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"PAT," By OLIVE BIRRELL,



WHEN Pat was three years old, she had the prettiest face to be seen on a day's journey. Dark grey eyes, with blue in them, long black lashes, curly brown hair, and rosy lips, which smiled as if they could not help smiling. Small wonder that such a delightful *tout ensemble* fascinated Mrs. Wentworth, a lonely middle-aged widow, who had driven in her brougham to buy presents for her nieces in New Zealand.

"Here, little girl," she said, leaning over the carriage window. "Here is sixpence to buy a doll with."

Pat had small experience with dolls, but she knew the use of money, and stood on tip-toe in the gutter, stretching out both her hands. Mrs. Wentworth's kid gloves were tight and slippery. The sixpence fell, the horses moved, the wheels went round. Pat screamed as she found her poor little self in the mud, jammed tightly between the carriage and the curb-stone. Mrs. Wentworth screamed also; a man on the pavement picked up the child whose left arm hung limp and helpless.

"Give her to me," said Mrs. Wentworth. "Now drive to"—St. Thomas's Hospital, she was going to say, when some sudden impulse prompted her to change the words, and substitute "Eaton Terrace."

So it came to pass that Pat slept that night in fashionable lodgings on the edge of Belgravia, waited upon by Travers, Mrs. Wentworth's maid, a good-natured woman, who approved of philanthropy. She and her mistress spent their days like Arabs, wandering over the face of the world, grievously afflicted by boredom, which is most likely not the case with Arabs. The little girl provided interest and excitement. They gave her toys, picture-books, frocks, and new shoes, and made her so happy that at the end of three weeks, when her father came to fetch her, she stamped her feet, crying—

"Pat don't want to leave yer." This appeal touched Mrs. Wentworth's heart.

"Travers," she exclaimed, "I don't think I can part with this baby. She is the sweetest I have ever seen."

The little girl, though just three years old, had two sisters younger than herself. The father of this small family, a coachman by profession, felt willing to yield up the eldest daughter; but the mother, who was Irish, cried bitterly when the plan came under discussion.

"I must see the child once a week," she sobbed. "And the lady must let her come back for good when she's finished her standards."

"What's this about a new christening?" asked Newman, her husband. "The child was christened right enough."

"In the chapel opposite, when I was too ill to go further," said his wife. "The lady asked if I had any objection to let her be christened again—provisionally," she said. "I told her Pat was only a name we picked up. Mary's the real one. Now she wants to add on a second, Veronica."

"Veronica," repeated her husband. "Sounds odd. I don't take to the notion."

"If you take to the notion of giving away your child as a present," said his wife, "you have no call to say a word more. When Pat's gone, she's gone, and a new name don't count much either way."

For a few months it seemed doubtful whether Travers would not have more to do with the training of Mary Veronica than her mistress. No word was said of permanent adoption, and the child lived a great deal in the maid's company. Gradually changes came about. Travers married, and went to America, and very shortly after Mrs. Wentworth left

London for Italy, taking her tiny charge with her.

Pat proved a clever little mortal, to whom learning was not difficult. She possessed that traditional ounce of wit, which is worth a pound of clergy. Her heart also was warm and generous. Half her pocket money went in buying presents for the children at "home." During flying visits to London they were invited to tea, and came in new frocks, looking awkward and shy.

These London visits grew rare as time passed on. Mrs. Wentworth spent every winter in Rome, and every summer in Switzerland, going to Paris and Dresden between whiles. All idea of training Pat to be a nursery governess ceased. The girl forced the hand of destiny by developing unusual powers. Her violin playing was remarkable, and she drew very well, having, in fact, a talent for original design. Mrs. Wentworth thought sometimes of the little house in the London mews with misgivings. Every year her secret anxiety increased. A strong woman might have cut the knot of the difficulty. Pat's guardian, being a weak one, refused to look facts in the face, and lived by simply ignoring them. Her adopted daughter was called Miss Wentworth, because it saved trouble, and by the time her twentieth birthday arrived, she was the beautiful Miss Wentworth, distinguished from all others.

This birthday summer was spent in a village called Leland, not far from London, where they had stayed once before, and made pleasant acquaintances. The day after their arrival Pat came home with interesting news.

"Mr. Rivers is at the Manor. Every one is excited. They have not seen him since his accident. Do you remember the last time we were here, they told us that his horse fell in the hunting field, and hurt him rather badly, and he had been forced to go abroad for rest?"

"I remember," said Mrs. Wentworth. "He is a grandson of Christopher Rivers, who published translations of Euripides. The family has always been distinguished; several of them have been in the Cabinet."

"He passed me just now in the lane," said Pat, "and held our gate open for me. The Vicarage people say he is very nice; but it does not matter much to us. I don't suppose we shall meet him while we are here."

They did meet him, and very quickly. The next morning, when they were walking in the village, the Vicar came up, and said—

"Mr. Rivers wished to know if they cared to see the Park"—Pat felt shy, and whispered, "Please say 'No,'" but Mrs. Wentworth did not hear her, and said, "Yes." Then Mr. Rivers joined the party, and they entered the great gates of the Park together.

Mrs. Wentworth liked the new acquaintance. He was twenty-nine or thirty. Tall and distinguished-looking, with very bright, dark eyes. His movements were vivacious and quick, in contrast with his voice, which was particularly soft and low. Before long the quartette broke up into pairs, Pat going first with Mr. Rivers.

"I want to show you the Beech avenue," he said. "The Vicar keeps the road, I see. If we go down the avenue, we shall reach home before they do."

Pat gave a little cry of joy as they entered the avenue. It was a quarter of a mile long, and at the further end she could see the old grey, weather-beaten house, which had resisted the storms of centuries. Her thoughts flew to the aisles of the great cathedrals in Germany and France, where Mrs. Wentworth had sometimes taken her, and she was not surprised that Mr. Rivers lifted his hat reverently as they passed be-