

THE
NANCY
PEMBROKE
SERIES

Nancy Pembroke
in
Nova Scotia

Margaret T. Van Epps

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK NANCY
PEMBROKE IN NOVA SCOTIA ***

NANCY PEMBROKE IN NOVA SCOTIA

By

MARGARET T. VAN EPPS

Author of

“Nancy Pembroke, College Maid,” “Nancy Pembroke in New Orleans,”
“Nancy Pembroke, Sophomore at Boxford,” “Nancy Pembroke in Canada,”
“Nancy Pembroke, Junior” etc.

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CHAPTER I

A RÉSUMÉ

It was one of those chilly, rainy days that sometimes come in early summer, when a grate fire is not only cheery but almost necessary. Mrs. Pembroke was embroidering at one side of the hearth, while she visited with the guest her daughter had brought home from college the preceding evening.

“It is too bad that Nancy had to leave you the very first thing,” observed Mrs. Pembroke, glancing at the girl who was sprawled in the big chair opposite her.

“Oh, I don’t mind; but I’m sorry about her tooth. She said it began to trouble her yesterday, and I guess she slept very little last night. I didn’t know about it, or I should have stayed awake with her.”

“Nancy certainly would not have wanted you to do that. So you slept well; did you?”

“Just like a log. Nan’s room is lovely; but I was so surprised to find twin beds in it. I had hoped that we would sleep together.”

“We think it is better for people to sleep alone; and Nan so often has someone here for the night, that I took out the big bed which used to be in there, and substituted the two singles; though it does crowd the room a bit.”

Mrs. Pembroke did not mention that the change had been a very recent one. When her daughter wrote for permission to bring home for the first two weeks of the summer vacation this singularly unattractive classmate, she

immediately replied that if Nan were willing to have the girl share her room, she might invite her.

“What’s the idea?” Mr. Pembroke had inquired when he read the letter.

“A twofold one. In the first place, using the guest room makes a lot more work; and in the second, it is not unwise to let Nancy put up with a few things. She has always enjoyed all the privileges of an only child, which have naturally resulted in the development of numerous little faults _____”

“I can’t see them,” interrupted her husband. “Nan’s one fine girl—I think!”

“And I agree with you. I’m just as fond and proud of her as you are; but you must admit that she is over-impulsive. She jumps into something without thinking; and then when she gets into difficulties, someone has to help her out. I just want her to learn to consider all sides of a project before she undertakes it.”

“Sure, that’s all right; but what has it to do with this Kane girl who is coming here?” Mrs. Pembroke had smiled and patiently explained. Men were so slow to grasp an idea, sometimes!

“Nan, who evidently felt sorry for the girl in question—I understand she has been shunned by all the rest—suddenly decided to ask her here for a couple of weeks. That is all right, and I admire her for it; *but* I want her to carry out her good deed to the very end. If I put Emma in the guest room, and take her off Nan’s hands a great deal of the time, how is the experiment going to help our girl? Don’t you see the situation?”

“No,” Mr. Pembroke had replied bluntly, “I’m afraid I don’t; but as long as you do, and are satisfied, it’s all right with me.”

A couple of days before college closed, Mrs. Pembroke, who had been giving some serious thought to the matter, went downtown one morning and

purchased twin beds, a new rug, and new curtains for her daughter's room. A wave of gratification swept over her now as she recalled Nancy's surprise, delight, and rapturous thanks. She had left Emma getting ready for bed, and had flown to her mother's room to give vent to her enthusiasm which she had concealed from her guest.

Mrs. Pembroke was aroused from her reverie by a question from Emma.

“Jeanette comes here a lot; doesn't she?”

“Oh, yes.”

“Has she always known Nancy?”

“Since they were little bits of tots. We moved here when Nancy was little more than a baby, and they went through grade and high school together. When they were graduated, Nancy did not know whether she wanted to go to college or not; so she planned to stay home with me a year, and try to decide. Jeanette was getting ready for Smith when Mr. Pembroke had to go West on business, to be away for a year. My brother, Dr. Donovan, persuaded me to go too, as I was not very well at the time, saying that Nancy could go to the college at Eastport where he lived. So it was decided; and Jeanette changed her plans, and went to Eastport too.

“My brother had to go abroad with a patient the following summer, and Nancy spent the time at Jeanette's. They took a little trip up the Rideau Lakes; and later in the summer a friend of Mrs. Grant's, a Miss Ashton, took them down the St. Lawrence and up the Saguenay. They stopped at Tadousac, Quebec, and Montreal, and had a wonderful time. In the fall, Nancy felt that she simply couldn't go back to Eastport, with her uncle still away. You see, they had been very devoted to each other ever since Nan was a baby, and naturally they had seen a great deal of each other during

Nancy's Freshman year at Eastport. So she and Jeanette begged to go to Roxford. From there on, you know their story too."

"But I thought that the summer after their Sophomore year they went to New Orleans to visit Nan's uncle and aunt," said Emma, frowning in a puzzled manner.

"They did. Dr. Donovan's patient, Mr. Doyle, died shortly after they took him to Germany; and since his widow was ill from strain and shock, and my brother was taking a course at one of the medical schools, the two stayed on for a time. Some months later, they married, and the doctor had an offer of a position in a New Orleans hospital. So they settled there."

"Oh, I see. And where are the girls going this summer? I haven't heard Nancy say." Emma had an insatiable curiosity, which she made no attempt to conceal.

"Miss Ashton and Madelon want them to go to Nova Scotia with them."

"Madelon? Who is she?"

"A little French girl whom they met in Beaupre, and who came back to live with Miss Ashton in Boston, and go to high school. She had always wanted to continue her education in 'the States,' as she refers to this country, and since her foster parents (her own died when she was very young) did not need her, Miss Ashton invited her to return with them. She goes to high school in the morning, and takes charge of a doctor's office afternoons and a couple of evenings each week."

"I should like to see Nova Scotia," observed Emma. "When are they going?"

"Their plans have not been fully worked out yet; so the exact date has not been set. But your summer is entirely taken up with invitations from your college mates; is it not?" asked Mrs. Pembroke, hastening to

discourage any idea of her following the others. She had some Spartan theories regarding her daughter's character development, but she did not want them to spoil a vacation trip.

“Y-e-s, but——”

“I think it is a very fine opportunity for you,” interrupted Mrs. Pembroke, “and one you should make the most of. It is good for all of us to share the home lives of others occasionally. We see how things are done, and get all kinds of new and beneficial ideas. While most of the girls whom you will visit are not especially wealthy, they are all very fine girls who know exactly what to do, and how to do it under all circumstances. Excuse me for being rather frank, Emma—I am speaking to you exactly as I should if you were Nancy; but since you have not had the same advantages of home life and training as they, why not observe closely the ways and customs of your hostesses? Many little personal habits and niceties you will probably want to adopt for your own.”

The suggestions were difficult to make, but Mrs. Pembroke presented them in so gentle and charming a manner, that a girl considerably more sensitive than Emma Kane could hardly have taken offense. She gave all her attention at this point to a difficult spray in the embroidery pattern, and Emma thought about the various girls whom she was to visit.

Nancy and Jeanette, with eight other girls of their class, had, during Junior year, formed a secret club whose object was charity of various kinds. When Nan and Janie had announced their intention of devoting part of their summer vacation to trying to “make over” Emma Kane, the other members of the club had each volunteered to entertain the girl for a week.

Emma had been unpopular all through her college course. Besides being unattractive, she was careless about her personal appearance, lacking in all the niceties of manner that seemed to come so naturally to the rest of

the girls, and was always forcing herself upon people. She was naturally sociable, and apparently failed to realize why the other girls avoided her.

Early in their Junior year, she paid considerable attention to Nancy, who, acting on the advice of her friends, discouraged any intimacy. The matter rather troubled Nancy throughout the year; for she thought that something might be made of the girl, and that at least some effort ought to be made. Hence her invitation to Emma to spend the first week of the vacation at the Pembroke home.

CHAPTER II

A BEGINNING

“Emma,” said Nancy suddenly, after they were settled in bed some nights later, “why don’t you have your hair bobbed?”

Several days had passed, and nothing had yet been accomplished; and she did *so* want to pass her guest on to the other girls greatly improved.

“Why bother? I can twist it up in a couple of minutes,” replied Emma, only mildly interested.

“But I think it would be so much more becoming if it were short.”

“I’m not one to fuss about looking well. I’m so homely anyway that it doesn’t matter.”

There was something a bit pathetic about the admission, but it rather annoyed Nancy.

“That’s all nonsense!” she snapped. “It is everybody’s duty to look her best at all times.”

“How so?”

Emma, was obviously surprised at her vehemence.

“Because other people have to look at us; and because, too, it gives one poise and confidence, and therefore affects one’s accomplishments.”

“I don’t see how.”

“Well, for example. The day we had to give our dissertations in Economics class, I was scared positively *green*. The idea of getting up in front, and facing that big class of men and women, and talking for twenty minutes about Corn Laws simply petrified me. So I took extra pains with my toilet that morning, used my favorite soap, bath salts, and powder; and put on my blue crêpe which I like a heap. I felt just fine, and knew that I looked well; and *that* gave me confidence. Confidence in its turn made me do well with the dissertation. I don’t mean by that that just dressing up without knowing anything would have enabled me to put the dissertation over; but being pretty well prepared, *and* being conscious of looking well, worked together. Do you see?”

“Why, I guess so; but you do an awful lot of fussing over yourself, Nan.”

“No, I really don’t, Emma. I simply make an effort to live up to all the modern ideas of health and cleanliness, and to have as good clothes as I can afford; and take care of them. That is what every girl in our crowd does.”

“I read a story the other day,” Nancy continued, after a pause during which Emma was apparently doing some thinking, “about a girl in some college or other who had a special gift for making people look their best; and she worked up a regular business. The girls were glad to pay her for helping them choose clothes especially suited to their individual types, and to advise them concerning their style of hairdressing, as well as the question of manicures, powders, perfumes, etc.”

“What a funny business,” was Emma’s sole comment. Obviously she was somewhat bored, and anxious to go to sleep.

“Seriously, Emma,” went on Nancy, almost in desperation—wasn’t it possible to make a dent on this girl at all?—“if you can afford to spend a little, why don’t you get all fixed up this summer and create a sensation when you go back to college in the fall?”

“Create a sensation.” That was a clever idea. Nancy had quite unconsciously hit upon a phase of the situation which was most likely to make an impression on her indifferent protégée. Emma had always been eager to attract the attention of her fellow students, even if she could not secure their affection. Her own methods had proved a complete failure. No harm to try someone else’s now.

“It *would* be fun,” she answered, showing more than a spark of interest. “And I can afford it all right.”

“Then let’s do it!” urged Nancy. “We’ll begin right away to-morrow. Janie and I shall just love helping you; that is, if you will let us,” she added somewhat doubtfully. She mustn’t go too fast.

“Oh, I shall. Now I’ve decided upon such a course, I’ll let you manage everything. You two know more about such things than I do.”

“I can hardly wait for morning!” cried Nancy enthusiastically some minutes later, as they settled down for sleep.

“Moms, we’re going downtown this morning,” said Nancy at the breakfast table.

She had already telephoned Jeanette the good news, and secured a promise of her company for the day.

“We have a lot to do,” she went on; “and if you don’t mind, I think we’ll have lunch at Sloan’s.”

“Of course, I don’t mind in the least. But you are not going to buy your fall outfit so early, I hope.”

“No,” laughed Nancy. “I need a summer one first; but I want to talk over my wardrobe with you first. Emma is going to do the shopping to-day _____”

“Don’t tell her! Don’t tell her!” begged Emma. “Let’s surprise her.”

“All right,” agreed Nancy, as they arose from the table. “Hurry and get ready. I told Janie we’d stop for her at half-past eight, and it’s twenty after now.”

It was a little after eight thirty when the three girls turned out of the Grant yard, and headed for the near-by car line. The car was crowded, and they could not get seats together; so there was no further opportunity for conversation until they got off on Main Street.

“Where first?” inquired Jeanette.

“To the Salon of Monsieur Louis. We haven’t any appointment; but he is rarely busy so early as this, and I am in hopes he will attend to us himself.”

“*Bon jour, bon jour!*” The little proprietor of the beauty parlor came toward them, rubbing his hands together as they entered his mauve and pink waiting room. “And what ees it that I may do for you *ce matin?*”

“This lady wants one of your marvelous hair cuts, Monsieur,” said Nancy, drawing Emma forward; “and then a permanent.”

“*Oui, oui;* in here plees.”

He settled her in one of the little booths, and proceeded to give her a most fashionable cut, after studying her from all angles.

Nancy had been somewhat afraid that Emma would protest against the discomfort involved in obtaining a permanent wave; but she sat rigid, and, for once, quite speechless.

“She looks scared,” commented Jeanette, peering in from the waiting room where she and Nancy sat completing the day’s plans.

“She probably is,” said Nancy emphatically. “I know I felt almost afraid to breathe when I was having my first one. I believe I thought I might be electrocuted when the current was turned on.”

“I hope her head looks well; so we can make a fuss over it and encourage her to go on with the making-over process. Don’t you?”

“I certainly do; but I think she’ll go on all right,” replied Nancy. “It is hard trying to undo the habits of years in so short a time. The buying of new clothes is fairly simple, but getting her to take proper care of them, and making her see that daily baths, frequent manicures, and the use of various creams and powders are essential—*that* is an entirely different matter. Sometimes when I see her attitude, I feel quite hopeless, and wonder if we shall ever accomplish anything.”

“Poor Nancy!” said Jeanette.

A little later Jeanette commented, “Her table manners are not bad _____”

“Thank goodness for that,” said Nancy fervently.

“But she laughs so loudly,” went on Jeanette, “and tries to be so demonstrative with people, even when she is not very well acquainted with them, that it is, well, embarrassing, to say the least.”

“I know it,” agreed Nancy; “and she is really very careless about putting away her various belongings. I can readily understand why her things always look so—so bedraggled! I’m not talking about her to be mean, but I am trying to pick out the habits that are different from those of other nice girls so we can concentrate on them.”

At last the dryer completed its work, and after a few finishing touches by Monsieur Louis, Emma was released.

“Oh, Emma, it’s lovely!” cried Nancy in genuine admiration, as she came out and stood before them. “What a difference it makes; doesn’t it, Janie?”

“It certainly does,” agreed Jeanette. “The style suits you perfectly.”

How glad Jeanette was that she could make the statement honestly!

“Don’t you like it, Emma?” asked Nancy anxiously; for the girl was unnaturally quiet.

“Yes, I think so. But to tell the truth, I feel a little dazed.”

“Oh, that’s part of the process,” said Nancy, relieved. “It comes from being under the dryer so long. The noise combined with the heat is rather stupefying. You’ll wake up when we get out into the air.”

Monsieur Louis bowed them out, and they hurried toward the elevator.

“I think we had better have lunch now,” said Nancy, when they were once more on Main Street. “Shall we go to Sloan’s, Janie?”

“It is as good as any other place near by; and then we’ll be right in the building where we intend to do most of our shopping.”

Soon they were seated in the big tea room, with menus in front of them.

“This is *my* party,” announced Emma.

“Janie and I usually go ‘Dutch,’” said Nancy; “but you are our guest this time.”

“You can go ‘Dutch’ any other time you like,” replied Emma; “but even though I am your guest, this lunch is on me—a sort of celebration.”

While they ate they made out a list of exactly what Emma needed, which was pretty much a complete outfit.

“But we can never do all this in one day,” said Janie, looking in dismay at the long list.

“Well, there are lots of days coming,” said Nancy, laughing. “We’ll go as far as we can to-day, and then ‘continue it in our next’ like the serial stories.”

“Nan, dear,” protested Jeanette, gently, “don’t laugh quite so loudly.”

Nancy looked up in astonishment, for her laughter had been perfectly modulated. Jeanette looked at her intently for a moment; then she understood.

“You’re right, Janie,” she said. “I should have been more careful.”

“Why, what’s the difference?” demanded Emma in a puzzled tone.

“Good breeding forbids a loud laugh anywhere, but most of all in a public place,” explained Jeanette.

“It does not harm anyone,” persisted Emma.

“Only one’s self. A real lady tries not to attract attention or make herself conspicuous,” said Jeanette patiently. “Loud laughing or talking is not good form, in public places especially.”

“And you see,” went on Nancy, “Janie and I know each other so well that we are quite at liberty to offer corrections when they seem in order. We agreed to that many years ago. The people we are with see many of our faults which we are unconscious of; and it helps a lot to have someone who really cares, tell us about them.”

Emma said no more on the subject; but the girls noticed after that a tendency to lower her voice and check her laughter. Nancy and Jeanette had been early trained to buy wisely and well, and knew good values as well as up-to-the-minute styles. All the rest of the day was spent in obtaining a coat, a couple of hats, gloves, and footwear.

“To-morrow,” said Nancy, when they were riding home, “we’ll go down again and get underwear and dresses—I just *love* to buy dresses!”

“Then next day,” added Jeanette, “Emma can have a manicure, and get a bag and the other things that we’ve forgotten; then she’ll be all fixed, outside.”

“Outside?” repeated Emma, somewhat puzzled.

“Well, you see,” replied Nancy lightly, “there are various personal and social customs which should go with a lovely wardrobe like yours; and you’ll want to adopt them, I’m sure. Janie is awfully good at that sort of thing, and you’ll learn lots when you are with her.”

“That’s so! My visit at your house is nearly over. I’ve had such a lovely time that I hate to leave; though, of course, I’m glad to stay with the rest of the girls too.”

The remainder of that week and the next passed more quickly than the girls had thought possible. They had just seen Emma off on the night train, which would get her to Plattsburg early the following morning, where Ethel King would meet her and drive her to the King cottage on the shore of Lake Champlain.

“Well, Janie?” said Nancy, as they came out of the station.

“Well, Nancy?” replied Jeanette.

“It’s over.”

“Yes; and how much of an impression do you suppose we’ve made—lasting impression, I mean?”

“A decided one, I think. You, poor dear, had a harder time than I did.”

“Why?” asked Jeanette, in surprise.

“Because you had to be a kind of habits-and-manners instructor, while I was only a costumer.”

“Oh; but Mother helped me a lot. She was very lovely to Emma, and really did much for her. Mother is so tactful, you know.”

“Yes; and she is something like Miss Ashton in her affection for and interest in young girls; isn’t she?”

“Something; even more so, I think, since Georgia disappeared.”

Georgia Crane was a girl whom Nancy and Jeanette had met under rather odd circumstances during their Sophomore year at Roxford. After a time she had gone to board with Mrs. Grant, who mothered her very much as she did her own daughter. Due to an unfortunate misunderstanding, Georgia left their house one night, without their knowledge, and, despite their efforts to find her, had never been heard of since.

“I wish I knew where she is.”

“So do I. Do you suppose she will ever come back?”

“I doubt it; but I feel quite sure that we shall hear from her or run across her sometime; probably when we least expect it.”

“Now for our own shopping, and preparations for our trip.”

“I’m just crazy to go!”

Nancy gave vent to her pleasant anticipation by dancing a few steps, to the great disapproval of the man in front of her, upon whose heels she trod.

“We had a letter from Miss Ashton to-day,” said Jeanette, when they had stopped giggling over the look the man gave Nancy.

“And what did she say?” asked Nan eagerly.

“She has engaged a stateroom on one of the boats from Boston to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, for the tenth of August. Madelon has gone back to Beupre for a couple of weeks——”

“What for?” interrupted Nancy, in disgust.

“Her foster mother is ill; and, since her daughter has married and gone to live at Batiscan, she is lonely. Madelon could not withstand her appeal for a short visit.”

“She was ready enough to get rid of Madelon when she didn’t need her!” said Nancy, vehemently. Then she added, “But, of course, she doubtless did do a lot for Madelon when she was little; and I do admire her for going back, in spite of the way she treated her in later years.”

“Well, anyhow,” continued Jeanette, “Madelon will be back in Boston about the first of August; and Miss Ashton suggested that we go down about that time, or a few days later, so as to have a little time to look about Boston before we sail.”

“‘Sail!’ Doesn’t that sound exciting?”

“But don’t get your hopes of the trip up too high, Nan; that is, the ocean part of it. I understand it is often quite rough; so there is quite a possibility of being sick.”

“Oh, Janie, be an optimist! I read recently that seasickness is nothing more than a condition of the mind. We just won’t *be* sick.”

“Coming in?” asked Jeanette, as they passed in front of her house, which they reached at that point in their discussion.

“No, not to-night. I’m going home and visit with Mother and Dad. I have hardly seen them alone since our guest arrived.”

“All right. I’ll see you sometime to-morrow, then.”

“Yes; and we’ll make a list of what we are going to need for our travels.”

CHAPTER III

BON VOYAGE

“There is one thing I *must* have,” decreed Nancy, a few days later, as she and Jeanette were setting out on one of their frequent shopping excursions.

“What’s that?”

“A new suitcase.”

“But Nan,” objected Jeanette, “you bought one when we went to New Orleans!”

“I know it; and when I got home from college this June, someone had kindly put a hole right through the side of it. Under the circumstances, even a person as economically-minded as you are, must admit that I can’t carry a suitcase in such a condition. I saw a new kind advertised the other day, called a wardrobe suitcase; and I thought we’d go to Leonard’s now and look at one. Dad said he would buy it for me as a sort of going-away present, if it doesn’t cost too much.”

Before long they were in the luggage store, listening to the persuasive voice of the salesman, who was enlarging on the advantages of that particular type of suitcase.

“It *is* lovely,” agreed Jeanette, as Nancy exclaimed over the little compartment for shoes, and a larger one for hats and underwear.

“And you see,” continued the clerk, “this rod in the cover lifts out so you can hang several dresses on it, by folding them once; then you put the rod back, press it in, snap these elastic bands across, and your clothing will come out without a wrinkle.”

The price of the suitcase was not prohibitive, since a special sale was going on; so Nancy bought it, and left it to be marked.

“Now where?” asked Jeanette.

“Dresses at Sloan’s. I’ll have to get some kind of a cool silk to travel in.”

“And I must buy a silk hat.”

“I wanted a new formal gown,” continued Nancy; “but Mother convinced me that it would be better to take the rose chiffon and the cream lace that I had at college, and get new evening dresses before we go back for our Senior year.”

“That’s what my mother said too; so my blue and silver georgette and my flowered chiffon will keep company with yours. At least they will feel at home together. What about sports clothes?”

“I’m to get material for two dresses to-day; and Mother is going to make them. I want a white crêpe de chine, and a blue something or other.”

“I hope you find the blue without any difficulty,” laughed Jeanette. “I am going to use the red and white printed silk that I had last year, and buy a white ‘something or other.’”

“Then we both have pleated skirts and sweaters for the boat, and I’m going to stick in my printed crêpe. Why don’t you take yours too?”

“They would be awfully handy for filling in, even if they are old,” admitted Jeanette. “Anyway, they look well; so no one but you and me will know that they’re not new.”

“Mother thought that would be plenty to take in the line of dresses. I’ll wear my travel coat, of course, and put the white flannel in my *new wardrobe suitcase*.”

“How proudly you say that!”

“We really could manage better if we took one trunk, as we did to New Orleans——”

“Yes, but Miss Ashton thought that since we’d be moving about so much in Nova Scotia, it would be much better to take just suitcases; and, she added, as few as possible.”

“Have you heard anything more from her? This is the first of August.”

“No, we haven’t. Perhaps there will be some word when I get home.”

After dinner that evening, the Grant family strolled down to the Pembroke home.

“Oh, come in, come in,” said Mr. Pembroke, holding open the screen door. “I was very late in getting home, and we’re still at table; but you won’t mind coming out into the dining room.”

“And you’re just in time to have dessert with us,” said Mrs. Pembroke, making room for them at the table.

“But we’ve had our dinner,” protested Mrs. Grant.

“Even so, you can surely eat some lemon sherbet,” said Nancy. “Mother made heaps of it to-day.”

“I never could refuse sherbet,” sighed Jeanette. “I just love it.”

Nothing was said about their real errand until the sherbet was finished, and they had all gathered on the wide front porch where the moon, shining through the vines, made a leafy pattern on the floor.

“We heard from Lois to-day,” began Mrs. Grant.

“We’re not going!” thought Nancy, quick to detect the reluctant note in her voice.

“Things are not going to work out quite the way she hoped,” went on Jeanette’s mother. “Madelon, poor child, feels that she can not possibly leave her foster mother this summer——”

“How is that?” asked Mrs. Pembroke.

“It seems that the woman is laid up with an attack of rheumatism, and has no one to take care of her——”

“But where is her husband?” interrupted Nancy.

“He has to work in the fields, getting in the winter crops; so she is alone all day long,” replied Mrs. Grant. “Madelon wrote Lois that she herself is terribly disappointed at having to give up the Nova Scotia trip, but since her foster mother was so very good to her when she was little, she

really felt it would not be right to leave her in this emergency. And I'm afraid we shall all have to admit that she is right."

"The poor child!" murmured Mrs. Pembroke.

"Yes, I feel very sorry for her, especially since I imagine, from what Lois says, that her patient is very *impatient*."

"However," continued Mrs. Grant briskly, after a few minutes' silence, "we cannot help Madelon by giving up our own plans. Lois suggests that the girls ask one of their friends to take Madelon's place, since there are two staterooms reserved——"

"Martha!" cried Nancy and Jeanette in one breath.

"Let's wire her right away!" exclaimed Nancy, jumping up.

"Just a minute," protested Mrs. Grant, catching hold of Nancy's arm. "Lois is unfortunately out on a case, and will be able to get off only in time to meet you girls at the boat. She closed the apartment for the rest of the summer, before she left, thinking that Madelon would be back to entertain you; but——"

"Oh, that's all right; we can go to a hotel," interrupted Nancy.

"Is it necessary to stay overnight in Boston?" inquired Mrs. Pembroke, anxiously.

"Is it if they go down by day," replied her husband.

"And we want to," said Nancy quickly. "I hate to travel at night. You never sleep well, and you don't see a thing!"

"It will be all right," said Mr. Grant. "They will have to learn how to look after themselves sometime. Why not begin now?"

"Good for you!" cried Nancy. "One would think we had never gone anywhere alone. Remember the Rideau? And way down to New Orleans? And we didn't get into any difficulties. We may stay at the hotel overnight; mayn't we, Moms?"

“If the rest of you are satisfied, I suppose so,” replied her mother, somewhat reluctantly.

“Under the circumstances,” said Mrs. Grant, “I thought it would be better to omit the sight-seeing trip, and go down on Saturday. The boat sails Sunday afternoon. Perhaps when you get back, Lois will be able to go about the city with you,” she added, seeing the disappointed looks on the faces of both girls.

“Come on, Janie, help me wire Martha now that we have full particulars to give her,” urged Nancy.

“Let’s write a letter, so we can tell her everything. If we put a special delivery stamp on it, and run downtown to mail it, she’ll get it in the morning.”

This was done; and the next day a wire arrived from Martha, reading

GLORIOUS MEET YOU AT SOUTH STATION BOSTON
SEVEN THIRTY P M AUGUST TENTH

So busy were the girls during the next few days that time simply raced along; and almost before they realized it, they were on the train bound for Boston.

“We’ve chased around so constantly for the past week,” said Nancy, when the yards were left behind and the train began to speed up, “that I’m *dead*.”

“So am I. Those last two parties nearly finished me.”

“Imagine, having one last night and one the night before! It is awfully nice of people to entertain for us, but shouldn’t you think that they would know we’d be too busy for such things?”

“Yes; but since they were given especially for us, we could hardly do other than go.”

“No-o-o,” yawned Nancy. “But I’m going to make up a little sleep between here and Albany. We’ve seen this road before. Then when we get to the Berkshires, I’ll be all rested and be able to enjoy them.”

The day passed quickly and quietly, for the girls were really very, tired. But riding on a good train is soothing; so when they came to a stop in the big South Station, they felt equal to anything. Close to the main entrance to the waiting room, they spied Martha; and the three fell upon one another regardless of the crowd hurrying in both directions. In a short time they were in their rooms at the hotel—a single and a double, with a bath between.

“Let’s get something to eat before we unpack and go to bed,” proposed Nancy. “We had so much sweet stuff on the train, that I feel the need of hot muffins and tea. And I do hope they have toasted English muffins here. I just love ’em with nice, hot, Orange Pekoe tea, with a thick slice of lemon floating around in it.”

“I want a club sandwich,” declared Martha, as they seated themselves at a small table in the café of the hotel.

“I’m going to order chicken bouillon and rolls,” decided Jeanette. “Isn’t it funny, no matter how much we like sweets, it is so easy to tire of them?”

They went out for a little walk, and then went to their rooms, after which each of the girls wrote a short note home letting their people know that they had “arrived safely.”

“Now, I’ll unpack both cases, while you take a bath, Janie,” said Nancy. “Then, while I bathe, you can put the clothes away.”

Jeanette shut herself in the bathroom, but presently Nancy came to the door.

“Janie, do you know where the key to my suitcase is?”

“No. You put it in your bag when we left home; and if it isn’t there, then I don’t know where it is.”

“Well, it isn’t there.”

“Look again, Nanny,” advised Jeanette; for Nan was always losing things, and then discovering them in some odd corner. When she came out of the bathroom, however, a distressed, pale-faced Nancy was bending over the contents of her bag, which she had turned out on the dresser.

“I’ve looked everywhere, Janie; and it simply isn’t anywhere. I must have pulled it out of my bag with a handkerchief, or tickets, or something, and lost it. What shall I do?”

“It’s lucky you put your night things in with mine, so you can get along without your case to-night.”

Jeanette was carrying a hat box, besides her suitcase; and the girls had used it in common, so as not to have to unpack everything at each stop.

“Yes,” wailed Nancy, “but I haven’t a dress to wear to church tomorrow; or a hat.”

“Well, we’ll try to have it opened; but if we can’t, you’ll just have to wear what you wore to-day,” replied Jeanette, going to the telephone.

The hotel locksmith came up; and, after working for some time, he said that much as he hated to do it, he’d have to force the locks.

“And don’t close that,” he advised them on leaving the room, “until you are sure you want it closed; for it may lock again.”

By that time it was nearly midnight; and the girls fell asleep as soon as their heads touched the pillows.

The following morning was spent in going to church, and wandering about the streets near the hotel.

“I wish we could take a ride somewhere,” said Nancy, looking longingly at the big sight-seeing busses which were rolling in all directions.

“So do I; but we might not get back in time to sail,” replied Jeanette. “It is nearly lunch time now; and you know we were going to get on board early. Miss Ashton is to meet us there an hour before sailing time.”

“Curtis wrote me,” observed Nancy, as they reentered their hotel, “to have a very light, simple lunch; and to go easy on the first meal on shipboard.”

“Why?” demanded Martha. “Does he think you ought to go on a diet?”

“No, goose; so we’d be less likely to be sick. He didn’t mean just me; he meant all of us.”

“Well, grateful as I am for his advice, I’m starved; and I’m going to eat.”

“All right, Mart,” laughed Nancy; “but don’t say that you weren’t warned.”

The luncheon menu was very attractive; but Nancy and Jeanette sternly repressed their desires for a quantity of rich food. They ate simple things, and ate them sparingly.

Immediately after luncheon they packed; and as Nancy closed her suitcase, sure enough, it locked!

“Don’t worry,” advised Jeanette. “You won’t need it on the steamer; and somebody in Nova Scotia will be able to open it. Anyway, you couldn’t have carried it about with you with the lid open.”

“But the customs!”

“Let the customs officer open it. He’ll have all kinds of keys.”

“But he’ll think I’m smuggling in Heaven knows what.”

“Then it’ll be a good joke on him when he doesn’t find anything,” chimed in Martha. “You should worry.”

On the dock, Miss Ashton was waiting for them; and after greetings were over, they gave their luggage to a porter. After going through several passages, sheds, and gates, they finally went up the gangplank, and on board.

Their two staterooms were nearly opposite each other, on the main deck.

“Who is going to be my partner?” inquired Miss Ashton, looking at the three girls.

“I, if you want me,” replied Martha. “It would be a crime to separate the two inseparables.”

“That was nice of Mart,” whispered Nancy, as they entered their stateroom, and put things in order.

“We must go up on the promenade deck, girls,” called Miss Ashton presently, “and get our chairs placed where we want them. The crowds will soon be coming on board, and the desirable places will all be taken.”

They decided on the right side of the steamer, near an enclosed portion of the deck, which would help keep off some of the wind.

“We’d better each have a rug, too,” said Miss Ashton, to the deck steward, who was putting tags on the chairs.

“What are those for?” asked Martha.

“Your stateroom number is on the tag; and no one but the holder of that room can use the chair. There is no danger, then, of finding it occupied when you come back from a stroll.”

The girls walked about in the sunshine, inspecting the boat and their fellow passengers, and looking at Boston, spread out along the water front.

Down at the purser's office was the usual crowd trying to straighten out reservations; to get a better stateroom, or to get some kind of accommodations when there were no more to be had. Women with small children wandered aimlessly about the steamer, or found cozy corners in which to settle down. Many of the passengers watched from the port side while dozens of automobiles were put on board. A small baby cooed delightedly over its bottle, as it lay on a settee in the salon, blissfully oblivious of the noise and confusion all about.

Soon came the cry—"All ashore who are going ashore!"

Passengers bade good-bye to friends and relatives who had accompanied them on board. The great cables were released, the gangplank was pulled in, and the steamer began to move slowly and majestically away from the wharf.

CHAPTER IV ON THE HIGH SEAS

"Oh!" cried Martha, when the steamer was well away from Boston, and headed northward, "I'm frozen!"

"Spread your rug over the chair; then sit down and fold the sides over you," directed Miss Ashton. "You'll be much warmer that way."

They all followed her advice, and lay cozily watching the sunset; while the deck trotters paced back and forth in front of them.

"First call for dinner!" called a colored porter, passing along the deck, and accompanying his words by strokes on a brass gong.

"How about it?" asked Martha. "I'm hungry."

“Go down if you like, Mart,” replied Nancy. “Jeanette and I are going to stay right here.”

“Right here! And not eat at all?” gasped Martha.

“A bit later the steward will bring us some sandwiches and ginger ale.”

“Ginger ale in this cold wind!” exclaimed Martha. “You’d better have it heated.”

Nancy laughed. “An old Frenchman up in Canada told us that if we’d drink ginger ale on shipboard, we’d never be seasick; and we’re going to try it out.”

“I’ll go down with you, Martha,” said Miss Ashton, getting up and throwing her rug over Nancy and Jeanette, who were shivering in spite of their own heavy ones. “I’m a good sailor; so nothing bothers me.”

The wind increased, and the ocean got choppy as soon as it grew dark; so the girls had their chairs moved into the enclosed deck, but near the door so they had plenty of ocean air.

“How do you feel, Nan?” asked Jeanette a bit anxiously, after they had finished their simple lunch.

“Mighty dizzy if I sit up; but deliciously comfortable as long as I lie back quietly. I feel as if I could stay here for hours.”

“That is the way with me, too.”

Some time later Miss Ashton came out on deck, and she was alone.

“Martha has succumbed,” she said, in reply to the girls’ questions. “The motion is much more noticeable in the dining room, and that, combined with the odor of food, about finished her. I put her to bed, and left her in the care of our stewardess. She’ll be all right soon, and will probably go to sleep.”

“Poor old Mart!” commented Nancy. “If she’d only stayed out of the dining room. But if she had,” she added, “then we would have been certain

that she was already sick. Mart likes to eat even more than I do.”

The pacers of the deck increased in number, and soon there was a regular procession of people trying to see how many times they could encircle the ship. It was interesting to watch the different gaits. Some walked so well, with a free, rhythmic swing, as if thoroughly accustomed to the exercise, and enjoying it. Others, apparently, were doing it because they thought it was “the thing to do,”—and were making pretty hard work out of it.

“I’m walking all the way to Yarmouth,” panted a fat man, on his sixth round. The next time the parade passed in front of the trio, he was missing.

“I suppose he has collapsed somewhere,” said Jeanette.

“Who will be missing when they pass again?” wondered Nancy. “I bet it will be the pretty little girl with the brown curls.”

It was. From this point on the walkers dropped out rapidly, and finally only three girls of about Nancy’s age remained.

“I’m going to follow them and see how they do it,” exclaimed a boy of about fourteen, springing up from a near-by chair, and pacing after the girls, imitating exactly their long strides and swinging arms. On his return, he dropped exhausted into his chair, without volunteering any information to the amused spectators. The three girls continued to pass by regularly. The motion of the boat did not seem to disturb them at all; they appeared to be enjoying themselves immensely.

“Let’s go to bed,” proposed Jeanette, suddenly.

“Not a bad idea,” replied Nancy, getting up so quickly that she lost her balance and fell back into her chair. “My, but I’m dizzy!”

With Miss Ashton’s help she finally managed to get on her feet again. By this time the motion of the boat was very pronounced, and walking was a difficult business. But the girls managed, by clinging to each other with

one hand, and to various railings and door frames with the other, to get safely down to their stateroom. There the motion was a bit less noticeable; so they had no difficulty in preparing for bed.

The fresh salt air had made them very sleepy, and they knew nothing more until the ship's whistle began to blow at regular intervals.

"What do you suppose is the matter now, Janie?" Nancy asked anxiously.

"Fog, I imagine," replied Jeanette sleepily.

"Had we better get up and dress?"

"What time is it?"

"About half-past two."

"Goodness, no! Go to sleep again. If there is any danger, the big gong will be sounded."

"How do you know? Who told you about that?"

"Sign—downstairs," and Jeanette was fast asleep, while Nancy thought of all the stories she had ever read which dealt with the horrors of ships caught in the fogs. But after a while she too went to sleep again.

The whistle was still blowing when they got up at six o'clock, although the steamer was anchored—somewhere.

"When do we get in?" asked Nancy of a porter who passed their door just as she was peering out.

"Soon as the fog lifts, madam, whenever that is. We're in the harbor now."

Miss Ashton and a pale-faced Martha appeared at that moment, and they all went to the dining room. While they were having breakfast, the fog lifted, and the sun crept out rather cautiously. Then the excitement of disembarking began.

Passengers surged in all directions. The ship's officers and crew were everywhere. Baggage was piled along the corridors, and people stumbled over it at almost every step.

Nancy had explained their locked suitcase to their porter, who promised to do his best to get it through the customs. While they were waiting for him in the big shed where the baggage was spread out on large tables for inspection by the customs officials, Nancy spied, on a table directly in front of them, a suitcase very much like her own.

"I wish I could get hold of the key to that," she exclaimed, pointing the bag out to Jeanette.

"But I'm afraid you can't."

Their porter joined them at that moment, and they went quickly out onto the wharf and over to the train for Halifax, which was waiting near by. To this day they do not know how the porter got Nan's suitcase through the customs, for it was still locked when they got onto the train.

"How funny!" exclaimed Martha, when she saw, instead of the regulation swinging chairs of a parlor car, big willow chairs upholstered in green velvet, but devoid of springs. These were not fastened to the floor in any way; so everybody placed hers as she pleased. As a result, walking down the aisle presented quite a problem.

When the train began to pull out, Nancy happened to glance across the aisle; and nearly fell out of her chair.

"Janie!" she whispered, "there is the very same suitcase we saw in the customs."

Without waiting for a reply, she went across to the gray-haired woman who occupied the seat opposite hers.

"Pardon me, madam," she said, a bit breathlessly, "but have you the key for that suitcase?"

“Why, yes,” replied the woman, in some surprise.

“And might I borrow it?” she asked, going on to tell the reason for her strange request.

The woman was only too glad to accommodate her, and was as pleased as the girls themselves when the key opened Nancy’s suitcase.

“Wasn’t that the strangest coincidence?” asked Nancy, as they settled back to enjoy the scenery; and they all agreed with her.

“No one but Nancy,” observed Jeanette, with a smile at her friend, “would have had the problem solved so easily. She is always getting into difficulties, and being taken out of them. Most of us would have gone through the country with our things safely locked in.”

“Now, girls,” said Miss Ashton, “what do you know about this country?”

“Very little,” replied Nancy, “except that the scene of Longfellow’s *Evangeline* is laid here. And I can readily see, even after the bit of the country we have passed, why he spoke of the ‘forest primeval.’ There is plenty of forest here all right.”

“I meant to look up some information before we started, but I didn’t have a minute,” said Jeanette.

“I vote that Miss Ashton tell us all we should know,” proposed Martha.

The motion was seconded, and passed unanimously; so they moved their chairs into a cozy group, and Miss Ashton produced a small map.

“As you can see,” she began, “Nova Scotia is a peninsula attached to that part of Canada called New Brunswick by a very narrow isthmus; it is only about ten feet wide. We landed down here at Yarmouth, on the southwestern coast, and this railroad follows the western and northern coast line over to Halifax, on the northeastern shore. The country was discovered about the year of 1000 by a Norseman from Iceland, called Leif the Lucky.

He called it Marksland, and left it to a native tribe of Indians called Micmacs. There are supposed to be some remnants of the Micmacs still in the country.

“In 1497, John Cabot landed here, and claimed the country for England. Some years later, the French attempted settlements which were not permanent. About the year 1606, Champlain and some other Frenchmen founded Arcadia at Port Royal, which was later destroyed by the English. In 1629, James VI of Scotland gave the entire territory to a favorite of his for colonization, and called it New Scotland, or Nova Scotia. From that time on, the country was constantly handed back and forth from the French to the English; for both claimed it until 1710, when it fell permanently into the hands of Great Britain.”

“But where does the expulsion of the Acadians, as referred to by Longfellow, come in?” asked Nancy.

“Some of the French, after the destruction of Port Royal, had gathered in the village of Grand Pré, and gradually a prosperous and even wealthy settlement grew up. Authorities are divided as to the question of their loyalty to the British government. Be that as it may, the English reached the conclusion that the community was a menace, and decided to deport the people and confiscate their lands. This was done in 1747. You might refresh your memories of the details by rereading *Evangeline*.”

“The Acadians came back again; didn’t they?” asked Jeanette.

“Yes; some years later, many of the survivors returned to settle on the shores of St. Mary’s Bay. We shall see the little Acadian villages on one of our bus trips.”

“The scenery is beautiful,” observed Jeanette. “So many lakes, bays, and rivers! Such quantities of white birch, and all kinds of pine trees.”

“It reminds me of the frequency with which the birch is mentioned in the ‘Anne’ books,” remarked Nancy.

“The ‘Anne’ books?” repeated Martha.

“Yes; *Anne of Green Gables*, and all the rest of them, by L. M. Montgomery. If you have never read them, your education has been neglected; and you should remedy the defect. I read the whole series over twice, and I think I could enjoy reading them again if there were not so many things to be read.”

“What rolling country it is,” remarked Miss Ashton a little later. “I have heard that there is scarcely a half mile stretch of level land; and there are two mountain ranges, one on the west coast, and one on the north.”

“The character of the country surprises me,” said Jeanette. “For no good reason at all, I have always pictured it as flat.”

At Digby, nearly all the travelers got out for ice cream cones.

“Now, Nan,” warned Jeanette, “you know your weakness for missing trains. *Please* don’t go too far.”

They were wandering back to the station, when Nancy’s eye was caught by some post cards attractively displayed in the window of a small store.

“Go on, Janie,” she said. “I’ll snatch just a couple of these and catch up with you.”

“But don’t stay a minute,” cautioned Jeanette, walking on. “It’s nearly time for the train to start.”

She boarded the train, but stood on the platform looking anxiously up the road.

The whistles blew, the bell rang, and the train began to get under way; but no Nancy. At that moment she was seen running down the street for dear life. Luckily for her, it was necessary at that point for the train to slow

up to round a curve; and she succeeded in swinging herself onto the steps of the last car.

“Didn’t I tell you not to stay,” Jeanette cried, fairly shaking Nancy, when she finally reached the platform on which her friend was waiting. “You might have been killed, getting onto a moving train like that! You’re not going to get off ever again!”

“Poor Nannie,” said Martha, who had overheard the last words, “you won’t be able then to get off with us at Halifax.”

“Seriously, Nancy,” said Miss Ashton, “you must be more careful. Suppose you had been left in that strange town in an unfamiliar country.”

For once, Nancy had no reply ready; for, to tell the truth, she had been more than a little frightened herself when she saw the train begin to move.

CHAPTER V

HALIFAX

“Halifax!” called the conductor; and everybody filed out of the train onto the platform, where all the baggage was piled on big trucks to be taken through the station and out to the taxicab entrance.

Martha was inclined to worry a bit about her two bags—she didn’t like to let them out of her sight; but Nancy and Jeanette, who had seen the same process in Chicago, assured her that she had no need for anxiety.

“Don’t you feel real important when you can say, ‘they did this or that in such and such a place’?” whispered Nancy to Jeanette as they followed the crowd to the exit at the end of the station, where the taxi platform was located. Jeanette admitted that she did.

At the outer edge of the platform was a railing over which leaned, facing them, a crowd of taxicab drivers, each shouting the name of the particular hotel he covered. It was a veritable bedlam, and nothing could be done but listen to it until the baggage was brought out.

“We had better have two cabs, I think,” said Miss Ashton, “on account of our numerous bags. Martha and I will take this one, and you two can follow in the next.”

The cab which came up to the steps immediately after she and Martha had driven off, was quickly claimed by another party; so the girls had to wait for the next. They signaled to one as it approached; but as soon as it drew up, a tall woman, who apparently sprang from nowhere, stepped out ahead of the girls and into the cab.

Jeanette ventured to remark, “*We* called this cab,” and the taxi men looked at one another and smiled. The girls hesitated; but the woman leaned forward and said to Nancy: “You are going to the Lord Nelson Hotel; aren’t you?”

“Why, yes——”

“Then we may as well go up together,” and she settled firmly back in the corner of the cab.

There was nothing else to be done; so Nancy got in, and Jeanette followed her.

The baggage was piled in front, and soon they were off up the steep streets leading to the hotel. The stranger, apparently an English woman, talked entertainingly of her trip across, the gifts which had been sent to her stateroom when she sailed, and of Halifax which she had not visited in several years. When they drew up at the hotel, which is opposite the beautiful Public Gardens, she paid her share of the charges, took her one

smart-looking bag, and walked away down the street, murmuring something about taking a walk.

“Of all queer women!” observed Jeanette. “Why on earth doesn’t she go in and dispose of the bag?”

A boy took their bags up to the room which had been reserved for them; and as Nancy felt for her purse, she gasped a little and whispered to Jeanette, “You tip him.”

“Janie!” she exclaimed, as soon as the door was closed, “I’ve lost my purse. I didn’t look for it when we were getting out of the cab, because you paid our share; and now I haven’t it.”

“Was there much in it?”

“Oh, no; about \$2.50, I think. You know I never keep much in it when we’re traveling.”

“But when did you have it last?”

“I know I had it when we were in the station.”

The girls looked at each other, their thoughts apparently traveling in the same direction.

“I do hate to suspect anybody,” said Nan, “but I am awfully suspicious of our queer-acting traveling companion.”

Martha and Miss Ashton entered just in time to hear the last words, and asked for an explanation.

“I’m afraid there is nothing to be done, Nancy,” said Miss Ashton, after hearing the story. “You are fortunate that there was not much in it.”

“Indeed I am; and I’m not going to worry about it. It is to avoid worry of that kind, that I carry so little money in my purse; then if it does get lost, it’s not especially important. What’s our immediate program?”

“Unpack, perhaps,” suggested their chaperon.

“If you don’t mind,” said Nancy, “I’d like to leave that until dinner time; and run out for a few minutes. We needn’t start to dress for an hour or so, and I should like to look around a bit. I never feel at home in a new place until I’ve had a walk.”

“It looks a lot like rain,” objected Jeanette; “and a fog is beginning to fall.”

“Well, we won’t go far; and we’ve been out in dampness before, Janie dear.”

So the three girls, after consulting some attractive souvenir advertisements in a folder, started out; while Miss Ashton remained to unpack, and rest a bit before dinner. They wandered along the street next to the hotel, stopping to look in various windows at amethysts, which were displayed in great profusion.

“I never saw so many amethysts in all my life,” said Martha. “Why do they make so much of them here?”

“Oh, the folder said that there is a mine of them at Cape Blomidon, and every tourist buys at least one. Look; there is a mass just as it was taken from the mine,” and Nancy pointed to a large piece, looking much like rock salt, except that it was lavender and the crystals were of varying sizes. For some minutes they rambled along, admiring the fine old English houses and estates.

“I think we had better turn back now,” proposed Jeanette. “It always takes longer to unpack and dress than one counts on; and I imagine Miss Ashton would like to get in for dinner a little early.”

“Just a minute,” begged Martha. “Let’s go just a little ways down this next street. Or you two go back if you want to; I’ll catch up with you.”

So they parted. Before the two girls got very far, it began to rain very heavily; and they discovered that Martha was carrying their one umbrella.

“Come on, Jeanette; we’ll have to run!” cried Nancy, catching her by the hand.

With several stops to rest, in sheltered doorways, they at last reached the hotel. By this time a dense fog shut down. The street lights, which had been turned on, looked like ghostly globes; and cabs and people were dim shapes.

“Where is Martha?” asked Miss Ashton, when they entered their rooms.

“I’m really rather worried about her,” added Jeanette, after they had explained.

“She’ll find her way back all right,” maintained Nancy. They were all anxious, however, when half an hour passed, and still no Martha. Miss Ashton was about to go down to the office for advice, when the girl rushed in; and Nancy and Jeanette plied her with all kinds of questions.

“I was all right,” she gasped, “until that blamed fog came up.”

“Came down,” corrected Nancy.

“I wandered about trying to find my way, and getting more and more lost every minute. Finally I ran into a man in uniform, and asked him to set me on my way. I thought he looked a bit familiar; and who was he but the purser from our steamer. He’s awfully nice, and he came all the way to the hotel with me!”

“Martha! Martha! I’ll certainly have to chaperon you more carefully,” laughed Miss Ashton. “However, all’s well that ends well. Now hurry, and dress for dinner. We didn’t have much on the train this noon; and I, for one, am hungry.”

After dinner they wandered about the hotel for an hour, and then went to bed.

“We must be up and ready to start at eight thirty,” was Miss Ashton’s good night instruction.

Promptly at that hour, they took their seats with a few other people in the roomy, comfortable bus.

“My name is James Jackson,” announced the conductor, as he checked up the list of passengers, “but most people call me ‘Jim.’”

Soon they were out of the city and on the open road leading to Chester and Bridgewater, on the southeastern coast. The roads ran up and down hills constantly, and around all kinds of curves, crossing and recrossing the railroad over which they had ridden the day before.

“This is heaps of fun!” cried Nancy, as they rolled down one particularly long slope. “It’s just like a great roller coaster. I hope there are lots of roads like this.”

“So many you’ll get tired of them,” commented the driver, without enthusiasm.

“No danger at all!”

A beautiful lake suddenly appeared on the right, and soon was left behind; then acres and acres of pasture land, dotted with cattle, stretched out on either side.

“Oh!” squealed Nancy suddenly. “Did you see *that*?”

“What?” inquired the others eagerly, looking back to see what they had missed.

“That tiny little black and white calf in the corner of that meadow. He was scratching his nose with his hind paw——”

A burst of laughter interrupted her.

“But he did,” she persisted, when she could make herself heard. “And it was too cute for anything!”

“It wasn’t that,” explained Jeanette, “it was because you called his hoof a paw.”

“Well, how should I know its proper name. I’m not a farmer, and don’t pretend to be.”

“I wonder if there is duty on calves,” commented Jeanette in mock seriousness. “Perhaps you would like to take the dear little fellow home with us, if the farmer would sell him.”

Everybody laughed; for Nancy was always wanting to “take home with her” all kinds of animals, and was prevented from maintaining a small zoo only by the fact that her family wouldn’t tolerate it.

The bus shot through the pine woods, and out again to roll smoothly along the edge of a large body of water.

“This is Mahone Bay,” said the driver; “and that island is Oak Island where Captain Kidd is supposed to have buried some of his treasure.”

“Oh,” cried Martha. “How I’d love to go out to it. Could we?”

“On the way back we stop here for lunch,” said the driver, as they entered the town of Chester. “Perhaps you could get some fisherman to take you out.”

“What do you expect to do there, Mart?” laughed Jeanette. “Find some of the treasure?”

“I might. Who knows? And wouldn’t I have the laugh on you if I *did!*”

“Look,” said Miss Ashton, as they stopped in front of the inn for a moment and the driver went in to give notice of the number of guests he would have stopping there for lunch, “that woman is doing her marketing with a pail instead of a basket.”

Sure enough a tall, thin woman, primly dressed in an old-fashioned looking garment of dull calico, was going from one store to another, and

piling meat, groceries, fruit, and notions into a large tin pail which hung on her arm.

On the way to Bridgewater they ran in and out of fog constantly. Sometimes the air would be perfectly clear, and the sun shining brightly. Then suddenly the fog would shut down so heavily that they could hardly see to the edge of the beach.

“Isn’t this queer?” said Martha. “At home either we have fog or we don’t.”

“That’s the way it is here, too,” replied the driver, smiling over his shoulder at Nancy; and Martha could not understand why they all laughed. Then he went on to explain that it was because they changed “levels” so constantly, that they “had the fog” or “didn’t have it” in such rapid succession.

“This is Lunenburg,” he explained presently, as they ascended a hill into a small, prosperous-looking town. “It is famous for the building of deep-sea fishing vessels. Out there,” pointing to the expanse of water below them, “is the Lunenburg Harbor. There are some boats ready for use; some ready for the masts; and on the shore are others just begun. Notice that the prows are all painted blue; for they are known as ‘Bluenose Boats.’”

“I have heard that term so many times since we landed,” said Miss Ashton, “and I never heard it before. For example, the train we came on yesterday is called the ‘Bluenose Special.’ What is the origin, and significance?”

“The name dates back to the American Revolution,” explained Jim. “Certain families who were direct descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers emigrated to Nova Scotia during the war. These were known as Bluenose families; and the term came to be used more generally later on as a mark of high quality.”

On the way back to Chester they passed an enclosed wagon with two doors at the back. "That," said Jim, "is a traveling store. It carries everything from crackers to kerosene."

"How very *funny!*" exploded Martha, leaning out of the window a bit to get another look.

"Be careful," warned Miss Ashton. "That is always dangerous."

"She might fall out!" laughed Nancy.

"How could anyone fall out of the window!" Martha was indignant again.

"Many of the people of this country," continued the driver, "live at great distances from stores; and as the automobile is not yet so common as it is in the States, they find it difficult to get to the towns to buy what they need."

As they drove along, they passed another traveling store standing in front of a small house; and from it the proprietor was taking several garments on hangers.

"That fellow," said the driver, "operates a ready-to-wear shop. Most of them do not limit their lines; they carry everything. He believes in specializing."

"Wouldn't it be convenient to have things brought in instead of having to go after them," said Jeanette.

"Not for you, Janie," laughed Nancy. "You'd need a whole procession of wagons. She goes through one store after another before she finds anything to suit her," she explained to the driver.

On their return trip, they stopped at Chester for lunch at the Lovett House. It is one hundred and fifty years old, and has been in the hands of the family of the present owners for one hundred and two years. There are steps up into this room, and down into that one. The old wall paper is

patterned in hunting scenes; and the whole house is filled with delightful, old-fashioned furniture. The side porch is built right around the trunk of an immense tree.

“Now for Captain Kidd’s island,” said Martha after lunch. “We can go; can’t we?” she appealed to the driver, as the girls laughed at her.

“I could get someone to take them out,” he replied, looking at Miss Ashton for assent.

“If you have time to indulge her whim,” she replied, “I have no objections to make.”

Before very long the girls and Miss Ashton were in a small launch manned by an old fisherman, and headed for Oak Island. It was a forlorn-looking spot when they reached it, much of it covered by trees and brush, and the rest of it holes of various shapes and depths.

“Apparently you’re not the first one who has entertained hopes of becoming wealthy, Mart,” said Nancy, peering into one immense excavation.

“I wouldn’t care so much about getting rich,” she replied, “if I could find even one coin to take home. Imagine, having even *one* souvenir from Captain Kidd’s treasure.”

“Of course, Mart,” said Jeanette practically, “it is not a certainty that he even buried any of it here.”

“Anyway, if at first you don’t succeed,” began Nancy, “you know the rest of it.”

They prowled around for about twenty minutes, and then wandered back toward the launch.

“Did you look into this hole, Mart?” asked Nancy, pointing to a wide, shallow one near by. “It doesn’t go very deep. This particular excavator lost heart early in the game.”

“No, I missed that.”

Martha went to inspect it, while the rest strolled on. A cry of delight and surprise from Martha made them turn suddenly. She was running toward them so eagerly that she did not see a twisted root in the path. Her foot caught in it, and down she went, rolling over and over down the slope to their very feet. They picked her up with anxious questions as to the extent of her injuries, trying hard not to laugh; for she had presented a very funny spectacle.

“I’m—all—right,” she gasped. “Don’t bother. But look.”

She opened one hand, which she had kept tightly closed in spite of her catastrophe. In the palm lay an earth-stained, blackened coin!

“I saw the edge of it sticking out from one side of the hole, and I could hardly believe my eyes when I pulled it out! Just think of my having been so very lucky!”

She could talk of nothing else for some time on the return trip, and the others tried to share her enthusiasm.

Jim examined the coin closely when they returned to the Lovett House, and then congratulated Martha on her good fortune. As he cleverly swung the big bus around the corner, and on the road out of Chester, he looked searchingly down at Nancy who was sitting beside him. She flushed a bit, but her eyes were dancing with mischief.

“What would you give to know?” she asked teasingly, in a low voice.

“Nothing!” he replied. “For I’m sure I have solved the problem.”

“How?”

“Two and two always make four. The first two is the fact that I once had a hobby of collecting coins, and I recognize many specimens; and I *know* that this one is not a part of the notorious Captain’s treasure.”

“And the other two?”

“That a certain person is fond of playing jokes.”

“I fear you know altogether too much.”

Jim laughed, but made no further comments. He did not always have such congenial people to “conduct”; and he was enjoying himself immensely.

“Gathering blueberries seems to be quite a business here,” observed Miss Ashton. “I have seen several old men and women with bowls, pitchers, or other containers; and many children with tin cups or pails.”

“It is,” answered Jim. “The people of all ages go out in berry season and gather all they can. A big truck makes the rounds of the scattered houses every day, and picks up the fruit. Most of it is then shipped from Yarmouth to Boston. The cargo of the steamer you go back on will be largely blueberries.”

“What are the winters like here?” inquired Miss Ashton. “Rather bleak, I should imagine.”

“They are really very much like Boston, except in the interior, where they get more snow, and farther up north, toward Truro, where it is considerably colder. The settlements, you will notice, are pretty much around the edge of the country; the center is still rather wild. And have you noticed the bundles of wood lying along the roadside?”

“Yes; and I have been wondering about them.”

“From time to time the people fell small trees, or find dry wood which they gather into bundles, and leave to be picked up ‘some day’ when they are passing with an empty cart. That is their winter’s supply.”

They were proceeding very slowly just then, as the road was more crooked than usual; and was upgrade.

“How——” began Miss Ashton, when a scream from Jeanette startled everyone.

“Martha has fallen out!” she cried.

Jim stopped the bus instantly. They looked back, and there sat Martha in the middle of the road, covered with dust, and wearing a most pathetically bewildered expression.

They all got out and ran back to assist her.

“What in the world happened?” inquired Nancy, brushing Martha off after Jim had set her on her feet.

“Happened!” exploded Martha. “Plain enough to be seen, I should think. I fell out!”

Everybody screamed with laughter.

“Yes, but——” began Nancy, and went off into another gale of merriment.

“Now please tell us just how you happened to fall, Martha,” said Miss Ashton, when they were all in the bus again, and on their way.

“I got awfully sleepy,” said Martha, rather sheepishly, “and I thought I’d go and sit in the back seat and take a little nap where nobody would disturb me. The next thing I knew, I was sitting in the road and the bus was going on without me. I *did* hope you’d discover that I was missing before you went very far.”

“But how on earth did you get out?” persisted Miss Ashton.

“That back door is almost never used, except in emergencies,” interrupted the driver. “It may not have been closed tightly; and she probably fell against it when she was asleep——”

“That was an emergency, all right,” commented Nancy.

“Now, Martha,” warned Jeanette, as they drew up before the hotel in Halifax, “you have had two falls. Do be careful during the rest of our trip.”

There was an hour to spare before it was time to dress for dinner, and the girls spent it wandering around the Public Gardens. A rambling stream,

stone bridges, duck ponds filled with water fowl, immense trees, great flower beds of all shapes in which are blended, in striking color combinations, blossoms of all kinds, make it a most attractive place to spend hours; and the girls heartily regretted that time would not permit them to linger.

“But it is just as well we did not have any more time to walk about the gardens,” said Jeanette, as they were preparing for bed. “I am tired to death now.”

“I am too,” replied Nancy; “but I do hope that the bell buoy in the harbor does not keep me awake to-night. Even in my sleep I heard that monotonous ‘ding-dong’ last night.”

“Well, try to sleep anyhow,” advised Jeanette; “for to-morrow will be our biggest day——”

“Oh, yes,” cried Martha, “to-morrow we see Evangeline——”

Then, as a laugh interrupted her, she went on indignantly, “I don’t know why you all laugh every time I open my mouth. I’m not going to say another word!”

“Until next time,” called Nancy, as Martha went into her own room.

CHAPTER VI

THE LAND OF EVANGELINE

“We have an addition to our party to-day,” said Jim when they went out to the bus the following morning.

“Who?” inquired Nancy.

“Mr. and Mrs. Bond, ardent collectors of antiques. They go only as far as Kentville, however.”

The newcomers proved to be a very interesting, middle-aged couple, full of information on many subjects besides their hobby, and a real asset on any sight-seeing trip.

“Isn’t it queer,” commented Nancy after they had ridden for a few miles, “how we are sort of on the outside trying to look in?”

“What on earth do you mean?” demanded Martha. “On the outside of what, looking in?”

“Why, it’s difficult to explain clearly; but we’re riding through this country peering at everything and trying to guess what the people are like from what we see. It is rather trying to complete a picture with many of the principal parts missing. If you know what I mean,” she laughed a little confusedly, seeing plainly from Martha’s expression that she, for one, didn’t know.

But the driver smiled understandingly at Nancy. He knew what she was trying to say. Long ere this she had discovered that Jim was a senior at Harvard, and drove a bus only during the summer vacation. He had been desperately lonely in this country, where he knew no one; and the pretty, lively college girl was a godsend.

“One thing we can be reasonably sure of,” commented Miss Ashton, “is their fondness for flowers. The front windows of so many of the houses are filled with plants, so arranged that the blossoms reach to the very top of the panes.”

“I’ve noticed that,” said Jeanette, “and in one house the cellar windows were also filled. Indoors they use mostly geraniums; and they seem to be splendid specimens. What a task it must be to attend to all those plants!”

“Even the poorest looking dwelling has its garden; and if there is a stump or unsightly rock, it is surrounded with nasturtiums,” said Mrs. Bond. “Those bits of bright color, dropped carelessly here and there, are very effective in this land of green trees and gray houses.”

“I wonder why all the houses are that peculiar dull gray,” said Martha. “They look positively ashen.”

“They are built of shingles and whitewashed,” explained Jim. “The whitewash wears off, and leaves the house a dirty gray. And, by the way, you will notice that many of the houses are shingled on one or two sides, and finished with clapboards on the others. Why, I don’t know, I’m sorry to say.”

“To return to the subject of flowers,” said Mrs. Bond, “we have been wondering if the people’s love of them is not a kind of a reflection of the land itself. I have never seen so many kinds and such quantities of wild flowers.”

“That is true,” agreed Miss Ashton. “We have been reveling especially in the profusion of wild roses along the roads.”

“They tell me,” said Jim, turning slightly toward Mrs. Bond, “that in the proper season there are such quantities of arbutus here, or Mayflower as some call it, that it has been adopted as the emblem of Nova Scotia, along with the motto, ‘We bloom amid the snows.’ It is gathered and sold in all public places; and everybody wears or carries some as long as it lasts. Every office, they say, every store, every house has its bouquet of arbutus.”

“What a pretty custom!” exclaimed Mrs. Bond.

“This is Windsor,” said the driver, as they entered a lovely town on the river Avon. “It was an Acadian village; and at Fort Edward, which was built after the country fell into the hands of the British, were drawn up the plans for the expulsion of the Acadians.”

They drove up the lovely wooded slopes where King's College was established in 1787, and where it continued as the oldest colonial university in the British Empire until very recently, when it was removed to Halifax. A private school for boys still uses the original chapel for its religious exercises.

“A most famous judge of Nova Scotia, Thomas Haliburton by name,” went on the driver as they left the old buildings behind, “was also quite an author, under the nom de plume of Sam Slick. His best known book is called ‘The Clock Maker.’ It is regarded as a classic, and its humor is said to rival that of Dickens himself in the Pickwick Papers. This is his house, which we are approaching, and where he wrote his books. It is known as the ‘Sam Slick House’ and is open to the public.”

The party was met at the low porch (upon which was an old-fashioned scraper for removing mud from one's shoes) by the hostess, a charming woman, who showed them through the house. The living room, into which the outside door opened, was paneled in oak halfway to the ceiling, and upon it were hung various old-fashioned articles.

“What is this for?” asked Nancy, examining a covered brass pan, at the end of a long wooden handle.

“That is a warming pan,” explained the hostess. “They used to put hot coals inside, and run the pan under the bedclothes a few times to take the chill off the sheets before one went to bed in severe weather. You know in those days there was no steam heat; and most bedrooms were entirely unheated.”

“And this, please?” asked Jeanette, fingering a metal plate which seemed to be double, with a small lip-like opening at one side.

“That? You put hot water in there,” pointing to the opening, “and set plates on it to keep warm.”

They gazed admiringly at the lovely gate-legged tables, fire screen, hunting prints, and numerous other treasures; and then, through a door at the back of the room, entered a narrow hall which ran across the width of the house. On the opposite side opened the dining room, where one may order refreshments, and the library where the judge's bookcases and desk are still standing. The woodwork of the hall was all painted in the peculiar Acadian blue; and from either end of the hall, there was a staircase leading to the rooms of the second floor.

"The judge built this house himself," said the hostess, as they crossed the oval rugs of braided blue and green straw, and went up the quaint narrow stairs, "and he thought the rooms upstairs should be entirely separate; so here are the ones on the right side of the house. But you will have to go down again, and up the stairs at the other end of the hall, to get to the rooms on the left of the house."

"How very funny!" exclaimed Nancy, as they peered into the cretonne-hung rooms, with their casement windows opening into the very tree tops, their four-poster beds, and old-fashioned pictures. In one room, apparently occupied by some favored individual, there was a tiny air-tight stove.

"Here is something I didn't notice when we came up," said Mrs. Bond, stopping on the landing on their way down, before a tall grandfather's clock.

The place was a veritable treasure trove for anyone interested in antiques, and she and her husband were just reveling in their finds, examining every article closely, and showing that their hobby was no mere pose. They had a genuine love for old things.

"And here is another kind," said her husband, pointing to the opposite wall, where hung a big, round clock with heavy weights dangling from it.

“Now, that’s just the kind of clock I always imagined the mouse must have run up,” cried Nancy, “although I never saw one before.”

“The mouse?” repeated Martha, in a puzzled tone. “What mouse?”

Nancy laughed.

“Why the one in the old rhyme, ‘Hickery-dickory-dock; the mouse ran up the clock.’”

Mr. and Mrs. Bond exchanged glances of tolerant amusement. If there were many college girls like the ones in this party, modern college girls were not so bad after all.

“Here is a place we didn’t see,” said Miss Ashton, stepping into a small room with deep, orange-colored walls. “What a perfectly *wonderful* rug! Look here, girls!”

“Oh!” exclaimed Nancy, plopping down on the floor beside a magnificent white bearskin that was spread before a mammoth fireplace, and stroking the head delightedly.

“My nephew, who is a member of the Royal Mounted Police, shot the bear in the polar regions, and sent it to me,” said the hostess.

They could hardly get Nancy away from it, and it was with great reluctance that all of them left the attractive house and shaded lawns, where gay tables and striped umbrellas made one long for a cup of tea, even at ten o’clock in the morning.

“I’m going to get hold of the ‘Sam Slick’ books as soon as we get back,” asserted Nancy.

“Won’t it be fun to recognize the parts of the house mentioned in some of the books?” Jeanette agreed that it would, and notation was made of another thing to do “when they got home.”

“Just west of here,” said the driver, “on the edge of the Basin of Minas, lies the great marsh meadow known as Grand Pré. Minas opens into the

Bay of Fundy, and is guarded by Cape Blomidon, both of which Longfellow mentions in his famous poem. You will notice the red mud flats on the banks of the river on this side of Nova Scotia,” he continued, as they drove across a quaint covered bridge. “They are all influenced by the famous double tides of the Bay of Fundy. Twice every twenty-four hours the tide, or ‘bore,’ as it is sometimes called, rushes into Fundy. The Avon River, for example, has a rise of thirty-four feet. When the tide is out, the river banks are a mass of red mud, veined by little trickles of water; when the tide comes in, with a mighty rush, all the banks are covered.”

They soon stopped before the little house guarding the Acadian Memorial Park, which is in the center of the old Acadian village immortalized by Longfellow. A descendant of the Acadians has charge of this little building, where a few souvenirs are sold, and where the services of a guide may be obtained. Standing in the doorway which opens into the park itself, one sees a vast stretch of meadow land, dotted with magnificent flower beds; a chapel, a statue, and a row of willows showing up in the distance.

“This,” said Mrs. Bond, who was elected to act as guide, since the young man who performed that office was busy with another party, “is the site of the meadows which the Acadians protected from the inroads of the sea with dikes, so built that at certain seasons enough water could be let in for irrigation purposes.”

Past beds containing flowers blended and contrasted as only the Nova Scotians know how to arrange them, our party finally stopped beside the stone well, known as “Evangeline’s well,” from which the inhabitants of the old village of Grand Pré obtained their water supply.

“Is there any water in it?” inquired Nancy, peering into its mossy depths, and gratified to see water not very far down.

“Be careful, Nan. Your purse!” cried Jeanette; but she spoke just too late. Nancy had laid it on the top of the curb a few minutes before, while Martha took a picture of them gathered about the well. She had neglected to pick it up again, and shoved it off when she leaned over the edge.

They heard a faint splash, and looked at one another in dismay; then Martha burst out laughing.

“I’m—really—terribly—sorry for you, Nan,” she said, “but you seem to be as unlucky with your pocketbook on this trip as I am with falls. We’ll have to beware of the fateful third time!”

“Was there much in it, Nan?” asked Jeanette.

“Oh, no,” said Nancy carelessly. “Just a couple of dollars. You know I’m always losing pocketbooks; so I never carry much in them. Anyway, it’s gone; and we’re not going to let it spoil our day.”

They wandered on to the small chapel of Norman architecture, built on the exact site of the original chapel of St. Charles, of which Longfellow says:

“And lo! with a summons sonorous
Sounded the bell from its tower,
And over the meadows a drum beat,
Thronged erelong was the church with men.”

In time, this little building is to house books, documents, and household articles of the French Acadians.

Halfway down the meadow, opposite the chapel, stands a bronze statue of an idealized Evangeline.

“This is the work of Henri Hebert,” said Mrs. Bond, “one of Canada’s foremost sculptors, and a direct descendant of the Grand Pré French.”

They all felt very serious as they gazed up at the rather sad figure, looking backward upon the land she loved so dearly; and then strolled down toward the row of willows which lined the street of Grand Pré. They then followed a narrow, winding stream to a pond upon which floated ducks among the lily pads.

“Do you suppose they’d let me pet them?” said Nancy, leaning down to touch one which seemed tamer than the rest.

“Be careful—” began Jeanette, just as Nan’s foot slipped on the grass, and she slid, headfirst, into the water, creating great consternation among the inhabitants of the pool, as well as among the spectators.

Nancy was a funny looking creature as she stepped from the pond, and Martha was once more overcome with laughter.

“You got the third fall, Nan,” she cried; “now I’ll have to lose the third pocketbook.”

“Don’t count on that!” retorted Nancy.

“Better watch your step just the same.”

“What in the world shall we do with you, Nan?” asked Jeanette, obviously worried.

“I’ll go back to the bus with her,” offered Miss Ashton, “and get her bag. Probably there is some place in the gatehouse where she can change her things. Fortunately, it is quite warm; so she is not likely to take cold in the meantime.”

They hurried on ahead, and the others followed in leisurely fashion, stopping often to examine the flowers. There were so many unusual kinds that the collection would have been a delight to any student of botany.

When they reached the bus, Nancy, in dry garments, was waiting for them. Jim stood near by, teasing her about her fondness for ducks; a fondness, he said, strong enough to induce her to seek their habitat.

“I know one thing,” said Martha, as they climbed into the bus, “I’m going to reread *Evangeline* as soon as I get home. It will be so much more interesting after seeing the place.”

CHAPTER VII

EN ROUTE TO DIGBY

“We still in the country of *Evangeline*,” said Jim, as they entered Wolfville, three miles beyond Grand Pré. “From here, one may sail across the Basin of Minas over the very course taken by the Acadians on their way into exile. Cape Blomidon’s purple head, thrust far out into the basin, acts as a barrier to fog and storm, thus keeping this region especially suitable for fruit raising. The Micmac Indians believe that Glooscap lives on Blomidon.”

“Glooscap?” inquired Nancy.

“A supernatural hero, something like the Grecian Hercules.”

“Oh! I wish we could see it!” cried Martha. “Who, the hero?” asked Jim.

“Of course not! I’m not so stupid. I mean Cape Blomidon. Then we could gather amethysts for ourselves.”

“Can’t you be satisfied with your souvenir of Captain Kidd?” asked Jim, with a sidewise glance at Nancy.

“Y—es. I suppose so.”

They lunched at Kentville, and bade a very reluctant farewell to Mr. and Mrs. Bond; then drove for miles through the famous orchard lands of the Annapolis and Cornwallis Valleys.

“The most celebrated apple district in the world,” said Jim, indicating with a wave of his hand the endless rows of trees beside the road, “though few people seem to know it. Here are raised many of the finest apples which we eat in the States, especially the Northern Spy.”

Past miles of orchards, and through many little towns they sped, until they reached Annapolis Royal.

“This is the old Port Royal, capital of French Acadia, and founded in 1604—the first permanent European settlement in America after St. Augustine,” said Jim. “Nova Scotia boasts of being first in several ways: The first mill was built here; the first conversion to Christianity took place here; the first Canadian song, written in honor of Champlain; the first play written and staged in North America; and last, but most interesting, the first social club.

“During the winter of 1606-7,” he went on, “Champlain instituted the ‘Order of the Good Time’ to which fifteen leading Frenchmen belonged. For a single day each member was hailed by the rest as Grand Master, and wore a splendid collar while he acted as host to the others. The Grand Master provided dinner and entertainment, and each man tried to surpass his predecessors. The old Indian chief was always an honored guest, and many of his tribe shared in the merrymaking. At the end, all smoked the pipe of peace. When the English captured the town, its name was changed to Annapolis Royal, in honor of Queen Anne.”

The bus rolled up the hill to the Park, which is on the site of the old ramparts of Fort Anne; and stopped before a long, quaint building, with three great chimneys.

“This was the officers’ quarters, built in 1798,” explained Jim; “and over on the other side of the Park you can see the remains of the powder magazine, and some of the fortifications, half buried in the embankment.

There are thirty fireplaces in this building, and many rooms filled with curios well worth inspecting.”

A little, white-haired old man of military bearing took them through the building, and explained the exhibits. He marshaled and directed the sight-seers like a crowd of children, and insisted upon absolute quiet while he talked. Not a finger did they dare lay upon any article, and not a move could they make in any direction until he gave the signal.

Martha leaned over and whispered some comment to Nancy, and immediately the guide fixed his piercing eyes upon her severely, and said, “I shall have to ask you to refrain from talking during my lecture. I *cannot* tell about these things when anyone else is talking.”

Martha shrank back, filled with confusion; and after that episode no one of the whole party ventured even the briefest remark.

In the narrow hall is displayed a collection of cuts of coats of arms, a treasure to anyone interested in the development of heraldry. In one of the rooms there is a collection of coins, covering all types used in Nova Scotia since the first settlement. Another is given over mostly to souvenirs of the World War, seeming a bit out of place amidst the relative antiques of the other rooms. Still another contains various pieces of firearms during the different sieges of the Fort. The guide displayed also, as one of his choicest bits, the immense key to the fort, handed over to the English general by the French commander in the last siege, and until recently in the hands of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

But the girls found most interesting of all, the Acadian room, taken intact from an Acadian house, and rebuilt into its present setting. It is simplicity itself, and takes one back in spirit to those delightfully simple people whom Longfellow has made so well known. The floor is bare, and the woodwork painted Acadian blue; and on the walls are a few holy

pictures, and a couple of rifles. At one side of the fireplace with its andirons and swinging crane, stands a wooden cradle with a hood at one end; and on the other side is the spinning wheel. The chairs have seats made of strips of deerskin, woven in and out. "Just like the mats we made out of paper in the kindergarten," said Nancy. One of the oddest articles in the room is a table which one can transform into a chair or a cupboard by the proper manipulation of the leaves. On the door is the old wooden latch, and the guide explained that if this were an outside door, the latchstring would be drawn in at night, after which no one could open the door from the outside.

"So that," exclaimed Nancy in delightful enthusiasm, forgetting the rule of silence, "is where we get our expression 'our latchstring is always out for you.' I've wondered about that ever since I first heard it."

"Don't you feel just as if you had been let out from school?" asked Martha, as they left the building and walked across the Park to take a look at the powder magazine.

"Yes; wasn't he strict?" answered Jeanette. "But he certainly knows his exhibits. And how he loves them, and everything connected with Nova Scotia!"

It was difficult to tear themselves away from the interesting old place, but Jim said they would have to be going in order to get to Digby in proper time.

"This town," he said, as they entered Bear River, some miles beyond Annapolis Royal, "is celebrated for its Cherry Carnival. In the middle of July, hundreds of tourists and natives come here to feast upon cherries and witness a series of thrilling aquatic events. The Indians from a near-by reservation take part in the birch bark canoe and log rolling contests, and usually carry off many of the prizes."

"Um!" said Martha. "I'd like to be here then. I just love cherries."

The car now followed the curving shores of the Annapolis Basin toward Digby. This is one of the most beautiful parts of the country. The purplish North Mountain range rises abruptly from the opposite bank of the Annapolis River, and one passes through miles of a picture book world—farms, quaint tiny villages, deep woods, rivers, hills, lovely summer homes guarded by tall fir trees, log cabin colonies, until the long bridge which leads into Digby is reached.

“Out there,” said Jim, pointing across Digby Basin, “is what they call Digby Gut. It was properly named Digby Gap; but, according to the story, the fishermen, after they had completed their catch, always stopped out there to clean the fish, throwing the refuse into the water; and from that comes the inelegant name which the gap now bears. The gap is formed by a mile wide break in the North Mountain range, and through that mountain gate, which the Indians call ‘Tee-wee-den,’ or ‘little hole,’ rush the great floods of the Bay of Fundy, twice every twenty-four hours. They fill the basin, the rivers, and all their tributaries to the very top of the diked embankments for a distance of over forty miles.”

“How wonderful!” exclaimed Jeanette, while Miss Ashton quoted from Longfellow:

“Oh, faithful, indefatigable tides
That ever more, upon God’s errands go,
Now seaward, hearing tidings of the land,
Now landward, bearing tidings of the sea,
And filling every firth and estuary,
Each arm of the great sea, each little creek,
Each thread and filament of water course,
Full with your ministrations of delight!”

“How perfectly that description suits this part of the country,” said Nancy appreciatively.

They drove up the wooded hill to the big hotel, surrounded by cottages of various sizes. One of these was assigned to Miss Ashton and her party; and they took possession at once, for dinner time was fast approaching.

“What a darling place!” cried Nancy, inspecting the two bedrooms, bath, and living room.

“I like this room best,” said Jeanette, standing in the living room with its big fireplace, cretonne hangings, and wonderful view of the basin into which extended the long government pier from which you may sail to St. John, New Brunswick.

“You had better postpone your raptures,” suggested Miss Ashton practically, “if we are all to bathe and dress for dinner. I understand that this is a very fashionable place, and we want to look our best.”

“I want to ask you something,” said Nancy, detaining Miss Ashton as she prepared to follow the girls who were on their way to the bedrooms.

“Yes?”

“Jim asked me to go to the dance at the hotel for a while to-night.”

“And what did you tell him?”

“I said I’d ask you and let him know later.”

“Well, why don’t you go? He is a very nice boy; and, by the way, I forgot to tell you that I had quite a long talk with him the other day and we have some mutual acquaintances.”

“But what about the other girls? Jeanette won’t mind, I’m sure; but I don’t feel so positive about Martha.”

“She is certainly sensible enough to know that the boy couldn’t be expected to take three girls to a dance. I’ll think up some way to fix things.”

Miss Ashton was much pleased with Nancy's deference to her opinions. She had chaperoned other girls who had shown far less consideration.

"Thanks a lot," cried Nancy, running happily off to dress for dinner.

At the table in the big dining room, filled with beautifully dressed people, Miss Ashton decided, after looking about, that her girls looked just as pretty as any of the other young people. Nancy was a picture in the old rose chiffon, with her dark brown fashionably bobbed hair, deep dimples, and dancing brown eyes. Jeanette, demure and dainty, was in the blue and silver which blended so well with her blond hair and blue eyes. The gypsy-like Martha was gay in unrelieved scarlet.

"Nancy has been invited to dance this evening," began Miss Ashton, while they were waiting for the soup.

"Oh, how nice!" said Jeanette. "Jim?"

Nancy nodded.

"I thought it might be fun, if you all agree," continued Miss Ashton, "to take a taxi uptown and look about a bit. Then perhaps when we get back, Nancy and Jim will be ready to join us at the cottage."

"A good idea," agreed Jeanette.

"And we might have a game of bridge," proposed Martha, who had succeeded in stifling her bit of envy; for she *did* love to dance.

"Fine!" said Nancy heartily. "We'll go over to the cottage as soon as you get back."

Shortly after they left the dining room, Jim came in search of Nancy; and the others departed in a taxi, with long heavy coats over their evening clothes.

They prowled about the little town of Digby, buying post cards, stamps, etc., and seemed to have about exhausted the possibility of

purchases, when Martha exclaimed:

“Let’s buy some funny prizes for our bridge party!”

“Oh, let’s,” agreed Jeanette, entering a little store in the window of which various souvenirs were displayed, Miss Ashton and Martha following.

It was difficult to make a selection; for they wanted a prize for each which would be particularly suited to its recipient; and by turns each had to withdraw while her prize was being bought. At last, however, they were ready to return to the hotel, when Martha cried:

“We haven’t any lunch for the party! And what’s a party without a lunch!”

Jeanette laughed; but Miss Ashton replied:

“I’ll surprise you. I planned that part of it long ago.”

When they got back to the cottage they found Nancy and Jim sitting on the tiny front porch looking at the moon above the tall pines shining down upon the little village and the pier with the lighthouse at the end.

“There was such a crowd that we didn’t care to stay any longer,” explained Nancy, as they all went into the living room.

The fireman had been in, and now a cheerful wood fire was dancing in the fireplace. They drew the table close to the hearth, for there was a chill in the air as soon as the sun went down, and settled themselves for card playing.

At about eleven o’clock, Miss Ashton, who had been watching the game, suggested counting up the scores.

“We bought some prizes,” she announced, “and they will now be awarded.”

She had taken the opportunity, while the young people were occupied, to wrap and label the articles which she now laid before each one.

“You had the highest score, Jim,” said Nancy, “so you open yours first.”

He slowly untied a box, and from it drew forth a toy automobile, while the girls exclaimed at its appropriateness.

“It winds up and runs, I think,” said Nancy, examining it closely.

“Take it right away from her,” said Martha. “If she gets fussing with a mechanical toy, it’s good night to everything else.”

Jim put his big hand over it, and Nancy surrendered the toy without protest.

“Now yours, Nan,” said Jim.

A toy duck emerged from her package, and Jim shouted with laughter.

“Oh!” she cried, delightedly, “it quacks!” as she accidentally pressed a spring in its neck.

Martha’s prize was a purse labeled, “For Captain Kidd’s coin.”

“Lovely!” she exclaimed. “I’ll put it right in.”

Jeanette received a small clothes brush, for she was always fussing about dust; and then Martha and Jeanette together presented Miss Ashton with a small basket filled with tiny dolls, and bearing a label “Some of your protégées.”

“She is always taking some girl under her wing,” exclaimed Nancy to Jim.

“I did not have much time or many opportunities for providing an elaborate lunch for this party,” said Miss Ashton, after the prizes had been examined and laid aside; “but I did my best.”

She laid a paper lunch cloth on the table, and in the center placed a big box of delicious looking chocolates and bonbons which she had bought in Boston.

“Don’t start on those,” she directed, as she added a box filled with fancy English cookies which she had picked up in Halifax, and not opened before.

“Now as soon as the boy brings over the coffee which I ordered from the hotel, we can begin.”

He soon appeared with a big tray of cups, spoons, sugar, cream, and pots of steaming coffee.

“I don’t know when I’ve enjoyed food so much,” said Jim, after they had finished, and were clearing up. “One gets awfully tired of the regular hotel menus.”

“I’ll bet I never would,” said Martha. “Anyhow, I’d like to try it until I did.”

“Which would not be long,” finished Nancy.

“Now, folks,” said Miss Ashton, “much as I hate to break up this delightful party, it is nearly midnight, and we have to take to the road again in the morning.”

They hastily said good night, and Jim went off to his quarters with a backward glance at the window which framed Nancy’s rose-colored loveliness.

“If you hear me holler during the night,” said Martha, “you’ll know that someone reached in this window and grabbed my feet.”

The girls laughed; but after they were settled in the twin beds on either side of their own room, Nancy asked Jeanette rather hesitatingly:

“Do you suppose anyone would?”

“Would what?”

“Reach in these windows.”

“Of course not! There are other cottages all around us, and the grounds are doubtless patrolled during the night.”

“Just the same,” persisted Nancy, “I don’t like sleeping in a little cottage with windows so close to the ground.”

“Wait until you go to Yellowstone, as you are always talking of, you’ll sleep in a cabin there.”

The next thing they knew, the sun was shining brightly, and Miss Ashton was calling:

“Hustle, girls! It’s after seven, and we leave at eight thirty!”

They dressed and packed in a hurry, and crossed the gravel path to the hotel. When they reached the top of the stone steps leading to the terrace, they paused to admire the view. The water of the Basin was calm and blue; the sky crossed by bands of brilliant light; and the surrounding mountain ranges were a bit misty.

“This view is said to resemble the one across the Bay of Naples,” said Miss Ashton, as they reluctantly continued on their way to the dining room.

“It is a lovely place,” said Nancy, when they were once more in the bus, and rolling past the brilliant flower beds, tall pine and spruce trees, and out upon the main road. “I had a good time here, and I rather hate to leave.”

“I hate to think that our trip is almost over,” said Jim, so softly that none of the others heard him.

Nancy made no reply; but there was a queer little feeling of sadness at the idea of leaving this lovely land behind.

“That long strip of land to the right,” said Jim presently, “is Digby Neck; and it separates the Bay of Fundy from St. Mary’s Bay which we shall follow for many miles.”

“Isn’t this where the Acadians settled when some of them returned from exile?” asked Miss Ashton.

“Yes; their houses are strung all along this Bay; and sometimes it is hard to tell when one leaves one village, and enters, the next. Some have

only half a dozen houses; others a larger number. These people still speak French, and retain all the customs of their ancestors, one of which is the constant dividing and redividing of their long narrow farms among their children and grandchildren.”

“There are few signs of life around the houses,” commented Jeanette. “I should think farmers would have to be up and at work before this time.”

“On an ordinary day they would,” said Jim; “but I understand that this is one of their Holy Days. They are a very religious people, you know, and not a stroke of work is done on a Holy Day any more than on a Sunday. We shall presently meet them all going to church.”

Sure enough, as they entered Weymouth, they saw conveyances of all kinds gathered about the church; and along the dusty roads toward it plodded old and young. One man was pushing a baby carriage containing a very young child, while his wife followed, leading one about three or four years old by the hand. A rough box wagon passed filled with children of all ages, sitting on the floor. Another cart had heavy boards laid across it for seats, all occupied by men, women, and children.

“This is Church Point,” said Jim, “and the spire of St. Mary’s Church, situated on the point, rises over two hundred feet and can be seen by every vessel nearing the shore. From far out on the water the sailors look for the cross on the top of the spire.”

Here too the church was surrounded by vehicles, and many people were approaching it from all directions.

Some miles farther on, Jim added:

“In this town, the church is unfinished; and the people, as you can see, are using a tiny wooden chapel. This big new church,” stopping before a dignified building of gray stone, “has been under construction since 1910.

The outside, as you see, is practically done; but the inside is a mass of scaffolding.”

“Yes,” said Nancy, “I can see some of it through that window. But why take so long to build one church?”

“The people have not enough money to finish it all at once; and although they give most generously to the church, it may be ten or fifteen years before the building is ready for use. They never use a church until it is entirely completed; and, apparently, do not borrow to build, as we do in the States, but simply go as fast as their money on hand will permit.”

“I think it marvelous,” said Miss Ashton, “that even in twenty-five years the people of a section like this could put up such a church. Surely the congregation is not large; and it is quite obvious that they are not possessed of much of this world’s goods.”

“It is wonderful,” admitted Jim; “but you see their whole life centers around the church, and they give, according to our standards of giving, far out of proportion to their means.”

“But how on earth do these people ever get anywhere?” asked Martha. “There is no sign of a railroad.”

“They drive; or if by chance (which is very seldom) they want to go some distance, the railroad can be reached, although it swings inland from Digby to Yarmouth instead of following the coast line. There is a reason for that curve in the Atlantic Dominion Line. It is said that when the course of the railroad was laid out, the priest who had charge of this district begged not to have it pass through these little French villages. His request was granted, and few distractions of the world outside disturb his people. The position of the priest here is most important; for he is judge, lawyer, general friend and adviser, as well as pastor.”

“Seems like a mighty drab sort of life, I think,” said Martha, skeptically.

“It does look that way to us,” said Miss Ashton, “who have made a regular fetish of what we call progress. But I wonder if perhaps in the real happiness that comes from peace and contentment, they haven’t the better of us.”

“In other words,” said Jeanette softly, “you think it possible that they have ‘chosen the better part.’”

Everyone was quiet for a while; there is an air of peace in the Acadian country that seems to command reverence. Soon the region of St. Mary’s Bay was left behind, and the bus rolled into Yarmouth, reaching the hotel just in time for lunch.

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE MAIL

“Be ready at two thirty for a trip to Lower Woods Harbor, please,” said Jim, as they left the bus; adding in an undertone to Nancy, “our last ride together.”

“It is hard to realize that,” she replied softly. “It seems as if we were just going on and on in this bus for the rest of the summer.”

“We’ll probably find some letters here,” said Miss Ashton, as she went toward the desk in the lobby.

“I hope so,” replied Jeanette. “It seems perfect ages since we left home.”

“Homesick, Janie?” inquired Martha.

“Oh, no; only I do love to get mail; and it seemed queer to be without it all this time.”

“Well, here’s plenty of it,” said Miss Ashton, distributing it rapidly. “Two for Jeanette, three for Martha, five for Nancy, and four for myself.”

“Let’s go somewhere and read it all; so we can exchange news,” proposed Martha.

“A very good idea. That ‘somewhere’ might just as well be one of our rooms,” agreed Miss Ashton, leading the way to the elevator, to which a bell boy had already preceded them with the luggage. They got off at the third floor, where two rooms had been reserved for them. They were a bit disappointed to find that they were not connecting; one, a small room, was near the end of the corridor; the other, much larger, was near the stairs.

“My goodness,” exclaimed Martha, as they entered the larger one. “You could give a dance here!”

A huge double bed near the fireplace, a single beside the two long windows (from which they could see the wharf), a big wardrobe, an immense dresser, a fair-sized square table and three chairs only partly filled the old-fashioned room; and its very high ceilings accentuated its huge proportions.

“You could take the single bed if you wanted to, Mart,” proposed Nancy; “and give Miss Ashton a chance to get a little real sleep. You see, we know how restless she is at night, as well as by day,” she added to Miss Ashton.

“Fix it up any way to suit yourselves,” she replied; “and that will please me. Now for our mail.”

For several minutes there was no sound except the opening of envelopes and the turning of pages. When everyone had read all her communications, they began to exchange bits of information.

“One of mine,” said Miss Ashton, “is from Madelon. Her foster mother is still confined to her bed, and she has no idea when she will be able to come back to Boston.”

“What a shame!” cried Nancy.

“Poor Madelon!” said Jeanette softly. “She must feel terribly lonely up there now, after having lived in a city like Boston.”

“I don’t know her at all,” said Martha; “but let’s all get her some little thing and mail to her at different times.”

“That is a very nice idea,” approved Miss Ashton. “She said to tell you girls how much she regretted being unable to show you Boston, which she likes so well. The rest of my letters are from old or prospective patients, and would not interest you particularly.”

“One of mine,” said Jeanette, “is from home. Mother spent Monday with your mother, Nan, and she said Polly kept calling, ‘Where is Nancy?’ She seemed to think Mother should know. My other letter is from Mrs. Perkins, and encloses one from Joey. Wait. I’ll read them both to you. Mrs. Perkins says:

“I was so glad to get your card, and to know that you and your special pals were going to have such a delightful trip. Nova Scotia is a place I always thought I should like to see. Perhaps if your reports of it are enticing, I may yet visit it some day. When you come back to college, you might give us a travel talk; and, by the way, there might be a surprise here awaiting your return. Don’t write and ask me what it is; for I shall not tell you. *That* would spoil the surprise.

“The Harris family is getting along very well. One of Pauline’s office friends invited her to go on a vacation trip to Toronto, for both of them happened to get the same two weeks. The other girl’s people live there; so it was a question simply of the fare for Pauline; and that was managed quite nicely——”

“Which means that she supplied the money herself,” interrupted Nancy.

“Joey” [continued Jeanette], “has been rather lonely this summer, in spite of all the attention lavished on him by the Harrises and the college people who live in town. He misses, I think, the crowd and bustle of college life. I enclose a note from him.

“Love to you and your pals,
“Alicia Perkins.””

“And here is Joey’s note,” she went on; “of course the spelling is superb, so you had better read it for yourselves.” She passed it on, and they all read:

“Dee Mis Janete, Hop you ar havin a fin time but com bac
soon THanks fur the cards Rollo sends lov.

“Joey.”

“And who, pray, is Joey?” inquired Miss Ashton.

“Oh, we forgot,” cried Nancy. “You don’t know anything about Joey, or Mrs. Perkins either; do you?”

All three of the girls tried to explain at once; so Miss Ashton had to exercise her imagination in spots to piece together the disjointed, interrupted bits of information about the little crippled boy who belonged to one of the college janitors, and had been taken up by the students as a sort of protégé; and of the fine Mrs. Perkins who was a member of the girls’ club for helping others.

“Poor little fellow,” she said, when the trio had finished. “Seems to me he should have some simple lessons to help occupy him, as well as to develop his mind.”

“Perhaps when we go back, he will be able to,” replied Jeanette thoughtfully. “He really wasn’t well enough for anything but play last year. Some days even that was too much of an exertion.”

“Now, Nannie,” said Martha. “What news have you to contribute?”

“The first letter I read was from Mother,” said Nancy. “Dad has bought a dog—a big collie, which they have named Peter; and Polly just can’t bear

him. *He*, however, is quite curious about *her*, and frequently stands for some minutes in front of the cage, gazing at her, undisturbed apparently by her shrieks of rage and uncomplimentary remarks.

“Mother has been dividing her spare time, since we left, between instructing a new maid, and sewing for a family whose house and belongings were badly damaged by fire. She says she has been a regular pest to the neighbors because she has asked all of them for cast-off clothing and furniture. Her struggles with the maid must be very funny; for she can’t speak a word of Italian, nor the girl a syllable of English. She tried to explain to Benita the other day that the floors in the bedrooms must be gone over with the dust mop every day, and showed her how the lint gathered under the beds where there were a couple of pairs of slippers. The next morning after the upstairs work was finished, Mother was horrified to find her slippers set carefully on her lovely orchid rayon dresser spread! She learned from Benita’s pantomime explanations that if the slippers were not kept under the bed there would be nothing to catch the dust. Now Mother puts all her footwear in the closet, where, she says, it really belongs after all. Mother hurt her ankle the other day (it was nothing serious, but she had to keep off of it for a day); and she sent Benita out to get the mail, from the box. She tried by gesticulations to get her to understand what she wanted; but from the noise on the porch she wondered what on earth Benita was doing. It seems that our maid is quite a muscular person; for what do you suppose she did? She got the wrong idea from Mother’s motions about taking something out of a box, and actually ripped the flower box off the railing of the porch and brought it in! Mother is surely having some fun, but I imagine it is rather trying. That is about all of interest in her letter.”

“And the second one?” urged Martha.

“That is from Uncle John. They have added a sun parlor to the house, Janie, on the south side, you know, near the fence where the lizards sun themselves——”

“Lizards, ugh!” shuddered Martha.

“Oh, Mart, you wouldn’t mind them. They are dear little things, some of them quite tame.”

“No recommendations at all to my way of thinking,” retorted Martha. “The wilder the better, I should say, if being wild makes them keep away from me.”

“What else did the Doctor say?” inquired Jeanette, who was very fond of Nancy’s uncle.

“He saw Madame the other day; in fact, she invited them over for dinner. She told him that she is considering getting a companion. Her husband is so occupied with some kind of writing that he is doing, that she is left alone a great deal of the time; and she would like a young girl who would liven up the house a bit. She says that she would be prepared to treat the right kind of a girl like a daughter, entertain for her, and all that. She wanted to know if Uncle could recommend anyone. He did not know of any possibilities, but promised to keep his eyes open.”

“Pauline!” cried Jeanette.

“Janie, you’re a genius! I wonder if she would go!” exclaimed Nancy. “I’ll write Uncle to-night, and tell him all about her.”

“And the third epistle?” teased Martha, who had seen an envelope addressed in a masculine hand.

“That’s from Curtis,” replied Nancy, without a trace of self-consciousness or embarrassment. “He has been sent out to Portland.”

“Maine?” asked Martha, hopefully. “That’s isn’t so far from here. We might stop over on the way home.”

“Sorry to disappoint you, dear,” answered Nancy, sweetly, “but I said *out not up*, for the Portland in question happens to be in Oregon.”

“Now that’s too bad! That’s just too bad!” sighed Martha.

Everybody laughed; for they had all recently seen “On with the Show” and recognized the quotation at once.

“Curtis wrote only a note; for he had just arrived, and had not yet seen anything interesting. This other letter,” she continued, “is from Phil Spenser.”

“Oh, are he and Tom going to meet us in Boston as they spoke of doing?” asked Jeanette.

“Time alone can tell,” replied Nancy.

“They started out in Tom’s old Ford coupe, intending to take in quite a part of the Adirondacks on the way. Thinking to make better time, or merely for the experience, I don’t know which, they drove all one night, instead of putting up anywhere. They made a wrong turn at some point or other, which took them off the main highway onto a very deserted road, where they were held up by a couple of armed men——”

“How perfectly *thrilling!*” cried Martha.

“Who relieved them of all their money, their watches, etc., punctured all the tires, and then rode off in their own little car. The boys stayed there until morning, and then got a passing motorist from the highway to tow them to the nearest garage. They had no money to pay for repairs; so made arrangements with the garage owner to stay and work out their bill. They worked there for a week, and then started on, almost penniless, for Lake Placid——”

“But why didn’t they send home for some money?” demanded Martha.

“Because Tom had taken with him all he could afford to spend on vacation, and Mr. Spenser, under protest, had furnished Phil with a like

amount.”

“I thought the Spensers had quite a lot of money,” said Jeanette.

“They have, I believe; but Mr. Spenser thinks Phil should earn what he wants to spend on pleasure. Phil says his dad was quite annoyed because he preferred going off with Tom to working all the rest of the summer in the Electric Company’s office. I imagine it was only the fact that Tom begged for Phil’s company that made Mr. Spenser consent at all. He feels that Tom has rather a good effect on Phil, I understand. But, to go on with the story—they tried all the hotels to see if they could get jobs, and finally found one where one of the elevator boys had just been sent to the hospital; so Tom was taken on as a sub. After some more wandering about, Phil found a place with an old man who has a farm a little way up the lake, and who supplies the hotels with chickens and eggs. He used to deliver his wares himself in an old-fashioned buggy; but that method is too slow now. He bought a Ford truck, and then discovered that he couldn’t learn to run it. Phil fortunately appeared on the scene at that particular moment, and was hired at once.”

“Just imagine,” cried Martha, “the superior Phil Spenser driving up to those big hotels with a load of chickens and eggs. It’s the funniest thing I have ever heard!”

“So that is what they are doing now,” concluded Nancy; “and their meeting us all depends on whether they can earn enough money before we go home.”

She picked up another letter. “This,” she said, “is from Ethel King _____”

“Oh, *what* does she say about Emma?” inquired Jeanette eagerly.

“I’ll read it to you.

“Dear Girls:

“To say that I was pleasantly surprised when Emma stepped off the train at Plattsburg is to put it mildly. Her hair looks just fine, and her pride in her new bob is very funny. She keeps patting it, and feeling of it to see if it is still there. Later on she’ll have to be broken of that. However, Marian will teach, or try to teach, her repose of manner. Did you ever see *anybody* practice it so perfectly as our “Mary Ann”? She never touches her clothing or herself, or anything at all, in fact, unnecessarily. I understand that her mother is painfully neat and particular—(what a jolt poor Emma will give her!)—and I suppose Marian took her ways quite naturally, or was trained into them.

“Emma’s wardrobe is perfect, and she really takes pains to keep her things nice. I suspect that was some of Jeanette’s good work. Her manners, too, are greatly improved, and she does not hang onto one’s waist or neck quite so persistently as of yore.

“You will want to know, I suppose, what little Ethel did for her. Well, Mother and I talked things over beforehand—for, of course, I had to confide in her—and we decided to teach our mutual friend the joys of athletic exercise. We get the morning setting-up series over the radio; so the very first day I routed her out and made her do them with me; and ditto the rest of the days. Twice a day we went into the water, and Emma learned to swim a little. We went for tramps through the woods, and along the shore; and had picnic suppers. In fact, as I said, outdoor exercise was the

theme of our entertainment. At the end of the week, Emma really had a little color, and had straightened up considerably.

“Esther expected to interest her in gym work when she went to Moore’s; so I imagine when we see Emma again she will have lost that distressing stoop, and rounded shoulders. I’m really very anxious to see what the entire summer will do for her. I can’t help thinking, though, that whatever does come out of it, the most credit should go to you two. The start you gave her in those two weeks was incredible. But all the C.M.’s are so different, and ride such diverse hobbies, that the composite result should be at least interesting, if not inspiring.

“Do run up here, if you can, before the summer is over, any or all of you. Love,

“Ethel”

“What might be wrong with this Emma!” asked Miss Ashton, and again the three all enlightened her at once.

“Glad you are being such friends in need,” was her brief comment, when they had finished. “And now let’s get ready for lunch.”

“Clams,” read Jeanette from the menu, when they were seated at the table. “I never ate any, but I understand they’re very popular here.”

“No time like the present,” suggested Nancy a bit absently, her eyes roving about the dining room.

“But I shouldn’t know how to eat them,” said Jeanette, wavering between her desire to taste a new food, and reluctance to appear awkward in such a public place.

“I’ll show you,” offered Martha.

“Do you really know how?” asked Jeanette, a bit doubtfully.

“Of course I do. I went to a couple of clam bakes last summer.”

When a cup of melted butter, another of hot water, and a big dish of steaming clams were set before her, Jeanette looked really frightened.

“Oh, I shouldn’t have ordered them. I don’t know what to do first.”

“You open them this way,” said Martha, demonstrating them as she talked; “pull off this piece, which I always called its ear——”

“Why?” asked Jeanette, watching anxiously.

“Because that part is not good. Then dip the clam into water, to wash the sand out, then in the melted butter, and then swallow it.”

“You take it in your fingers?” asked Jeanette in horrified tones.

“Of course.”

“Are you *sure*?”

“Why, yes. Go ahead, and don’t be silly!”

Slowly and awkwardly, Jeanette repeated the processes which Martha had demonstrated.

“Everybody is looking at me,” she said, flushing hotly.

“Everybody is far too interested in his own lunch to bother looking at you,” Miss Ashton assured her.

“I’m afraid this isn’t the right way to do it,” protested Jeanette, over the third clam. “It seems so sort of messy.”

“I certainly would have no object in deceiving you,” retorted Martha, a bit tartly. “That man at the next table just got some. Watch him and see what he does.”

Rather to Jeanette’s surprise, and to Martha’s complete satisfaction, their neighbor employed the same method.

“You’re right, Mart,” admitted Jeanette. “I don’t mean that I actually doubted your word; but, as I said, the process is so unattractive.”

“I agree with you,” said Nancy. “Someone ought to invent a more gracefully way of handling them.”

“Someone ought to invent a means of keeping the time from passing so quickly,” observed Miss Ashton. “We are due in the bus in ten minutes.”

A light fog was beginning to be seen and felt as they took their old places in the bus.

“Couldn’t you have ordered a better afternoon?” asked Martha saucily of Jim as they left the hotel behind. “And don’t forget that you promised to show us some ox teams to-day. In fact, you told us we’d see a lot yesterday, and not even one appeared.”

“I’ll do my best,” was Jim’s brief reply. He was not much of a talker at any time, except when his work required it; but this afternoon he was more quiet than ever before. Nancy, too, was strangely silent.

The country through which they were riding was sterner, more rugged than any they had yet seen; now rocky shores, rolling stony pastures, few houses, bleak strips of beach seen through a heavy mist, with white billows of fog in the background ready to roll in upon the land at any minute and envelop everything in its baffling embrace.

“Here comes your ox team, Mart,” said Jeanette presently, as they saw in the near distance a team pulling a long low wagon loaded with stone.

Jim good-naturedly stopped the bus and let the girls get out to take a picture of the animals at a watering trough where they paused for a drink.

“Why, they have no harness,” said Jeanette, “only that heavy wooden yoke laid across their necks and binding their heads together. How do you guide them?” she asked of the driver.

“With this small whip, Miss, and my directions,” replied the man.

“Poor things!” said Nancy, after they had climbed back into the bus again. “They look so sad, and lumber along so bent down that it really is depressing. The expression in their eyes is truly pathetic. I almost wish I hadn’t gotten out to look at them.”

The girls laughed, but Jim looked down understandingly at Nancy. Jim, who slowed down the big bus to almost a standstill if even a chicken crossed the road in front of it!

“These people,” he said, after a moment, “are very proud of their fine oxen, and take pains to have them perfectly matched. If one of a team happens to die, they travel all over the country, if need be, to find an exact match for the survivor.”

“Why do they prefer them to horses, I wonder,” said Miss Ashton.

“Because they are cheaper to feed. They are peculiar to Nova Scotia; for nowhere else in Canada are they still used.”

The fog billows gathered themselves together, and rolled along the surface of the water, closer and closer to the land.

“What are those?” asked Nancy, pointing to a stack of crate-like objects near a fisherman’s hut.

“Lobster pots,” said Jim; “and that pile of stakes with the ball-like colored tops are markers.”

At the next pile, which happened to be close beside the road, he stopped and got out; and they all followed him to see what the strange looking cages were really like.

The base of the pot was rectangular in shape, and between two and three feet long, and a foot and a half wide. It was made of narrow strips of wood; and the sides and top were formed, in a semicircle, of similar narrow strips bent and fastened to the base, into which some flat stones are wedged to give weight, and help sink them. The trap is lined with coarse net, and

openings are left at the side and ends, with the net so arranged that the lobsters can get in, but once in, cannot get out. The box-like cage is let down in the water where lobsters are known to be plentiful, and a marker is set up beside it. The lobster is so full of curiosity that he crawls into the trap, but finds it more difficult to get out again. Some of the pots are so constructed as to catch four lobsters at one time.

“You will notice,” said Jim, “that the markers are of different colors and combinations of color. Every fisherman in a section has his own, and no one else dares to touch the trap guarded by the markers of another.”

Jeanette had been busy pulling wild roses from the thicket beside which they were standing; and when they got back into the car, presented each person with a fragrant spray. Some of these sprays were carelessly thrown away as the flowers wilted; but two of them were carefully pressed and preserved for many years.

“Oh, what is going on here?” cried Martha, as they approached a small village.

Flags, large and small, the blue one of New Scotland, the Canadian maple leaf, the Union Jack, the tricolor of France all strung along the roadside; also on the houses, barns, trees, and even merely stuck into the ground. Even the tiniest, poorest cottage proudly flaunted its bit of loyalty. The grounds of the church were surrounded with conveyances of all types, from brand new Fords to muddy canopied surreys. Crowds of people were standing about the building, some setting up tables, some carrying chairs, some helping the tall young priest place the donations of food and fancy articles which would presently be sold. Between two trees stretched a banner of blue, bearing in white letters the words “Old Home Week.” For miles, the roads were dotted with men, women, and children of all ages,

dressed in their best, hurrying eagerly along on foot to take part in the festival.

Jim prolonged the drive as much as possible, but at last it came to an end; and they drew up once more before the hotel.

“Well, my boy,” said Miss Ashton, “we have enjoyed the trip immensely, and are indeed sorry that it is over. Look me up when you get back to Boston, if you ever happen to feel like it. Here’s my card.”

“Thank you. Perhaps I shall. I live in Cambridge, but that’s only across the river, as you know.”

Jeanette and Martha then said good-by, and Jeanette considerately took Martha by the arm, and followed Miss Ashton into the hotel.

“And have you enjoyed it all?” asked Jim, when he and Nancy were left alone.

“Just wonderfully,” replied Nancy honestly. “The most of any trip I have ever taken.”

“I wish I had a stop-over here so I could show you the town; but I go back to Digby first thing in the morning, as soon as the boat comes in. Do you suppose you could go out to-night for a walk, or are you too tired?”

“I’ve done nothing to tire me,” said Nancy, smiling. “And I’m sure Miss Ashton won’t mind.”

“Then I’ll call for you at—say eight?”

“Yes; I’ll be all ready.”

They could not have told you where they walked that evening, nor what they said; but their conversation was entirely of themselves.

Nancy heard all about Jim’s parents, and his older brother; about his plans and hopes for the future; his experiences in prep school, and at college. She in turn told him all about herself and her friends.

“I wish I were going back on the boat with you to-morrow night,” he said, as they rested on the enclosed porch for a few minutes before parting for good.

“It would be very nice, if you could,” she said. “When do you expect to go back?”

“I have no idea. Whenever orders come. Well, you must get some sleep; for you’ll want to shop in the morning, I suspect. There are some stores here which I guess would interest girls.”

Reluctantly they rose, and stood silent for a moment.

“Will you write, Nancy?”

“Yes.”

Poor Jim! He could think of many things which he would like to say, but was too bashful, too repressed to put them into words.

They clasped hands; then Jim ran down the steps, turning to salute when he reached the sidewalk.

Nancy did not feel like joining the others just yet; so she selected a far corner of the nearly deserted writing room and began a letter to her mother. Miss Ashton peered in at her a couple of times, and then went upstairs again without disturbing her.

“Nan is writing,” she said to the other two girls. “I imagine she will be up after a while. I, for one, am going right to bed.”

She was as good as her word; but she lay for several hours, turning over an idea in her mind. When she had settled it to her satisfaction, and not until then, she fell asleep.

In the meantime Jeanette and Martha had also retired, and lay talking across the room.

“It seems to me,” said Martha, “that somebody has quite a case on somebody else.”

“Your statement is a trifle ambiguous,” laughed Jeanette, “but I know what you mean.”

“And don’t you think so, too?” persisted Martha.

“Yes, I do; but for pity’s sake don’t let Nan know that you notice it. She just hates any of what she calls ‘foolishness over the boys.’”

“That’s the funny part of it,” said Martha. “I don’t believe she realizes that Jim is just crazy about her.”

“Or that she cares for him,” added Jeanette, to herself.

“Do you?”

“No-o-o,” yawned Jeanette. “I’m terribly sleepy. Let’s settle down.”

It would be easier for Nancy if they were both asleep when she came up, and she could slip into bed without having to talk. Martha was soon breathing heavily; but Jeanette did not succeed in getting to sleep until long after Nancy came to bed.

CHAPTER IX

RAMBLES ABOUT YARMOUTH

“What are we to do to-day?” asked Martha at the breakfast table.

“Shop, and see the town,” suggested Jeanette.

“Suits me,” said Nancy, when they all waited for her comments. Just a few minutes before, she had heard the whistle of a boat from the wharf. The steamer from Boston must have docked, and the big bus was down there now ready for a new cargo of passengers. What would this crowd be like? She wondered.

“I have some letters to write; so I’ll have to be excused,” said Miss Ashton. “If I finish in time, I may hunt you up; if not, we’ll all meet here at lunch time.”

An hour later, the three girls were strolling along the main street, stopping in various stores to look at the goods most attractively displayed.

“I could spend a day in there,” said Nancy, as they left a stationer’s store, where English books and magazines invited one to browse.

“It’s funny, I suppose; but I never thought of their having different magazines from ours,” said Martha.

“I know. It gives one a kind of a start to look at the display, and not see a name one recognizes,” remarked Jeanette.

“I’d love to read them all, and compare them with similar publications of ours,” said Nancy.

“We might buy Joey one of those books for small boys,” suggested Jeanette.

“That’s so,” and Nancy darted back into the store to select one.

When she came out, they wandered on again until they came to a shop where all kinds of gifts were sold.

“Don’t you think it would be nice,” said Jeanette, “if we were all to put together and get some little souvenir for Miss Ashton? It need not be very expensive, but something that she could keep as a memento of this trip.”

“I think that would be fine,” agreed Nancy. “She has been just wonderful to us.”

“So do I,” added Martha. “What shall we get?”

They were inside now, and gazing helplessly at the fascinating array.

“One of these water colors of Nova Scotian scenery,” suggested Jeanette, picking one up as she spoke.

When there were three to be suited, and each picture they looked at was more beautiful than the last, the process of making a decision was a lengthy one. At last, however, it was accomplished to everyone's satisfaction; and to the relief of the clerk.

"Dear, I'd just love to buy some of these for all my relatives and friends," said Martha, hanging longingly over a tray of sparkling amethysts.

"I'm going to get a pin for Mother," said Nancy; "but I'm afraid that will be the extent of my purchases."

"I thought we were going to get something for Madelon, as you call her," said Martha.

"Yes, we were—or rather, we are," replied Jeanette. "Would one of these pendants be nice?"

"Just the thing, I should say," agreed Nancy. So they selected a dainty silver chain and a long slender pendant set with a single amethyst.

"I've just *got* to have it," murmured Martha, presently.

"Got to have what, Mart?" asked Jeanette.

"That ring. Did you ever in all your life see such a beauty?"

It was lovely—a dinner ring with an oblong amethyst of one of the deepest violet shades.

"Well, why don't you buy it then?" asked Nancy, a bit impatiently. She was restless, and eager now to move on.

"I can't quite make up my mind. It's quite expensive and yet I do want it so much."

"Well, think it over, Mart," suggested Jeanette, "and come back here this afternoon if you decide you can't get along without it."

"I heard that there are wonderful bargains in sweaters here," said Martha, as they went out upon the street again; "and I'd like to find them."

After a little search, they found the shop where woolens of all kinds were sold, and Martha went into raptures over the various articles.

“I’m going to get that doll for Ellen Harris, and this scarf for Betty

“Do you think that is really wise?” interrupted Jeanette.

“What?”

“Taking presents to those children?”

“Why not?”

“If it were only this once, it might not matter so much; but don’t you see that you will be creating a precedent? Like all children, and some grown-ups, they will then look for souvenirs every time you or any of us go away in the future. One can’t always be bringing things, and yet, naturally, you hate to disappoint children.”

“Maybe you’re right,” said Martha slowly. “But the things *are* darling.”

“Nancy and I decided when we first began to go on trips that we’d each take our mother some little gift, but no one else. Wholesale buying of souvenirs is very expensive, and sometimes is the cause of much jealousy and dissatisfaction. There is no good stopping place, once you have begun. If you really want to buy any of these things for friends, I would suggest that you get them as Christmas gifts. Lots of people buy their gifts when on their vacations.”

“Well, I don’t know about buying Christmas gifts as early as this,” said Martha, after thinking a minute; “but anyhow I’m going to get a sweater for myself. This rose one is lovely. Don’t you think so?”

“It is sweet,” said Jeanette; “but would it go with everything?”

“Always the careful shopper, Janie,” laughed Nancy.

“I suppose it wouldn’t go with everything,” admitted Martha, putting it back reluctantly. “I’ll take this tan one, I guess. That gray and violet I’ll buy for Mother. And I’ve always taken something to Christine, the girl I pal around with at home. I’ll buy the powder blue one for her.”

While the purchases were being wrapped up, Martha was looking over more sweaters; and Nancy heard her murmur to herself.

“What *are* you saying, Mart?” she asked. “You know it’s a bad sign, they say, when you begin talking to yourself.”

“I was just thinking that scarlet sweater would be exactly the thing I need for skating this winter. I think I’ll take that one too,” pointing it out to the clerk.

“For pity’s sake, let’s get her out of here,” whispered Nancy to Jeanette; “or she’ll have to walk home.”

“And won’t we even get the things for Joey?” asked Martha, when they were on the street again, loath to bring to a close the shopping expedition which she so dearly loved.

“Oh, we’ll each get some simple amusing toy for him. Nobody would question our remembering a sick child.”

They stopped in another shop and selected a game, a puzzle, and a new collar for Rollo; and then they went on for a walk through the residential section of the town.

“Did you ever *see* such flower gardens?” asked Jeanette, entranced.

“Or such climbing roses?” added Nancy, pointing out a house where, on trellises at either side of the front door, with its brass knocker, red roses ran to the very roof.

“These beautifully trimmed hedges of English hawthorne attract me,” said Martha. “Imagine them when they are covered with deep rose-colored blossoms!”

“The guidebook says Yarmouth is famous for rose gardens, velvet-green lawns, and well-trimmed hedge rows,” said Jeanette. “Years ago it was also famous for shipbuilding, and the ships made here went all over the world. Now it is the principal port for passenger and freight service between Nova Scotia and the United States.”

“Oh, look at those darling colored children,” cried Martha. “I must get a picture of them.” They stood waiting, while the oldest girl pulled, pushed, and coaxed the younger children into a straight line; smoothed their fuzzy hair, and their clothing, joined their hands, and then took her place at the head of the row.

“Do you know that it is nearly lunch time?” asked Nancy, as Martha lingered to visit with the children.

“That’s so! How the morning has flown! We’ll have to run so as not to keep Miss Ashton waiting. Come on!” And clutching them by the arms, Martha started toward the hotel at a very rapid pace.

“Martha,” objected Jeanette, “do slow up a bit. They don’t dash around here the way we do down in the States. People will think we are crazy, or going to a fire or something.”

“We are going to something,” laughed Martha, slackening her speed, “our lunch. Some more clams, Janie, now that you know how to eat them!”

“Never!”

“Now I suppose we shall have to pack,” groaned Martha, as they left the dining room after lunch. “That’s the only part of a trip that I don’t like.”

“I want to consult you girls,” said Miss Ashton. “Will you come in here, please?” entering the white parlor on the opposite side of the hall.

“I wonder what has happened,” thought Jeanette anxiously; for their chaperon looked very serious.

“One of my letters yesterday,” began Miss Ashton, when they were seated before the fireplace in the attractive room with its white woodwork and blue upholstered furniture, “told me that I shall not have to report on a new case for another two weeks. This place seems to be very healthful and pleasant, and I wondered if you would mind canceling our sailing reservations for to-night and staying on a few days longer——”

“Mind!” exclaimed Martha and Jeanette together.

Nancy said nothing at all, but her eyes shone.

“I shall devote the time to rest; for I expect to have a rather heavy, busy season. Do you think you can find enough amusement by yourselves to keep from being bored?”

“Of course we can,” replied Jeanette. “I, for one, love to ramble about a strange place; and I know Nan does too.”

“I’ll hire a car, I think, and practice; so I can take my test as soon as we go home,” announced Martha.

“Are you learning to drive?” asked Nancy in surprise, finding her tongue at last.

“Oh, yes; I meant to surprise you, but the ‘cat’s out of the bag now.’ I’ve had an awfully funny time so far,” and Martha paused to laugh.

“Go on; tell us about it,” requested Miss Ashton, relieved at finding the girls so agreeable about the proposed change of plan.

“Well, I decided that I’d be quite independent and go to a driving school and learn properly. So I enrolled, and I nearly laughed myself sick at the first lesson.

“I found myself in a little room—the ‘driving school’—and there, across the bay window, was the body of an ancient machine, set up on blocks of wood. At the opposite end of the room was a display of ‘ladies’ dresses at \$1, \$2 and \$3 presided over by a fat, elderly woman. She also

sold fancy articles—very fancy. A young fellow of twenty-three or four, the son of the fat lady, as it developed, was the instructor. He gave me a few directions, indicating, with the flourish of a pointer at some diagrams on a blackboard facing the ‘car,’ the position of the various gears, and what happened if you ‘stripped them.’ Then he had me climb into the car and learn to start, and stop. Shifting was the difficult thing; and, to make things worse, the clutch pedal stuck. I never felt so utterly silly in my life. He’d say, ‘Now we’re coming’ to a red light. Down with your two feet, and say, don’t forget to put your hand out.’ And I’d stop the already motionless car. ‘Now the lights are green,’ he’d say. ‘Let out your clutch and give her gas; throw in your clutch and shift into second; give her a little start; now throw out your clutch and shift into high; and drive on.’ And on I’d go, in the same spot. ‘Now you’re making a left turn. Stretch out your hand; Straighten your wheel! straighten your wheel!’ and I would madly tug at the wheel, after making the motions as directed. It was a scream but I *did* learn the shifting operations.

“The second lesson, I was to take on the road; and his mother went along, evidently as chaperon. She called in a neighbor to take care of the ‘shoppe.’ I have an idea that from what she observed in the school she thought my lesson would be too good to miss. I think the boy knew his machine, and probably knew how to instruct green drivers; but, as I learned afterwards, he had just had an accident, and his nerves were ragged. And that day he did nothing but holler at me; and the more he hollered, the more stupid I became. ‘Don’t you see what you went and done there?’ he’d demand. ‘You almost took his wheel off.’ Or, ‘That was an awful way to turn a corner,’ to which the chaperon would contribute, ‘*I’ll* say it was!’

“After making many corrections, he finally complimented me: ‘You done fine in the school; but you’re awful at steering. I never saw anyone do

so bad.'

"I kept getting madder and madder, and finally I stopped the car with a jerk which nearly threw Jake on his nose, and his mamma on our backs, and said just as emphatically as I could: 'Now see here, I'm not used to being yelled at like this by *anybody*, least of all someone I'm paying. You can just *cut it out* right now, or I'll stop taking lessons immediately.' Jake stared at me blankly for a minute, and then tried to bluster, 'Say, don't you like my teachin'?"

"'It has nothing to do with your teaching,' I said; 'but I won't let you yell at me. So that's that!'"

"After that, he behaved quite like a human being, and didn't even do more than feebly remonstrate when, one day, I ran over a traffic officer's foot——"

"Ran over a traffic officer's foot!" exclaimed Miss Ashton, while the other two girls doubled up with laughter.

"Yes, he stopped me just as I was going to turn into a one-way street, and in twisting the car around so as to keep on straight ahead, his foot got in the way and I ran over it——"

"But Mart," gasped Jeanette, "what did he do?"

"What could he do? He was peeved, of course; but it was his own fault for keeping his old foot too near my wheels."

"Peeved——" began Nancy, but she could get no farther.

"But Martha," protested Miss Ashton, "wasn't the man hurt?"

"Not much, I guess, except his temper. It was just the edge of his foot, not the whole top of it."

"I——never——heard——anything——quite——so funny," stammered Nancy.

"Mart," said Jeanette, when they had recovered from their spasm of mirth, "won't you have to have a licensed driver in the car with you?"

“I suppose so,” replied Martha slowly. “I never thought of that.”

“You might send for Jake,” suggested Nancy, with a giggle; “but he would probably have to bring mamma with him.”

“I’ll go with you sometimes,” said Miss Ashton. “I have my card here, and won’t want to rest all the time.”

“That’s indeed awfully good of you,” said Martha gratefully. “I’ll hunt up a place to rent a car this very afternoon.”

“Be careful not to get lost,” warned Jeanette.

“She’ll be all right,” said Nancy, “as long as there is no fog.”

“Somebody would bring me home,” said Martha carelessly.

Then they all parted. Martha went in search of a car. Miss Ashton retired to her own room, well satisfied with the progress of her plan so far. Jeanette had a headache, and decided to try to sleep it off; and Nancy sat in the little park near the hotel, and just dreamed.

“I hired a car,” announced Martha, when they gathered around the dinner table; “and it now rests in the hotel garage, awaiting the touch of my hand.”

“And all you need now is a companion driver,” observed Nancy.

“Well—I—I’ve——”

“Hired one of those, too?” asked Jeanette.

“Not actually hired,” corrected Martha; “sort of borrowed.”

“Who is it?” asked Miss Ashton quickly.

“Mr. Pierce.”

“And who might he be?”

“Why, the purser. Don’t you remember?”

“Oh, you foul weather friend,” said Jeanette, laughing.

“My friend in need, you mean.”

“Well, you might give us an account of yourself,” suggested Miss Ashton.

“I was coming up Main Street for the third time, hunting for the garage, after having asked several people where such an establishment was located, when I ran right into Mr. Pierce, figuratively and literally.

“I had been looking in a window at——”

“Don’t say they were sweaters,” groaned Nancy.

“Or amethysts,” added Jeanette.

“Just for that I won’t tell you what was in the window,” retorted Martha. “Anyhow, after I finished looking at *them*, I turned away rather quickly, stepped on a pebble, turned on my ankle, and nearly fell. Someone grabbed me, and I looked up to see Mr. Pierce looking anxiously down at me. We were near that street which leads to the wharf; so with his help I limped down to the boat, and the ship’s doctor strapped my ankle for me. You are an observing crowd, I must say, not to have noticed all this plaster,” and Martha stuck out her foot to display the bandaging plainly visible through her thin stocking.

“It was all right to do that; wasn’t it?” appealing to Miss Ashton. “My foot was swelling rapidly, and I did not know where to find any of the town doctors.”

“It was perfectly all right,” Miss Ashton assured her.

“Well,” Martha resumed, “the stewardess insisted upon getting me a cup of tea; and while I drank it I told Mr. Pierce how I happened to be wandering around this afternoon. He knew exactly the place I wanted, and as by that time I could walk perfectly well, we went in search of the garage. I selected a car, got in, and he drove it to the park over here; and there we sat and planned my driving practice. I don’t want you,” turning to Miss Ashton, “to think me ungrateful for your offer, or that I am simply passing

it by; but I know you want to rest, and it is tiresome work sitting in with a beginner——”

“Won’t it be terribly tiresome for Mr. Pierce?” asked Nancy gravely.

“Don’t you bother about me,” said Miss Ashton. “I understand perfectly. But Martha, how can Mr. Pierce get away from the boat? Doesn’t he go back to Boston to-night?”

“Well, you see, he has two weeks’ vacation. He had one week in Halifax, where his people live—that was how I ran across him there—and the other week is still coming to him. He can take it now, or later——”

“And he’s going to take it now,” finished Nancy.

“Any or all of you are perfectly welcome to sit in the back seat when I practice,” offered Martha generously.

“Thanks, *so much*,” said Nancy.

Miss Ashton, who had seen the two in the park that afternoon, when she was on her way to the steamer to cancel her reservations, had made a few careful inquiries as to the character of the young man, and had been perfectly satisfied with what she had found out. So she made no objections to Martha’s going about with him.

“Well, don’t go too far away; that’s all, Martha,” she said; “and be very careful; for some of the native drivers here still keep to the left of the road. It is very confusing to one accustomed to the right side.”

CHAPTER X

WHERE IS NANCY?

“My, but I am glad we didn’t go back last night,” exulted Jeanette the next morning.

“Why?” inquired Martha, as they sat in the sun parlor after breakfast.

“Didn’t you see the fog when we got up?” asked Nancy.

“Oh, yes. It *was* foggy; wasn’t it?”

“Mart likes fog,” said Jeanette, smiling.

“I’m going for a long ramble along the shore this morning,” announced Nancy presently. “Anybody want to come along?”

“I promised Miss Ashton that I’d go with her to look at some linens she is thinking of buying,” said Jeanette regretfully. “I’m sorry; for I’d love to go. I suppose she would postpone her shopping trip, but I sort of hate to ask her to.”

“I know; she asks so little of us, that one can’t refuse when she does want something,” said Nancy.

“I’d go, but I’m driving this morning,” said Martha. “But we’ll take you part way, if you like. Which way are you going?”

“Oh, out the road toward Lower Woods Harbor, I think. I love that rocky coast. Thanks for the offer of a lift, Mart; but I really want to just ramble along the shore.”

“You won’t be able to see much; will you, Nancy? It’s so foggy,” said Jeanette. Somehow she didn’t quite like the idea of Nancy going off alone this morning; and yet she had no reasonable objection to offer.

“The fog will be entirely gone by ten o’clock, I imagine,” replied Nancy.

“Don’t go so far you can’t get back for lunch,” advised Martha.

“Oh,” laughed Nancy, “I always have a bar of chocolate in my bag for emergencies; so if I walk farther than I expect to, at least I won’t starve.”

“If you get tired, or go too far, just hop on an oxomobile,” suggested Martha.

“In that case, I’m afraid it would be dinner time before you reached the hotel,” said Jeanette.

“Dinner time to-morrow, you mean,” corrected Nancy; “for the poor beasts move so painfully slowly.”

“Better wear something warm, Nan,” advised Jeanette, as they all went upstairs to get ready for the morning’s trips. “It’s quite chilly.”

“But it’s hard to walk in a long coat,” objected Nan. “I should think my knitted dress and heavy sweater would do.”

“Perhaps,” said Jeanette, doubtfully.

“Don’t lose your pocketbook, Nan,” called Martha, as they parted at the foot of the hotel steps later in the morning.

“Don’t fall, Mart,” retorted Nancy.

Laughing, they turned in opposite directions, Martha toward the garage where she knew Mr. Pierce would be waiting; and Nancy toward Lower Woods Harbor.

The selection of a luncheon set took Miss Ashton and Jeanette much longer than they expected; then they spent an hour looking at the fascinating souvenirs in one of the shops devoted to such bait for the tourist. It is almost impossible to tear one’s self away from their attractive displays.

Martha found driving on the dusty, winding roads of Nova Scotia quite a different thing from rolling smoothly over the concrete roads at home. Besides a stream, on one road, they saw a brand new maroon sedan on its side in the water, at the right of a narrow bridge. The bank at the entrance to the bridge plainly showed where the driver had gone over. Martha got so nervous that she wanted to give up the wheel to her companion at once; but he quietly refused.

“Go right ahead,” he ordered. “You’ll have to learn to cross narrow bridges.”

“But that car down there,” protested Martha.

“Don’t look at it. Keep your eyes on the road ahead of the car.”

Martha was not at all accustomed to being told so firmly what to do, and expected to do it. Everyone had always laughed at her and considered her ways and remarks a huge joke. She did not know now whether to obey or not; so she slowed up a bit.

“Go on,” said her instructor. “Keep to the right of the center of the bridge, and you’ll be over it in a minute.”

“Don’t ever let yourself become unnerved at the sight of an accident,” he went on sternly when they had left the bridge behind. “Put your mind on the managing of your own car, and let the other fellow attend to his.”

Long before the lesson was over, Martha discovered that there are instructors; *and* instructors.

“Where is Nan?” inquired Miss Ashton, when they assembled for lunch.

“I haven’t seen her since we parted at ten o’clock at the foot of the hotel steps,” replied Martha.

“Nor I since she dressed to go out,” added Jeanette.

“It is strange that she is not back by this time,” said Miss Ashton anxiously.

“She said she had some chocolate in her bag,” observed Martha, “and that she wouldn’t starve if she went too far to get back by lunch time.”

“Yes, she did,” agreed Jeanette. “I thought she was joking; but maybe she meant it.”

“In that case, there is no sense in our waiting lunch for her,” decided Miss Ashton, practically. “Perhaps she will come before we have finished.

If not, we'll manage to feed her some way when she does come."

"Nan always walks farther than she intends," said Jeanette, as they sat down at the table; "then has to sit down and rest before she can get home again."

"That's probably the case this time," decided Miss Ashton. "There is no occasion for worry about her."

Jeanette tried to take the same view of the situation; but, in spite of herself, she felt some misgivings. She wished now that she had asked Miss Ashton to put off the shopping trip, and had gone with Nan. However, there was nothing to do but wait; and everything probably was all right after all. As Nan always said, Jeanette was over-inclined to worry.

Martha was so tired after her morning's exertion that she threw herself across her bed, and slept most of the afternoon. Jeanette roamed anxiously from their room down to the lobby, out to the sun parlor, from which you can get a view of the street in both directions, and back again. Shortly after lunch, the fog crept in again; and the damp, gray, gloomy atmosphere added to her depression. She wanted to go out in search of Nancy, but since she was not very sure of direction in a strange city, she was afraid of losing her way. Miss Ashton had gone to the outskirts of the city to call upon a family whose address had been given her by a Boston friend with an urgent request to see them before she returned.

By four o'clock, poor Jeanette was quite frantic. She was crossing the lobby for the tenth time, when she caught sight of Jim Jackson standing before the desk. Running across the room, she grabbed him by the arm; and he turned quickly.

"Why, Miss Grant! What are you doing here?" he exclaimed in surprise. "I thought you were in Boston by now."

“No; we didn’t go—we’re still here,” replied Jeanette, incoherently; “but”—her voice almost broke—“Nan’s gone.”

“Nan’s gone! What on earth do you mean?”

“Nan’s lost, I think.”

“When? How?”

“Since morning. She went for a walk, and——”

“In which direction? Do you know?”

“She spoke of going toward Lower Woods Harbor.”

The scene of their last ride together, thought Jim.

“I’ll take the bus and go to look for her. Want to come?” he added kindly; for Jeanette’s distressed little face touched him.

“If you don’t mind. I’ll not be a second.” She dashed upstairs, snatched her own heavy coat and Nan’s, and was down again by the time he had the bus at the door. Miss Ashton had not yet returned, and Martha was still asleep; but Jeanette was far too excited to think of leaving any word for them.

“I was so shocked to see you standing beside me,” began Jim, as he guided the bus rapidly in the direction of the Harbor, “I could hardly believe my eyes.”

“Well, I assure you I was delighted to see you. I have been nearly frantic all the afternoon. Miss Ashton is away off somewhere at the other end of the town, making a call, and Martha is asleep; and I didn’t know what to do.”

“How did you happen to stay over!”

With frequent pauses to examine the roadside more closely, Jeanette told him about their change of plan; and of what they had been doing since he left town.

“Pierce, the purser?” he asked, when she mentioned Martha’s efforts to learn to drive. “Yes.”

“He’s a fine fellow. A bit serious, and stern; but a good scout.”

“I can’t imagine Martha with anyone of that type,” observed Jeanette; “for she’s always been laughed at and given her own way.”

“She’ll never get it with him, unless it happens to be his way too; or he’s convinced that hers is the right way. Pierce doesn’t hold out for his own way through mere obstinacy; but when he’s sure he’s right, there’s no budging him.”

“What’s that?” asked Jeanette suddenly; and Jim stopped the bus almost instantly.

“Where!”

“Down on those rocks.”

Jim scrambled down, and came up with a piece of bright Blue bunting.

“Just a bit of some of the decorations we saw the other day, evidently,” he said, tossing it aside after showing it to her. “If only this fog would lift,” he muttered, as he started the bus again.

“You watch that side of the road,” he presently directed Jeanette; “and I’ll watch this.” They were going very slowly, and scanning every nook and cranny.

In the meantime, Miss Ashton had returned, taken a peek into the girls’ room, and found Martha just rousing from her long nap.

“Where are the other two girls?” asked Miss Ashton.

“I don’t know—” yawned Martha. “I went to sleep right after lunch; for I was dead after this morning. Nan hadn’t appeared then, and Jeanette was waiting around for her. She must have come, and then she and Janie

gone off somewhere; for I'm quite sure Jeanette would never have let me sleep until this hour if Nan hadn't returned."

"It is very strange that they are staying out until now," said Miss Ashton, half an hour later, going again to the girls' room, where she found Martha partly ready for dinner.

"That's just what I was thinking. Do you suppose Nan didn't come back, and Janie went to look for her?"

"I don't know what to suppose. It isn't like Jeanette to go off without a word to anybody."

"I know it."

Worry and excitement gripped Martha, and she had a hard time to keep back the tears.

They finished dressing, and went down to the lobby, where Miss Ashton inquired of the clerk if he knew anything about Jeanette's whereabouts.

"The day clerk is off duty now, Madam," he replied, "and I have not seen the young lady this evening."

"Pardon me," said the head bell boy, who had been standing near enough to hear the question and answer. "You mean the little blond lady?"

"Yes, yes," cried Martha.

"She came into the lobby about four o'clock, just as Jim got here——"

"Jim?" demanded Martha.

"Yes, Jim. I don't know his other name, but he drives the bus. They stood here talking, and then the lady went upstairs for her wrap, and went off with Jim when she came down again. They went away in the bus."

"Thank goodness!" breathed Miss Ashton, as they turned away after thanking the boy for his information. "Jim has evidently gone to look for Nan, and has taken Jeanette with him. Don't worry, Martha," she added,

seeing that the girl beside her was struggling with emotion, “Jim knows these roads, as probably no one else does. He will find her, I’m sure.”

“But—but—” faltered Martha, “suppose something has *happened* to Nan.”

“We just won’t think about such a possibility,” decreed Miss Ashton determinedly.

“But I don’t see *why* Jeanette didn’t waken me.”

“She probably thought every minute that Nancy would come. You know how it is, Martha, when one is waiting for somebody. Besides, after all, what could you have done?”

“I could have kept her company, at least,” retorted Martha quickly.

“Yes, of course; but she knew that you were tired out. We might as well eat dinner.”

“I couldn’t swallow a mouthful——”

“There is no sense at all in letting yourself get weak and more nervous for want of food,” said Miss Ashton firmly. “So we’ll eat. Order something light, if you prefer; but you must have nourishing food.”

For the second time that day, Martha surprised herself by following the will of another.

It seemed to Jeanette that they had ridden at least twice around the whole peninsula of Nova Scotia before she spied something red upon the rocks below the road.

“Stop!” she cried, excitedly; and Jim obeyed.

“Nan has a red purse. Maybe that’s it,” pointing to the scarlet spot at the water’s edge.

They both scrambled across the rocks with what speed they could, for they were wet and slippery with the incoming tide, and strewn with

seaweed.

“It is!” exclaimed Jeanette, as they got closer to the object. “She must be drowned!”

Jim made no reply, but with one long stride, and a sweep of his arm, he secured the little purse.

“For Heaven’s sake!” he cried. “Look!”

The purse was tied to the back of a toy duck.

“That’s the prize Nan won at the bridge party in Digby,” he added.

“You’re right, but how did it come here?” puzzled Jeanette.

“I can’t tell any more than you, but it is what kept the purse from sinking. See how wet it is? Nan must have sent the toy ashore, hoping it would attract attention.”

“But what can we *do*?”

Jeanette was twisting her hands and trying to keep from tears. She must *not* become hysterical.

Jim was doing some rapid thinking.

“I imagine she’s out on one of those rocks that are high and dry at low tide, but cut off from the mainland when the tide comes in. I can get a boat back there a ways,” waving his hand in the direction from which they had come, “and go out after her. Would you be afraid to stay in the bus if I lock it? I’d take you,” as Jeanette hesitated, “but I can go quicker alone; and, besides, it won’t help matters any for you to get soaked.”

“I’ll stay,” said Jeanette, bravely going back toward the car, and getting in.

“Good for you! You’ll be perfectly safe, and I’ll be just as quick as I can.”

Jim disappeared into the fog, and Jeanette curled up on one of the seats for a good cry. She was soon over it, however, and straining her eyes, trying

to see through the thick gray blanket which had wrapped itself around the coast. Once she heard the sound of oars, but she could not distinguish any objects.

The minutes seemed to fairly crawl, and each one was like an hour! No one passed along the road, not even a stray dog. Suppose Jim could not find Nan? Suppose he too got lost? Suppose she had to just stay on and on here?

In the meantime Jim was heading, as well as he could, toward a big rock called "The Turtle," which he had pointed out and remarked upon to Nan on that last memorable ride. It was a big flat slab, with an end which reared up much higher than the rest of it, and formed the head of the turtle. The long tail, which joined the formation with the jutting point of the shore, was well under water long ere this. It was difficult to be sure of direction in the fog, and he paused frequently to get his bearings. He dared not go too far along the coast, either way, because he might get beyond his goal. If he rowed out any great distance, the current might catch him; and if he remained too close to the shore, he would ground on the rocks.

If old Dave had only been at home, he would have come with him; or at least would have furnished a lantern. Lucky that the old dory, with the oars in it, was outside where all Jim had to do was help himself.

"Nan!" he finally shouted at the top of his voice, when he figured he might be somewhere near the cut-off portion of the "Turtle." He listened intently, holding his breath so as to hear better.

No reply.

He rowed a little farther to the right, and tried again with the same result. Then he turned back to the left, where he had called the first time.

"N—A—N!"

Was that an echo, or a faint answer?

He tried again.

“N—A—N!”

“—e—r—e.”

No mistake. It *was* a far-off reply. But from which side had it come?

“Nan! Where are you?”

He strained his ears for the answer, trying with all his might to get the direction when the answer did come.

“—e—r—e.” It trailed off feebly in the fog at the right. He must have gone beyond The Turtle; for he felt quite positive that was where Nancy was. The purse and duck had been at a point nearly opposite it.

He rowed as fast as he dared for some little distance to the right, and then called again.

“Nan! Where are you?”

“Here— Tur-tle.”

Thank God she was safe!

By repeatedly calling and waiting for the answer, he guided the boat successfully toward the rock formation. At last it loomed up beside him, and he saw Nancy perched on the head, all the rest being covered by water.

“Hello, Jim!” she said, as he sat for a moment silently looking up at her.

One would have thought it the most natural place in the world for them to meet.

“Oh, Nan,” he faltered; and could get no further.

“Jim, take me home,” she begged, her bravery and nonchalance quickly dispelled by the sight of his deep distress.

“Can you slide down into the boat?”

“I think so.”

“Steady yourself with this,” holding up one oar and keeping the boat in place with the other.

She succeeded in slipping down the rocks and into the dory, and Jim started to head for the shore. Neither said a word, until Nancy began to wring the water out of her skirt.

“Nan, you’re soaked. Take this,” said Jim, pulling off his sweater quickly.

“I won’t! You’ll catch your death of cold without it.”

“I’m exercising. Put it on!”

Nancy obeyed, and nothing more was said until the boat grated on the sand. Jim stepped out and gave her a hand. She was stiff and cold, and could hardly stand. Seeing her stagger, Jim stooped and picked her up like a doll.

“Put your arms around my neck,” he directed.

“But Jim,” she protested, “I’m too heavy. You’ll hurt yourself.”

Paying no attention to her objections, he carried her across the beach and appeared so suddenly beside the bus that Jeanette gave a little scream.

“She’s all right,” said Jim, placing Nan gently on the seat beside Jeanette, “only cold and stiff.”

After one wild hug, Jeanette busied herself making Nancy comfortable.

“Give Jim my coat,” directed Nan, when Jeanette tried to slip it on her. “He made me put on his sweater, and it’s too wet from my clothes now for him to use it.”

“You’ll do no such thing,” said Jim decidedly. “Besides, what do you suppose would happen to your coat if I tried to get into it.”

“Jim, *please!*” pleaded Nancy. “You’ll catch cold and have pneumonia—or—or something, and it will be all my fault——”

Her voice broke.

“I have a sheepskin somewhere here under the seat. I’ll put that on to satisfy you. Will that do?”

“Yes.”

Nobody talked on the homeward trip; each was too busy thinking of what might have happened.

“Go ahead and open the doors for us, Miss Grant,” directed Jim, when they stopped in front of the hotel, and he prepared to carry Nancy in. Like a good soldier, Jeanette obeyed, and did not look behind.

“It’s quite unnecessary to carry me, Jim,” said Nancy. “I can walk perfectly well now; see? I’d really rather not be carried in. *Please!*” as he hesitated.

“I—I don’t know what to say to you, how to thank you,” she continued.

“Don’t try. Go in now, dear. I’ll see you to-morrow.”

At the top of the long flight of steps, up which he assisted her, a pillar shut off the light from the windows; and in its shadow Jim stooped and shyly kissed Nancy. Then he pushed her gently into the lobby, where Jeanette was waiting; ran down the steps, and out to the bus.

“My goodness, Nan,” cried Jeanette, “you were so long getting in that I was afraid he had dropped you.”

“He didn’t carry me, Janie. I’m all right now. Please don’t tell the others that part of it,” she begged.

“All right, Nannie dear. I won’t.”

It did not take them long to put Nancy to bed and give her a hot meal.

“We’re not going to ask or answer any questions to-night,” decreed Miss Ashton, in her professional manner. “I want Nancy to be perfectly quiet now, and go to sleep. To-morrow, if she feels like it, she may tell us

her experiences. Jeanette, you and Martha take my room for to-night. I'll stay here in case Nan needs any care during the night."

Excited though they were, the girls respected Miss Ashton's wishes too much to object to her decision. Jeanette hated to be separated from Nancy, but she knew that she would be in capable hands; for Miss Ashton was a tireless nurse.

The girls bade Nancy good night and went to their room. Miss Ashton went to bed in Martha's single, and, after bidding Nan call her if she wanted anything, or felt at all ill, she was soon asleep.

Nancy herself lay wide awake in the big bed beside the fireplace, and watched the street lights flicker across the windowpane. She was quite cozy and comfortable, but not in the least sleepy. The events of the day passed and re-passed through her mind, especially those of the last two hours. How nice it had been to see Jim again, and how wonderful of him to rescue her. Her cheeks burned as she recalled his good night, yet she could not, some way, feel angry at him, as she should. Why? She had always hated any form of "necking" and a boy who tried it even once was out of her good graces.

"You're so funny, Nan," remarked one of her admirers, smarting from a rebuke. "Everyone does it now."

"That may be," she had replied. "Let 'everyone.' *I* won't."

"But why? There is no harm in it," he had persisted.

"Whether there is harm in it or not, I don't *like* it. I consider love and all that goes with it such a wonderful, such a sacred thing, that I don't care to spoil it by playing at it with Tom, Dick, and Harry. My kisses and hugs are going to be kept for the one right man; if he ever comes. This wholesale display of affection is unspeakably cheap and disgusting, and I won't be a party to it."

Poor Jim! *He* had been so cut up over her disappearance, and the difficulty he'd had in rescuing her, that the relief of getting her home safely made him forget all about his shyness and customary reserve. She'd try to forget about the whole affair, and go to sleep.

"But," she thought, just before she fell into a doze, "I'm glad Jim's coming to-morrow."

CHAPTER XI

AFTER EFFECTS

The next morning, although Nancy appeared to be perfectly all right, Miss Ashton insisted upon her remaining in bed.

"You were thoroughly soaked and chilled, and must have had quite a nervous shock," replied that lady when her patient wanted to go down to breakfast; "so we're going to be on the safe side. This afternoon, possibly, I will let you get up."

Jeanette brought up some breakfast, and insisted upon feeding her, though Nancy laughed at her. A little later in the morning, they all gathered around the bed to listen to the story of her adventure.

"I went right out the Harbor road after I left you, Mart," began Nancy. "The fog had risen, and the sunshine on the water was lovely; and I stopped often to admire the view. When I reached The Turtle, I walked out and sat down on his back to rest. First, I faced the water for a time; then I turned around, leaned against his head, and just reveled in the scenery.

"Such scenery! Back from the shore, beyond the road, lay a stretch of forest land. The great, green tips of the pines on the background of the blue

sky, the white birch trunks among the dull rough ones of the firs, the splash of russet, yellow, or crimson where a branch had put on autumn color made a wonderful picture. The rocks were very warm in the sun, and I was tired from walking; so I think I must have had a nap, although I didn't mean to. I wakened from a dream of a sudden heavy rainstorm, to find a complete change in the landscape. The sun had disappeared. A fog was gathering, and between my rock and the shore was a sheet of water.

“If I'd had any sense, I'd have waded ashore then; but the water looked pretty deep—I couldn't even see the tail of the turtle. The waves kept creeping up to where I sat, and I realized that soon I'd be in them. So I climbed up on the head, and made myself as comfortable as I could.”

“And what did you think about,” asked Martha, “while you were perched up there?”

“First, that I was very stupid to go to sleep. Then I wondered how I'd get back here again; if I'd have to stay until the tide turned. I did not know when that would be, nor how much higher it would rise. I thought about all of you, and imagined just what you were doing. I knew you'd be worried after a while, and try to find me. I remembered telling you in which direction I was going; but the fog which kept growing more dense would prevent you from seeing me, even if you did pass along the road.

“After a while, I became awfully hungry; so I opened my bag to get the bar of chocolate, and discovered my duck! Don't you remember, my big needlepoint bag was on the table that night at Digby, Janie, and for want of a better place, I stuck my prize in it? I never bothered to take it out, fortunately. An idea came to me, and I fairly hugged the little beast. I emptied the red purse which I keep in that bag, fastened it on the duck's back with some rubber bands, and on the next wave set it afloat. The last I saw of it, it was headed straight for the shore. It made such a brilliant,

unusual combination that I thought somebody might notice it when it went around on the rocks.”

“But,” objected Martha, “if a stranger instead of Jim had happened to find it, how would that have helped you? A stranger would never connect it with anyone being out on the rocks.”

“But my card was in it, with the message: ‘Am out on The Turtle. Please rescue me.’ Didn’t you find it, Janie?” turning to Jeanette.

“We didn’t even open it, Nannie,” confessed her chum. “We knew at once that it was yours, and Jim said you must be on The Turtle.”

“Jim, the Sleuth,” laughed Nancy; but Miss Ashton saw the light in her eyes as she said it.

“Oh, Nan,” said Jeanette, “he was just wonderful! I’ll never forget it.”

“Nor I,” replied Nancy, quietly.

“Then what?” urged Martha. “Go on, Nan.”

“There wasn’t much more. I simply sat there, curled up in a heap so as to keep as warm as I could, and waited. After, oh, hours and hours it seemed, I heard someone calling me, and I answered. I did not know at first whether he could hear me; for the fog seemed to force the tones of my voice right back upon me. Soon, however, we were keeping up a regular system of calls.”

“Did you know it was Jim?” asked Martha.

“Of course I wasn’t *sure* until he was nearly there; then I recognized his voice.

“Thus endeth the tale,” she added laughing; “except that I want to say how awfully sorry I am to have caused you all so much worry.”

“Anyway,” said Martha, “they lived happily ever after.”

Nancy blushed, and looked sharply at Martha; but her remarks were apparently quite innocent of any hidden meaning.

A maid rapped at the door at that moment.

“I was to give these to Miss Pembroke,” she said, when Miss Ashton opened the door, “and ask if she is able to see anyone.”

Miss Ashton took the mass of lovely red roses, freshly cut from some Yarmouth garden, and laid them on Nancy’s bed.

“I’ll go down, and talk to him,” she said; “for I suppose it is Jim.”

She was out of the room before Nancy could say a word; and in a few minutes she was back again.

“It was Jim, as I supposed. He made the proper inquiries about your health, and is going to join us for lunch.”

Nancy drew a breath of relief. She might have known that Miss Ashton would not simply send him away without letting her see him.

After hearing what Jeanette and Martha did in her absence, Nancy got up and dressed; and they all went down to lunch.

Jim, as Miss Ashton had directed, was waiting in the white parlor.

“Go and get Jim,” she said to Nancy, as they turned toward the dining room. “We’ll go on in.”

Jim, who had been sitting before the fireplace, rose as Nancy entered, and crossed the room to meet her.

“You’re all right, Nan?” he asked, a bit breathlessly, his kind brown eyes gazing searchingly down into hers.

“Perfectly, thanks to you,” she replied, giving him her hand.

He held it, clasped firmly in both of his for a long moment.

“And I want to thank you also for the lovely roses,” she added.

“I robbed my landlady’s garden for those,” he said. “She has a huge trellis, just covered with them. Perhaps if we take a stroll this afternoon you’d like to see it?”

“Just love to. Had we better go in to lunch now?”

They joined the others, and had a merry time at the table laughing over Martha's efforts to learn to drive. Much, to Jeanette's confusion, and Jim's amusement, they also told him about her struggles with the clams the first day they spent in Yarmouth.

"Well," said Martha, as they left the dining room, "in spite of your discouraging mirth, I'm going to drive again this afternoon; so I'll have to leave you now. Shall I see you again, Jim?"

"I'm going out at five this afternoon," he replied; "but I'll be back day after to-morrow."

"We'll still be here then," said Miss Ashton. "How much longer do you stay in Nova Scotia, Jim?"

"I'm not sure. May get orders to go back the last of the week."

"It would be nice if you could go when we do," suggested Miss Ashton.

"Wish I could," he said, fervently.

"Would Miss Ashton object to your going walking if you feel able to?" Jim presently asked Nancy, as they followed the others down the hall.

"I don't think so."

"As long as you don't get overtired," said Miss Ashton, when Nancy asked her. "See that she doesn't go too far, Jim," she added.

So they went out into the fresh sea air and brilliant warm sunshine with which Yarmouth was filled that afternoon, and rambled down one street and up another of that charming seaport town, pausing to admire a colorful garden here, some fine trees there, and many an attractive house of English architecture.

The days passed rapidly after that, hurrying along toward Friday night, when they would sail.

Early Friday morning, Jim ran in.

“Good news!” he announced. “Orders have come to park the old bus on the steamer and return to Boston.”

“Really, Jim?” said Miss Ashton. “How very nice,” while Nancy flashed him a happy smile.

“I can’t stay now, for I’ve a dozen things to fix up before I leave. See you at the dock to-night,” and Jim ran out again.

“I have some shopping to do,” announced Martha, when he had gone. The other two girls groaned.

“What now, Mart?” asked Nancy.

“Oh, that’s so. You didn’t get that ring you wanted. Did you?” inquired Jeanette.

“Yes! No! That is, yes,” stammered Martha.

“What do you mean by ‘Yes—no—yes’?” demanded Nancy.

“I mean that I didn’t at first; but then I did,” explained Martha.

“Just as clear as clear,” laughed Jeanette. “You didn’t tell us you bought it,” said Nancy reproachfully.

“Well, with all the excitement we’ve had, could you blame me for forgetting something? It was extravagant, I admit; but I felt I’d never be happy without it. I’ll wear my last year’s clothes all year to make up for it.”

“Yes, you will!” jeered Nancy.

“But if you have the ring, why shop?” asked Jeanette.

“I thought I’d buy a little fruit to eat on the steamer——”

“Now, Mart, didn’t you learn better than that on the way over?” protested Nancy.

“But I don’t expect to be sick this time. I’m a seasoned sailor now.”

“You probably won’t touch it; and anyhow, you can buy some on board,” persisted Nancy.

“Not such fruit as I saw.”

“Well, go to it if you must.”

So that night, when they went on board, Martha’s baggage included a fancy basket filled with various kinds of fruit.

CHAPTER XII

THE UNEXPECTED

Tim met them at the head of the gangplank; and after having their chairs placed, he and Nancy strolled about the deck to inspect the crowd.

Finally a little tug, carrying the end of a heavy cable attached to the steamer, swung out into the harbor. After describing a wide semicircle, it took up its position waiting for a signal. Soon it was given; and by skilful manipulation the little boat pulled the big one slowly away from the wharf and headed it out to sea. Its work done, the tug steamed fussily back to the dock.

“So,” said Martha suddenly, as they all lay in their steamer chairs, wrapped in rugs, and watching the rapidly receding shores of Nova Scotia against the sunset, “we got away without my having my third fall, or Nan losing her third pocketbook.”

“But,” said Jeanette, “you nearly fell, when you turned on your ankle, Mart; and Nan nearly lost her little red purse.”

“A miss is as good as a mile,” declared Martha.

“Peut-on dire d’une chose qu’elle est perdue quand on sait où est die?”¹ quoted Jim softly.

“What’s that?” asked Martha.

“Didn’t you ever have that French exercise which tells about the sailor who lost the silver teapot?”

“Yes, of course; but what’s that got to do with it?”

“If you don’t know, I’ll never tell you,” laughed Nan.

Jeanette said nothing; for she was quite certain that the little red purse was not in Nan’s possession.

“My goodness, it’s getting rough,” complained Martha presently. “I’m going down to bed.”

“So am I,” said Jeanette.

They made their way to their respective staterooms as rapidly as possible.

“Will it be like this all the way, do you suppose?” asked Nancy anxiously.

“I doubt it. This is the wash from the Bay of Fundy that we’re getting now. It will be calmer after a while,” replied Jim, slipping a big warm hand over her cold one under the edge of the steamer rug. “Go to your stateroom if you want to; but I think if you lie here, perfectly quiet, you will be quite all right.”

Presently the moon came up, and the ocean was a scene of fairyland. It was a couple of hours later when Nancy crept in beside Jeanette, who was sleeping soundly under heavy blankets in the big stateroom, filled with fresh salt air which was sweeping in through the open port hole.

Toward morning, the foghorn began to blow; and Nancy looked at her watch. Five o’clock. They were due to dock between seven and eight. Too early to get up; but, try as she would, she could not go to sleep again. So she lay, thinking over the things she and Jim had talked about the preceding evening on deck. At half-past five she rose, dressed, and began to pack.

“If I have all this done early, there will be more time to spend on deck. I’ll do Janie’s too,” she decided, after finishing her own. “*Dear*, dear Janie!”

She had just closed her own suitcase, and had Jeanette’s all ready to slide in the last things, when a terrific jar threw her forward onto the floor.

“Oh, what is it?” cried Jeanette, who was instantly aroused by the unusual motion. “Nan dear, are you hurt?”

Nancy assured her that she was not.

The sound of opening doors, running feet, shouts, curt directions were heard; then—the ringing of the big alarm! *That* meant for everybody to get out on deck.

“Get dressed as quickly as you can, girls,” called Miss Ashton from the opposite state room. “We’ve been struck; but, don’t get frightened.”

In less time than she ever dressed before, Jeanette got ready to go up on deck.

Jim met them in the passageway.

“Your life preservers,” he said, “are under the berths. Get them,” taking their bags from them. “I’ll show you how to put them on.”

He quickly buckled them in place; his own was already on. Then he helped Miss Ashton and Martha with theirs, and they all joined the throng of passengers who were trying to get to the promenade deck.

Ship officers were everywhere, keeping order among the startled passengers. It was a calm crowd, fortunately, rather inclined to treat the accident as an adventure.

“I woke up,” said one man whose stateroom was on the lowest deck, “to find the nose of some other steamer in my room. ‘Well, old girl,’ I said, ‘either you or I’ll have to get out of here. I must have some privacy! And I guess it had better be me.’ So here I am.”

“Well, I looked all over for my toothbrush,” said one woman, “while Joe hollered at me all the time to hurry. ‘You go on if you want to,’ I said to him at last; ‘but I won’t stir until I find that toothbrush.’ And I *didn’t*.”

She was carrying it carefully in her hand, evidently having left all her other belongings behind.

Another woman was taking great care of an umbrella and a box of candy. Martha clung fast to her untouched basket of fruit.

A strange sight met their eyes when they reached the promenade deck. Beside them, in the dense fog, was the steamer which had rammed them, her bow still in the hole she had made; apparently just “standing by” until help came.

The passengers surged in all directions. Some were crying, some laughing hysterically; others pale and silent; but most were as calm as if this were an everyday occurrence, or at least an interesting one. A few blustered angrily over the delay and the inconvenience. The kicker, like the poor, we have always with us.

“There is really no danger,” cried John Pierce, working his way in and out among the people. “An SOS has been sent out, and assistance will soon be here.”

He had no time to linger with Martha now, but paused beside her long enough to say, “Don’t get excited. There is no need for worry.”

Jeanette and Martha, pale with anxiety, sat on the arms of Miss Ashton’s chair; for Jim had succeeded in finding a place for her to sit down. He and Nancy were half leaning, half sitting, on a pile of camp stools near by.

“Frightened, Nan?” he asked, looking down at her.

“Not—exactly,” she replied, bravely smiling up at him, but she shook with nervousness. “If there were only something one could *do*, instead of

just having to wait passively.”

“I imagine it won’t be very long,” he said, slipping his arm around her to steady her a little. “We are so close to Boston that a boat, should reach us very quickly.”

“Isn’t it queer,” she observed presently, “how persistent a part the fog has played in this trip? The morning we landed at Yarmouth, that first night in Halifax, several times on our motor trip——”

“And on Turtle Head,” interrupted Jim in a low tone.

“And now it is pushing us into Boston,” she finished, smiling at him.

“Pushing us in!” echoed Martha, who had caught her last sentence. “How do you get that way? Keeping us *out*, you mean!”

“Miss Scott has recovered her speech at last,” observed Jim. “Is she often silent for so long a time?”

“Very seldom; but Jim, why don’t you call her Martha? Miss Scott sounds so very formal.”

“It isn’t very easy for me to get on familiar terms with people,” he replied slowly. “I never have made friends quickly—at least,” he corrected himself as he caught sight of her dancing eyes and funny little smile, “never until the present instance.”

“The exception which proves the rule?” she inquired.

“Exactly.”

“But Jim,” she added, more seriously; “the girls like you, and—and my friends must be yours too.”

“I know; I want them to be; and mine yours. You’ll like my special pal Griff Burton. He’s the most unconventional chap you ever saw; a perfect riot. But a prince of a fellow. I hope there will be a chance for you to meet him before you go home.”

“Shouldn’t you think they were sitting calmly in a living room somewhere on dry land, all by themselves, instead of here in a crowd of people on a foggy ocean, not knowing whether we’re going to the bottom or not?” whispered Martha, glancing at the two, absorbed in each other.

“Goodness, Mart, what a cheerful idea”; exclaimed Jeanette, ignoring the first part of her remark.

Miss Ashton made no comment; but she gazed rather thoughtfully out to sea.

“How long do you expect to stay in Boston?” continued Jim.

“I really don’t know. Our plans for the time subsequent to getting into Boston are not at all definite. If Madelon had been with us, you know I told you about Miss Ashton’s protégée, the little French girl?—we expected to run about the city a bit; and there were a couple of boys who spoke of meeting us here.”

“Who are they?” asked Jim quickly.

“One is a Junior at Roxford—his name is Phil Spenser; the other is his cousin, Tom Mixer. He’s a grad. They are having such a funny experience this summer,” and she went on to tell him of their adventures. “If we had come back to Boston when we expected to, I think it unlikely that they would have been here. But I sent Phil a card after our plans changed, and it may be that by this time they have made enough money to come on.”

“I should like you to meet my father and mother before you go back,” said Jim, after she had finished her story of the boys. “My brother is in Bermuda at present——”

“Oh, is he? That’s where Janie and I want to go next summer. We’re planning to ask our folks to give us the trip as a graduation present.”

“And after that, what?”

“I honestly don’t know, Jim. I wish I did. During this last year at college I’ll have to think hard, and come to some decision. I *might* teach, for I love youngsters——”

“But only for, say a year or two?” interrupted Jim, in a very low tone.

“Why, I don’t know. I probably should keep at it if I liked it.”

“I mean just until I get well settled, and can take care of you?”

There was dead silence, broken only by the harsh sound of the foghorn, and the subdued voices of the crowd around them. Nancy’s heart raced madly; and although she felt Jim’s anxious eyes upon her, and knew he was waiting, she could not force herself to reply at once.

“You’re not angry; are you, Nan?” he asked at last.

She shook her head.

“And—and—you’ll do it?”

“Do what?”

Even in a serious moment like this, her fondness for mischief got the upper hand.

“You know perfectly well what I mean, Nancy,” he replied very gravely.

He had not meant to speak so soon; not for a long time. But in the excitement of the collision, and their possible danger—for truly help did seem mighty long in coming, and he knew that by this time water must be filling the hold of the steamer—he had thrown aside all reserve. He must let her know how very much he cared.

At that moment, a huge bulk loomed out of the fog, and there were shouts of joy from the passengers. Help had come.

Two at a time, “Like the animals going into the ark,” remarked the irrepressible Martha, the people were all transferred to the *City of Boston*

which had come to rescue them; and the disabled steamer, being lightened, prepared to limp into port with her cargo, under her own power.

In the excitement Nancy managed to whisper to Jim:

“I can’t answer you now, with all this going on; maybe we’ll be able to have a few minutes together before I go home?”

“I’ll see that we do,” was his firm reply.

Rumors of the accident had reached Boston, and the wharf was thronged with people. Some were friends or relatives of the passengers on the unfortunate steamers; others merely seekers of excitement. Jim managed to get his party through the crowd, and into a taxi.

“Sorry to hurry you away from Pierce, Miss—Martha,” he said, after they were seated in the cab and on their way to Miss Ashton’s apartment.

Nancy flashed him an approving glance.

“Oh, that’s all right,” replied Martha frankly. “He knows where he can find me.”

[1] Can one say of a thing that it is lost if one knows where it is?

CHAPTER XIII

A LETTER

Dear Mary,

“I don’t know how you will feel about it, but in spite of my careful chaperoning” [Miss Ashton smiled shrewdly to herself as she wrote that] “I’m afraid that I have let your little girl fall in love.

“I fancy I can see you stiffen up at that, and hear you say, ‘What nonsense! She is only a child.’ Perhaps she is in your eyes, still a little girl—I suppose that, to their own mothers, children never really grow up; but to others she is a very lovely and lovable young girl. She was always most attractive, but how wonderfully she has developed and improved during these last two years! I have not seen her, you know, since that summer she was so crushed by her uncle’s departure for Germany; and I imagine I see the change more clearly than you do.

“To get back to the subject in hand, I do not want to forestall Nancy’s confidences to you; for I am sure she will tell you about her new more-than-friend very soon, if she has not already; but I do want to give you my impressions of the case, as well as to let you have some information which will perhaps move you to smile, instead of frown, upon these two young things.

“James Jackson, the driver of the bus and conductor of our motor trip through Nova Scotia, is, except during the summer, a student at Harvard; and, from what I have found but, a very good student. This will be his senior year. His father and mother are well-known and highly esteemed descendants of the founders of the city. He has one brother, Edmund, who is at present running a lily farm in Bermuda. They are not wealthy people, but are very comfortable and live in one of the lovely old-fashioned houses in Cambridge. So much for his antecedents and position.

“Now, for the lad himself. Really, Mary he is a dear! A big, strong, manly fellow, but gentle and bashful as a girl—I correct myself, as girls used to be. He talks very little, and hides his ideas and emotions behind his serious face and quiet manners. There is plenty of character, force, and determination, however, in the background, ready to be exercised whenever

needed. He has dark hair and eyes, though not quite so dark as Nancy's; but he is much taller, and of course heavier, than she.

“Her manner toward him, as well as his toward her, have given no opportunity for criticism even by the most severe judge. It is such an ideal little romance that I just love to watch it. They are over in the Public Gardens now, looking at the flower beds. Whether they will really see them or not, I am not prepared to state.

“Seriously, Mary, they seem to be perfectly suited to each other—made for each other, as we used to say. What is the modern term? Soul mates, or some such foolish expression. It does not matter what we call it, however, as long as real love, respect, and honor form the foundation.

“The girls will be here for a few days longer. Run down, if you like, and look Jim over; or invite him to go home with Nancy for the week-end.

“Sincerely,

“Lois Ashton.”

CHAPTER XIV

PLANS

In the meantime, Nancy and Jim were sitting on a bench which was placed on a tongue of land jutting out into the lake in the Public Gardens. A white swan, which Nancy had been feeding with gingersnaps, uttered its peculiar harsh cry to call her attention to its desire for more food.

“Well, Nan,” Jim was saying, “have you been thinking about what I asked you on the steamer this morning?”

“Yes, I have very seriously, in the intervals of fitting ourselves and belongings into Miss Ashton’s tiny apartment.”

“And you decided——”

“It’s this way, Jim,” said Nancy slowly, as if choosing her words very carefully. “I’m going to be perfectly frank. I—I care a lot for you, and just now I’m sure I’d never want to marry anyone else. But it seems to me that we would be foolish to tie ourselves up with an engagement just now, when we both have a whole year more at college. The senior year is a very important one, and we’ve got to be deciding what we want to do after we finish, and make preparations for work of some kind.”

“We could do all that just the same even if we were engaged,” protested Jim.

“Yes, but suppose this last year you should meet some other girl you care a lot for——”

“I won’t,” said Jim decidedly.

“You can’t be absolutely *sure*, Jim; and while I think there is no danger of my meeting anyone who could take your place, such a thing *is*, after all, a possibility, if not a probability. Just think! A month ago we had never even seen each other! We have known each other such a short time, and under such unusual conditions, don’t you really, way down in your heart, think that it would be wiser, safer, for both of us to go back to our old normal familiar lives for this one year, unfettered?”

“I see what you mean, even if I can’t enthuse over it very much.”

“Don’t misunderstand me—dear,” faltered Nancy, for Jim’s tone was rather hurt. “It’s frightfully hard for me to take this stand; but I feel that it is the right one, and——” her voice broke pathetically.

“Please—Nan,” begged Jim, “don’t. Fix things up to suit yourself, and I’ll do whatever you wish.”

“We can write regularly, that is, if you want to.”

Jim gave her such a disgusted look that Nancy smiled in spite of her earnestness.

“And probably,” she added, “we’ll be able to see each other once or twice during the year. Then, if next June we both feel the same way as we do now, you may ask me again. Though, as a matter of fact, you haven’t yet asked me *once*.”

“Why Nancy, I did; I’m sure I did,” protested Jim so earnestly that she laughed.

“Why, Jim, you didn’t; I’m sure you didn’t,” she retorted. “You asked me to wait until you were making enough to take care of me.”

“Well, anyhow, you knew what I meant. But to make sure, if you must have it in so many words, Nancy, will you marry me?”

“Ask me that question on Commencement Day, and I’ll answer it.”

“Promise me one thing, Nan,” begged Jim very seriously; “that you won’t become engaged to anyone else until I have had my chance, again in June.”

“Of course, I’ll promise that; and—and Jim.”

“Yes?”

“If you find some other girl, and feel that you don’t want to ask me again, just mail to me the little spray of wild roses that Janie gave us on the Harbor ride that day—what ages ago it seems!—and I’ll understand.”

Jim laughed gayly.

“Fat chance of that!” he declared.

“But you’ll promise?” persisted Nancy.

“Oh, yes; to please you I’ll promise,” he agreed indulgently.

“My goodness!” exclaimed Nancy, looking at her watch after a long silence, during which the swan, disgusted at the lack of attention from the

two human beings, sailed off down the lake, “do you know that it’s after five o’clock? Martha went off somewhere with Mr. Pierce; Jeanette was going through some of the shops; and Miss Ashton suggested that we all be back about five thirty. We had rather a ‘picked up’ lunch, as she called it; and to-night we’re going out to dine.”

“I know it.”

“You do? How?”

“Because I invited you all to go to dinner with me.”

“You did! When?”

“I asked Miss Ashton this morning, and she accepted for the crowd.”

“How very nice! And she never said a word about it.”

“She’s an awfully good scout,” said Jim fervently, if a bit irrelevantly.

“To-morrow,” he went on, “I hope to have you meet Mother and Dad. I told them all about you when I ran out home for lunch, and they want you, and the others too, of course, to come out for afternoon tea to-morrow.”

“I shall love seeing them, and your home, Jim.”

“They’ll love you, too. I’m going to have Griff there. I guess I’ll ask him for to-night too; and Pierce, if I can get hold of him.”

“Jim, you’re extravagant, taking such a big party out to dinner; though of course it would be loads of fun.”

“I have my whole summer’s pay, and we must celebrate some way.”

“Celebrate what?” asked Nancy quickly; but Jim only looked at her and laughed.

At six o’clock he was back at the apartment, bringing Griff with him. After introductions were over, they sat in the little living room waiting for John Pierce. Griff, a tall, blond youth, proved to be as lively and unconventional as Jim was serious and reserved. He roamed restlessly about, taking up ornaments and books and setting them down again,

stumbling over footstools (whether accidentally or intentionally, it was difficult to tell), and getting into people's way generally.

"Excuse it, please," he said, as he bumped into Martha who was just turning away from the window for the third time.

"What's the matter with you?" she asked bluntly, as she watched him continue his ramble about the room.

"Me? Oh, I'm nervous."

"Over what?"

"Meeting so many charming girls all at one time. It's quite a strain on a fellow's nerves. Didn't you know that?"

"Don't pay any attention to him," said Jim smiling. "He's quite harmless."

"Indeed. And when you get really to know me," added Griff, "you'll like me a lot. Folks always do."

Jeanette did not know quite what to make of him, and sat watching him, half fascinated, half disapproving. He noticed her gaze, interpreted it correctly, and, being a born tease, decided to bother her.

"Little blond girl," he said, going over to her and taking her hand, "I feel that you are the only one here who really understands me. Come over on the window seat and talk to me, and I'll sit as still as a mouse. Oh, have a heart," he added, as she hesitated.

"Yes, Janie," urged Martha; "do take pity on the rest of us, and keep that Perpetual Motion quiet for a few minutes. It would be an act of charity."

Thus impelled, figuratively and literally, Jeanette, blushing to the roots of her hair, rose to comply with the request. Bowing low, Griff took her hand and led her ceremoniously across the room to the window seat, where he began to talk nonsense to her in a low tone.

“You other people will have to amuse yourselves,” he paused long enough to say. “We are too busy to bother about you.”

“Thank Heaven!” ejaculated Martha fervently.

After talking nonsense for a few minutes, Griff led the conversation to the subject of books and plays; and Jeanette found him a really delightful companion.

“I like to see the first impression Griff makes on strangers,” observed Jim to Nancy. “Martha is evidently going to fight with him all the time.”

“Yes, and poor Janie is fussed to death. She doesn’t know what to make of him. But,” she added in a lower tone, “they seem to be enjoying each other’s company now.”

“She’ll like him after a while. Girls always do.”

“Sorry to be so late,” said John Pierce, coming in at that moment; “but it couldn’t be helped.”

Jim introduced him to Griff, and the party went down in the elevator. A taxi soon whirled them through the streets to the Copley-Plaza Hotel.

“Oh, I’ve always heard so much about this, and wished to see it,” whispered Nancy to Jim as they entered.

A table for seven had been reserved for them at one side of the circular dining room, and they were soon making up for their “skimpy luncheon.” They had so many things to talk about, that they spent a long time over dinner.

“Now, what should you like to do?” asked Jim, when they finally rose from the table. “A movie?”

“I don’t know, Jim,” said Miss Ashton with some hesitation. “I should not like to be considered a spoil-sport, but it is half-past nine now, and we have had a most strenuous day. I think the girls had better forego the joys of the screen for the benefit of a little rest.”

She had been looking at her party while they were at dinner, and saw how tired and excited they all were; and she didn't want to send the girls home looking like that. So after a stroll through the hotel, they returned to the apartment.

"I'm not going to ask you boys to come up," said Miss Ashton, as they got out of the taxi. "But, let me see. To-morrow we're going out to your house, Jim, for afternoon tea. In the morning we hope to go to church. Monday, these girls are going home. Suppose to-morrow night you all come here for a farewell supper. We'll be crowded, but I know you won't mind."

The exclamations of delight with which her invitation was received fully repaid her for any work which it would entail.

Packing themselves away for the night in Miss Ashton's tiny apartment was a problem, and they had so much fun over it that all inclination for sleep was destroyed.

The living room had what Martha persisted in calling a "wall bed."

"Mart, it's a *Murphy* bed!" protested Jeanette, whenever it was mentioned.

"That may be its official name," retorted Martha; "but it comes out of the wall, just the same."

"Suppose you and Jeanette sleep here, Nancy," suggested Miss Ashton, pulling it out. "Martha can take the davenport. We'll push it over to the other side of the room."

"And what about you?" inquired Nancy. "I have a cot which I can set up in the dressing room."

"But you won't be comfortable," objected the girls. "Let one of us take the cot."

"Indeed I won't. I'm used to sleeping anywhere. Wait until I get it fixed and you'll see how cozy it really is."

It was. The cot fitted in between the wall and the dressing table in the tiny room which connected the living room with the bathroom; and plenty of air came in from the living room windows directly opposite, if the door between were left open.

“This is heaps of fun,” declared Martha, when they were at last in bed, and the lights had been extinguished. “Who’d ever think that this time last night we were on the ocean, and to be shipwrecked before morning, and not knowing anything about it.”

“If they could have known about it ahead of time, Mart,” laughed Nancy, “I suppose it might have been avoided.”

“I said *we*, not *they*!” retorted Martha, as she turned over with a flop. She was soon fast asleep, as was also Miss Ashton.

“Janie, are you sleepy?” whispered Nancy after a while.

“Not very. Are you?”

“No. Janie——”

“Yes, Nan?”

“I suppose you noticed that Jim has been—has been—sort of nice to me.”

“Yes.”

“Well—he—he asked me to marry him.”

“Oh, Nancy darling, I’m so glad!”

Jeanette caught her friend in her arms, and squeezed her until she could hardly breathe. “I think he’s just fine, and I hope you’ll be just awfully, awfully happy.”

“Not so fast! Not so fast!” protested Nancy. “I haven’t said ‘yes’ yet.”

“You haven’t? Why Nan, don’t you care too? I thought you did.”

“I do; but I must be positive. It is too eternal, too serious a thing to decide in a hurry. I’m not even engaged yet.”

She went on to tell Jeanette the substance of Jim's and her conversation on the subject; adding, as she finished, "Of course you know without my telling you that this is just between you and me. I suppose Miss Ashton suspects; and Jim has told his father and mother. I'll tell Mother and Dad, and Uncle John, but I don't want anyone else even to suspect it."

"But Martha?" said Jeanette.

"Oh, she's so wrapped up in Mr. Pierce that she probably hasn't even noticed us," giggled Nancy softly.

"Don't deceive yourself," said Jeanette, smiling to herself in the darkness over Nan's naivete, "Martha is more observing than you give her credit for being. She hides a lot under that rather abrupt way of hers."

"I wonder if I had better tell her, then, and caution her not to mention it."

"Of course, Nan, it isn't necessary to tell her; but perhaps it would be as well if you did. She will appreciate your confiding in her, and will, of course, say nothing about it. And I think, Nan, that you have been very wise in your decision, hard as it must now seem to you and Jim."

"I felt that it was the only thing to do, Janie. I really want to finish college, and be prepared to earn my living in some way if it is ever necessary. So many girls think that if they can only get hold of a man, they need never lift a finger again."

"I know; and one can never be sure what will happen at some time in the future. It is foolish not to find out what one thing we can do well, and then fit ourselves to do it. Then, in an emergency, there is something to depend upon."

The girls talked for some time. They had missed their intimate companionship in the excitement and confusion of the past few days, and it

gave both of them much pleasure to get together and talk things over in the old intimate way.

“Well, now that we’ve talked it all over, and aired our ideas,” said Nan, “perhaps we’d better try to go to sleep. To-morrow is going to be a full day too, and we don’t want to be tired out.”

“I’m glad to be going home to see the folks,” she went on, “for it seems ages since we left. I am a bit disappointed, though, at seeing nothing of Boston; aren’t you? I did hope to *do* the town while we were here.”

“Yes; I’m disappointed too, Nan. It is such an interesting city—so different from other large cities.”

“There is only one Boston, and I’ve wanted, ever since I studied history, to explore not only the city itself but also its surroundings.”

“And Cape Cod, that Joseph Lincoln writes about,” added Jeanette.

“Well, perhaps some time we shall be able to come back again,” said Nancy, yawning.

“I am quite sure,” said Jeanette, squeezing her friend’s hand, “that at least *you* will.”

CHAPTER XV

PARTIES

As a result of the late hours which they had kept, in spite of Miss Ashton's resolutions, and also of the excitement and over-fatigue, it was eleven o'clock the next morning before any of the girls stirred.

A stray sunbeam, coming through a tiny hole in the shade, shone directly in Nancy's eyes, and awakened her. For a moment she did not know where she was; then the events of the preceding day rushed through her mind. She lay still for a while, listening to hear if anyone else was awake. Not hearing a sound, she drew her watch from under her pillow. Her involuntary exclamation roused Jeanette.

"What's the matter, Nan?" she inquired, sleepily.

"Guess what time it is!"

"Oh, about seven o'clock, I suppose. But please tell me it's only five."

"Add four to your seven."

"Nan, you don't mean it!"

Nancy held the watch before Jeanette's eyes. "Imagine! And I don't think I stirred all night."

"I'm sure I didn't. I never slept so late in all my life."

"Oh, did we disturb you?" Nancy asked, as Miss Ashton appeared in the doorway.

"Disturb me!" she repeated. "It's time somebody did. Do you two know the hour?"

“Just discovered it. I’m afraid we won’t get to church to-day,” said Nancy, regretfully. Martha slept peacefully on.

“It seems a shame to disturb her,” said Miss Ashton; “but we’ll be eating lunch before we have breakfast, if we put it off much longer.”

“Mart,” said Nancy, shaking her.

“What?”

“Time to get up.”

“Can’t be.” And Martha turned over and settled herself for another nap.

“But it’s a quarter after eleven!”

“You’re crazy!”

She was now fully aroused.

“I’ll start breakfast,” said Miss Ashton, going into the kitchen. “Come out as soon as you’re ready.”

“Why don’t we have breakfast and lunch in one?” called Nancy. “Then, since we’re going to have afternoon tea, we won’t need any noon meal.”

“Not a bad idea,” replied Miss Ashton. “We’ll do that.”

Soon they were gathered about the built-in table in the breakfast nook. The sun was streaming in through the double window, and Jip, the canary, flew merrily about his cage above their heads.

“Can’t we do something to help you get ready for to-night?” asked Jeanette, as they were washing the dishes.

“Indeed you can,” replied Miss Ashton promptly. “Lots of things.”

“Good! Give us directions, and we’ll follow them to the letter,” said Nancy gayly.

“We’ll try to, you mean,” amended Martha. “Remember; we’re amateurs.”

“What are we going to have?” inquired Nancy.

“The menu is on top of that cabinet,” said Miss Ashton.

“Fruit cup,” read Nancy. “Um! I love it. Cream of pea soup, with croutons; celery, radishes and olives; breaded veal cutlet, with scalloped potatoes, and asparagus; tomato and lettuce salad with cheese wafers; vanilla ice cream with chocolate sauce; cakes, and coffee. How lovely!”

“Oh, it makes me hungry just to listen to it,” cried Martha.

“Mart! And you’ve just finished your breakfast,” laughed Jeanette.

“And not a *petit déjeuner* either,” said Nancy.

“I didn’t eat any more than you did,” retorted Martha. “You had three muffins, an egg, and a heap of bacon, besides peaches and cream.”

“Don’t let’s stop to quarrel over what we ate,” said Jeanette. “We must get right to work. You allot our tasks, Miss Ashton, and we’ll do our best to perform them.”

It was two o’clock before everything that could be prepared ahead of time was finished.

“What are you going to wear this afternoon?” asked Martha, as they left the kitchenette.

“My flowered chiffon, I think,” replied Nancy; “and I’m going to keep it on for the evening, too. In fact, it is the only thing I have that is at all suitable.”

“What about you, Janie?”

“Would the powder blue georgette be too dressy, do you think?”

“Not a bit, and you look so lovely in it,” replied Nancy. “And why don’t you wear your green and white figured georgette, Mart?”

“I guess I will.”

All three girls had white coats and white felt hats, and Miss Ashton thought they looked very nice as they sat waiting for the taxi.

“This is called the Longfellow bridge,” said Miss Ashton, as they were crossing that lengthy span over the Charles River into Cambridge.

“Oh, is this where he was when he wrote—‘I stood on the bridge at midnight’?” cried Martha.

“This is the bridge he was referring to when he wrote that line,” laughed Miss Ashton. “He was inspired to write it, while standing on this bridge.”

“Yes, Mart,” said the irrepressible Nancy, who was overflowing with fun to-day, “but he probably waited until he got home to write the poem. There wouldn’t be much light here on the bridge at midnight, you know; especially in Longfellow’s time.”

Martha refused to say another word until they were going up the brick walk toward an old colonial house set well back on a shrub-dotted lawn, with several great elm trees spreading protecting branches over all.

“Some house,” she whispered, inelegantly, to Jeanette.

There was no chance to reply; for Jim stood at the top of the steps ready to welcome them. In the doorway was a beautiful white-haired woman, and in the dimness of the hall, just back of her, hovered a big, genial-looking man.

“Come right in here,” said their hostess, after introductions were over, and Jim had taken their coats; and she led them into the library on the left of the long hall, which ran through the center of the house.

“It’s really not cool enough for a hearth fire to-day,” she went on; “but I think it looks so cozy that I just couldn’t resist the temptation to have one started.”

As they chatted of various matters, Mrs. Jackson’s keen, though kindly, eyes were taking careful stock of these new friends of her son.

Mr. Pierce soon arrived, and shortly afterwards Griff burst in. Then all attempts at serious conversation ceased for a time. At five o'clock a maid brought in the tea service, and they all gathered about the table which Mrs. Jackson had placed near the hearth.

Mr. Jackson, who had that fondness for young girls, which one so often finds in a man who has no daughters, busied himself waiting on the girls, and trying to make them comfortable.

"Mother, Miss Scott's cup is empty," he would say, taking it away from Martha and carrying it to the tea table where his wife sat.

"Do have a sandwich, Miss Pembroke! They are so small it takes a dozen to make one."

"Now you must see our garden," said Mrs. Jackson, rising, when they had finished tea. "It is not very large, but we are quite proud, and very fond, of it."

While they strolled about among the flower beds and borders, and went on behind a tall hedge which separated the vegetable garden from the rest of the grounds, Mrs. Jackson managed to have a word or two alone with Nancy.

"I do not find a vegetable garden and orchard so very interesting," she said, taking the young girl by the arm. "Do you? Shall we sit down here beside the pool and watch the goldfish until the others came back?"

"I should be glad to," replied Nancy shyly.

Jim turned around to see what had become of them; but at a look from his mother, he followed the others.

"I want to say, dear, while I have a chance, that Jim has told me all about you; and I can quite understand why he has so completely lost his head, as well as his heart."

"You are very kind," murmured Nancy.

“I also want to commend you, my dear, on your very excellent sense. Now! That sounds funny, doesn’t it? As if I meant in choosing my Jim. But really, I mean your decision to wait a year to see how your sudden friendship wears.”

“It was the only sensible thing to do, I thought,” said Nancy.

“And you were quite right. You and Jim need to get better acquainted before choosing a life together. Naturally too, his father and I want to know you real well, if you will let us.”

“I’ll be glad to.”

“Then too, your parents will want to get acquainted with my boy. It is a pity we live so far apart; but there are ways of surmounting that difficulty, I think. We must do some planning together. You and Jim will have two or three short vacations during the college year, and we must make the most of them.”

“It is good of you,” said Nancy impulsively, “to be so interested in me, when a month ago you had never heard of me; and to be so willing for Jim to be friends with me.”

“I judged a great deal by what Jim told me about you yesterday, and I have added to my information by the impressions gained this afternoon,” replied Mrs. Jackson, smiling. “I always expected that sometime my boy would find the girl he wanted to marry; but I confess I was surprised that he found her so soon. I do not realize—mothers never do—that he is grown up. As you have doubtless discovered, Jim is quite diffident, and though he has gone about with the girls considerably, it was mostly in crowds, or with first one and then another. He has never gone with any one steadily; and that, coupled with the fact that he had no sisters, makes him in many ways quite unused to the ways of girls in particular.”

The others came back to them at that moment, and all opportunity for further personal conversation was over.

They all walked back to the house again. Mr. and Mrs. Jackson and Miss Ashton sat down before the fireplace; for the air was growing chilly, and they had spent some time in the garden. The young people went into the living room on the opposite side of the hall, and turned on the radio. The band music which immediately filled the room was an excellent cover for private conversation.

Mr. Pierce and Martha drifted to a big davenport in an alcove formed by four small windows built out at one side of the room. Griff persuaded Jeanette to occupy the radio bench with him; for he loved to operate it, and could talk nonsense just as well while his fingers were busy with the dial. Jim coaxed Nancy into the sun parlor, which opened from the end of the room.

“Well, Nan?” he asked, smiling at her as they sat down in big willow chairs facing the garden.

“Oh Jim, your mother and father are lovely. I’m going to like them a lot, I know. Your mother and I had such a nice talk, and she was very, very nice to me.”

Jim looked pleased.

“I’m glad,” he said simply. “They like you too. I could tell by the way they acted. But who could help it?” he added.

“I hope they will,” replied Nancy seriously, ignoring his last remark. “I certainly want them to like me.”

“And you have a lovely home, Jim,” she added after a few minutes’ silence.

“I like the old place, and I hope you will like it too. Dad said right away, when I told them about you, that this house was plenty big enough to

add one small girl to it.”

“That was nice of him——”

“But?”

Nancy only laughed, a bit embarrassed.

“I know what you’re thinking, and I feel the same way—that we’d be better off by ourselves, even if we had only a very small establishment to start with.”

“I’m glad that you feel that way too. But, how funny we are?” and Nancy stopped to laugh.

“Why?”

“We decided yesterday to be only friends, until June.”

“Well, we’re just thinking what we’ll do when we’re more than friends.”

“When?” repeated Nancy. “If, you mean.”

“*When*, I said,” replied Jim decidedly.

“Mother will want you to come here and make us a visit sometime before summer,” he continued.

“Yes; she hinted at that, and spoke of our having several short vacations before that time.”

“I hate to think of your going home to-morrow,” he said regretfully.

“Yes, I’m sorry too; but Miss Ashton goes on a case this week, and poor Madelon won’t be able to get back for a while. Besides, my mother and Janie’s mother are anxious for us to get back. They have had no real chance to visit with us this summer; for Emma was there the first part of the vacation, and then we spent all our time getting ready for this trip. It won’t be long now, before college opens; and we really feel that we should give our people some attention.”

Jim had been considering asking his mother to keep the girls a few days longer; but Nancy's words made him reluctantly put aside the idea. After all, it would be better for her to come alone, say during the Easter vacation. Or perhaps at Christmas time. *That* would be sooner.

Miss Ashton appeared in the doorway.

"I think we had better go now, young folks," she said.

They followed her out to put on their wraps, but they moved reluctantly.

"I tried to persuade Mr. and Mrs. Jackson to join us to-night," said Miss Ashton, as they stood for a moment in the hall before the final good-bys.

"It is very nice of you," replied their hostess; "but unfortunately we have made other plans for this evening. I shall hope to see you all again, though, before too long a time has passed."

After various expressions of pleasure over the afternoon's visit, they all walked slowly down the steps and along the brick path to the street where Mr. Jackson had his car ready to take them home.

"Good-by, my dear," said Mrs. Jackson, kissing Nancy, who was the last one, except Jim, to get into the machine. "I hope you will be able to come again, and very soon."

"I'm not going to say good-by," said Mr. Jackson, when they got out of the car at Miss Ashton's apartment. "I hate the word, anyway; so I'll just say 'good night and see you in the morning.'"

"What did he mean?" asked Nancy, as she and Jim walked up the steps together.

"I don't know exactly," replied Jim. "Dad is a bit soft-hearted, though you'd never guess it to judge by his size and appearance; and, as he said, he never likes to bid people good-by."

“Soft-hearted,” thought Nancy. “Like father, like son. That is where Jim gets his big heart from. His mother is charming, but much more practical. I like both of them, but I fancy his father and I will be more especially chummy.”

The supper party was a hilarious affair. Everybody felt very gay, and Griff quite outdid even himself. He insisted upon setting the table, but Jeanette had to follow him around, correcting his errors of omission and commission. The table had built-in benches on either side of it, instead of chairs, and the space between was very narrow. On one of his trips around the table, he slipped and fell, scattering a handful of silver in all directions. He could not, or pretended he could not, extricate himself; and the other two boys had to go to his rescue. With much laughter and difficulty they succeeded in getting him out, and gathering up the silverware.

“Now,” said Martha firmly, taking him by the arm and leading him to a chair in the living room, “just come right in here and sit down. And don’t you *dare* stir until you are called.”

She left him sobbing noisily, his face buried in his handkerchief.

When the other two boys had finished setting the table, and supper was ready to serve, they went to call Griff; and they found him, spread out in the big chair, sound asleep.

“Let’s leave him there,” suggested the hard-hearted Martha.

“His fall must have tired him out,” remarked John Pierce, grinning.

“Come on, Griff,” called Jim. “Eats!”

“Where?” he cried, jumping up. “Oh, I remember.” He sighed deeply, sinking back and covering his face with his hands.

“Oh, cut the comedy, and come on!” directed John Pierce, dragging him to his feet.

Throughout the meal, he assumed the most exaggerated shyness, speaking only in a whisper, and hardly raising his eyes from his plate. No amount of razzing on the part of the others could make him change his manner; and it was only when they began to clear up and wash the dishes, that his real self reappeared.

“Which is worse than the other,” declared Martha.

The girls had managed to get their kodak pictures finished, and the rest of the evening was spent in going over them, and recalling amusing bits of their Nova Scotia tour.

“Like Dad,” said Jim, when the boys prepared to leave, “we won't say good-by; for I'm sure some of us, I won't say for sure how many, will be at the station in the morning. What time did you say your train goes?”

“Nine something, I think. What is the exact time, Janie?” asked Nancy.

“Nine fifty,” prompted Jeanette.

“Then we'll say, au revoir,” said Mr. Pierce.

“Say au revoir, but not good-by,” caroled Griff in a lyric tenor.

“Be quiet! Other folks in this house are probably asleep,” ordered Jim; and he and John Pierce pushed Griff rapidly along the hall in the direction of the elevator.

“It was a lovely, party,” sighed Nancy, as they prepared the rooms for the night; “and it was most awfully nice of you, Miss Ashton, to have it.”

“I was indeed glad to be able to,” replied their hostess; “and I think I enjoyed it almost, if not quite, as well as you young folks.”

CHAPTER XVI

A STRANGE ENCOUNTER

The next morning was a confusion of breakfast, packing, and hurrying off to the station.

“I can never tell you, Miss Ashton,” said Nancy before they left the apartment, “how very much I have enjoyed the trip, and how much I appreciate all you have done to make things pleasant for us.”

“And how glad we are that you asked us to go in the first place,” added Jeanette. “I too certainly had a wonderful time.”

“I never had so much fun in my life,” said Martha. “You have all got me spoiled by this trip, for a summer at home or for an excursion with anyone else. I’m wedded to you for life, vacationally speaking.”

“It is a real pleasure to take you girls anywhere,” said Miss Ashton, in reply; “not only because you so thoroughly appreciate what one does, and enjoy it, but because you are good company. It is not often that a chaperon can boast of a wholly congenial party of girls who keep sweet-tempered, pleased with what they see, and who have such consideration for her. I hope we shall be able to go somewhere again, sometime.”

“And so do we,” was the echo.

“And the lovely picture that you girls gave me will serve to remind me constantly of the land of Evangeline, and our good times there.”

The big South Station was filled with hurrying people when they entered, but Jim and the other two boys who had been watching for them were at their side almost at once.

“The train is made up here,” said Jim, giving Nancy’s bags to a redcap; “so you can get on immediately.”

It was a very long train; and they walked some distance along the platform before they reached their car. The boys settled the party in their chairs, and presented magazines, fruit, boxes of candy, and books; then sat down to visit until it was time to get off.

“My goodness,” cried Martha, looking at the offerings, “you boys must have thought we were going to be a week on the train.”

“Oh, no,” replied Griff quickly. “We gave them so you wouldn’t be weak.”

“Terrible! Terrible!” groaned John Pierce. “Don’t give us any more like that.”

They remained on the train until the very last minute; so the final good-bys consisted of hasty handclasps and promises to write.

Their last glimpse of the Boston station from the car window showed the three boys and Miss Ashton waving to them as the train pulled out. The girls were very quiet for a long time.

“Well,” sighed Jeanette, after the train had passed Worcester, “it’s over.”

“The actual trip itself,” replied Martha; “but perhaps there might be a sequel to it. Who knows?”

“Was it all you expected, Jane?” asked Nancy, rousing from a reverie.

“Yes, it was; and more than I anticipated, in some respects. What about you, Nan?”

“Oh, I loved it! Yet how soon even such a pleasant trip falls into the background. Nova Scotia seems to be so very far away already.”

“It is,” said the materialistic Martha. “Miles and miles.”

“It always seems a pity,” said Jeanette, “that we can’t enjoy the present more while we still have it, on trips especially. We are always looking forward to getting to the next place, or doing the next thing, and so lose the full joy of what we are doing at the time. As our friend Horace says, ‘*Carpe diem.*’”

“There was a lot of good sense in his poems, if he was a bit gloomy,” said Martha, as if she were announcing some hitherto unknown truth; and

she wondered why the girls laughed.

“But it’s true, as you say, Janie,” said Nancy, “and then afterwards, when we think it over, we realize what we have missed, and wish we had enjoyed it more intensely while we had it.”

“Next time, I’m going to try to do that,” resolved Jeanette.

“This vacation was rather unreal, anyhow,” said Nancy, after another long silence.

“What do you mean?” inquired Martha.

“Didn’t Nova Scotia seem to you a kind of unreal, visionary country?”

“I think I see,” said Jeanette slowly. “It was a sort of phantom land.”

“Exactly.”

“You two are too poetical,” observed Martha. “It seemed real enough to me.”

“Martha,” said Nancy, upon their return from the dining car, after lunch, “can you keep a secret?”

“Sure. Why?”

“Because I want to tell you one.”

“Go ahead.”

“It’s—about Jim—and me——”

“Oh, that! I don’t need to be told about that. I don’t think *that* was a secret to anyone.”

Nancy laughed, a bit embarrassed.

“I didn’t think you noticed.”

“Couldn’t help noticing something that even a blind man could see.”

“But nothing at all is to be settled until after Commencement, Mart; and besides our parents, Miss Ashton, and Janie and you, I don’t want anyone to know or even suspect.”

“Why, if I may ask?”

After Nancy finished her explanation, which she found it much harder to make to Martha than to Jeanette, Martha replied, "I see. I guess maybe you're right. Anyway, of course you can count on me to keep it quiet."

"Thanks a lot, Mart."

The beautiful Berkshires had slipped away somewhere behind the train, and they were rapidly approaching Albany, when Martha said hesitatingly:

"Since confidences are in order, I suppose I should do my part."

"Martha! What?" demanded Nancy, excitedly.

"Oh, don't get your hopes up like that. My news is not nearly so interesting as yours. But you remember, you wondered in Yarmouth when I had bought my amethyst ring?"

"Yes," said Nancy, "because I thought it odd that you had not mentioned it before."

"I felt rather queer about it, to tell the truth. The day we sailed, Mr. Pierce and I were strolling about, window shopping, and I foolishly pointed out the ring and said how crazy I was over it. He immediately went into the shop and bought it for me. I absolutely refused to accept such a gift, for I knew that you and Jeanette disapprove of girls taking gifts of any value from men——"

"But Mart," interrupted Nancy, "what have our opinions got to do with it?"

"Haven't you been my mentors ever since we started out together in Eastport?" demanded Martha.

"Why, yes, I suppose so; but you certainly must have some ideas of your own on such subjects."

"Well, I know most girls take anything a man gives them, and seem not to give it a thought."

“I know they do; and they laugh at us for having what they call such old-fashioned notions; but I don’t care. In this, I think the custom of my mother’s day, of accepting only flowers, books, or something like that, is the nicer one; and therefore I adopted it for mine, and shall stick to it,” decreed Nancy decidedly.

“But what could I do?” wailed Martha, “when he just forced it upon me? He said it was just a little souvenir of the country; that he had been intending to get me something to take home, and it was better for the thing to be some article I liked a lot than just some trinket or other that he might pick out.”

“In such a case I really don’t know what you could have done, Mart,” said Jeanette, thoughtfully. “After all, those rings were not so awfully expensive. If he had taken you to the theater a couple of times in a city like New York, and to dinner afterwards, the expense would have been more than the cost of the ring.”

“Yes, that’s true,” agreed Nancy. “I think I just wouldn’t worry about it, Mart. You did your best; so wear the ring, and enjoy it, and forget about the rest of it.”

“Anything else you’d like to tell us?” suggested Nancy shyly, after a pause.

“Nothing much,” replied Martha. “He asked me if he might come to see me, if he could get away for a few days sometime, and I said he might.”

“At college?” asked Jeanette.

“I don’t know. There would be no objections. Would there?”

“None at all. Many of the Juniors and Seniors, you know, have visitors over the week-end, or go off to dances or house parties, though the girls of our own crowd have not done much in that line.”

“You like Mr. Pierce, don’t you, Mart?” asked Nancy.

“Yes, I do sometimes——”

“And other times?” prompted Jeanette.

“I don’t like him a bit! He’s awfully stern, and so dictatorial when he wants to be; and——”

“You’re not used to it,” concluded Nancy, laughing.

“No; and I’m not sure I could ever get used to it, either; or that I want to.”

“*Albany!*” called the porter. “Stop of forty minutes.”

“Let’s get off,” proposed Martha. “It will be a long wait on the train.”

“If we can keep Nan right between us all the time, I will,” said Jeanette; “but I refuse to let her out of my sight.”

“I want a soda,” decided Martha, as they strolled along the platform with the other passengers. “There’s plenty of time.”

So they hurried on through the crowd of trainmen, redcaps, travelers, dodged between baggage trucks, around piles of freight, and down the stairs to the station proper.

“We were lots farther out than I thought,” observed Jeanette, as they perched on stools before the soda fountain.

While they were waiting for their orders to be filled, Nancy’s eyes fell upon a man who was lounging on one of the near-by benches. His clothes had once been good, but were now very shabby, and he looked as if he might be slightly the worse for liquor.

“His face looks familiar,” she thought. “I wonder where I have seen him before.”

She puzzled over the likeness for a few minutes, and then gave it up. After all, there were so many similar types. One was always saying, “That person looks so much like so-and-so.”

While the girls were enjoying their sodas, the man, whose attention had been attracted to them when they first approached the counter, eyed them attentively. As they paid the check and turned away, he got up, and moving across the short space between them, stood directly in their way. They were about to walk around him, when he spoke.

“Say,” he demanded, in a low tone, “what did you do with my sister?”

“Your sister?” repeated Nancy, in astonishment.

“Come on! Don’t notice him,” whispered Jeanette, trying to urge them on their way.

“Now just you wait a minute,” he persisted. “Don’t try to get away from me. There’s something I want to find out and you’ve got to tell me.”

Jeanette looked wildly around to see if she could see a policeman, but there were none in sight.

“We know nothing about any of your affairs,” said Nancy firmly.

The man laughed unpleasantly.

“Maybe you don’t know me, but I know you; and your friends too. You’ve done me a couple of ill turns, and now to pay up a little you can tell me where Georgia is.”

Now Nancy knew where she had seen him before. The peculiar acting man in front of them in the theater that day so long ago; Georgia in tears in the lobby; the girls taking her to tea, and making up enough to send her home; the meeting with Georgia in the store at Christmas time; her months of boarding at Janie’s house. All this flashed through her mind, followed immediately by the picture of a man bending over her dresser one night at college; his capture by means of her flashlight; the room filled with girls; Tim’s entrance to take the man into custody.

“Georgia!” gasped Jeanette.

“Yes, Georgia,” repeated the man. “You tried to coax her away from me, by getting her to live at your house; but I fixed that! You didn’t want her any more after you found out about the brooch. Did you?”

The girls were so surprised and shocked by the man’s words that they were absolutely speechless.

“She came back with me for a while after that,” he continued, “and then gave me the slip again. Now what I want to know is, where is she? Where have you hidden her?”

“We know nothing at all about Georgia’s whereabouts,” said Nancy, finding her voice at last. “We only wish we did. We too have been looking for her for a long time.”

“Is that the truth?” demanded the man, looking sharply at her.

“It certainly is. Now let us pass at once.”

Seeing a policeman crossing the station, the man slunk off, and was soon lost in the crowd; and the girls hurried out, and up the stairs toward the train.

“My goodness!” panted Martha, as they almost ran along the platform. “I was scared.”

“I wasn’t scared; for there were too many people all around us; but I was almost stunned by the unexpectedness of the encounter,” said Nancy.

“Poor, poor Georgia,” commented Jeanette, “to have such a brother! What do you——”

“Our car!” cried Martha. “It’s gone.”

“It can’t be,” protested Nancy. “That is our engine.”

“Well, you can see for yourself that the car ‘Elaine’ isn’t anywhere around here,” persisted Martha, excitedly.

“They are switching,” said Jeanette, after a careful survey of the scene. “‘Elaine’ is probably farther out in the yards. We’ll walk on a ways.”

“She’s gone. She’s certainly gone,” repeated Martha, after they had proceeded for some distance, and still saw no signs of the runaway car.

“There it is!” cried Nancy, pointing across several tracks, where, far ahead, almost at the bridge over the Hudson River, stood “Elaine.”

“How in the name of fortune can we get to her?” demanded Martha.

“The answer to that,” said Jeanette, smiling, “is that you can’t, at present.”

“Unless you want to climb over those two trains,” added Nancy. “They’ll probably switch again, and bring her farther in.”

They stood watching, and Martha breathed more freely when an engine soon picked up the lost “Elaine” and brought her in near the platform where the girls were waiting. Soon they were able to get on board again.

“Now that the excitement is over,” said Nancy, as they settled down in their chairs for the rest of the trip, “let’s discuss our strange encounter. Mart did so much dancing around out on the platform that we had no chance to talk about it.”

“Well, I didn’t want to get left,” protested Martha.

“Of course we *did*,” laughed Nancy.

“Can you figure out the mystery at all. Nan?” asked Jeanette.

“No, Janie, I really can’t, that is in detail. We know now that this man whom we first saw that day in the theater is Georgia’s brother; and that he is a—a—” she hesitated, not liking to say the word.

“A thief!” prompted Martha, who had no such scruples. “And what did he mean by saying that you had done him a couple of ill turns?”

“First, in befriending Georgia, I suppose,” replied Nancy slowly, “since that took her away from him. And second, for turning him over to Tim that night at college——”

“Oh,” squealed Martha, “was *he* the burglar that you captured with the flashlight?”

“Yes.”

“You realize, Nan, judging by what he just said, that he was responsible for the brooch being found in Georgia's pocket?” asked Jeanette.

“Do you suppose he was lying? I don't see how he could have worked it.”

“Nor I, but he doubtless has ways and means of which we know nothing; and I'm just as sure as sure—and always have been—that Georgia was not guilty.”

“So am I; and I wish more than ever, now, that we could find her,” replied Nancy.

“Perhaps if we advertised?” suggested Jeanette.

“You might. But don't expect any results; for there are so many papers, and so many cities. She might not even be in this country now.”

“What about the brooch story!” asked Martha. “I never heard that!”

“No, we never told it, and never intended to; but since you have accidentally heard part of it, you may as well learn the rest,” replied Jeanette.

Jeanette went on to tell her briefly how, after Georgia had been living with them for some months, and had been left alone for the week-end, a valuable brooch of Mrs. Grant's had been found in Georgia's pocket under very puzzling circumstances, and that, immediately after, Georgia had mysteriously disappeared.

“How very uncomfortable for all of you,” was Martha's comment, when Jeanette had finished her explanation. “Why don't you tell everybody you know,” she proposed, after a moment's thought, “that you want to find

Georgia! Just give them a description of her, and tell them to be on the lookout for such a person. You needn't tell them why you want her.”

The girls smiled skeptically over her suggestion.

“I'll ask John—Mr. Pierce anyhow,” she persisted. “He meets such a lot of people.”

“First call for dinner. Dining car forward,” called a waiter, passing through the car.

“Let's go in right away,” proposed Martha, rising promptly. “If we don't, we'll be standing in line later. We had a very light lunch, you know,” she added, as Jeanette smiled. “And I'll have to be leaving you in about an hour.”

So they went in to the dining car, and lingered over their last meal together on the trip; talking over the happenings in detail, as perhaps only a trio of college girls can.

When Martha's station was reached, they bade her good-by until the opening of college; and by that time they were so tired and sleepy, that they dozed until their own station was called.

“Just think,” observed Nancy, as they walked along the platform, “the next time we come here we'll be starting out for our last year at Roxford. Our senior year, Janie. It doesn't seem possible; does it?”

THE END

*** END OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK NANCY
PEMBROKE IN NOVA SCOTIA ***

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