go of me–don't let go of me!" implored Pat, wanting to cry.

"I won't! Keep up your nerve!" And Garrett strengthened his hold under Pat's arm. He looked about him. From a tree growing out of the bank stretched a bare limb just a little way out of reach.

"We'll work along slowly until you can reach that branch! Take it easy, Pat!"

He began moving his grasp on the edge of the ice, slowly, cautiously, for sometimes it cracked, sending terror to Pat's soul! She recalled hearing someone tell how very deep the water was in the Inlet! And it was *so* black and cold!

"Come on! We'll make it!" he called out cheerily. They drew nearer and nearer the branch; soon Pat could reach it.

"Now let go of the ice and grab it! I'll hold you!"

"Oh no, no!" implored Pat, clinging tighter.

"You've *got* to, Pat! It's our only chance!" Summoning all the strength he had in his fine young body he lifted her as he spoke! The effort made great veins swell on his forehead. With a gasp of terror she caught and clung with both arms to the branch.

"Get your legs around it, too," directed Garrett. "Now work yourself along! *Hurry*, Pat!"

Stung into effort Pat with feverish haste did as he told her. Securing her hold on the branch by locking her strong legs about it she gradually swung around until she was astride it. Then it was but a moment's work to edge along to the bank. Grasping the strong roots of the undergrowth she pulled herself to the top. She wanted dreadfully then to throw herself down upon the ground and cry, but a sharp noise below made her turn suddenly.

Garrett had attempted to lift himself upon the branch. Strained by Pat's

weight, under his it snapped off, dropping him back into the water.

"Garrett!" screamed Pat. In agony she watched for his head to reappear at the surface of the water. As he came up he again caught the edge of the ice, but his face was gray and drawn as though by sharp pain and his breath came and went in short gasps. She called him vainly over and over but he could not seem to muster enough strength to answer! She fancied, in her terror, that his fingers were slipping in their hold of the ice.

It was *her* turn to direct!

"Garrett, move down! See, the tree's across the ice! Maybe it'll hold! Oh, Garrett, *try*!"

With a slow, cramped movement he worked along the edge of the rapidly enlarging hole until he could grasp the broken branch which stretched now across the dark water, one end firmly held in a crack of the ice where it had buckled near the bank. Strengthened by desperation, Garrett managed to crawl along it until he reached the bank. As, numbed by exposure, he struggled to lift himself up the steep side of the gorge, clinging for support, as Pat had done, to roots and branches, repeatedly slipping back, it seemed to Pat as though he could not make it! At last her own frantic hands dragged him over the top to safety, only to have him drop in an unconscious heap at her feet!

All Pat knew was that whatever she had to do she must do quickly! Loosening the straps of her skates she threw them from her! Then she attempted to lift him. He was too heavy–she could not stagger a step with his weight in her arms. So as gently as she could she dragged him over the soft snow to a higher point of open ground from which she could see the lake and the skaters and the farmhouse!

"Girls! Girls! Jim!" she called frantically. They could not hear–only the echo of her own voice answered.

"What *will* I do?" she cried. She tore off her bright tam-o'-shanter and waved it high in the air! Suddenly she saw one of the girls detach herself! from a group of skaters and wave back!

An inspiration seized Pat! The semaphore code she had learned! Oh, could she remember it quickly enough? And poor Garrett himself had taught her! Snatching off her sweater she waved that in one hand and her tam in the other and slowly signaled:

"Accident–bring bobs–blankets–quick!"

It seemed to Pat as though they would *never* answer! She waved her message again–more slowly! Then one of the boys waved back: "Coming."

Now Pat began to cry–tears that left cold streaks on her own cheeks and splashed in a warm shower on Garrett's face as she knelt over him. He slowly opened his eyes and whispered, "All right, Pat?" Then, as though very tired, he

closed them again and lapsed back into unconsciousness.

There was no more merriment at Hill-top! The boys brought Garrett, wrapped in blankets, on one of the bobs to the door of the farmhouse where his mother, warned of the accident, awaited him. No one would let poor Pat tell her story–there was too much to be done! While Mrs. Lee and Sheila cared for Garrett, the girls gave Pat a hot bath and a vigorous rub and put her to bed. And Jim Archer flew to the nearest telephone to summon a doctor and nurse from the city.

Garrett was very, very ill! Weakened by the exposure and strain he quickly developed pneumonia. The doctor would not let him be moved, he must remain at Hill-top! Mrs. Lee, brave with all her anxiety, begged the boys and girls to go back to the city quietly, not to worry, but to hope for Garrett's quick recovery! Sheila and Jim Archer she kept with her to help her. At the earliest possible moment came Mr. Lee with a trained nurse.

Pat, none the worse for her icy bath of the day before, lingered behind the others and miserably begged for a parting word with Mrs. Lee.

"It was *all* my fault," she whispered, bursting into tears. "I called him a fraidy-cat and went on, just so's he'd follow—-"

Though Mrs. Lee took the girl in her arms, her face was very grave. But she guessed the suffering in Pat's heart, so she spoke kindly.

"Child, I am glad he *didn't* leave you! You must help us fight for him now and–well, he just *must* get well!" For a moment she could not keep her own tears back; then she resolutely wiped them away as much as to say, "*this* isn't fighting!"

Anxious days followed. Every morning and every evening Jim Archer telephoned to the Everett home from Hill-top a report of Garrett's condition. Sometimes there would be a word of encouragement–then he would be a degree worse! Pat, pale as a ghost, scarcely speaking to anyone, trembling at every sound, in spite of all Aunt Pen's and Renée's efforts, refused to be cheered or comforted! She spent almost all her time in the Eyrie with the door locked.

"I'm downright worried!" Aunt Pen said to Pat's father, who fortunately had returned in the midst of the trouble and anxiety. "*Whatever* does the child do in that room all by herself?"

No one would ever know! In the most shadowy corner of the Eyrie Pat had crept and there she had found strength to bear the suspense! Kneeling before one of the old broken chairs, she repeated over and over a little prayer she had made:

"Please God, make Garrett well! He was so brave and I was so wicked! I'm the one you ought to punish! Please make him well and I'll never, never be wicked again!"

Sometimes she would vary the wording of her little prayer and once, think-

ing that perhaps her clumsy sentences might not reach the Father's ear, she carried a prayer-book to the Eyrie and slowly, with great emphasis, repeated the prayer for the sick that she had often heard in church.

Going downstairs from one of these vigils in the Eyrie she heard Sheila's voice. Her heart stopped beating with an instant's fear! She rushed into the room where Sheila was talking to Aunt Pen and her Daddy.

"He is—-" She could not make herself ask the question.

Sheila turned. Her tired face was bright with joy. "Garrett's better! He will get well! We didn't telephone because I wanted to tell you! I had to come home, for mother needed me."

"Really, truly?" Pat could scarcely believe that the black shadow was lifted from her. Sheila nodded laughingly.

"Really, truly! The doctor says he has a wonderful constitution! And we're all so glad, because we love Mrs. Lee so much!"

With quivering lips Pat turned and threw herself into her father's arms. There was so much she wanted to tell–of her silly vanity, her wicked recklessness, her leading another into danger, but the words would not come!

"I'll always remember–how he looked–up on the bank!" she shuddered, her face hidden against her father's coat. "I asked God to make him well and He did, and I guess I'll remember never–to be–wicked again!" And as though he understood how truly repentant poor Pat was, her dear Daddy patted her shoulder and held her very close.

CHAPTER XVI
GOOD TURNS

The winter days passed quickly in the Everett household. Each moment was filled with work or play. And so delightfully intermingled was the play with the work that the girls found themselves tackling their Latin verbs with the same zest they threw into their outdoor recreation.

In spite of the holidays and the suspense of Garrett Lee's illness the routine of Aunt Pen's "school" had been renewed with little difficulty. Pat, who always before had been very indifferent to the report system followed at Miss Prindle's, suddenly developed deep concern and pride in the reports that Aunt Pen carefully prepared at the end of each week to show Daddy and then tucked away in the

spinnet desk to wait mother's return. She was improving in her Latin and her French; she could write a letter now with only one or two misspelled words; she tackled the difficult problems in Algebra in a fine fighting spirit, and with great pride–after many mortifying failures–was able to set before her father three beautifully browned loaves of bread!

Daddy had declared that such triumph must have its reward and had carried them all–pupils and teacher–off to the theatre to see "Penrod."

The Eaglets still gathered in the Eyrie. How much nearer each was coming to her ambitions no one of them could tell–that they were still steadfastly true to their pledge to help one another was certain; unconsciously perhaps, they did it by the strength of their friendship.

"LaDue and Everett" had developed a thriving business. Pat, quite all by herself, had gone to Brown Brothers, the leading bookstore in the city, and had sought and obtained an order for hand-painted valentines. This had given her courage to approach Miss Higgins and a nearby Gift-shop. Very proudly she presented the three orders to the senior member of the firm.

"There, I guess *that'll* make us work!"

At first Renée was aghast at the amount of work, but with Pat to help her and by steady application–although Aunt Pen was firm in her command that the work must not interfere with the outdoor play–she was able to complete the orders by the first of February. And so beautifully had the little valentines been made that Brown Brothers immediately ordered ten dozen dinner cards!

The rush of business set Pat at the company's books which had gotten into such a muddle that they had to be taken to Daddy to be straightened out. Pat's figures were like a Chinese puzzle running up and down the pages of her imposing ledger. Poor Mr. Everett had a knotty problem putting them into proper shape and Pat had a lesson in accounting!

Altogether, after all expenses had been paid, there was left to the account of the youthful firm a sum of eighteen dollars and fifty cents. Two-thirds of this, Pat declared, must be Renée's, because the responsibility of the work fell upon her–"though I'll just say it isn't any fun getting up your nerve to go in and ask for an order! They always treat you like a kid!" she explained, indignantly.

There were many demands upon their earnings. The scout uniforms had been bought; the girls each pledged six dollars to the Victory Army; there was the Red Cross, too, and the French Babies and the Vacation Fund for the tots at home–innumerable other good causes, worthy of their help.

"It makes me feel so grown-up to sign my name to all these pledges and things and pay for it out of my *very* own money!" And Pat assumed a comically mature air.

Pat was a real "Yellowbird" now and Renée was a "scrub." The girls had

joined a swimming class, too; Pat, having spent many summers at the seashore was like a fish in the water, and helped Renée, who had to overcome a physical terror at the very thought of slipping over into the tank!

Early in February Garrett Lee was brought back to the city from Hill-top. Pat, with Aunt Pen, had immediately gone to see him and his mother. Mrs. Lee's kind welcome drove away the fear that had teen in Pat's heart; impulsively she threw her arms about Mrs. Lee's neck and, because Mrs. Lee could always see straight into the hearts of her boys and girls, she knew what prompted the caress and gave an affectionate hug in return.

"Garrett doesn't want one single word ever said about it all," she whispered in Pat's ear.

After that Pat went almost daily to the Lee house–sometimes with a book, or a basket of fruit or some home-made candy. At first she was a little shy in her friendly devotion, but after a while, so truly grateful did Garrett seem for her company and the things she brought to relieve the monotony of his convalescence, she simply rang the bell and ran straight up to his room. When these frequent visits interfered with lessons Aunt Pen said not a word, for she knew Pat was trying to make up in some small way for the harm she had wrought!

As Garrett grew stronger the young people deserted the Eyrie for the pleasant Lee living-room. "It does him more good than a trip to Florida!" his mother declared, looking with satisfaction at her patient. And the boys and girls were learning thoughtfulness and considerateness. When Peggy, of her own will, suddenly lowered her voice, and Jim Archer, without a word, shoved a pillow back of Garrett's head as he sat on the old divan, Mrs. Lee had thought–hard as it had been–Garrett's illness had brought some good.

Pat had never known before the wholesomeness of jolly comradeship with a large circle of boys and girls; she found it now in these pleasant gatherings at the Lees. Bob Slocum and Peggy could think of so many games; Jim Archer–all in one afternoon–had composed, staged, and produced a melodrama, "Heinie the Hun," although, because Pat could not control her giggling, the irate author-manager had made her play the drum to mark the dramatic climaxes. There were endless and lively discussions over everything under sun and earth; jolly songs with Mrs. Lee at the piano, and always some careful eye to notice when Garrett showed signs of fatigue.

And to Pat the best of all was when Garrett, one afternoon, had confided to her that he was planning an airship with a new kind of stabilizer; showed her his drawings and explained how, for days since his illness, he had been studying a housefly which he had caught and imprisoned in the old fish bowl. Pat wanted very much to tell the others what great things Garrett was going to do but he had made her promise on her scout's honor to keep his secret, so she carried it

faithfully locked away in her heart, proud that Garrett should have honored her with his confidence after the unhappy accident at Hill-top!

"We're *pals*–just's if I was a boy," she said to herself.

As the weeks slipped by Renée, to Aunt Pen's delight, was rapidly developing a fascinating and forceful personality. With so many true friends and playmates the shyness had gradually disappeared from her manner; contrasted with Pat's dynamic spirits Renée would always seem quiet, but her will was strong and often, in her gentle way, she was a leader among the young people. With a character that had been moulded and guarded by a simple life, she had in her a rare beauty and purity of thought that seemed to shine in her pretty face and clear eyes. Happiness and healthy living were dispelling the shadows from her young life; she could talk of Susette and the old cottage without a quivering of the lips; she often drew for Pat, as though she enjoyed it, a vivid description of how splendid Emile had looked in his uniform as he had marched away with the others–a rose she had given him stuck jauntily in his belt!

The cessation of the fighting and the approaching peace had brought many problems. Wounded men were coming home, employment was uncertain, living expenses soaring higher and higher; actual want stalked in many homes. And to add to it all a terrible epidemic had raged through the city, leaving in its wake untold misery and suffering.

There was serious work for everyone to do. There were countless ways in which the Girl Scouts helped. "Good turns," they called it and they held themselves always ready for the command of any organization, never counting one moment of sacrifice, tireless and faithful.

"What do you think now?" Pat burst in upon her family from a special meeting of the troop. "The Scouts are going to adopt families!"

This astonishing announcement caused Mr. Everett to throw up his hands in mock dismay.

"Good gracious, Pat, black or white?"

"I'm really very serious, Daddy, and Mrs. Townsend from the Red Cross says we can make it a beautiful work! One family is assigned to each of us. We give as much time as we can spare and do everything we can–amuse the children, take 'em out, make things easier for the mothers so's they can rest and get strong again! You see these are families that have been sick. Mine is Mrs. K-a-s-u-b-o-w-s-k-i," she read from a card.

Pat had, in her way, expressed the scout orders. To each of the older scouts had been assigned a family that had suffered from the epidemic. Each girl was to work under the direction of the District Nurse and in coöperation with the Red Cross. She was to give brief reports of each visit. And knowing that these girls could, in the homes to which they were sent, win trust where older women often

met suspicion and unfriendliness, the Red Cross hoped to build up through their services, a sympathy and understanding that would benefit everyone and draw more closely the bonds of common interest.

In her youthful mind Pat did not sense any such vision; she only knew that her scout orders directed her to go and do all she could for a family whose name she simply could not pronounce; that her card stated that there was a Rosa, aged seven, a Josef, age six, a Stephanie, aged three and a baby Peter; that everyone of them had been desperately ill, including the father and mother; that only within the last two or three weeks had the father been able to go back to work and that upon the poor mother, still weak from the ravages of fever, had fallen the burden of making the meagre savings tide them over.

Pat called them all her "Kewpies." Her first two visits left her discouraged, the children were dirty and quarrelsome, the mother unfriendly. But, gradually, armed with picture books and toys, Pat won the liking of the little ones; at the next visit she gave them cakes of soap which Renée had carved to resemble dogs and pigs and promised them more if they would use these "all up"; warm sunshine permitted a long walk and outdoor play and Mrs. Kewpie, gratefully realizing that for an hour she was absolutely without chick or child, caught a much-needed moment of rest!

Renée had not been given a family by the Red Cross. At first she was disappointed, then, wholeheartedly, she fell to helping Pat. Aunt Pen and Daddy, too, were deeply interested. Almost every evening the "Kewpies" were discussed at the "pow-wow." Aunt Pen was aghast that Mrs. Kewpie could speak only a word or two of English!

"How can she be expected to bring up good American citizens–let alone be one herself?" she asked heatedly.

Through Rosa Pat learned that poor Mrs. Kewpie would really like to talk and read English. Her husband had learned it at his shop, the older children were learning it at school; less and less they were talking the only language she had ever known! She felt, with the quick instinct of her mother's heart, that they were growing away from her into a world of interests where she could not follow. No one had ever offered to teach her this new, strange tongue! She was afraid of the teachers in Rosa's school! She misunderstood and resented the approaches of the few English-speaking women she had met; proud herself, she had thought them patronizing and officious! But Pat was just a girl!

So Pat, quite unconsciously, began making a good American citizen out of Mrs. Kewpie. She found that the picture books she brought the children interested the mother, too–not because of the pictures alone but because the mother could make out, through them, the meaning of the words beneath them. When Pat told of this at home Aunt Pen thought of the beautiful plan of making for Mrs.

Kewpie a primer out of pictures. Every evening, for a week, the entire Everett family worked industriously with scissors and paste, compiling what Aunt Pen laughingly called: "Everett's First Lessons in the American Language."

"She'll know all about this country of ours when she's graduated from *this* book," declared Mr. Everett, proudly smoothing down a colored picture of the Capitol at Washington.

"And for everything I teach her in English I'm going to ask her to teach me a word in Polish! It's such a funny looking language and then it *sounds* like music! They have lots of awfully exciting stories in their history–Keineth Randolph told us some that her father had told her! And in the next book, let's have pictures of flowers and mountains and water and things like the country, 'cause I guess poor Mrs. Kewpie thinks there *aren't* such things!"

Prompted by this thought on her next visit Pat carried to the Kewpie kitchen a pink geranium plant. Then she conceived the idea of making the untidy kitchen look as much like Mrs. Quinn's as possible! So interested did she grow in her work that for two afternoons she completely forgot basketball practice, thereby bringing down upon her head the fury of the Captain of the Yellowbirds!

And when Baby Peter fell sick with some digestive disorder, Pat, with the help of the District Nurse, was able to persuade Mrs. Kewpie that a daily bath would reduce the slight fever and to substitute the sweet, fresh milk that the nurse had brought in the place of the coffee she was accustomed to feed the baby.

Now Renée, to her delight, was given an opportunity to share the "good turns."

One afternoon Mrs. Lee, always an angel of kindness and of wide charity, had sought Renée's help. She explained to Renée, as they walked along together, that this was a "case" of her own, and that she was taking her to this house because she thought she might bring a little sunshine into a very lonely life there.

"Poor Mrs. Forrester is very cross and very queer, my dear! No one ever goes to see her now and she lives all alone with a servant almost as old as she is! I thought that if you would go there once in awhile and read to her you might help her pass the long hours."

Mrs. Lee did not add that she hoped the child's quiet, sympathetic manner might waken some tenderness in a heart as cold and dead as stone.

Mrs. Forrester lived in a very old house in an out-of-the-way street. Standing almost concealed by trees and overgrown shrubbery, it looked like some forgotten corner of the big, growing city. The door creaked on its hinges as the untidy old servant grudgingly opened it just far enough to permit them to enter. The rooms were dark, dusty and absolutely bare of any furnishings except a few worn chairs. Not a picture, not a book, not one spot of color was to be seen! There were no curtains at the windows and the cracked dingy-brown shades had

been pulled close to the sill as though to forbid one tiny gleam of sunlight filtering through.

Renée thought it the most horrid house she had ever seen and wondered how Mrs. Lee could step into it so cheerfully!

But always tender with old people, she immediately felt sorry for the queer old woman propped up against a pile of pillows in a great, ugly bed.

"It isn't that she's so very old–or sick! I believe she just *won't* stir! Mrs. Lee says she has had a very unhappy life," Renée explained at home. Now Mrs. Forrester and the ugly old stone house shared the interest of the pow-wow.

Another time Renée told, with much amusement, how she had insisted upon raising the shade at the bedroom window so that Mrs. Forrester might see how spring-like the sun made everything look and how the old lady had promptly hopped out of bed and had pulled it down with such a snap that it fell to the floor!

"But she just *had* to go back to bed and leave it there and I went on reading's though nothing had happened and I know she really loved the sunshine because she lay there as quiet as could be, staring at the window!"

But one afternoon Renée returned, deeply excited, with a secret that she kept for Pat's ears and the seclusion of the Eyrie.

"I was reading something awfully stupid for I thought she might go to sleep and I know she wasn't listening at all, and finally I heard her say, "If I could find my baby–I'd be ready to die!" Now I wasn't reading a *thing* about dying or a baby and she frightened me dreadfully! I suppose she had forgotten I was there. Then when I went on reading she said it again–real plain! Now, Pat, isn't that exciting? Where *do* you suppose her baby is and *how'd* she ever lose it?"

None of Pat's experiences could equal this for mystery! Pat stared at Renée and Renée stared back; in the quiet of the Eyrie they thought up all sorts of explanations and stories–tragic, all of them! Pat fairly shivered with delight.

"Aren't you *lucky*, Renée–to have such a spliffy mystery! It's just *spooky*! I'm going to write a story about that! You get her to talk more–read a lot about babies and listen hard! And talk to that old Crosspatch, maybe she'll tell you something. That's the way they always do in detective stories. Something dreadful *must* have happened to make her live like that, in that ugly old house! Oh, rapture, I *know* I'm going to be famous! This goes way ahead of Aunt Pen's story! Of course," she added, hastily, "I don't know *all* Aunt Pen's secret sorrow yet and she doesn't stay in bed and act queer! I think I'll call this "The Lost Baby!"

So that evening, armed with several newly-sharpened pencils and much of Daddy's writing paper, Pat began her first chapter. However, its progress met with a serious setback when Aunt Pen laid in her hands a letter from Angeline Snow. Pat opened it eagerly; she had not heard from any of her old schoolmates at Miss Prindle's for a long time.

She read it quickly. Miss Angeline, in a few breezy sentences, informed Pat that she would come immediately to make her a visit!

"... You were *such* a dear to ask me (Pat read that twice, thoughtfully)–and the doctor says I need a teeny rest. Mama is in California and of course I cannot go to her! But we'll have a perfectly sweet time together and I'm just dying to see you again. We've missed you dreadfully here! I have *bushels* to tell you–just you. (About the girls and things–you'll *die* when you hear it all!) I'll come on the Empire on Thursday, so please meet me. I have a stunning new hat, henna and turquoise blue and a feather you'll want to *eat*. Bye-bye, your Angeline."

So intent was Pat upon examining the gold crest on the paper that she did not see the curious look that flashed over Aunt Pen's face.

"Good gracious," she exclaimed, suddenly, "that's to-morrow!"

"Yes," Aunt Pen answered quietly, "and we must do everything we can to make her visit pleasant!"

CHAPTER XVII
ANGELINE

At a first glimpse, from the crown of her glossy black head to the patent tip of her smart little shoe, Angeline Snow, arriving the day following, was like a stranger to Pat!

Pat had left her at the close of that last term of school, after parting embraces and repeated pledges of undying friendship, a girl, long of leg and short of skirt like herself; now she beheld a fascinating young creature whose slim body was robed in a dress of the most stylish fabric and cut, its clinging skirts reaching quite to the tops of the little patent leather shoes, and the hair that Pat had always loved to braid and unbraid was pinned in curious puffs and waves close to the small head.

However, in the transformation, Angeline had lost none of the fascination that had made of Pat, in the old days at Miss Prindle's, a sort of adoring slave. She was amazingly pretty, her black hair made her white skin dazzling, the faintest of rose-pink flushed her cheeks and the tip of her pointed chin; her eyes set deep under long black lashes were as blue as a June sky; her mouth alone marred the perfection of her face–when the lips were not twisted into an affected smile, acquired after faithful study before the mirror, they glaringly betrayed the girl's

little weaknesses.

There might well be some doubt in anyone's mind as to why a doctor had prescribed a rest for the young lady! From the moment when, clasping her Pekinese under her arm and followed by a porter with two huge shiny leather suitcases she stepped down from the train, she fairly bubbled with spirits!

Quickly Pat fell under the old charm! Because Renée had developed a light attack of influenza which confined her to her bed and kept Aunt Pen in close attendance, lessons were suspended and the two girls were left very much to themselves. At Aunt Pen's suggestion Pat moved into Celia's room, which adjoined the room assigned to Angeline. A door opened from one to another and every night and morning Pat crept in under Angeline's covers for a little while and listened breathlessly while Angeline told the "secrets" of the school. Almost always there was a box of chocolates under Angeline's pillow so that at regular intervals the stories were interrupted while the two girls munched on the candies.

"The very most exciting thing of all–and don't you *dare* breathe it to a soul"–and Angeline sat bolt upright and clasped her arms about her knees–"is the *awful* scrape that Jule Kale and I got into and that's *really* why I'm here!"

Jule Kale had been a Junior when Pat had been at Miss Prindle's. Pat remembered her as a daring young lady whose adventures had more than once thrilled her and the other girls in the school.

"You know she'd been writing to a French soldier for over a year, even after Prin said we couldn't and what *do* you think! He *came* to New York! He was the handsomest thing–the girls were all crazy about him, when we described him! He wrote to Jule right away and asked her to meet him at the Waldorf and she went real often and took me with her. I used to take a book and pretend to read, but I watched every minute so's I could tell the other girls. Once he bought me some chocolate, too, when Jule told why I was sitting there. He said there were some more Frenchmen coming over and he'd introduce them to us! Oh, the girls were *wild* with excitement! Then one afternoon Jule went to a tea-room and danced with him and she didn't take me and some one saw her there and told Prin and Jule was awfully scared, 'cause you remember Prin had told her that the next scrape she was in she'd have to leave the school! And what does Jule do but tell Prin that he was her *cousin* who had been in the French flying service! And Prin *insisted* that she invite him up to school for dinner like we always do our relatives and have him give a talk about the war and Jule had the *worst* time explaining how he had to go away and couldn't come! And we knew all the while that Prin was sniffing around the way she does for more information so Jule thought I'd better go away for awhile so's she couldn't question me! I pretended to faint one day–I can do it awfully well now–and Prin never said a word when I told her I wanted to come here for a visit. But wasn't that all exciting and wouldn't it be

funny if some day Jule married the French soldier? His name is Henri Dupres. Only Jule says his teeth are all filled with gold and he shows 'em *all* the time as if he was proud of them!"

Contrasted to these exciting revelations Pat felt that the telling of her little experiences–the happy school with Aunt Pen, the Eyrie and its secrets, the jolly hours at the Lee's, the basketball games, the Scout work and play, would be stupid to Angeline!

Aunt Pen had bade Pat do everything she could to entertain her guest; Pat found that Angeline was easily entertained. Indeed, the young lady never failed to indicate with daring frankness just what she wanted to do and what she did *not* want to do. And to Pat's dismay none of Angeline's desires included any of the other girls! Angeline stated very plainly that she considered Peggy "stupid," Keineth "a kid," and Sheila–"downright common."

"Why, do you mean she lives in that tumble-down house and her mother keeps *lodgers*?" she had asked with scorn.

Pat had opened her lips to answer and then closed them quickly. Something within her told her that nothing she could say would win Angeline's approval of Sheila–she, too, months ago, when she was at Miss Prindle's, might have thought the same thing!

Angeline, with pretty condescension, found Renée interesting. "Poor little refugee!" she said when Pat told Renée's story.

The two girls divided their time in the moving-picture theatres, the chocolate shops and the stores. Angeline never tired of hanging over counters and showcases; because she was smartly dressed and possessed a fund of information as to styles, she commanded respect and attention from the clerks. Each day Pat grew more and more envious and impressed by Angeline's "grown-upness."

Under Angeline's influence Pat began to feel ashamed of her own simple garments and to contrast them unhappily with the finery Angeline spread out over the bed for her inspection. She turned the henna and turquoise creation over and over while Angeline told that it had cost twenty-five whole dollars! "That's more than Renée and I earned all winter," Pat thought. And Angeline put into her hands a pair of pumps, gleefully remarking that "they were sixteen and I got them for twelve–*wasn't* that a great bargain?"

In her rude way, which Angeline considered pretty frankness, she made Pat understand, too, that she was "simply amazed" to find that Pat lived in such a plain old house!

"Of course it's nice and roomy and all that–and a long time ago it must have been fashionable, but you just *ought* to see Brenda Chisholm's father's new house on the Drive–why, it's like a *palace*!" She enlarged, then, upon its grandeur until Pat felt deep chagrin that her father had preferred to live on in the old homestead

rather than to move into a newer part of the city.

Pat knew that she loved the old library with its deep fireplace and the rows of book shelves reaching to the ceiling and the long, deep windows overlooking the slope of lawn between her house and Sheila's, the old paintings on the walls and the softly colored rugs; she knew that her own room, over the library, held all her memories of nursery days; that she loved the way the morning sun, streaming in through the little conservatory where the birds sang among the flowers, turned to gold the dark oak panels of the dining-room. However, it must seem shabby to Angeline after she had visited Brenda's new home! She looked at the more modern houses they were passing, great piles of stone and marble surrounded by well-kept lawns, and resolved to urge her Daddy to move immediately!

One morning, a week after Angelina's arrival, the girls found themselves with nothing to do. Aunt Pen had taken Renée out for a walk in the Park. The sun was shining warmly, buds were appearing on the lilac bushes, everywhere was the hint of spring. Aunt Pen had declared she had heard an oriole, she and Renée had started in search of the songster's nest. Pat had watched them depart with a little longing in her heart and a hurt that they had not even asked her and Angeline to go with them! Yet she knew how Angeline would have scoffed at the suggestion of a walk in the Park!

Angeline now was arranging and rearranging her hair before the mirror. Pat was crossly wishing she'd stop–she'd been fussing there for ages! "What'll we do?" she asked, as Renée's and Aunt Pen's figures disappeared up the street.

"Oh, let's go out somewhere for lunch. Then we can shop. You know, I think it's a *shame* your aunt doesn't buy you some decent things! If *I* were you I'd just go and get them myself! My goodness, you're too old to be dressed like a little kid. How the girls at school will laugh when I tell them!"

Pat's face flushed crimson. Angeline went on in her persuasive voice; "If you don't just show your independence *sometime* they'll go on treating you like a child! Of course it's none of my business, but you're my dearest friend and I *do* feel sorry for you! And I can help you pick out–oh, just a few things!"

Pat gave her head a little toss! "Shall we walk or ride?" she asked, mutely yielding to Angeline's tempting.

"Oh, dear me, ride, of course! I couldn't walk a *block* in those heels!" and Angeline extended one of the bargain pumps for a loving inspection.

It was necessary, before they started forth, for Pat to open her treasure box in the Eyrie and take from it the crisp six dollar bills which she had ready for her Victory pledge, due on April first. This, with her week's allowance, seemed a great deal of money and would surely meet the expenses of their outing.

As they whirled along the street toward the shopping section of the city Pat caught Angeline's gay mood. With a little thrill she told herself that they

were embarked upon an adventure! At Angeline's suggestion they lunched at a fashionable restaurant, always thronged at the noon-hour. Emboldened by Angeline's composed manner, Pat gradually lost her own awkward consciousness and enjoyed to the fullest the gay bustle and confusion, the clatter of china, the music rising discordantly above the endless chatter at the tables.

"*This* is more like what we girls do at school," declared Angeline, dipping her pink finger-tips into the glass bowl before her. "And now let's go to the stores and find some things for you!"

Under Angeline's direction this was an absorbing process. She recalled a love of a taffeta dress they had seen in a window. Of course it could be charged–everyone must know who Miss Everett was! Fortunately for the success of their shopping they found a clerk who had often sold dresses to both Mrs. Everett and Celia. Anxious to make a sale, she assured Pat that the dress would look beautiful on her! She shook out its flounces temptingly as she said it. Angeline added that the flame-colored chiffon collar was "chic–everyone's wearing them in New York!" Pat was promptly thrilled with a mental picture of herself in the stylish gown!

"Of course your aunt will look cross for a moment," Angeline whispered, "but it's really none of her business is it? I know *my* mother likes to have *me* look after myself!"

So Pat bought the dress, gave the address, and carried it away with her in a box. They then made other purchases; a silk and lace petticoat that Angeline declared a "love," some chiffon ties, a velvet bag with a jeweled top, a vanity case and a box of face powder.

"What *fun*!" cried Angeline, seizing some of the precious packages. "Now I tell you what let's do! Let's stop at that Madame Ranier's place and let her curl your hair and do it up! Then you'll look just peachy! *All* the girls are wearing their hair up now–truly, Pat! Why, you'd be ridiculous in New York!"

They found Madame Ranier's and Pat spent an uncomfortable hour before the mirror while a yellow-haired young woman curled her pretty hair with long, hot irons. Angeline hovered over them both, giving suggestions from time to time and exclaiming over the transformation. The hairpins hurt cruelly and Pat had a feeling that she could never move her head again; however, in spite of all this, she was secretly satisfied, as was Angeline and Madame and the young woman, that the result was most becoming and that she looked quite "grown-up!"

Then Angeline caught her arm. "Now, silly, just stand still *one* moment and I'll have you looking *really* like something," and to complete her afternoon's work, she dabbed at Pat's nose with the tiny powder puff she carried in her bag.

As they marched forth Pat tried to assume an airiness of manner she did not feel. Between their luncheon and Madame Ranier she had spent almost all of her

money; the purchases she had had charged began to trouble her soul. Angeline stopped suddenly at Brown's window–she saw a book there that she declared she must have! All the girls were reading it! She ran in without another word and Pat could do nothing but follow her. The book, "All on a Summer's Day," was purchased and Pat paid for it out of what remained of her money.

"Prin said we younger girls couldn't read it, but guess she can't say anything to me now!"

"Now to wind up this jolly day, Pat–*I'll* treat," Angeline said, edging toward a chocolate shop.

As they sat down at one of the little tables Pat saw across the room Garrett and Peggy Lee and Keineth Randolph. Her first thought was to join them but something in their faces stopped her. In that moment's exchange of glances, though the girls had nodded pleasantly enough, Pat read surprise, disgust, and outright amusement!

A deep crimson dyed her face, in funny contrast to the powdery whiteness of her nose. Trying to assume an indifferent air she turned her back on the others and devoted herself to Angeline; her pride and satisfaction had fled, though, leaving her deeply hurt, not so much because of the girls' suppressed ridicule as by the thought that they had not invited her and Angeline to join them.

Then Garrett added the last drop to her humiliation! As they trooped out, giving a passing smile to Pat and her guest, Garrett slyly poked Pat in the back and, leaning over, whispered: "Where'd you lose your ears, Miss Everett?" Involuntarily Pat clapped her hands to the curly puffs that were pinned carefully over her ears and threw Garrett a wrathful look!

But her adventure was ending most dismally! Reaching home she threw her boxes and bags and the book on her bed and fiercely shook out the miserable hairpins! For ten minutes she brushed the offending curls and then braided them into a tight pigtail. If Aunt Pen noticed the work of Madame Ranier's young woman, or the daub of powder still decorating the bridge of Pat's nose, she said nothing; neither did she question Pat concerning her absence at luncheon. She and Renée were in high good humor, they had had a happy afternoon and Renée was herself again.

"Pat, dear, don't you think–Renée is all better now–we might have some sort of a party in honor of Angeline?"

Angeline's expressive face brightened. She was always prettily agreeable when with the family. She clapped her hands to express her delight.

"Let's have a dinner dance," she cried; then–"oh, how *dreadful* of me to speak right out–like that!" and she affected deep embarrassment.

"I had in mind a picnic at Hill-top on Saturday. The roads are open and we can all motor out, have lunch and then go to the sugar camp. The sap is running

well, Mrs. Lee says."

Aunt Pen kept her eyes on her knitting and did not see the blank look of astonishment that crossed Angeline's face. Pat had exclaimed eagerly over the suggestion:

"I've never seen a sugar camp, have you, Renée?"

"Then I will tell Mrs. Lee that we will all go, Sheila and Peggy and Keineth, and Garrett may ask some of the boys. Garrett can drive their car too."

The next morning Angeline stayed locked in her room until after eleven o'clock. Then, hearing Pat in the adjoining room, she suddenly threw open the door and appeared fully dressed, even to the henna hat. To Pat's exclamation of astonishment she answered:

"I'm going back on the Empire! Will you tell Watkins? Now *don't* be a silly and make a fuss, Pat–just tell your aunt that I had a telegram! Jule wrote that everything was smoothed over and that I was missing some fun! So you *don't* think I'm going to stay any longer in *this* dead hole!" She snuggled her face in the Pekinese. "You've been a *dear* to keep me, Pat, but, you poor child, couldn't you see I was just bored to *death*? And a sugar-party! Oh, la, la–*won't* the girls laugh? Why, I wouldn't be seen *dead* at one!"

Slowly Pat stiffened until she stood as though made of stone. Her lips tried to frame the tumult of wrath that raged within her, but she only managed to say lamely: "I'll tell Watkins–if you've really–got to go!"

So Angeline and her dog and her bags of finery departed and ten minutes later, the rage in Pat's soul bursting all bounds, she presented herself at Aunt Pen's door, her arms filled with the hateful purchases of the day before, her face red with the effort to choke back her tears.

Aunt Pen had just come in. So she was amazed when Pat burst out: "She's gone and I'm glad of it! I just *hate* her! She said we were stupid and that Sheila was common–and she was–bored to death and we–we weren't fashionable–and–and she wouldn't be seen *dead* at a sugar-party! As if anyone wanted her, anyway!"

"Pat, dear, one thing at a time! Who's gone? Angeline?"

Pat dumped her boxes on the floor and sitting like a little girl on Aunt Pen's lap told of Angeline's dramatic departure. She could not see the smile that stole over Aunt Pen's face; she could not know that the sugar-party had been planned to bring about just what had happened! Wise Aunt Pen had decided that Pat had had just about as much of Angeline's company as was good for her! She listened to the tale of the shopping, glanced at each purchase, then patted the hair that was still curly.

"Poor Patsy, what a time you've had!"

"But I hate her, Aunt Pen, and I hate myself for ever having let her say

Sheila was common! Dear old Sheila!"

"Well, dear, you've learned something in values–all around! Sheila, even though her life is a continual sacrifice of all the pleasures and luxuries most girls have, is a finer girl and a more worth-while friend than poor Angeline–and I think the *next* time you'll stand up for her, won't you, my dear? Now, for the book–*that's* the place for that," aiming it at the waste-basket, "and if you want some novels I'll find you some that are more thrilling and better brain-food. Your curls"–she fondled the dark head–"they *are* pretty, Pat–it's too bad we aren't all born with curly hair and there's no particular harm in having it curled, only–it does take *so* much time that could be spent in some much better way! And after a few years you can do up these braids and be a young lady, but for awhile longer we want our Pat a girl that can romp and play and get all the joy that youth alone offers!"

"Oh, Aunt Pen, you make me feel as if I'd been so silly! But what on *earth* will I do with all these things!" and Pat kicked at the offending boxes.

"Well," Aunt Pen glanced appraisingly over the spilled contents. "You can give the bag to Melodia and the vanity case to Maggie and we'll just go back with the other things and ask the store manager to exchange them for–what do you say to shoes for all the Kewpies?"

"Oh, joy! For Easter! Oh, you're *such* a comfort, Aunt Pen!"

"Seriously, Pat, do you feel that you really need a dress? Perhaps I have neglected you!"

"Oh, gracious no, I don't want to fuss with any more clothes! That's all Angeline talked about! Let's take this truck back right after luncheon!"

"Pat, dear, just a moment," Aunt Pen still had a little sermon tucked away in her mind. "You mustn't hate Angeline–when you think all this over you'll realize she has taught you a valuable lesson–perhaps you, too, have given her something in return! Each one of us has within us much that we give all unknowingly to others, that helps them. Think how much little Renée has taught you with her unselfish companionship and Sheila, who is so brave and cheerful and honest, and Peggy and all the others! And you must think that you, too, in turn, through your friendship, give them something of what is good in you! Can you understand what I mean? So let Angeline go away with grateful thoughts in your heart–she is silly now but some day she may outgrow all that and be a fine girl!"

Pat's face reflected Aunt Pen's seriousness. "I just ought to feel sorry for her 'cause she hasn't a mother and a daddy and an Aunt Pen like I have! But, oh, I don't want to ever look another piece of chocolate candy in the face again! And I'm as broke as broke can be and have spent even my Victory money and I'll have to draw more from 'LaDue and Everett' to meet my pledge and save all this month to pay it back," with a groan. "But, Aunt Pen, will we have the sugar-camp

picnic just the same?"

"We surely will," smiled Aunt Pen, folding the dress back into its box, "and a good time, too!"

So Pat quickly forgot Angeline's insults, her abused stomach and her empty pocketbook in a happy anticipation of the day in the woods at Hill-top with the boys and girls who were her "really worth-while friends."

CHAPTER XVIII
FOR HIS COUNTRY

"Paddy! Pad-dy Quinn! You get *right straight* out of there!" The cry came from Sheila. Returning from school she had spied, as she turned into her walk, Paddy digging among her mother's precious tulips.

Sheila threw her books inside the kitchen door, taking pains to notice that the room was empty, and then went back to punish the culprit. Paddy lay crouched on the ground watching her with bright eyes and wagging his stub of a tail in a way that was anything but repentant!

Perhaps the only thing that Mrs. Quinn loved more than Paddy, except of course her Sheila and her Denny and her Matt and her Dare, were the bulbs that grew each spring in the little border bed along the old fence. Her tulips always put their tiny green leaves up through the earth long before any other tulips; they were always bigger and brighter and seemed almost human, the way they nodded on their silvery green stalks and leaned toward one another as though repeating, like old gossips the stories the robins sang over their heads. Each fall Mrs. Quinn carefully covered them over and each spring, at the first feel of warmth in the sunshine, she watched daily for the tiny green tips, as a mother might watch for the return of a long absent son.

The children shared her interest, too–they could not be her children if they did not love the flowers and birds and sunshine that made their living joyous! The fairy stories she had taught them in their babyhood, as she had rocked them in her loving arms, had made the familiar things about them have a magic of their own; the old clock in the corner was not ugly because elves lived in it by day and pranced from its old case at night; a fairy princess had her fairy-palace in the nearby tree tops, a prince hid in the wood box, the nodding posies that always budded and grew wherever Mrs. Quinn lived, were the souls of sprites

and at night danced about under the star-light; the dew that could be found on the blades of grass in the early morning were the jewels that they dropped in their haste to flee back to hiding from the approaching dawn!

Trouble had been a frequent visitor in this magic household but the only mark it ever left was an added line in the corner of Mrs. Quinn's smiling lips, made by long night struggles over the dilapidated book which contained the family accounts. Even when left a widow with four children to bring up, she did not lose one bit of the optimism that, years before, had made the whole world her Denny's and hers for the conquering! Her Denny had been taken from her before any one of the dreams they had dreamed had come true; still, for her, he lived on in her Sheila and the three small boys who had red hair and blue eyes like the father, and she still dreamed the old dreams for them. "There was no cloud so dark but that it had its bright lining somewhere" was the brave philosophy with which she directed her household, and the meals that were often frugal she made cheery with some loving nonsense. The sacrifices Sheila had to make as she grew older were nothing because she knew her mother made them, too, and there was comfort in the sense of sharing. The summer before Mrs. Quinn had taken the old brick house, fashionable in its day, comfortable now, even in its shabbiness, and had rented its rooms to lodgers. With careful economy this slender income would keep them comfortable until the day, to which Sheila always looked forward, when she herself could earn money and give to the boys the advantages of education that she would not ask for herself. To her her own little ambitions were as nothing compared to the big things that must be done for the boys so that they would grow into great men!

Paddy had become, immediately upon his adoption, a favored member of the family. He had privileges, too, and these increased as he willed because, from the mother down, not one of them could speak crossly to what little Dare called "the orphing dog." He slept in a box near the stove when he was not stretched across the foot of one of the boy's beds; he ate from a plate under the chair in the corner, a spot of his own choosing, from which he could watch the course of the family meal and ask for a second helping when he wished. He shared the rise and fall of the family fortunes–a bit of liver when the rest had chicken, a good bone on a holiday, a new collar when Matt found, on the walk before the house, a crisp five-dollar bill that had no owner.

Though, as a dog–especially an "orphing" dog Paddy measured in good manners up to the average, he had occasionally, during the winter, fallen into deep disgrace. Time and again he had been found digging vigorously in the back yard. Both Mrs. Quinn and Sheila had protested violently! The bulbs were there and, too, it was Sheila's precious war-garden–the best in the troop! Paddy had been punished–severely for the Quinns; in spite of this he was found again and

again at his mischief.

"Oh, dear, he'll ruin everything," Sheila had cried, eying the havoc Paddy had worked. The more the snow melted from the ground the more determined Paddy seemed to dig his way straight through to China!

Then Mrs. Quinn had made the ultimatum! The children heard it with worried faces; Paddy listened, disturbed, from the stove behind which, after a chastisement, he had taken refuge.

"If we find him at it *once more* he'll go straight to the pound! I'm *not going* to have my bulbs ruined!" And Mrs. Quinn had turned resolutely away from the dismay and grief she saw in four young faces.

Sheila knew that her mother had meant what she said. That was why, on this day, she had peeped into the kitchen before she went back to Paddy. If no one had seen him then he might have just one more chance!

"You're a *bad, bad* dog!" she said, advancing threateningly upon the culprit.

But Paddy barked protestingly. His whole manner seemed to say: "I'm through now. See what I've found!" And between his paws he held a small tin tube, badly discolored from long contact with the earth.

As Sheila leaned over he jumped upon her, then pawed the ground where the tube lay.

"What have you got? Don't you dare bury that in the tulip bed!" But he barked so hard in protest that Sheila gingerly picked up his treasure.

Under her fingers it came apart and from it dropped three folded slips of paper.

"For goodness sake!" cried Sheila, almost frightened. She smoothed them out; except for a slightly mouldy smell they were in good condition and the writing upon them could be easily read.

They were the lost formulas!

"*Mother! Mother! Mother!*" With one bound Sheila was in the house confronting her mother who had come up from the cellar, panting with alarm.

"*Paddy's found 'em! Paddy's found 'em!*" And she threw her arms about her mother's neck in a hug that swept the two of them straight into the big rocker!

"Sheila Quinn, are you *loony*? What *have* you got? And *do* stop that dog's barking!"

"Oh, mumsey, it's the lost formulas–they were buried in the tulip bed! *That's* what Paddy's been digging for–all this time!"

The two spread the papers out on the table and read them over and over.

"Don't they sound *dreadful*! Just's if they'd explode all by themselves!" whispered Sheila, recalling what Mr. Everett had said about the formulas.

So giving Paddy a warm hug by way of tribute Sheila put the formulas back in the tin tube and started forth to find Mr. Everett, to tell him the whole

story. All through the winter the loss of the formulas had worried Mr. Everett. His experts had been working over the experiments again and in time would, of course, have made new formulas; it was the fear, however, that some other government already possessed the secret that had troubled, not only the officials of the Everett Works, but the United States government as well. So that when Sheila, with Aunt Pen, Pat and Renée, burst into the office with the wonderful news, Mr. Everett felt as though a great load was rolling off his shoulders!

A curious gathering inspected the dirty tube and listened to the story; Mr. Everett and his staff, some secret service men, two chemists from the experimental laboratory, in their long white coats, some workmen who were passing the door and had been attracted by the exclamations–and the girls. Mr. Everett questioned Sheila closely. She recalled that Paddy had–all winter long–barked a great deal at night, so much so that after awhile the family grew accustomed to it and did not notice it.

"Marx buried it–intending to go later and dig it up! The man was smart enough to know that if they'd been found on his possession nothing could have saved him. It was a lucky thing they kept him locked up so long! Your dog has done good work, Miss Sheila!"

Mr. Everett then, turning the tube over and over in his hands, said to one of the others in a low tone:

"After all–perhaps the best service we could do for our country and the world would be to bury it again–where it would lie forever and ever!"

That night, for the second time, Mr. Everett, with Pat, came to the Quinn kitchen. But this time he was accompanied by Aunt Pen and Renée, too. They made a very loud noise at the doorstep, as though dragging to the door some heavy object. Mr. Everett insisted that the three small Quinns must stay up and to make it certain drew little Dare to his knee.

"We're going to have a regular ceremony," declared Pat so solemnly that Mrs. Quinn nervously fell to lighting more gas jets and Sheila sent Matt off to the sink to wash the jam from his face.

"We must decorate Mr. Paddy Quinn for distinguished service," Pat finished. So the boys with shouts dragged Paddy from his basket–for Paddy believed in an early bed-hour–and set him in the centre of the merry circle. Thereupon Mr. Everett produced a handsome collar decorated with a red, white and blue bow and allowed Dare to fasten it about the shaggy neck. Everyone laughed at the comical picture Paddy made in his gay decoration! Then a knock came at the door and in trooped Peggy and Keineth, trying to look as though they had not known what had been happening!

Mr. Everett rose with much seriousness. "And now that everyone is here I want to present *another* badge of honor, that has been left in my keeping!" Sheila

guessed what was coming! She threw one wildly happy look toward her mother and then stood quite still, blushing. Mr. Everett drew from his pocket the flat tissue-paper package, unwrapped it, and held up the badge of the Golden Eaglet.

"It gives me profound pleasure to return this to Miss Sheila Quinn! May she always keep and give to others, too, her sense of a true scout's honor! It is one of the strongest weapons we can carry!"

His voice was so earnest and the eyes he fixed on Sheila so full of sincere respect and admiration that the laughter in the room suddenly died. As Pat said afterwards: "It was just as though Sheila was a knight and was starting out on some crusade!" And Mrs. Quinn, who knew something of the weapons one needed to fight the battles of life, choked down a catch in her throat and Aunt Pen whispered something under her breath with a look that was like a caress for Sheila!

Then the girls opened the door and revealed a tub of ice cream on the threshold; while two of them were lifting it out of the ice Pat brought in and opened a big box full of dewy-wet pink roses.

Keineth went to the piano and played so that "the fairies danced," and then everyone sang–Dare, holding tightly to one of Mr. Everett's hands, almost splitting his throat in his effort to express his joy!

"*Such* an evening!" said Mrs. Quinn as she closed the door behind the last guest. "And who'd have ever thought of it at six o'clock and you, Matty, with your elbow out of your sleeve! Well, well, I guess *those* good folks don't mind a thing like that!"

"*Mother–look!*" Sheila had gone to the roses and had leaned over them to whisper good-night into the fragrant petals. And there, hidden among the leaves, she had found a small envelope addressed to "Miss Sheila Quinn."

She opened it quickly. "Oh, *Mumsey*!" she cried. For before her amazed eyes she unfolded a check for two hundred dollars!

And with it was just one short line.

"As a small token of appreciation for Paddy's services I present this to his mistress, begging her to do with it whatever she wants most in the world."

"Mumsey–the music!" Sheila ran to the piano, which had been scarcely touched during the long winter. With ecstatic fingers she ran up and down the scale.

And Mrs. Quinn, watching her girl with happy, misty eyes, seeing in the young face a look of the father who had gone on, and the glow of the rosy dreams she had used to dream in her own girlhood, thought it the most beautiful music

in the world!

CHAPTER XIX
A LETTER FROM FRANCE

"A letter for you, Miss Renée!" and Jasper laid down at Renée's elbow a square, bluish envelope with a foreign postmark.

From time to time Renée and Mr. Everett had received cards from Renée's guardian–but this was a fat envelope! Aunt Pen reached eagerly for it and turned it over and over in her fingers. Whereupon Pat nodded to Renée, as much as to say: "The plot thickens! The mystery clears!"

"What fun to have it come on a nasty, rainy day like this!" she declared aloud. "Let's take it to the Eyrie and read it very slowly so's to make it last a *long* time!"

"Renée may want to read her own letter by herself, Pat," laughed Aunt Pen, looking as happy as though the letter had come straight to her.

"Oh, *no*, please! Let's do what Pat says! And *you* read it, aloud, Aunt Pen!"

So the fat envelope was carried to the Eyrie and Aunt Pen sat down in the one sound chair while Pat and Renée stretched out on the floor at her feet. And as Aunt Pen began to read no one minded the rain beating in torrents against the Eyrie windows!

"My dear little girl and all her good friends, the Everetts," the letter began. "Because I am confined by an inconsiderate doctor to a very small bed in a very big room in what, in the sixteenth century, used to be a monastery and is now one of the best of the American base hospitals–though I wish the window was bigger so it could let in a little more sunshine to warm these ancient walls–I have time at last to write to you a real letter. Since I returned from God's country I have been continually on the jump. I got back to the boys just in time to fire one last shot at the Jerrys, though it was a waste of good honest steel, for they were running faster than even a bullet could go. After the armistice they sent us almost directly up to the Rhine. Somehow, now that I've got the time to write, and a fairly good pen, I can't seem to find the words that will describe to you just how we men felt when we knew we were there–at the old Rhine–the way we'd talked and sung about back in the training camp. Things were not tedious–not for a moment–and we were as busy as ever and constantly on the alert that

Jerry didn't slip anything over us. And then just when I was getting used to the eternal rain and mud and the Germanness of everything–and good honest, sheets, too, on a regular old grandmother's feather bed–I was ordered back with a detachment to Le Mans.

"And now, Renée, I must tell you a little story. It is about a poor French soldier I found in one of the many small villages not far from Valenciennes. We were going back in lorries, one had broken down and that held us up for a couple of hours. Some of us were prowling around for souvenirs. (By the way I am sending a German helmet to you by mail. Turn it upside down, fill it with earth and plant flowers in it–that'll redeem it.) To go back to my story–I happened upon a very old man digging in a strip of a back yard that looked the way one of our streets home look when they're paving it and putting sewers through–it was back of what had been a cottage only the roof and two of the walls were gone. I asked him for a drink and he took me to the one room that was whole to give me some of the wine which–he told me proudly–he had hidden months before, and there I found his very old wife and a young French soldier. The Frenchman would not talk to me at all, just stared and shrank away as though he was frightened. I shall never forget how the poor fellow looked, a bag of bones, hollowed eyes that burned in his white face and an empty sleeve. The old man told me the boy's story, then, and with the knowledge of French I have picked up I was able to put it together. He had been released from a German prison, he had had to walk back with other French prisoners, but because he had had his arm amputated in the prison and had had a long run of fever and was half starved he had not been able to keep up with the others and had dropped behind. The old peasant had found him lying by the road, raving in delirium. There had been a nasty wound on his forehead, too, as though back in the prison camp some Jerry had struck him over the head. The old couple had taken him in and for weeks and weeks had nursed him as best they could, keeping him alive with their precious wine. His fever had gone, the wound had healed, his strength had begun to slowly return, but he could not remember one single thing of what had happened nor tell who he was–that blow had wiped everything out of his mind! He was like a little child. But the shock of seeing me started something working in his brain; he stared and stared, after a little he got up his courage to feel of my face and of my uniform–and then of his own uniform–or the rags and tatters of what had been a good French uniform, and I think at that moment blessed memory began to return!

"To make a long story short I just took him along on the lorry to Paris and put him in a hospital there under expert care and now he's as sane as he ever was and says he can remember the German doctor who struck him and wants to go back and find him! But I told him that a higher Justice was going to settle all those scores and that he was going back to America with me–when I go. That is

why I am telling you the story; I know your kind little heart that is part French will find pity and affection for this poor fellow who has suffered so much that little girls like you might go on living happy safe lives in a good world, and you will be kind to him when I bring him home with me.

"Home–Renée, it seems so funny for me to think of a home! I used to dream of having one but I have found out some dreams don't come true, and since then I've just wandered from one country to another building bridges and railroads and such things. But I feel tired now and I think when I go back I'll fix over an old house I own in a little town up in the Adirondack mountains, and we'll go there and we'll be happy, or at least I promise I'll see that you are happy. And we'll keep the French soldier I've adopted as long as he will stay, won't we?

"When I was in Paris I went down and spent a whole day with Susette and Gabriel. They are well, Gabriel's rheumatism is better, and he declares it is the slippers you sent him–he wears them all the time. They are happy getting their garden ready, and the florists in Paris are placing more orders for violets than before the war. Prosperity shines in every wrinkle in Susette's face. She pointed out to me where she has hung the Stars and Stripes alongside of the Tri-color and told me that I must tell you. Your picture was in a place of honor on the shelf under the Madonna and there was over it a tiny wreath of waxed snowdrops which Susette says she made herself. I looked at the picture and I said to myself: 'Bill Allan, that big girl with the very nice eyes is your ward, given into your care by the bravest lad you ever knew–see that you live up to the charge with the best that's in you!' That was the vow I made in front of your picture, Renée.

"Some day when we've saved enough money we'll go back and visit Susette. But she's happy, Renée–the way we're all happy over here–the fighting is over!

"You and I can never thank the Everetts for all they have done for us. I bless the Fate that brought that very lively Miss Pat into the Red Cross office for I'll admit right at that moment I didn't know what to do with you! I think that in a few weeks I'll be sent back to America and then I will try to tell them how grateful we are..."

The letter concluded with a brief description of the hospital and its beautiful, cloistered grounds where, long before, monks had found rest from the world's strife. But not one of the three listened; Aunt Pen's thoughts, even while her lips went on framing the words of the letter, were back, repeating over and over–"I used to dream of having a home but I found out some dreams can't come true!" and, as she finished and folded the letter, her eyes, staring out over the wet housetops, saw vividly again the college campus and the old stone bench under a spreading elm where she and another had talked about that very house in the Adirondacks!

"It *is* my Will!" she murmured almost aloud. But for once Pat was too

concerned with her own worry to notice her Aunt Pen's absorption!

"I think it's just *mean* in him to say he's coming over here and take Renée away to some old place–we *won't* let her go!" she exploded.

A little dread of this same thing was disturbing Renée! Though she had in the long trip across the sea learned to respect and trust her new guardian, and, because Emile had placed her under his care, would always feel a strong loyalty for him, she shrank a little from the thought of leaving these kind friends and going to a strange home. Aunt Pen, coming with an effort back from her own dreams, read what was passing in both Pat's and Renée's minds.

"Let's not worry, girlies! I know everything is going to turn out just the way that will make everyone happy–when Capt. Allan returns!"

Now Pat suddenly grew suspicious!

"You speak *just as though* you knew something we didn't know, Penelope Everett! What *is* it? *Did* you know Renée's guardian before? You've *got* to tell us every thing!" And Pat, a vision in her mind of romance and mystery unfolded at last, knelt before Aunt Pen and rested her elbows upon Aunt Pen's knees with an air that said: "I'm ready now to hear the whole story!"

But Aunt Pen's face, rosy red, did not suggest the secret sorrow that Pat had liked to imagine! She laughingly pushed Pat away.

"What an old teaser you are! Yes, this *is* the same Will Allan I knew! He used to tell me, sometimes, of the old house in the mountains which an aunt had left him. Then he went to South America to build a bridge or something! There's nothing more to tell!"

Pat was visibly disappointed.

"Well, anyway, will you promise to keep him from separating Ren and me?" she begged.

Aunt Pen slipped the letter back into its envelope.

"I'll promise to do my best to keep him from–separating you–very far! If he remembers me," she added with sudden alarm! Such a thought had not occurred to her! Now it brought a tiny droop in the corner of her lips. "Anyway, Pat, much as we love Renée we must not forget that Capt. Allan has the first claim, though I am sure he will be anxious to do whatever will make her the most happy! He may let Renée decide."

"Oh, that would be *dreadful*!" cried Renée.

But the thought satisfied Pat. She stood up with sudden resolution. "Well, then, *I'm* going to begin right now teasing Renée *every minute* to choose us! I'm glad the letter came! Everything was so dull and now it's exciting again! And that poor Frenchman–let's go over to Peggy's, Ren, and tell her all about him!

As if we minded rain, anyway!"

CHAPTER XX
THE LOST BABY

"Ren, you look as though you'd stepped out of a picture book!"

Renée did, indeed! With odds and ends from the scrap-bag and the storeroom upstairs she and Pat had put together an Alsatian costume. Pat, perched cross-legged in the middle of the bed with a book on Historical Costumes stretched across her knees, proclaimed her satisfaction with their handiwork while Renée turned and turned before the long mirror, stopping to spread out the full short skirt or perk up the enormous bow that adorned her head.

Keineth Randolph was going to give a party. It was to be a costume party; there was to be dancing as well as games; all the boys and girls of the Randolph's acquaintance had been invited. They always loved to go to the Randolph's home; the house, though small, seemed to have been built for the sole purpose of giving young people room for a good time; John Randolph, himself, could be as young as the youngest and Keineth, always good-humored, was a hospitable little hostess. Add real musicians, tucked off on the landing of the stair, a table in the corner of the dining-room laden with goodies dear to young folks, witches and goblins, lords and ladies of past kingdoms, monks, fairies, clowns and elves to make merry–well, "it will be one grand party!" Pat had declared.

She herself had been torn in mind as to what she wanted to be. She pictured herself as Jeanne d'Arc, glorious in silver armor and lance in hand; she considered Mary, Queen of Scots; then her romantic fancy favored Cinderella! But learning from Peggy that Garrett was going as the brave Powhatan, the Indian Chief, she promptly decided to tease Garrett by appearing as Pocahontas! Aunt Pen was shopping at that very moment trying to find the gayest feather duster in the city with which to decorate her.

"Pat, I'll wear my locket!" cried Renée, turning from the mirror.

She ran to her drawer as she spoke and drew from it the little case. Pat watched her approvingly as she fastened the bright red band about her throat. It added a piquant spot of color to the quaint costume and the curious old locket looked as though it might have been fashioned by some old artisan for a royal lady in the days when feudal lords reigned over France!

"It's *perfect*!" Pat gave a leap over the low footboard of her bed to examine more closely Renée's entire appearance.

"You're going to be the best thing there," she declared conclusively. "I know everyone will be crazy over you! *Won't* it be fun? I can't wait until Thursday comes! Only then it'll be over so soon!" And Pat sighed deeply, as millions of others have sighed over the rapid flight of time!

Maggie tapped at the door.

"There's a queer old woman downstairs a-asking for you, Miss Renée!"

"For me?" Renée turned, startled. Then a sudden thought enlightened her. "It must be Elsbeth!"

She ran quickly down the stairs to the door followed by Pat. It was Elsbeth, the queer old servant who lived with Mrs. Forrester. At sight of Renée she turned a face white with distress.

"Oh, Miss Renny, Miss Renny, she's took again! Mis' Lee sent me to fetch you! You must come!"

"What do you mean, Elsbeth–Mrs. Forrester? I'll go with you at once!"

"I think that's *mean*, Renée! We were going to plan my costume–you *know* it!" protested Pat.

"Oh, *Pat*!" Renée's voice pleaded from the depths of the hall closet where she was hunting for her warm coat. "Oh, Pat–you wouldn't want me not to go! The poor thing!"

Pat was a little ashamed; however she did not want to show it–she cast an accusing look at old Elsbeth as though she was to blame.

"Well, I don't believe I'd leave you for any of the Kewpies, but I'll get along somehow!" and assuming the air of a martyr she started slowly back up the stairs.

"I'll get back as quickly as I can, truly, Patsy, so wait for me!" Pat paused in her ascent. "You're never going in *that* costume, are you?"

Renée had completely forgotten what she had on! However, she only laughed and buttoned the coat up closely about her throat.

"Oh, it won't make any difference! I'm ready, Elsbeth–let's hurry!"

"She was took last night with one of her spells and cried and wouldn't take her powders! And to-day she's still like she was dead," the old servant explained to Renée as they almost ran through the streets. They made a curious pair–the young girl's scarlet skirts swinging out below the coat, the gilded cardboard with which she had covered her slippers flopping about her ankles and the ends of the big black bow peeping out from under the soft hat she had clapped upon her head; Elsbeth, hobbling in her effort to keep up with the younger feet, her loosened ends of stringy gray hair flying in every direction, and her hands rolled in the apron she tried vainly to conceal under the short, shabby jacket she wore.

"The Lord sent Mis' Lee," she gasped, panting for breath, "and she sez–go

fetch Miss Renny! An' I come!"

"She'll be better, I know, with Mrs. Lee there! Don't worry, Elsbeth," and Renée, heedless of the panting breath beside her, quickened her pace so that in a very few minutes she was tapping at the door.

Mrs. Lee opened it and drew Renée into the dingy parlor. She went to one of the windows and raised the shade to the very top, letting in a flood of warm sunshine. Then she whispered to Renée:

"The doctor is with her now. It is the first time since I have known her that we could get her to see a doctor! Take off your coat, my dear! Oh—-" she stared for a moment, puzzled, then laughed: "you were trying on your costume for Keineth's party! You are a picture, my dear!" She hesitated, as though something in Renée's face suddenly held her attention.

"Just for a moment you made me think of someone, but I can't tell who! Perhaps it is that you so thoroughly look the part of a little Maid of Alsace! I thought, while we were waiting, I might tell you a little more of poor Mrs. Forrester's story. Then you will understand why she suffers as she does! She was not always alone as she is now–she once had a beautiful young daughter—-"

"Oh," broke in Renée, excitedly, "was that the lost baby?"

"Yes, though she was twenty years old! Now the mother always thinks of her as a baby."

"Did she die?"

"No–to Mrs. Forrester then it was worse than death. The two of them seemed to have been quite alone in the world; the mother cared for nothing but the little girl. Every luxury that money could buy she heaped upon her with a lavish hand. One might think that the child would have been dreadfully spoiled but those who knew them say she was sweet and gentle, pretty as a flower. When she was a little older the mother took her away–she must have the best schooling that money could obtain. They traveled a great deal, too. And all the while, as the young girl grew toward womanhood, the proud mother was building plans for the wonderful future her child must have! I do not know of just what greatness she dreamed–whether it was of some Duchess Somebody or even a prince's title–I only know that she held money and high social position as the greatest gifts with which a Kindly Providence could endow her flower and lost sight of what makes real happiness in this world!

"It sounds like a fairy tale, my dear! While the proud mother was dreaming her golden dreams, the young girl met and fell in love with a poor artist–a boy, for he was only twenty-two, whose family was quite unknown and who had nothing in the wide world but a profound belief in his own great talent. The young girl went proudly and joyously with him to the mother to tell of their happiness. The mother would only believe that the boy was an adventurer–a

fortune seeker; she saw an end to the plans of her whole lifetime, an obscure future for the girl she had so carefully educated. She sent the young man away and forbade his communicating in any way with her daughter. For weeks the girl pleaded vainly, the mother would not listen; in a fury of disappointment she even locked her for days in her room, thinking to break the young will! But there is an old saying that true love will find a way–the day came when the young girl slipped away, joined her lover and a few hours later returned to tell the mother that they had been married. Then it was that anger and baffled pride drove out all love and justice from the mother's heart; heaping curses upon the frightened girl she drove her from her, bidding her never cross her path again! The girl and boy went away and from that day to this the unhappy woman has never laid eyes upon them. Her rage brought about a spell not unlike what she is having now; for days and days she lay in her bed refusing to let anyone near her. Then, finally, as the weeks grew into months, slowly into her heart crept the realization of what she had done. Remorse began eating at her soul. She tried vainly to find some trace of the daughter; with only Elsbeth she wandered for month after month over every country of the globe, seeking everywhere! She spent almost a fortune on her search. But there was never a sign. It was as if the world had swallowed them. And, finally, broken by her sorrow, unhappy and discouraged, without any friends and with only a little of her former wealth left, she came back to this city and to this old house. It looked then just the way it does now. She threw out anything in it that might make it even a little cheerful and then settled down to die! But life, cruelly enough, has hung on and on! I have learned her story from things she has told me; for some strange reason she has seemed to want to confide in me. And Elsbeth, too, has sometimes softened a little and talked about the old days! That is her sad story, my dear! I know, now, how tender you will always be with her and I have often thought that perhaps you may remind her–a little–of the–lost baby, because you are young and like a flower, too!"

Two bright spots of color burned in Renée's cheeks. To herself she was saying: "*Wait* until I tell Pat!" The thrill of the secret of the lost baby held her more than any sympathy for the old lady; perhaps deep in her heart some sense of justice told her that the proud mother had had just the punishment she deserved.

Mrs. Lee had turned toward the door. "The doctor is going! Wait here, Renée, until I call you. He may have some directions to give."

Renée looked about the room. What a horrible place! Even the gold of the sunlight dimmed to a cold lustre as it lay across the dusty surface of the shabby furniture! Everything was so unspeakably ugly and so still! She suddenly felt very lonely. A moment's wild impulse tempted her to run back to Pat as fast as her feet could fly! They had been having such fun fixing the costumes; the pink-curtained room had been so cheery, Peter Pan had been singing so lustily–why

should she stay here?

Except for the low murmur of voices from the hall where Mrs. Lee was talking to the doctor, the only sound to break the awful stillness was the loud ticking of old Elsbeth's clock in the kitchen. It had a mournfully resentful tick as much as to say to its unhappy listeners: "No matter how wretched you feel, I go on–I go on–I go on!"

The door going into the room where Mrs. Forrester lay was closed. As she thought of crossing its threshold little Renée shuddered. A fear she could not explain gripped her! After all, she was only a little girl; she had never seen anyone suffer–except Gabriel when he was tortured with his rheumatism; she had never seen anyone die–her own dear mother had seemed to just go to sleep! And what if Mrs. Forrester should die? If she wanted to go back home, surely Mrs. Lee would let her go!

And then, as she waited, bits of the story Mrs. Lee had told her flashed back across her thoughts and held her. Now her sympathy was not so much for the girl bride as for the poor, lonely mother, wandering broken-hearted, over the world!

"The poor thing!" she said aloud, and then jumped at the sound of her own voice.

A door closed behind the doctor; Mrs. Lee came into the room.

"She is quiet now. The doctor says there is no danger. It is all her nerves. Only–women her age can't indulge in hysterics without serious results! What a picture you are in all this gloom, child! It's a strange coincidence that you should have had this dress on! Perhaps it will rouse her."

Somehow, now, Renée did not feel a bit like asking to go home. She was not even very much afraid. With Mrs. Lee she stepped softly down the dim hall toward the closed door.

"Anything, Renée, that will make her forget herself will help her," whispered Mrs. Lee. "Tell her about Keineth's party–anything!" They walked into the room. The doctor had raised one of the cracked shades so that the sun was slanting in. Mrs. Lee had put some extra pillows under the patient's head; she was half-sitting, a pathetically little figure in the great ugly bed. Her face was turned toward the wall. She lay perfectly still; Renée might have thought that, like her mother, she was sleeping, except that her thin fingers twitched at the edge of the bedspread.

"I have brought Renée," Mrs. Lee said softly.

There was no answer.

"Perhaps you would like to have her stay with you for a little while!"

"Oh–go away–*all* of you!" came pettishly. "Can't you let an old woman die in peace? Will it ever come?" she moaned into her pillow.

Renée felt so indignant that anyone should be praying like this to die that she stepped to the side of the bed.

"But the doctor says you are *not* going to die," she answered quickly, with a stubborn note in her sweet voice.

The moment she had spoken she was very frightened but she could not have said anything that would have so quickly roused the old lady. It roused her because it angered her; she jerked her head around. However, what she might have retorted in answer was checked by her utter amazement at seeing the strange, quaint little figure by her bedside.

"Who are you?" she demanded angrily. "Who let you in here?"

The child stepped closer. "I'm Renée!" she answered gently.

"You that little Renée? Come here!" Mrs. Forrester commanded stretching out a thin hand.

Renée stepped close to the head of the bed and leaned over. Mrs. Forrester touched her cheek and her hair.

"So it is! So it is!" and her voice softened. Then a gleam of sunlight from the unshaded window struck across the curious old locket. Suddenly the sick woman sat bolt upright in bed and clutched with both hands at the red band.

"*That–that—*-" she screamed. "Where did you get it?" She tore at the velvet band until it hurt Renée cruelly. Her voice rose to a shriek. "*It is hers! My baby!*"

As her fingers fumbled over the face of the locket a part of it suddenly opened and from a hiding place within dropped a tiny gold key! The old lady cried loudly and held it up.

"*I knew it! I knew it!*" Then she sank back among the pillows, turned slowly to Renée and whispered hoarsely:

"But who are you?"

CHAPTER XXI

RENÉE'S BOX

"Who are you?"

Of course they all thought Mrs. Forrester was having a spell! Renée was terribly frightened–the more so because now one of the thin hands was gripping her arm so that it hurt.

Elsbeth, more wild and disheveled than ever, pushed at Renée and leaned

over the bed, a tumbler in one hand, some powders in the other.

"Mis' Forrester! *Please*, Mis' Forrester!" she pleaded, tears running down her wrinkled cheeks.

But Mrs. Forrester struck angrily at the hand holding the powders and sent them in a tiny cloud of dust all over the covers.

"Go away, you old fool!" she cried, "can't you see I've found my baby? No one else anywhere in the world had a locket like that!"

Mrs. Lee suddenly remembered who it was that Renée had looked like! It was the faded picture Elsbeth had once shown her of the young daughter of Mrs. Forrester! She stepped forward now and answered for Renée.

"She is Renée LaDue, but I think–I believe–she *must* be your grandchild!"

Mrs. Forrester was sitting bolt upright and the pillows had fallen all about her. Two bright spots of red burned on her cheeks and her eyes, as they stared through and through Renée, were alight with life. She was a different creature from the one who had lain limply on the ugly bed, her face turned toward the wall! Only her voice still sounded weak and shrill.

"Your mother–answer, child!"

Then, more than anything else in the world, Renée wanted to run away! But the hand on her arm held her tight. And, too, who was this old lady who had known that the key was in the locket when she and Emile had not known it?

"My mother's name was Amy—-"

"My baby!" Now the old lady sank back among the pillows; she commenced to sob–dry, heart-breaking sobs, "My baby! You are her little girl! I have found her!"

And then a strange thing happened! For suddenly Renée lost all her fear and over her swept a joy that she had found someone–someone to really, truly belong to! So very shyly she reached out and took one of the thin hands in her own.

Mrs. Lee gently told the old woman as much of Renée as she knew; how the mother had died five years before, how she had made the brother promise to some day bring the little girl back to America to live, how the brother had given his life for France, the country of his mother's adoption, and an American officer had fulfilled the promise. As she listened Mrs. Forrester kept her eyes fastened on Renée's face and Renée held tightly to the trembling hand.

When Mrs. Lee had finished Mrs. Forrester lay still for a long time. Then she said softly: "God has been good to a wicked old woman because my flower had gone to Heaven and pleaded for me! I am forgiven." And she closed her eyes as though at last a peace of soul had come upon her!

"Is–is the key–a key to a box?" Renée asked.

Her grandmother roused suddenly.

"Yes–yes! A leather box–have you got it? My grandmother gave it to my darling–with the locket–when she was fifteen."

"My mother gave it to Emile just before–she died! She never told him about the key but she made him promise to let no one break it open. And of course we never would!"

"Shall I go and get it?" asked Mrs. Lee. She felt that for a little while it might be better to leave the old lady and the child alone. Renée made a move as though to go, too, but Mrs. Lee motioned her back.

"Aunt Pen will tell me where I can find it! You stay here, my dear," and she hurried away.

Elsbeth had been watching the unusual happenings with a suspicious, jealous eye. She loved her strange old mistress better than anything on earth; she resented these strangers usurping her place!

"Missus had best lay down now and keep quiet," she said, coming forward with an authoritative air. "If ye'll jes' take a powder—-" But she got no further; Mrs. Forrester burst into a laugh! And Elsbeth was so startled that her knees knocked together, for, not for many years, had she heard her mistress laugh–and such a laugh!

"Elsbeth, stupid, can't you see I'm a well woman? That I am happy again? None of your powders any more! Go about your business–ransack your pantry and find some food for my pretty one here! My flower–my baby!" And with a look that transformed her thin face she lifted her arms and closed them about little Renée.

"Tell me," she whispered, as though it must be a secret between them, "was she ever unhappy?"

Renée answered very slowly because she was thinking very hard. She tried to make the mother know that her own dear mother had been always cheerful, always singing and telling beautiful stories and playing with her among the flowers–and was only unhappy when Emile brought out the father's tools.

"That was because he had been blind, and I heard her tell Emile once that his heart had broken because he could not do his work! For a long time she guided his fingers for him! She herself used to take the things they made to Paris to sell, and, when she couldn't sell them, she and Susette used to hide them so he couldn't know–Susette told me all that! I think we were very, very poor, but my mother always seemed happy. She used to sew sometimes, until she was very tired. We never had anything but the flowers to play with and the games she used to make up. And she always talked of the time when she would bring us both to America! 'It was my country and it must be yours,' she used to tell us over and over!"

"Did she–did she–ever tell you–about me?"

Renée hesitated. She knew that what she must say would hurt the old lady deeply. But before she could speak Mrs. Forrester answered herself.

"Of course she would not! I had forbidden it!" and in her voice was the bitterness of remorse.

Then Renée told her of the cottage at St. Cloud where, since as far back as she could remember, they had lived with Susette and Gabriel. She told, too, of Emile and the days when he had gone to Paris to study with an old sculptor, and how bravely he had gone away to war with a company from St. Cloud!

Mrs. Forrester pushed Renée's hair back and looked intently at her.

"I can see it now! You are like her–a little! But your eyes are like–your father's."

There were voices in the hall and in a moment Mrs. Lee and Aunt Pen walked into the room. Aunt Pen was greatly excited and came straight to Renée.

"I am so glad, my dear," she whispered.

But no one had eyes for anything but the queer old box which Mrs. Lee had placed upon the bed.

"How old it looks," sighed Mrs. Forrester, caressing for a moment the worn leather. Her fingers trembled so that she could not hold the tiny key and it was Renée who fitted it into the lock and turned it. It turned slowly and the lid fell back, revealing packages of papers and letters, tied neatly together.

Although not knowing exactly what she had always imagined was in the box, Renée was vaguely disappointed! But Mrs. Forrester fell to eagerly sorting over the packages. Lying loose among them was a folded sheet, addressed to herself.

"Her writing!" she cried, holding it close to her eyes. "Read it for me–I cannot."

"Dearest of mothers," Renée read. The writing showed that the letter had been written under stress of deep emotion. "It was only because he needed me so much, for the doctors had told him his eyesight was slowly going, that I could hurt you by acting against your wishes. And sometime you may know that I have always loved you dearly and that I forgive you as I pray you will forgive me."

"Oh, my darling," and a flood of tears dropped on the sheet of paper. "It is as though she was speaking to me!" she whispered, kissing the lines. And indeed a great stillness held the room as though each of those in it felt, too, the spirit of Renée's young mother among them!

Mrs. Forrester, her eyes still dim with tears, spread out the other papers and she and Mrs. Lee and Aunt Pen fell to examining them, while Renée watched, feeling as though it was all a dream.

They found an old journal whose contents explained how John LaDue, who before his marriage with Amy Forrester had been John Tellers, had gone with his

young bride to Paris where they had taken the name of LaDue. Living as they did in simple obscurity, and because John Tellers had been born and brought up among the French-speaking people of New Orleans, it was very easy for them to pass as a young French sculptor and his wife. And the friends they made were other young artists, struggling along like themselves, who could know nothing about the proud, unhappy woman who was traveling all over the world, seeking her daughter!

The journal stopped abruptly at the record of Renée's birth. Renée remembered Susette telling her that it was when she had been a tiny baby that her father had become totally blind and they had moved to St. Cloud that he might have the benefit of the pure air and the sunshine.

Aunt Pen discovered a package of papers that proved to be United States government bonds. They had been given to Renée's mother on her twentieth birthday, six months before her marriage. They had not been touched. Penelope exclaimed:

"A small fortune! And they are Renée's!"

Many thoughts were shaping in poor Renée's sadly bewildered little head. She had now, what Peggy always called "folks"–a grandmother and Elsbeth; even though it was an ugly old house she'd have a real, real home all of her own! She would *not* have to go to the mountain place with her guardian and the strange French soldier! And yet that disturbed her a little. Emile had, in a way, given her into the guardian's keeping and not to a strange old woman! So, even though belonging to so many, Renée felt torn and unhappy. And she looked almost scornfully at the packet which Aunt Pen held up as though precious–how *could* just plain papers like that be a fortune!

Mrs. Forrester, who looked less and less like a sick woman, commenced to slowly gather up the papers and place them back neatly in the leather box. When she shut down the lid she turned to Renée.

"I thank God that He has shown me His mercy! I have not deserved to find my darling. But I have been punished! No one knows how I have suffered! And maybe, even now, I am not fit to have you. I am an ugly old woman who has cast everything beautiful out of her life! Perhaps I have no right to keep you! You have good friends–go back to them, only keep in your heart a kind thought for an old woman—-"

"Oh, I'll *stay*–I'd rather!" and Renée was quite startled that she could decide so quickly.

"You mean it? Oh, my baby–my pretty flower!" Then a sudden resolution lighted the old woman's face. "It will be as though that motherhood I sacrificed by my wicked pride was given back to me! Oh, I *know* how wicked and wrong I was and how I wanted for my precious one only the things that my own pride

clamored for! But you shall not stay now–my pretty flower would wither and fade in these ugly walls. I am well, again–and Elsbeth and I will clean out this place! It shall be made bright and pretty for my little one! You must go now, back with your good friends, then after a little—-"

Every one thought that was best. Elsbeth came in with a tray of sandwiches and some cocoa. Every one was hungry because the dinner hour was long past and, in the excitement, had been forgotten. And as they ate, Mrs. Forrester, like a new creature, began energetically to give Elsbeth orders as to what she must do on the morrow to begin the work of transforming the ugly old house into a beautiful home for her "pretty flower."

Then, one by one, they said good-night to Mrs. Forrester, and Renée, leaning over, kissed her and whispered shyly:

"Good-night, grandmother! Very soon I will come back–to stay."

CHAPTER XXII
SURPRISES

"Dinner is served, Miss Pat!"

"Why, Aunt Pen and Renée are not here," cried Pat, looking up from a book.

"Miss Everett said that dinner should not wait! It is a quarter past seven."

"But my father—-"

"Mr. Everett is dining out."

"Well, I never!" Pat threw down her book crossly. Drawing herself to her full height, she stalked down the length of the room on into the dining-room, where, at the end of the long table, alight with the sparkle of silver, glass and china, one lonely place had been set.

She wanted very much to throw a plate at Jasper who was biting his lip to keep from laughing at her aggrieved air. Instead she tossed her head higher and, in her haughtiest manner, ordered:

"Jasper, will you see at once what Melodia has made for dessert and, *whatever* it is, tell her that I want two extra big helpings!"

"*So there!*" she muttered to his retreating back and felt much better!

Pat had really had a very bad afternoon. She had not liked one bit having Renée rush away in the midst of all their fun fixing their costumes! She had helped Renée and Renée had left her to fix her own. She had felt decidedly ag-

grieved. Of course she was sorry for the sick old lady, but didn't Renée love her more than anyone else? Or didn't she?

When a little girl begins to ponder in such a fashion she can soon work herself into a sad state of blues. That was what Pat did! So that when Aunt Pen returned with a feather duster made of the biggest, brightest feathers that had ever grown to grace a young Indian princess, Pat didn't care whether or not she even went to Keineth's party!

Then the climax of her unhappiness was reached after Mrs. Lee rushed in with the story of the locket and the key. Aunt Pen and Pat had listened with eyes wide with astonishment.

"Oh, it's *just* like a fairy story!" Pat had cried.

"Dear Renée! It will mean a home of her own for the child! I will get the box at once."

Pat was startled–a home of Renée's own! She had felt that they might coax the soldier-guardian to leave Renée with them forever and ever, but here was a new and much stronger claim! A real grandmother–even if it was a terrible old lady who had had a mystery!

Aunt Pen came back wearing her coat and hat. Pat jumped to her feet.

"Wait for me, Aunt Pen!"

"No, no, my dear! Too many of us may embarrass Mrs. Forrester! You must stay here."

"As if *I* hadn't found Renée in the first place," thought Pat resentfully as they went away.

Even the thought that the mystery of the "lost baby" had been solved–and solved in such an amazing way, brought no comfort–rather a sense of envy! All the others had had *such* exciting things happen to them! Sheila had had the lost formulas. And now Renée had the excitement of finding a grandmother! Nothing at all ever happened to her! To console herself she scornfully tore to bits the first four chapters of her story. She'd never try to be a famous author–she'd just grow up and do silly things like Celia always did–they were fun, anyway! And Aunt Pen and Renée, when they realized that she was never, never going to write any more stories, would feel *very* sorry!

That was Pat's state of mind when she sat down to eat her lonely dinner.

Then the doorbell rang. Pat heard a man's voice talking to Jasper. She heard Jasper step toward the library. She was immensely curious–for even a very unhappy person can be curious! Daddy was not at home–it was too early in the evening for callers–who could it be? She pushed her chair back and tip-toed toward the hall.

An hour later Aunt Pen and Renée, returning home, were met at the door by a wildly-excited Pat. Her blues had disappeared like magic–the expression of

her face, every motion of her body indicated that she had a secret! She held her fingers to her lips to forbid a sound. Then seizing them both by the elbows she whispered into their amazed ears:

"Oh, the *bestest, grandest* surprise you ever, *ever* knew!" And Pat danced up and down and giggled deep in her throat to make them know that grandmothers and lost babies were as nothing compared to the surprise she had for them within the house!

"Pat Everett, are you *crazy*?" whispered Aunt Pen back. "Aren't you going to let us in?"

"Of course!" answered Pat with importance. "You may walk in and go at *once* into the library! But you must shut your eyes *tight* and promise not to peek until I count—-"

"It's your mother!" declared Penelope, eagerly.

"Nopey–it's a bigger surprise than that! No fair guessing, only you couldn't anyway! Now come in and shut your eyes!"

So they had to do just what Pat told them to do! And Pat, happier than she had ever been in her life, dancing rather than stepping, led them into the library. She had no chance to count–a sudden, quick exclamation made them both open their eyes!

For some one had said: "Pen–Everett!" But Renée's sharp cry drowned out the sound. She saw, standing a little behind Capt. Allan, thin in his shabby French uniform, the empty sleeve pinned to his tunic, Emile–her beloved Emile!

In an instant she was in the tight clasp of his arm–they were both crying–poor little Renée's heart could stand no more! And as she clung to him her fingers were feeling across his face and through his hair and over the cloth of his uniform as though to tell her it was *not* a dream but *true*!

Pat was so happy for Renée that she found her own eyes wet and turned away to keep back the tears. And there was Aunt Pen, the color of a red poppy, slipping out of Capt. Allan's arm!

"I might have known, Miss Pat, that you and I were old friends–because I used to think I had a sort of solid claim on this aunt of yours–only I didn't know she was your aunt!"

With a triumphant look Pat tried to tell Aunt Pen that she had guessed it all a long time ago but Aunt Pen, as radiant as a school girl, was beaming upon Capt. Allan and Capt. Allan was shaking Pat's hands as though he had to do something violent.

Then Aunt Pen went to Renée and kissed Emile–for, in spite of the deep lines that his suffering had carved on his face–he looked like a boy!

"It is just as though God was working miracles," she whispered to Renée.

There was so much to tell that no one knew just where to begin! They

all knew, now, that Capt. Allan's French soldier, whom he had found in the old peasant's cottage, was Emile. Then Emile, still holding Renée in the circle of his arm as though he could not bear to let her go for one little moment, told how he and the private who had been left by the scouting party, had had to separate in order to get back to their line.

"I had a presentiment that I was going to be killed–I gave him my wallet with all my papers and the sketches I had made. That was why they thought it was I who had been killed!"

No one wanted to spoil the joy of the evening by asking Emile to tell of his experiences in the German prison. It was enough that he was there with Renée once more–in America! Everyone's eyes were very bright and every now and then everyone was very still, as though the happiness was too great to be spoken in mere words!

Then Mr. Everett came in and the surprise was a surprise all over again, and Pat, because it had been her surprise, was allowed to tell him all about it. He shook hands very warmly with Capt. Allan and Emile, and laid his arm tenderly over the boy's shoulder as though to express things he could not say!

They laughed at Capt. Allan because they caught him so often staring at Renée!

"What *have* you done to her? It's hard to believe she's the same little girl I picked up at St. Cloud!"

"It's Penelope's work," answered Mr. Everett; "she's been doing some experimenting!"

Renée, indeed, was a different child. She had grown taller, sturdier, her face had lost its delicacy of line and color; now she had, too, in her step and look the spirit and vigor that only healthy, happy living can give.

Suddenly Aunt Pen exclaimed: "Goodness me, Renée, we've forgotten to tell about—-"

"*The Lost Baby!*" cried Pat

So there were new surprises all around! It seemed more like a fairy story than ever–to find, in a few hours, a grandmother and a brother! Emile was deeply interested; he listened gravely. He knew perhaps more of his mother's sacrifices and hardships than Renée had known; for a moment, deep in his heart, he found it hard to feel kindly toward the proud woman who had made his mother unhappy. Then as Aunt Pen described her lonely life in the old house, the dreary days shut in with her grief and her remorse, just as Renée had, he felt a wave of tenderness.

"She is going to begin right away making the old house bright and pretty and nice to live in! And think how happy she'll be to know Emile has come back!" cried Renée.

"Well, it looks as though *I* was the one who had lost out all around," broke

in Capt. Allan, although he did not look one bit unhappy as he said it. In fact, his eyes were fastened on Aunt Pen's face with a sort of eager questioning in them that kept the blushes coming and going on her cheeks. "I thought I had gotten together a nice little family! However, I shall go on with my plan of fixing up that old place in the mountains and maybe, sometime, I can induce my ward and her brother and her grandmother to make a poor, lonely ex-guardian a visit!"

"And me!" put in Pat, eagerly, for she was certain he was in earnest.

"And me!" laughed Aunt Pen with a look that seemed to flash back an answer to Capt. Allan.

"I think you girlies had better go to bed!" Mr. Everett had noticed that Renée's eyes were looking very tired. She had had a most exciting day. And on the morrow she must go again to the grandmother's with Emile.

Pat consented to go to bed only when Capt. Allan and Emile promised to spend the night with them!

She and Renée whispered together for a long time. Pat must hear just how Renée felt the moment she knew the cross old lady was her *very own* grandmother!

"I don't believe she'll be cross when she's happy," confided Renée. "She laughed and it sounded real jolly! And even Elsbeth looked different after that."

And wasn't it *wonderful* to have a brother come back?

"I don't mind his losing his arm," Renée whispered, "for I love him so much I want to do things for him and now he'll have to let me!"

Long after Renée had fallen asleep Pat lay wide awake. There was so much to think about she was sure she could not ever shut her eyes again. And she could hear the steady murmur of voices downstairs–she wished she knew what they were talking about! Then a queer little disturbing thought commenced to eat at her heart. Renée, alone in the world, had been very close to her. She had seemed to feel that, because she had found Renée, Renée belonged to her–was something even closer than a friend or a sister! And now Renée had suddenly acquired a family and a home! As the tiny thought grew bigger and bigger and into a real Fear she sat up very straight and leaning across to Renée's bed, shook her violently.

"Ren! Ren!" and her voice rang tragically. "Promise me, on your scout's honor, that you'll *always* love me more'n–everybody–except Emile!"

Renée thought she was dreaming but she promised sleepily.

"Of course–I'll love you–more'n everybody–'cept Emile–on my scout's honor!" and just as, on that other night, months before, when Aunt Pen had tip-toed into their room to see that the little stranger was comfortable, they fell

asleep, clasping hands.

CHAPTER XXIII
THE BEST OF ALL

To Pat it seemed as though everything exciting was happening at once! For the next morning's mail brought a letter from Mother saying that she and Celia would start north in a day or two.

Pat and Renée had wakened very early. The first thought in each mind was to know if it was all true–that Emile had come back–or was it a dream?

Outside of their window a friendly robin was trilling a gay song as though the joy of the spring-time was bursting his proud little throat. Through the window the sun shone with added brightness and warmth and delicious earthy smells greeted the girls.

"Oh, isn't it just *grand* to be alive? Let's dress fast and be the first ones down!" And Pat, because the sun and the birds and the spring freshness made her very happy, also burst into a gay snatch of song. Aunt Pen and Capt. Allan were late for breakfast. When the others had almost finished they came in from a brisk walk through the park, with red cheeks and amazing appetites.

Aunt Pen, dropping into the chair next to Pat, slipped a roll of paper into her hand and whispered:

"There's something that belongs to you, Patsy! I'm ashamed that I didn't return it before. But now you can write the last verse!"

Pat, immensely curious, peeped at the paper. It was the lost ballad! And what *did* Aunt Pen mean about the last verse? Both Aunt Pen and Capt. Allan were looking at her with eyes full of laughter. Pat felt her color creeping to her eyebrows and crushed the innocent verses in her hand. But Aunt Pen checked her rising indignation.

"Patsy, dear, I found 'The Secret Sorrow' on the floor of the library one night after we had had a pow-wow. I recognized the heroine–by a guilty conscience, I guess–my hair is not exactly 'of raven hue' or my eyes 'pellucid blue'! But I loved it, my dear, and I tucked it away, for I couldn't bear to have you write the sad ending that was coming! *What* if you had made her thrust a steel dagger into her breast! Or have had her leap from one of those mighty crags over which the knight, her brother hunted!"

Capt. Allan had been furiously scribbling some words on the back of an envelope. Now he looked up, very seriously.

"Will you forgive Aunt Pen if I write the last verse for you?" he asked, and then, not waiting for an answer, read with dramatic emphasis:

"Back came the lover, wise and bold,
To snatch his lady, grown cross and old,
To a mountain cave he'll carry his prey,
And there they'll be happy for ever and aye!"

Everyone laughed at Pat's disgust.

"*I* think that's very silly and Aunt Pen *isn't* cross and old a bit and—-" she stopped suddenly. "Do you mean that's *true*?" she demanded.

It was Aunt Pen now who grew very red. But she nodded and turned toward her brother.

"*We* have a surprise! A long time ago Will and I were engaged–my last year in college! Then we let foolish things come between us and we have lost a good many years of happiness, but—-"

"Now we're going to make up for it!" put in Capt. Allan. "And I won't be lonely in that place in the mountains, after all!"

"Oh, Aunt Pen, I'm so glad!" and Pat threw two strong young arms around Penelope's neck. Everyone talked at once. Renée, looking at Emile and then at the other happy faces about her, thought that all the joy in the world must have crowded there within the four walls of the sunny dining-room!

"It'll be just as though we were really related," she put in, shyly. "For I'll always feel that Capt. Allan *is* my guardian and Emile belongs to me and Pat belongs to Aunt Pen!"

"Don't leave *me* out, Mouse!"

"Oh, no!" and Renée's contrition was tragic. "For you are the very best man in the world and belong to all of us!"

Pat, who had been performing a sort of ceremonial dance among them all, stopped in dismay.

"Oh, Aunt Pen, *what* about school?"

"Then you will be sorry to lose your teacher, Patsy? But it is almost the first of May and with a little home study you girls can get along. Anyway, mother will be here to decide what is best."

Pat's face was serious.

"I am glad mother's coming home! And Celia, too! But I *have* loved our school, Aunt Pen! You've made me just like to study all sorts of things! When mother comes I'm going to tease her to let us go next fall to the Lincoln school

with Peggy and Sheila and the other girls–and then go to college."

Aunt Pen nodded toward Pat's father. Pat, of course, didn't know that she was trying to say: "There–*that's* a real girl talking–who wants to be of some service, some day, in this world!"

Then Pat insisted that Capt. Allan tell them more about the old house in the Adirondacks.

"Somehow, I can't imagine him keeping you up there very long, Penelope," laughed her brother. "He doesn't know you as well as I do!"

Capt. Allan described to them the old rambling house built half way up the wooded slope of Cobble Mountain. From its many windows, he remembered, a wonderful view could be had of a sweep of valley, river and surrounding slopes.

"Will has promised me that I may go on with all my experiments and fads just the same! There'll be lots of room there!" she retorted to her brother. "And some day I shall turn Cobble House into a school for girls."

"Like *our* school, Aunt Pen?"

"Yes, and I hope that all my girls there will work as faithfully as you have, Pat!"

"And I'll be the man-of-all-work around the place and chief executioner, when you need one!" declared Capt. Allan, mischievously.

Mr. Everett shook hands gravely with his sister.

"All I say is success to you–my dear, whatever you try to do!"

There seemed to be so much to talk about that no one wanted to break up the little circle. However, the hands of the old clock over the fireplace were climbing rapidly toward noon and Renée was eager to take Emile to the grandmother's. Pat begged to go, too. As they started away, Renée holding tightly to Emile's hand, Aunt Pen, watching the boy, wiped a suspicion of a tear from her eye.

Capt. Allan saw it and answered the thought that was in her mind.

"He's a brave boy and has a strong will–he'll learn to do his work with his one arm! But before anything else he must stay in the open until he has built up his strength and wiped from his mind forever the horror of all he has gone through!"

The old stone house did not look at all ugly and gloomy in the bright morning sunshine! And for Renée and Emile it took on a new interest–it was to be their home! There were signs of life, too, about the place. The windows had been opened and from the back of the house came sounds of vigorous beating. As they walked slowly up the brick path Renée suddenly darted in among the wild honeysuckle growing close on either side of the door.

"Emile–*see*! A daffodil!"

There it was–lifting its bright head through the tangle of undergrowth as

though it knew that sunshine and happiness had come to the neglected home! And there were more, too, and Renée, hunting eagerly, found hundreds of tiny blades of bright green grass and beyond a rose vine climbing toward the old stone wall.

"Oh, it *is* going to be nice!" she cried to Emile. "We can have a garden like Susette's."

Emile, with the soul of an artist, was already mentally transforming the entire house and garden. It would be very pleasant to do nothing for awhile but work out among the growing things with Renée! Mrs. Forrester, eager to see again her "little flower," had roused Elsbeth very early in the morning that she might be in readiness. She had insisted upon putting on her old black silk dress; she had folded a soft net fichu around her neck and had fastened it with a lavender ribbon.

"Now *don't* stand and stare at me like that silly," she had rebuked the old servant. "Can't you understand that I'm not sick any more? Watch me!" and holding her head very high she walked slowly across the room out into the hall.

So it was in the living room they found her. God had given back to her so much that she was not even startled when Renée very simply told of Emile's coming. She could not speak a word as she reached up her arms to embrace the boy, for he looked so much like his mother that it brought a choking sob to her throat.

And if in Emile's heart there had lingered any hardness toward the grandmother it disappeared when he saw her! She looked so little and fragile, sitting in the big walnut chair, that it roused all the chivalry in the boy's soul. He kissed her tenderly on each wrinkled cheek.

Then Pat was introduced; Renée had to tell, too, of finding the daffodils. Elsbeth, her face twisted into a comical expression of bewilderment, listened in the doorway, and from all parts of the house there was a rumble of furniture and the tread of feet.

"In a very little time this place will all be changed," Mrs. Forrester said, patting Renée's hand. "We will have flowers growing all around us–and we will be very happy, we three!"

It was a very busy day! Emile must be admitted to the secrets of the Eyrie; he was shown the account book of LaDue and Everett and some of Renée's work. Then he had to hear the story of Paddy and the lost formulas, of Sheila and Peggy and Garrett and Hill-top, of Troop Six and the scout work, and of Keineth and the coming party! Surely never in the world did a tongue wag faster that Pat's nor did eyes shine more brightly than Renée's as Emile was made acquainted with all that had brought so much happiness into her life during the past winter.

Downstairs Aunt Pen, Capt. Allan and Daddy were talking, too. Pat with

her remarkable instinct for sensing "when plans were in the making" exclaimed, as she entered the room:

"Daddy Everett, you look *just* as though you had a secret!"

Her Daddy assumed a very important air.

"I have! I have a surprise! You've all had one but me! And I am sure you will think that *mine* is best of all! And I thought of it all myself!"

"Oh, what *is* it? If much more happens I'll be walking on my *head*! What *can* it be!" Pat looked from one to another. "Aunt Pen, you're giggling so silly I believe it's something about your wedding! It is! *It is*! May Ren and I be bridesmaids, Aunt Pen, and wear gauzy dresses and big hats and carry bouquets?"

"You're warm, Pat!" teased her father.

"*Please*, Aunt Pen!" implored Pat in an agony of curiosity.

"Mother has suggested in a note to me that your Aunt Pen and I bring you and Renée to Atlantic City and meet them there—-"

"But *I'm* determined to make Aunt Pen marry me right away, you see; I can't even wait for gauzy hats and big dresses–we've wasted so much happiness, already!" cut in Capt. Allan.

"So *I* said let's *all* go and meet Mother, and we can have the wedding down there where the breaking waves dash high—-"

"Oh, *Daddy, Daddy*, that's the *bestest, grandest* surprise of all! A *wedding* in Atlantic City! Only the waves can't dash very high–'cause there's no stern and rock-bound coast–only sand! But we'll trim the room with flowers—-"

"And you and Renée *shall* be my bridesmaids, no matter what dresses you wear!"

"And Emile shall be my best man!"

"And, oh, *won't* mother and Celia be surprised? You see *I* had guessed all about Capt. Allan because Aunt Pen acted so funny when we spoke of him, but Mother doesn't know a single thing! Was there ever such a nice, jolly wedding planned before?"

Renée's face was a little clouded. It would be wonderful to go to the sea, but ought she and Emile to leave the little grandmother?

"Bless you, she shall come, too! Ocean air will finish up the good work that her happiness has started! I can't have my plan spoiled–not even if we have to charter a whole train!"

Pat wanted to begin packing immediately.

"When will we go, Daddy?" she cried.

"Day after to-morrow," he answered with the promptness of decision that was characteristic.

"I'm glad that you give me *that* much time! I'll have to get 'something old and something new, something borrowed and something blue,'" laughed the

bride-to-be.

"And we can go to Keineth's party and tell them all about it!" Pat was silent for a moment. Then going to her Daddy she laid her cheek coaxingly against his arm.

"Daddy, as long as there are so many going–and weddings are jollier when there are a lot of people–can't we take Sheila, too? She's never been any further from the city than Hill-top and she's always so contented and happy and's never teasing for things the way I am! Just *think* how she'd look when she saw the ocean! I have so much more fun than she does, Daddy, I'd just as soon stay home if she could go in my place!"

And Pat, thinking how Sheila's face *would* look when she first beheld the great sweep of deep, blue sea, was very much in earnest.

Mr. Everett patted the pleading face. He did not smile for he had been deeply touched by Pat's generosity.

"Yes, daughter, Sheila shall go, too."

"Oh, Daddy, you *are* the best daddy in the world! Let's run straight over and tell her, Ren! *Think* how happy she'll be!"

From the library window Aunt Pen and Mr. Everett watched the two girls, arms interlocked, swing down the walk that led from the Everett house to the street. There was pride in Aunt Pen's face as she watched. Her girls had learned generosity and unselfishness as well as Latin and Algebra! And they had found, too, the joy of fellowship! They were hurrying now to share their happiness!

Mr. Everett was thinking the same thoughts as his sister, but looking slyly at her from the corner of his eye, he repeated teasingly:

"Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow?
Silver bells and cockle shells—-"

Aunt Pen laughingly interrupted: "And larkspur all in a row! But won't this world's garden be richer and more beautiful for healthy, happy girls like ours, Daddy Everett?"

* * * * * * * *

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