



(PRIZE STORY.)

"Say, girls what is it? What are we to do during holidays? Was that why you were called down?" eagerly questioned Ethel Payne as the girls came upstairs.

"Miss Moore is so fidgety," continued Ethel, "she wouldn't let me go down. Said the draughts might make my throat worse, and here I have just been hovering around the stairway longing to hear."

"You needn't have been so anxious. It's nothing so very pleasant," drily remarked Maud Morris.

"What is it anyway?" impatiently repeated Ethel.

"Oh! I'll tell you if Maud will not," said Rose. "It's just this, we are not to have our annual party."

"It's just too mean," interrupted Bessie Morton, "Uncle Fred wanted me to go up to Salem for my holidays, and I begged mamma to let me stay and have some fun. I might as well have gone to the country as to be buried here with you girls."

"Complimentary to us, I must say! We'll allow you to go yet, and hope the society of the old folks will not prove too exciting, after being so long accustomed to the dullness of ours."

"Don't try to be sarcastic, Susie. You know it is provoking to be shut up here, when one might have got out of it."

"But why is it, girls? Why can't we go?" persisted Ethel.

"Well," said Rose, "Miss Moore is unexpectedly called away, and Miss Burt, who is to be left in charge, requests that there be none, as she feels she is too inexperienced to undertake it."

"She'll be experienced before vacation is over, if I know anything about it," chimed in Clara Millar.

"But, Ethel, we haven't told you all yet," resumed Rose.

"Miss Burt is truly magnanimous and has devised a plan for our entertainment that should make us all perfectly happy. We are each to have the privilege of inviting one young lady to spend Christmas Eve with us. We shall have a simple tea, served at an early hour, and such amusements as we choose to provide for our friends." (Groans from the girls.)

"She hopes we will all take such an interest in this as will ensure a pleasant evening to ourselves, and be an honor to the school. We are to meet her this evening after the other pupils have gone, to perfect arrangements. There, that's all of it. Is it not a delightful prospect?"

"It is mean," assented Ethel, "but it's no use moping over it. We'll have some fun out of it yet. See if we don't."

"Suppose I'll not be allowed to leave my room this evening, but you quietly listen to her plans and then we shall perfect ours."

These six girls, students at "Marley College," near the town of Maine, could not go to their distant homes for the Christmas holidays and so remained at the college.

In former years, Miss Moore, the principal, stayed with them, and did all she could to make it pleasant for them, among other amusements giving a party on Christmas Eve, to which were invited many of the young people of the neighboring town.

This was an event eagerly looked forward to by the young ladies, and did much to reconcile them to a vacation spent in the college.

Miss Moore was now called away by the illness of her mother, and compelled to leave the half-dozen girls who were remaining in charge of Miss Burt, one of the junior teachers, a young lady who had been but a short time in the school.

The teachers had decided that it would be wiser not to have the party in the absence of the principal, and it was the communication of this decision to the girls that occasioned such dissatisfaction.

"Well, now, for details," as the girls gathered in Ethel's room next morning, "I suppose you didn't dare to come in last night, although I was just dying to hear."

"No, indeed, Miss Burt came up with us and remained in the hall until we had each gone to our own rooms."

"Oh! just about what she said before. She will give to each of us a card of invitation, issued in her name, which we shall inclose with our visiting card in an envelope addressed to the particular young lady we wish to be present."

"She also suggests, that they be accompanied by some small Christmas gift, which our friend can appropriately wear and preserve as a memento of the evening."

"What did she say, Rose?"

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"Well, then, let us all ask the same one. Let us all invite Jane Huston."

"O Ethel!" in dismayed tones, from the girls.

"Now do, it will be fun. Miss Burt will be ready to receive the elite of the town, and won't she be surprised, when the milk-maid is ushered in."

"We wouldn't dare to!" asserted Susie Brock.

"We would, too! What could be said? We would each have invited one, and would be just obeying the injunction to 'Ask the poor, etc., to the feast.'"

"But Miss Moore?"

"Now, girls, I won't listen to one objection. We must just get the whole thing arranged."

"We might do it," began Clara, "if—"

"Of course, we'll do it," said Rose. "If we can carry it out successfully."

"What's to hinder us? We can slip them to her, when she comes with the milk, Wednesday morning. What will she think?"

"She'll come, of course," said Susie.

"Of course she will. Six times over, if she can," added Maud.

"What about souvenirs?" questioned Bessie.

"Oh! we couldn't miss that," said Rose. "She'll wear them all."

"Let's make something gay. I'll tie a red ribbon through a little bell, and ask her to wear it," said Ethel, laughing.

"I have a lovely set of glass beads a squaw gave me when I was a little girl," said Rose, "and she shall have them."

"And I," said Clara, "shall make her a fancy rosette of various bright colored ribbons."

"I'll get the fanciest pin that can be bought in town for ten cents, and enclose it."

"A ring to match Susie's pin," called out Bessie.

"The gayest of handkerchiefs, perfumed with musk, shall be my offering," declared Maud.

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ter for a time, resolved to give them to some young gentlemen of the town to whom she had carried notes on previous occasions.

Having come to this conclusion, she proceeded down town, and distributed them most impartially, giving to the first one on whom she called the note that came first to hand.

The result, as you may surmise, was not all that could be desired. Thus it befell that Mr. Peters, who was engaged to Rose, had to endure the fancied slight of having Mr. Ryde receive the invitation he felt was his by rights, and young Wilton, who was just going down the street to order some



MARY AND ROSE LED.

roses sent up to Clara, felt he could not do less than send them to Maud, when she had been so kind as to remember him. Mr. Young was much pleased to receive the card of Susie, that young lady in general treating his advances rather coolly, while Mr. Harton could not understand how Miss Bessie, whom he had met but once, should have singled him out for her favor, and Mr. Sanders, who was very young and very bashful, was much astonished and rather alarmed at being favored with the card of the sprightly Ethel.

The gentlemen, too, were rather surprised that invitations that had the sanction of the teacher should not have come by mail, but supposed it must be to ensure their prompt delivery.

However they came, they had them, and so, in due time, presented themselves at the college and sent up their cards to Miss Burt.

Much surprised, she went down to greet them, and by skilful questioning, learned how they had become possessed of their invitations, without letting them suspect that they were not expected, and then excusing herself to see if the ladies were ready, she waited on the girls.

One glance at them convinced her they were not expecting the gentlemen, and thinking they could not be more surely punished in any way than by meeting their friends in the style of dress they had chosen to assume, she quietly informed them, that their company had arrived and they must now come down to the drawing-room.

As she stood by the open door for them to pass out, she could scarcely repress a smile at their appearance.

Ethel and Rose led, the former wearing a tweed walking-suit, which was not too long to conceal her white kid slippers, elbow gloves of white silk, loosely drawn over the tight-fitting sleeves of her heavy dress, and a string of pearls above the high, close collar.

Rose had an elaborate evening dress of pink silk, which she had borrowed from an elder sister to wear in a tableau, and with it wore a long sash of gold-colored silk, and a pair of ordinary two-buttoned black kid gloves.

Maud wore a dainty, white dress, that displayed to advantage her gloveless hands and neat fitting walking boots, while Susie, by her side, was resplendent in a bright red tea-gown and a profusion of jewelry.

Clara wore with her blue wool school-dress a most elaborate lace fichu and head-dress, and Bessie a gay, plaid blouse, over a sky-blue silk skirt.

Awaiting in the drawing-room the advent of their guests, Miss Burt glanced over the programme they had just placed in her hand, while the girls, standing around in the room, exchanged meaning glances, and Ethel whispered to Rose, "She's not going to let on she is annoyed, but, of course, she is."

Imagine their astonishment and chagrin, as the door opened and Miss Burt moved forward to welcome the visitors.

They could scarcely return the greetings of the gentlemen, who, having donned their gaudy gifts, came in smiling at their own gay appearance, before they noticed the striking and peculiar attire of the ladies.

Unable to regain their composure, the girls would have fled from the room, had they not been detained by the calm, commanding look in Miss Burt's eye.

The gentlemen attempted to talk, and the girls, feeling they had been out-witted, tried to make the best of it, but conversation was strained and spiritless, and all were relieved when the summons to tea caused a diversion.

Owing to Miss Burt's efforts, the hour spent in the dining-hall passed rather pleasantly, and by the time they returned to the drawing-room the girls were ready to forget their dress and enjoy themselves.

An hour or so passed in pleasant, cheerful chat, and then, to their dismay, Miss Burt advanced to the open piano, with the programme in her hand.

The girls knew not what to do. They looked helplessly at each other, and cast beseeching glances towards Miss Burt, plainly imploring to be spared that ordeal. But she was relentless, and coolly taking her place began—

"That the evening might be spent both pleasantly and profitably, I requested the young ladies to prepare a short programme. They have done so, and I shall now call for the first number."

"Solo—God Save the Queen—Miss Rose Taylor."

The discomfited looks of the girls and the amused looks of the gentlemen alike failed to disturb the serenity of Miss Burt under whose steady gaze Rose felt compelled to come forward meekly followed by Bessie, who was to play the accompaniment.

Loyalty was at low ebb with poor Rose, if the fervor with which she sang the anthem was to be taken as an index,



SHE THOROUGHLY ENJOYED HER DAILY DRIVE.

"Then, she would like us to prepare a short programme of music, recitations, etc., but will not dictate to us regarding any of the arrangements," but leave it entirely to our own judgment and pleasure."

"How very kind!" exclaimed Ethel.

"Now, girls, I've got the brightest idea. Of course, Miss Burt wishes the evening to be a success, that it may be a credit to the school and reflect honor upon herself. But we'll be even with her."

"Here's my plan. We are not required to let her know whom we invite?"

"Oh, no!" from two or three of the girls. "We have perfect freedom of choice."