

**BAUM LYMAN
FRANK**

MARY LOUISE

Лаймен Фрэнк Баум

Mary Louise

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Edith van Dyne

Mary Louise

TO YOUNG READERS

You will like Mary Louise because she is so much like yourself. Mrs. Van Dyne has succeeded in finding a very human girl for her heroine; Mary Louise is really not a fiction character at all. Perhaps you know the author through her "Aunt Jane's Nieces" stories; then you don't need to be told that you will want to read all the volumes that will be written about lovable Mary Louise. Mrs. Van Dyne is recognized as one of the most interesting writers for girls to-day. Her success is largely due to the fact that she does not write DOWN to her young readers; she realizes that the girl of to-day does not have to be babied, and that her quick mind is able to appreciate stories that are as well planned and cleverly told as adult fiction.

That is the theory behind "The Bluebird Books." If you are the girl who likes books of individuality – wholesome without being tiresome, and full of action without being sensational – then you are just the girl for whom the series is being written. "Mary Louise" is more than a worthy successor to the "Aunt Jane's Nieces Series" – it has merit which you will quickly recognize.

CHAPTER I

JUST AN ARGUMENT

"It's positively cruel!" pouted Jennie Allen, one of a group of girls occupying a garden bench in the ample grounds of Miss Stearne's School for Girls, at Beverly.

"It's worse than that; it's insulting," declared Mable Westervelt, her big dark eyes flashing indignantly.

"Doesn't it seem to reflect on our characters?" timidly asked Dorothy Knerr.

"Indeed it does!" asserted Sue Finley. "But here comes Mary Louise; let's ask her opinion."

"Phoo! Mary Louise is only a day scholar," said Jennie. "The restriction doesn't apply to her at all."

"I'd like to hear what she says, anyhow," remarked Dorothy. "Mary Louise has a way of untangling things, you know."

"She's rather too officious to suit me," Mable Westervelt retorted, "and she's younger than any of us. One would think, the way she poses as monitor at this second-rate, run-down boarding school, that Mary Louise Burrows made the world."

"Oh, Mable! I've never known her to pose at all," said Sue. "But, hush; she mustn't overhear us and, besides, if we want her to intercede with Miss Stearne we must not offend her."

The girl they were discussing came leisurely down a path, her books under one arm, the other hand holding a class paper which she examined in a cursory way as she walked. She wore a dark skirt and a simple shirtwaist, both quite modish and becoming, and her shoes were the admiration and envy of half the girls at the school. Dorothy Knerr used to say that "Mary Louise's clothes always looked as if they grew on her," but that may have been partially accounted for by the grace of her slim form and her unconscious but distinctive poise of bearing. Few people would describe Mary Louise Burrows as beautiful, while all would agree that she possessed charming manners. And she was fifteen – an age when many girls are both awkward and shy.

As she drew near to the group on the bench they ceased discussing Mary Louise but continued angrily to canvass their latest grievance.

"What do you think, Mary Louise," demanded Jennie, as the girl paused before them, "of this latest outrage?"

"What outrage, Jen?" with a whimsical smile at their indignant faces.

"This latest decree of the tyrant Stearne. Didn't you see it posted on the blackboard this morning? 'The young ladies will hereafter refrain from leaving the school grounds after the hour of six p.m., unless written permission is first secured from the Principal. Any infraction of this rule will result in suspension or permanent dismissal.' We're determined not to stand for this rule a single minute. We intend to strike for our liberties."

"Well," said Mary Louise reflectively, "I'm not surprised. The wonder is that Miss Stearne hasn't stopped your evening parades before now. This is a small school in a small town, where everyone knows everyone else; otherwise you'd have been guarded as jealously as if you were in a convent. Did you ever know or hear of any other private boarding school where the girls were allowed to go to town evenings, or whenever they pleased out of school hours?"

"Didn't I tell you?" snapped Mable, addressing the group. "Mary Louise is always on the wrong side. Other schools are not criterions for this ramshackle establishment, anyhow. We have twelve boarders and four day scholars, and how Miss Stearne ever supports the place and herself on her income is an occult problem that the geometries can't solve. She pays little Miss Dandler, her assistant, the wages of an ordinary housemaid; the furniture is old and shabby and the classrooms gloomy; the

food is more nourishing than feastful and the tablecloths are so patched and darned that it's a wonder they hold together."

Mary Louise quietly seated herself upon the bench beside them.

"You're looking on the seamy side, Mable," she said with a smile, "and you're not quite just to the school. I believe your parents sent you here because Miss Stearne is known to be a very competent teacher and her school has an excellent reputation of long standing. For twenty years this delightful old place, which was once General Barlow's residence, has been a select school for young ladies of the best families. Gran'pa Jim says it's an evidence of good breeding and respectability to have attended Miss Stearne's school."

"Well, what's that got to do with this insulting order to stay in evenings?" demanded Sue Finley. "You'd better put all that rot you're talking into a circular and mail it to the mothers of imbecile daughters. Miss Stearne has gone a step too far in her tyranny, as she'll find out. We know well enough what it means. There's no inducement for us to wander into that little tucked-up town of Beverly after dinner except to take in the picture show, which is our one innocent recreation. I'm sure we've always conducted ourselves most properly. This order simply means we must cut out the picture show and, if we permit it to stand, heaven only knows what we shall do to amuse ourselves."

"We'll do something worse, probably," suggested Jennie.

"What's your idea about it, Mary Louise?" asked Dorothy.

"Don't be a prude," warned Mable, glaring at the young girl. "Try to be honest and sensible – if you can – and give us your advice. Shall we disregard the order, and do as we please, or be namby-pambies and submit to the outrage? You're a day scholar and may visit the picture shows as often as you like. Consider our position, cooped up here like a lot of chickens and refused the only harmless amusement the town affords."

"Gran'pa Jim," observed Mary Louise, musingly, "always advises me to look on both sides of a question before making up my mind, because every question has to have two sides or it couldn't be argued. If Miss Stearne wishes to keep you away from the pictures, she has a reason for it; so let's discover what the reason is."

"To spoil any little fun we might have," asserted Mable bitterly.

"No; I can't believe that," answered Mary Louise. "She isn't unkindly, we all know, nor is she too strict with her girls. I've heard her remark that all her boarders are young ladies who can be trusted to conduct themselves properly on all occasions; and she's right about that. We must look for her reason somewhere else and I think it's in the pictures themselves."

"As for that," said Jennie, "I've seen Miss Stearne herself at the picture theatre twice within the last week."

"Then that's it; she doesn't like the character of the pictures shown.

I think, myself, girls, they've been rather rank lately."

"What's wrong with them?"

"I like pictures as well as you do," said Mary Louise, "and Gran'pa Jim often takes me to see them. Tuesday night a man shot another in cold blood and the girl the murderer was in love with helped him to escape and married him. I felt like giving her a good shaking, didn't you? She didn't act like a real girl at all. And Thursday night the picture story told of a man with two wives and of divorces and disgraceful doings generally. Gran'pa Jim took me away before it was over and I was glad to go. Some of the pictures are fine and dandy, but as long as the man who runs the theatre mixes the horrid things with the decent ones – and we can't know beforehand which is which – it's really the safest plan to keep away from the place altogether. I'm sure that's the position Miss Stearne takes, and we can't blame her for it. If we do, it's an evidence of laxness of morals in ourselves."

The girls received this statement sullenly, yet they had no logical reply to controvert it. So Mary Louise, feeling that her explanation of the distasteful edict was not popular with her friends, quietly rose and sauntered to the gate, on her way home.

"Pah!" sneered Mable Westervelt, looking after the slim figure, "I'm always suspicious of those goody-goody creatures. Mark my words, girls: Mary Louise will fall from her pedestal some day. She isn't a bit better than the rest of us, in spite of her angel baby ways, and I wouldn't be surprised if she turned out to be a regular hypocrite!"

CHAPTER II

GRAN'PA JIM

Beverly is an old town and not especially progressive. It lies nearly two miles from a railway station and has little attractiveness for strangers. Beverly contains several beautiful old residences, however, built generations ago and still surrounded by extensive grounds where the trees and shrubbery are now generally overgrown and neglected.

One of these fine old places Miss Stearne rented for her boarding school; another, quite the most imposing residence in the town, had been leased some two years previous to the time of this story by Colonel James Weatherby, whose family consisted of his widowed daughter, Mrs. Burrows, and his grandchild, Mary Louise Burrows. Their only servants were an old negro, Uncle Eben, and his wife, Aunt Polly, who were Beverly bred and had been hired when the Colonel first came to town and took possession of the stately Vandeventer mansion.

Colonel Weatherby was a man of exceptionally distinguished appearance, tall and dignified, with courtly manners and an air of prosperity that impressed the simple villagers with awe. His snow-white hair and piercing dark eyes, his immaculate dress upon all occasions, the whispered comments on his ample deposits in the local bank, all contributed to render him remarkable among the three or four hundred ordinary inhabitants of Beverly, who, after his two years' residence among them, scarcely knew more of him than is above related. For Colonel Weatherby was an extremely reserved man and seldom deigned to exchange conversation with his neighbors. In truth, he had nothing in common with them and even when he walked out with Mary Louise he merely acknowledged the greeting of those he met by a dignified nod of his stately head.

With Mary Louise, however, he would converse fluently and with earnestness, whether at home during the long evenings or on their frequent walks through the country, which were indulged in on Saturdays and holidays during the months that school was in session and much more often during vacations. The Colonel owned a modest automobile which he kept in the stable and only drove on rare occasions, although one of Uncle Eben's duties was to keep the car in apple-pie order. Colonel Weatherby loved best to walk and Mary Louise enjoyed their tramps together because Gran'pa Jim always told her so many interesting things and was such a charming companion. He often developed a strain of humor in the girl's society and would relate anecdotes that aroused in her spontaneous laughter, for she possessed a keen sense of the ludicrous. Yes, Gran'pa Jim was really funny, when in the mood, and as jolly a comrade as one would wish.

He was fond of poetry, too, and the most severe trial Mary Louise was forced to endure was when he carried a book of poems in his pocket and insisted on reading from it while they rested in a shady nook by the roadside or on the bank of the little river that flowed near by the town. Mary Louise had no soul for poetry, but she would have endured far greater hardships rather than forfeit the genial companionship of Gran'pa Jim.

It was only during these past two years that she had come to know her grandfather so intimately and to become as fond of him as she was proud. Her earlier life had been one of so many changes that the constant shifting had rather bewildered her. First she remembered living in a big city house where she was cared for by a nurse who was never out of sight or hearing. There it was that "Mamma Bee" – Mrs. Beatrice Burrows – appeared to the child at times as a beautiful vision and often as she bent over her little daughter for a good-night kiss the popular society woman, arrayed in evening or ball costume, would seem to Mary Louise like a radiant angel descended straight from heaven.

She knew little of her mother in those days, which were quite hazy in memory because she was so young. The first change she remembered was an abrupt flitting from the splendid city house to a humble cottage in a retired village. There was no maid now, nor other servant whatever. Mamma

Bee did the cooking and sweeping, her face worn and anxious, while Gran'pa Jim walked the floor of the little sitting room day by day, only pausing at times to read to Mary Louise stories from her nursery books.

This life did not last very long – perhaps a year or so – and then they were in a big hotel in another city, reached after a long and tiresome railway journey. Here the girl saw little of her grandfather, for a governess came daily to teach Mary Louise to read and write and to do sums on a pretty slate framed in silver. Then, suddenly, in dead of night, away they whisked again, traveling by train until long after the sun was up, when they came to a pretty town where they kept house again.

There were servants, this time, and horses and carriages and pretty clothes for Mary Louise and Mamma Bee. The little girl was sent to a school just a block away from her home. She remembered Miss Jenkins well, for this teacher made much of her and was so kind and gentle that Mary Louise progressed rapidly in her studies.

But the abrupt changes did not end here. Mary Louise came home from school one afternoon and found her dear mother sobbing bitterly as she clung around the neck of Gran'pa Jim, who stood in the middle of the room as still as if he had been a marble statue. Mary Louise promptly mingled her tears with those of her mother, without knowing why, and then there was a quick "packing-up" and a rush to the railway again.

Next they were in the house of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Conant, very pleasant people who seemed to be old friends of Mamma Bee and Gran'pa Jim. It was a cosy house, not big and pretentious, and Mary Louise liked it. Peter Conant and Gran'pa Jim had many long talks together, and it was here that the child first heard her grandfather called "Colonel." Others might have called him that before, but she had not heard them. Mrs. Conant was very deaf and wore big spectacles, but she always had a smile on her face and her voice was soft and pleasing.

After a few days Mamma Bee told her daughter she was going to leave her in the care of the Conants for a time, while she traveled to a foreign country with Gran'pa Jim. The girl was surprised at being abandoned but accepted her fate quietly when it was explained that she was to go to school while living with the Conants, which she could not do if she was traveling with her mother and grandfather, who were making this arrangement for the girl's best good.

Three years Mary Louise lived with the Conants and had little to complain of. Mr. Conant was a lawyer and was at his office all day, while Mrs. Conant was very kind to the girl and looked after her welfare with motherly care.

At last, quite unexpectedly, Mary Louise's trunk was packed and she was taken to the station to meet a train on which were her mother and grandfather. They did not leave the cars except to shake hands with the Conants and thank them for their care of Mary Louise. A moment later the train bore away the reunited family to their new home in Beverly.

Mary Louise now found she must "get acquainted" with Mamma Bee and Gran'pa Jim all over again, for during these last three years she had developed so fast in mind and body that her previous knowledge of her relatives seemed like a hazy dream. The Colonel also discovered a new granddaughter, to whom he became passionately attached. For two years now they had grown together until they were great friends and cronies.

As for Mrs. Burrows, she seemed to have devoted her whole life to her father, the Colonel. She had lost much of her former beauty and had become a thin, pale woman with anxious eyes and an expectant and deprecating air, as if always prepared to ward off a sudden blow. Her solicitude for the old Colonel was almost pathetic and while he was in her presence she constantly hovered around him, doing little things for his comfort which he invariably acknowledged with his courtly bow and a gracious word of thanks.

It was through her association with this cultured old gentleman that Mary Louise had imbibed a certain degree of logic and philosophy unknown to many girls of fifteen. He taught her consideration for others as the keynote of happiness, yet he himself declined to mingle with his fellow men. He

abhorred sulking and was always cheerful and pleasant in his home circle, yet when others approached him familiarly he resented it with a frown. He taught his granddaughter to be generous to the poor and supplied her freely with money for charity, yet he personally refused all demands upon him by churches or charitable societies.

In their long talks together he displayed an intimate acquaintance with men and affairs, but never referred in any way to his former life.

"Are you really a colonel?" Mary Louise once asked him.

"Men call me so," he replied, but there was a tone in his voice that warned the girl not to pursue the subject further. She knew his moods almost as well as her mother did.

The Colonel was very particular as to dress. He obtained his own clothing from a New York tailor and took a keen interest in the gowns of his daughter and of Mary Louise, his taste in female apparel being so remarkable that they were justly considered the best dressed women in Beverly. The house they were living in contained an excellent library and was furnished in a quaint, old-fashioned manner that was very appealing to them all. Mary Louise sincerely hoped there would be no more changes in their lives and that they might continue to live in Beverly for many years to come.

CHAPTER III

A SURPRISE

On the afternoon when our story begins Mary Louise walked home from school and found Colonel Weatherby waiting for her in the garden, leggings strapped to his gaunt legs, the checked walking-cap on his head, a gold-headed crop in his hand.

"Let us go for a walk, my dear," he proposed. "It is Friday, so you will have all day to-morrow in which to get your lessons."

"Oh, it won't take all day for that," she replied with a laugh. "I'll be glad of the walk. Where shall we go, Gran'pa Jim?"

"Perhaps to the mill-race. We haven't visited it for a long time."

She ran to the house to put away her books and get her stout shoes, and presently rejoined him, when together they strolled up the street and circled round the little town until they came to the river bank. Then they followed the stream toward the old mill.

Mary Louise told her grandfather of the recent edict of Miss Stearne and the indignation it had aroused in her girl boarders.

"And what do you think of it, Gran'pa Jim?" she asked in conclusion.

"What do YOU think of it, Mary Louise?"

"It is rather hard on the girls, who have enjoyed their liberty for so long; but I think it is Miss Stearne's plan to keep them away from the picture theatre."

"And so?"

"And so," she said, "it may do the girls more good than harm."

He smiled approvingly. It was his custom to draw out her ideas on all questions, rather than to assert his own in advance. If he found her wrong or misinformed he would then correct her and set her right.

"So you do not approve of the pictures, Mary Louise?"

"Not all of them, Gran'pa Jim, although they all seem to have been 'passed by the Board of Censors' – perhaps when their eyes were shut. I love the good pictures, and I know that you do, but some we have seen lately gave me the shivers. So, perhaps Miss Stearne is right."

"I am confident she is," he agreed. "Some makers of pictures may consider it beneficial to emphasize good by exhibiting evil, by way of contrast, but they are doubtless wrong. I've an old-fashioned notion that young girls should be shielded, as much as possible, from knowledge of the world's sins and worries, which is sure to be impressed upon them in later years. We cannot ignore evil, unfortunately, but we can often avoid it."

"But why, if these pictures are really harmful, does Mr. Welland exhibit them at his theatre?" asked the girl.

"Mr. Welland is running his theatre to make money," explained the Colonel, "and the surest way to make money is to cater to the tastes of his patrons, the majority of whom demand picture plays of the more vivid sort, such as you and I complain of. So the fault lies not with the exhibitor but with the sensation-loving public. If Mr. Welland showed only such pictures as have good morals he would gain the patronage of Miss Stearne's twelve young ladies, and a few others, but the masses would refuse to support him."

"Then," said Mary Louise, "the masses ought to be educated to desire better things."

"Many philanthropists have tried to do that, and signally failed. I believe the world is gradually growing better, my dear, but ages will pass before mankind attains a really wholesome mental atmosphere. However, we should each do our humble part toward the moral uplift of our fellows and one way is not to condone what we know to be wrong."

He spoke earnestly, in a conversational tone that robbed his words of preachment. Mary Louise thought Gran'pa Jim must be an exceptionally good man and hoped she would grow, in time, to be like him. The only thing that puzzled her was why he refused to associate with his fellow men, while at heart he so warmly espoused their uplift and advancement.

They had now reached the mill-race and had seated themselves on the high embankment where they could watch the water swirl swiftly beneath them. The mill was not grinding to-day and its neighborhood seemed quite deserted. Here the old Colonel and his granddaughter sat dreamily for a long time, conversing casually on various subjects or allowing themselves to drift into thought. It was a happy hour for them both and was only interrupted when Jackson the miller passed by on his way home from the village. The man gave the Colonel a surly nod, but he smiled on Mary Louise, the girl being as popular in the district as her grandfather was unpopular.

After Jackson had passed them by Gran'pa Jim rose slowly and proposed they return home.

"If we go through the village," said he, "we shall reach home, without hurrying ourselves, in time to dress for dinner. I object to being hurried, don't you, Mary Louise?"

"Yes, indeed, if it can be avoided."

Going through the village saved them half a mile in distance, but Mary Louise would not have proposed it herself, on account of the Colonel's well-known aversion to meeting people. This afternoon, however, he made the proposal himself, so they strolled away to the main road that led through the one business street of the little town.

At this hour there was little life in Beverly's main street. The farmers who drove in to trade had now returned home; the town women were busy getting supper and most of their men were at home feeding the stock or doing the evening chores. However, they passed an occasional group of two or three and around the general store stood a few other natives, listlessly awaiting the call to the evening meal. These cast curious glances at the well-known forms of the old man and the young girl, for his two years' residence had not made the testy old Colonel any less strange to them. They knew all about him there was to know – which was nothing at all – and understood they must not venture to address him as they would have done any other citizen.

Cooper's Hotel, a modest and not very inviting frame building, stood near the center of the village and as Mary Louise and her grandfather passed it the door opened and a man stepped out and only avoided bumping into them by coming to a full stop. They stopped also, of necessity, and Mary Louise was astonished to find the stranger staring into the Colonel's face with an expression of mingled amazement and incredulity on his own.

"James Hathaway, by all the gods!" he exclaimed, adding in wondering tones: "And after all these years!"

Mary Louise, clinging to her grandfather's arm, cast an upward glance at his face. It was tensely drawn; the eyelids were half closed and through their slits the Colonel's eyes glinted fiercely.

"You are mistaken, fellow. Out of my way!" he said, and seizing the girl's arm, which she had withdrawn in affright, he marched straight ahead. The man fell back, but stared after them with his former expression of bewildered surprise. Mary Louise noted this in a glance over her shoulder and something in the stranger's attitude – was it a half veiled threat? – caused her to shudder involuntarily.

The Colonel strode on, looking neither to right nor left, saying never a word. They reached their home grounds, passed up the path in silence and entered the house. The Colonel went straight to the stairs and cried in a loud voice:

"Beatrice!"

The tone thrilled Mary Louise with a premonition of evil. A door was hastily opened and her mother appeared at the head of the stairs, looking down on them with the customary anxiety on her worn features doubly accentuated.

"Again, father?" she asked in a voice that slightly trembled.

"Yes. Come with me to the library, Beatrice."

CHAPTER IV

SHIFTING SANDS

Mary Louise hid herself in the drawing-room, where she could watch the closed door of the library opposite. At times she trembled with an unknown dread; again, she told herself that no harm could possibly befall her dear, good Gran'pa Jim or her faithful, loving mother. Yet why were they closeted in the library so long, and how could the meeting with that insolent stranger affect Colonel Weatherby so strongly?

After a long time her mother came out, looking more pallid and harassed than ever but strangely composed. She kissed Mary Louise, who came to meet her, and said:

"Get ready for dinner, dear. We are late."

The girl went to her room, dazed and uneasy. At dinner her mother appeared at the table, eating little or nothing, but Gran'pa Jim was not present. Afterward she learned that he had gone over to Miss Stearne's School for Girls, where he completed important arrangements concerning his granddaughter.

When dinner was over Mary Louise went into the library and, drawing a chair to where the light of the student lamp flooded her book, tried to read. But the words were blurred and her mind was in a sort of chaos. Mamma Bee had summoned Aunt Polly and Uncle Eben to her room, where she was now holding a conference with the faithful colored servants. A strange and subtle atmosphere of unrest pervaded the house; Mary Louise scented radical changes in their heretofore pleasant home life, but what these changes were to be or what necessitated them she could not imagine.

After a while she heard Gran'pa Jim enter the hall and hang up his hat and coat and place his cane in the rack. Then he came to the door of the library and stood a moment looking hard at Mary Louise. Her own eyes regarded her grandfather earnestly, questioning him as positively as if she had spoken.

He drew a chair before her and leaning over took both her hands in his and held them fast.

"My dear," he said gently, "I regret to say that another change has overtaken us. Have you ever heard of 'harlequin fate'? 'Tis a very buffoon of mischief and irony that is often permitted to dog our earthly footsteps and prevent us from becoming too content with our lot. For a time you and I, little maid, good comrades though we have been, must tread different paths. Your mother and I are going away, presently, and we shall leave you here in Beverly, where you may continue your studies under the supervision of Miss Stearne, as a boarder at her school. This house, although the rental is paid for six weeks longer, we shall at once vacate, leaving Uncle Eben and Aunt Sallie to put it in shape and close it properly. Do you understand all this, Mary Louise?"

"I understand what you have told me, Gran'pa Jim. But why – "

"Miss Stearne will be supplied with ample funds to cover your tuition and to purchase any supplies you may need. You will have nothing to worry about and so may devote all your energies to your studies."

"But how long – "

"Trust me and your mother to watch over your welfare, for you are very dear to us, believe me," he continued, disregarding her interruptions. "Do you remember the address of the Conants, at Dorfield?"

"Of course."

"Well, you may write to me, or to your mother, once a week, addressing the letter in care of Peter Conant. But if you are questioned by anyone," he added, gravely, "do not mention the address of the Conants or hint that I have gone to Dorfield. Write your letters privately and unobserved, in your own room, and post them secretly, by your own hand, so that no one will be aware of the

correspondence. Your caution in this regard will be of great service to your mother and me. Do you think you can follow these instructions?"

"To be sure I can, Gran'pa Jim. But why must I – "

"Some day," said he, "you will understand this seeming mystery and be able to smile at your present perplexities. There is nothing to fear, my dear child, and nothing that need cause you undue anxiety. Keep a brave heart and, whatever happens, have faith in Gran'pa Jim. Your mother – as good a woman as God ever made – believes in me, and she knows all. Can you accept her judgment, Mary Louise? Can you steadfastly ignore any aspersions that may be cast upon my good name?"

"Yes, Gran'pa Jim."

She had not the faintest idea what he referred to. Not until afterward was she able to piece these strange remarks together and make sense of them. Just now the girl was most impressed by the fact that her mother and grandfather were going away and would leave her as a boarder with Miss Stearne. The delightful home life, wherein she had passed the happiest two years of her existence, was to be broken up for good and all.

"Now I must go to your mother. Kiss me, my dear!"

As he rose to his feet Mary Louise also sprang from her chair and the Colonel folded his arms around her and for a moment held her tight in his embrace. Then he slowly released her, holding the girl at arms' length while he studied her troubled face with grave intensity. One kiss upon her upturned forehead and the old man swung around and left the room without another word.

Mary Louise sank into her chair, a little sob in her throat. She felt very miserable, indeed, at that moment. "Harlequin fate!" she sighed. "I wonder why it has chosen us for its victims?"

After an hour passed in the deserted library she stole away to her own room and prepared for bed. In the night, during her fitful periods of sleep, she dreamed that her mother bent over her and kissed her lips – once, twice, a third time.

The girl woke with a start. A dim light flooded her chamber, for outside was a full moon. But the room was habited only by shadows, save for her own feverish, restless body. She turned over to find a cooler place and presently fell asleep again.

CHAPTER V

OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION

"And you say they are gone?" cried Mary Louise in surprise, as she came down to breakfast the next morning and found the table laid for one and old Eben waiting to serve her.

"In de night, chile. I don' know 'zac'ly wha' der time, by de clock, but de Kun'l an' Missy Burrows did'n' sleep heah a-tall."

"There is no night train," said the girl, seating herself thoughtfully at the table. "How could they go, Uncle?"

"Jus' took deh auto'bile, chile, an' de Kun'l done druv it heself – bag an' baggage. But – see heah, Ma'y 'Ouisse – we-all ain' s'pose to know nuth'n' bout dat git-away. Ef some imper'nent puss'n' ask us, we ain' gwine t' know how dey go, nohow. De Kun'l say tell Ma'y 'Ouisse she ain' gwine know noth'n' a-tall, 'bout nuth'n', 'cause 'tain't nobody's business."

"I understand, Uncle Eben."

She reflected upon this seemingly unnecessary secrecy as she ate her breakfast. After a time she asked:

"What are you and Aunt Polly going to do, Uncle?"

"Fus' thing," replied the old negro, "Polly gwine git yo' traps all pack up an' I gwine take 'em ovah to Missy Stearne's place in de wheel-barrer. Den I gwine red up de house an' take de keys to Mass' Gimble, de agent. Den Polly an' me we go back to our own li'l' house in de lane yondeh. De Kun'l done 'range ev'thing propeh, an' we gwine do jus' like he say."

Mary Louise felt lonely and uncomfortable in the big house, now that her mother and grandfather had gone away. Since the move was inevitable, she would be glad to go to Miss Stearne as soon as possible. She helped Aunt Polly pack her trunk and suit case, afterwards gathering into a bundle the things she had forgotten or overlooked, all of which personal belongings Uncle Eben wheeled over to the school. Then she bade the faithful servitors good-bye, promising to call upon them at their humble home, and walked slowly over the well-known path to Miss Stearne's establishment, where she presented herself to the principal.

It being Saturday, Miss Stearne was seated at a desk in her own private room, where she received Mary Louise and bade her sit down.

Miss Stearne was a woman fifty years of age, tall and lean, with a deeply lined face and a tendency to nervousness that was increasing with her years. She was a very clever teacher and a very incompetent business woman, so that her small school, of excellent standing and repute, proved difficult to finance. In character Miss Stearne was temperamental enough to have been a genius. She was kindly natured, fond of young girls and cared for her pupils with motherly instincts seldom possessed by those in similar positions. She was lax in many respects, severely strict in others. Not always were her rules and regulations dictated by good judgment. Therefore her girls usually found as much fault as other boarding school girls are prone to do, and with somewhat more reason. On the other hand, no one could question the principal's erudition or her skill in imparting her knowledge to others.

"Sit down, Mary Louise," she said to the girl. "This is an astonishing change in your life, is it not? Colonel Weatherby came to me last evening and said he had been suddenly called away on important matters that would brook no delay, and that your mother was to accompany him on the journey. He begged me to take you in as a regular boarder and of course I consented. You have been one of my most tractable and conscientious pupils and I have been proud of your progress. But the school is quite full, as you know; so at first I was uncertain that I could accommodate you here; but Miss Dandler, my assistant, has given up her room to you and I shall put a bed for her in my own

sleeping chamber, so that difficulty is now happily arranged. I suppose your family left Beverly this morning, by the early train?"

"They have gone," replied Mary Louise, non-committally.

"You will be lonely for a time, of course, but presently you will feel quite at home in the school because you know all of my girls so well. It is not like a strange girl coming into a new school. And remember, Mary Louise, that you are to come to me for any advice and assistance you need, for I promised your grandfather that I would fill your mother's place as far as I am able to do so."

Mary Louise reflected, with a little shock of pain, that her mother had never been very near to her and that Miss Stearne might well perform such perfunctory duties as the girl had been accustomed to expect. But no one could ever take the place of Gran'pa Jim.

"Thank you, Miss Stearne," she said. "I am sure I shall be quite contented here. Is my room ready?"

"Yes; and your trunk has already been placed in it. Let me know, my dear, if there is anything you need."

Mary Louise went to her room and was promptly pounced upon by Dorothy Knerr and Sue Finley, who roomed just across the hall from her and were delighted to find she was to become a regular boarder. They asked numerous questions as they helped her to unpack and settle her room, but accepted her conservative answers without comment.

At the noon luncheon Mary Louise was accorded a warm reception by the assembled boarders and this cordial welcome by her school-mates did much to restore the girl to her normal condition of cheerfulness. She even joined a group in a game of tennis after luncheon and it was while she was playing that little Miss Dandler came with, a message that Mary Louise was wanted in Miss Stearne's room at once.

"Take my racquet," she said to Jennie Allen; "I'll be back in a minute."

When she entered Miss Stearne's room she was surprised to find herself confronted by the same man whom she and her grandfather had encountered in front of Cooper's Hotel the previous afternoon – the man whom she secretly held responsible for this abrupt change in her life. The principal sat crouched over her desk as if overawed by her visitor, who stopped his nervous pacing up and down the room as the girl appeared.

"This is Mary Louise Burrows," said Miss Stearne, in a weak voice.

"Huh!" He glared at her with a scowl for a moment and then demanded:

"Where's Hathaway?"

Mary Louise reddened.

"I do not know to whom you refer," she answered quietly.

"Aren't you his granddaughter?"

"I am the granddaughter of Colonel James Weatherby, sir."

"It's all the same; Hathaway or Weatherby, the scoundrel can't disguise his personality. Where is he?"

She did not reply. Her eyes had narrowed a little, as the Colonel's were sometimes prone to do, and her lips were pressed firmly together.

"Answer me!" he shouted, waving his arms threateningly.

"Miss Stearne," Mary Louise said, turning to the principal, "unless you request your guest to be more respectful I shall leave the room."

"Not yet you won't," said the man in a less boisterous tone. "Don't annoy me with your airs, for I'm in a hurry. Where is Hathaway – or Weatherby – or whatever he calls himself?"

"I do not know."

"You don't, eh? Didn't he leave an address?"

"No."

"I don't believe you. Where did he go?"

"If I knew," said Mary Louise with dignity, "I would not inform you."

He uttered a growl and then threw back his coat, displaying a badge attached to his vest.

"I'm a federal officer," he asserted with egotistic pride, "a member of the Government's Secret Service Department. I've been searching for James J. Hathaway for nine years, and so has every man in the service. Last night I stumbled upon him by accident, and on inquiring found he has been living quietly in this little jumping-off place. I wired the Department for instructions and an hour ago received orders to arrest him, but found my bird had flown. He left you behind, though, and I'm wise to the fact that you're a clew that will lead me straight to him. You're going to do that very thing, and the sooner you make up your mind to it the better for all of us. No nonsense, girl! The Federal Government's not to be trifled with. Tell me where to find your grandfather."

"If you have finished your insolent remarks," she answered with spirit,

"I will go away. You have interrupted my game of tennis."

He gave a bark of anger that made her smile, but as she turned away he sprang forward and seized her arm, swinging her around so that she again faced him.

"Great Caesar, girl! Don't you realize what you're up against?" he demanded.

"I do," said she. "I seem to be in the power of a brute. If a law exists that permits you to insult a girl, there must also be a law to punish you. I shall see a lawyer and try to have you properly punished for this absolute insolence."

He regarded her keenly, still frowning, but when he spoke again he had moderated both his tone and words.

"I do not intend to be insolent, Miss Burrows, but I have been greatly aggravated by your grandfather's unfortunate escape and in this emergency every moment is precious if I am to capture him before he gets out of America, as he has done once or twice before. Also, having wired the Department that I have found Hathaway, I shall be discredited if I let him slip through my fingers, so I am in a desperate fix. If I have seemed a bit gruff and nervous, forgive me. It is your duty, as a loyal subject of the United States, to assist an officer of the law by every means in your power, especially when he is engaged in running down a criminal. Therefore, whether you dislike to or not, you must tell me where to find your grandfather."

"My grandfather is not a criminal, sir."

"The jury will decide that when his case comes to trial. At present he is accused of crime and a warrant is out for his arrest. Where is he?"

"I do not know," she persisted.

"He – he left by the morning train, which goes west," stammered Miss Stearne, anxious to placate the officer and fearful of the girl's stubborn resistance.

"So the nigger servant told me," sneered the man; "but he didn't. I was at the station myself – two miles from this forsaken place – to make sure that Hathaway didn't skip while I was waiting for orders. Therefore, he is either hidden somewhere in Beverly or he has sneaked away to an adjoining town. The old serpent is slippery as an eel; but I'm going to catch him, this time, as sure as fate, and this girl must give me all the information she can."

"Oh, that will be quite easy," retorted Mary Louise, somewhat triumphantly, "for I have no information to divulge."

He began to pace the room again, casting at her shrewd and uncertain glances.

"He didn't say where he was going?"

"No."

"Or leave any address?"

"No."

"What DID he say?"

"That he was going away and would arrange with Miss Stearne for me to board at the school."

"Huh! I see. Foxy old guy. Knew I would question you and wouldn't take chances. If he writes you, or you learn what has become of him, will you tell me?"

"No."

"I thought not." He turned toward the principal. "How about this girl's board money?" he asked. "When did he say he'd send it?"

"He paid me in advance, to the end of the present term," answered the agitated Miss Stearne.

"Foxy old boy! Seemed to think of everything. I'm going, now; but take this warning – both of you. Don't gabble about what I've said. Keep the secret. If nothing gets out, Hathaway may think the coast is clear and it's safe for him to come back. In that case I – or someone appointed by the Department – will get a chance to nab him. That's all. Good day."

He made his exit from the room without ceremony, leaving Mary Louise and Miss Stearne staring fearfully at one another.

"It – it's – dreadful!" stammered the teacher, shrinking back with a moan.

"It would be, if it were true," said the girl. "But Gran'pa Jim is no criminal, we all know. He's the best man that ever lived, and the whole trouble is that this foolish officer has mistaken him for someone else. I heard him, with my own ears, tell the man he was mistaken."

Miss Stearne reflected.

"Then why did your grandfather run away?" she asked.

It was now Mary Louise's turn to reflect, seeking an answer. Presently she realized that a logical explanation of her grandfather's action was impossible with her present knowledge.

"I cannot answer that question, Miss Stearne," she admitted, candidly, "but Gran'pa Jim must have had some good reason."

There was unbelief in the woman's eyes – unbelief and a horror of the whole disgraceful affair that somehow included Mary Louise in its scope. The girl read this look and it confused her. She mumbled an excuse and fled to her room to indulge in a good cry.

CHAPTER VI

UNDER A CLOUD

The officer's injunction not to talk of the case of Colonel Weatherby was of little avail in insuring secrecy. Oscar Dowd, who owned and edited the one weekly newspaper in town, which appeared under the title of "The Beverly Beacon," was a very ferret for news. He had to be; otherwise there never would have been enough happenings in the vicinity to fill the scant columns of his little paper, which was printed in big type to make the items and editorials fill as much space as possible.

Uncle Eben met the editor and told him the Colonel had gone away suddenly and had vacated the Vandevanter mansion and put Mary Louise with Miss Stearne to board. Thereat, Oscar Dowd scented "news" and called on Miss Stearne for further information. The good lady was almost as much afraid of an editor as of an officer of the law, so under Oscar's rapid-fire questioning she disclosed more of the dreadful charge against Colonel Weatherby than she intended to. She even admitted the visit of the secret service agent, but declined to give details of it.

Oscar found the agent had departed for parts unknown – perhaps to trail the escaped Colonel – but the hotel keeper furnished him with other wisps of information and, bunching all the rumors together and sifting the wheat from the chaff, the editor evolved a most thrilling tale to print in the Wednesday paper. Some of the material his own imagination supplied; much else was obtained from irresponsible gossips who had no foundation for their assertions. Miss Stearne was horrified to find, on receiving her copy of the Wednesday "Beacon" that big headlines across the front page announced: "Beverly Harbors a Criminal in Disguise! Flight of Colonel James Weatherby when a Federal Officer Seeks to Arrest him for a Terrible Crime!"

Then followed a mangled report of the officer's visit to Beverly on government business, his recognition of Colonel Weatherby – who was none other than the noted criminal, James J. Hathaway – on the street in front of Cooper's Hotel, how the officer wired Washington for instructions and how Hathaway, alias Weatherby, escaped in the dead of night and had so far successfully eluded all pursuit. What crime Hathaway, alias Weatherby, was accused of, the officer would not divulge, and the statements of others disagreed. One report declared the Colonel had wrecked a New York bank and absconded with enormous sums he had embezzled; another stated he had been president of a swindling stock corporation which had used the mails illegally to further its nefarious schemes. A third account asserted he had insured his life for a million dollars in favor of his daughter, Mrs. Burrows, and then established a false death and reappeared after Mrs. Burrows had collected the insurance money.

Having printed all this prominently in big type, the editor appended a brief note in small type saying he would not vouch for the truth of any statement made in the foregoing article. Nevertheless, it was a terrible arraignment and greatly shocked the good citizens of Beverly.

Miss Stearne, realizing how humiliated Mary Louise would be if the newspaper fell into her hands, carefully hid her copy away where none of the girls could see it; but one of the day scholars brought a copy to the school Thursday morning and passed it around among the girls, so that all were soon in possession of the whole scandalous screed.

Mable Westervelt, after feasting upon the awful accusations, cruelly handed the paper to Mary Louise. The girl's face blanched and then grew red, her mouth fell open as if gasping for breath and her eyes stared with a pained, hopeless expression at the printed page that branded her dearly loved Gran'pa Jim a swindler and a thief. She rose quickly and left the room, to the great relief of the other girls, who wanted to talk the matter over.

"The idea," cried Mable indignantly, "of that old villain's foisting his grandchild on this respectable school while he ran away to escape the penalty of his crimes!"

"Mary Louise is all right," asserted Jennie Allen stoutly. "She isn't to blame, at all."

"I warned you that her goody-goody airs were a cloak to hidden wickedness," said Mable, tossing her head.

"Blood will tell," drawled Lina Darrow, a very fat girl. "Mary Louise has bad blood in her veins and it's bound to crop out, sooner or later. I advise you girls to keep your trunks locked and to look after your jewelry."

"Shame – shame!" cried Dorothy Knerr, and the others echoed the reproach. Even Mable looked at fat Lina disapprovingly.

However, in spite of staunch support on the part of her few real friends, Mary Louise felt from that hour a changed atmosphere when in the presence of her school fellows. Weeks rolled by without further public attacks upon Gran'pa Jim, but among the girls at the school suspicion had crept in to ostracize Mary Louise from the general confidence. She lost her bright, cheery air of self-assurance and grew shy and fearful of reproach, avoiding her schoolmates more than they avoided her. Instead of being content in her new home, as she had hoped to be, the girl found herself more miserable and discontented than at any other period of her life. She longed continually to be comforted by Gran'pa Jim and Mamma Bee, and even lost interest in her studies, moping dismally in her room when she should have been taking an interest in the life at the school.

Even good Miss Stearne had unconsciously changed in her attitude toward the forlorn girl. Deciding one day that she needed some new shoes, Mary Louise went to the principal to ask for the money with which to buy them.

Miss Stearne considered the matter seriously. Then she said with warning emphasis:

"My dear, I do not think it advisable for you to waste your funds on shoes, especially as those you have are in fairly good condition. Of course, your grandfather left some money with me, to be expended as I saw fit, but now that he has abscon – eh – eh – secreted himself, so to speak, we can expect no further remittances. When this term is ended any extra money should be applied toward your further board and tuition. Otherwise you would become an outcast, with no place to go and no shelter for your head. That, in common decency, must be avoided. No; I do not approve of any useless expenditures. I shall hoard this money for future emergencies."

In happier times Mary Louise would have been indignant at the thought that her grandfather would ever leave her unprovided for, but she had been so humbled of late that this aspect of her affairs, so candidly presented by Miss Stearne, troubled her exceedingly. She had written a letter every week to her grandfather, addressing it, as he had instructed her to do, in care of Mr. Peter Conant at Dorfield. And always she had stolen out, unobserved, and mailed the letter at the village post office. Of course she had never by a single word referred to the scandal regarding the Colonel or her mother, or to her own unhappy lot at school because of that scandal, knowing how such a report would grieve them; but the curious thing about this correspondence was that it was distinctly one-sided. In the three months since they had gone away, Mary Louise had never received an answer to any of her letters, either from her grandfather or her mother.

This might be explained, she reflected, by the fact that they suspected the mails would be watched; but this supposition attributed some truth to the accusation that Gran'pa Jim was a fugitive from justice, which she would not allow for an instant. Had he not told her to have faith in him, whatever happened? Should she prove disloyal just because a brutal officer and an irresponsible newspaper editor had branded her dear grandfather a criminal?

No! Whatever happened she would cling to her faith in the goodness of dear Gran'pa Jim.

There was very little money in her purse; a few pennies that she must hoard to buy postage stamps with. Two parties for young people were given in Beverly and at both of them Mary Louise was the only girl boarding at the school who was uninvited. She knew that some of the girls even resented her presence at the school and often when she joined a group of schoolmates their hushed conversation warned her they had been discussing her.

Altogether, she felt that her presence at the school was fast becoming unbearable and when one of the boarders openly accused her of stealing a diamond ring – which was later discovered on a shelf above a washstand – the patient humility of Mary Louise turned to righteous anger and she resolved to leave the shelter of Miss Stearne's roof without delay.

There was only one possible place for her to go – to the Conant house at Dorfield, where her mother and grandfather were staying and where she had already passed three of the most pleasant years of her short life. Gran'pa Jim had not told her she could come to him, even in an emergency, but when she explained all the suffering she had endured at the school she knew quite well that he would forgive her for coming.

But she needed money for the long journey, and this must be secured in some way from her own resources. So she got together all the jewelry she possessed and placing it in her handbag started for the town.

She had an idea that a jewelry shop was the proper place to sell her jewelry, but Mr. Trumbull the jeweler shook his head and said that Watson, at the bank, often loaned money on such security. He advised the girl to see Watson.

So Mary Louise went to the "bank," which was a one-man affair situated in the rear of the hardware store, where a grating had been placed in one corner. There she found Mr. Watson, who was more a country broker than a banker, and thrived by lending money to farmers.

Gran'pa Jim was almost as fond of pretty jewels as he was of good clothes and he had always been generous in presenting his grand-daughter with trinkets on her birthdays and at Christmas time. The jewelry she laid before Mr. Watson was really valuable and the banker's eye was especially attracted by a brooch of pearls that must have cost several hundred dollars.

"How much do you want to borrow on this lot?" he asked.

"As much as I can get, sir," she replied.

"Have you any idea of redeeming it?"

"I hope to do so, of course."

The banker knew perfectly well who Mary Louise was and suspected she needed money.

"This is no pawnbroker's shop," he asserted. "I'll give you a hundred dollars, outright, for this pearl brooch – as a purchase, understand – but the rest of the junk I don't want."

A little man who had entered the hardware store to purchase a tin dipper was getting so close to the "bank" that Mary Louise feared being overheard; so she did not argue with Mr. Watson. Deciding that a hundred dollars ought to take her to Dorfield, she promptly accepted the offer, signed a bill of sale and received her money. Then she walked two miles to the railway station and discovered that a ticket to Dorfield could be bought for ninety-two dollars. That would give her eight dollars leeway, which seemed quite sufficient. Elated at the prospect of freedom she returned to the school to make her preparation for departure and arrived just in time to join the other girls at dinner.

CHAPTER VII

THE ESCAPE

As she packed her trunk behind the locked door of her room – an unnecessary precaution, since the girls generally avoided her society – Mary Louise considered whether to confide the fact of her going to Miss Stearne or to depart without a word of adieu. In the latter case she would forfeit her trunk and her pretty clothes, which she did not wish to do unless it proved absolutely necessary; and, after all, she decided, frankness was best. Gran'pa Jim had often said that what one could not do openly should not be done at all. There was nothing to be ashamed of in her resolve to leave the school where she was so unhappy. The girls did not want her there and she did not want to stay; the school would be relieved of a disturbing element and Mary Louise would be relieved of unjust persecution; no blame attached to any but those who had made public this vile slander against her grandfather. From all viewpoints she considered she was doing the right thing; so, when her preparations were complete, she went to Miss Stearne's room, although it was now after eight o'clock in the evening, and requested an interview.

"I am going away," she quietly announced to the principal.

"Going away! But where?" asked the astonished teacher.

"I cannot tell you that, Miss Stearne."

"Do you not know?"

"Yes, I know, but I prefer not to tell you."

Miss Stearne was greatly annoyed. She was also perplexed. The fact that Mary Louise was deserting her school did not seem so important, at the moment, as the danger involved by a young girl's going out into the world unprotected. The good woman had already been rendered very nervous by the dreadful accusation of Colonel Weatherby and the consequent stigma that attached to his granddaughter, a pupil at her eminently respectable school. She realized perfectly that the girl was blameless, whatever her grandsire might have done, and she deeply deplored the scornful attitude assumed by the other pupils toward poor Mary Louise; nevertheless a certain bitter resentment of the unwholesome scandal that had smirched her dignified establishment had taken possession of the woman, perhaps unconsciously, and while she might be a little ashamed of the ungenerous feeling, Miss Stearne fervently wished she had never accepted the girl as a pupil.

She HAD accepted her, however. She had received the money for Mary Louise's tuition and expenses and had promptly applied the entire sum to reducing her grocery bills and other pressing obligations; therefore she felt it her duty to give value received. If Mary Louise was to be driven from the school by the jeers and sneers of the other girls, Miss Stearne would feel like a thief. Moreover, it would be a distinct reproach to her should she allow a fifteen-year-old girl to wander into a cruel world because her school – her sole home and refuge – had been rendered so unbearable that she could not remain there. The principal was really unable to repay the money that had been advanced to her, even if that would relieve her of obligation to shelter the girl, and therefore she decided that Mary Louise must not be permitted, under any circumstances, to leave her establishment without the authority of her natural guardians.

This argument ran hurriedly through her mind as the girl stood calmly waiting.

"Is this action approved by your mother, or – or – by your grandfather?" she asked, somewhat more harshly than was her wont in addressing her pupils.

"No, Miss Stearne."

"Then how dare you even suggest it?"

"I am not wanted here," returned the girl with calm assurance. "My presence is annoying to the other girls, as well as to yourself, and so disturbs the routine of the school. For my part, I – I

am very unhappy here, as you must realize, because everyone seems to think my dear Gran'pa Jim is a wicked man – which I know he is not. I have no heart to study, and – and so – it is better for us all that I go away."

This statement was so absolutely true and the implied reproach was so justified, that Miss Stearne allowed herself to become angry as the best means of opposing the girl's design.

"This is absurd!" she exclaimed. "You imagine these grievances, Mary Louise, and I cannot permit you to attack the school and your fellow boarders in so reckless a manner. You shall not stir one step from this school! I forbid you, positively, to leave the grounds hereafter without my express permission. You have been placed in my charge and I insist that you obey me. Go to your room and study your lessons, which you have been shamefully neglecting lately. If I hear any more of this rebellious wish to leave the school, I shall be obliged to punish you by confining you to your room."

The girl listened to this speech with evident surprise; yet the tirade did not seem to impress her.

"You refuse, then, to let me go?" she returned.

"I positively refuse."

"But I cannot stay here, Miss Stearne," she protested.

"You must. I have always treated you kindly – I treat all my girls well if they deserve it – but you are developing a bad disposition, Mary Louise – a most reprehensible disposition, I regret to say – and the tendency must be corrected at once. Not another word! Go to your room."

Mary Louise went to her room, greatly depressed by the interview. She looked at her trunk, made a mental inventory of its highly prized contents, and sighed. But as soon as she rejoined Gran'pa, Jim, she reflected, he would send an order to have the trunk forwarded and Miss Stearne would not dare refuse. For a time she must do without her pretty gowns.

Instead of studying her text books she studied the railway time-card. She had intended asking Miss Stearne to permit her to take the five-thirty train from Beverly Junction the next morning and since the recent interview she had firmly decided to board that very train. This was not entirely due to stubbornness, for she reflected that if she stayed at the school her unhappy condition would become aggravated, instead of improving, especially since Miss Stearne had developed unexpected sharpness of temper. She would endure no longer the malicious taunts of her school fellows or the scoldings of the principal, and these could be avoided in no other way than by escaping as she had planned.

At ten o'clock she lay down upon her bed, fully dressed, and put out her light; but she dared not fall asleep lest she miss her train. At times she lighted a match and looked at her watch and it surprised her to realize how long a night can be when one is watching for daybreak.

At four o'clock she softly rose, put on her hat, took her suit case in hand and stealthily crept from the room. It was very dark in the hallway but the house was so familiar to her that she easily felt her way along the passage, down the front stairs and so to the front door.

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