ARLO BATES

# PATTY'S PERVERSITIES

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# Содержание

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## CHAPTER I
## MORNING

"There is one thing sure," mused Patty Sanford, newly awakened by the sun's rays which streamed through her honeysuckle-draped casement; "there is one thing sure, – I shall go to the picnic with whom I like: else why should I go at all? To-day they will come to invite me. Burleigh will come, of course; but it is easy to get rid of him. Then Clarence Toxteth is sure to ask me. How it piques the girls to see me behind his span! Clarence's span is so nice! It is a pity he isn't – I mean I wish I liked him better. But he isn't always saying horrid things, like Tom Putnam. I wonder if Tom will ask me. I do so hope he will, so I can snub him. I'm sure," she continued to herself, in her energy raising herself upon her dimpled elbow, – "I'm sure I don't know anybody who needs snubbing more than he. If he only would come after Clarence has invited me, that would be fun. He'd manage to come out superior, though, in some way. He always does; and that's the worst of him – or the best, I'm not quite certain which. There! Will would say I was 'moonier than

the moon.' – Flossy, Floss!"

"Yes," answered a sleepy voice from the next chamber.

"Are you awake?"

"Well," the voice replied with great deliberation, "not as much as some."

"You'd better be, then. There are oceans of things to see to to-day."

At that moment was heard from below the voice of Mrs. Sanford, calling her daughter; and Patty hastily began her toilet for the early breakfast, already being prepared below by Bathalina Clemens, the maid of all work.

The company assembled around the breakfast-table consisted, in addition to Patty, of her father and mother, her brother Will, and a cousin rejoicing in the euphonious title of Flossy Plant.

Dr. Sanford was a tall, thin-faced gentleman, with deep, kindly eyes, and slightly-stooping shoulders. He would have been hen-pecked, but for the fact that he was so fully aware of his wife's peculiarities as to be able to guard himself against them. He smiled at her vagaries and gallinaceous ways with a quiet, inward sense of humor.

"Your aunt is a very amusing woman," he once said to Flossy Plant; and, indeed, it was sometimes difficult for the whole family not to regard Mrs. Sanford as a species of private Punch and Judy intended for their especial entertainment.

This morning the worthy lady was discussing the church picnic, to take place the following day.

"I think," she said impressively, "that picnics are chiefly bugs and critters; but I suppose it is a duty folks owe to religion to go."

"And to ride there with the gentlemen," put in Flossy, seeing the twinkle in her uncle's eye.

"But the buggies are so terrible narrow nowadays," Mrs. Sanford continued, the breadth of her figure giving point to the remark, "that one is squeezed to death. The last time I rode in one I dreamed, the next night, that I was a postage-stamp on a letter; and, of course, that couldn't be a lucky dream."

"Oh, the narrow buggies are the beauty of it!" Flossy retorted: "it brings you and the gentlemen so close and cosey, you know."

"Flossy Plant!" exclaimed Bathalina Clemens, who was bringing in a fresh supply of griddle-cakes, and felt called upon, as she frequently did, to "bear testimony." "Flossy Plant, that is positively indelicate."

"Bathalina Clemens," returned Flossy serenely, "you don't know the very first principles of indelicacy."

In the general laugh that greeted this sally Mrs. Sanford did not join.

"I don't know what you mean," she said; "but I'm sure it isn't proper. Besides," she continued, "I have a foreboding in my mind. I put my left shoe on my right foot this morning, and I doubt something will happen: besides, I know strangers are coming, for my nose itches; and Bathalina dropped the dish-cloth last night; and a fork stuck up straight in the floor this morning."

"I am glad of that," Patty said lightly. "The more people that

come to-day, the better Floss and I shall be pleased, if they come to invite us to the picnic."

"Flossy," interrupted Mrs. Sanford, "you have spilled your salt. Throw a pinch over your left shoulder quick. It is strange how careless folks can be; just the day before a picnic too. – And then," she rambled on, "there's the cooking. Patty, you'll have to make the cake, and do all the millinery of the cooking: you ought to have picked over the raisins before breakfast."

"If I do any thing before breakfast," Flossy said, "I have to have my breakfast first."

"So do I," Patty laughed; "but I can make up for lost time afterward."

# CHAPTER II
# "A BIRD IN THE BUSH."

It was while Patty was engaged in doing "the millinery of the cooking," that her first swain arrived. Social etiquette in Montfield was not rigid, and Patty was not at all surprised when the shadow of Burleigh Blood's broad shoulders fell upon the kitchen-floor, and that enamoured youth entered without the formality of knocking.

"Good-morning, Burleigh," she said, her eyes bright with the spark of merriment which always kindled when Mr. Blood appeared. "Can't shake hands with you without getting you all covered with flour."

"I shouldn't mind that much," he answered awkwardly.

"Sit down, please," she said. "I'm just done with these puffs. Isn't it a lovely day?"

"It is good growing weather for the corn."

"And for you," she laughed. "You get bigger and bigger every day."

"Do I?" he said disconsolately, looking from his big hand to the one she was wiping on the long snowy roller. "I am too big now."

"Nonsense – not for a man! I like to see a man big and strong."

"Do you, though, really," he said, a glow of delight spreading

over his honest features. "I – I'm glad of it."

"Come into the other room," Patty said, leading the way: "it's cooler there. – Bathalina, don't let those puffs burn."

The windows of the sitting-room were open, and the blinds unclosed; but so thickly was the piazza overhung with honeysuckle and woodbine, that a cool shade filled the apartment. It was unoccupied, save by Pettitoes, the cat, who had curled himself up luxuriously in Mrs. Sanford's work-basket. Mr. Blood stumbled over a chair or two before he found his way safely into a seat, and then sat, flushed and uncomfortable, trying to make up his mind to do the errand upon which he had come. Patty, who knew perfectly well the state of her guest's mind, played carelessly with Pettitoes, making casual remarks, to which Burleigh replied in monosyllables.

"I hope it will be as good weather as this for the picnic," she said at length. "Of course, you are going?"

"Yes, I thought I should; that is, I may."

"Oh, you must! We are sure to have a splendid time. Everybody is going. I wouldn't miss it for any thing."

"Then you are going?" he asked.

"Of course. I am always ready for a lark," she answered. "And I know you'll go."

"It depends," said he, "whether I can get any one to go with me."

"Of course you can. There are lots of girls would be delighted. There's Emily Purdy, or Dessie Farnum. You know you can get

some one."

"But I mean one particular one," he said, blushing at his own temerity.

"Oh! you mean Flossy," Patty exclaimed, her eyes dancing. "I'm sure she'll be delighted. I'll ask her myself for you this minute. You are so bashful, Burleigh, that you'd never get along in this world, if I didn't help you."

"Wait, Patty," the unfortunate Burleigh began; but his voice stuck in his throat. For days he had been summoning his courage to invite Miss Sanford to ride with him to the picnic; and now it failed him in his extremity. To add to his confusion, his eye at that moment caught sight of a rival advancing from the front-gate towards the cottage in the person of Clarence Toxteth, only child of the richest man in Montfield. A sudden burning sensation seized young Blood at the sight. He was ready to pour out his heart and his passion in the moment that remained to him. But what is love in the heart, albeit never so burning, when the tongue refuses its office? A flippant rogue without a soul may defeat the most deeply loyal silent one, and never a word could Burleigh utter. He was conscious, as if in a dream, that the bell rang, and that Mr. Toxteth, in all the glory of a light summer suit and kid gloves, was ushered into the room. He unconsciously glowered at the new-comer in a way that made it difficult for Patty to preserve her gravity. The entrance of Mrs. Sanford restored him to himself somewhat. He always felt more comfortable for her bustling, homely presence.

"How do you do, Burleigh?" the worthy lady said. "How do you do, Mr. Toxteth? I knew we should see strangers to-day. You remember, Patty, I said so at breakfast. Bathalina dropped the dish-cloth, and then a fork that stood up in the floor, and I never knew either of those signs to fail. You must be the dish-cloth, Burleigh, and you are the fork, Mr. Toxteth. I always think the dish-cloth don't mean as much of a stranger as the fork does."

Mrs. Sanford had a never-ending procession of signs and omens. "The wisest aunt" could scarcely have extracted more mystical lore from everyday occurrences to other observers the most commonplace. Every thing with her was lucky or unlucky, related to the past, or foretold the future; and the wisdom she extracted from dreams was little less than miraculous.

What Dr. Sanford was accustomed to term "the religious ceremonies of a call," – the remarks upon health and the weather, – having been duly accomplished, Mr. Toxteth proceeded directly to the point.

"I called," he said, while Mrs. Sanford was asking his rival about the prospects of the crops, "to beg the honor of your company to-morrow at the picnic."

"How kind of you!" Patty answered with an appearance of sweet frankness; the inward struggle which had been going on ever since his entrance being suddenly decided against him. "I am very sorry, if you will be disappointed; but, you see, Burleigh came before you."

She spoke so softly that her mother did not hear; yet the

words reached the ears of her earlier caller, and filled him with triumphant joy. For Patty herself, she was not quite able to understand her own act. She had beforehand fully determined to accept the invitation to ride behind the Toxteth span, should she be favored with it; and she certainly had even now no intention of going with Burleigh Blood. It was partly due, no doubt, to the fact that the dandified air of the young fop offended her honest taste; but she was uncomfortably conscious that there was a stronger reason underlying all others. She had said to herself that it would be charming to reject an invitation from Mr. Putnam after having promised to accompany Clarence Toxteth. Now she had refused the latter upon the mere chance that the former would come. She would gladly have recalled the words, and given a different answer to the rich young swell, with his elegant clothes, and a turnout which was the admiration of all the girls in Montfield. But there was now no help for it; and with a sigh she saw the form of her rich suitor disappear down the walk, and turned to the task in hand. She knew Burleigh had overheard her refusal to Clarence; and, as soon as the latter was gone, she said lightly, "I knew you wouldn't mind my making you an excuse to put him off; and, besides, mother was here, and wouldn't have liked it if I had refused him outright. Here comes Flossy. It is very kind of you to ask her; for she really knows so few people here."

Flossy Plant was a little maiden much afflicted by dyspepsia, and given to making odd remarks. Her father was a Boston merchant, noted for his dinners; and Flossy always maintained

that his high living caused her ill-health.

"I am like that text of Scripture," she declared: "'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, – or drank their juice, – and the child's stomach is set on edge.' I don't mind the dyspepsia so much, but oh! think of the good things father has eaten to give it to me."

Her physician had ordered the constant use of pop-corn; and Flossy was accustomed to wander about the house at all times of day and night with a large blue bowl of that dry and aggravating edible tucked comfortably under her arm. Her hair, fine and flaxen, was generally in a state aptly enough described by her name; so that it was not without reason that Will Sanford compared her to a thistle-puff.

"I thought I would wait," Flossy said, as she came into the sitting-room, "until Clarence Toxteth went away. He always looks so soft and juicy that I want to eat him, and it makes me dreadfully hungry to look at him."

Burleigh laughed; but this little pale creature was a mystery to him, and her dryly-uttered drolleries not wholly devoid of a sibylline character, it being a profound wonder to him how one could have such thoughts.

"I don't think he'd be good to eat," he said grimly; "but I guess he'd be soft enough."

"Did he come to invite you to the picnic, Patty?" Flossy asked, munching at her pop-corn.

"What would you give to know?" laughed her cousin. "But Mr. Blood has come to invite you, at least: so you are provided for."

In such a situation what was a bashful man to do, particularly if, like Burleigh, he was not sure that he was offended at the turn affairs had taken? Patty was an old friend, indeed, in Montfield parlance a "flame" of the young man's; yet certainly the stranger cousin exercised over him a peculiar fascination. He left the house as the promised escort of Miss Plant, and went home, wondering whether Patty did not know he came to invite her, and whether he were glad or sorry things had turned out as they had.

The long sunny day wore on, and no third invitation came for Patty. She kept her own counsel so completely that the family thought she had accepted young Toxteth's escort, – an impression which she took pains not to dissipate. But, although outwardly gay, she grew more and more heavy-hearted as the day passed with no sign of Mr. Putnam.

# CHAPTER III
# "A BIRD IN THE HAND."

The day of the picnic dawned as fair and sweet as if made for a pure girl's wedding, or a children's holiday.

The gathering was to take place at Mackerel Cove, a little bay jutting inward, amid lovely groves of beech-trees, from a larger inlet of the Atlantic. A drive of a dozen miles stretched between the cove and Montfield; the picnickers taking their own time for starting, and speed in going, the rendezvous being at the hour fixed for dinner.

Patty saw the family depart one by one. First Will went to call for Ease Apthorpe, the lady-elect of his heart or fancy; then Dr. Sanford drove off with his wife, intending to visit certain patients on the way; and, last of all, Flossy was swung lightly up into his buggy by the mighty arms of Burleigh Blood.

"Don't you mean to go at all?" the latter asked of Patty, who came running after them with Flossy's bowl of pop-corn.

"I never tell my plans," she laughed gayly. "Mother went off predicting that something dreadful was sure to happen. How do you know but I am afraid to go?"

"Pooh! She's going with Clarence Toxteth," Flossy said.

"But" – began her escort.

"There! Drive on, and don't bother about me," said Patty. "I

have usually been thought able to take care of my own affairs. A pleasant ride to you."

She turned back toward the lonely house. Bathalina Clemens was at work somewhere in the chambers, counteracting any tendency to too great cheerfulness which the beauty of the day might develop in her mind, by singing the most doleful of minors: —

> "'Hearken, ye sprightly, and attend, ye vain ones;
> Pause in your mirth, adversity consider;
> Learn from a friend's pen sentimental, painful
> Death-bed reflections,'"

she sang, with fearful inflections and quavers. Patty's face fell. A feeling of angry disappointment came over her. This picnic was an event in Montfield. What to the belle of the season would be the loss of its most brilliant ball was this privation to Patty. This is a relative world, wherein the magnitude of an object depends upon the position of the eye which observes it; and for the time being the picnic filled the whole field of mental vision of the young people of the village. Nor did it tend to lessen the girl's annoyance that the fault was her own, although she resolutely persisted in thinking that she thought herself not at all responsible, but had transferred the entire blame upon the shoulders of the cavalier who should have invited her, and had not. She wandered restlessly through the house and garden, at last seating herself upon the piazza with a book, upon which she

vainly attempted to fix her attention. From above came the voice of Bathalina chanting, —

"'Shun my example!'"

"'Shun your example!'" muttered Patty to herself. "I shall shun my own hereafter. I might have known that poky old Tom Putnam wouldn't ask me. It is too mean that I should have to stay at home! He might at least have given me a chance to refuse him, and then I should have known what to count on. He is so intensely aggravating. I don't doubt he took Flora Sturtevant. I've no patience with a man that will let himself be trapped by a flirt like her."

And at that moment, raising her eyes, she saw the object of her animadversions – a tall, slender man of two or three and thirty – coming up the walk. He seemed surprised to find her at home.

"Good-morning," Mr. Putnam said, in a voice which few persons heard with indifference, so rich and pleasing it was. "I supposed you had gone to the picnic."

"You see I haven't."

It required no great penetration to see that Patty was out of spirits. The new-comer looked at her keenly.

"Thank you, I will sit down for a moment," he said, as if she had invited him to do so. "These steps are very comfortable. Don't trouble to get me a chair."

"I had not the faintest intention of doing so," she returned.

"Why have you not gone?" he asked, looking up at her curiously from his seat upon the piazza-steps.

"I chose to stay at home," she answered shortly.

"Conclusive, but impossible. A better reason, please?"

"I do not know that it can make any difference to you why I stay at home."

"But it does, however ignorant you may be on that point."

"Why should it?"

"You have not answered me," he said; "but I will be generous, and tell you why. I was coming yesterday to invite you myself, and heard that you were going with Burleigh Blood."

"Did you?" she asked, brightening visibly. "That was a lie I told, or rather a lie I didn't tell. How did you hear of it?"

"I heard Clarence Toxteth say so. Is your list of questions much longer?"

"If Bathalina doesn't stop singing such hymns," Patty said irrelevantly, "I know I shall murder her sooner or later."

"I would," he answered, looking at his watch. "I came for a book of your father's; but it is no matter to-day. I will have the horse at the gate in fifteen minutes. Can you be ready so soon?"

"Who said I'd go?" she laughed, springing up.

"Who asked you to?" he retorted.

"But I will, if only to plague you," she said.

"Don't feel obliged to," he replied, starting down the walk. "It really won't annoy me enough to make it worth your trouble."

Patty darted into the house, and up to her chamber, like a

swallow. Unconsciously she caught up Bathalina's strain.

> "'Sudden and awful, from the height of pleasure,
> By pain and sickness thrown upon a down-bed,'"

she carolled; and for once the hymn put on a garb of mocking gayety.

"Patience Sanford!" solemnly ejaculated the pious maid-servant, putting her head in at the chamber-door. "It's tempting Providence to sing that hymn that way. No good'll come of it, you may depend."

"Nonsense, Bath! I could dance to the hymns of the cherubim!"

And into the garden she flew to pin a bunch of clove-pinks at her belt.

"Do you know how solemn you looked," Putnam asked as they drove along the smooth road, between unfenced fields green with the starting aftermath, "when I found you on the piazza? Were you thinking of your sins?"

"No: of those of my neighbors."

"Of omission, or commission?" he asked, looking at her closely.

"Both," she returned, flushing a little. "I was lonesome, of course. You wouldn't like to stay at home alone all day."

"On the contrary," he said, "there are few things I like better. It is strange how a woman is never good company for herself.

She can never keep still and think, but must always be rattling away to somebody."

"You think so because you don't know."

"My observation has not been very extensive, perhaps; but it has been all in one direction. Men are content enough to be alone."

"It is all the conceit of the men," she retorted. "You all fancy you are never in so good company as when alone."

"Unless we are favored by some one of your sex."

"Nonsense! You don't think so. What a man finds to say to himself, I cannot imagine; unless, indeed, his mind is one grand vacuum."

"The wisdom of a man's reflections must always be beyond a woman's comprehension," he returned. "Some men have made great mistakes by forgetting this."

"Then, of course, you'll never marry," Patty ventured. "You wouldn't want a companion who couldn't understand you."

"Oh! I may join 'the noble army of martyrs,'" he answered in the same bantering tone he had been using. "Every man will be ruled by some women; and with a wife his resistance would be a trifle less restrained, you see."

"I have heard it said," she answered, "that, as love increased, good manners decreased; but I never made such an application of it."

"Of course," he began, "having a legal mind, I regard a wife as a piece of personal property, and" —

"There!" she interrupted. "It is perfectly maddening to hear you talk in that way about women. I hate it."

"I'm sure I don't mean any disrespect," he answered soberly. "I should have married long ago, had I been able."

"Whom would you have married?" she demanded. "You speak as if you had only to make your selection, and any girl would be glad of the chance to take you."

"That is because I think so highly of the penetration of your sex," he retorted, with a return to his light manner; adding, with some bitterness, "but, when a man is as poor as a church mouse, he can have as little thought of marrying, and being given in marriage, as the angels in heaven."

"Don't be profane. You have your profession."

"Oh! I earn enough to keep soul and body together, if I don't do too much for either. But this is not a cheerful subject, even if it were in good taste for me to be complaining of poverty. Did you know my nephews came last night?"

"Yes; and I am so glad! It is always pleasant to have Hazard Breck here. Of course, they'll be at the picnic."

"Yes. Frank, you know, has graduated, and Hazard is a junior. It is two years since I have seen them."

"They probably feel ten years older. We are to have company too. Grandmother is coming."

With such discourse they rolled over the country road towards Mackerel Cove. Under the gay surface of the conversation was a sting for Patty in the lawyer's allusion to his poverty. He was

usually very reticent about his affairs; and it may have been for that reason that the gossips of Montfield called him "close." "He's close-mouthed and he's close-fisted," Mrs. Brown was accustomed to say; "and most generally the things go together."

To Patty's thinking few faults could be worse. To an open-handed Sanford, avarice was the most disgusting of vices; and this fatal defect in her companion was like the feet of clay of the image of gold.

# CHAPTER IV
# THE PICNIC

Seated upon a stone which happened to be clean enough for even her exacting taste, Mrs. Sanford was conversing with Mrs. Brown, a frowsy lady whose house-keeping was a perennial source of offence to her order-loving neighbor. Mrs. Brown was a miracle of tardiness, – the last-comer at every gathering, the last guest to depart. Indeed, so fixed were her friends in the habit of expecting her to be behindhand, that she could have chosen no surer method of throwing into confusion any plan wherein she was concerned than by appearing for once on time; which, to do her justice, she never did. "She is so slow," Will Sanford once said, "that she always looks solemn at a wedding, because the grief of the last funeral has just got into her face. Her smiles appear by the time another funeral comes."

On the present occasion Mrs. Brown had reached Mackerel Cove just as preparations for dinner were being completed. Mrs. Sanford, who had been superintending the making of the coffee, had seated her plump person upon the stone mentioned to rest and get cool, when the late-comer appeared. Mrs. Brown sank languidly upon the fallen trunk of a tree.

"I didn't know as I should ever get here," she said. "My girl's gone mad."

"Gone mad!" ejaculated the doctor's wife. "I knew something dreadful would happen when you found that silver dollar, and kept it: that's always unlucky. Is she really mad? You don't mean Selina?"

"No, not Selina, but the hired girl. She must be mad. She poked all my hair-pins down a crack in the floor. Selina thinks she did it to plague me; but I know she's crazy."

"I declare! The trouble you have with your girls beats every thing I ever heard of. I should think you'd rather do the work yourself than have them about."

"Oh! I must have a girl to shirk things on to," said Mrs. Brown.

"Shirk!" exclaimed Mrs. Sanford. "Lawful sakes! I don't have time to shirk. If I hadn't so much to do, I might find time to plan and contrive to get rid of half my work; but now" —

The words died upon her lips as she caught sight of a buggy coming along the shady wood-road. In it sat her daughter Patty, chatting happily with Tom Putnam. The sight filled her with amazement little mixed with pleasure. The lawyer might be a man after her husband's heart; but he was not after hers. He constantly said things she could not understand; he oppressed her as might an unguessed conundrum; and, moreover, he was a dozen years older than her daughter. Clarence Toxteth filled the measure of Mrs. Sanford's requirements when she considered her daughter's matrimonial prospects, which, thrifty housewife that she was, was not seldom. The young man was rich, good-looking, trimly dressed; and Mrs. Sanford appreciated to the full

the advantages of the possession of money. The worthy lady was not without a deeply-seated suspicion that Patty, in the depth of her heart, preferred the lawyer to his more pretentious rival. The girl was like her father, and looked at things in a way wholly unaccountable to her mother, who saw only the other side of the shield. To-day Mrs. Sanford had been at ease in her mind, believing Toxteth to have been the chosen escort. She chanced to be out of the way when he arrived at the picnic-ground, and supposed her daughter to be about somewhere. What, then, was her dismay to perceive her driving up with Mr. Putnam, as boldly and gayly as if she had never deceived her family!

"Is dinner ready, mother?" called the transgressor lightly, as they drove up. "I am as hungry as three polar bears."

"Good-morning, Mrs. Sanford!" the lawyer said. "There is a delightful smell in the air, as if you had been making coffee."

"So I have," she returned, a little mollified by the compliment implied. "You are just in time: they are blowing the horn now."

And indeed, through the beautiful beech-woods rang the shrill cry of a tin dinner-horn blown by lusty lungs. It sounded harsh enough in the sylvan spaces; but not Pan himself could have piped more enchantingly into the ears of the hungry country people scattered about in the grove. The young folk came flocking towards the spot where table-cloths, spread upon the mossy ground, were heaped with that profusion of cake and other sweetmeats, and scarcity of any thing eatable, by which a picnic-dinner is usually characterized. A pleasant chattering and bustle

followed, while the company seated themselves around upon stones, stumps, moss-covered roots, or the green turf itself. Harmless practical jokes were played, clumsy attempts at wit laughed over, clever ruses employed by people who wished their being together to have the appearance of the merest accident; and amid the chatter, the laughter, and the rattle of crockery, the feast began.

Mrs. Sanford had pressed Mr. Putnam into her service to pour the coffee, knowing of old that he was steady-handed and quick-witted, and feeling not unwilling, moreover, to draw him away from Patty's side. That young lady, being thus left to her own devices, curled herself up in a soft mossy nook, between two huge beech-roots, the tree-trunk behind her.

"I have a crow to pluck with you," the voice of Clarence Toxteth said at her elbow.

"Oh, let's not pluck a crow!" she answered, without turning her head. "It isn't pleasant; and nobody feels any better for it."

"But why did you tell me you were coming with Mr. Blood?"

"I beg your pardon," she said, laughing, and turning to flash her dark eyes upon him. "I only said he came before you to ask me, and so he did. You gave up too easily. I knew by that, that you didn't really care whether I came with you or not."

"Care? I did care. I thought you had promised him: so I brought Miss Purdy, and you know I can't endure her."

"I am sure she ought to be obliged to you."

"Well, there was nobody else."

"Was that the reason you came for me?" Patty said saucily. "Flossy, what are you wandering about so for?"

"I am seeking what I may devour," Flossy answered, seating herself at her cousin's feet. "But I do not find it. I'd like a square chunk out of the side of a cow or a chicken. The sight of these deserts of cake makes me sick."

"Make up your mind what you really would like," Clarence said, "and I'll order it of the wood-nymphs. What will you have first, – turtle-soup?"

"Oh, dear, no!" Flossy answered. "I like to know what I am eating, and turtle-soup is all green fat and things. I'll eat a little pop-corn, if you please. So saying I gayly munch and munch like an educated mooly cow. Patty, where did you pick up Mr. Putnam?"

"Nowhere. He came after me."

"You didn't put him off with an evasive answer," Toxteth said in her ear.

"He didn't ask me," she retorted. "He only told me he was coming to take me."

"You girls like to be bullied," the young man muttered crossly.

"Mercy sakes!" cried the shrill voice of Mrs. Brown, behind the tree at whose roots they were seated. "I thought I heard dishes rattling; but I didn't think dinner'd begun."

"Not only begun, but finished," Patty cried, springing up. "Let's go down to the beach, Flossy."

# CHAPTER V
# A MISHAP

Mackerel Cove was surrounded by high banks, the path from the grove above being very steep and difficult. A rude hand-rail had been nailed to the trees to assist the visitor in descending; but the feat was still any thing but an easy one.

As Flossy and her cousin, with young Toxteth following, took the path through the grove to the top of the embankment, they fell in with several of their friends going in the same direction.

Clarence saw, to his intense annoyance, Mr. Putnam take his place at Patty's side; while he himself was forced to drop into step with Miss Purdy. The etiquette of Montfield was rather primitive, and demanded that a gentleman should bestow his attentions exclusively upon the lady whose escort he was for the time being. A picnic was a gathering of couples, not a homogeneous mixture of friends; and the young people trooped along in pairs, with a prim and decorous consciousness of doing the proper thing.

Miss Flora Sturtevant, however, was above any such rustic etiquette. Miss Sturtevant, like Flossy, was a Boston girl; and although at home there stretched between them that fathomless abyss which is supposed to divide the South End from the sacred precincts of the West End, they met on a common footing at

Montfield; and Miss Plant was too good-humored to show the superiority which her residence might give her reason to feel. Flora was a cousin of Mrs. Brown, who had passed several summers in Montfield, pecuniary reasons having forbidden those excursions to more expensive resorts for which her heart yearned. She was rather stylish, and her pursuit of Mr. Putnam was scarcely disguised. She was several years his senior; but nature, having fashioned her face so that she had never looked young, now apportioned to her some compensation by preserving her from looking old. On the present occasion she hovered about the lawyer, asking his help at every obstacle, and so managing, that, when they came to the edge of the embankment, Patty, who had been gathering the red clusters of the bunch-berry and the silvery blossoms of the "wild everlasting," was a few steps behind. Mr. Putnam turned to the latter, and held out his hand.

"O Mr. Putnam!" Flora cried, stepping into the narrow descending path, "do hold me! Oh, I shall fall! I shall fall!"

She clutched his arm, and dragged him forward so violently, that it was with difficulty he retained his foothold, supporting as he did the entire weight of Miss Sturtevant. He caught at the rail with so sudden a wrench, that it was started from its fastenings. He was able, however, to get the young lady to the bottom unhurt, although they rushed down the path in a way scarcely dignified, nearly overturning Burleigh Blood and Flossy, who had just descended. Patty was less fortunate. She had stepped forward, and extended her hand to take that of her escort, only to

see that gentleman seized, and whirled down the precipitous way like an unfortunate sinner in the clutch of fiends, as portrayed in the frescos of the old masters. Thrown from her balance, she sought the hand-rail; but, already loosened, it gave way, and she plunged headlong. Fortunately Putnam had time to turn before she reached him, half falling, half running; and he caught her in his arms.

"What a performance!" she exclaimed, laughing and breathless. "I came down like a falling star. I beg your pardon."

She extricated herself from the arms of the lawyer, and planted her feet on the shingle, beginning to smooth her dress. Suddenly she gave a smothered scream, and for the first time in her life fainted dead away, falling back again into the arms of her escort. She had sprained her ankle badly, but in the excitement had not noticed the mishap, until her weight was thrown upon the injured limb.

"And then and there was hurrying to and fro." Patty's cry was re-enforced by a shriek loud, shrill, and long, from Miss Sturtevant, who, with no apparent provocation, threw her arms about the lawyer's neck, and went into violent hysterics.

"For Heaven's sake, Burleigh," Mr. Putnam cried angrily, "take that girl off! – Spread out that shawl, please, Miss Plant. – Bring some water, Will."

Miss Flora's hysterics were not so violent as to need any stronger restorative than the lawyer's words, and she left him unhampered. Under the kindly offices of her friends, Patty soon

opened her eyes, and sat up upon the shawls which had been hastily spread for her.

"Oh, what a goose I am!" she cried, as the situation dawned upon her. "I never fainted in my life before; but my ankle hurt terribly."

Dr. Sanford was soon on the spot, and proceeded to put a compress upon the injured limb; the girls standing about in a protecting circle. Mrs. Sanford stood upon the bank above, unable to descend, but showering down pathetic remarks.

"I knew something would happen," she said. "I had a foreboding in my mind when I put my left foot on my right shoe – no, I mean my right foot on my left shoe. That isn't what I mean, either. But I told Charles then I doubted something would happen to this picnic. – Does it pain you much, Patty? I can't get down without breaking my neck, and that wouldn't do you any good. – Do you think she's lamed for life, Charles?"

"Father," Patty said, forcing a smile, "I am really very comfortable now, and don't need you: so you can climb up, and quiet mother."

Patty now arranged herself picturesquely upon a pile of shawls as on a divan, and held an impromptu levee. Flora Sturtevant persisted in going down upon her knees, and with a flood of tears begging forgiveness for having caused the accident.

"Don't be a goose, Miss Sturtevant!" the other laughed. "It was my own fault – or it isn't anybody's fault. There is salt water enough here now: so don't shed any more tears."

Patty was a leader among the girls of Montfield; and now they served her like a queen. They brought her various rustic treasures, – red checkerberries, long wreaths of ground-pine, the white, waxy Indian-pipes, and mosses from the grove or from the water. Burleigh Blood sat for half an hour breaking open live mussels; and when at last a pearl rewarded his persistence, he brought it to her as proudly as if it had been already set in a betrothal ring. Dessie Farnum and Emily Purdy came, dragging between them a crooked tree-root, washed ashore by the waves, which was pronounced just the thing for the back of a rustic chair; and Clarence Toxteth undertook that the chair should be manufactured accordingly.

The afternoon sped on happily and brightly. The salt breeze always inspired Tom Putnam; and he was the life of the party. Older than most of them, and passing for a taciturn man, because he talked with few people, the lawyer had yet a vivid fancy, a quick wit, and a dry humor, which made him a charming companion to those who shared his friendship. The day, the lovely scene, the sea-air, the presence of the girl he worshipped, and her escape from a fall which might have been so much more serious, all tended to render him joyous; and his gladness overflowed to all the company.

Not all the picnickers, however, remained with Patty. Frank Breck wanted to talk with Ease Apthorpe; and Flora Sturtevant longed for the society of Mr. Putnam. Being unable to compass their desires, the two were forced to look to each other for

consolation, and went strolling among the rocks in an aimless fashion. Flora had known Frank too well to waste upon him those coquetries which she lavished upon his uncle. They had been neighbors in their young days, and had at various times been useful to each other: they had reached a period of intimacy where many of the fictions which disguise the true purposes of conversation were between them laid aside, although it is doubtful if they were the more honest in consequence.

The two strolled for some distance in comparative silence. Flora stopped at length by a rock which the waves had fashioned into the rude likeness of a seat; and here she seated herself with a deft adjustment of the blue draperies of her yachting dress. "She gets herself up well," her companion mused. "She certainly doesn't look a day older than she did five years ago."

"Frank," the lady said, breaking the silence, "wasn't it the Samoset and Brookfield stock that Montfield people lost so heavily on?"

"Yes," he answered, dropping upon the shingle. "Uncle Tom has a small fortune in the bonds, if they were worth any thing. Half the people in town got bitten on it."

"Then I suppose the bonds could be bought for a song."

"No doubt. Why? Are you going into railroad speculation?"

"I may," she said thoughtfully, looking out over the sea, and letting the quiet of the afternoon envelop them a moment. "If" – She watched a white sail disappear over the horizon's rim, before she completed her sentence. "If I only had a hold over uncle

Jacob, I'd make my fortune; but I haven't."

"How?" Breck asked.

"Never mind, I haven't, so *n'importe*. If there's an opening, I'll tell you. What was it you had to tell me, by the way?"

"I want help," he answered; "but I don't see how you can help me. You have had some clever ideas, though, before now."

"Thanks!" she returned, turning the rings upon her white fingers. "Say on."

"It is about that Smithers woman."

"Who is she?"

"Nonsense! Don't bother to pretend you don't know, Flora. You can't expect me to be honest, unless you are."

"Well," Miss Sturtevant smiled, "let us assume that I do know who the Smithers woman is. An old friend of your father, if I remember correctly."

"Bother!" he said impatiently. "Why do you tease so to-day? Do you want me to relate all the details of her disreputable relations with my father?"

"Oh, no! Nothing disreputable," Flora exclaimed with a deprecatory gesture of her small hands. "But what about her now?"

"You've heard how madly fond of her old Mullen became in his last days?"

"Yes: it was as romantic as it was improper."

"Mullen put into her hands papers which related to my father's affairs, and I want them."

"It is strange how that woman held both your father and Mr. Mullen," Miss Sturtevant said reflectively. "I should like to see her."

She seemed to become more and more indifferent as the conversation proceeded; while, in reality, reasons of which Breck could know nothing, made her intensely interested.

"She is at Samoset," Frank said. "You may see her any day."

"And she has these papers?" Flora asked.

"No, she has not."

"Who has?"

"Will you help me get them?"

"If I can, of course I will."

"I'll make it worth your while," he said, taking out his tablets.

He leaned towards her, and wrote a name before her eyes, as if he feared to speak what some unseen listener might overhear. Then, in answer to her puzzled look, he added an explanatory word or two.

The afternoon sun was declining swiftly when the party prepared to leave the beautiful cove. Many of the elder people had gone, Mrs. Sanford among them, the worthy dame having first come to the top of the bank, and poured out a flood of directions to her daughter, to all of which, an impartial historian is compelled to add, Patty gave not the slightest heed.

A rope had been fastened to a tree standing near the head of the path leading up the embankment, and supplied the place of the broken rail. When Patty was ready, a discussion arose how

she should be got up the steep. Putnam cut it short by taking her, blushing as a modest maiden should, in his arms, and climbing up with her, she assisting by clinging to the rope.

"You are something of a load," he said, puffing as they reached the top.

"I shall be as heavy as mother some day, I don't doubt," she replied demurely; "but it isn't grateful of you to speak of it, when I pulled you up by the rope."

"You are not the first lady who has pulled a man up by a rope," he replied, tucking her into the carriage with great tenderness; "but they generally do it by means of the hangman."

# CHAPTER VI
# CHIT-CHAT

Three carriages followed in succession the homeward road; the first contained Patty and Putnam; the second Clarence Toxteth and Miss Purdy; the third, Burleigh Blood and Flossy.

Young Blood found himself unexpectedly at his ease with his companion. The awe he felt for her as a stranger, and because of her quaint speech, had largely worn away. Still he regarded her rather doubtfully, as one looks at something dangerous to handle. Her tiny figure, her quick, nervous motions, reminded him constantly of a humming-bird, and he had a fearful if vague sense of the danger of crushing her by the mere force of his huge presence. The great honest fellow, almost a giant, could have taken her up with one hand, his gentlest movements seeming overpoweringly forcible when exerted in behalf of his *petite* companion; and of this he was unpleasantly conscious.

Burleigh had known Patty Sanford from childhood in the way that everybody in Montfield knew everybody else. They had been companions at school, where Burleigh was only one of a dozen who believed themselves ready to lay down their lives for the doctor's daughter, or – a far greater proof of devotion – to share with her their last apple, or handful of chestnuts. It is true that the social status of the Bloods, so far as such distinctions were

marked in Montfield, was below that of the Sanfords; and Miss Mullen of Mullen House, the aristocrat of the village, wondered that Patty could associate with everybody as she did. But Patty, while secretly proud enough of her family, was democratic at least in the treatment of her admirers; and young Blood found as warm a welcome at the doctor's cottage as did Clarence Toxteth. With Patty, Burleigh was less shy than with any girl of his acquaintance, and yet was far from being at his ease, even in her presence. With her cousin, whom he had known only a few weeks, he was at first painfully diffident. Her manner so completely ignored this shyness, however, that it was gradually wearing away.

"I do hope Patty's ankle isn't hurt so that she can't take her part in the theatricals," Flossy said as they rode along.

"Dr. Sanford thought," he returned, "that is, he said, she'd be all right in a week or so, if she'd keep still."

"She never did keep still," answered Flossy. "But I'll do my best to make her now. Did you ever play in amateur theatricals?"

"I? Oh, no! of course not."

"There's no of course about it; only of course you'll play now. This bashful man, you know, is just your part."

"This bashful man?" he repeated doubtfully.

"Oh, yes! In this play, you know. Patty and I both say you'll do it capitally."

In despite of her assurance that he knew, Burleigh was painfully conscious that he did not; and, indeed, her way of

designating every thing as "this, you know," or "that other, you know," was sufficiently confusing.

"I have had such fun in theatricals!" Flossy ran on, not noticing his puzzled expression. "We played 'Trying It On,' one Christmas, and I was Mr. Tittlebat. I was so nervous, that I repeated stage-directions and all. And such a time as I had to get a man's suit small enough!"

Her companion involuntarily glanced from his own figure to the tiny maiden by his side. She understood the look, and burst into a gay laugh.

"Oh, dear! I should have been lost in your clothes," she cried. He blushed as red as the big clover she had pinned in his buttonhole, and modestly cast down his eyes.

"In that other, you know," she chattered on, "they wanted me to take the part of Jane. That was after I had been Mr. Tittlebat, and I felt insulted."

"Insulted? Why, because it wasn't a man's part?"

"Oh, dear, no! I don't like to act men's parts. But I hunted and hunted and hunted, and it was forever before I could find it; and then this was all it was. [*Enter* Jane.] Mrs. Brown. – Jane, bring my bonnet. [*Exit* Jane.] [*Enter* Jane.] Mrs. Brown. – That will do, Jane. [*Exit* Jane.] Of course I wouldn't take it."

"What was there insulting in that?" asked Burleigh, to whom the brevity of the part would have been a strong recommendation.

"Why, in the first place I couldn't find it; and then, when I did,

it was only 'Exit Jane.' You wouldn't want to exit all the time, would you? I wouldn't 'exit Jane' for 'em."

"Well," he answered, laughing at her emphatic speech; "it is just as anybody feels: but I think I'd rather 'exit' than any thing else."

"Did you ever see 'Ruy Blas'?" Flossy asked. "You ought to see that. All the ladies cry; or at least they all take out their handkerchiefs: this man is so cruel, you know. And it's lovely where she says, – she's the queen, you know, – 'Ruy Blas, I pity, I forgive, and I love you!' Oh, it's too lovely for any thing."

"Is that the place where the ladies all take out their handkerchiefs?"

"No, that isn't the time *I* cry."

"Why not?" Burleigh asked, his bashfulness forgotten. "Because you have shed all your tears?"

"Oh, no!" she answered. "But I never cry until the music strikes up."

In the carriage before Burleigh's, theatrical matters were also the subject of conversation.

"Of course, Patty can't take her part now," said Emily Purdy.

"Then we shall have to put off our play until she can," Clarence replied, somewhat to the discontent of his companion, who wished to be asked to take the part assigned to Patty.

A theatrical entertainment was to be given for the benefit of the Unitarian Church; that edifice being, so to speak, decidedly out at the elbows; and the young people of the society were all

much interested.

"Of course," Miss Purdy said rather spitefully, "every thing must be put off for her. She needn't have been flirting with Mr. Putnam. I wonder if she is engaged to him."

Clarence should have been wise enough to let this pass unanswered; but his annoyance got the better of his prudence. He found it hard to forgive Patty's rejection of his invitation to the picnic; and before he thought he blurted out what he would instantly have been glad to recall.

"Of course not. She told me she thought him an old miser."

"Did she?" his companion cried, her eyes sparkling maliciously. "I didn't think she'd abuse a person behind his back, and then accept his invitations. If you only knew what she said about you!"

But Toxteth, in spite of the slip he had made, was a gentleman, and couldn't be brought to ask what Patty had said about him; so that, as Miss Purdy hardly thought it best to offer the information unsolicited, he remained forever in ignorance of the careless remark about his foppishness, which would have been envenomed by the tongue of the mischief-maker who longed to repeat it.

"I ought not to have told what Patty Sanford said," he remarked. "She didn't mean it. Indeed, I am not sure but I said it, and she only assented. Of course it should never have been repeated. I beg you'll forget it."

"I never forget any thing," laughed Emily; "but I never should

mention what was told me in confidence."

In the first carriage of the three, the lawyer and his companion rode for some time in silence. Each was endeavoring to imagine the thoughts of the other, and each at the same time carrying on an earnest train of reflections. With people in love, silence is often no less eloquent than speech, and perhaps is more often truly interpreted.

Mr. Putnam was the first to speak.

"You are twenty-one," he said, with no apparent connection.

"I am twenty-one," she answered, not failing to remark that the words showed that his thoughts had been of her.

"A girl at twenty-one," he continued, "is old enough to know her own mind."

"This girl at twenty-one certainly knows her own mind."

"Humph! I suppose so – or thinks she does."

Another long silence followed, more intense than before. Both were conscious of a secret excitement, – an electric condition of the mental atmosphere. At last Putnam, as if the question of ages was of the most vital interest, spoke again.

"I am thirty-two," he said.

"You are thirty-two," she echoed.

"Do you think that so old?"

"That depends" —

"Well, too old for marrying, say?"

"That depends too," she answered, her color heightening, in spite of her determination not to look conscious.

"To marry," he continued, "say, – for the sake of example merely, – say a girl of twenty-one. You ought to know what a lady of twenty-one would think."

"I know a great deal that I should never think of telling."

"But I am in earnest. You see this is an important question."

"You had better ask the lady herself."

"*The* lady? I said *a* lady. Besides, as I said this morning (pardon my repeating it), 'the little god of love won't turn the spit – spit – spit.'"

"Of course you are not too old," Patty said with a sudden flash of the eyes, "to marry a girl of twenty – if she would accept you."

"I said twenty-one," he returned; "but the difference isn't material. You've evaded the question. What I want to get at is, wouldn't she think I was too old to accept?"

"Not if she loved you."

"But if she didn't?"

"Why, then she wouldn't marry you, if you were young as Hazard, as big as Burleigh, and as gorgeously arrayed as Clarence Toxteth. You had best not let any woman know, however, that you think her love meaner than your own."

"I do not understand."

"A woman, if she loved a man at all, would find it hard to forgive him for believing her unwilling to share his bitter things as well as his sweet."

"Um! But suppose he thought it selfish to ask her to share the bitter things?"

"That is like a man!" Patty said impatiently. "But what nonsense we are talking! Won't it be funny to hear Bathalina condole with me? She'll quote 'Watts and Select' by the quantity, and sing the most doleful minors about the house to cheer me up. For every one of mother's signs she'll have a verse of Scripture, or a hymn."

"There is as much variety in love," Mr. Putnam said, returning to the subject they had been discussing, "there is as much variety in love as in candy."

"And as much difference in taste," she retorted. "For my part, I should hate a love that was half chalk or flour. But I don't wish to talk of love. I hope my friends will come and see me, now I am lame, or I shall die of loneliness."

"I'll send the Breck boys over," the lawyer said. "Hazard is very good company."

"Of course their uncle," she said demurely, "would come to look after them."

"Perhaps," he replied. "But who would look after their uncle?"

# CHAPTER VII
# A BUSINESS INTERVIEW

Whatever else Flora Sturtevant might or might not be, she at least was energetic, and what she had to do she did at once and with her might. Although she returned from the picnic at Mackerel Cove very weary, she did not rest until she had written a dainty missive to Jacob Wentworth, the brother of her late step-father. The answer came on the evening of the following day in this telegram: —

"Will be in Boston Saturday. Come to office at twelve.

"Jacob Wentworth."

It was to meet this appointment that Miss Sturtevant passed leisurely down Milk Street about noon Saturday. The signal-ball upon the Equitable Building fell just as she passed the Old South Church; but she seemed not disposed to quicken her steps.

"Uncle Jacob will be cross if he has to wait; but I think I like him best a little cross. I wonder how he'll act. I must make my cards tell: I never shall hold a better hand, and the stake is worth playing for. How tremendously hot it is! How do people live in the city in August! Next summer I'll be at the seashore, if this goes through all straight. I shall be independent of everybody then."

Musing in this agreeable fashion, Miss Flora turned the corner

of Congress Street, and walked on until she entered one of those noble buildings which have sprung up since the great fire, making Boston's business streets among the finest in the world. Miss Sturtevant adjusted her dress a little in the elevator, looked to the buttons of her gloves, and glanced over her general trigness, as might an admiral about to go into action. An inward smile softened her lips without disturbing their firmness, as she entered an office upon the glass of whose door was inscribed her uncle's name.

"Good-morning, uncle Jacob," she said brightly.

A white-haired man, with small, shrewd eyes which twinkled beneath bushy brows, looked up from the letter he was writing. His forehead was high and retreating, his nose suggestive of good dinners; and his whole bearing had that firmness only obtained by the use as a tonic of the elixir of gold. Flora had been from childhood forbidden to address him as uncle, and he understood at once that she felt sure of her ground to-day, or she would not have ventured upon the term. The lawyer paused almost perceptibly before he answered her salutation.

"Good-morning," he said. "Sit down."

"Thanks," answered the visitor, leisurely seating herself. "This office is so much nicer than your old one! I hope you are well, uncle."

"I am well enough," he returned gruffly. "What is this wonderful business which brings you to Boston?"

"You know I always do you a good turn when I can," remarked

Miss Sturtevant by way of introduction.

"Yes," he assented. "You find it pays."

"You may or may not remember," she went on with great deliberation, "that you once requested me to discover for you – or for a client, you said – what became of certain papers which you drew up for Mr. Mullen of Montfield."

"I remember," the other said, his eyes twinkling more than ever.

"I had hard work enough," Flora continued, "to trace them as far as I did, and little gratitude I got for my pains."

"You did not discover where the papers were?"

"I found that they had been in the possession of Mrs. Smithers."

"Her name," Mr. Wentworth remarked, pressing softly together the tips of his plump fingers, "is not Mrs. Smithers. She never married. It is best to be exact."

"Miss Clemens, then," said Flora. "I know now where those papers are."

"You do?" the old lawyer cried, at last showing some excitement. "Where are they?"

"That is my secret," she answered, with the faintest smile, and a nod of her head. "When is that directors' meeting?"

"Next Tuesday," replied Mr. Wentworth.

He knew his interlocutor well enough to allow her to take her own way in the conversation, fully aware that she would not idly turn from the subject in hand.

"And you then decide whether to buy the Samoset and Brookfield Branch?"

"Yes," he said. "Do you object to telling me how you discovered that?"

"I have my living to earn," she answered, smiling, "and it is necessary that I keep my eyes and ears open. Could you promise me, if you chose, that the decision should be to buy the Samoset and Brookfield Branch?"

"If I chose, I dare say I could," the lawyer affirmed. "My own vote, and others upon which I can count, will turn the scale."

"Very well. Do you accept my terms?"

"By George!" exclaimed Wentworth, slapping his palm upon his knee. "What a long head you have, Flora! You are like your mother, and she was a devilish smart woman, or she wouldn't have married my brother."

"It would have been to my advantage," Flora said, "if she had taken him for her first husband, instead of her second. Those precious half-sisters of mine would hardly hold their heads so high now, if she had. But do you agree?"

"If I understand," he said, "you offer me your information for my vote."

"For your assurance," she corrected, "that the vote is affirmative."

"What is your game?" demanded the old man. "What assurance have I that your information is correct?"

"Only my word," she said coolly. "I will tell you the name of

the person having those papers, and where that person is to be found, the day I have proof that the affirmative vote is passed. You do as you like about accepting my terms."

It is needless to narrate further the conversation between the two: suffice it to say that Miss Flora was in the end triumphant. The wily lawyer determined to find his own account in the purposed vote, by the immediate purchase of Samoset and Brookfield Railroad stocks. One question Miss Sturtevant asked before she left the office.

"Had these papers any relation to Mr. Breck or his property?" she asked.

"No," Mr. Wentworth answered, evidently surprised. "What put that into your head?"

"Nothing," she said. "Good-morning."

And the enterprising woman, going to the bank, drew every dollar she could raise, and then hastened to catch the afternoon train to Montfield.

"Frank Breck," she said to herself, as she rolled along, "you are hardly a match for me, after all."

Within the next few days Miss Flora was very busy. She astonished the business-men of Samoset, a village half a dozen miles west of Montfield, by going about, purchasing the old Samoset and Brookfield stock, which everybody knew to be worthless, and which was to be had for a song. The lady was full of a thousand affectations and kittenish wiles in her leisure hours; but, when attending to business, she showed the hard,

shrewd nature which lay beneath this soft exterior. She drove sharp bargains, and when, at last, the vote of the directors of the great Brookfield Valley Railroad to purchase the Branch became known, Miss Sturtevant's name was in every mouth, not always uncoupled with curses. Many a man and woman whose all had been sunk in the Branch found it hard to forgive this woman for the advantage she had taken; and she was accused of a sharpness not to be clearly distinguished from dishonesty; for country people see stock operations in a light very different from that of Wall Street. That Flora was not without consideration for the property of others, however, is proved by the following note, which she wrote the Sunday after her interview with Mr. Wentworth: —

> Dear Mr. Putnam, – My interest in your welfare is too deep for me to stop to consider how you will regard my writing you. I heard in Boston yesterday, that the stock of the Samoset and Brookfield is likely to increase in value very soon. I tell you this *in strictest confidence*, as I have heard it intimated that you own some of the stock.
>
> *Very sincerely yours,*
> *Flora Sturtevant.*

# CHAPTER VIII
# ON THE PIAZZA

The life of Bathalina Clemens was one long wail in the past-potential tense. "I might have been" was the refrain of all her days.

"I might ha' been Peter Mixon's wife, if my sinful pride hadn't a made me high-minded," she said continually. "How'd I know he'd give up so easily, 'cause I said I wouldn't let him lick the ground I walked on?"

The nasal melancholy of camp-meeting minors floated after her angular form like the bitter odor from wormwood or tansy. She reproved the levity of those about her with an inner satisfaction at having "borne testimony;" and particularly did she labor with Patty, whose high spirits were a continual thorn to Bathalina.

"It's so like the Amorites and the Hittites and Hivites," she groaned, "to be always singing and laughing and dancing about! How'll you feel when you come to your latter end? Would you dance on your dying-bed?"

"Probably not," Patty answered, laughing more than ever; "but I can't tell."

The spraining of Patty's ankle seemed to Bathalina a direct visitation of Providence in reproof for her vain merry-making.

"I knew some judgment would happen to you," the servant said. "'My sinfulness has been visited upon me.' If you'd only live as you'll wish you had when you come to stand around your dying-bed!"

"Bathalina," Patty said sedately, "I am glad you mention it. I intend to behave until my ankle gets better; and I wanted to ask you if you'd mind taking my place in the theatricals we are getting up."

"You may mock now," retorted Bathalina wrathfully; "but at the last you'll bite like an adder, and sting like a serpent. – Mrs. Sanford, I came to tell you that I am going this afternoon to the funeral of my cousin Sam's first wife's child."

"Is she dead?" asked Mrs. Sanford. "I hadn't heard of it; though, now, I remember I did hear a dog howl night before last."

"I suppose she's dead," the servant answered; "because, when I was over there Saturday, Jane said to me, says she, 'We sha'n't churn till after Emma dies.' And she wouldn't ha' said that if she warn't a-goin' to die soon. And, as that family always has their funerals Wednesday, I thought I better go over."

"But to-night is bread night," Mrs. Sanford objected; while Patty sank back in convulsions of laughter.

"Well'm, I'll mix it up early to-morrow morning."

"No," the housewife said decidedly; "none of your bread raised by daylight in my house. I'll see to it myself to-night. Grandmother Sanford is coming to-day; and she knows what good bread is, if anybody does."

"Mother," Patty asked, as the door closed behind Bathalina, "do you suppose Bath is as crazy as she seems? She talks like a perfect idiot."

"Well," her mother answered meditatively, "sometimes I think that perhaps maybe she isn't; and then, again, I don't know but after all I can't tell but she is."

Later in the forenoon Patty lay upon a light willow lounge which Will had placed for her on the piazza. It was a lovely summer's day. The bees hummed drowsily among the flowers, and Patty had drifted halfway from waking into sleeping. Through an opening in the vines which shaded the piazza, she watched the clouds moving slowly through the far, still spaces of blue ether, one shape insensibly changing into another as they passed.

The girl was thinking of nothing higher or greater than her suitors, perhaps having meditated sufficiently upon graver subjects in the days since her accident, now making almost a week. She was not counting her conquests; yet she had a pleasant consciousness of her power, and recalled with satisfaction the compliments bestowed upon her in words or attentions. The two nephews of Mr. Putnam, Frank and Hazard Breck, had the previous afternoon called upon her; and the younger was of old a devoted worshipper at her shrine. Hazard Breck was a fine, manly fellow a year Patty's junior. He believed himself madly in love with her; and indeed, in the fashion of pure-minded youth, he felt for her that maiden passion which is light and sweetness

without the heat and wholesome bitter of a man's love.

As Patty lay watching the clouds, and enjoying the colors brought out by the sunlight as it filtered through the leafy screen, she heard the latch of the gate click. Without turning her head, she tried to guess whose step it was coming up the gravel-walk, and rightly concluded it must be that of Hazard Breck. He crossed the piazza, and came to her side.

"Good-morning," he said, in a tone having something of the richness of his uncle's voice. "Are you asleep, or awake?"

"Asleep," she answered, closing her eyes. "Isn't it a delicious morning to sleep and dream?"

"What do you dream?"

"That you have good news to tell."

"You are no witch to guess that. You knew it from my voice."

"What is it?"

"Now I can torment you," he said, "as you did me last night. Guess."

"One never guesses in sleep."

"Dream it, then."

"I should dream that the sky had fallen, and you had caught larks."

"No, I haven't, worse luck. But you'll never get it."

"Then tell me."

"It is about uncle Tom," he said after some further bantering. "He's had a windfall. The Samoset and Brookfield stock has gone up like a rocket, and made his fortune. Isn't that jolly!"

"I know nothing about stocks," she answered; "but I'm glad he's made his fortune."

"I'm just wild over it!" Hazard said. "It is so opportune!"

"Did he need it so much, then?" Patty asked, with a secret consciousness that she was pumping her guest.

"Uncle Tom is so generous!" Breck answered.

"He has not usually had that reputation," she returned, dropping the words slowly, one by one.

"I know," he said indignantly. "Of course I've no right to tell it, because he has always insisted that I should not. But I'd like you, at least, to know, and it can't do any harm to tell you now. He has supported not only aunt Pamela, but Frank and me; and of course, with two of us in college, it has been a hard pull on him."

"But I should think," she began, "that" —

"That we wouldn't have let him?" Hazard said as she hesitated. "I wonder – I've always wondered that we did. But he insisted, and said we could pay him back when we got our professions; and so we shall, of course."

Patty was silent. She was filled with self-reproach for having misjudged the lawyer. Why, from all her suitors, her heart had chosen this elderly-looking man, his hair already threaded with gray, she could have told as little as any one else. Love as a rule is so illogical, that it is strange the ancients did not give the little god the female sex; though it is true they approximated toward it by representing him eternally blindfold. Something in Patty had instinctively recognized the innate nobility of Mr. Putnam's

character, hidden beneath a somewhat cold exterior. Against the fascination which his personality exercised over her, she struggled as a strong will always struggles against the dominion of a stronger. She could not easily yield herself up, and often treated the lawyer with less tenderness, or even courtesy, than the rest of her suitors. At the revelations of Hazard, however, she was much softened; and had Tom Putnam been at hand – but he was not; and it is idle to speculate upon chances, albeit the whole world is poised upon an IF, as a rocking-stone upon its pivot.

# CHAPTER IX
# AN ARRIVAL

The silence of the pair upon the piazza was broken by the arrival at the gate of Will, who had been to the station to meet grandmother Sanford. Patty started up as if to run to meet her, but fell back.

"I forget that I am a cripple," she said.

"Mother, how do you do?" exclaimed Mrs. Sanford, appearing in the doorway. "Do come up on to the piazza. I don't want to meet you on the stairs, or I'll have a disappointment."

"Thee art as full of foolish superstitions as ever, daughter Britann," the old lady said, coming slowly up the steps on Will's arm.

"You dear little grandmother!" Patty cried. "How glad I am you've come!"

"I am glad to come," her grandmother answered, "and grieved much to find thee lame. How dost thee do to-day?"

"Oh! I'm nicely. My ankle isn't painful at all. It would have been well if I could have kept still. This is Hazard Breck, grandmother, Mr. Putnam's nephew; you remember him. – And this, Hazard, is the nicest grandmother that ever lived."

"Thee art the nephew of an honest man," the old lady said, "though he is somewhat given to irreverent speech."

"He is the best of uncles, at least," Hazard answered warmly.

"He is a very respectable old gentleman," Mrs. Sanford said patronizingly.

Will laughed meaningly, and glanced at his sister, whose cheeks flushed. Mrs. Sanford's antipathy to the lawyer was no secret.

"Mr. Putnam is the finest man I know," Patty said, a trifle defiantly, "except my father."

"Indeed?" Will said teasingly. "Grandmother," he added, "I think it is all nonsense about Patty's ankle. She only makes believe, so as to have everybody come and see her. She has a regiment of callers about the house all the time."

"Hazard," Patty said, "if mother has no objections, I wish you'd please toss Will into that bed of pinks."

"Objections!" exclaimed Mrs. Sanford. "Of course I've objections. Your own brother and the most thrifty bed of pinks I've got! Patience Sanford, I'm surprised at you!"

"If thee hast no objection, daughter Britann," grandmother Sanford said with her quiet smile, "I'll go in and rest a little."

The old lady was the mother of Dr. Sanford and of Mrs. Plant. She was a woman of strong character, and had adopted the Quaker faith after her marriage, being converted to it by the labors of a woman who had nursed her through a long illness. In her youth, grandmother Sanford had perhaps been somewhat stern, as people of strong wills are apt to be: but age had mellowed her, as it does all sound fruit; and now she was

so beloved by her friends and relatives, that they were ready to quarrel for her society to such a degree, that she declared she lived "on the circuit." She had keen perceptions, a quick sense of the ludicrous, and a kindly heart, which endeared her to all. Even Mrs. Sanford, who was undemonstrative in her affection for everybody else, brightened visibly whenever her mother-in-law came, and showed her pleasure in numerous kindly attentions. As for Patty, she worshipped her grandmother, who understood her as no one else but Dr. Sanford did. It was a peculiarity of the girl's to make few confidences; but to her grandmother she would talk of matters which she mentioned to no one else. Nor was the old lady less proud and fond of her grand-daughter; and the love between them was, as is always love between youth and age, a most beautiful thing to see.

Patty and Hazard Breck were scarcely left alone on the piazza, when a new visitor appeared, in the person of Burleigh Blood. The young man had been to the depot to see about the freight of the products of the dairy-farm which he owned in company with his father, and had chosen to improve his opportunity by calling at the Sanford cottage. At sight of him, young Breck said good-by, and betook himself home by a short cut across the garden, much to Patty's disappointment, as she wished to hear further concerning his uncle's good fortune. She, however, sped the parting, and welcomed the coming guest with a smile; and the young farmer sat bashfully on the steps of the piazza before her.

"How big you are, Burleigh!" she said, glancing admiringly

over his breadth of shoulder and chest, the strong head, and the firm, large hands.

"You told me that the other day," he said ruefully; "but I can't help it."

"Help it? Of course not. What makes you think I meant any thing but praise?"

"I thought I was so big and clumsy, that you must be making fun of me."

"Oh, no! I was only thinking what a mere morsel Flossy looked beside you at the picnic."

He blushed, and pulled at his hat, after his usual awkward fashion; and at that moment, as if summoned by a call-boy for her part in the play, Flossy herself appeared in the doorway, bowl of pop-corn, and all.

"Good-morning, Mr. Blood," she said. "Can you tell why mutton always tastes catty? As if it were cats, I mean."

"I – I never tasted any cats," he said with the utmost earnestness.

"No? Well, I wouldn't. But why didn't you come to inquire how I felt after the picnic? Montfield manners and bonnets both need to be issued in a revised edition."

"Montfield manners are perfect," Patty said, coming to the rescue of the guest. "They cannot be improved. But you remember, Flossy, what you had to ask Burleigh."

"Of course you understand, Mr. Blood," Flossy said, "that a lady's request is a command."

"Yes, certainly."

"Very well. It is this I spoke to you about the other day, you know."

"I don't remember what you mean."

"You are to be my lover in this play."

"What?"

"You don't look over-charmed at the prospect," Flossy remarked coolly. "You ought to feel honored. So saying, I will eat a few kernels of corn. Have some, Patty?"

"But of course I can't act."

"Of course you can. I'll get the book for you now, so you can be studying your part. We don't have rehearsal until next week."

"You are to be Jonathan Cowboy in the play," Flossy continued, having produced the book. "Will is Mr. Bramble, and Ease Apthorpe his daughter. I'm to be Waitstill Eastman. I chose that because she has things to eat."

"Shall you eat pop-corn?" asked Patty.

"Really, I couldn't think of taking a part," Burleigh said.

"Nobody wants you to think of it," Flossy returned placidly. "It is settled that you are to have it. It is a bashful part, and, if you make any mistakes, people will think it is part of the play."

"'Vanity of vanities,'" said the voice of Bathalina Clemens, who had approached unperceived. "'All is vanity.'"

"So are you," Flossy retorted.

"How came you home so soon?" Patty asked. "Didn't they have the funeral?"

"No," the doleful servant answered. "Emma ain't dead: so they had to put it off. Jane concluded to do her churning, after all; but she says she's in hopes to get through the burying by next Wednesday. And I should think she'd want to; for that'll finish up all the first wife's children. It'll naturally give her more time to look after her own."

"Did you ever hear any thing so atrocious!" exclaimed Patty, as the maid-servant disappeared round the corner of the house. "The way she talks about that funeral is more crazy than her usual speeches, and that is certainly needless."

"Don't names," Flossy asked pensively, "always convey a color to your mind, Mr. Blood?"

"Convey a color?"

"Yes. Like Caroline, you know: that always makes me think of pale yellow, and Susan of red, and Mary of blue."

"What nonsense!" laughed her cousin. "What color would Bathalina suggest?"

"That name," said Flossy, "always calls up a grayish, dirty green, like faded linsey-woolsey."

And at that moment the dinner-bell rang.

# CHAPTER X
# A CHANCE MEETING

The Putnam mansion, wherein the lawyer's ancestors had lived and died for several generations, stood next to the cottage of Dr. Sanford; or rather the two places were back to back, each facing one of the two principal of the village streets. To reach either house from the more distant thoroughfare, a short cut was taken across the grounds of the other, right-of-way being conceded by mutual agreement.

People in Montfield retired early; and thus it happened that at ten o'clock of the Friday night following the coming of grandmother Sanford the lights were out in the doctor's cottage, and sleep was supposed to have descended upon all the dwellers therein. Patty had not, however, retired. A thunder-storm was slowly rising out of the west, with golden fringes of lightning about its dark edges; and she sat at her open window to watch its progress. The unusual restraint imposed upon her by her lameness had made her restless; and she longed to steal out of the house, and run races across the orchard as she had done when a child. The sultry closeness of the night made her take a fan, with which she did little but tap impatiently upon the window-ledge. She was not thinking connectedly, but in a vague way unpleasant thoughts and feelings crowded tumultuously through her brain

like the crew of Comus.

Suddenly in the garden below she heard voices. A man was speaking earnestly, but in a tone too low to be audible at the window above. A woman answered him, the pair seeming to discuss something with much emphasis. Her curiosity greatly excited by so unusual a circumstance, Patty leaned out of the window to discover, if possible, who were the speakers.

"Well, it's the Lord's will," she heard the woman's voice say. "And I, for one, ain't a-going to run a muck agin it."

"It is Bathalina!" the listener said to herself. "Who in the world can she be talking to?"

She leaned farther from her window, but by an unlucky movement of her arm sent her fan fluttering down to the gravel walk below. The speakers departed in different directions like phantoms, and Patty was left once again to her own reflections. At first she speculated upon the possible nature of the interview she had interrupted; then her thoughts came back to her fan. It chanced to be one painted by an artist-cousin, and one of which she was fond: a thunder-storm was rapidly approaching, and the fan likely to be ruined. Her ankle was fast recovering, and she was not long in determining to go down into the garden for her property. With the aid of the furniture and the stair-railings she got safely down to the side-door, cautiously unbolted it and slipped out. The fan was only a few steps from the door, but a rolling-stone lay in wait for the lame ankle, and gave it so severe a turn that Patty sank down a miserable heap upon the ground.

She sat there a moment to recover herself, and then crawled back to the door-steps. Seated here, she gazed ruefully at the fan, a white spot upon the dusky walk, and, coddling her aching ankle in her hands, wondered how she was to regain her room.

At that moment brisk steps sounded on the walk, approaching the spot where she sat. A tall form defined itself amid the darkness, pausing before her.

"Good-evening," said the voice of Tom Putnam. "Is it you, Patty?"

"Yes. It is I."

"Would it be polite to ask if you walk in your sleep?"

"I can't walk awake at any rate," she replied, half laughing and half crying, "whatever I may do in my sleep."

"Then, you must have come here for air in your dreams."

"I came after that fan, and I've twisted my foot over again."

He restored the fan, and then seated himself at her feet on the lowest step.

"It is fortunate I took this way home," he said coolly. "I hear that you think I am miserly."

"What?" she exclaimed in surprise.

"I am told that you pronounce me miserly," he repeated. "I am very sorry, for I mean to ask you to be my wife."

Instead of answering this strange declaration, Patty covered her face with her hands and burst into tears. He laid his fingers lightly upon her hair, smoothing it with a caressing motion. Surprise, physical pain, anger, and love were all oddly mingled

in Patty's mind. She knew that she loved this man, and she was bitterly angry with herself for having misjudged him. She was no less angry with him for knowing the latter fact, of which Emily Purdy had taken care that he should not remain ignorant. She had, too, that Amazonian repugnance to the caress of a lover which is often inborn in strong personalities. She shook off the lawyer's touch as if it were fire.

"I misjudged you," she said, by an angry effort controlling her tears, "and I am not too proud to own it. Now forget it."

"Very well," he said, "it is forgotten. But your opinion is every thing to me, for I have loved you these dozen years, Patty. I've watched you growing up, and loved you more and more every year. I've had the words in my mouth a hundred times; but now I am able to marry, and I ask you to be my wife."

However cool these words may seem in black and white, they were intense as Tom Putnam spoke them, his rich voice gathering force as he proceeded. He was moved from that calm which Flossy Plant declared to be an essential law of his existence. The passion he felt was too old, too well defined, to come stammering and broken from his tongue; but his voice trembled, and he bent forward until his hot breath touched her cheek. He did not again attempt to caress her, but she felt that his eyes were fixed upon her with a keenness that could almost pierce the darkness. Still her mood was a defensive one. That she fought against herself no less than against him, only added strength to her determination not to yield.

"You had little faith in the depth of my love," she said at last, after a silence which seemed to both very long, "if you thought I should be afraid of poverty with you."

"Then you do love me!" he exclaimed, in joyous, vibrating tones.

"I did not say so," she retorted quickly. "I was talking of your feelings, not mine."

"I had no right to ask you to share poverty," he said. "I loved you too well to do it."

"That is because you looked only at your own side," she persisted. "If I loved a man, I should be glad if he were poor. I should delight to show him that I loved him better than any thing money would buy. Oh! I should be proud and glad to work for him if I need – and you thought I wouldn't do it!"

He caught her hand, and kissed it passionately.

"You know it is not that," he said. "I never thought any thing of you but that you were the noblest woman I knew; but I was not worth so much hardship – I couldn't bring it on you. But since you love me, I can wait."

"I never said I loved you! I – I don't."

"I know better," said he, springing up; "but let that go. It is beginning to rain, and sentiment must give place to reason. How shall you get into the house?"

"But you must not go away thinking I love you," she said weakly.

"How can you help it?" he returned. "How shall you get back

to your room?"

"If I only could wake Flossy, she'd help me."

"Which is her window?"

"The one over the rosebush."

He took up a handful of pebbles, and threw them lightly against the panes until Flossy came to the window.

"Who's there?" she called timidly.

"It's I," Patty answered. "Come down."

"What on earth!" began Flossy.

"Come quick, and keep quiet."

"She is coming," Putnam said. "Good-night, Patty. If you knew how I love you!"

He kissed her hand again, and was gone just in time to escape Flossy.

"How did you hit my window from the door-step?" the latter asked as the two girls climbed slowly the stairs.

"By sleight of hand," her cousin answered. "Good-night. Thank you very much. I want to get to bed and to sleep before it begins to lighten any worse."

But how could she sleep with those two kisses burning like live coals upon her hand?

# CHAPTER XI
# A BUNDLE OF PAPERS

Patty slept late the following morning, and before she was well awake the sense of something strange and sad was present in her mind. She opened her eyes, and slowly recalled the conversation of the previous night, with the most mingled feelings. That Tom Putnam loved her was a new, keen joy; but bitter indeed was it to remember how she had met the proffer of his heart. It was true he had not accepted her negative; but all the combativeness of the girl's disposition was aroused, and she felt something of the martyr spirit of men determined to die for a cause they know lost or hopeless. She felt that nothing would make her retract her denial; that she could not do so and retain her self-respect. And yet an inner double-consciousness knew that some time she meant to yield, and that she hoped for some fortunate turn of circumstances to bring about the means of graceful submission.

She dressed herself slowly and sadly, until, catching sight of her lugubrious face in the glass, she laughed in spite of herself, and determined to shake off her melancholy.

She descended to breakfast humming a gay air, and trying to appear as if she were no more lame than upon the day previous. No one but grandmother Sanford noticed that her gayety was forced; but the beautiful old Friend with silvery hair and snowy

kerchief possessed a shrewd head and a tender heart, quick to detect and to sympathize with pain.

"Grand-daughter," she said after breakfast, when they were alone together, "something troubleth thee."

"Me, grandmother?" Patty began with affected surprise. But there was about the other a candor which enforced frankness in return. "It is nothing that can be helped," Patty said, sighing, "and indeed it is nothing to tell of."

"Thee must have confidence in thy grandmother, Patience, if so be that I can ever serve thee."

"I shall, I do. Grandmother, I" —

The door opened, and admitted Flossy and her aunt.

"I can trust the maid to clean the parlor," Mrs. Sanford was saying impressively; "but the cellar I must see to myself."

"Yes," Flossy returned, "and that reminds me, Aunt Britann: can you tell why a cat's breath always smells fishy?"

"It cleared off in the night," her aunt continued, without taking the slightest notice of the whimsical question, "and so ain't likely to stay pleasant."

"Beech-nuts," Flossy said in the same rambling way, "used to be good to eat in school, they took up so much time. But then they have a sort of apologetic taste, as if they'd be bigger if they could."

"And horse-chestnuts," added her aunt, "are so good for rheumatism."

"Mercy!" cried Patty. "Are you both insane? You talk like two

crazy Janes."

"I'd like to be a crazy Jane," Flossy said reflectively. "I wonder what they eat? Grandmother, did you bring those old-fashioned things with you? We are counting on them for our play. So saying, I gracefully fling myself into a chair. I think I could wear your dresses, grandmother."

"I brought them," the old lady answered with a twinkle in her eye. "Though I fear 'tis encouraging thee in vain and frivolous follies."

"If we don't go into vain and frivolous follies until you encourage them," Patty cried, "we may live to grow as solemn as Bathalina herself."

"It seems to me," Flossy put in, "that Mademoiselle Clemens has a dreadful 'hark-from-the-tombs-a-doleful-sound' air this morning."

"Why" – her cousin began, as there flashed through her mind the remembrance of the interview she had interrupted on the previous night. Her own troubles had until now driven it out of her mind.

"Well, what?" Flossy asked.

"Nothing. Let's look at the dresses now. Can't Flossy get them, grandmother?"

The costumes were produced in a hair-covered trunk which Flossy and Mrs. Sanford with some difficulty dragged into the sitting-room. When it was opened, a delightful odor of lavender and camphor and sweet-grass was diffused through the air; which

grew more and more pungent as from the trunk were taken delicious old gowns of Canton crape, broidered kerchiefs, caps, and hand-bags.

"That corn-colored crape is just the thing for me," Patty cried. "Isn't it lovely! Oh, you vain old grandmother! you are as gray as a sparrow now, but you used to go arrayed in purple and fine linen."

"I was not weaned from the worldliness of fine dress then," the old lady said, smiling. "And they did say," she added, smoothing her dove-gray dress with innocent complacency, "that I was not uncomely in those days."

"You are the handsomest mother in the State now," said Dr. Sanford, who had entered. "Patty, what is that bundle of papers?"

A packet of papers yellowed by age lay in the bottom of the trunk, and Patty took them up.

"Some of the letters grandmother had in her philandering days, I suppose. Shall I open them, grandmother?"

"Give them to me. Thee art a sad, giddy girl, grand-daughter. – They are old papers of thy father's, Charles. I haven't seen them this forty years for aught I know."

"Let me see them, mother," Dr. Sanford said. "This is father's land-grant for serving in the war of 1812."

"I never knew grandfather was in the war of 1812," said Patty. "Was he wounded?"

"Wounded," repeated grandmother Sanford, laughing. "There came a report that the British were coming to Quinnebasset

where he lived, and a company of men was raised. They went down to Edgecomb, and had a camp for four or five weeks, and then came home again."

> "'The king of France, with forty thousand men,
> Marched up a hill, and then marched down again,'"

quoted Dr. Sanford.

"But, grandmother," Flossy said, "you must have been awfully frightened to have him in danger."

"There was no danger. The men camped out, and spent their time in riotous living I fear. At least the British were not within hundreds of miles of them."

"But they might have come. I should have lain awake nights fearing something would happen, if it had been my husband."

"I think I did not lie awake nights much," grandmother answered, smiling. "I was but eight years old, and did not know that there was such a person in the world as William Sanford. It was before my father removed his family to Quinnebasset."

"But, mother," Dr. Sanford said, "you must be entitled to a pension as the widow of a veteran of the war of 1812. I'd forgotten all about father's being mustered in. This land-grant is evidence enough to show that he was."

"O grandmother!" put in Patty. "Now I shall begin to behave, so as to be remembered in your will."

"I am little in favor of receiving money obtained by bloodshed,

son Charles, as thee knowest."

"Nonsense, mother. There was no blood shed. The money will be clean of any taint of war according to your own story. The money won't hurt you: you know you are only half Friend, when all's said and done."

And, after much laughter and joking, it was decided that the matter should be put into the hands of Mr. Putnam.

Many were the allusions made to the grandmother's pension, and out of the matter came several odd incidents as will in due time appear.

# CHAPTER XII
# AN AFTERNOON RIDE

The quiet which falls upon a country village after its noonday meal, brooded over Montfield. Only the great butterflies and the bees were stirring, except for a humming-bird that now and then darted among the flowers. Patty and Flossy were together upon the piazza, lazily discussing matters relating to the theatrical entertainment, when a buggy stopped at the gate, from which descended the huge form of Burleigh Blood.

"Now, Burleigh," Patty cried, as he approached, and before he had time to say more than good-day, "I know you've come to take Flossy to drive, but I want to go myself. It is too lovely for any thing this afternoon, and I am an invalid and must be humored, you know."

"If I could ever see that mushrooms had any taste," Flossy said deliberately, but with no discoverable connection, "I am sure I should be fond of them: so I always eat them, and think what a good time I am having if I only knew it."

"Flossy, you get to be more and more incomprehensible every day. Sit down, Burleigh, please. Of course you'll have to take me to ride."

"That is what I came for," he answered.

He did not, however, tell the truth. He had come intending

to ask Flossy; but somehow his invitations always seemed to get crossed at the Sanfords', and he fated to be the sport of adverse fortune. He had reasoned out in his honest head a profound scheme of diplomacy. He would pique Patty by his attentions to her cousin, and thus force her to treat him with more consideration. He was about as well fitted for diplomatic juggleries as a babe in its cradle, and certainly this beginning was sufficiently unpropitious.

"Flossy, get my hat, that's a dear. Now, Burleigh, you'll have to let me lean on you. I'm lame still."

The afternoon was enchanting. It was one of those September days which in some strange way get transposed into August; when the air is full of hazes that soften the distant landscape with tints of purple and smoky blue and topaz; when the breeze is soft and enervating with a pleasing melancholy, like a revery, the sweeter for its sadness. The golden-rod and purple asters seem suddenly to have bloomed by the roadside, and the trees rustle softly with a dry murmur as if already falling into "the sear and yellow leaf." The crickets chirped cheerily in the lichen-covered stone walls and in the fields, while not a bird was to be seen or heard, unless now and then some chatty sparrow gossiping volubly with her neighbor, or an ill-omened crow that flew heavily over a distant field.

Burleigh and Patty chose a road leading out of the village, and lonely as country roads are apt to be. Patty was somewhat absent, sadly recalling the conversation of the previous night;

but Burleigh looked so troubled at her pre-occupation that she resolved to throw off her heaviness, and began to chat cheerily.

"It is a lovely afternoon to ride," she said. "It is one of those days when one wants to go somewhere, yet doesn't know quite where."

"I knew where I wanted to go," he answered, "and went."

"Perhaps it is different with men," she continued, ignoring the allusion. "You men can always go and come as you please, and haven't the restrictions to incite you that we girls have."

"Haven't we? I did not know we were so free. We usually end, I think, by doing as you like."

"That is an epigram, Burleigh. Since when did you become so wise?"

"Since you began to knock me about as you chose," he answered boldly. "You do as you like with me. I went to invite you to the picnic, and you had me take your cousin. This afternoon I went after her, and have you."

"Did you really!" Patty exclaimed. "Honestly, I did not think of such a thing. It was all my vanity. Let's turn round. I didn't mean to cheat Flossy out of a ride."

"We'll keep on now, I guess," he answered. "I can take her another time."

"There is no time like the present," Patty said absently; wondering secretly what was the true nature of Burleigh's feeling toward her cousin.

"Isn't there?" he said, facing her suddenly. "Then I have a

question to ask you. I" —

"About Flossy?" she interrupted hastily, warned by the look in his eyes.

"No; about yourself. I" —

"But I want to tell you about Flossy first. You know she" —

"I don't want to talk of Flossy," Burleigh said.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.