

Wells Carolyn

Two Little Women



Carolyn Wells

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CHAPTER I

THE GIRL NEXT DOOR

Summit Avenue was the prettiest street in Berwick. Spacious and comfortable-looking homes stood on either side of it, each in its setting of lawn and shade trees. Most of these showed no dividing fences or hedges, and boundaries were indiscernible in the green velvety sward that swept in a gentle slope to the sidewalk.

Of two neighbouring houses, the side windows faced each other across two hundred feet of intervening turf. The windows of one house were duly fitted with window-screens, holland shades and clean, fresh white curtains; for it was May, and Berwick ladies were rarely dilatory with their "Spring-cleaning." But the other house showed no window dressings, and the sashes were flung open to the sunny breeze, which, entering, found rugless floors and pictureless walls.

But at the open front doors other things were entering; beds, chairs, tables, boxes and barrels, all the contents of the great moving vans that stood out at the curb. Strong men carried incredibly heavy burdens of furniture, or carefully manœuvred glass cabinets or potted palms.

From behind the lace curtains of the other house people were watching. This was in no way a breach of good manners, for in Berwick the unwritten law of neighbours' rights freely permitted the inspection of the arriving household gods of a new family. But etiquette demanded that the observers discreetly veil themselves behind the sheltering films of their own curtains.

And so the Fayres, mother and two daughters, watched with interest the coming of the Roses.

"Rose! what a funny name," commented Dolly Fayre, the younger of the sisters; "do you s'pose they name the children Moss, and Tea and things like that?"

"Yes, and Killarney and Sunburst and Prince Camille de Rohan," said Trudy, who had been studying Florists' catalogues of late.

"Their library furniture is mission; there goes the table," and Mrs. Fayre noted details with a housekeeper's eye. "And here comes the piano. I can't bear to see men move a piano; I always think it's going to fall on them."

"I'm tired of seeing furniture go in, anyway," and Dolly jumped up from her kneeling position. "I'd rather see the people. Do you s'pose there's anybody 'bout my age, Mums?"

"I don't know, Dolly. Your father only said their name was Rose, and not another word about them."

"There's a little girl, anyway," asserted Trudy; "they took in a big doll's carriage some time ago."

Trudy was nineteen and Dolly not quite fifteen, so the girls, while chummy as sisters, had few interests in common. Dolly wandered away, leaving the other two to continue their appraisal of the new neighbours. She went to her own room, which also looked out toward the Roses' house. Idly glancing that way from her window, she saw a girl's face in a window next door. She seemed about Dolly's age, and she had a pretty bright face with a mop of curly black hair.

She wore a red dress and a red hair-ribbon, and she made a vivid picture, framed in the open window.

Dolly looked through the scrim of her bedroom curtain, and then to see better, moved the curtain aside, and watched the black-haired girl.

Dolly, herself, could not be seen, because of the dark wire window screen, and she looked at the stranger with increasing interest.

At last the new girl put one foot over the window sill and then the other, and sat with her feet crossed and kicking against the side of the house. It was a first floor window, and there was little danger of her falling out, but she stretched out her arms and held the window frame on either side.

Dolly judged the girl must be about her own age, for she looked so, and too, her dress came nearly but not quite to her shoetops, which was the prescribed length of Dolly's own.

It was a pleasant outlook. If this new neighbour should be a nice girl, Dolly foresaw lots of good times. For most of her girl friends lived at some distance; the nearest, several blocks away. And to have a chum next door would be fine!

But was she a nice girl? Dolly had been punctiliously brought up, and a girl who sat in a window, and swung her feet over the sill, was a bit unconventional in Berwick.

Dolly was seized with a strong desire to meet this girl, to see her nearer by and to talk with her. But Dolly was timid. Beside her careful education in deportment, she was naturally shy and reticent. She was sure she never could make any advances to become acquainted with this new girl, and yet, she did want to know her.

She went back to her mother and sister.

"There's an awful big picture," Trudy was saying; "it's all burlapped up, so you can't tell what it is. It's easy to judge people from their pictures."

Trudy had graduated the year before from a large and fine girls' school and she knew all about pictures.

"I think you can tell more by chairs," Mrs. Fayre said; "their easy chairs are very good ones. I think they're very nice people."

"Have you seen the girl in the window?" asked Dolly. "She's just about my size."

"So she is," said Mrs. Fayre, glancing at Dolly, and then returning to her study of the chairs.

"When can I go to see her, Mother?"

"Oh, Trudy and I will call there in a fortnight or so, and after that you can go to see the little girl or I'll ask her mother to bring her over here. You children needn't be formal."

"But can't I go over there to-day?"

"Mercy, no, child! Not the day they arrive! They'd think we were crazy!"

Dolly went out on the side verandah. The black-haired girl still sat in the window. She was frankly staring, and so, every time Dolly caught her eye, the straightforward gaze was so disconcerting that Dolly looked away quickly and pretended to be engrossed in something else.

But at last with a determined effort to overcome her timidity, she concluded she would look over at the girl and smile. It couldn't be wrong merely to smile at a new girl, if it was the very day she arrived. They couldn't think her "crazy" for that. But to conclude to do this and to do it, were two very different matters for Dolly Fayre.

Half a dozen times she almost raised her eyes, her smile all ready to break out, and then, it would seem too much to dare, and with a deep blush, she would turn again toward her own house.

But it was nearing luncheon time, and Dolly made a last desperate effort to screw her courage to the sticking point. With a determined jerk she wheeled around and smiled broadly at the new girl.

To her amazement, the pretty face scowled at her! Definitely and distinctly scowled! Dolly could scarcely believe her eyes. Why should this stranger scowl at her, when she didn't know her at all?

Dolly quickly looked away, and pondered over the matter. She felt less shy now, because she was angry. Then the bell rang for luncheon.

Dolly started for the house, but unable to resist a final impulse, she glanced again at the girl in the window.

The girl shook her head at her! It was a quick, saucy, sideways shake, as if Dolly had asked her something and she had refused. The pretty face looked pettish, and the black eyes snapped as she vigorously shook her curly head.

"Pooh!" said Dolly to herself; "wait till you're asked, miss! I don't want anything of you!"

Dolly went into the house and at the lunch table, she told her mother and Trudy of the girl's actions.

"I thought she looked saucy," said Trudy, and the subject was dropped.

In the meantime the girl next door had drawn in her feet and jumped down from the window.

"What a funny lunch!" she exclaimed, as she ran into the dining-room. "Looks good, though," and she sat down on a packing-box, and took the plate her mother offered.

"Yes, it's a sort of picnic," said Mrs. Rose; "everything's cold, but it does taste good!"

The dining-room was unfurnished; though the table and chairs were in it, they were still burlapped, and the barrels of dishes were not yet unpacked. Mrs. Rose and her sister, Mrs. Bayliss, sat on packing-boxes too, and made merry at their own discomfort.

"Seems 'sif we'd never get straightened out," said Mrs. Rose, taking another sandwich on her plate, "but I s'pose we will. It's always like this when you move. Thank goodness, George is coming home early, – he's such a help."

"Yes, he is," agreed Mrs. Bayliss; "what lovely fresh radishes! I'll take some more. Do you know any one at all in Berwick, Molly?"

"No one at all. George liked the place, and he bought this house from an agent. But I shan't hasten to make acquaintances. I believe in going slow in such matters. The neighbours will probably call after a few weeks, and then we'll see what they're like. The people next door have lovely curtains. I think you can judge a lot by curtains. And their whole place has a well-kept air. Perhaps they'll prove pleasant neighbours. Their name is Fayre."

"I saw the little girl out on the verandah," said Dotty Rose, between two bites of her sandwich. "She has yellow hair and blue eyes. But I don't like her."

"Why, Dotty, how you talk!" exclaimed her aunt; "how can you like her or dislike her, when you don't know her?"

"She's a prig; I can see that, Aunt Clara. I can tell by the way she walks and moves around. She hasn't any go to her."

"Well, you've got enough for the whole neighbourhood! Probably you'll find she's a nice, well-behaved little girl."

"All right, have it just as you like, Aunt Clara. When are you going to fix my room, Mother?"

"As soon as your things come; not till to-morrow, most likely. If we can get beds to sleep on to-night, that's all I'll ask."

"I think it's fun," and Dotty danced around on one toe; "I'd like to live this way, always, – nothing in its place and all higgledy-piggledy!"

"I believe you would," returned her mother, laughing. "Now, if you've finished your lunch, dearie, run away and play, for you only bother around here."

Dotty ran away but she didn't play. She went from one room to another, trying to learn the details of her new home; but ever and anon her glance would stray to the house next door, and she would wonder what the yellow-haired girl was doing.

Dotty had been allowed to choose her own room from two that her mother designated. One was on the side of the house that faced the Fayres', the other wasn't. Dotty hesitated between them. She went in one and then the other.

"If I *should* like that prim-faced thing," she said to her Aunt Clara, "I'd rather have this room, that looks toward their house. But if I *don't* like her, – and I'm just about sure I *won't*, – I'd rather have my room on the other side."

"Oh, you'll like her, after you know her," said Aunt Clara, carelessly. "But don't mind that, take the room you think pleasanter."

So Dotty considered them both again. The room not facing the Fayres' was without doubt the more attractive of the two, though not much so. It had a large bay window, which was delightful; but then on the other hand the other room had an open fireplace, and Dotty loved a wood fire.

She stood in the room with the fireplace, looking toward the next house. It was Saturday afternoon, and as she watched she saw the yellow-haired girl and two ladies come out and get in a motor car.

"I don't like her!" Dotty declared again, though as there was no one else present, she talked to herself. "She walks like a prig, she gets in the car like a prig and she sits down on the seat like a prig! I don't like her, and I'm going to take the other room!"

So, when her own furniture arrived it was put in the room with the bay window and which did not overlook the Fayre house. The house that she could see from her newly chosen room, was so hemmed in by trees as to be almost invisible.

Dotty spent a pleasant afternoon, after her furniture was in place, arranging her little trinkets and pictures, and putting away things in her cupboards and bureau drawers.

But every little while some errand seemed to call her across the hall, and she couldn't help looking out to see if "that girl" had returned yet.

The next day was Sunday, and Mr. Rose was at home.

"Well, Chick-a-dotty, you'll have a nice playmate in that little girl next door," he said, as his daughter followed him round the house looking after various matters.

"Deed I won't, Daddy; she's horrid!"

"Why, why! what sort of talk is this? Do you know her?"

"No, but I've seen her, and she isn't nice a bit."

"Oh, I guess she is. I came out in the train last night with a man I know, and he knows the Fayres and he says they're about the nicest people in Berwick."

"Pooh! I don't think so. She's a prim old thing, and doesn't know B from broomstick."

"There, there, Dotty Doodle, don't be hasty in your judgment. Give the little lady a chance."

Later, Dotty and her father walked round the outdoors part of their new domain.

"Isn't it pretty, Daddy!" exclaimed Dotty; "I'm so glad there are a lot of flower-beds and nice big shrubs, and lovely blue spruce trees and lots of things that look like a farm."

The Roses had always lived in the city, and to Dotty's eyes the two acres of ground seemed like a large estate. It was attractively laid out and in good cultivation, and Mr. Rose looked forward with pleasure to the restful life of a suburban town after his city habits.

"There's that girl now!" and Dotty suddenly spied her neighbour walking with *her* father around *their* lawn.

"So it is. I shall speak to him; it's only right, as we are next-door neighbours, and we men needn't be so formal as the ladies of the houses."

"I don't want to speak to her," and Dotty drew back. "*Don't* do it, Daddy, *please* don't!"

"Nonsense, child! of course I shall. Don't be so foolish."

"But I don't want to; she'll think I'm crazy to meet her, and I'm not! I don't want to, Father."

"What a silly! Well, if you don't want to see the girl now, run away. I'm certainly going to chat with Mr. Fayre, and get acquainted."

Now the other pair of neighbours had, not unnaturally, been talking about the newcomers.

"You see, Father," said Dolly as she took her usual Sunday morning stroll around the place with him, "that new girl isn't nice at all. When I smiled at her, she scowled and shook her head at me."

"Oh, Dolly, I imagine she's all right. Mr. Forrest told me about them. He knows them and he says they're charming people."

"Well, they may be, but I don't want to meet her. Don't walk over that way."

"Yes, I shall. Mr. Rose seems to be coming this way, and I shall do the neighbourly thing and have a chat with him."

"Why, Father, you don't know him."

"That doesn't matter between next-door neighbours, at least between the men of the houses. Come along, and scrape acquaintance with the little girl. I think she looks pretty."

Dolly started, then a sudden fit of shyness seized her, and she stood stock-still.

"I can't," she murmured; "oh, Father, please don't ask me to!"

"All right, dear; don't if you don't want to. Run back to the house. I'm going to speak to Mr. Rose."

And that's how it happened that as the two men neared each other, with greeting smiles, the two girls, started simultaneously, and ran like frightened rabbits away from each other, and to their respective homes.

CHAPTER II

DOTTY ROSE AND DOLLY FAYRE

A few days passed without communication between the two houses.

Mr. Fayre expressed a decided approval of his new neighbour, and advised his wife to call on Mrs. Rose. Mrs. Fayre said she would do so as soon as the proper time came.

"I'm not going," said Dolly. "I don't like that girl, and I never shall."

"Why, Dorinda," said her father, who only used her full name when he was serious, "I've never known you to act so before. I've thought you were a nice, sweet-tempered little girl, and here you are acting like a cantankerous catamaran!"

"What is the matter with you, Doll?" asked Trudy; "you are unreasonable about the little Rose girl."

"Let her alone," said Dolly's mother; "she'll get over it."

"I'll never get over it," declared Dolly; "I don't want to know a girl as big as I am, who plays with dolls."

"How do you know she plays with dolls?"

"Well, a dolls' carriage went in there the day they moved in."

"Perhaps it's one she used to have, and she has kept it, for old associations."

"Maybe. Anyhow, I don't like her. She made faces at me."

"Really?" and her mother smiled.

"Well, she scowled at me, and shook her head like a – like a –"

"Like a little girl shaking her head," said Mr. Fayre, to help her out.

But Dolly didn't smile. She was a queer nature, was Dolly. Usually sunny and happy-hearted, she liked almost everything and everybody, but if she did take a dislike, it became a prejudice, and very hard to remove.

Dolly was pretty, with the bluest of blue eyes and the pinkest of pink cheeks and the yellowest of yellow hair. She was inclined to be plump, and Trudy was always beseeching her not to eat so much candy and sweet desserts. But Dolly loved these things and had small concern about her increasing weight. She didn't care much for outdoor play, and would rather sit in the hammock and read a story-book than run after tennis balls.

Her mother called her a dreamer, and often came upon her, sitting in the twilight, her thoughts far away in a fairyland of her own imagination, enjoying wonderful adventures and thrilling scenes.

Dolly was in the grammar school and next year would be in the high school. She didn't like study, particularly, except history and literature, but she studied conscientiously and always knew her lessons.

This morning, she kissed her mother good-bye, and started off for school. She wore a blue and white gingham, and a fawn-coloured coat. Swinging her bag of books, she marched past the Rose house, and though she didn't look at her, she could see the Rose girl on the front steps.

"I wonder if she'll go to our school," thought Dolly; and for a moment the impulse seized her to stop and "scrape acquaintance." Then she remembered that shaking head, and fearing a rebuff, she walked on by.

"Do you know that new girl next door to you?" Celia Ferris asked her as she entered the school yard.

"No; do you?" and Dolly looked indifferent.

"No, I don't; but my mother knows a lady, who knows them and she says Dorothy, – that's her name, – is a wonder."

"A wonder! How?"

"Oh, she's so smart and so clever, and she can do everything so well."

This was enough for Dolly Fayre. To think that disagreeable new neighbour of hers, must be a paragon of all the virtues!

But Dolly was never unjust. She knew she had no real reason to dislike Dorothy Rose, so she only said, "I haven't met her yet. My mother is going to call there this week, and then I s'pose I'll get acquainted with her."

"How funny," said Celia, who was chummy by nature. "I should think you'd go in and play with her without waiting for your mother to call, – and all that. Anybody'd think you were as old as Trudy."

"Oh, I could do that if I wanted to, but I don't want to."

"Well, I think I'll go to see her, anyway. If she's so smart it would be nice to have her in the Closing Day exercises. I s'pose she'll come to school here."

"Of course, you can do as you like, Celia, but I think it's too late to get any new girls in now."

Dolly went on to the schoolroom, her heart full of resentment at this "smart" interloper. It was a little bit a feeling of jealousy, for Dolly Fayre was head and front of everything that went on at the Berwick Grammar School, and it jarred a little to think of having a wonder-girl come in with a lot of new ideas and plans and mix everything all up at the last minute.

But don't get any mistaken idea that Dolly Fayre was a mean-minded or small-natured girl. On the contrary, she was generosity itself in all her dealings with her schoolmates. Every one liked her, and with good reason, for she never quarrelled, and was always happy and smiling.

But the Rose girl had acted queer from the first, and Dolly couldn't admit the desirability of bringing her into their already arranged "Closing Exercises." These were so important as to be almost sacred rites, and as usual Dolly was at the head of all the committees, and her word was law.

She went home from school that afternoon, thinking about it, and her pretty face looked very sober as she went in the house and put her school-books neatly away in their place.

"There's some lemonade and cookies on the sideboard," said her mother as Dolly went through the hall.

"All right, Mumsie," and somehow, after these refreshments had been absorbed, Dolly felt better, and life seemed to have a brighter outlook.

She took an unfinished story-book and picked up her white kitten, and went out to the side verandah, her favourite spot of a warm afternoon.

"You see, Flossy," she whispered, addressing the kitten, "I want you with me, 'cause I'm buffled to-day." Dolly was in the habit of making up words, if she couldn't think of any to suit her, and just at the moment *buffled* seemed to her to mean a general state of being ruffled, and buffeted and rebuffed and generally huffy.

"And you well know, Floss, that when I feel mixy-up, there's nothing so comforting and soothing as a nice little, soft little, cuddly little kitty-cat."

Flossy blinked her eyes, and purred gently, and was just as comforting as she could be, which is saying a good deal.

There was a big, wide swing on the side verandah, one of those cushioned settee affairs that are so cosy to snuggle into, and read.

And it was without a glance at the house next door, that Dolly snuggled herself in among the red cushions and opened her book, while Flossy cuddled in the hollow of her arm; and concluding that she would be quite as comforting asleep as awake, the kitten promptly fell into a doze.

Meantime there were arrivals at the Rose house.

Eugenia, the eleven year old girl, had been staying with a cousin until the house should be put in order, and now she had come to the new home.

She was a black-haired witch, and of exceeding vivacious and volatile disposition.

"OO! – ee!" she exclaimed; "isn't it great! Take me everywhere, Dot! Show me all the rooms and all the outdoorses and everything! I didn't know it was such a big house. Which is my room?"

Even as she talked, Eugenia was flying upstairs, only to turn right around and fly down again. She danced from room to room, sometimes followed or preceded by Dotty and sometimes not. Her own room delighted her. It faced the Fayres' house, being the one Dorothy had rejected in favour of the other.

"Where's Blot?" asked Dotty; "didn't you bring him?"

"Oh, yes; he's down with Thomas. He's crazy. He barked all the way here."

But Dotty was already flying down stairs to find her beloved puppy.

"Here he is, Miss Dorothy," and the chauffeur, Thomas, gave the black poodle into her arms.

"Oh, you blessed Blotty-boy! Oh, you cunnin' Blotsy-wotsy! Does him love him Dotty?"

The love was manifested by some moist caresses and then Blot was all for a scamper. Dotty took him out on the lawn and set him down, herself all ready for a romp.

Now only a minute before, Flossy, the white kitten, had waked from her nap, and seeing that Dolly was absorbed in her story-book, inferred that kitten comfort was not at the moment needed, and decided to go after a very yellow butterfly out on the Fayre lawn.

Stealthily across the grass, Flossy went butterflywards, on tippy-toe. Each white paw was daintily lifted and softly set down on the thick turf, as her progress continued. From the Rose lawn Blot spied the advancing Flossy. He didn't then know her name, but he had liberal ideas on the subject of introductions, and he made a wild dash toward the oncoming kitten.

When Floss saw the small black whirlwind hurling itself at her, she was either too brave or too frightened to retreat, so she put her white back up as high as possible and stood her ground. She expressed her opinion of the performance in a series of sputtering yowls that drew Dolly's attention from her book to the impending battle.

She sprang out of the swing, and rushed toward Flossy just as the two belligerents met in the grassy arena.

Dorothy Rose, on her side of the lawn was shaking with laughter, and this sight was the last straw to Dorinda Fayre's overburdened soul.

"Don't you let your dog eat up my cat!" she cried out, angrily, to the black-haired girl opposite.

"Don't you let your cat eat up my dog, then!" was the immediate response, delivered with enthusiasm equalling Dolly's own.

"Cats don't eat dogs!"

"Neither do dogs eat cats!"

"Well, these will eat each other! Oh! look, we *must* get them apart!"

The battle was of the pitched variety, whatever that may mean. But it is a phrase used to describe the most intense and desperate battles of history, and surely this was one of them. Dolly Fayre had no idea that gentle little Flossy had so much fight in her small white body, and Dotty Rose never dreamed that Blot was such a fire-eater under his curly black coat.

Really alarmed for their pets, the two girls went nearer to the agile warriors, who now looked like an indistinct moving-picture film that was going too fast.

"Come here, Blot!" Dotty cried, in most commanding tones.

"Come here, Flossy!" Dolly called, in coaxing accents.

Insubordination ensued on both sides.

"We'll have to grab them!" declared Dotty Rose; dancing about the war zone.

"We can't!" wailed Dolly Fayre, wringing her hands as she edged away from the seat of battle.

"Well, I just guess we will!" and Dotty Rose seized Blot by the scruff of his black neck and shook him loose from the white kitten.

With a little cry of rejoicing, Dolly Fayre picked up Flossy and plumped herself down on the grass to make sure the kitten was intact.

Dotty sat down too, and felt of Blot's small and well-hidden bones.

As neither animal gave any cry of pain and as each glared at its late opponent, the respective owners of the combatants drew sighs of relief and held on tightly to their pets, lest a fresh attack should begin.

Now it stands to reason that after a scene like that just described, the two girls couldn't get up and walk off home without a word.

So they sat on the grass and looked at each other.

And when the troubled blue eyes of Dolly Fayre saw the big brown eyes of Dotty Rose twinkle and saw her red lips smile, she discovered that the scowl she had objected to was not permanent, and she smiled back.

But somehow, they could think of nothing to say. The smile broke the ice a little, but Dolly Fayre was timid, and Dotty Rose was absorbed in looking at the other's blue eyes and yellow hair.

But it was Dotty who spoke first. "Well," she said, "how do you like me?"

It was an unfortunate question. For Dolly Fayre hadn't a single definite notion regarding Dotty Rose except that she didn't like her. However, it would hardly do to tell her that, so she said, slowly: "I don't know yet; how do you like me?"

"Well, I think you're awfully pretty, to begin with."

"So do I you," put in Dolly, glad to find a favourable report that she could make truthfully.

"Aren't we different," went on the other thoughtfully; "you're so blonde and I'm so dark."

"Yes; I just hate my hair, – towhead, Bert calls me."

"Who's Bert?"

"He's my brother; he's away at school. He's seventeen years old." Dolly spoke proudly, as if she had said, "he's captain of the Fleet."

"Why, I've got a brother away at school, too."

"Have you? What's his name?"

"Bob; of course it's Robert, but we always call him Bob. He's eighteen."

"What else have you got?"

Dotty knew the question referred to family connections, and answered: "A little sister, Genie, 'leven years old."

"That all?"

"Yep. 'Cept Aunt Clara, who lives with us, she's a widow. And of course, Mother and Dad."

"I've got a grown-up sister, Trudy. She's in s'ciety now, and she's awful pretty."

"Look like you?"

"Some. But she's all fluffy-haired and dimply-smiled, you know."

"What funny words you use."

"Do I? Well, I only do when I can't think of the real ones. Are you going to the Grammar School?"

"Mother says it's too late to begin this year. Here it is May, – and it closes in June. So she says for me to wait till next year."

This was comforting. If the girl didn't go to school this year she couldn't make any bother with the Closing Exercises. Beside, maybe she was not such a dislikable girl as she had seemed at first. Dolly sat and regarded her. At last she said: "Then the doll-carriage belongs to your little sister."

"To Genie, yes. How did you know she had one?"

"Saw it come with your things, the day you moved in."

"How old are you?"

"Fourteen, but I'll be fifteen next month, – June."

"Why, so will I! Isn't that funny! What day is your birthday?"

"The tenth."

"Mine's the twentieth. We're almost twins. And our names are quite alike, too. Mine's Dorothy, really, but they all call me Dotty."

"And mine's Dorinda, but I'm called Dolly."

"And we both have brothers at school, and we each have a sister."

"But mine is a big sister and yours is a little sister."

"Yes, but we have as many differences as we have likenesses. You're so fair, and – why, your name is Fayre!"

Dolly laughed. "Yes, and you're so rosy and your name is Rose!"

"Dotty Rose and Dolly Fayre! We ought to be friends. Shall we?"

Dolly hesitated. She was too honest to pretend to a liking she didn't quite feel. She looked squarely at Dotty Rose, and said, straightforwardly, "What made you scowl at me that first day you came?"

"I didn't!" and Dotty Rose opened her brown eyes in astonishment.

"Yes, you did; and you shook your head at me when I smiled to you. You were sitting in a window, with your legs hanging out."

"Sitting where! Oh, I remember! Why, I didn't scowl at *you*, it was because Aunt Clara called me to come in out of that window. And I didn't want to, so I scowled. I've a fearful temper. And then, she told me again to come in, and I shook my head. I wasn't shaking it at *you*! Why, I didn't know you then!"

Dolly drew a long breath. "Then that's all right! I thought you scowled because I smiled at you, and it made me mad. All right, I'll be friends with you. I'd like to. I think you're real nice."

"So do I you!"

CHAPTER III

THE NEW ROOMS

In the cushioned swing on the Fayres' verandah the two girls sat.

An artist would have stopped to admire the picture. Dorinda, her pink and white face framed in its golden halo of curlilocks, her light blue frock, neat and smooth, was calmly and daintily nibbling at a piece of cake, catching the crumbs carefully as they fell.

Beside her, Dorothy was rapidly munching her cake as she talked, and letting the crumbs fall where they might. Her black hair framed her rosy cheeks and her eyes snapped and sparkled as she gesticulated with both hands. It was Dorothy's habit to emphasise her remarks with expressive little motions, and her father often said that if her hands were tied behind her, she couldn't say a word!

Her pink lawn dress was rather tumbled by reason of her wriggling and jumping about, but Dorothy's frocks were rarely unrumpled after she had had them on ten minutes.

"We've been friends more than a week now," she said, as she finished her cake in one large bite and brushed a few stray bits out of her lap. "And I think you're just fine! I'm *so* glad we came to live in Berwick. I like you better than any girl I ever knew." Dotty spread her hands wide as if embracing all the girls who had figured in her previous existence. "Do you like me as much as that?"

As she spoke, she touched her toes to the floor and sent the swing up in the air with a mad jump.

"Oh!" gasped Dolly, as her cake flew out of her hand; "how – how sudden you are!"

"Never mind! *Do* you like me as much as I like you?"

"I don't know," and Dolly looked thoughtful; "I like you, of course, but I wish you'd sit stiller."

"Can't; I'm always jumpy. But you *do* like me, don't you, Dollyrinda?"

"Yes, but I can't hop into a liking the way you do. We're awfully different, you know."

"Course we are! That's what makes us like each other. Just think, Dolly, we'll be fifteen soon. Don't you think we ought to be called by our full names and not Dolly and Dotty any more?"

"I don't know. Why?"

"Oh, 'cause we're too big for baby names. I'm going to stop wearing hair-ribbons."

"You are! How ever will you keep your hair back? And you've such a lot of it."

"I know. So've you. Why, I'll just braid it, and let the end flutter. But Mother says she won't let me till I'm sixteen. Well, we'll see. Do you want to grow up, Doll?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know anything! I never saw such a girl! Well, what are you going to do when you're fifteen?"

"I haven't thought about it. Do I have to do anything different from when I'm fourteen?"

"You don't *have* to! But don't you *want* to? What do you want to be when you're grown up?"

"Oh, *then*! Why, then I'm going to be an opera singer."

"Can you sing?"

"Not much yet. But Trudy says I have a nice voice and I'm going to learn."

"Pooh! I don't believe you'll ever sing in opera. I'm going to be an actress."

"Huh! Can you act?"

"Not yet; but I'm going to learn." Dotty smiled as she realised that their ambitions were at least equally promising. "Wouldn't it be fun if we did both get to be famous! Me an actress and you a singeress. But I may change my mind about mine. I do sometimes. Last winter I was crazy to be a trained nurse; but Mother wouldn't let me."

"Will she let you be an actress?"

"I haven't asked her yet. There's no hurry. I couldn't begin to study for it till I'm out of school. What are you going to get for your birthday?"

"I haven't decided yet. Mother said I could have my bedroom all done over or have a gold watch."

"Oh, have the room things. And I'll do the same! Do you know, when we moved into our house, I took a room on the other side, but I'm going to move across so I can be on this side toward you. And Mother is going to have the room done up for me, and I'm to choose the things. So you do that too, and we'll have 'em alike!"

Dotty had jumped out of the swing in her excitement, and stood at one side, her foot on the step, pushing it sideways.

"Don't do that, Dot, you'll break the swing."

"Well, will you? Will you choose the room fixings 'stead of the watch?"

"I don't know; I'll have to think."

"Fiddlesticks! Don't think! Jump at it, and say yes!"

"I believe I'd rather, anyway; it would be fun to have our things alike. I'll ask Mother."

"But she said you could have your choice."

"Yes, but of course, I'll talk it over with her. And Dotty, we don't want the same coloured things, you know."

"Why don't we?"

"Why, because we're so different. What colour do you want?"

"Oh, I've got it all picked out. I'm going to have rose and grey. It's all the rage. Rose pink, you know, and French grey."

"Well, I don't want that. I want pale green and white."

"You do! Why rose and grey is ever so much more fashionable."

"I don't care. I know what I want. Now, see here, – But do come and sit down! Don't climb over the back of the swing!"

Dotty jumped down from the back of the swing, and came around and seated herself beside Dolly. For nearly five minutes she sat quietly while they discussed the colours.

"But, don't you see," said Dolly at last, "it will be nicer for us to have our own colours and have the things alike. We can have just the same shape furniture and everything, only each stick to our own colour."

Dotty was persuaded, and they agreed that the two mothers could easily be brought to see the beauty of their plans.

And so it was. A neighbourly friendliness already existed between the households, and as the two birthdays fell so near together, it seemed fitting that the girls should have their gifts alike.

So the paperhanger was visited and Dolly chose a lovely paper of striped pattern, but all white; to be crowned with a border design of hanging vines and leaves in shades of green.

Dotty's paper was the same stripe, in soft greys; and her border was a design of pink roses and rosebuds.

Dolly's woodwork was to be painted white and Dotty's light grey.

The two sets of furniture were exactly alike, except that one was enamelled grey and one white.

Each room had a bay window, and the window seats were cushioned in green or rose, and the numerous pillows that graced them were of harmonious colouring.

The parents of the girls agreed that a fifteenth birthday was a memorable occasion, and one not likely to occur again, so they made the furnishings of the two rooms complete to the smallest detail.

Each had a large rug of plain velvet carpeting; Dotty's rose pink and Dolly's moss green. Window curtains of Rajah silk fell over dainty white ones, and pretty light-shades of green and pink, respectively, gave the rooms a soft glow at night.

Trudy contributed wonderful *fillet* embroidered covers for dressing-tables and stands, and dainty white couch pillows, with monograms and ruffles.

Dotty's Aunt Clara gave each of the girls a picture, which they were allowed to choose for themselves. They took a whole afternoon for this, and at last Dolly made up her mind to take "Sir Galahad," and Dotty chose, after long deliberation, a stunning photograph of the "Winged Victory."

These, framed alike in dark, polished wood, were hung in similar positions in the two rooms.

Altogether, the rooms were delightful. It was hard to say which was prettier, but each best suited its happy owner.

There was quite a discussion as to when they would take possession, for everything was in readiness by Dolly's birthday, which was on the tenth.

"I'll tell you!" cried Dotty, with a sudden inspiration; "let's average up! Dolly's birthday is the tenth and mine the twentieth. Let's celebrate both on the fifteenth, that's half way between, and as we're fifteen anyway, it makes it just right!"

This was agreed to as a fine scheme, and then Mrs. Fayre electrified the girls by proposing that they have a little party by way of further celebration.

"Together, of course," she said, smiling; "not in either house, but an outdoor party, on the lawn, half-way between."

"Oh, Mumsie!" and Dolly clasped her hands in ecstatic joy at the prospect.

"Oh, Mrs. Fayre!" and Dotty flung her hands above her head, and danced up and down the room where these plans were being talked over.

They were in the Fayre house, having just come down from an inspection of Dolly's room, and these inspections were of almost daily occurrence and usually participated in by several members of both families.

"Good idea!" said Mrs. Rose. "It will let Dotty get acquainted with the young people here, and that's what I want. But let me make the party, Mrs. Fayre, and you and Dolly invite the guests as we know so few people as yet."

"No; the party must be half and half as to responsibility and expense. If our two D's are to be so friendly, we must share and share alike in their doings."

So it was agreed, and as there was but a week in which to get ready, plans were hurried through.

They decided to ask thirty of the Berwick young people, fifteen girls and fifteen boys.

"I wish Bob could be home!" sighed Dotty; and Dolly echoed the wish for her own brother. But the boys of the two families were deep in school exams and could not think of coming home for a party.

Of course the Fayres decided on the invitation list, but everything else was mutually arranged.

It was to be entirely a lawn party; first because that seemed pleasanter, and too, because then, it could take place on the adjoining lawns and so be the party of both.

"Only, – if it rains!" said Dolly, with an anxious face.

"It won't rain!" declared Dotty; "it *can't* rain on our double birthday! It will be the beautifullest, clearest, sunshiniest day in the world! I know it will!"

The girls decided to sleep in their new rooms for the first time the night before the party.

"For," said Dolly, shaking her head sagely, "the night after the party, we'll be so tired and thinky about it, that we can't enjoy our rooms so much."

"All right," agreed Dotty, "I don't care. I'm crazy to get into mine; the sooner the better, I say."

The two girls had a birthday present for each other, and though they didn't know it, the two mothers had planned these so they should be alike.

But they did know that the mothers had these gifts in readiness, and that they would see them when they awoke on the birthday morning.

By common consent the real birthdays were ignored, and the fifteenth of June accepted as the right anniversary for both.

Very formal were the rites preparatory to the occupancy of the new rooms.

Dotty had planned them and after some discussion Dolly had agreed.

"You come over and wish me good-night in my room," Dotty said, "and then I'll go over and wish you good-night in yours. And then, I'll go home again, and when we're all ready for bed, we'll put out our lights and stick our heads out of our windows and holler good-night across."

"Somebody might hear us," objected Dolly.

"Pooh! they won't. And what if they did? Neighbours have got a right to say good-night to each other, I guess."

"But that's disturbing the peace, or something like that."

"Huh! the Peace must be awful easy disturbed! Well, you've got to do it, anyhow."

"I haven't got to, either! Not just 'cause *you* say so!"

Dotty was beginning to learn that mild-mannered Dolly had a will of her own, and she said, placatingly: "Well, what do you want to do, then?"

"Let's do something like this. When we're all ready to hop into bed, let's turn our lights up and down three times in succession; that'll mean good-night."

"Oh, yes, I see; now, listen! we'll do it separately. You flash first and then I will; and after three flashes, we'll leave the lights out and jump into bed at the same minute!"

So it was settled, and the eventful occasion duly arrived.

The girls' bedtime hour was nine o'clock, but some time before that they were in their new rooms, enjoying their beauty and freshness.

At quarter before nine, Dolly appeared at the Rose house, and said solemnly, "I've come over to wish Dorothy good-night."

"Come in," said Mrs. Rose, trying not to smile at the ceremonial visit. "You'll find her in her room; go right up."

Dolly went up, and found Dotty waiting for her.

"Isn't it pretty!" Dolly exclaimed, seeing, as if for the first time the beauties of the room. The bed was turned down, and a lovely new nightdress, with a rose-coloured ribbon run through its lace edge, lay in readiness for the sleeper.

"Oh, it's *lovely*!" returned Dotty; "I can hardly wait to go to bed! Go on, say your piece."

Dolly stood a minute, her hands clasped, her eyes wandering about with a thoughtful far away gaze.

"It's all gone," she said at last; "I can't remember it, only a line:

"Sleep sweetly in this quiet room, oh, thou, whoe'er thou art;
Nor let a troublous something or other disturb thy peaceful heart.

"Honest, that's all I can remember."

"Well, that's enough. Thank you, sweet friend and playmate, now go I with thee!"

Grabbing Dolly by the arm, Dotty flew downstairs and across the lawn to the other house; Dolly running by her side.

Up to Dolly's new room they went.

"Lovely!" exclaimed Dotty, as she saw almost the counterpart of her own room, even to the new nightdress, – only Dolly's had a white ribbon.

"You might have had green," said Dotty, doubtfully.

"No, I don't like coloured ribbons in my underclothes. They're all right for you," Dolly added politely, "but I never did like them."

"Now I'll say *my* piece;" and Dotty bowed to her audience of one. "I haven't forgotten it, but it's very short.

"Early to bed and early to rise
Makes a girl healthy and wealthy and wise.

"Thank you, sweet friend and playmate, now go I with thee."

"No; *you* don't say that! You've *been* with me. Now, I go home and we both get ready for bed. When you're all ready, put out your light and – "

"Yes, I know."

Dotty scampered downstairs and over home, and fairly flew up to her room.

In less than twenty minutes Dotty was all ready for bed; she put out her light, and throwing a dressing-gown over her nightdress, she sat in the window, watching the light in Dolly's room.

She waited and waited, but the light behind the pulled-down shade remained.

"H'm!" said Dotty to herself, yawning, "she is the *slowest* thing! I could have undressed twice in this time!"

But at last, Dolly's light went out, and her shade was slowly raised.

Then, according to their plan, Dotty flashed her light on and off again. Dolly's light repeated this manœuvre. Then Dotty did it again, and then Dolly did. The third time the flashes came and went, and then all ceremonies over, the two girls went to their new pretty, inviting beds, and were very soon asleep.

CHAPTER IV

THE BIRTHDAY MORNING

Dotty Rose woke early next morning, and, wide-awake on the instant, sprang from her bed and flew to the window. But she could see nothing of Dolly. The white shades were down and there was no sign of any one stirring. Dotty turned back and began anew to look at her pretty belongings. On the dressing-table she spied something she had not seen there the night before. It was a lovely picture of Dolly in a beautiful silver frame. Dotty laughed outright, for that was exactly what she had given Dolly! A silver frame with her own picture in it. The two mothers had been in the secret, and had seen to it that the frames were alike, but neither of the girls knew that her gift was to be duplicated.

It was a perfect likeness, showing Dolly at her best; a dreamy expression on her sweet face, and her soft hair in little waves at her temples, and drawn back by an enormous ribbon bow.

It was almost too early to get dressed, so Dotty slipped on a dressing-gown and bedroom slippers and dawdled about, keeping a watch on the Fayre house, in hopes Dolly's shades would fly up.

Soon her little sister Eugenia came bounding in. She, too, was in a kimono and she gave a jump and landed with a spring in the middle of Dotty's carefully arranged couch pillows.

"Genie!" cried her sister, "get off of there!"

"Won't!" and Genie bounced up and down on the springs of the couch.

"Get off, I tell you!"

"Won't, I tell you!"

It *was* trying, for the pretty pillows with their snowy white embroidered covers were rumpled and tossed by Genie's mischievous play.

"Genie Rose! You go right straight out of my room! You're a naughty little girl and you're spoiling my birthday things!"

"Dorothy Rose,
With a pug nose!"

chanted Genie, with the amiable intention of teasing her sister beyond endurance.
And she did, for Dotty flung back:

"Genie, Genie,
You're a meany!"

and then she grabbed her and pulled her off the pillows and pushed her out of the room and locked the door.

"It's a shame!" and poor Dotty nearly cried to see the havoc naughty little Genie had wrought. One pillow cover was torn and another had a black mark from the sole of Genie's slipper.

She heard a tap at the door, and her mother's voice said, "Let me in, Dotty, dear."

Dotty opened the door, and exclaimed: "Mother! Isn't Genie the bad little thing! Look at my pretty pillows!"

"Oh, what a shame! Why *do* you two children quarrel so?"

"We didn't quarrel. Genie did it on purpose."

"But why can't you be loving, kind little sisters? You're always teasing each other."

"But I didn't tease her, Mother."

"Well, you usually do. Now, Dotty, can't you make a birthday resolution to be more patient with Genie? Remember she's only a little girl, while you're getting grown up. Fifteen is almost a young lady, and you should be kind and gentle with everybody."

"I s'pose I ought," and Dorothy sighed; "but it's hard to have my birthday things upset. Aren't you going to punish her, Mother?"

"Oh, no; she didn't mean to be naughty. She was only mischievous. I'll mend your pillow, and the soiled one can be laundered."

Dotty's anger was always quick to come and quick to go, and she smiled brightly, as she said, "all right. I'll forgive her this time, but she's got to stop that kind of teasing."

"I'll speak to her," said easy-going Mrs. Rose; "how do you like Dolly's picture?"

"Lovely, isn't it? Did you and Mrs. Fayre know about the frames?"

"Yes; and we wanted them to be alike; but I had to urge you to take this instead of that other pattern. Remember?"

"Yes, indeed," and Dotty smiled to think how determined she had been in the matter, but had at last yielded to her mother's judgment.

"Oh, there's Dolly!" she cried, as she saw the shade go up in the opposite window. "Hello. Happy Birthday!" she called out.

Dolly returned the greeting, and the two girls waved their respective photographs at each other, and then both began to get dressed.

Dolly, too, had a morning visit from her sister.

Trudy looked in on her way down to breakfast.

"Happy Birthday, Doll!" she said; "shall I tie your hair-ribbon?"

She stepped into the new room, and while tying the big bow, looked around admiringly.

"You're a lucky little kiddy to have such a lovely room. It's prettier than mine."

"I know it is, Trudy," and Dolly looked regretful. "I'll change with you, if you like. I think as you're the oldest you ought to have the prettiest room."

"Not at all, you little goosy!" and Trudy kissed the troubled face. "This is your fifteenth birthday, and I'm glad you have such a beautiful gift to remember it by."

With their arms around each other, the two girls went downstairs.

"Whoop-de-doo! Dollykins," cried her father, throwing down his paper; "why, you don't look a bit different from when you were fourteen! I thought you'd be a foot taller, at least!"

"I don't feel any taller or any older, Father; and I don't s'pose I'll act so. But Mumsie, mayn't I stop wearing hair-ribbons? Dotty's going to."

"Are you sure?" and Mrs. Fayre looked quizzical, for she had discussed this weighty matter with Mrs. Rose.

"No, not sure; but Dotty's going to ask her mother and she thinks she can make her say yes."

"Well, let's wait and see what Mrs. Rose does say," and Mrs. Fayre took her place at the breakfast table.

"It seems funny not to have a lot of presents at your place, Doll," said Trudy, smiling.

"That's all right," and Dolly returned the smile; "I agreed that my room fixings were to take the place of all other presents."

"And then you have the party, you know," said her father. "Mr. Rose has a delightful surprise for it, and when I come home this afternoon I'll bring something to add to the gaiety of nations."

"Oh, Father, what?"

"Never you mind, curiosity-box! You'll see soon enough."

"Will you come home early, Father?"

"As early as I can. By five, surely."

After breakfast, the two heroines of the occasion went out to their respective side verandahs, and the usual morning programme was carried out.

Each frantically waved her hand to the other, calling, "Come over!"

Then each vigorously shook her head, shouting: "No, you come over here!"

"No, you!"

"No, you!"

Then Dolly, coaxingly, "Aw, come on, – come on over."

Then Dotty, positively, "No, sir! it's your turn. Come on over here."

With slight variations this dialogue was repeated every morning. Not that either cared much which went to the other's house, but it was one of their habits. Perhaps Dolly oftenest gave in, and on this birthday morning, the colloquy was short before she ran across the grass and the two friends sat in the Roses' hammock, swinging vigorously as they talked.

"How'd you like my present to you?" asked Dotty, with twinkling eyes.

"Lovely!" and Dolly smiled back. "How'd you like mine to you?"

"Beautiful! Truly, Dollyrinda, I'm awful glad to have that picture of you."

"So am I of you. Did you get any plate presents?"

"No; I didn't expect any. All the family gave me things for my room, you know. Bob sent me a dear little clock."

"How nice; Bert sent me a pair of candlesticks, – glass ones, – they're awfully pretty."

"Isn't it funny we don't know each other's brothers."

"We will soon, though. Bert is coming home in about two weeks."

"Yes, so is Bob. As soon as school closes. Oh, here come the men to put up the tent! Let's go and watch them."

Dolly had been allowed to stay at home from school for the day, and the two girls, followed by Genie, ran out on the lawn to see what was going on.

In order to make the party a truly joint affair, it had been decided to set up a tent on the lawn exactly midway between the two houses, for the party supper. It was a large tent, and gay with red trimmings and flags. Inside, tables were set up, and the maids from both houses brought out plates and glasses in abundance.

"Oh, isn't it just *grand*!" exclaimed Dotty, seizing Dolly round the waist and making her dance about the lawn.

"Lovely; but don't rumple me so, Dotty! This is a clean frock."

"Oh, what an old fuss you are! Always thinking about your clothes!"

"I am not, any such thing! But what's the use of spoiling a clean dress the minute you put it on?"

"All right, I'll keep away from you, if you're so afraid I'll muss you up! Proudly!"

For some unknown reason, this epithet was the most scathing in the girls' vocabulary, and either was quick to resent it.

"I am not a Proudly! And you'd look nicer if you took a little better care of your own clothes, – so there now!"

"My clothes are all right! They're as good as yours! I wish we didn't have a birthday together!"

Dotty flounced away, and Dolly walked home with an exaggerated dignity.

These little quarrels were very silly; but they often occurred between these two who were really good friends, but who sometimes acted very foolishly.

Dolly went in her own house, and as she ran upstairs, she sang so very gaily, that Mrs. Fayre looked at Trudy, and said, "Another fuss!"

"Yes," and Trudy sighed. "I don't know as Dotty Rose is a very good friend for Dolly; they quarrel a lot."

"Oh, well, they get over it right away. I think it is good for Dolly to have some one to stir her up now and then. She's naturally so meek and mild."

"Well, Dotty Rose stirs her up, all right!" and Trudy laughed.

It was about half an hour later, that Genie Rose appeared before Mrs. Fayre.

"Where's Dolly?" she demanded.

"Can't you speak a little more politely, Genie?" and Mrs. Fayre smiled pleasantly at the child.

"You ain't my mother to tell me what to say!"

"No; but this is my house and I like to have little girls act nicely here, especially as I know that you have better manners if you choose to use them."

Genie thought a moment, digging her toe into the rug, and at last said:

"Good-morning, Mrs. Fayre. Please may I see Dolly?"

"Why, what a little lady! Yes, indeed; you will find her in her room. Go right up, Genie, dear."

The child trudged upstairs, and entered Dolly's room.

"What do you want?" and Dolly, with suspiciously bright eyes, looked up from the book she was pretending to read.

"You're not so awful polite, either," and Genie's big, black eyes looked sharply at Dolly. "But never mind. I've come over to tell you that Dot's cryin' about you."

"Did she tell you to come?"

"Nope. She don't know I'm here. But I think you're two sillies to spoil your nice birthday by crying about each other."

"I'm not crying!"

"Well, you have been. I can see the cry-marks in your eyes. Nice blue eyes. C'mon over and make up."

"Get Dotty to come over here and make up."

"She won't come."

"Have you asked her?"

"No, but I just know she won't. So let's don't ask her, and you come over there."

"You're a funny little thing, Genie! You know a lot, don't you?"

"Course I do. Come on, Dolly," and the child pulled at Dolly's sleeve.

"All right, I will," and the two went together over to the Rose house.

Dotty in her room, heard Dolly's voice below stairs and came running down. Her anger was all past, and she was more than ready to be friends again.

"Let's go out and see the tent," said Dolly, as the two met in the hall.

"All right, let's," and out they went.

"Did you fix it up, Genie?" said her mother, who had pretty much known what was going on.

"Yes'm, I fixed it up," and Genie ran after the black puppy, who with judicial foresight was running away from her.

"Tell me about the people who are coming, Dolly," said Dotty. "Who are the nicest ones?"

"You may not like the same ones I do; but Clara Ferris is my most intimate friend of the lot."

"As intimate as I am?"

"Well, of course, I've known her so much longer, you see, she seems more intimate."

"But we're sort of twins, you know."

"Only sort of; we're not really. Well, anyway, there's Celia and then there's Maisie May."

"Maisie May! What a funny name!"

"Well, it's her name all the same. And the two Rawlins girls, Grace and Ethel."

"Are they nice?"

"Lovely. They live on the next block below us. Their brother is coming, too. Clayton, his name is."

"What other boys?"

"Oh, Reggie Stuart and Lollie Henry – "

"Lollie! What a ridiculous name for a boy!"

"His real name is Lorillard. He's an awfully nice boy. He plays the cornet in school sometimes for us to march by. Then there's Joe Collins. He's the funniest thing! Makes you laugh all the time. And a lot of others; I can't tell you about all of them."

"Never mind; I'll catch onto them as they come. Do you think they'll like me, Dolly?"

"Of course they will; why wouldn't they?"

"I don't know; but with such a lot of them, I feel kind of shy."

"Pooh; Dot Rose, you couldn't be shy if you tried!"

"It isn't shy, exactly; but I'm afraid they won't think I'm nice."

"Oh, yes, they will; don't be silly. Anyway, some of them will. And maybe you won't like all of them. Everybody can't like everybody, – you know."

"No, I s'pose not. What do we do? Stand up to receive them?"

"Of course! Did you think we sat down? Haven't you ever had a party?"

"Not such a big one."

"Well, I've had lots of 'em. We stand side by side, and I'll introduce everybody to you. Of course, Mumsie and Trude will be around, and your mother and your aunt, – won't they? Don't try to remember all their names, 'cause you can't, and you can pick them up later."

"What a lot you know!" and Dotty looked at Dolly with a thoughtful admiration.

"I know why," said Dolly, with a sudden flash of enlightenment; "it's 'cause I have an older sister. Trudy is 'out,' you know, and I'm sort of accustomed to comp'ny; but you have a *little* sister, so you haven't had so much experience."

"Yes, that's it," and Dotty comprehended. "All right, you can show me, and I'll do whatever you say."

CHAPTER V

THE DOUBLE PARTY

The party was from four to seven. Before the hour the girls were in readiness and waiting on the lawn, midway between the two houses, to receive their guests.

Dolly Fayre wore a white organdie, all lacy with little ruffles and a light blue sash with blue silk stockings and white slippers.

Dotty Rose had on a lovely white voile with pink ribbons and pink stockings.

Both girls wore their hair in a long loose braid, with a big ribbon at the top of the braid.

"Didn't leave off hair-ribbons, did you?" said Dolly, smiling.

"No, Mother wouldn't hear of it. She says we ought to wear them until we're sixteen, anyway."

"I don't care much, do you?"

"No; only I'd rather leave them off. It didn't rain, you see."

"I should say not! It's a perfect day. Did you put a pink ribbon on Blot?"

"Yes, he looks lovely! Oh, here's Flossy, in her blue bow. If they'll only behave themselves!"

The puppy and the kitten had become fairly good friends, by reason of their two young mistresses' training; and frequently met without fighting, though this was not to be depended on.

"Oh, here comes somebody, Dolly! I feel as if I should run away!"

"Nonsense, Dot! don't be silly! It's only Joe Collins. Hello, Joe; this is my new friend, Dorothy Rose. It's her party, same as mine."

Joe was far from bashful. "Hay-o, Dorothy," he said, gaily. "Aren't you afraid you'll get off the line? My, but you girls are particular to stand just so!"

Dorothy flashed a smile at him. Somehow her shyness vanished, and she replied, "Oh, we only stood that way, waiting for somebody to come. Now, we can move around," and she took a few jumpy skips around the lawn. "Do you live near here?" she went on, by way of conversation.

"Couple o' blocks away. Hope we'll be friends."

"Course we will. And I've got a brother about your size; you'll like him."

"Is he here?"

"No; he's away at school. Be home in about two weeks. Come and see him then."

"I will. Here come the Brown twins. Know 'em?"

"No, I don't know anybody. My! Aren't they alike?"

They certainly were, and when Dolly introduced Tod and Tad Brown, Dotty frankly stared at them.

"I never saw such twinsy twins before," she said; "do you know yourselves apart?"

"Not always," replied one of them. "But I think I'm Tod, and my brother is Tad. Of course our Sunday names are Todhunter and Tadema, but Tod and Tad are much better for every day use."

Then some girls came; Clara Ferris was among the first; and then Grace and Ethel Rawlins, and Maisie May.

Dotty took a quick liking to the last named, for she was a bright, pretty girl who seemed eager to be friends.

Clayton Rawlins came too, and Lollie Henry, and then they came in such numbers that Dotty couldn't catch all the names nor remember those she did catch.

The girls had laid off their hats and wraps in the Fayre house, and the boys in the Rose house, as every means was used to have the party equally divided.

At first they played games. The Fayres had a tennis court, and the Roses a croquet ground. Also, Mr. Rose had contributed as his "surprise" to the party a set of Lawn Bowls. This was a new

sport to many of them and all liked it, and took turns at the bowling. Others wandered about the grounds or sat in the swings and hammocks, and at five o'clock they were called to supper.

Little tables had been placed on the lawn and four or six young people were seated at each. Then the good things were brought to them. Bouillon and tiny sandwiches, ices, cakes, jellies, bon-bons, everything that goes to make a delightful party supper.

The two hostesses did not sit together, and Dotty found herself with Clara Ferris, Joe Collins and one of the Brown twins.

"How do you like Berwick?" asked Tad Brown, as he finished his bouillon.

"Ever so much!" returned Dotty enthusiastically; "and now I'm acquainted with so many people I shall like it better than ever."

"Aren't you coming to school?"

"Not this term. It's so near closing, and Mother says next year I can go right into High School with Dolly Fayre."

"We'll all be in High next year," said Clara. "We're all in the same grade, you know. But I wish you would come to school now, and be in the Closing Exercises. We need more girls."

"What for?"

"Oh, for the tableaux and things. We have a splendid program. Haven't we, Tad?"

"How do you know he's Tad?" asked Dotty, laughing.

"I asked him," returned Clara. "It's the only way. Nobody can tell 'em apart."

"Cept Mother," said Tad, grinning. "She never makes a mistake. But the teachers can't tell. I get kept in if Tod misses his lessons, and he gets marked if I'm late."

"Don't you mind?"

"No; 'cause it evens up in the long run. Tod's better-natured than I am, but I'm prettier."

"Why, how can you be?" cried Dotty; "you're exactly alike."

"Oh, *I* can see it! I'm *much* better-looking." Tad's honest, round, freckled face was winsome but not handsome, and the girls laughed at this make-believe vanity.

Dolly was at a table with the other Brown boy and Grace Rawlins and Lollie Henry.

"Dotty Rose is pretty, isn't she?" said Grace.

"Awfully pretty," agreed Dolly, "and a nice girl, too. I like her lots."

"Some looker!" declared Lollie Henry, gazing with admiration over at Dotty, who was laughing merrily.

"She's my sister," put in Genie, who was a restless spirit, and having finished her supper, was roaming around among the tables talking to different ones.

"So she is," and Dolly patted the glossy, black curls.

"Looks like a spitfire, though, if she should get mad," commented Tod Brown, who was an outspoken boy.

"Oh, I don't think so," returned Dolly; and then she remembered the few trifling quarrels they had already had. "No," she went on, "Dotty isn't a spitfire; but when she gets mad she just flounces off and gets over it."

"Just like a girl!" said Tod; "why don't you have it out, and done with it?"

"That's what Bert always says," and Dolly laughed. "I guess girls and boys are different about such things."

"I guess they are," said Grace, looking rueful. "Maisie May and I have been 'mad' for two weeks now."

"Oh, how silly!" exclaimed Lollie Henry. "I'm going to get you two girls together and make you make up!"

"Yes, let's," said Tad; "come on now; I've finished my ice cream, haven't you, Dolly?"

They all had, and they followed Tad, who was ringleader in this game. The others had mostly risen from the tables, and Tad told Dolly to get Maisie and bring her over to their group.

Grace Rawlins looked a little uncertain. She honestly wanted to be friends with Maisie but she was not sure she liked the way it was being brought about.

Dolly came back, arm in arm with Maisie.

The two boys stood in front of Grace until the girls came up, and then Tad, whisking aside, said, with a low bow: "Miss Maisie May, I want to make you acquainted with Miss Grace Rawlins, the nicest girl in Berwick, except the rest of them."

Maisie coloured and looked half-angry, half-amused, and Tad went on: "I see by the papers that you two girls don't know each other to speak to, so Dolly Fayre and us two boys are a committee of three to see that you become acquainted immediately if not sooner. You two will therefore now greet each other with a nice, sweet kiss."

Tad's manner was so funny and so like a kindly old gentleman, that the girls had to laugh.

But though Grace looked willing to obey the order, Maisie did not.

"Don't be silly, Tad," she said; "I guess you don't know what Grace said about me, or you wouldn't ask me to kiss her!"

"Tell me," said Tad, with the air of an impartial judge, "and I and my wise colleague, Mr. Lorillard Henry, will size up the case and pronounce judgment."

"Why, she said I was the meanest girl in Berwick, because I wouldn't tell her the answer to an algebra example. And I couldn't, because Miss Haskell had made us all promise not to tell the answers to anybody – she wanted everybody to do them without help."

"Seems to me you did the right thing," and Tad looked at Grace.

"I didn't know that," said Grace. "I wasn't at school the day Miss Haskell said that."

"Then you couldn't be expected to know," said Tad; "now, it's just as I said, a boy would fight it out with another boy, and he might punch his head, but the matter would be understood and straightened out, and not sulk for two weeks over it."

"I didn't sulk," said Grace.

"Well, you two sillies didn't speak to each other, – it's about the same thing. *Now* will you be good! Will you kiss and make up?"

"I will," said Maisie May, heartily, and she flung her arms round Grace, and gave her a most friendly kiss, which was as heartily returned.

"Bless you, my children!" said Tad, dramatically. "Now don't let me hear of your quarrelling again! Are you mad at anybody, Dolly?"

"No, sir, thank you; but if I am, at any time, I'll come to you for a peacemaker."

"Oh, *look* who's here!" cried Lollie, spying a strange figure walking across the lawn.

The group joined the others and found themselves invited to take a seat in the rows of chairs which were lined up in front of an interesting-looking table.

They did so, and soon all present were seated in breathless anticipation of what might happen.

The tea tables had been whisked away, and at the door of the tent the stranger stood, – a table in front of him.

He was a magician, and the tricks he did held his young auditors spellbound.

Turning back his coat sleeves to prove he was concealing nothing, he would take a large sheet of white paper, and with a swift movement twirl it round into a cornucopia. This was, of course, empty, and shaking it about to prove its emptiness, he then held it upright, and invited Dolly to look into it. But he held it so high, that she had to stand on tiptoe to peep in. However, she caught a glimpse, and it seemed to her there were pink flowers in it.

Then the magician asked Dotty to peep in. She peered over the edge, and just as she exclaimed, "Why, it's full of flowers!" he overturned it on her head, and she was showered with lovely pink rosebuds made of tissue paper!

"Where did they come from?" cried everybody, as they scrambled to pick them up. "The cone was empty! Where did he get them?"

But the magician only smiled, and went on with his other tricks.

"Has any one a gold watch?" he asked.

Not many of the boys had gold watches, but Lollie Henry exhibited with pride one that his grandfather had given him on his birthday.

"May I borrow it?" said the magician; "ah, thank you," and he took it before Lollie had really consented.

"Now, a silk hat. Much obliged, sir," as Mr. Fayre provided the hat.

"Now, my young friends, we'll make an omelet. Two eggs, somebody, – please?"

Nobody had any eggs, and the magician seemed nonplussed. "What, no eggs in all this well-dressed crowd? Incredible! Ah, come here, little girl!" He caught Genie, who was running about. "Why, here is an egg in the big bow of your hair-ribbon! And here is another in the other bow! What a strange place to carry eggs! Did Mother send you to the store for them?"

"No, sir," said Genie, looking in amazement at the unmistakable eggs the man had evidently found in her ribbon. "I should think they would have dropped out sooner!"

"I should think so too," returned the magician; "lucky for me they didn't, or I could not have made the nice omelet I'm about to concoct."

He set the silk hat on the table, laid the watch and eggs beside it, and then called for a cup of milk.

Somehow or other Mrs. Fayre had that all ready and handed it to him with a smile.

"Good!" said the magician; "now we'll to work! I suppose many of you girls know how to make an omelet, so you must look sharp and see that I do it right. First, we'll break the eggs and whisk them up."

He broke the eggs right into the silk hat, and stirred them with a fork and then poured in the milk slowly, stirring all the time.

"Something else goes to an omelet," he said, trying to think; "ah, yes, some sort of an herb. Ah, I have it! Thyme! Well, well, Mr. Fayre, do you raise thyme in your kitchen garden? No? What a pity! But, luckily, I have time right here!" He took up Lollie's watch. "Ah, just, the thing!"

He threw the watch in the hat, and began to beat it with his heavy fork.

He looked anxiously in the hat. "Wants to be crushed," he said; "can't get the flavour of time unless it's crushed. Ah, here we are!" and he picked up a kitchen poker that had appeared from nowhere in particular.

With that he beat and pounded and banged the watch, and then with a big spoon, he dipped up spoonfuls of the mixture and let it run back into the hat. The children could distinctly see the bits of brass or steel wheels and springs, and even fragments of the gold case.

Lollie looked a little sober, but said no word of fear for his watch's safety.

"Now, we'll cook it," said the magician, and he poured the "omelet" into a bright, clean frying-pan.

"Where's the fire?" he asked, holding the pan high aloft, and looking all about.

"There isn't any," said Mr. Fayre; "you didn't tell me to provide a fire."

"You should have known enough for that!" shouted the magician, as if in anger. "Well, as we have no fire, of course, we can't make our omelet. So take back your things."

From the frying-pan he poured a cup of clear milk, which he gave to Mrs. Fayre. Then he took out of the same pan two eggs, which he handed to Genie, intact and unbroken. Then he hesitated, saying, "What else did I borrow?"

"A watch!" "A gold watch!" cried a dozen voices.

"Oh, yes, to be sure!" and the magician, smiling, passed the pan to Lollie, and there on its clean, shining surface, lay the gold watch, absolutely unharmed.

Such a clapping of applause! for many of the young audience had been forced to believe that the watch was utterly ruined.

That closed the entertainment, and soon after that the young guests went home.

"How do you s'pose he did it?" Dolly asked of Dotty, as they sat in the swing, talking over the party.

"Oh, it's easy enough," returned Dotty. "They don't really break up the watch, you know."

"Of course I know that! But how *do* they do it? What becomes of the broken eggs and all?"

"I don't know, but I've seen magic tricks before and they always bring everything out right somehow!"

CHAPTER VI

ROLLER SKATING

The day after the party the two girls sat as usual in the big swing talking things over.

"I like that boy with the funny name," said Dotty; "the one they call Lollie. Such a silly name for a boy!"

"Yes; such a dignified name as Lorillard ought not to have such a silly nickname. But he's always called Lollie. He is a nice boy, but I like Joe Collins better."

"Yes, he's funny and makes you laugh all the time. But those twin boys are the nicest of all. What funny names they all have. Tod and Tad!"

"How do you like the girls?"

"The Rawlins girls are nice and Celia Ferris. But I like you best, Dolly, and except for parties I don't care so much about a crowd. Let's go roller skating."

"Oh, no; let's sit here and swing; it's too hot to skate."

"Pshaw! come on. You're too lazy for anything. You just sit around and do nothing and that's what makes you so fat. Get your skates and I'll race you around the block. Really, Doll, you ought to take more exercise or you'll get terribly fat."

"Well, you'd better not take so much then, for you're as thin as a ping-wing now!"

"What's a ping-wing?"

"I don't know, but it's the thinnest thing there is. All right, I'll skate around the block once or twice, and then we'll go and see if there are any little cakes left over from yesterday."

In a short time the two girls had their skates on and started to roll along the smooth, wide pavements of Summit Avenue.

"Let's do this," proposed Dotty. "Start right here in front of our house; you go one way and I the other round the whole block and see if we can come back and meet right straight here."

"All right, but I know I can't go as fast as you do. You skate like a streak of lightning."

"Well, I'll go sort of slow for me, and you go as swift as you can, and let's try to come together right here."

The two girls started in opposite directions, and turned their respective corners on their way around the block. In due time they passed each other in the street back of their own, and Dotty nodded approval as she saw they were about half way round. They didn't pause to exchange any words but, waving their hands, went on their way and rounded again on Summit Avenue.

As they saw each other approach, they regulated their speed in a careful attempt to meet exactly where they had started. Dotty had to curb her speed and go a little more slowly or she would be ahead of time. But Dolly saw that it would take a pretty strong spurt for her to reach the goal, so when they were about ten feet apart Dolly made a special effort and put all her strength into a last grand dash. Dotty hadn't looked for this and as she rolled rather slowly to the appointed place Dolly came along and with a fell swoop, unable to control her direction, she crashed right into Dotty and the two girls went down in a heap. The impact was so sudden and unexpected that neither had a chance to save herself in any way and there was a tangle of waving arms and legs, and skate-rollers as the crash occurred.

"I've broken myself," Dolly announced calmly, though her voice sounded dazed and queer. Dotty opened her mouth to speak but changed her mind and gave voice to the wildest kind of a shriek. She followed this up with several others of increasing force and volume and looked at Dolly, wondering why she didn't yell too. But the reason was that Dolly had fainted and the white face and closed eyes of her friend made Dotty scream louder than ever.

Various members of the two families ran to the scene, as well as several neighbours.

Mrs. Fayre and Mrs. Rose looked on somewhat helplessly at the two girls, but Aunt Clara went at once at the rescue. She and Trudy lifted Dotty to her feet and found she could stand.

"Try to stop screaming, dearie," said Aunt Clara, "and tell me where you're hurt."

"I don't know," cried Dotty; "I don't know and I don't care! But Dolly is dead! My Dolly, my own Dollyrinda is dead! And it's all my fault 'cause I made her go skating, and my arm hurts awful! Ow!"

"Her arm is broken," said Mrs. Bayliss, gently lifting Dotty's right hand, which caused more piercing shrieks. "What shall we do? Somebody call a doctor quick!"

Meanwhile the strong arms of a neighbour's gardener had lifted Dolly and was carrying her toward her own home.

"It's her leg that's bruk," he said, holding her as gently as possible. "It's good luck she fainted; she'll come round all right, but she's bruk a bone, the poor dear."

It seemed ages to the anxious mothers and friends, but it was really only a short time before doctors arrived and the two little sufferers were put to bed and their injuries attended to.

Sure enough Dolly's leg was broken, and Dotty had a fractured arm.

Both houses were in a tumult of confusion as surgeons and nurses took possession and bones were set and splints and bandages applied.

Dolly Fayre took it quietly and seemed almost awestricken, when at last she realised that she was in her bed to stay for several weeks.

"But it doesn't hurt much," she said wonderingly to Trudy. "Why does it take so long to get well?"

"Because the bone has to knit, dear, and that is a slow process. I'm glad it doesn't hurt, but it may at times. The worst, though, is that you will get very tired lying still so long. But I know what a brave little girl you are, and we will all do all we can to help and amuse you."

"Did Dotty break anything?"

"Yes, she broke her left arm. That is not as bad as your breaking your leg, for she can walk about sooner than you can. But hers is more painful, so there's small choice in the two accidents."

"Is she yelling like fury?" inquired Dolly, who herself lay placid and white-faced, though her blue eyes showed the strain she had undergone.

"Yes, she is," and Trudy smiled a little. "You two children are so different. I wish you would yell a little and not look so patiently miserable."

"What's Dolly yelling about? Because she hurts so?"

"Partly that; and partly because she's blaming herself for the whole thing."

"How ridiculous! She isn't a bit more to blame than I am. She proposed skating, but it was because I ran into her that we fell down. I tried to steer out but I couldn't."

"Don't think about who is to blame; that doesn't matter. The only thing to think about is to get well as quick as you can."

"But we can't do anything to help that along; the doctors have to do that."

"Indeed you can help a lot. If you're patient and quiet and cheerful you will get well sooner than if you fuss and fret and cry. That might cause fever and inflammation and all sorts of things."

Trudy was sitting on the edge of Dolly's bed and she smiled lovingly down at her little sister. "I'm going to take care of you," she went on; "Mother wants to have a trained nurse, but I think you would like it better to have me for a nurse, wouldn't you?"

"I'd like it better," and Dolly looked up wistfully, "but I don't want to bother you too much, Trudy."

"Oh, it isn't any bother, and besides, Mother will do a great deal of the nursing. Here she comes now with your luncheon."

Mrs. Fayre came in, bringing a dainty tray on which was a small bowl of broth and some crackers.

"The nurse has gone," she announced, "and I'm glad of it. It was necessary to have her here while the doctors set the broken bones, and she will come in every morning as long as may be necessary. But it's much nicer to be in charge of this case myself and have full jurisdiction over my patient."

"Oh, ever so much nicer, Mother," and Dolly raised affectionate blue eyes to her mother's face. "Can I sit up to eat?"

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