YOU NEVER SAW SUCH A GIRL

GEORGE WESTON

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BY

GEORGE WESTON

Author of "Oh, Mary, Be Careful!" "The Apple-Tree Girl," etc

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TO

MY SISTER AMY

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I

MARTY MAKES HER BOW

MARTY MACKENZIE lived with her Uncle Ebau (whose name rhymed with Esau) and Aunt Emma in a little stone house on Green Mountain. Her real name was Martha, but no one ever called her that.

Uncle Ebau was an old bachelor, a farmer, who just managed to make a living selling butter and eggs around Plainfield. He had a ferocious moustache and wore his trousers tucked into his felt boots, which, combined with a swaggering gait, somehow gave him the appearance of a pirate who had just returned from a pros-

perous cruise on the Spanish Main. When he went around to the back door of a new customer's house, for instance, the ladies quaked at seeing him pass the kitchen windows and, opening the door in answer to his knock, they braced themselves for the shock of a roaring voice and a gruff demand. Instead of this, however, when Uncle Ebau addressed them from under his fierce moustache they found he had one of the most peaceful falsettos that ever astonished the ear.

"Any butter or eggs today?" he would pipe. And then he would give them a wistful smile, as much as to say: "S'prised you some, now, didn't I, ma'am? Well, let me tell you something: I've seen the time it used to s'prise me too!"

As a matter of fact that voice of his was one of the two great tragedies of Uncle Ebau's life.

And now I will tell you the other.

Twenty years before my story opens after living alone for over twelve months in that little stone house on Green Mountain, Uncle Ebau had advertised in the local paper for a housekeeper. But, housekeepers being scarce in our part of the world, he received no answers. After thinking it over a week or two he asked the minister to put an advertisement in a Boston paper. "Write it, 'Some one who likes the country,' " he said, " 'and would appreciate a good home.' " The answers which he received to this would make a story in themselves, and he had about decided to shut his eyes and draw an envelope at random, when another letter arrived from the Boston paper, and instantly all the others ceased to interest him.

It wasn't the stationery, which was in perfect taste, as much as it was the handwriting. And it wasn't the handwriting, which was spidery and aristocratic, as

much as it was the subject matter. And it wasn't the subject matter, which was gentle and ladylike at the same time that it was eloquent and anxious, as much as it was the P. S. And it wasn't the P. S., which only consisted of three lines, as much as it was the inclosed photograph. This photograph showed a baby with one of its hands firmly grasping one of its toes, the other hand in its mouth, and its eyes fixed on Uncle Ebau with the most appealing smile you ever saw.

"P. S.," said the postscript. "She is *such* a lovely child, and I would work my finger ends off to have her with me in a good home."

"The little rascal!" piped Uncle Ebau, smiling back at the baby. "Hope she didn't catch cold." And after reading the letter till he knew it by heart, he sat down and wrote an answer, breathing hard every time he started a new line and drawing a

deep sigh of relief when he finally concluded, "and oblige, Your Obedent Servant, Ebau A. Babson."

As soon as the letter was finished he went over to Plainfield to mail it, and then he went to Mercier's Variety Store, where he bought a roll of Japanese matting which, truth to tell, had a smell like foreign parts and was printed all over with clusters of red chrysanthemums. Next he bought two pictures, which were "marked down special" for that week only, and all the time he kept peeking around among the stock—and peeking around—and peeking around. Suddenly he bristled his moustache at the clerk in a particularly ferocious manner. "Do you sell cribs for babies?" he asked.

Fortunately for every one concerned the clerk kept a straight face. "How old is the baby?" he asked, not without curiosity.

"I'll show you her picture," said Uncle Ebau.

Between the two of them they selected a cot in blue and white enamel, and although Uncle Ebau tried to hide it under a horse blanket when they got it in the wagon, there wasn't an old woman or (what is worse) there wasn't an old man in Plainfield who hadn't heard about that baby's cot before night. Yes, and before noon of the next day they had Uncle Ebau secretly married to a girl in Moosup, to a girl who lived near Danielson, to a girl near Providence, to a girl in Boston. Unfortunately here the Atlantic Ocean stopped them, or before the day was over they might have had him secretly married to a girl who lived near Cairo or a girl in Rumti Foo.

Not that Uncle Ebau knew. He was too busy with big things to bother about little ones.

The next morning a telegram came for him:

Shall arrive Plainfield three oclock Please meet me at station

This was signed "Mary Mackenzie," and as soon as Uncle Ebau read it he went out and curried Nancy Hanks till she looked as though she had been varnished. Then he had a wash and shave and put on his best suit. He was a striking-looking figure, with his hawklike features and tremendous moustache. "If 'twarn't for this dratted voice of mine!" he piped to himself as he wrestled with his tie.

Indeed it was that same voice—or rather the lack of it—which nearly sent Mrs. Mackenzie back to Boston. She was a slight little woman, quite doll-like in some things, although you never saw a doll which looked so pale or had such serious eyes or such a crown of hair. Uncle Ebau

recognized her in a moment because of the baby, and he went right up to her and bowed with his hat in his hand.

"You are Mr. Babson?" she asked.

Uncle Ebau groaned to himself, knowing it would spoil everything when he piped up: "Yes'm, that's me." So he did a foolish thing. Instead of speaking he bowed again to gain for himself a few seconds' grace, and reached out his hand for Mrs. Mackenzie's travelling bag.

"I have two trunks in the baggage car," she said. "Could we take them with us now?"

Uncle Ebau bowed again, but continued to say nothing.

"Could you get them for me?"

Again Uncle Ebau bowed, and again he preserved the silence of the Sphinx. Mrs. Mackenzie didn't know what to think. She looked at Uncle Ebau and she looked at that ferocious moustache of

his. "Can't he speak?" she wondered to herself in a little panic. Meanwhile the situation was growing more strained every moment, Uncle Ebau standing there in silence with his hand held out for the checks, and Mrs. Mackenzie looking in her bag for them with eyes so full of worry that she couldn't see. "Oh, dear," she thought, "I could never stand any one like this. I must make him some excuse and take the first train back to Boston."

But just then the baby, who had been watching him with that preternaturally solemn gaze which is only given to babies, reached over and fastened her little fingers around the thumb of his outstretched hand.

Poor Uncle Ebau! It was too much! "Hello, baby!" he piped and, turning to the child's mother, he added: "I tho't I'd never seen a prettier picture, but the child's prettier'n her picture ever knew how to be." And perhaps because the

baby had released his thumb and was now holding out her arms, or perhaps because of a passing wave of sadness because of his voice, something very much like tears of emotion gathered in his eyes and, though he immediately batted them back of course, Mrs. Mackenzie saw them and all her hesitation vanished.

Before you could say Jack Robinson—yes, or before you could mention Jack Spratt—she had found her baggage checks and had handed them to Uncle Ebau; and before five minutes had passed the three of them were seated in the Concord runabout and they were headed for the little stone house with the wonderful view.

"What's the baby's name?" asked Ebau as they passed John Dodge's, which is the last house in Plainfield.

"Her name is Martha, but I call her Marty, for short. . . . No, Marty; you

mustn't do that. You can't go to Mr.—Mr.—"

"She can call me Uncle Ebau when she's old enough."

Mrs. Mackenzie said nothing to that.

"Ma'am," said Ebau, speaking as earnestly as he had ever spoken in his life, "that child and me—we're going to be great friends."

"I believe you are."

"I know we are!" cried Uncle Ebau.

And that is how my heroine came to Green Mountain Farm.

II

SUNSET AND EVENING STAR

YOU mustn't think that I have forgotten to tell you about the second great tragedy in Uncle Ebau's life—comparable only to the sorrow he felt because of his piping voice. For the last few minutes I have been leading up to it, and now, to put it in the fewest possible words, I have reached the point where I must tell you that he gradually fell in love with Mrs. Mackenzie.

Yes, in spite of his forty-odd years, and his enormous moustache, and his weather-beaten face, and his trousers tucked into his felts, Mrs. Mackenzie hadn't been keeping house for him three months before Uncle Ebau worshipped the very ground

she walked on; though all the time he realized, better than you or I could have told him, that his love was the kind which can only exist in dreams—that it was one of those things, like choirs of angels and fairy queens, which can never come true in this world.

For one thing she was nearly twenty years younger than he, and in every word and attitude she unconsciously showed him the gulf that lay between them—a gulf as wide as that which separates the peasant and princess, the sailor and the star of the sea. And so his love repressed soon grew to a sort of a secret worship, and only showed itself to the eye in his love for little Marty.

Did Mrs. Mackenzie guess his feelings toward her? For the present we can only guess, but soon I am going to tell you something which will throw at least one ray of light upon the subject.

The first thing that drew them close together was Marty's croup. A blizzard was blowing the night she was taken sick, and Nancy Hanks had spiked herself that morning bringing up a load of wood. So Uncle Ebau walked four miles through the storm to Plainfield and brought back Doctor Chase at two o'clock in the morning.

Marty had a bad time of it. Her mother and Uncle Ebau sat up with her, turn and turn about—but oh, it was a narrow squeak! Yet it had this good result: it united those three into one family. After that, Mrs. Mackenzie and Marty belonged there just as much as Uncle Ebau did; and when the spring came, if you could have seen little Marty toddling around the house and playing under the trees, you would have thought that she had been born there; yes, and if you could have seen Mrs. Mackenzie come out and

begin tying up the Dorothy Perkins roses which grew around the porch, a newborn peace in her eyes, you might have thought that she had been born there, too, and had never known another home. She cleaned and washed and polished and dusted, and in less than a month she had that house so spick-and-span that you wouldn't have known it was the same place. Indeed, she worked so hard that at last the chief beneficiary raised objections.

"You're wearing yourself away, ma'am," he whispered one evening after supper. "I want that you should take it easier for a spell." He was sitting on his chair by the window, little Marty asleep on his knee, and Mrs. Mackenzie had just brought out the ironing board.

"It's only a dress or two of Marty's that I want to iron out," she whispered back.

"Yes, I know. But why not leave 'em till tomorrow? To speak right out in

meeting, as the feller said," he continued after a thoughtful pause, "you've been doing too much, and you ain't as rugged as I would like to see you, as the feller said." You could see that the more Uncle Ebau quoted that mythical "feller" the bolder he grew. He could say anything and blame it all on what the "feller" said. "I meant to speak about it before," he went on, "but I never seemed to get myself around to it, as the feller said. The day I see you first in Plainfield, I says to myself: 'She ain't as rugged as she might be, but give her a month on the farm and she'll start building up and get a little colour on her cheeks.' But, to speak right out in meeting, it seems to me lately that you ain't as rugged now as you was then—if you'll excuse me, ma'am, from speaking right out this way."

Uncle Ebau was right, too, and though she satisfied him with a promise to take a

rest "by and by," every passing month saw Marty's mother a little less rugged (to use the homely word), and her eyes grew larger and brighter, and her love for the sunsets deeper and deeper, especially when the autumn came and the trees on the distant sky line seemed to beckon her like fingers, and the evening star appeared like a light in a window, as though set there by an invisible hand in the dark-blue velvet of the western sky.

Doctor Chase's car began to climb Green Mountain again, at first with long intervals between visits and then with rapidly increasing frequency.

Then came that evening, never to be forgotten by one of them, when the doctor's car went rolling slowly down the hill for the last time, and Uncle Ebau sat by the side of Marty's mother's bed, and didn't even try to hide the tears that trickled down upon his fierce moustache.

And though I cannot tell you all they said to each other, after little Marty had been brought in and had said her prayers by the side of the bed, her mother pressed her to her and then half whispered to Uncle Ebau: "Now—if you'll lift me up—so I can look outside—once more. . . ."

He lifted her up, and for as long as a minute she looked out over the darkening valley. Then gently drawing Uncle Ebau's face to her own she kissed his poor, wet cheek, kissed little Marty, and the next moment her spirit had gone to join the mystery of the sunset—and the splendour of the evening star.

III

THE ARK

ON the surface, the first few years of Marty's education were much like those of any bright young girl, and we need not greatly concern ourselves with details. Uncle Ebau's sister Emma came and kept house for him—quite the stoutest old maid ever seen around Green Mountain, and quite the jolliest. She had a gruff voice and a laugh that rumbled and shook her all about; and she was deaf in one of her ears (one of her favourite sayings being "Come around to this side"); and finally she had a gift for needlework which amounted to downright genius.

A little later, having an unformed idea in his mind that Marty "should grow up to

be a lady," Uncle Ebau had Miss Perkins, the school-teacher, come to board with them. Nancy Hanks had to make two trips to get her things, which included an old-fashioned square piano and nearly a wagonload of books and magazines. It had been arranged that Miss Perkins should share with Marty the south bedroom overlooking the Quinebaug River, and when her things had been placed in it—all except the piano, which was set in the front room downstairs—it might be said that, in that great play which is sometimes called life, the stage had been set and the persons of the drama assembled for the education and development of Miss Marty Mackenzie.

As soon as she was old enough she was taught her notes by Miss Perkins, and how to crochet by Aunt Emma, and how to ride Nancy Hanks and make the turkey gobble by Uncle Ebau. And, as you can easily

guess, she hadn't long finished her Third Reader before she began to dip into those books and magazines which Miss Perkins had brought. And sometimes she let the book rest on her knee and looked over the valley and dreamed vague stories about herself in which Uncle Ebau was a knight, and Nancy Hanks was a steed, and Aunt Emma was the chatelaine of the castle, and she herself was the beautiful lonely lady sitting in the window and waiting for the prince to come with an army of banners and take her out into the great world beyond—into the Kingdom of Heart's Desire.

But you mustn't think that Marty was growing up sadly sentimental. If old Moe, the turkey gobbler, could speak, he would be able to tell you many a thrilling tale of how Marty used to chase him for his feathers. And if that old-fashioned bedroom overlooking the Quinebaug

River could speak, it would be able to tell you many a droll story of how the Imp of Perversity seemed at times to take possession of Marty and make her try to shock the prim Miss Perkins out of all her primness—pretending once, for instance (the night after Uncle Ebau had taken her to a circus), that she was Rosalie, the World-Famous Equestrienne, and that the foot of the bed was a galloping horse, and pretending again that she was Cleopatra, Queen of the Nile, sitting in an empty trunk by way of a barge, and clasping her hands and calling to prim Miss Perkins: "Antony! Oh, Antony!"

As she grew older she also developed what Uncle Ebau called a "good, clear strain of grit," although Aunt Emma generally called it "a bit of Israel Putnam."

"Show 'em your Israel Putnam!" she would sometimes say. "And don't let anybody walk on you!"

"You bet I won't!" cried Marty.

She finished grammar school in her thirteenth year, and the next autumn started at the Plainfield High School, walking two miles to the trolley every morning and two miles home every afternoon, and bringing back such spirited accounts of her adventures and teachers that Aunt Emma started beaming as soon as she saw her approaching over the crest of the hill. By that time Marty was showing signs that she was growing into an unmistakable beauty, every day looking a little more like her mother had looked—the same delicately carved nose, the same purity of profile, the same eyes and crown of hair. She sometimes caught Uncle Ebau gazing at her with a look which was almost apprehension behind his enormous moustache—that moustache, alas, which was no longer ferocious, but was streaked with silver and grey.

"What do you suppose Roger Davis asked me today?" suddenly shouted Marty one night into Aunt Emma's good ear, when she had finished her algebra.

Uncle Ebau sat in his chair by the side of the stove, cleaning an old musket that had belonged to his grandfather, being a great hand to tinker with things and never so happy as when he was in the tool house. Aunt Emma was knitting. And Miss Perkins, in her room upstairs, was correcting examination papers, her face near the green-shaded lamp, the tortoise-shell glasses on her nose making her look unusually prim and old-maidish.

"I d'n' know. What did he say?" beamed Aunt Emma, her needles clicking away

Upstairs Miss Perkins marked one of the papers "B," and calmly turned to the next with an air which seemed to say: "I must keep right on with this. I have no time to

listen to what is going on downstairs."

"He asked me to be his beau!" shouted Marty again.

Uncle Ebau stopped oiling the musket. Aunt Emma stopped knitting. And upstairs, Miss Perkins looked up from her work and bent her ear as though the papers could wait, after all, and she would rest her eyes for a minute or two.

"Wall, I swanny!" breathed Aunt Emma, her lips parted with interest. "Asked you to be his beau, did he? And what did you tell him?"

"I told him when I wanted to be his beau I'd let him know!" shouted Marty, with the old Putnam spirit. "He makes me mad. Always tries to sit beside me on the trolley—and nudges me."

"Nudges you?" demanded Aunt Emma, nearly tickled to death and trying to wink at Uncle Ebau unobserved. "Whatever does he want to nudge you for?"

"I don't know. He seems to like it."

"Sassy young fool!" piped up Uncle Ebau, indignation showing in every line of him. "If he ever bothers you again, Marty, you let me know and I'll speak to his father about it."

For the rest of the evening Uncle Ebau was unusually quiet, even for him, and the next morning he sent a money order to Boston, subscribing to the paper in which he had put his advertisement for a housekeeper fifteen years before. After that, every night when she had finished her home lessons, he had Marty read the Society Notes aloud, always hoping that the next time would have something in it about the Mackenzies—what they were doing, where they were staying, some clue at least that might lead to the discovery of Marty's identity.

But, although every other name in the directory seemed to be there, the Macken-

zies must have been an unusually quiet lot that autumn, so Uncle Ebau's inspiration failed of its desired result.

All the same it had an effect, but one of which he had never dreamed.

Marty hadn't been reading those Society Notes long before they began to appeal to her young imagination and turn it into a new channel. Easter Festivities—Visitors at Atlantic City—Bal Masque at Palm Beach—it wasn't long before they seemed more real to Marty than the Castle in "Ivanhoe" or the Chariot Race in "Ben Hur." Nay, more! In the twilight, just before the lamps were lighted, when Marty liked to look over the shadowing valley and dream those dreams of life and love which come to every girl, she no longer tried to visualize fond delusions of bygone days and scenes.

She no longer dreamed of seeing a Prince with Banners, but her imagination

began to run to a modern young man in a racing automobile, who would stop at the house to ask the road, and who would see her, love her, woo her, win her and carry her off in triumph to the Kingdom of Heart's Desire.

Going to the mirror of her dresser she saw herself, an incomparable heroine, "regarding him long and earnestly, her bosom rising and falling like the waves of the sea," or "looking at him, her nose in the air, with the hauteur of a young duchess" —and "leading him ever on—and on—and on." But note this carefully, if you please: Of all the dreams and ambitions which came to her, not one centred around that quiet old farmhouse on the top of Green Mountain; but, even as once all roads were said to lead to Rome, so every one of Marty's visions of the future inevitably led to the great, gay world which lay beyond the distant hills.

That was the winter when Nancy Hanks ate her last four quarts of provender, having lived to the good old age of thirty. Uncle Ebau, sorrowfully declaring that he never wanted to ride out behind another horse, bought a second-hand motor delivery car with a closed top, being, as I said before, a great hand to tinker with things and never so happy as when working in the tool house. He hadn't had it a month when Marty could drive it as well as he could, and liked nothing in the world so much as to drive Uncle Ebau around on his Saturday morning route.

They called it the Ark.

Marty graduated from high school that year, and joined the Grange in the autumn, where, under Miss Perkins' eye, she learned to dance at the Young People's Thursday Nights. It is just as well that she enjoyed herself that winter, because in the following July a sudden stroke of mis-

fortune fell upon Green Mountain Farm.

Uncle Ebau was pitching hay one day from the wagon into the barn when the horse took an unexpected step forward, and Uncle Ebau fell over the wheel of the wagon and onto the ground, not only breaking his arm, which was bad enough, but also spraining his back, which was a great deal worse.

For nearly two years he was unable to do a day's work. One by one, and two by two, the cows were sold and, although Roger Davis came over on his wheel every morning and evening to milk those cows which were left, and although Aunt Emma and Miss Perkins and Marty did the best they could with the butter and eggs, things began persistently to fall behind, slowly at first, but with ever-increasing speed.

The excitement and worry of this were too much for Aunt Emma, although to the end she preserved her cheerful counte-

nance. For the last few years she had been steadily growing larger in girth and shorter in breath, and one night, when Uncle Ebau was particularly bad, she hurried up and down the stairs just once too often.

The next morning Doctor Chase found he had two patients instead of one and, although Aunt Emma tried to make a joke of it, saying she had only fallen sick because she wanted to be "upsides with Ebau," she had finished her last piece of needlework and had snipped off her last piece of thread.

As you can guess, the shock of that didn't help Uncle Ebau, and it wasn't long before he came to the day when he was bidding Marty his last good-bye.

"Just like your mother," he told her, his voice so weak that she could hardly hear him. "I've left you everything I've got. 'Tain't much, but the farm's free and

clear." For a few minutes then he lay quiet, Marty's arm around him. "Just like your mother," he breathed once more. "Life would have been a poor thing for me, Marty, if it hadn't been for you—and her—"

Poor Uncle Ebau, they were his last words! If ever a man deserved the title of nature's nobleman, surely it was he; and I sometimes find myself wishing that if he won his way to heaven, as I do not doubt he did, he found there wasn't an angel there with a voice so deep, nor one who could sing with so profound a bass.

That autumn and winter was a hard time for Marty. She sold the stock and the tools, everything except one cow and the chickens and the Ark; and by the time the estate was settled, and she had paid the store bill and the grain bill and the doctor's bill and all those other accounts which

present themselves for settlement at such a time, she found that she had a few cents less than eighteen dollars with which to face the world.

IV

THE CALL OF THE SPRING

YES, it was a dreary autumn for Marty, and a cold, hard winter followed it. As it happened, spring was late that year too—and, oh, how Marty longed to get away at times! Indeed, if it hadn't been for her Saturday mornings, when she took the eggs to the store in the Ark, and sometimes rode as far south as Jewett City or as far north as Danielson, I doubt if she could have stood it as well as she did. But finally the spring came, warm and balmy and smelling of earth and flowers, and insensibly Marty's mind began to revert to its old dreams of the Great World beyond. One afternoon she was looking out over the valley when she drew such a deep sigh.

"Oh, dear!" she thought. "Have I got to stay here as long as I live, when all those wonderful things are going on? And grow up into an old maid like Aunt Emma?—or Miss Perkins?—or marry Roger Davis and have him standing off looking so silly, or coming up closer and trying to nudge me?" Tears of self-pity filled her eyes. "I never, never could!" she cried. "I believe I'd die first! Oh, if there was only some road to get away!"

It was then that the inspiration struck her—that inspiration which was to change her whole life; and the more she thought about it, the more the colour mounted to her cheeks and the brighter grew the sparkle in her eyes.

"Aunt Fanny," she began, as soon as Miss Perkins came home that afternoon; "how would you like to go travelling this summer as soon as school's over?"

"Travelling?" repeated Miss Perkins

primly, though with a wistful note in her voice. "Why, child, I've wanted to go travelling every summer since I started teaching; but a week in Boston, or down to Pond Beach with my married sister and the children, is all I could ever afford. Anyhow, you don't think I'm going to leave you alone here this summer, do you?"

"No," laughed Marty excitedly, "because we're going travelling together, you and I—Niagara Falls! Washington! New York! Atlantic City! Every place you ever heard of and wanted to go to!"

Miss Perkins looked at her with an anxious air, which seemed to say: "I wonder if her temperature is very high."

"I've got the loveliest idea!" cried Marty, her eyes brighter than ever. "At first I thought we'd take the yellow cow along, and let her graze now and then by the side of the road—only that would be

too slow, although of course we would have our milk, if we could find somebody to milk her, which might be hard in the cities, besides having no grass. But we can take Shep, of course, to mind us, and Tinker too. Though if we took Tinker we should have to catch him a lot of mice before we started, and take them with us in a Mason jar."

"Marty!" cried Miss Perkins, almost in alarm. "What on earth do you mean?"

"Why, you said you'd like to go travelling, didn't you, Aunt Fanny?"

"Travelling, yes! But folks don't go travelling with cows, and dogs, and cats, and milk, and mice in a Mason jar! Land's sake! And as for going to all those places you mentioned, it would cost a little fortune for carfare alone."

"Not the way I mean, it wouldn't," eagerly crowed Marty. "Not if we went in the Ark!"

It was truly a stupendous idea. Miss Perkins received it in silence, though she seemed to rock a little from side to side as a boxer (they say) will sometimes rock when he receives a hard blow between the eyes.

"It came to me just like a flash," continued Marty. "I thought to myself: 'If Aunt Fanny and I can go twenty miles in the Ark, why couldn't we go two hundred?' It stands to sense we could. And if we can go two hundred, I'd like to know why we couldn't go two thousand just as well, if we wanted to. And don't you see, Aunt Fanny?—we could sleep inside, just like Camp-Fire Girls camping out, except that the Ark would be our tent—and we could take the little oil stove and a lot of things to eat."

It was four o'clock when Marty began to unfold her wonderful idea, and at ten

o'clock that night she was still filling in the details.

"We could even hang some pictures in the car," she was saying, "and put a little curtain at the window in the front. And of course you'd take your camera along, and whenever we came to a good picture, like Longfellow's Home, or Niagara Falls, or the Washington Monument—"

"Don't, Marty! Don't!" said Miss Perkins in a weak voice.

"Why not?" asked Marty.

Miss Perkins was quite pale, and behind her tortoise-shell glasses her eyes had a troubled look, such as Lady Macbeth once had, perhaps, just before she struck the fatal blow. "Oh, do keep quiet," she suddenly cried, "or in another minute I shall want to go myself!"

That, of course, was surrender pure and simple, and the next moment Marty's arm

was around her, and Marty's cheek was pressed against her own. "I know it sounds like a big, bold thing," she breathed. "But, oh, Aunt Fanny, we'll have the loveliest time when we once get started."

V

BREATHLESS MOMENTS

THE next day was Saturday—one of those rare June days when you dress yourself feeling that something great and grand is going to happen to you that day; at least that's the way you feel if you are like Marty Mackenzie when she awoke that Saturday morning. And, truth to tell, Miss Perkins wasn't far behind her, even if Miss Perkins was thirty-six years old and sometimes sighed with relief at night when she took her corsets off.

"Now first of all," said Marty, as soon as breakfast was over, "we'll give the Ark a good cleaning out."

"Marty!" weakly demurred Miss Perkins. "You aren't thinking of that again, are you?"

As a matter of fact, neither had thought of much else that night, except when she lay dreaming about it, and a little while later, when Marty went to the barn and pushed the car out into the yard, again Miss Perkins wasn't far behind her.

It was a sturdy little car with wooden sides and top, and a pair of doors in the back which were locked with a bar and padlock, just such a car as you have probably seen many a time lettered "Bread and Rolls" or "If it's Dry-goods We Have It." The makers, I believe, described it as "a commercial body, with four-cylinder engine, brown-enamel top and artillery wheels." But if they had seen and heard Marty Mackenzie that morning, telling Miss Perkins just what they were going to do—and how they were going to do it—the manufacturers would have changed their description completely. They would have called it a romantic body, with

poetical engine, fanciful top and whimsical wheels; and, instead of a dark bilious brown, they would have painted it sky-blue, with a fleecy cloud here and there; or else they would have enamelled it apple-green for a background and have filled in the foreground with hollyhocks, dreams, butterflies, hopes, longings, music and humming birds.

The first thing Marty did was to open the back doors, and there, exposed to view, was one of the cosiest interiors imaginable, with walls nearly six feet high and a window just behind the driver's seat.

But, of course, Miss Perkins had to raise one last objection.

"Oh, I never could!" she said in a faint voice. "It looks like a little jail."

"Perhaps that's because the walls inside are painted black," said Marty, frowning at the suggestion. "But when we've tacked a piece of carpet on the floor, and

have hung some pictures—" Her voice trailed off as another inspiration struck her. "Aunt Fanny," she gleefully cried, "have you any of that wall paper left—that pretty pattern you papered our room with?"

"Ye-es. There ought to be two or three rolls around somewhere."

"Then how would it be if we went and found it, and papered the whole inside of the car? Then it would look more like our bedroom, and you'd never call it a little jail again."

A minute later they were both in the attic, looking for those rolls of paper, and you know the way it is in an attic—you always turn over everything else before you come to what you want. If we were to list the things which Marty and Miss Perkins turned over that morning, for instance, it would sound like the catalogue

of a curiosity shop, including such strange items as spinning wheels, cream paddles, gambrels, flails, candlestick scrapers, bed warmers, snuffers, half-testers, whatnots, tea caddies and cranes.

"It's probably in a box somewhere," said Miss Perkins, coughing at the dust they were raising.

Now back under the eaves was an old table, with a drop leaf and three legs. Hence its position against the rafters. The drop leaf was down, thus effectually hiding anything which might be under the table. Marty, laboriously climbing over a Mt. McKinley of old doors, furniture, barrels and trunks, came at last to the table and, with much difficulty, peeped in under it.

"There's a lot of old carpet here," she reported. "Perhaps we could get enough for the car." She tried to pull it out, and

then in a tone of surprise she added: "There's a trunk under here that I've never seen before. I wonder what's in it."

At that, Miss Perkins clambered over the trunk's defences and she, too, took a peep. "Why," she said, pressing it with her finger, "I do believe it's leather! A leather trunk! Imagine! It's heavy too," she added, trying to lift it. "There must be something in it; I wonder what."

Just how they got that heavy trunk out of there they probably couldn't tell you themselves. But even as the fever of delirium will sometimes give a man false strength, so perhaps the fever of curiosity acts upon a woman in much the same way. Though I defy any one, male or female, to find a mysterious, expensive-looking trunk in an attic and not to try to find out what was in it!

Fortunately, while it was strapped in three places, it wasn't locked, and almost

as quickly as you can read about it, Marty and Miss Perkins had the cover up and were gazing inside with eyes like capital O's.

VI

HISTORY UNFOLDS ITSELF

AS Marty and Miss Perkins stood staring into the tray of the leather trunk in the dim attic light, they saw that it was filled with the daintiest imaginable laces and linens and toilet accessories. There was a silver-backed mirror, for instance, and a brush and comb of the same pattern—shoehorn and scissors, travelling clock and pin-cushion. A cut-glass bottle was half full of an amber-coloured liquid. Marty pulled the stopper out and the scent of white lilacs wreathed to her nose. She wound the clock, and the clock began to go.

"Look here!" cried Miss Perkins, picking up a gold-mounted photograph with a

double opening. "Why, Marty!" she gasped, almost frightened at her discovery. "It—it's you!"

"Me?" cried Marty. "How could it be?"

How, indeed? And yet, if you hadn't known that it was impossible you would have said the same as Miss Perkins. There was the same dreamy eyes, the same refinement of feature, the same crown of hair, the same expression in repose, half wistful, half smiling.

"I know," suddenly breathed Marty, an invisible hand from the past seeming to tug at her heart as she spoke. "It—it—oh, Fanny, it's my mother!" Glancing at the address on a letter which lay in the tray—an address in Uncle Ebau's writing—she read: "Mrs. Mary Mackenzie, 16 Copeland Street, Boston, Massachusetts." And almost brokenly she added "I knew it was."

She looked at the picture again, but this time it was through a veil of tears that she gazed at that half-wistful smile, that smile which now seemed to span the dark interval of years and shed its light where Marty's mother would most have wished to have it seen.

"Then I suppose this was your father," said Miss Perkins, breathless with interest. She was looking at the other picture in the double frame—the photograph of a handsome young man who, from his hair and pose, had a far-off resemblance to that famous picture of Henry Clay.

"Yes, I suppose it is," said Marty; but somehow, after one good look, she didn't seem to be so much interested in him. "Isn't it queer?" she whispered. "To think that she's been dead so long, and here's her clock ticking away as though it had never stopped, and she was probably the last one to wind it before I touched it;

and here's her cologne, smelling just as sweet as it did the last time she smelled it—and everything else the same. Let's see what else there is."

Between them they lifted the tray, and one by one they took out five dresses, each carefully wrapped in tissue paper and with little bags of sachet powder here and there. The first was an afternoon frock of soft, grey, silky-looking wool, trimmed with blue silk and lace and bearing the name and address of a Fifth Avenue firm. The dress itself was exciting enough, but you can guess how Marty felt when she found the following note pinned to the waist:

To my daughter Martha (when she has grown to be a woman): This is the dress I wore the day I met your father. Sometime, my dear, if it fits you perhaps you can wear it, too, and when you do I have prayed and prayed that you shall be very happy.

The second dress was a cream-and-

brown mousseline, with needlework on it that would have delighted the eye of Aunt Emma, if she had been there to see it. And on it was pinned:

To my daughter Martha: This I wore the second time we met and he never forgot it. Some day, when you have met a man whom you love, I want you to wear this mousseline because I am sure it will suit you. You will probably have to alter them all more or less, because of the changing styles, but I hope you will find them useful.

The next was a blue taffeta with silver trimming, evidently a party dress, and on it was pinned:

This is the next dress he saw. You must be careful when you wear it, because I'm afraid the rain will spot it.

That night I thought he danced too much with a girl I didn't like, and I went to the dressing-room because I felt the tears were rising to my eyes.

I found I had lost my handkerchief, so I dabbed my eyes against the right sleeve. As you will see, it spotted it!

The fourth was a silk net over red satin, and on it was the simple statement:

I was engaged in this.

And the fifth was a wedding dress: all magnificent satin and shadow lace and silver cloth. Marty and Miss Perkins shook out the folds with reverent care, and this is the note they found:

I was to have been married in this, but I never wore it, my dear. Instead I was married in a travelling suit of fawn-coloured broadcloth, which later I wore out in Boston at a place where I worked after your father died.

But this lovely wedding dress—I hope you will wear it some day. It had so many hopes stitched into it, in the days when I thought I was going to be so happy that I'm sure they'll come true for my daughter, even if they couldn't come true for me.

That was all, except a half-used box of writing paper, in the bottom of which was

folded a wedding certificate, testifying to the fact that Mary Agnes Burgess had been married to Robert Scott Mackenzie on the fifth day of June, 189–, at Providence, Rhode Island, by the Reverend A. B. Christian.

"I never saw anything like it in all my life," gasped Miss Perkins, who had never been so interested in all her life either. "Your mother must have come from awfully rich people, Marty, to have had clothes like this. Did you see the maker's label in the mousseline? Look! 'Paris.' What do you think of that!"

"Isn't it queer?" breathed Marty, her eyes ever so far away, as she tried to piece together the past. "The only thing I can think of is that she married some poor man, or else her folks lost all their money or something like that, because you see she says she worked in Boston."

"Married a poor man probably," nodded

Miss Perkins. "Perhaps ran away with him when everything was ready for her marriage to another man whom she didn't love. You do read of cases like that. What is it, Marty? Have you found something else?"

In the half-used box of stationery, Marty had found the beginning of a letter which ended with a splutter and a blot, as though the pen had stuck its point in the paper and kicked up its heels full of ink. The writer had evidently then started a new sheet, and the spoiled one had slipped in among the other paper and had been put away unobserved. "Green Mountain Farm, Plainfield, Connecticut, August 5, 189–," the letter was dated—just a few weeks before Marty's mother had died; and this is how the letter ran:

Mrs. Conant Burgess,
The Pillars,
Newport, Rhode Island.

Dear Mamma: I think I ought to write and let you know that—

And then came the splutter and the blot.

"Marty!" gasped Miss Perkins again. "It's your mother's own writing—the same as the notes on the dresses! Marty! Imagine! Your grandmother lives in Newport. You'll have to write her right away and tell her who you are."

VII

LITTLE MISS NOAH

YES, there sat Marty, surrounded by those almost incredible dresses, her mother's picture before her, her mother's little travelling clock awakened from a slumber of twenty years and ticking away like mad.

"Oh, yes," repeated Miss Perkins. "You must write her right away!"

"Write who?" asked Marty, with that fine disregard for grammar which excitement often brings.

"Your grandmother, of course: Mrs. Conant Burgess, Newport."

"But I don't see how I can, quite," said Marty after a thoughtful pause. "You can write about some things, even to strangers, but not about everything. Be-

sides, she might be dead, or she may have moved. Oh, I'm sure she has, or we'd have heard from her. Besides—"

Marty didn't express her last thought, but she had never been much of a letter writer, and now to write to an old lady, apparently a rich old lady—and say "Dear Madam: I am your granddaughter"! Marty shook her head. "She might think I was after her money," she thought, "and never write back. And what would I do then?"

"No, Fanny," she said at last, "I'll tell you what we'll do. As soon as we get the car ready we'll go to Newport first of all. Then—don't you see?—we can stop a while and visit them if they want us. And if we don't find anybody, or if they don't make us welcome, we can ride right on as though nothing had happened, and we haven't spoiled our trip."

All the same, it was a heart-stirring ad-

venture, such an adventure as had never come to Marty even in her dreams and, although she tried to take it calmly, she went around the rest of that day with eyes as bright as diamonds and cheeks like the roses, especially after they had tried the dresses on and had found that, after changing them a little to conform with the current styles, they would fit her slim young body like the calyx fits the flower.

A little while later Miss Perkins found the wall paper they had been looking for and, after Marty had stirred some flour in a pail of boiling water, they started to paper the Ark.

It was a pretty paper, a sort of tapestry design with fruit and flowers and leaves pleasantly mingled together; and when they had finished their work, meanwhile talking to each other in breathless numbers about the wonderful trunk, the Ark was no longer a repository of butter and

eggs, to say nothing of chickens and little-pig pork. It was a travelling bower of beauty—a four-wheeled boudoir fit for any queen. Next they found two strips of carpet which had never been used, and by the time they had covered the floor with that, what with the way the Ark looked and what with the contents of that surprising trunk, even Miss Perkins' cheeks began to grow warm and she could hardly settle down to eat her supper.

"Now to sleep on," said Marty, as they ate their fried eggs and bacon with the nervous haste of two birds in nest-building time, two birds who had never built a nest before, "I think we ought to have the box mattress. Then in the daytime we could stand it on edge and have plenty of room for other things."

"Yes, and we mustn't forget the little oil stove—so we can fry things—and have tea and coffee."

"And that mirror over the kitchen sink —we can fasten it up against the wall—"

"And a towel rack fastened up too. Oh, Marty, suppose you find you have a lot of rich cousins!"

"And some clothes hooks. . . . You never can tell."

"And a box for our clothes that we can sit on too. . . . I wouldn't be a bit surprised."

"And the leather-covered trunk—"

"Oh, that, of course!"

For nearly a week they worked upon the details, and then one afternoon they had a dress rehearsal. First Miss Perkins climbed inside and sat upon the box under the window with much the same feelings, I think, that Mrs. Noah probably had when she climbed aboard the original Ark upon a certain historic occasion and waited for the waters to rise.

Then Tinker, the glossy black cat, was

handed in, struggling, by the scruff of his neck, and the double doors were smartly shut behind him. Next came Shep, who needed no coaxing, but sprang at once into the seat by Marty's side.

And then with a loud shout—"Are you ready?" and a muffled reply from Miss Perkins (inside)—"All ready," Marty threw in the clutch, sounded the horn till it made a noise like an ocean steamer leaving her dock, and then slowly but grandly, and with ever-increasing speed, the Ark began to move—through the gate, along the road and down the hill to Herbert Parkhurst's, around to the school where the road widened out; then, making a beautiful turn, they returned up the hill to Green Mountain Farm, where the Ark presently made safe anchorage with a purr of her engines that seemed to say: "You wait till the real trip begins!"

VIII

"THE GOLDEN VANITEE"

THE next week was the closing week of school. In the daytime Marty made her last preparations for the cruise of the Ark, and in the evening she and Miss Perkins sewed and laid their final plans.

Roger Davis agreed to take the yellow cow and care for her until their return, and Deacon Kingsley bought the chickens for twenty-five cents a pound. Out of the proceeds, though, Marty had to buy four new tires. So, as you can see, by the time she had also bought a pair of new shoes and a pair of new ties and a raincoat which she simply had to have, there wasn't exactly a fortune left. Nor, as she

triumphantly pointed out to Miss Perkins, did they need one.

That was the beauty of it.

They were first going to Newport and then to Pond Beach, where Miss Perkins' married sister was already installed with her four children. These two family visits concluded, they had made up an itinerary which would have done credit to any tour that has ever been planned.

"And whenever we come to a pretty place," concluded Marty, "we shall simply stop the car and stay there till we get tired of it; and, with all the things we're going to take with us, our board will cost us terribly little. All the same," she acknowledged, "it's nice to have a little extra money too."

Miss Perkins was in her element there, and it would have done you good to see her adding up the money and doing neat

sums in subtraction and division, and absent-mindedly correcting her own paper when she got through. And it would have done you good, too, if you could have seen her the morning after school closed, the morning when they were going to start upon that great adventure which Marty fondly hoped would take her to the Kingdom of Heart's Desire.

"Why, Aunt Fanny!" crowed Marty, clapping her hands with delight; "you've fluffed your hair out!" Miss Perkins said nothing, but looked very prim. "It suits you too," said Marty in undisguised approval. "You've no idea how much younger it makes you look."

Which wasn't altogether displeasing to Miss Perkins, and perhaps hadn't been altogether absent from her mind that morning when she had fluffed it out, and had made it stand away from her head like an

aura, instead of brushing it down flat as though she wished to awe her scholars with the severity of her appearance.

And now I am going to tell you something about Miss Perkins. In her younger days she, too, had dreamed about a prince—a prince, alas, who had never come. For the last few days it had gradually been dawning upon her that this would probably be her very last chance to meet him.

If he came galloping along on his big, white horse (figuratively speaking, of course, as Miss Perkins would say) and saw Fanny Perkins with her hair brushed flat, wearing her blue serge and taking no notice of anything in history subsequent to the Spanish-American War—why, as she had reasoned it out, the prince might think that she was married, promised or otherwise engaged, and would ride right on and take no notice either. But if she

met him with a gentle smile, and a pretty dress, and her hair fluffed out, he could be ever so much more likely to read the sign, a sign which (still figuratively speaking, of course) might be said to read like this:

MISS FANNY PERKINS
A Nice Girl
At Home
Apply Within

And what more natural then than for the prince to call out "Whoa!" to his big, white horse and stop for a season to rest and refresh himself?

They had packed the night before, the two trunks just filling the front of the car and leaving plenty of room for the other things. So there wasn't much to do that morning except to stock the car with the provisions which they had accumulated for that purpose.

At last everything was ready. Tinker

was shut up in the Ark, which wasn't done in a minute, and Shep took his place on the driver's seat, like the good dog which he was. In the house Marty and Miss Perkins were putting on their hats and gloves, each pretending not to notice the bright red colour which was mantling the other's cheeks. Then at last the back door was locked, Marty took her place at the wheel, Aunt Fanny took her place on the other side of Shep, the engine roared, the gears clashed, the Ark lurched forward, and this time they were off for good.

And, oh, how Marty's spirits soared as the Ark went swinging down the hill on its wonderful cruise to the Kingdom of Heart's Desire! But Miss Perkins sat quiet for a few minutes, and if you had been there you would have noticed that the red colour on her cheeks had disappeared and she looked quite troubled—all because of something which Marty had done

at the very last moment before they left the farm.

She had gone into Uncle Ebau's room and had come out with that old musket.

"Do you know what I'm going to do?" she had whispered, holding it gingerly as though it were very warm, and trying to stand with her feet behind her, so if it fell it wouldn't drop on her toes. "I'm going to slip this into the car and take it with us. Then, if Shep ever barks at night and begins to mind us, we—well, we shall have something."

Which was splendid, though vague. And now, as they started, Miss Perkins couldn't keep her thoughts away from that venerable musket. Every time the car struck a stone, or lurched in and out of the ruts, she felt a crawl go over her, and sat as far forward in the seat as she could, and tried to tuck her feet in under her, which, as you may happen to know, if you

have ever attempted it, is a difficult thing to do when you are swinging down a mountain side at twenty miles an hour.

"What's the matter?" asked Marty, without turning her head from the road. "Aren't you comfortable?"

"It's that gun," said Miss Perkins in a strained voice. "Do you know which way it's pointed, Marty? Something tells me it is pointed right at me."

"No; it's pointed toward the back of the car. You look through the window and see. Anyhow, it isn't loaded. I don't believe it has been since long before I was born."

Thus encouraged, Miss Perkins peeped through the window; and then, feeling quite ashamed of herself, she made herself comfortable at last.

Now the valleys around Green Mountain had never looked more lovely than they looked that bright June morning.

Pastures alternated with meadows, grain lands with cultivated fields, and separating yet joining all these various pieces and colours were the old stone walls, as though the fields had been sewn together with giant granite stitches.

As they passed the houses they knew they sometimes saw a neighbour who greeted them with a wave of the hand. And sometimes a friendly dog would run out and bark greetings to Shep and run alongside the car as far as he could keep up. Yes, and sometimes a happy little group of birds would dart out of a tree and race along in front of the car—dipping and rising like saucy little porpoises in an azure sea, and then wheeling off into the distance, Marty's heart soaring after them as though on the wings of a lark.

Tears of happiness weren't far from her eyes—happiness mixed with trepidation at the knowledge that she had broken her

bonds at last and was about to penetrate the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heart's Desire, that world of brilliant men and beautiful women where every one talked in witty dialogue, and all was love and lights and laughter. Is it any wonder that Marty presently started to hum an old song which Aunt Emma had taught her, and which she sometimes used to sing in the car to Uncle Ebau on just such days as this?

There was a ship with banners bright that sailed
the Lowland Sea,
And the name of that brave ship, sir, was the
Golden Vanitee.
And they feared she might be taken by the Turk-
ish Enemee,
That sailed upon the Lowland. . . . Low-
land. . . .

And then she could almost hear poor Uncle Ebau's piping voice chime in:

That sailed upon the Lowland Sea.

The throbbing engine of the Ark seemed to beat time with her as she swung into the second verse:

Then from the deck below a little cabin boy came he,
And he spoke up to the skipper: "Sir, what will you give to me,
If I dive and swim alongside of the Turkish Enemee
And sink her in the Lowland. . . . Lowland. . . .

And again she seemed to hear Uncle Ebau's voice:

And sink her in the Lowland Sea?

Then at last when Marty had followed the cabin boy's adventures with that wealth of detail which is characteristic of old ballads of an age when haste was regarded as unseemly and folks took time to live, she sadly, sweetly sang:

His messmates took him up at last and on the deck he died,

And they sewed him in his hammock, sir, which
was both long and wide,
And they lowered him overboard where he drifted
with the tide
Till he sank beneath the Lowland. . . . Low-
land. . . .
Till he sank beneath the Lowland Sea.

And whether or not it was a premonition of coming events, Marty's young heart sank, oh, so low, and a minute later a feeling that was near to fright came over her as the car turned a corner, and they suddenly came in sight of the state road, slick as though with sophistication, oily and winding like that old serpent which once so tempted Eve.

IX

THE FIRST DAY

FOR the first few miles Marty knew the road and every landmark on it, having rolled along it many a time on her way to Jewett City. But when the Jewett City bridge was passed she suddenly found herself in scenes so new that she might have been a thousand miles from home. Once the Ark rolled through a piece of woods, and they might have been in an old forest with Robin Hood waiting for them just around the corner. And once they rolled along the side of a steep hill on a road blasted out of the rock, and they might have been in Switzerland, with Gessler the Tyrant waiting for them just around the corner.

For that is the charm of a new road: you never know what is waiting for you just around the corner.

And when you realize that the roads in that part of New England are nearly all corners and turns, you can begin to guess that it wasn't long before Marty's cheeks were bright with excitement again, and even Miss Perkins so far forgot herself once as to cross her knees and laugh aloud at nothing in particular, though looking very prim the next morning and saying "I trust we shan't have rain before night."

Rain? There wasn't a cloud in the sky—"not a rift in the lute." But on—and on—and ever on—the Ark cruised grandly forward toward the Kingdom of Heart's Desire, its engine throbbing as though with life as eager as their own. And then at last they came to their first grand view, a view of mountains and lakes which I can no more describe to you than

I can tell you how roses smell or raspberries taste. But one thing I can tell you: I can tell you the effect it had upon Marty.

She stopped the car by the side of the road and looked around her with a feeling close to awe, and for as long as a minute neither she nor Miss Perkins spoke a word to the other and were only brought to earth by a loud, protesting "Meow!" from Tinker in the back of the car.

"I think we'll have our lunch here," said Marty, looking at Miss Perkins' watch which hung conveniently on her chest like a little town clock. "It's half past twelve, and I'm beginning to feel hungry."

And such a lunch they had! Such an exciting, appetizing lunch, simply crowded with breathless interest from the moment when they lit the oil stove to boil the water until they tried to catch Tinker to put him into the Ark again, and he couldn't be caught, and they had to use

strategy on him. They caught him at last and put him in; but when they finally rolled on it was after two o'clock.

It was nearly seven when they stopped again after an afternoon of adventure which I dare not even think about or I should never be through telling of it. It was beginning to grow dark when not far from a farmhouse they spied an open field with thick screens of birch here and there, and a brook winding through the centre. Marty and Miss Perkins looked and nodded at each other, and the Ark turned in and hid itself behind a clump of birch.

In the last village which they had passed they had bought a loaf and a bottle of milk and, with the help of the friendly little oil stove, they soon had a supper fit for two queens—including some hot mock-turtle soup (canned), a tin of sardines, a pint of hulled corn (from Green Mountain), bread, butter, tea, pickles, straw-

berry jam and milk. By the time they had washed their dishes in the brook it wasn't far from being quite dark. They fastened Shep to the rear wheel, where he could spring right out at anybody—that is, of course, if anybody came—and then a thoughtful silence fell first upon Miss Perkins, and then upon Marty too.

"Well," said Marty at last, trying to make a joke of it, "I suppose we had better go upstairs. 'Early to bed and early to rise—' "

It was probably the first time that either of them had slept outside of a regular bed in a regular house. In the tree directly above them a whippoorwill suddenly started its strident song, and Miss Perkins, giving a muffled shriek, temporarily forgot all the reading, writing and arithmetic that she had ever known. But when she realized how she had been fooled by a mere bird, her back unconsciously straightened

and she held herself as she held herself at school when one of her pupils tried to conceal the gum in his mouth by hiding it under his tongue.

"After all," she said, reasoning it out aloud to give herself heart of grace, "it's as safe as though we were Camp Fire Girls."

"Safer!" cried Marty eagerly. "Because they only have tents, and look what we've got."

"In fact," primly continued Miss Perkins, "I don't see why it isn't as safe in the car as it would be on the farm."

"Safer!" cried Marty. "Because at the farm a burglar might climb through a window, but this little window here is much too small for any one but a child."

At that, they anxiously regarded each other in the moonlight, and a minute later they had both climbed into the Ark and had locked the door behind them. Presently,

if you had been that whippoorwill in the tree, you might have seen a faint light coming through the curtained window and later have heard a subdued burst of laughter followed by a warning "Sh!"

For nearly ten minutes the light shone through the window and then a prim voice said (in some alarm): "Be careful how you handle it, Marty"; and when a more youthful voice replied "It's all right; it isn't loaded" the prim voice retorted: "Well, keep it on your own side, please; it *might* go off."

A minute later the light went out . . . and silence came and brooded over the Ark.

X

THE SECOND DAY

TO write the log of the Ark for the second morning of its voyage would be in great measure to repeat the first morning's events. Again the weather was perfect and again after an early start they throbbed along on their wonderful cruise. But if you had been there to see and compare, I think you would have agreed that Marty was a little more radiant in her happiness than she had been the day before, and even Miss Perkins had lost a little of her primness and had reached the point where she could hum "How Verdant are the Woods" without fear and without restraint.

Probably because of their previous day's

experience in the fresh air, and the uncounted miles of wind which had blown upon their faces, they had both slept like tops, and had eaten breakfasts which had given Shep and Tinker many anxious moments for fear there wouldn't be anything left for them.

"Unless something happens," said Marty, "we shall get to Newport about four o'clock this afternoon. So if Grandma Burgess is still alive we shall be there in time for supper."

They were both silent then for a while, each busy with her own thoughts, and again those vague doubts and misgivings arose in Marty's mind. To go to a strange old lady and claim her for a grandmother —that wasn't a thing to be done without a qualm. And yet, when Marty began to think of the grandmothers whom she had known, it didn't seem such a perilous task.

"There's old Mrs. Osborn," she thought.

"I know she'd just love to find a new grandchild—yes, and a new grandchild would just love to find her. And there's Mrs. Hartley, and Mrs. Simmons, and Mrs. Condon—"

"Do you notice how close the houses are getting?" asked Miss Perkins. "We must be approaching a large city."

"Fall River," nodded Marty absently; but, waking up as the Ark nearly ran into an ice wagon, she said: "Perhaps we ought to have had our lunch before we got so near. Still, it may not take us long to get to the other side." Then another thought struck her, possibly born of the ice wagon. "Let's stop in somewhere and get some ice cream," she suggested. "Shall we?"

"It would taste good," admitted Miss Perkins, "if we could find a respectable place."

By that time they weren't far from the

centre of the city and in the next block they saw a pleasant-looking restaurant, directly opposite a garage. "We'll stop here," said Marty, "and when we've had our ice cream we'll get some gasoline."

Over their ice cream the voyagers discussed their plans. "Now when we get to Newport this afternoon," said Miss Perkins, "suppose we can't find your grandmother. Have you given it any thought what we shall do then?"

Marty was about to reply when a dull but wicked crash was heard outside. "Gracious," said Marty, "I wonder what that was!"

A dreadful feeling seemed to sweep over them both at the same moment. "Oh, it can't be ours!" said Miss Perkins, horrified.

They hurried to the door to allay their fears. But, alas, the poor old Ark was almost over on its side, two of its wheels

and the radiator damaged beyond repair, and away up the street they just caught a glimpse of a heavy truck, lurching around the corner like a wicked old battleship leaving for parts unknown.

XI

THE DARK SIDE OF ADVENTURE

AMONG those attracted by the crash of the wreck was a young man in oily overalls. From the facts that he had a wrench in his hand and that his curly hair was unconfined by any hat or cap it didn't take Marty long to deduce that he had come out of the garage across the street.

"Do you—do you think you could fix it?" she asked in a shaking voice.

"Yes, ma'am, sure thing," he promptly replied. "New wheels, radiator, fenders, lamps, and she'll be good as new."

"We're in a great hurry to get on," continued Marty; "do you think you could have it ready for us this evening?"

"No, ma'am, not a chance," he promptly replied again. "If I can get new parts in town—and I think I can—we might have it ready tomorrow noon, but not a minute sooner. Why, look at it yourself," he briskly urged. "Anybody can see it's some job."

The poor old Ark—canted over on one side as though to have its barnacles scraped—it was, indeed, as Curly Head had said, "some job." Moreover, a crowd was gathering, and at any moment a policeman might come along. Just why Marty feared the advent of a policeman is a matter which may never be quite cleared up, but it was probably the result of her newspaper reading. She saw visions of herself and Miss Perkins being "haled to court." "The prisoners were haled to court to tell their story to the judge"—and, knowing nobody in Fall River, what would they do then?

"All right," she said, "if we can surely have it tomorrow noon I think you'd better take it over and fix it."

Curly Head also agreed to take care of Shep, but the problem of Tinker wasn't so easily solved. They coaxed him through the little window at last, however, and Miss Perkins tucked him, struggling, under her arm to the admiration of every one present.

"My knees are trembling so I can hardly walk," said Miss Perkins when they were nearly two blocks away from the scene of the wreck.

"My knees never tremble," said Marty, "but I seem to flutter in here."

"Your diaphragm," said Miss Perkins, rallying a little to her school-teacher's manner. But the next moment their troubles descended upon her again and she added: "How I would like to get my hands on the man who did it!"

"Never mind," said Marty, trying to find the bright side. "Suppose we had been in the car when it happened and had to go to a hospital. And, anyhow, it will give us a chance to see Fall River, and that's something."

But they didn't enjoy themselves. Although they found a comfortable room in a hotel which was recommended by a policeman, and in the afternoon went to a moving-picture show which was recommended by another policeman, their hearts and minds were continually on the Ark. Late in the afternoon they returned to the garage and found the car jacked up, and repairs well under way. Fortunately Curly Head had been able to find the new parts he needed, and he promised to have everything ready not later than two o'clock on the following afternoon. So, after they had fed Shep with the meat which they had bought for him, Marty and

Miss Perkins sadly returned to their hotel.

"I wonder how much it will cost," said Miss Perkins at last.

"Oh, not a great deal, I'm sure," said Marty in alarm. "He said he could use the tires again. I asked him."

"Ah!" said Miss Perkins, shaking her head with an air that said: "I have lived longer in this world than you have, Marty, my child. However, enough of this for the present."

She brought up the question of cost again the following morning: "How much money have you got, Marty?"

"Nearly thirty-five dollars."

"And I have nearly forty-one. Perhaps you had better take my pocketbook, and then if you need any more money you'll have it ready."

Marty's heart sank at the implication, but it sank lower yet at the garage at five o'clock that afternoon, when the Ark

finally rolled out under its own power and took up its station against the curbstone of the street for the second time with an indomitable lurch of its body which seemed to say: "Now! Hit me again!"

"How much do I owe you?" asked Marty after she had thanked Curly Head for the good job he had done.

He had it figured out on a printed slip, item by item. But Marty didn't dally with the items. Her eyes immediately sought the total. This figure was $76.50, and the next moment she knew that she had boasted for the last time that her knees never trembled.

"I'm not sure," she said in a voice so weak that it sounded like an invalid's, "that I have so much money with me." With an air of one who wishes to conceal nothing, she emptied the two pocketbooks out on the desk. Their total funds amounted exactly to $75.68.

"I guess we're not going to quarrel about the difference," said Curly Head briskly. "The scrap in the old fenders isn't worth anything, but I'll credit you eighty-two cents for that and call it square." He receipted the bill with a flourish. "Shall I crank her up for you?" he smiled.

Marty nodded, but made no sound. She called Shep, and they took their places on the front seat. But there was no celebration this time, no singing, no laughing, no blowing of exultant horns. Curly Head spun the crank, and even the engine seemed to catch on a mournful note as though it knew only too well that its voyagers had suddenly been left without a cent in the world.

"Can you tell me the road to Newport?" asked Marty, her hand sadly laid upon the shift lever.

"Yes, ma'am. You follow this street till you come to the park, and then you

follow the signs. You can't miss it."

Mournfully then the Ark moved on, only twenty miles from Newport, but nearly two hundred miles from home, and though Curly Head had assured them that they couldn't miss the road you might have thought that Marty had missed it a few minutes later when she brought the Ark to a sudden stop.

"What's the matter now?" asked Miss Perkins.

"Get up quick!" said Marty. "I want to see if he put in any gasoline."

It was one of those cars which have the tank under the seat, and the depth of gasoline is plumbed by a ruler marked off in gallons and half gallons. Working feverishly, Marty unscrewed the top from the tank and thrust in the ruler.

"Now if it comes out wet up to the '10'!" she breathed.

But alas again, when she pulled the

ruler up it came out as dry as the proverbial bone, except for a miserable inch or so at the bottom end.

"One gallon!" she announced, lifting a tragic face. "And twenty miles to Newport!"

"Do you think we can make it?" asked Miss Perkins, almost in awe.

"We've *got* to make it!"

"But suppose the gasoline doesn't last—"

"It's *got* to last!"

"And suppose your grandmother isn't alive—"

"She's *got* to be alive!"

Coming up grandly from the Atlantic Ocean, a peal of thunder seemed to sound as though in rumbling laughter.

"I guess we'd better get our raincoats out," said Marty. "We're going to have it bad."

XII

A PORT IN A STORM

IT wouldn't do to tell too much about that mad, wet ride from Fall River to Newport; it would be too exciting: How the clouds kept piling up darker and darker; how the thunder kept threatening and the rain kept spotting; how Marty measured the gasoline every few miles; how Miss Perkins did oral sums in ratio and didn't like the answers; how they coasted down the hills to save gas; how they nearly had heart disease when, after passing one sign which said "Newport 8 Miles," they presently came to another which said "Newport 9 Miles"; how the rain finally came down in torrents and the Ark seemed to swim in places over the

flooded roads—these are only a few of the things which Marty will never forget. It was nearly half past six when they reached the outskirts of Newport, and by that time the thunder was roaring almost directly overhead and the rain, sweeping down in sheets, had made the streets deserted.

"We mustn't go too far without inquiring," said Marty, "or perhaps we shall have to turn back again and run out of gas. I do wish some one would come along—"

As though in answer to this heartfelt wish, a pedestrian, shielding himself as best he could behind an umbrella, came tacking around a corner directly toward them.

Marty ran the car to the curb and stopped for him. "Excuse me!" she cried, as he drew near. The wind, however, carried her voice away and, his head under the umbrella, the stranger neither saw nor

heard her. "I say, excuse me!" shouted Marty with all her might.

At that the stranger peeped out from behind his black silk bulwark in some surprise to see who was excusing herself on such a night as this, and the moment he saw Marty he tacked toward the car.

"Do you know where Mrs. Burgess lives?" she asked. "Mrs. Conant Burgess?" she added in desperate earnest that there should be no mistake.

"Mrs. Conant Burgess?" asked the stout old gentleman. "Yes. Third turn to the right—last house you come to—red-brick house with a lot of trees around it—right next door to the ocean."

If smiles could be valued in money Marty gave the stout old gentleman at least a million dollars.

"We shan't be a minute now," exulted Marty, starting the Ark again. "Third turn to the right, he said, and here it is."

As she turned the corner the throbbing little engine coughed a time or two.

"It's getting low," cried Marty, "but I think we'll make it."

By way of answer, Miss Perkins briskly chattered her teeth, having sat on the rainy side all the way down.

"Never mind," cried Marty again. "You'll soon be warm and dry. I guess those are the trees at the end of the street. I'll ask this delivery boy."

A confectionery wagon stood in front of one of the last houses. A youth was peering out from the driver's seat, waiting for the car to pass before he turned around.

"Can you tell me where Mrs. Conant Burgess lives?" shouted Marty, stopping again.

"Yep. Straight ahead between them pillars. Why? Got something for her?" He cast appraising eyes at the Ark.

Marty nodded and was about to start again, afraid of losing the last of that precious gas, when the boy continued: "Swell chance you've got of delivering it. The place is locked up tight."

"Locked up?" gasped Marty.

"Yep. Servants off for the day, and Mrs. Burgess out of town—New York or California or some place. Gidd-ap!" This last was to his horse.

After he had wheeled around the waiting car, Marty started forward once more, knowing that every moment might see the last movement of the Ark. "Oh, there must be some one there," she said. "We'll try it, anyhow."

The Ark passed between the pillars which the boy had indicated, coughing again as though in answer to Miss Perkins' sneeze, and, following a winding path that led between a grove of evergreens, they soon came in sight of a large brick house—

"right next door," as the gallant old gentleman had said, "to the ocean."

Here the gale caught them with new fury, but a few seconds later the Ark rolled under a covered porch that led to a massive door, and there, with one last spasm of coughing, it suddenly seemed to drop its anchor like a tired old Ark that had earned its rest and could go no farther.

XIII

ARRIVED AT LAST!

FOR nearly five minutes Marty clanged the knocker, and finally fell to rattling the knob. But if you can imagine a knocker on Old Cheops, she might just as well have clanged at that; and if you can imagine a door knob on Hadrian's Tomb, she might just as well have rattled at that. It was a massive door, with a row of wrought-iron rivets across the top like beetling eyebrows, and another across the bottom like teeth, while in its proper place hung that pendulous knocker like a black, fantastic nose—a nose which seemed to curl and say: "Now, what are you making this noise about? Can't you see there's nobody home?"

The tempest was growing in intensity. The thunder was crashing directly above them. The lightning flashed in blinding streaks. Even under the porte-cochère the rain was beating in solid masses against the back of the Ark, and Marty knew that they had only to open the rear doors and everything inside would be drenched.

"But I've got to get Miss Perkins in under shelter somehow," she thought. "She's got to dry herself in front of a fire, or she'll catch her death of cold. If I could only get her in somewhere; I'm sure Grandma Burgess wouldn't care, when she learned how it happened."

She was still wondering, almost in a panic, what to do, when a flower box was blown off the roof of the porch and banged against one of the French windows that opened on the lawn. It was a heavy box, painted green and cut with a serrated

edge, and it caught that French window in such a way that the two leaves opened like a pair of barn doors, and simultaneously the gale began to whip the curtains as though it would tear them to shreds, and the rain was simply tumbling inside.

"I must close that," thought Marty, "or the rain will beat in there all night and ruin everything."

Leaning against the storm she made her way, as well as she could, out of the shelter of the porch to the open windows.

"I shall have to shut them from the inside and prop something against them," she thought, when she saw that the fastening had been broken. "There!" she panted a minute later, after she had forced the windows together and rolled a sofa against them to keep them in place. "Grandma Burgess will thank me for that when she knows about it."

As you will see, having closed the win-

dows from the inside Marty now necessarily found herself in one of the rooms—evidently a library, with its shelves of books, dimly seen in the darkness, reaching up on every side toward the ceiling. Another flash of lightning showed an electric dome on the table, and when Marty turned the switch an emerald glow shone over the room and made it look like a scene from Fairyland.

Such rows of books! Such beautiful rugs! Such pictures, and horns, and heads, and deep chairs in snug corners or pulled up to a fireplace, which was surely large enough to hold a whole cord of wood at once!

"Oh, I could live and die in a room like this!" thought Marty, throwing out her arms. "How beautiful it must be in the daytime—to sit here and read, or have friends call and chat, and look out over the sea—"

The word "sea" reminded her of Miss Perkins, sitting in that raging flood outside.

"I must get her in," said Marty, with the Israel Putnam look in her eyes. "I'm not going to let her catch her death for nothing. I wonder which of these doors leads into the hall. This, I guess."

A moment later she was in the hall, one of those halls which are sometimes read about but seldom seen—hewn oak timbers, red quarry floor, minstrel gallery, stairway niches, a man in armour on the landing, everything except a moat and portcullis to make you think you were living in that romantic age when the tailor was a blacksmith and the ladies wore their hair in braids and played the dulcimer.

"It's better even than I had thought it was," she breathed, looking around with appreciation. "But now I must get Miss Perkins in. I'll bet she's had enough of it."

Yes, and by the time Marty had opened the front door Miss Perkins had just about "had enough of it," sitting there alone in the thunder and the lightning and the rain, her teeth chattering at times, no matter how hard she tried to bite them together, and gooseflesh rising all over her. So, when Marty opened the door and called her she didn't enter into any lengthy protests, but climbed right down—Shep jumping after her and shaking himself—and walked stiffly and damply into the house.

"You must get some dry clothes on," said Marty. "Let's see if we can push the back of the car out of the rain and get the trunks. It's too dark in there to see anything."

And so it happened that, five minutes later, Marty and Miss Perkins were comfortably installed in the most modest room they could find upstairs, which wasn't par-

ticularly lowly at that, with its driftwood fire, soon blazing, and its private bathroom in blue and white tiles. The furniture was cane and mahogany. The electric lights had shades of old rose silk. At the foot of the bed were their two trunks; and Uncle Ebau's musket, which had fallen out of the car and hadn't been noticed till the doors had been locked again, stood in a corner behind the door.

"Isn't this heaven!" sighed Miss Perkins as she sat in front of the fire with her feet on the fender. "It's too bad it's only a single bed, but I'll take the little room next to this one, and we can leave the door open between."

Her wet clothes had been draped over the back of a chair to dry, and she was dressed in her Japanese kimono, a gorgeous affair in sky blue and peach blossoms, which Miss Perkins had been able to buy one Christmas at an unbelievably cheap

figure, because the Japanese artist who had designed it had happened to embroider a stork among the peach blossoms. But as Miss Perkins had always prided herself upon her strength of character, and as she knew that no one would ever see it except herself and Marty, she had bought it, stork or no stork, and it became her wonderfully well.

Marty had also changed, and was brushing her mop of hair before the triple-mirrored dresser—the first she had ever seen, when all at once she stopped, the brush halfway down a tress, and she and Miss Perkins stared at each other in utter consternation.

"What—what was it?" whispered Marty.

"I don't know," gasped Miss Perkins, hurriedly tiptoeing to the door and locking it. "Did you hear it too?"

XIV

THE CREAK ON THE STAIRS

"IT sounded like a creak on the stairs!" breathed Marty, and then they both stood and listened, Marty's hair falling over her shoulders as she bent her head, Miss Perkins' stork seeming to listen with them.

Presently Miss Perkins gave voice to the immemorial theory. "It must have been the wind," said she.

"Perhaps it was. But wouldn't it be awful if anybody came and caught us like this! As soon as I've written to Grandma Burgess and told her we're here I shan't mind. I wonder what her address is."

"The postmaster will know," said Miss Perkins, who was now her own prim self

again. "I think I saw a telephone downstairs. We can phone in the morning and find out where to write."

Marty, who had been listening all this time at the door, now came back into the room; but it was evident from her thoughtful glances that she hadn't quite recovered from the alarm. For the second time that day it came to her that Adventure, like Janus, has a double face, and that you must take both—or neither. On the first day's cruise of the Ark only the bright side had showed itself. But first came the accident, then the storm, then the deserted house, and now a fancied creak on the stairs like the tale of the hungry bear: "Marty, I'm on one step! . . . Marty, I'm on two steps! . . . " And so on, with an inexorable procession of stair numbers until the shuddering climax: "Marty, I've got you!"

But there were no more creaks, no other

sounds except the crackling of the fire on the hearth, the beating of the rain on the window, the purring of Tinker on one side of the fire and the contented sighs of Shep on the other. Marty's happy mood gradually returned to her and she opened her trunk.

"I think I'll put on the gray cloth with the blue lace tonight," she said, lifting it out and placing it on the bed. And, a new thought coming to her, she added: "Oh, Fanny! I wonder if it was ever laid out on this bed before."

It was a thought which made her breath come quickly for a time, a thought with little prickles and throat aches in it, that perhaps her mother had slept in this very room—had laid out the grey cloth upon this very bed "in the days when I thought I was going to be so happy." Marty had left the note pinned to the dress and now she read it again:

To my Daughter Martha (when she has grown to be a woman): This is the dress I wore the night I met your father. Sometime, my dear, if it fits you, I want you to wear it, too, and when you do, I have prayed and prayed that you shall be very happy.

"I wonder if she's watching me now," she thought, her throat aching again as she gave expression to that beautiful, world-old fancy. "Well, if she is," she half sighed, half smiled, "she'll be glad to see that it fits me."

She slipped it over her head and smoothed it into place, each movement of her hands a gentle caress as she remembered whose hands had touched it, oh, so many years ago.

"Any one would think you were dressing for dinner," said Miss Perkins, sitting there as comfortably as you please in her stork kimono. And glancing at the travelling clock—the one which had also been

Marty's mother's—she added: "Nearly seven o'clock. No wonder I feel so hungry. It was lucky we brought up something to eat, but I wish we could boil some water."

"That's easily done," said Marty, "if we can find the kitchen. We'll take this can of soup down, too, and get that good and hot."

"It doesn't seem right, somehow," objected Miss Perkins, whose conscience was beginning to return to her, now that she was dry and warm. "Indeed, for that matter, it doesn't seem right to be here at all."

"What are we going to do, then?" demanded Marty. "Suppose you were shipwrecked on a desert island, and there was a house there with nobody living in it. Would you think it wrong to go in, even though it belonged to your own grandmother? Would you stay outside and catch your death of cold first?"

"No-n-no. I don't suppose I would."

"Well, then!" said Marty, bridging her logic with feminine swiftness, "let's go down and find the kitchen."

And such a kitchen it was, when they found it! It had white-tile walls and a mosaic floor, for instance, and a refrigerator at one end as big as a little house, and a range at the other end which had so many attachments and doors and handles and dampers that it looked more like a piece of engineering than a piece of hardware, as though it had been built according to plans and specifications, and needed the services of an expert machinist to open the oven door every time the cook wanted to see if the biscuits were done yet.

"Did you ever?" exclaimed Marty, stopping in dismay.

"I think it's a combination gas-and-coal range," said Miss Perkins in the voice of superior knowledge. "I once saw a

smaller one at Storr's College." She turned a handle and leaned over to sniff. "Yes," she said, quickly raising her head, "gas; I thought so. And here are the matches. I thought they would be—"

She struck a match and applied it to one of the burners. "Plop!" said the gas, and a circle of blue jets appeared as though by magic under an iron grill.

"And here's a sink," reported Marty; "and here are saucepans and kettles and teapots and everything you can think of. Now, if we can find some cups and plates—"

It didn't take her long to find them, and while the soup was warming and the kettle was boiling she started on a tour of discovery. One door, she found, evidently led to the cellar, another to a back kitchen, another to the butler's pantry.

At this point Miss Perkins' voice sounded its doleful doubts, like the omi-

nous chorus of an old morality song. "Marty, you shouldn't! You shouldn't poke around like that! It isn't nice! It isn't a bit nice!"

Whereupon the Imp of Perversity took possession of Marty, that spirit which sometimes fell upon her and made her want to shock the prim Miss Perkins out of all her primness. A moment before she had opened a cupboard door and, staring now at a wealth of linen, china and silver, a daring ambition seized hold of her. As she had guessed, the next room was the dining-room, a magnificent apartment panelled in oak, hung with tapestries, lighted with a chandelier of such dazzling beauty that, when Marty found and pushed the button which lighted it, she almost cried out "Ah-h-h-h-h!" as children do on the night of the Fourth when a particularly fine rocket explodes.

Working quietly, then, before Miss Per-

kins could see and object, she laid a cloth and set out dishes and silver for two, and although she almost had to push the scandalized Miss Perkins into her place when the supper was finally ready, they sat down at last under that dazzling chandelier, Miss Perkins quaking inwardly with every breath she drew, but Marty sitting in her carved-back chair (in her grey cloth and blue silk lace) as proud as a princess, who was giving her first party and was having the time of her life.

"If there were only more of us in this big room!" she said.

Jumping up she drew to the table another chair, on which she installed Shep, quickly tying a napkin around his neck and clapping her hands with delight at the picture he presented.

"Marty!" groaned Miss Perkins.

"Now, I'll say grace," said the princess,

and, solemnly glancing at Shep, she said: "Let us pray."

At the word "pray" Shep bowed his head, but, though they didn't notice it, he turned his eyes and stared attentively at a doorway at the other end of the room.

"For what we are to receive," prayed Marty, "may the Lord make us truly thankful. Amen."

They all raised their heads then, and Shep's back began to bristle.

"Now, if we only had a butler!" beamed Marty, all unsuspecting.

But the next moment she caught Shep's meaning and turned to look.

In the far end of the room, partly concealed by the shadows, a door was slowly, noiselessly opening, and the next moment the massive head of a man appeared and stared at them. Next his body came into view and, with the watchful sinister walk

of a huge tomcat about to spring upon two poor little white mice, he slowly advanced, still staring, into the light of the chandelier.

XV

A NARROW SQUEAK

LIFE is full of the strangest things —till you consider them step by step, and then you cease to wonder at the wonderful, and look upon a miracle as the merest matter of fact. Consider Marty and her cruise to the Kingdom of Heart's Desire. If you were to think of her at one moment at the farmhouse on top of Green Mountain, and imagine her next in that stately mansion of her Grandmother Burgess by the side of the sea in Newport, you would say to yourself: "The idea of such a thing! Things don't happen like that!"

But if you will stop and reflect for a few minutes upon the strange changes

which have taken place with you, yourself, since those far-off days when you were first informed that there were twenty-six letters in the alphabet and that M and N were distinct and separate symbols, you will begin to appreciate the fact that Marty simply *had* to go to that imposing house at Newport.

From the moment she had found her mother's trunk there was nothing else for her to do. And so, having followed her adventures step by step, we now find her in a strange house, a house with nobody home and belonging to a grandmother whom she had never seen. Under the porte-cochère stood the Ark, as though upon another Mount Ararat; and in a room upstairs Marty and Miss Perkins had changed their wet clothes in front of an open fire, for though it was June the evening was chilly; and though the gale was beginning to moderate, the rain still swept

against the windows as though the Big Dipper were in a state of competition with the Little Dipper to see which could throw the most cold water upon a helpless world.

And now, sitting in a strange dining-room of that deserted house, they were about to start upon their supper when they suddenly became conscious of the massive figure of a man, partly concealed by the shadows, but slowly advancing into the room, his hand clutched around a short, polished object which looked suspiciously like a club. He slowly advanced into the light of the chandelier, and the nearer he drew the more massive he looked, massive and grim and forbidding—a truly formidable sentry on the road to the Kingdom of Heart's Desire—twiddling the polished club that hung from his wrist with a leather loop and breathing loudly with unrepressed suspicion.

"Excuse me," he said in a voice which

seemed to come from some deep tunnel in his chest, "but I saw the car outside waiting to take away its load, so I thought I would drop in and see what it was all about. I'm chauffeur and watchman here," he rumbled on with sudden ferocity, "and before we go any further, we'll just unlock that car of yours and take a peek inside."

Marty and Miss Perkins continued to stare at him in a sort of dreadful amazement.

"Pretty slick trick," he continued, "coming up to a house in an old delivery car and running it under the porch like that when everybody's away. Load it up with whatever you want—eh?—and drive away as innocent as you please. Pretty slick trick," he repeated in another ferocious postscript, "but one thing you didn't count on: you didn't count on Jimmy Reagan being here."

And yet, if you had been there, it might have struck you that his second ferocious outburst wasn't anywhere near as fierce as his first, and as he looked first at Marty in her grey wool and blue silk, and then at Shep with his napkin around his neck (Marty holding him firmly by the collar), and then at Miss Perkins in her stork kimono, you would have seen that a measure of uncertainty was beginning to mix with the suspicion expressed upon his massive countenance.

"Oh!" gasped Marty, turning with rounded eyes to Miss Perkins, "he thinks we're burglars."

"Burglars or no burglars," said Mr. Reagan—with an air that seemed to denote "They shan't fool me"—"what I want to know is this: How did you get in here?"

Marty and Miss Perkins exchanged horrified glances and, for the second time since

the Ark started on its cruise, Marty had visions of herself being "haled to court." "The prisoners were haled to court," you remember, "to tell their story to the judge." But suddenly the old Israel Putnam strain asserted itself, and she turned to the inquisitive Mr. Reagan with her head held high.

"If you really want to know," she said, "I came in through the window, and let Miss Perkins in through the door. Mrs. Burgess is my grandmother and we came to visit her, but when we got here, wet through, there was nobody home."

"First I ever knew that Mrs. Burgess had any grandchildren," said Mr. Reagan; "and when you admit yourself that you came in through the window—"

So Marty explained that, and at the proper moment Miss Perkins, who had been looking very intently at Mr. Reagan

even as he had been looking at her, spoke up and said: "If you will come with me, sir, I will show you the flower box which broke the window."

Bit by bit, then, he had further details of the story—the accident, the gasoline, the storm, Miss Perkins' chill.

"And I didn't want to stay outside, wet through, all night, you know," Miss Perkins smiled up at him, "and catch my death of cold."

"That's right too," Jimmy respectfully smiled back at her; "you certainly might have caught pneumony."

They looked at each other again, then—those two—and if you had been there you might have thought that Mr. Reagan had seen and was carefully reading the sign upon Miss Perkins, that sign which (figuratively speaking, of course) read something like this:

MISS FANNY PERKINS
A Nice Girl
At Home
Apply Within

"I think he's about my age," thought Miss Perkins, "but, oh, how big and strong!" As for Jimmy's thoughts, they were of a more impressionistic nature, and he could hardly have defined them himself.

"Excuse me," he said, putting his little club in his pocket as though it were an article for which he had no immediate use. "But did you say that you were some relation to Mrs. Burgess too?"

"Gracious, no!" laughed Miss Perkins. "I'm Marty's old school-teacher."

"Oh, that's it!" You might have thought that Jimmy looked relieved. "Well, it certainly does beat all, doesn't it?" he said, respectfully smiling again.

"It certainly does," smiled Miss Perkins.

"It certainly does," said he.

If you read those lines with the proper expression you will find them rather rich.

"So Mrs. Burgess doesn't know that you ladies are here," he said, when they returned to the dining-room.

"No," said Marty. "Of course we expected to find her in; but as soon as I get her address I'm going to write her."

"I'll give it to you, if you like. She's on her way back from California. You'll catch her at her town house in New York. And while you're finishing your supper, I'll just take a walk around the house and make sure everything's all right. It's too bad there was nobody in, but they all went over to Conanicut Island on a picnic today, and I guess the storm has kept them there."

Of course, this was Greek to Marty;

but it was one of those occasions when you don't feel like cross-examining everything that's said—though she was to remember his words well enough later. For the present she and Miss Perkins sat down to their interrupted supper and Mr. Reagan started on his tour of the house. Upstairs he looked in at the open door of their room, and when he saw the trunk and the clothes laid out on the bed, any last trace of suspicion that might have been lingering in his mind completely vanished.

"I might have known, if I hadn't been such a fool," he accused himself, "the minute I see that dog with the napkin round his neck saying his prayers. I guess it was the car that worked me up. I thought it was Gentleman Jack, for sure."

When he returned downstairs it was evident that Marty and Miss Perkins had been talking things over.

"Oh, Mr. Reagan," said Marty, as soon

as she saw him, "if I write a letter to Grandma Burgess, do you think you could mail it for me tonight?"

"Yes, ma'am, I certainly could."

Whereupon Marty ran upstairs, and Miss Perkins started clearing the things away. She put the plates, cups and saucers in one neat pile and started with them toward the kitchen when she heard Mr. Reagan's heavy step following close behind her. In the pantry she naturally turned to see what he wanted. Mr. Reagan, breathing heavily, was the colour of a young Egyptian beet, and in his enormous hands he was carrying the teapot and the sugar bowl. . . .

It was nearly half an hour before Marty came down with her letter and Mr. Reagan regretfully arose to go.

"I'll keep a sharp eye on things tonight," he promised them, "and tomorrow morning we'll get that window fixed.

You can't be too careful these days, with Gentleman Jack around."

"He's a clever burglar who's been breaking into houses all around here," rapidly explained Miss Perkins. "I'll tell you about him later."

"A pretty slick article," nodded Mr. Reagan. "He certainly is. Well, good night, ladies."

"Good night!" they cried in friendly chorus.

At the door he paused and turned to Miss Perkins. "First thing in the morning," he said, "I'll push that car of yours into the garage."

"Oh, Mr. Reagan!" exclaimed Miss Perkins, admiration for his strength plainly showing in her eyes and voice; "do you think you could?"

He made a gesture which seemed to signify that he could not only push the car into the garage, but that he could then

push the garage into the house, and (as a final demonstration) conclude his performance by pushing the house into the ocean, if it would please Miss Perkins in the slightest degree to see such a feat accomplished.

"Well, good night, ladies," he said again, this expressive pantomime completed.

"Good night!" cordially repeated the friendly chorus.

They heard the front door shut behind him, and then Miss Perkins turned to Marty with, to use an old-fashioned phrase, a smile that reached from ear to yonder.

"Well!" she exclaimed, unconsciously borrowing Mr. Reagan's favourite word. "I certainly do feel better now."

XVI

A BIT OF ISRAEL PUTNAM

TO tell the truth, they both felt better—feeling more at their ease, as though they were now more properly established. The letter to Marty's grandmother was on its way, and they both felt better for that. Law and Order, as personified by Mr. Reagan, knew of their presence, and they both felt better for that.

Moreover, when they returned to their room upstairs and Marty opened the curtains to see what sort of a night it was going to be, she found the rain had stopped, the clouds were breaking, and away, 'way over in the east the moon was rising over the edge of the ocean and was making a

silvery road over the waves, a path which seemed to ripple and dance right straight for Marty's window, a road for the feet of those who dream and for the golden wheels of fancy.

"I think I'd draw the curtains again if I were you, Marty," said Miss Perkins, who was trying her hair a new way at the mirror. "You never can tell. Perhaps Gentleman Jack is prowling around among the trees."

"Oh, yes," said Marty, turning from the window. "You were going to tell me about him."

"He's quite a young man, they say," began Miss Perkins, "but he's stolen a dreadful lot of jewelry and silver right around here in Newport, and Mr. Reagan says there's a thousand dollars' reward out for him. They've only seen him twice, and each time he was in an officer's uniform. Of course, that makes it hard to

catch him, because, as Mr. Reagan says, you certainly can't go round arresting every man you see in an officer's uniform."

There was a tone of sympathetic indignation in Miss Perkins' voice, as though she were echoing Mr. Reagan's manner as well as his words. "No, of course you couldn't do that," smiled Marty; and, smiling again at her thoughts, she added:

"Didn't Mr. Reagan look foolish when he found out who we were?"

"Foolish?" demanded Miss Perkins, quite bridling herself. "Why, no! My memory isn't such a bad one, I'm sure; but I fail to recall that he looked particularly foolish."

"Do you?" smiled Marty, as innocent as you please. "Not when he coughed behind that awful big hand of his, and started shuffling those terrible feet?"

"No," said Miss Perkins in her primmest possible manner. "I don't recall it at

all. If he did cough behind his hand I should say it was because he had manners. And as for his feet striking any one with terror—"

At that it began to dawn upon Marty. "Of course I was only joking," she said. "What else did he tell you, Fanny, while I was upstairs?"

Miss Perkins returned to her reflection in the mirror.

"He was in the police department once," she said in a more mollified tone, "but he's very ambitious. So he learned to be a chauffeur; because, as Mr. Reagan says, if you're not very careful, when you're once a policeman you're always a policeman. Some day he's going to form a company—the Reagan Protective Agency; but first he's looking for a chance to distinguish himself, to 'do something big,' he called it—like catching Gentleman Jack, for instance. Mr. Reagan says

if he could get ten good clients for his agency—"

But just what Mr. Reagan had said he would do if he could get ten good clients for his agency is a matter, perhaps, which will never be made public, for all at once Miss Perkins' pleasantly reminiscent voice trailed off into silence.

She and Marty both suddenly stiffened to attention at the sound of a door banging shut downstairs.

"Did you hear that?" whispered Marty.

"Yes. . . . I wonder if it's Mr. Reagan back again." . . .

Moved perhaps by the gentle emotion, Miss Perkins stole to the door and then noiselessly made her way to the head of the stairs. It might be said that she went as though on the tiptoes of expectancy, but a minute later she came hurrying back as though on the wings of fear.

"It's a man, I'm sure," she whispered.

"I didn't see him, but I heard his step—a light, quick step, not at all like Mr. Reagan's. I could hear him going through the rooms, and oh, Marty, he had one of those little flashlights, and once he nearly shone it on the stairs!"

"I'll bet you it's Gentleman Jack!" breathed Marty in growing excitement. "Oh, Fanny! A thousand dollars' reward! Just when we haven't a cent in the world! When I even had to give Mr. Reagan my letter without a stamp! And now a thousand dollars all in a lump, like that! And how it would help Mr. Reagan—to turn the burglar over to him! Besides, you often read in the paper about women catching burglars—more, I think, than men do. And just think how it would please Grandma Burgess, if we saved her house from being robbed!"

It was probably the allusion to helping Mr. Reagan which stiffened Miss Perkins'

knees. For even the most obtuse could see what a feather it would be in his cap if he were the one who marched the famous burglar to the police station.

"To do something big!" What could be bigger than that?

"Oh, Marty!" she whispered. "I wonder if there's any way we could catch him!"

Marty had evidently been thinking of that too.

"He's sure to come upstairs looking for jewelry," she whispered back. "So why couldn't we hide behind our door till he comes along the hall? Then, just as he gets to our door, you switch the light on and I'll point Uncle Ebau's gun at him. Of course he won't know it isn't loaded, and then we'll lock him in a closet somewhere, and watch the door all night, and then we can turn him over to Mr. Reagan in the morning."

Miss Perkins had an instinctive feeling that this was one of those uncertain moments of life when too much thought is sometimes fatal to action.

"I'll shut Shep in the bathroom first," she whispered, "or he might run out and spoil everything."

Meanwhile Marty picked up Uncle Ebau's old musket, although her hands trembled a little as she held the butt tightly under her arm.

A moment later Miss Perkins switched the light off and noiselessly opened the door. Then they both flattened themselves against the wall in their room, so they couldn't be seen by any one approaching along the hall.

Fortunately they didn't have long to wait. Before their courage had time to cool, a step was heard coming up the stairs, and the flicker of a spotlight began to play around the ceiling and walls of the hall.

"When I say 'Now!' " breathed Marty, the end of the musket having a sort of chill and ague in the dark.

The step drew nearer. The spotlight began to show the pattern on the hall rug —on the embossed figures of the wall covering. Suddenly the figure of a man loomed into view.

"Now!" shouted Marty.

The electric lights clicked on and, almost simultaneously, the most astonished man in the United States that night obeyed the immemorial summons and threw up his hands.

"Oh, Marty!" exulted Miss Perkins. "It's him!"

From which you can see how worked up she was. And yet, if you had been there to see their prisoner I think you would have excused her slip.

He was a young man, about twenty-five, dressed in the uniform of a lieutenant of

aviation, and in one of his hands (just before he raised them both) he had been carrying a large black leather bag, which sagged with the weight of its contents.

"It's Gentleman Jack! It's Gentleman Jack!" exulted Miss Perkins again, seeing every one of her visions now beautifully coming true. "Bring him in, Marty, and we'll lock him in this closet, quick!"

By that time the young man was evidently getting his bearings. He had cast one glance at Miss Perkins, and all the rest of his gazing was concentrated on Marty in her grey wool and blue silk lace, a modern Diana, you might have thought, on a new sort of hunt, but surely one of the strangest tableaux ever encountered in the Kingdom of Heart's Desire.

"Now, look here," said Marty's captive good-naturedly; "this is a jolly sort of a surprise, and I want to thank you for it

very much. But won't you tell me, please, what it's all about?"

"Be careful, Marty," warned Miss Perkins. "You never can trust them when they start talking. Let's get him into the closet first. He can talk just as well through the door."

"I suppose," said the captive, "that a little farther up the hall there is a room full of happy young people who are waiting for the pleasure of seeing a son of Mars taken prisoner by—shall I say a daughter of Venus?"

"Be careful, Marty!" warned Miss Perkins. "He's the kind!"

"But I wish to make the announcement, here and now," continued the young man boldly, "that nothing of the sort is going to take place—absolutely nothing of the sort. I'm a little too large to be locked in a closet; so, to pay every one back in their own coin, I'm going to turn the table by

kissing Jesse James till she cries for mercy."

"You keep your hands up!" cried Marty in sudden alarm.

"Never!"

He snatched up the leather bag and held it in front of him like a shield.

"You stay back there!" cried Marty. "Right where you are!"

"Never!"

As he sprang toward her, Marty's finger instinctively, convulsively clutched at the trigger of the musket.

The next moment an explosion seemed to shake the house and the recoil of the gun sent Marty reeling against the wall. She quickly recovered herself, however, filled with a terrible foreboding. . . .

Yes!

There on his back lay Gentleman Jack, and beside him lay the fragments of his black leather bag.

XVII

UNCLE ERIC

THERE are, I think, in every one's life some moments which seem as long as months—long, grey months in which every day is filled with depression and every night with fears. Such a moment now came to Marty as she gazed at the quiet figure which lay on the floor before her. She had shot him. She had killed him. This was the thought which dominated her mind—like the sad, mournful motif in the "Dead March From Saul." Gone, completely gone, was her wish for adventure, her desire to see the great world, her longing to enter the Kingdom of Heart's Desire. "If I had only

stayed home!" she sighed to herself, as countless others have sighed already and countless more will sigh again.

Her mind flew back to that comfortable old homestead on the top of Green Mountain, with its low kitchen ceiling and its double row of lilac bushes on the way to the pump. How tranquil, how desirable it seemed to her now!

"Haled to court." It wasn't for nothing that the phrase had lodged in her mind. It was more than a phrase; it was a prophecy. "The prisoner was haled to court to tell her story to the judge." Something told her it was coming true at last.

Miss Perkins, too, was plainly frightened, standing there with a face as white as a piece of her own chalk. And yet, if you had been there, you might have thought that there was a reflective quality to her fright as though some subconscious part of her—that part, perhaps, which had

been developed at the school-teacher's desk—was looking upon the whole affair as a phenomenon of nature; a breathlessly interesting phenomenon, it is true, but one not wholly incomparable to a physiological demonstration—say, to the famous experiment of Doctor Galvini.

"Look!" she suddenly whispered. "Did you see that?"

"See what?" asked poor Marty.

"I saw his chest move. There! It went again!"

As you can imagine, it didn't take Marty long to run to her room and come out again with a cushion and place it under the head of her victim, and lean over, and rub one of his hands, and run for a glass of water and sprinkle it on his forehead and, with the help of Miss Perkins, raise him into a sitting position and ask him over and over again: "Do you feel better now? Do you feel better now?"

But the patient didn't speak. Indeed, the limpness of his body revived Marty's fears.

"I don't think he's much hurt," said Miss Perkins, in response to Marty's frantic suggestion that she should run downstairs and telephone for a doctor. "You can see for yourself that you shot the bag instead of him. The shock of it knocked him over and his head probably struck against the edge of the baseboard and stunned him a little. There! See? He's opening his eyes."

As though to confirm Miss Perkins' diagnosis, he not only opened his eyes, but his hand uncertainly arose and went to the back of his head.

"Didn't I tell you?" asked Miss Perkins. And laughing, although somewhat hysterically, with relief, she added: "We're going to get that thousand dollars yet. You see if we don't."

"Oh, Fanny, don't! He doesn't look a bit like a burglar to me."

"Well, he certainly does to me!"

"And look . . . his hand's bleeding." Marty dipped her handkerchief in the water and tied it around the injured hand. "Now, if we could only get him somewhere where he would be more comfortable—"

"If we could get him in a closet somewhere," said the indomitable Miss Perkins, "he'd be plenty comfortable enough."

At that moment the patient drew a deep breath, as though relieved to find that the back of his head was still there, and he tried to get to his feet. How much he had heard of the foregoing conversation is a question, but, weakly turning to Marty, he said: "If you'll help me up I think I can get to my room."

His room! Somehow, Marty had never thought of Grandma Burgess' having any

other relations living with her, and when this young man in the aviator's uniform spoke of his room, an awful possibility ran over her like a chill. "Your room?" she asked. "Which—which room's that?"

"Last door—end of the hall. If you can help me there—that is," he added, "if you don't want to shoot me again!"

"Marty!" said Miss Perkins sharply, "don't you let him fool you."

"I shan't," said Marty, but, holding out her hands and bracing herself, she helped the young man to his feet. It was plain to see that his dizziness was fast leaving him, but he didn't seem to object to Marty's assistance as they walked along the hall, Miss Perkins grimly bringing up the rear.

"This is the room," he said, stopping at the last door. "You'll find the switch just inside to the right."

It was a large room, part study and part

bedroom. With a sigh of satisfaction the young man sank on the couch.

"Home at last," he said with a whimsical smile, "but great guns, what a voyage!" Then, giving Marty such a long look that she blushed and dropped her eyes, he continued: "And now that I'm alive again and no bones broken I wish you'd tell me"—he paused, as though there were a lot of things which he wished to be told and found it hard to take his pick—"well, I wish you'd tell me why you wanted to shoot me."

"Because we thought you were Gentleman Jack," faltered Marty.

"No!" corrected Miss Perkins. "Because you *are* Gentleman Jack!"

The young man continued to look at Marty. "A gentleman?" he gravely smiled. "At least I hope so. But there, I hope, the similarity ends. My name is Eric, not Jack. And I have just come home unex-

pectedly for a few days' furlough before starting for the front. If your suspicious friend still refuses to believe me she will find a photograph or two on the wall. There's one just behind her, the Glee Club. Reading from left to right, I believe I'm the third melancholy individual in the front row. Between the foils you'll see another—in a baseball suit—standing in a rather superb attitude with my wrist upon my hip, secretly trying to look like Christopher Mathewson. But, speaking of burglars—who, I believe, generally go armed—I should like to ask you a riddle: What were you and your friend doing in here tonight in company with that young cannon?"

"I'm Mrs. Burgess' granddaughter—" began poor Marty.

"You're what?" he demanded.

"Mrs. Burgess' granddaughter—"

The young man laughed, a laugh which

seemed to have as much disappointment in it as mirth. "Pardon me," he said, "you'll have to find some other answer to the riddle. You can't very well be her granddaughter, you know, because I'm her son, and I also happen to be the only child she ever had. So unless you're a daughter of mine—"

"Of course I'm not," said Marty, the old Israel Putnam strain showing for a moment. "My name's Martha Mackenzie, and my mother was Mary Burgess Mackenzie, who died when I was a little girl."

The young man opened his eyes very wide indeed, and through these wide-open eyes he stared at Marty as though he was now really looking at her for the first time. "Does my mother know you're here?" he asked at last.

Marty explained as briefly as she could how they had come to pay a surprise visit,

and how the storm had driven them in, temporarily penniless and absolutely destitute of gas. "But I've written to her," she concluded, "and Mr. Reagan took the letter and mailed it."

The young man thought it over and, though he looked serious enough at first, he couldn't keep back his whimsical smile for long. "Then, according to that," he said, "you'd be my little niece; wouldn't you?"

"Ye-es," hesitated Marty; "I suppose I would."

"And I would be your uncle—your good old Uncle Eric!"

Marty smiled again at that, but said nothing, for he was such a handsome young uncle in his aviator's uniform that she didn't know what to say.

"I'm sorry my mother wasn't in when you called, but don't mind that. You'll probably hear from her soon enough. In

the meantime, both in her behalf and mine, I bid you welcome to the Pillars and beg you to shoot no more."

"Marty," said Miss Perkins, who had satisfied herself from the photographs, and was now speaking primly from the doorway, "I think we had better go now." She coughed a little behind her hand and continued: "We cannot tell you, Mr. Burgess, how sorry we are for what occurred a few minutes ago in the hall, but can only ask you to consider that we thought we were saving your own house from being burglarized. We thank you for your hospitality, and assure you that we shall not trespass upon it a moment longer than is absolutely necessary. In fact, I think, Marty, that if Mr. Burgess were to lend us enough gasoline to return to Green Mountain in the morning, it would be the best solution of an awkward dilemma. However, that and other mat-

ters can wait for discussion until a more propitious time. Meanwhile, Mr. Burgess, trusting that you will accept our most sincere apologies, we will bid you good night. Good night." Thus spoke Miss Perkins, quite in her best manner, as though the school committee were looming largely in the background and three red apples were standing on her desk.

Entering into the formal spirit of her remarks, the young man bowed, his hand upon his heart. "Good night, ladies," he said, "and—may I wish it?—pleasant dreams."

But it was a long time before Marty had any dreams that night, pleasant or otherwise. Despite her efforts to compose herself, her eyes stayed open and her heart kept beating like a busy little watch which has just been wound. Across the field of her consciousness the events of the afternoon and evening kept galloping

past; their last cent paid for the repair of the car; their anxious ride to Newport, afraid every moment that their gasoline would give out; the storm; the dark; the arrival at her grandmother's; the deserted house; the massive entry of Mr. Reagan—breathless events only to be punctuated at last by the bang of Uncle Ebau's musket, that musket which she had always thought was never loaded.

To aim at a burglar and shoot an uncle!

What strange, disturbing events took place in the Kingdom of Heart's Desire!

XVIII

KINGDOM COME

MARTY was awakened the next morning by a dim confusion of sounds. For a few seconds she lay still, her mind floating on a sort of nebulous cloud, staring around the pretty room and vaguely wondering where she was. It was the tensely whispered voice of Miss Perkins which brought her down to earth.

"Marty! Wake up!" Miss Perkins was whispering. "Some one's rapping on your door."

"Rap-rap-rap! Rap-rap-rap!" sounded a gentle knuckle on the panel.

"Who's there?" cried Marty, now thoroughly awake.

Miss Perkins, curious beyond words, put her head through the communicating doorway a little farther to hear the answer, and Marty noticed, with a sense of utter astonishment, that Miss Perkins' hair was done up in tight little pigtails, such as are sometimes seen on small girls on Saturday afternoons when their mothers wish them to go to church the next day with curly little tresses on their shoulders.

"It's Louise, the maid," said a voice in the hall. "I've brought your breakfast, miss."

Miss Perkins' hands made a silent appeal to the ceiling and she softly shut the door; although, as Marty guessed, she didn't go far from the other side of it. At the same moment the maid entered from the hall, carrying a breakfast tray; and in less time than it takes to tell it, Marty was sitting up in bed like a little queen with the tray in front of her, and Louise, mov-

ing about on noiseless feet, was starting the water in the bathtub.

Marty had never seen a breakfast set before, and at first she could hardly eat for admiring it. The tray was mahogany, with a plate-glass centre covering a piece of embroidered cretonne which would have done Aunt Emma good to see. And on this tray was an individual service of apple-blossom china, complete from coffee-pot to egg cup. By the side of the plate was a rose still wet with dew, and, as Marty inhaled its fragrance, she seemed to catch her first sure glance of the Kingdom of Heart's Desire.

After she had finished her breakfast she dressed with special care, choosing the second dress which her mother had left her—the cream and brown mousseline on which the note had said:

This I wore the second time we met and he never forgot it. Some day, when you have met a

man whom you love, I want you to wear this mousseline because I'm sure it will suit you.

"Of course, I haven't met a man whom I love," thought Marty, "but—I wouldn't want Uncle Eric to think—to think that —just because I nearly shot him—and came from the country—"

A confused thought, as you will see, and as Marty's mind went dreaming farther and farther afield, perhaps it is just as well that Louise was there to help her with skilful hands. It was the first time that Marty had ever had a maid, but she sat so demurely in front of the mirror while Louise brushed and arranged her hair that you might have thought that she had been accustomed to it all her life.

Yes, and half an hour later when she strolled outside (Miss Perkins still being busy with her own breakfast and toilet and primly refusing all offers of assistance, perhaps because of those tight little pig-

tails) and found Uncle Eric apparently waiting for her on the veranda, I doubt if the Atlantic Ocean had ever flung up its breakers, like curly green arms, or thundered approval at a prettier picture—of a shyer, more radiant girl.

"Good morning," said Uncle Eric, such admiration showing in his eyes that Marty felt her heart beating like a little drum. "You're just in time—that is, of course, if you'd like a ride—"

Under the porte-cochère, then, she saw a waiting car. "Do you think there's room for Miss Perkins?" hesitated Marty.

"I'm afraid not. It only holds three—and we're going for some one. Besides, we shan't be many minutes. I'll tell you where we're going; shall I? I tried to get my mother in New York on the telephone this morning, but she won't be back from California for a day or two. So I have asked a very old friend of ours—Judge

Allison's sister-in-law—to come over and stay with us a few days and play hostess by proxy. I thought you'd feel more at home if you had some one in the house like that."

"It's very thoughtful of you, I'm sure," said Marty simply, although it wasn't until later that she appreciated his thoughtfulness to the full.

"One thing more," he said, as they slowly rolled between the two pillars which gave the house its name: "I rather think it will surprise my mother to know that she has a grandchild. In fact, I know it will. So don't you think it would be a good idea if we kept the surprise for her, and not let everybody else know it before she does? I will introduce you as Miss Mackenzie, a friend of ours. Though I would like to tell Mrs. Allison, if you don't mind."

A few minutes later they stopped at one

of the neighbouring houses, and Marty was introduced to Mrs. Allison, a bright-eyed widow of about fifty, who squeaked with pleasure at seeing Uncle Eric and was soon chatting to Marty as though she had known her all her life. It was while listening to Mrs. Allison that Marty took the first step in a great discovery.

"She's just like Mrs. Tanner, the butcher's wife," she thought in growing surprise; "high-strung, Aunt Emma called her, and always used to squeal when she laughed."

And perhaps because Marty had liked Mrs. Tanner, she soon found herself liking Mrs. Allison, too, liking her for her bird-like movements and her roguish manner of pointing her finger at Uncle Eric, and the way she squeaked when the car bounced, and the manner in which she drew a brisk sigh between two equally brisk smiles, and told about the sweaters

she had knitted, and confided to Marty, without the least pretence to punctuation: "My dear you do look sweet I'm afraid I shall have to be a very strict chaperon feeeeerocious ha-ha-ha or there's no telling what may happen why gracious how you blush!"

"My trunk is coming right over, Eric," she said, when they reached the Pillars. "And now if you'll introduce me to the other one, I think I'll let you take this pretty child out for a spin till lunch."

And, oh, such a thrilling ride that was! No lurching Ark this time, but rather an eagle of the air. No cars passing them from behind this time; but, whenever they saw a car ahead, they swooped down on it and swung around it as though it were glued to the road. No measuring of gasoline this time, no smiles of amusement from the folks on foot, no repressive primness of Miss Perkins. And, in between

thrills, Marty told Uncle Eric about Green Mountain Farm, and the lamb that bit Uncle Ebau, and the turkey which had such a human look in its eyes that they never could kill it, and the little pig that had the mumps but was finally sold when six months old, and swam back home the following night across the Quinebaug River.

How they laughed! And then Uncle Eric told Marty of some of his adventures in the air; how he had been flying nearly two years in France; how he had come back to train other men to fly; how one day when he was up in his "bus" two miles high, his propeller flew off; how another time he was lost in a fog and nearly came down among the Germans, and how he swooped up just in time and they sent a perfect shower of shells up after him, shells called "woolly bears," which nearly ate him alive! At the end of this last

adventure he looked at Marty and found her lips parted with excitement, two big tears trembling in her eyes, and, for some reason which I can't explain to you, his heart tenderly looped the loop, and the next moment the speedometer arrow jumped forward as though from Hiawatha's bow, and Marty leaned over toward Uncle Eric to escape the rush of the wind, and they both laughed together in jubilation at the way the posts and trees went rushing past.

After lunch they went for another ride, Mrs. Allison accompanying them this time (Miss Perkins having letters to write), and, coming back about half past five, they saw the funniest thing. A little car was holding the middle of the road and they had to sound their horn half a dozen times before it gave them room to pass.

"That's Jimmy Reagan in the family flivver," said Uncle Eric, "but I never

knew Jimmy to be wool gathering before." And when they passed and turned around to look, whom do you suppose Jimmy had in the car? Miss Perkins, the letter writer, on her way back from the post office!

"I had the greatest luck," she told Marty later. "On the library table I found letter paper, pens, ink—and stamps! Just imagine—stamps! So I wrote a letter to my sister at Pond Beach, and asked her to send me twenty dollars. We shan't be quite so helpless then."

Not that Marty felt especially helpless as it was. At least you wouldn't have thought so if you had seen her the next night, when she went with Uncle Eric to a dance which was being held at the Casino. For this adventure she wore the third dress, the blue taffeta with silver trimmings; and when they sat down for dinner Uncle Eric could hardly keep his eyes off her.

"I don't know how she does it," he exclaimed in mock despair to Mrs. Allison, "but behold our child!"

Mrs. Allison squeaked with admiration and cried: "She'll beat them all the little lamb hip hip hurray for us!"

Mrs. Allison was going too; but Miss Perkins primly stayed at home, giving as her reason that she would rather spend the evening with a good book in the library. Another reason, which she didn't mention, was that in her pursuit of the classics she had never learned to fling the light, fantastic toe. While the real, ultimate reason of all was that, along toward nine o'clock, while strolling over the lawn to see the breakers, she rather expected to see Mr. James Reagan engaged upon a somewhat similar sightseeing expedition.

So Marty went without her—though still in good company, as you can see—and while she knew many of the dances there

were a few in which she preferred to sit out and watch the others. This is when she began to verify that great discovery which she had made earlier in the day.

"Isn't it funny!" she thought. "If they were dressed a little different and taken over to the Canterbury Grange, they wouldn't look much different from most of the folks I know. Now, that one over there in the yellow silk—she's giggling just like Fanny Palmer does. And that tall girl who acts as though she takes everything for granted—that's just the way Alice Newton acts. And there's a woman who dresses too young—like Mrs. Winter back home. And that girl with the nice eyes and mouth—like Annie Taylor's—I know I could like her the same as I always liked Annie. And this old gentleman with the bristling moustache who is coming over here—now, isn't that funny! he reminds me of Uncle Ebau!"

He turned out to be Judge Allison, Mrs. Allison's brother-in-law, and when he was introduced to Marty, at first he could hardly keep his eyes off her. A few minutes later, while dancing with Uncle Eric, Marty saw the Judge and Mrs. Allison watching her and talking together.

"They're talking about me," she thought. "I wonder why he stared so when we were introduced. And two or three others tonight; they've looked ever so funny when they've heard my name. Oh, well, folks are queer, anyhow, and I guess they'd stare just as much at Canterbury Grange if a strange girl were to drop in there and start dancing with—the nicest man!"

Whereupon, putting all other thoughts behind her, she turned her face and gave Uncle Eric such a radiant smile that he nearly missed his step and skipped quite wildly for a bar or two like a falling

chamois, and then they lowered their heads and laughed together as though they had one of the greatest private jokes in the world.

But Marty's heart, acting, as it sometimes did, like a pendulum, having swung to happiness now stopped and seemed to start the other way. A vague sense of uncertainty and disillusion began to steal over her. That happy, witty assembly of men and women which she had expected to see—superior beings, moving and laughing and loving with a sort of glorious graciousness—where, oh, where were they?

"Isn't it funny!" she thought for the third time that night. "Some of the girls are pretty, and some are homely—just the same as they are at home. And some of the married ladies are stout, and some are sad, and some have moles—just the same as they do at home. And some of the young men are serious, and some have long

noses, and some look muddy—just the same as they do at home. . . . Or anywhere else, I guess, if I could go and see. And why did Judge Allison stare so? And those others? And why—"

But that last question she wouldn't put into words, not even in her thoughts.

"Of course he likes me, in a way, because I'm his niece," was all she would tell herself. "But, oh dear, if this is the way it's going to end, I wish I'd never come!"

In short, the sweets of the evening had somehow turned sour in her mouth, and because it seldom rains but that it pours, two other incidents occurred before she left which made her heart feel heavier yet.

A tall girl—the one who had the air of taking everything for granted—had danced with Uncle Eric a good many times that night, and now they were dancing the "Au Revoir" together. She was one of

those tall girls with a proprietary air, and she was dancing with Eric in a certain way which I can't begin to define, any more than Marty could. If you had asked Marty, for instance, how the tall girl danced with Uncle Eric, she would have said: "Well, she danced in a certain way." And if you had pressed her, she might have sharply exclaimed: "She danced as if she owned him!" Which is, of course, beyond all definition. And as they danced the "Au Revoir," the tall girl kept looking at Marty over Eric's shoulder, and then she and Eric would have another long, earnest talk together.

The second incident was the remark which Judge Allison made, just before she left for home.

"My dear," he said, speaking in a low voice so that none could hear except Marty, "have you heard from Mrs. Burgess yet?"

"Not yet."

"Hm-m! Well. . . . Hm-m! I want you to promise me something: I want you to promise me that, no matter what happens, you will come and see me before you leave Newport—or at any other time, in fact, when you feel yourself in trouble. Will you promise me that?"

Marty promised him, impressed by his manner; but for some reason which must have been partly instinct, because it can't be altogether explained in any other way, her promise seemed to turn to lead, hung like a weight upon her heart.

Perhaps Eric divined her mood, for all the way home he chatted in his whimsical way and soon had Mrs. Allison squeaking with laughter. Even Marty presently caught the contagion of his manner and found herself smiling too.

"Don't let's go in yet," he said when they reached the Pillars. "Full moon and

a summer sea—it's a shame to sleep them away."

"Personally," said Mrs. Allison, "I'm simply expiring for a Welsh rabbit. Wait till I go in and get one started; will you, children? I'll be out again in a minute."

She disappeared with a birdlike flutter, and Eric gently led Marty along the wide veranda which overlooked the sea. Once he stopped at a rosebush which grew by the side of the rail and, breaking off a bud, he raised his hands to place it in her hair.

"It seems to me," he said in a low voice, while her head was bent to receive the flower, "that my little niece didn't enjoy herself tonight as much as she might have done." She gave him a quick look through her lashes. "If she hasn't," he continued, "her Uncle Eric knows how she feels, because that has been his own experience too."

"It has?" she gravely asked.

"It has," he gravely answered. "But, whenever I felt myself getting blue, I consoled myself in a most interesting fashion."

"You did?" she gravely asked.

"Dear child, I did," said he. He called her "dear child," you see, although there couldn't have been more than five years' difference in their ages. "I said to myself: 'Never mind. The nicest dance shall be the last. We'll have it in the moonlight by the sad sea waves.' Do you know that waltz?"

He hummed a few bars of Rosas' deep-toned melody and rapped on the window of the dining-room, through which Mrs. Allison could be seen flitting about superintending the Welsh rabbit.

"Oh, Nan!" he called through the glass. "To oblige a good young soldier, will you play the 'Sad Sea Waves Waltz' for Marty

and me? One last dance—it's all I ask. It's all I ask, Nan!"

She shook her finger at him and disappeared through a doorway. Soon one of the French windows on the veranda opened, a piano lamp burst into bloom inside, and a moment later the strains of the waltz were heard.

Eric bowed to Marty, and Marty curtsied low. So like her dreams it was. Then slowly, gently placing their arms around each other, they gracefully danced together in the moonlight.

Neither spoke for a time.

Marty felt too happy to speak, too full of the splendour of the Kingdom of Heart's Desire. Lights, and love, and laughter—they were all there then; and, though the laughter was silent, it sang in her heart with ever so happy a note. Gay, gallant gentleman and beautiful ladies—at least Eric filled his part of that—and

something told Marty that never, even in her longings, had she been such an incomparable heroine as she was that night—"the moonlight bathing her face with its silvery radiance"—"and leading him ever on—and on—and on."

Presently a sense of apprehension began to take possession of her. Lights and laughter, yes, but surely one doesn't fall in love with one's uncle! The mere thought made her smile; but she didn't smile a minute later when Eric suddenly bent his head and kissed her. The music went on, but the dance stopped.

"Eric!" she said. "What did you do that for?"

"Dear child," he replied in his whimsical voice, "I wish you'd tell me."

Before she knew what he was doing he had kissed her again and was waltzing her through the open window into the lighted room with Mrs. Allison.

XIX

A TORPEDO—BY TELEGRAM

THE next morning brought a letter for Miss Perkins and an official envelope for Uncle Eric. As soon as Miss Perkins received hers, she peeped in and noiselessly whispered to Marty that magic word of hope and cheer: "Money!" But apparently there weren't any words of hope and cheer in Uncle Eric's letter. Instead he groaned when he read it, and stared out over the sea.

"Is it bad news?" asked Marty timidly.

"Not very pleasant. My furlough's cut short. I've got to sail on the *Fortuna* tomorrow."

"Oh!" And all the sunshine suddenly seemed to go out of Marty's morning. "It'll be dreadfully lonesome when you're gone," she said at last.

"Yes, child," he said, "and it's going to be dreadfully lonesome for your Uncle Eric, too, when he's gone. Still—no use crying over what can't be helped. What do you say if we go a long ride this morning—all over the world and back?"

On the way they stopped at the telegraph office, where he sent a number of messages. A few minutes later they were flying up the road to Portsmouth. In the harbour a submarine was manœuvring and, from the way Marty felt the next few minutes, it might have sent one of its deadliest missiles right through her tender young breast. And, oh, how she prayed for a safe voyage for the *Fortuna!*

"Going too fast?" asked Eric, stealing a look at her and slowing down a little.

"No; I like it fast." She tried to smile.

"I thought the wind was making your eyes run," he explained.

"It isn't the wind."

Whatever it was, it was enough to make them both ride in silence for the next few miles, and then he stopped where some boys were selling pond lilies, and bought Marty enough nearly to fill the car. They began talking and smiling then as they rode on; but I think if you had been there you would have noticed a deeper tone of friendship in their conversation, a warmer sympathy in their smiles.

It was nearly one o'clock when they returned to the Pillars, that stately old house which Marty was beginning to regard as her home; and there they found a telegram waiting for Eric—and another for Marty.

"For me?" she cried. "Why, who would send a telegram to me?"

She wasn't long in doubt. The message read:

MISS MARTHA MACKENZIE
The Pillars Newport R I

184 You Never Saw Such a Girl

What utter nonsense I have no grandchild Please leave immediately Am returning home at once

CONSTANCE BURGESS

XX

THE ARK MOVES ON

AT first the telegram from Mrs. Burgess ordering Marty to "leave immediately," nearly carried her off her feet. What a terrible thing if it were true! To break into a strange woman's house! To sleep in her beds! To eat her food! To have your car rolled into her garage, and even to bring a dog and cat to make themselves at home!

And yet—why shouldn't it be true? What reason would Mrs. Burgess have for denying her own grandchild? Besides, in the light of that disconcerting telegram, it now stood clear and plain for every one to see that, if Mrs. Burgess had no other child except Eric, Marty couldn't possibly be her grandchild.

Her cheeks burned with the shame of it all.

Then another thought came to her mind, and for a moment it stopped her breath. If Mrs. Burgess were not her grandmother then Eric wasn't her uncle. And if he wasn't her uncle—

She saw him again as she had seen him last night when they danced together on the veranda, she with a rosebud in her hair, and only the moonlight to watch them. And now if it turned out, after all, that he wasn't her uncle—

In silence she handed him the telegram and watched him as he read it.

How grave and troubled he looked. Marty thought that at least he would smile reassurance at her. But he didn't! He read the telegram over with pursing lips, and frowned to himself as he did so.

"He probably thinks I'm a little impostor," thought Marty; and, taking the

fateful telegram from his outstretched hand, she gave it to Miss Perkins.

"We'll pack our things at once," she said brokenly. "What a lucky thing you had that money come this morning."

"We may as well pack now—yes," said Miss Perkins; "but we mustn't think of leaving before Mrs. Burgess returns. If a mistake has been made it is only justice to her and ourselves that we should explain it to her."

"Well said!" cried Eric, speaking at last. "You won't have long to wait. I have a wire here which says she'll be home at half past one."

Marty and Miss Perkins went upstairs to pack, and somehow it seemed to Marty as though the house was no longer friendly, but that it frowned at her, as Eric had just frowned on the veranda. Before, when she had looked at the library where she had broken in, or at the dining-room where

Jimmy Reagan had discovered them, or at the spot in the hall upstairs where she had mistaken Eric for Gentleman Jack, she had smiled at her recollections and the rooms had seemed to smile back, as though they were friends together and liked to think of past experiences.

But now the house seemed to hold an atmosphere of reproach, almost of hostility, as though it were saying: "What are you doing here? Don't you know that Mrs. Burgess has no grandchild? Please leave immediately—if you know when you're well off!"

"You don't know how sorry I am, Fanny," sighed Marty, "to think that I brought you out on such an awful vacation!" She compared the hopes with which they had left the farm with the realities which now faced them, and never did a prisoner waiting for sentence feel more guilty than she.

"Never mind," said Miss Perkins, her usual prim voice quite forgotten; "it has certainly been exciting while it lasted." From her smile and the use of his favourite word, it may be that Mr. James Reagan was not altogether absent from her thoughts. "Besides," she added, "we can stop at Pond Beach on our way home and stay a few days with my sister. Then we won't feel as though we had been chased away and had to run home, like two naughty children being sent home from school."

Marty didn't say anything, but as she folded her dresses and laid them sadly in the trunk, again she couldn't help thinking of the high hopes with which she had started out upon her grand adventure—to find the Kingdom of Heart's Desire. Truth to tell, she had had all the visiting she wanted; but she felt too broken to object to Miss Perkins' plan. She felt too

much like a defeated general who had been relieved of his command to go on making plans for the rest of the campaign.

The trunks were carried down and placed in the Ark, and under Mr. Reagan's skilful hands the Ark was supplied with gasoline, water and oil, while Miss Perkins stood by to see how the thing was done.

Once Mr. Reagan had to go into a far corner of the garage for something, and upon his invitation Miss Perkins followed him to see the new air compressor. If you had seen Miss Perkins a few minutes later you would have thought to yourself:

"What an extraordinary air compressor it must have been!" For Miss Perkins' eyes had a wonderful new light in them, and her cheeks were red, and she spent nearly a minute smoothing her hair with her sidecombs before she finally braved the veranda again.

All this time Eric was absent, and perhaps you can guess how Marty felt about that.

Jimmy Reagan rolled past the house in a limousine at quarter past one, evidently on his way to the station, and half an hour later he returned and stopped under that same porte-cochère which had sheltered the Ark from the storm.

The door opened and Eric stepped out, looking rather pale. Then a maid came out and rapidly cleared a small mountain of hand baggage out of the way. And then, and not till then, disdaining the proffered hands which were raised to help her, Mrs. Burgess stepped out; and the moment Marty saw her, her heart began to sink.

Masterful—that was the character of Mrs. Burgess in a word. For the first time Marty understood why the servants lowered their voices and referred to her as

"the madam." Masterful, autocratic, imperial—that was how Mrs. Burgess looked as she stepped out of her stately limousine. She was a large woman, almost as large around as Aunt Emma, but cast in a more heroic mould, and as she walked up the veranda steps, followed by Eric and the maid, you might have thought that an irresistible army was advancing to the fray—and woe betide the enemy that stood in its path!

"Which one of you is it?" she demanded, stopping in front of Marty and Miss Perkins.

"It's me," said poor Marty, even her grammar failing her.

"Come inside!" It was a command rather than an invitation.

Miss Perkins also arose. "You stay here!" said Mrs. Burgess to her. With the same implacable step as before, Mrs. Burgess led Marty into the library.

"Now!" she said, settling herself heavily in a chair by the window. "What do you mean by it? What did you expect to gain by sending me that tomfool letter?"

Marty winced at the adjective—but, after all, this masterful old lady was Eric's mother.

"What did I expect to gain?" asked Marty. "Nothing but a grandmother. What else could I expect to gain?"

"Grandmother? Fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Eric's mother. "Don't use that word again to me."

"I won't," said Marty, her head lifting proudly.

"Don't you know that you could be arrested for breaking into a house the way you broke into this one—and rummaging around?"

"We didn't break in."

"I say you did!"

"If you'll let me explain—"

"Explain? Fiddlesticks! I tell you again: you broke in and rummaged around."

"Mother!" protested Eric, who had just come in. "I knew they were here, and so did Mrs. Allison."

"You be quiet, Eric," said the indomitable old lady. "I know what I'm saying."

"I'm very sorry," said Marty, and spoke in more senses than one.

"Sorry!" scoffed the old lady, beating the word as though her tongue were a stick and the word were a rug.

"Yes, sorry!" repeated Marty, the old Putnam strain beginning to show at last. "I said I was sorry! And I bid you good-bye!"

"I heard you," said the grim old lady.

Her head held high, Marty went out on the veranda, Eric following her.

"Good-bye, Eric," she said, holding out her hand and vainly trying to keep back her tears.

"No, no," he protested; "don't say good-bye. Where are you going?"

"Home," sighed Marty; and even the sound of the word seemed to soothe her.

"But when can I see you again?" he asked.

"Your ship sails tomorrow," she reminded him. And, thinking of that masterful old lady in the library, she sadly added: "No, Eric, it's no use. It's got to be good-bye."

Their hands met, and what would have happened next can never be told, because just at that moment the dominating figure of Mrs. Burgess appeared in the doorway.

"Eric, come here," she said. "I want you."

Marty slipped away and into the wait-

ing Ark, where Miss Perkins and Shep were awaiting her . . . and the Ark moved on. . . .

XXI

MORE HISTORY

ALONG the pleasant street moved the Ark, its little engine throbbing as though with relief at getting away from there. For a time Marty was too full to speak, but presently Miss Perkins primly raised her voice.

"So this is Newport," she said in a slightly nasal, slightly ironic voice, a voice which her misbehaving scholars knew quite well.

"Don't, Fanny," pleaded Marty. "I guess there are nice people and the other sort in Newport, same as everywhere else. And now we're going to call on one of the nice ones."

"Call?" repeated Miss Perkins. "Where are you going to call?"

"On Judge Allison. I promised him last night that I wouldn't leave Newport without seeing him."

Fortunately they found the judge in his study and, under his gentle questioning, it didn't take Marty long to tell the story of Mrs. Burgess' return.

"A wonderful woman," smiled the judge—though Marty wasn't doing any smiling. "She has more decision of character, I think, than all the men in Newport put together. I only had an argument with her once." He made a humorous gesture, as though a vigorous old lady were trying to box his ears, whereat Marty's face did for a moment lose its look of woe. "That's better," said the judge. "And now—if you'd like to explain to me what Mrs. Burgess wouldn't let you explain to her—"

So Marty told him what she had found in her mother's trunk, Miss Perkins fetch-

ing the certificates and photographs and unfinished letter to show him; and before long the judge was leaning eagerly over his desk, as though he didn't want to miss one single syllable.

"No!" he cried once in the tone which means "Yes!" And again "No!" And when Marty had finished her story he lifted his hand and brought it down "Smack!" upon the desk. "I knew it!" he cried. "And now, my dear, you listen to me and I'll tell you about your mother."

He leaned back in his chair and turned his gaze inward, as though he were reviewing the past.

"Her name was Mary," he began, "and she was the only child of old Commodore Burgess. She was one of those quiet girls with a good, clean spark of temper. Her mother died when she was about ten, and Mary idolized her memory. So perhaps you can form some idea of how she felt

when, about ten years later, the old commodore married again, and Mary saw a strange woman come into the house to take her mother's place. The commodore's second wife, my dear, is the woman whom you have just left.

"When the commodore married her she was a widow, handsome, brilliant. She had a son about two years old by her first husband. That son is Eric. She hadn't been married to the commodore a month when she and your mother had their first clash. After that, I'm afraid there was very little peace at the Pillars. It was one of those household affairs where it is practically impossible not to take sides. Your grandfather, as nearly always happens in such cases, gradually began to take his wife's side, and your mother must have thought that she hadn't a friend in the world. It was at this point that young Mackenzie came on the scene.

"He was an architect from a New York office, a fine young fellow who was rapidly making a name for himself, but poor. He came to the Pillars to attend to some alterations, and it wasn't long before he and your mother fell in love with each other. There was going to be a big wedding, but the night before some sort of a dreadful row broke out and your mother packed her trunk, telephoned for a carriage and simply disappeared. So far as we could find out, she and young Mackenzie took the last train that night to Providence. From this certificate, you see, they were married there.

"As you will realize, the cancellation of the wedding and your mother's disappearance made a seven days' wonder, during which time Mrs. Burgess' ears probably burned more often than not, because so many of us were on your mother's side. Mind you, my dear, I always tried to make

allowances both ways whenever I could, because in many respects it was a case of Greek meeting Greek. Some things, however, I never approved.

"One day, for instance, just after your mother had disappeared, the commodore came to my office and wanted me to draw a will in which your mother would be cut off with nothing. I refused to have anything to do with such a document, but I understand he had it drawn in New York. A few years later, I am glad to say, he experienced a change of heart. He divided his property more or less equally between his wife and his daughter. If your mother died her share was to go to her children, if she had any. If she died without leaving children Mrs. Burgess and her son would have everything."

"So there you have the situation, my dear. Your mother's long silence, despite all our efforts to find her, was presumptive

evidence of her death, and in the absence of any claim to the contrary the whole property would finally go to Mrs. Burgess.

"I can understand now why we couldn't find any trace of your mother, evidently soon left a widow, and long since dead and buried in that little country place. The commodore died early last autumn, and Mrs. Burgess was expecting to take possession of everything. So now you know the way she felt when she received your letter! In her self-willed manner of doing business she has lost a great deal of money in unfortunate investments; and now, if she loses her house here in Newport and the one in New York—to say nothing of half the personal property—she wouldn't be far from finding herself a poor woman."

For a time Marty was silent, her heart wildly beating as she thought of her mother, but gradually—very gradually—

a strange fact began to loom up in her mind. "Did you say," she asked, "that the house where I've been staying was left to me?"

"It surely was, my dear. I drew the second will myself."

"And it's really mine?"

"It's really yours, completely equipped and furnished, just as it stands."

"Why, Fanny!" exclaimed Marty, "we broke into our own house!"

Another thought came to her, one of those flashes of grandeur which come to nearly every one at times, in which one sees oneself as a Joan of Arc leading her nation to victory, as a William Tell striking the tyrant down.

Marty saw a vision of herself back in the library of the Pillars. Before her stood Mrs. Burgess with oh, such a crestfallen air. "You drove my mother out of her own house," she heard herself say-

ing, "and you drove me out. And now I'm going to drive you out! Go!" One flash and the vision faded. In its place she saw herself dancing with Eric in the moonlight.

She smiled to herself, a breathless little smile, when she thought of Eric. So they weren't relations, then, except by marriage; and that, of course, is no relationship at all. Another picture arose to her mind, a picture in which she saw herself as a modern Juliet reuniting the families of Montague and Capulet.

"Then I suppose," she said, smiling to think how soon she could change all that, "I suppose that Eric will be quite poor, too, when I get my share."

"I don't think it will worry him much," smiled the judge.

"No?" breathed Marty, wondering if he had guessed her secret.

"Not very much," smiled the judge

again; "the rascal's engaged to the richest girl in Newport, Miss Spencer; you probably saw them dancing together last night."

XXII

DREAMS HAVE ENDINGS

IF Marty had been a boy I think she would have shown her feelings; but as she sat there, vaguely smiling on the other side of Judge Allison's desk, flanked by the prim figure of Miss Perkins, you would never have guessed the turmoil which was going on in her breast, nor how her thoughts lay almost stunned under the ruins of her dreams.

Much that the judge had told her, she had not had time to grasp. The ownership of the Pillars, for instance, seemed more a subject for anxious thought than a cause for joy. All those servants—she would have to pay them now. She would have to do the planning and the ordering, and something seemed to tell her that she knew as much about it as the owner of a

rowboat knows about the navigation of a battleship. But amid this obscurity and uncertainty one fact had shone out like a star, and that was that Eric would be able to put her right—Eric, who was no longer her uncle; Eric, with whom she had danced in the moonlight with a rosebud in her hair. And now suddenly to discover that he was engaged to the richest girl in Newport!

"Playing with me," she thought, sitting there at the judge's desk among the ruins of her dreams. "What a little fool he must have thought I was! And never to say a word when his mother treated me like that—and let me come away; yes, and if it hadn't been for Judge Allison I'd have gone back home and never have known a thing about my mother, or the will, or anything else. A nice friend! And then to pretend that—that he liked me—and to kiss me!"

A feeling which wasn't far from bitterness arose in her mind; but reaction was beginning to have its effect, and the judge noticed the growing pallor of her cheeks.

"What are you going to do with that car out there?" he asked.

"Going home," said poor Marty.

"But, my dear, you can't get there this afternoon, I'm sure—even if you were up to such a long ride. Now, if you'll let me advise you—" Marty tried to smile at him, and nodded her head. "Then if I were you I would leave the car in my garage here and go by train. Then you won't have anything to bother you. And when you're ready for the car just drop me a line and I'll have some one run it up there for you."

"There's a dog," said Marty.

"I'll take care of him."

"And a cat."

"My barn is full of mice."

Again Marty tried to smile, and nodded her head. Truth to tell, she felt washed out and done for, and the prospect of driving the Ark two hundred miles and spending the night on the road had suddenly appeared wearisome, distasteful.

But the judge was speaking again. "One thing more," he said: "My sister-in-law has told me the plight you were in when you reached Newport. Money is always a handy thing to have with you, so I'm going to advance you five hundred dollars until you are able to pay it back from the estate. Meanwhile, if you would like me to act for you and look after your interests—" He arose and smiled at them both. "I'm going over to the bank," he said. "You and your friend can talk it over."

"I should do exactly as he says," said Miss Perkins as soon as the door closed

behind him. "Only first, I want to run over to Pond Beach and see my sister."

"Oh, Fanny, I don't know," said Marty in a tired voice. "I want to get away from all this."

"That's just why I should go to Pond Beach if I were you. It's been a terribly exciting week, and the rest will do us both good."

"Yes, and as soon as we get there Eric or some one will come rushing around."

"How can he, when he sails tomorrow?"

"He doesn't leave here till noon."

"He wouldn't know where you were, anyhow."

"Not unless Mr. Reagan or somebody told him."

"Mr. Reagan won't know, either. He's going to New York for a week with Eric and Mrs. Burgess."

"I'm sure I don't care," sighed Marty.

"If you really want to go to Pond Beach I guess we might as well go there as anywhere else."

So half an hour later Marty and Miss Perkins sat in the train at the station, waiting for it to start. The bell on the locomotive was just beginning to ring when Marty thought she heard the sound of a familiar horn approaching down the street, and looking out of the open window she saw Eric's machine rolling up to the curb. He jumped out, and although Marty knew he was looking for her she pretended not to notice him, but leaned over to Miss Perkins, who was sitting in the seat in front.

"Don't look," she whispered. "He's here."

By that time the train was beginning to move out, and Eric's eyes swept the line of open windows until he saw Marty. He ran forward then—she still pretending not

to see him—and rapped on the window sill.

Marty turned her head, gave him a frigid little bow and turned her back again.

"I've just come from Judge Allison's," he said, walking along with the moving train. Marty paid no attention. "I'd get on," he said, walking faster, "but they've taken the steps up." She paid no attention. "Good-bye, Marty," he said, "if I don't see you again this time. Good-bye."

She looked at him, then, although she wouldn't speak, looked at him as though she were a deep-sea diver and he were a wayside pool, looked at him as though he were a strange young man who was engaged to the richest girl in Newport; and, though his last wondering glance nearly softened her decision, she proudly turned her head away and didn't look again.

"No, sir," she thought, trying hard to keep back her tears. "They may have broken my mother's heart, but they won't break mine!"

XXIII

WHERE THE TREASURE IS

SURELY in the search for the Kingdom of Heart's Desire no one ever made a stranger excursion than Marty's visit to Newport. She had arrived in a race with a tempest, and she was leaving in a race with her tears. She had broken into a stately mansion which she thought belonged to her grandmother; and now that she found that she owned it herself, she was running away from it as fast as she could and never wanted to see it again. She had gone in poor and happy, filled with visions and dreams; and she was coming out disillusioned, disenchanted—and rich.

"No, sir," she told herself with resolution, "they may have broken my mother's

heart, but they shan't break mine. I'll get away while there's time!"

So, with greater resolution than ever, she fixed her woebegone features into something which faintly resembled a smile. "There," she thought, "I feel better already. I'm just not going to think about it any more." And turning brightly to Miss Perkins, she said: "What time did you say we arrive at Pond Beach, Fanny?"

They arrived there at half past five and found Miss Perkins' married sister installed in a comfortable boarding house not far from the beach. Marty liked her the moment she saw her—liked her gentle voice and straightforward gaze and the smiling, cheerful patience with which she attended to the wants of her four children. One of these, a girl named Fanny, immediately attached herself to Miss Perkins; and it didn't take long, somehow, for Marty

to feel that she was quite out of it, "like an outcast and an interloper," as Aunt Emma used to say.

"They all seem to have some one but me," she thought. "Oh, well, perhaps some day I shall have some one too."

She smiled at one of the children, but he hid his face in his mother's lap. She looked up in a friendly manner at a girl of her own age who was passing by on the porch, but the girl only stared and walked on. She went into the office and looked around at the guests who were waiting for the dining-room door to open, but no one spoke to her.

"I—I think I'll go upstairs," she said to the clerk. "Will you give me my key, please?"

"Dinner will be ready in five minutes," he announced, looking over her head as he handed her the key. "No, Mrs. Hagan, the mail hasn't come yet."

Dinner! The mere sound of the word seemed to choke Marty as she made her way upstairs. Arrived in her room she threw herself across the foot of the bed. All afternoon she had been running a race with her tears. They had caught her at last.

But everything comes to an end—even tears. Her sobs began to come farther and farther apart, as though they were barriers placed to stop her grief. "Now," you could almost imagine yourself saying, "I'll bet this one will stop her." But though it required an effort, Marty sobbed once more. "Now, I'll bet *this* one will stop her." And it did.

"Ah-h-h!" she sighed with relief, and sat up on the bed. "I'm glad Fanny didn't come up and catch me, although I guess she'll know as soon as she sees my face."

Indeed, she approached the mirror with

a feeling not far from fear, half expecting to see a deeply lined face staring back at her, cheeks furrowed with tears, and looking sad and worn before its time. "No," she thought, with another sigh of relief, "it doesn't show—much. I'll have a good wash, and dress myself, and I don't believe that any one will ever know the difference."

And yet if you had been there I think you would have noticed some slight measure of difference between Marty of Green Mountain and Marty of Pond Beach, a difference hard to analyse, but showing itself in a deeper glance of the eye and perhaps a somewhat slower tendency to smile. Before, her glance had danced around like a butterfly in a flower garden; but now the butterfly seemed to be thinking: "I wonder if it's safe to taste this flower." Before she had smiled as easily and naturally as a robin hops over a lawn; but now the

robin seemed to be thinking: "I wonder if there's a cat behind that bush."

Opposite her at the dinner table sat a young man with an earnest look and his hair in a pompadour. He passed Marty the bread, saying: "Pardon me, but may I help you to this?" She thanked him with surprise, and, though she didn't need any, she took a piece to be polite.

Presently he passed her the butter, saying: "Pardon me, but won't you have some butter?" There was something so earnest in his manner that Marty took some butter; but when dinner was over, and he said, "Pardon me, but would you care to take a turn on the boardwalk?" the robin didn't hop so easily, but seemed to be thinking, "I wonder if there's a cat behind this bush!"

"Still," she thought, "it will keep me from thinking. I guess I might as well."

He was a nice young man; no other

words will express it half so well; "assistant bookkeeper for Peck & McWilliams, the well-known contractors of Norwich"; and in the week that followed he gave Marty much to think about—although, alas, it was nearly always to his disadvantage. His conversation, his manner, his laugh, his walk, his manners—unconsciously she compared them all with Eric's. For though she told herself over and over that she had banished Eric from her thoughts, she greatly resembled a little Miss Partington banishing the tides with her broom. "Swish, . . . swish, . . . swish . . . went the broom along the shore, but the tides came rolling in.

Did a ship sail along the horizon? She thought of Eric on the *Fortuna*, braving the perils of the deep. Did a gull fly up from the water? She thought of Eric in his "bus" that time the "woolly bears" nearly caught him. And whenever she

saw a uniform, or heard any one speak about the war, or listened to the band playing patriotic airs, the tides of thought came rolling past her and left her alone with Eric, dancing on the veranda, the moon above, a rosebud in her hair.

"Poor Eric," she thought one morning as she brushed her hair. "After all, it wasn't his fault—altogether." From which, when I add that she smiled at herself in the glass, you can guess whether the earnest young man with the pompadour was making any progress.

Miss Perkins had gone down first that morning; and when Marty joined her at the breakfast table, Miss Perkins pulled her chair out for her (which was unusual) and patted her shoulder (which was more unusual still) and, glancing around the table when she thought Marty wasn't looking, she quickly placed her finger on her lip as though to say: "Now, children,

please be quiet!" (Which was, of course, the most unusual of all.)

"What's the matter?" asked Marty, catching sight of this expressive pantomime.

For a moment there was silence.

"It's nothing—nothing," said Miss Perkins hastily. "Eat your breakfast, dear."

That word "dear" from the prim Miss Perkins was the finishing touch. Marty looked across at the young man with the pompadour. "What is it, Will?" she quietly asked. "I know you'll tell me."

"It's a troopship," he said, accepting the bribe, at the same time avoiding Miss Perkins' glare. "They've sunk it."

"The *Fortuna?*" quietly asked Marty again.

"Yes."

"Were there—any saved?"

"About forty, I think." He reached

around to the back of his chair to the newspaper which he had hidden there, and Marty held out her hand for it.

Yes, there it was in black letters that reached across the page, and down below in a small box were the names of the survivors, alphabetically arranged. It needed only a glance to tell her that Eric's name was not among them.

"I think I'll go upstairs," she whispered to Miss Perkins.

They arose together . . . and together they went up to their room. . . .

It was nearly an hour later when Miss Perkins came down, pale and precise, to find when the next train left for home. There was one at half past ten. Miss Perkins had a talk with her sister and went upstairs again.

Marty was still sitting at the window, her cheeks like white, wet marble, looking out over the sea. . . .

XXIV

THE END OF THE CRUISE

AS long as she lives, Marty will never forget her journey on the train going home from Pond Beach, after she had heard of the sinking of the *Fortuna*. "If I had only said good-bye!"

That was the thought which kept echoing in her mind as the train rolled on toward Plainfield. The telegraph wires alongside seemed to hum it, the telegraph poles to punctuate it, the car wheels to hammer it out as they passed over the rail plates: "If I had only said good-bye! If I had only said good-bye!"

They reached Plainfield at five o'clock, and Deacon Briggs took them home in his livery car.

"I'll make a good cup of tea as soon as we get home," said Miss Perkins. "I bought a cake at Kingsley's."

Marty drank the tea in a dispirited way, and went outside as soon as she could. "How beautiful everything is!" she thought, looking out over the valley and down on the fields below, sewed together with their grey granite stitches, and then idly watching a figure hurrying down the hill. Her mind went out to the Pillars with its formal lawns and gardens. "It's all right for those who like it," she thought. "If Eric was there, of course it would be different. But to go and live there by myself? Oh, I never, never could!"

She was thinking how sadly, how reproachfully he had looked at her at the station, when suddenly Miss Perkins' voice broke into her thoughts.

"I've just been writing a line to Mr. Reagan," Miss Perkins was calling out

through the open window, "telling him that he can go around to Judge Allison's and send the car home any time now." From which you can see that Miss Perkins was losing no time.

"She wouldn't feel so much like writing," thought Marty, "if she felt like I do. Still, it'll be good to see Shep and Tinker again." So aloud she called back: "I wonder when they'll send it." Miss Perkins, still at the window, tried to look as though she had never thought of that. "Oh, some time next week, I suppose," she primly replied.

The next morning after breakfast Marty was out mowing the lawn, and Miss Perkins was tying the roses to the trellis on each side of the front door. On the window ledge was her letter to Mr. James Reagan—quite a thick letter when you remember that she was simply telling him that he could send the car home any time

now. As Miss Perkins worked among the roses, she occasionally glanced down at the road in the valley, watching for the rural free delivery wagon.

"I think it's coming," she said at last.

Far down below, a moving vehicle could just be seen on the distant road.

"It's coming too fast for the mail," said Marty.

Now a strange car on a country road in our part of New England is an event comparable only to a firemen's parade in a small town or a pageant in a large city. So both Marty and Miss Perkins stood motionless watching its rapid advance. Although it was still more than a mile away, there was something strangely familiar in the way in which it rolled over the roads, ploughing along like a little ship following a winding channel, and leaving a long, grey wake behind it to mark its course.

"Fanny!" gasped Marty; but, checking

the thought, she hastily added: "But no; it can't be that."

"Yes! . . . No! . . . Yes!" cried Miss Perkins. "Marty! It's the Ark!"

By that time the approaching car had reached the foot of Green Mountain, and there they lost sight of it as it began to ascend the rise. With a squeak of excitement Miss Perkins ran inside, her hands already at the fastenings of her waist as she disappeared through the door.

"She thinks it's Mr. Reagan," thought Marty, standing her ground; and, knowing that it would be a minute at least before the Ark would loom up over the top of the hill, she calmly continued to mow the lawn.

Presently the roof of the car could be seen over the brow of the hill. "How did they know we were home?" wondered Marty, a new thought striking her.

Before she could find herself an answer,

the wind shield came into view, and she could just make out the massive countenance of Mr. Reagan at the wheel. By that time the Ark was on level ground, and on it came, rolling grandly forward like a good little boat and a stanch little boat, which knows the value of its cargo and is glad to get it into port at last.

"He's got somebody with him," was Marty's next thought. "I wonder who it is. Why. . . . It looks. . . . It looks. . . . It looks like. . . . *Oh, and it is!*"

At the end of this crescendo the Ark stopped, not five yards away from her, with a satisfied creak of its brakes which seemed to say: "You see what I've brought you!"

And first of all out stepped Mr. Reagan —then out sprang Shep—and last of all—do you think you can guess?—yes, out jumped Eric—it was Uncle Eric—and walked right over to Marty!

For a moment Marty simply stood there, staring at him. It was one of those moments which are sometimes worth years, and her heart beat like a little drum might beat in the Kingdom of Heart's Desire, when the garrison is called out to stand at attention while the king and queen walk in.

"Oh, Eric," she cried then, "I thought—I thought you were drowned!"

"And probably would have been," he gravely answered, "if it hadn't been for you."

By that time Mr. James Reagan was gazing around with an inquisitive look which seemed to say: "Where is she?" Through the open windows of the house Marty heard a bureau drawer being rattled open.

"If it hadn't been for me?" asked Marty. "Why, Eric, what do you mean?"

"When you went away like that, and wouldn't speak," he said, "I thought perhaps you had an idea that I was trying to keep you out of your legacy so that some day I would have it for myself. And of course I didn't like to go away and leave you feeling like that."

"Oh, Eric, I never, never did! It wasn't that at all!"

"So I went to see Judge Allison," he continued, "and, after a lot of telephoning, he had my furlough extended to give me a chance to find out. From the very first night I saw you, Marty, I was on your side. Do you remember Judge Allison asking you to go and see him if you ever found yourself in trouble? You do? Well, let me tell you something: It was I who asked the judge to tell you that."

"Eric!" breathed Marty, her eyes shining.

"For the last week," he went on in the

same grave voice, "I've been trying to find you. I've been up here so often that the neighbours know me, but the house was always closed. So finally I left a man on guard and told him to stay here till you came back, and then to send me a wire just as quickly as he could get to the nearest telegraph office."

"I thought I saw somebody yesterday, just after we came," nodded Marty breathlessly, "running down the hill."

"As soon as I got his wire, Jimmy and I started right out with your car. And here we are. For don't you see, Marty, I simply had to tell you this? Because if I had gone without telling you, perhaps I should never see you again, and all your life you might have thought that I was a schemer."

"Eric, don't!" she pleaded. "I don't like to hear you say it. It wasn't that at all."

They looked at each other, almost with

tragic faces, so desperate was the desire of each to break down the barriers of misunderstanding which had arisen between them. But in a world where laughter and tears are generally found not far apart—and often hand in hand—it is hard to keep a tragic face for long.

At that moment, for instance, Miss Perkins came sauntering out of the front door—oh, quite by accident!—and, as luck would have it, she was wearing her prettiest house dress and her hair was fluffed out in a most attractive manner. In her hand she was carrying a pair of grass shears, as though to clip the grass along the paths when Marty had finished mowing, and you can imagine her surprise when she saw Marty's visitor!

Of course she had to be told about Eric's miraculous escape; and, after she had congratulated him, she happened to turn her head, and there stood Mr. Reagan!

"You here too?" she exclaimed in a tone which seemed to say: "Will wonders never cease?"

"I certainly am!" promptly acknowledged the beaming Mr. Reagan.

Marty and Eric smiled at each other, but then Eric's face grew serious again. "I have a letter here from my mother," he said. "Would you care to read it now?"

She led the way to a seat which Uncle Ebau had built around one of the elms, and there she opened the letter. It ran:

My dear Martha: I trust you will forgive an old woman who can offer no other excuse than her love for her son. You saved him from going on the *Fortuna*, for which I shall pray God to bless you as long as I live.

Your mother and I had our differences, in which I was often wrong. Can you forgive me for that too? Some day, perhaps, before it's too late, you will write me a line and tell me so.

I have told Judge Allison that I shall not contest your claim in any way. The Pillars, of course, belongs to you—and much besides.

I am leaving this week for California, where I hope to see you sometime.

With every good wish for your future happiness
I am Yours sincerely,

CONSTANCE BURGESS.

Marty looked out over the valley—green, gold and brown—and the fields seemed to blur together like a piece of watered silk. But soon her vision cleared, and then she saw that Eric was looking at her.

"Well?" he asked with one of his whimsical smiles, "shall you say good-bye this time when I go?"

"Oh, Eric, don't!" said Marty. She had almost said, "Don't go," but caught herself in time. "Don't!" she said. "It wasn't that at all which made me act the way I did—that afternoon."

"I do not wish to be unduly inquisitive," he said in his old manner as he

glanced up into the tree; "but, as one of the interested parties, if there is a little bird up there, I wish it would whistle a few sweet bars and tell me why my niece refused to speak to me that afternoon."

Even then, of course, Marty couldn't tell him directly. After a moment's thought she let him have it at a tangent.

"Now that I'm rich," she said, "I'm going to buy you the nicest wedding present, Eric."

"What for?" he asked, astonished beyond measure at the informaiton which the little bird was bringing him.

"For your wedding of course."

"My wedding with whom, pray tell?"

"With that girl who danced with you last—the richest girl in Newport, Judge Allison said. Miss Spencer; isn't that her name?"

"But didn't you know that she jilted

me?" asked Eric; "jilted me the very same night that you saw me dancing with her?"

"Jilted you?" laughed Marty, as though this indeed were splendid news. "Oh, Eric! Why?"

"For one thing," he smiled, "she seemed to think I was paying too much attention to a certain little niece of mine. Of course there were probably many other reasons, but I don't happen to remember them just now."

Again laughter and tears walked hand in hand and danced before her eyes. Not that she let him see it, though. Indeed, she turned her head, and that is when she saw the strange behaviour of Miss Perkins' feet.

Miss Perkins and Mr. Reagan had gone behind the Ark, and Marty could only see their feet, which stood facing each other, very close together. Then Miss Perkins gently raised herself upon the tips of her

toes and a pair of grass shears fell unheeded to the ground. . . .

"Let's go and look at the garden; shall we?" asked Marty, hastily rising.

They passed through the gateway.

"Of course it isn't like the Pillars," she said; "but I love old-fashioned flowers."

"So do I," said Eric in the same low, almost tremulous voice; "better than any other flowers that grow."

They looked at each other, and something seemed to tell them both that they had come to an hour which would stay in their memories as long as they had breath of life.

"Marty," he whispered.

"Yes?"

"Do you know—dear child—that I love you?"

"Eric!"

He held out his arms and she found her place within them, knowing full well that

her Search was over, that here at last, even where the Quest had started, she had entered into the Kingdom of Heart's Desire.

THE END