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Author: Harriet Pyne Grove

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The Strange Likeness

hard cover

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Sidney passed with her head in the air and without looking at Shirley.

THE
STRANGE LIKENESS
BY HARRIET PYNE GROVE



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THE STRANGE LIKENESS

CHAPTER I.

ACT TWO, SCENE ONE.

STAGE dramas are accustomed to begin with Act One, Scene One; but the little drama of living presented in this story starts with the second act. The fact that the first act was for so long unknown to some of the *dramatis personae* permitted the mystery.

“Adoring, dear?”

A young gentleman entered the room as he spoke, smiling indulgently as he looked at his young wife, who bent over a white crib.

The young man was perhaps twenty-seven years of age, neat in his gray suit, with the blue tie that matched his eyes, and carrying himself with an air of poise and quiet assurance. Soft fair hair with a wave that curled itself over an intelligent brow, and good, firm features were points that were no drawback to the gentleman’s attractive personality. Crossing the room, he put an arm around the slender figure of his wife and with her looked down at the sleeping baby.

“Do you blame, me, honey?” whispered the young woman, responding to the embrace and drawing away from the crib a little as she laid a soft finger on her husband’s lips. “Don’t wake her. Isn’t she like a lovely little rosebud? Just look at her adorable little mouth and that wee, dimpled hand and arm. Oh, I’m so glad that I have her!

“And what do you think of the nursery? Auntie’s taste is wonderful, you know, and she helped me. Why, Auntie is just crazy about the baby!”

“I see where I am going to be entirely left out in the cold,” the young man remarked, but he did not look worried over the situation.

“You will soon be as silly as I am,” laughed his wife. “Now promise me! You will never tell, will you?”

“I have hesitated to promise, dear, because I think that no good ever comes of not knowing the truth.”

“But what harm could it do? She is really ours, all tight and fast, and nobody to dispute it!”

“Certainly. But suppose she finds out some day.”

“She can’t, unless we tell her, and if you will promise,—”

Two arms went around the young man's neck and a lovely face looked up at him. "Please, please," she begged. "It isn't as if there would be anything dreadful to find out."

"No,—it's just that I—well, I'm no proof against you, as you well know! All right. I promise. I will never tell her."

"Now you have made me perfectly happy,—as you always do. This is the prettiest doll that I ever had to play with, and I'm going to bring her up *very carefully*."

"I see that she has my hair," teasingly continued the young man, "what there is of it. What color are her eyes? I've never seen her awake but once and then she was howling and her eyes were screwed shut."

"Her eyes are going to be exactly like mine. Auntie says that in all important features she is precisely like all the prettiest babies of our family!"

The two young people happily looked at each other and laughed, still softly; but the baby parted its long, dark lashes a little, turned its head, waved a tiny hand for a moment, and with a faint sigh put its thumb in its mouth, falling soundly asleep again as it did so.

Silently the two, who stood by the crib with its white blankets and dainty coverlid, waited to see if the child would waken. Then gently the young woman drew the baby hand away from the rosebud mouth. With a new dignity she said, "You have to do that whenever babies start to put their thumbs in their mouths."

But this was back in the late autumn some seventeen years before the next recorded scene.

CHAPTER II.

SHIRLEY EMBARKS UPON NEW ADVENTURES.

“OF course I don’t care, Mother! Why shouldn’t you and Dad go off and have the time of your lives? It is simply *great!* Hurrah for the Trustees and Faculty! It is *time* that Dad had his ‘sabbatical year,’ or whatever you call it. With all that he has done for this university!”

“And all that he expects to do, childie.”

“Certainly. The museum will be full of all those mummies and things that you will dig up over there.”

Shirley’s mother smiled. “It would be better for you to learn more definitely, daughter, just what your classical father is going to do over there. I can assure you that we are not going to bring home any mummies. I wanted to make sure, little girl, that your heart had no soreness about this. You understand why it is not best to take you now. When you go abroad, as I hope you may some day, you will want a more general trip first. We have had that. And it is best not to interrupt your education now. I confess to being a little torn between desire to go with your father, to see your cousin in England, with the fine opportunity for myself as well, and the regret about leaving you behind.”

“Seriously, Mother,” said Shirley, more earnestly than she had spoken before, “it looks like a fine adventure to me. Of course, I’m not going to pretend that I will not miss you. But you could give it up and come home if anything serious should be the matter, and after all, we might look at it this way. I am going West for the summer, a big chance for me. Then *I’m* going to do what I’ve longed to do, attend a girls’ school for a year. See? *I’m* leaving *you* for a year!”

“Bless you, child,—I might know that you would take it that way. What a comfort you have always been to me! Just see to it that you are careful not to do risky things, and I shall throw off responsibility. Keep a diary, Shirley. I’m going to keep one, too, to bring you daily pictures of what we shall be doing. Then there will be letters, of course.”

“I will write the letters, Mother, but I’m not so sure about the diary. You know my failing. I like to have the fun, but it takes so long to write about it, and you know that the fun makes better notes than the serious things. My diary will be

something like this: ‘January first. Snowing. Missed breakfast. Classes all day. Theme assigned. Chose ‘Why Go To College?’ Have to dress for dinner. Hungry. Expect letter from Mother tomorrow.’”

“Even an outline like that, Shirley will be better than nothing. I should like to look over it to see what my girl has really been doing.”

“I promise to have good lessons, Mother, not just fun, and I imagine that they are pretty strict. Probably they will have to be. But that is a long way off. I shall have nothing *but* fun this summer, I hope. Here comes Dad. Is this the distinguished professor of Epigraphy, Paleography and Archaeology, to say nothing of—well, all the rest—who is going to dig up Greece and Rome and Egypt this year?”

“And is this the saucy, beautiful and only daughter of the said professor?” queried a light-stepping, fine looking man who entered his own living-room, letting the screen bang behind him.

Shirley ran to meet him, hugging him rather impetuously, while he ruffled her hair and imprinted a kiss upon her forehead. “Well, girls,” said he, “the last old grad has gone, I believe: the last meeting of the trustees is over. I shook hands with the president in his office and he wished me a happy and profitable year.” With a comical side step, the dignified professor reached for the other girl, his wife, and drew her to him with the arm that was not around Shirley.

“My reports of grades are long since in and I’ve answered the university bell for classes for the last time till year after next. Can you wonder that I am a little crazy?”

This mild way of figuratively throwing up his hat amused Shirley, but she was as careful of her father’s dignity as he; so she slipped out from his arm and said, “Here comes a student up the walk, Father. Come on, Mother. Dad has probably flunked him in something. Never mind, Daddy, you will soon be away. I’m packing, too, and I need Mother anyhow. ‘*In pace requiescat,*’” Shirley added, waving her hand toward the unseeing student who was knocking on the screen, just as Shirley and her smiling mother left the room.

Just what point Shirley had in mind in applying the Latin expression to the supposedly unhappy student, she did not explain, but it was probably the only Latin phrase that occurred to her at the time. Whatever was the lad’s errand, the professor made short work of him and as the student began to whistle as soon as he reached the street some responsibility must have been lifted.

It was a little hard for Shirley that her father and mother should leave before she could, but it could not be helped, and if Shirley had a lump in her throat, no sign of it showed in her bright face as she blithely waved a last goodbye to Dr.

and Mrs. Harcourt, whose faces she could see through the Pullman window as the train began to move. But she turned away rather soberly and the young man with her without a word took her arm to lead her back to the car which stood waiting.

Shirley swallowed, winked a moment, then lifted smiling eyes, dark, with curling lashes, to her tall, slim companion. "I'm all right, Dick. There's just that funny, all-gone feeling, you know."

"Yep," returned Richard Lytton. "I've had it. Remember when I went to military school? When I stood on the platform in my new uniform, just a mere kid, you know, and saw the train disappear with my father on board, going home without me,—O boy!"

"You were such a little chap, weren't you? But you seemed terribly old to me, and I remember how impressed I was when you came home at the Holidays wearing that uniform."

"Little idiot that I was!" laughed Dick, drawing Shirley out of the way of a truck loaded with trunks. "More students going out on the next train," said Dick, glancing at the truck. "There's that freshman trying to catch your eye, Shirley."

Shirley looked in the direction of Dick's nod and smiled at a plump youth who was looking at her with interest. She waked up to her immediate surroundings a little with her bow to the boy who was in one of her father's classes and whom she had met several times at her own home. She could not know how very much interested the freshman was or why he said to himself, "That's only her cousin."

The small station of the college town was busier than usual with the departure of students. As Dr. and Mrs. Harcourt had made their plans to depart at the earliest moment possible, their leaving was coincident with that of many others, though trustees had largely gone before.

"If you begin to smite them, now, Shirley," said Dick, "what it will be when you actually get into college, I shudder to think."

"Nonsense," said Shirley. "Perhaps I can stay two years at the other school. They have a junior college, you know."

"Your father wouldn't stand for that, Shirley. He wants you here for your University work."

"I know."

But they had reached the car in which two ladies were sitting. One was elderly, the other about the age of Shirley's mother. "Well, here's the orphan, Mother," said Dick cheerfully, handing Shirley into the front seat and going around to the other door to climb into the driver's seat himself.

"I would not remind her in that heartless way, Dick," said his mother whose

smile was as cheerful as Dick's and whose kind eyes looked sympathetically at Shirley.

"I don't mind, Cousin Molly. Thank fortune, I'm not really an orphan, and I'm going to do just what my revered Dad said to do, keep my mind on the adventures before me. Do you think that we *can* get off, ourselves, day after tomorrow, Auntie?"

Shirley addressed the older lady in this remark.

"You will be obliged to do so, my dear. You forget that your tickets are purchased and all the arrangements made. We may as well do the last of your shopping now, if Dick will drive us around. I knew that your mother could not manage all of it at the last, with all the interruptions that she had in the professor's affairs."

"Now, Auntie! don't blame it on poor Dad."

"He could not help it, my dear. But I have not lived next door to you in vain, my child, these pleasant years, and your mother trusts my judgment. I have the list."

"Oh, you have planned it with her, then," said Shirley. "Things have been rather mixed up today, but she said to ask you about everything. I'm almost packed, but I surely will be glad to have your help."

Miss Dudley was Shirley's great aunt, her mother's aunt. She lived in an apartment of her own near the Harcourt home and managed to hold the position of general adviser to her niece without any of the disagreeable features which an interfering nature might have introduced. But Miss Dudley had her own pursuits and a wide circle of friends. No one knew her age, but if the Harcourts were in the early forties, Miss Dudley, well preserved, still attractive, with her only lightly wrinkled brow, her wide-awake brown eyes and air of independence, must be in the sixties. She and Shirley had always been good friends. Her tasteful rooms, her books, her curios, which the child Shirley was trained not to touch without permission, had always been a source of pleasure to the professor's daughter. Many a time some one of Miss Dudley's friends would come in to call and note the pretty, fair-haired child with her dark eyes, reading some book, perhaps, and curled up in a corner of Miss Dudley's davenport.

The Lyttons were distant cousins, related upon the Harcourt side. It was with them that Shirley expected to make the western trip. As they, too, had many errands and much to do before the start, Dick deposited Miss Dudley and Shirley in the center of town at their first shopping point and made arrangements to meet them at a later hour, to take them home again. Shirley quite forgot to be lonesome in the exigencies of the moment, the importance of not forgetting any

detail and the selection of the last purchases.

Meanwhile, upon the Pullman, Dr. Harcourt was saying to a rather sober wife, "I need a more cheerful companion, Eleanor." Somewhat whimsically he looked into the now smiling eyes, very like Shirley's. "I, too, feel as if the plunge had taken my breath a little, but if we let ourselves get homesick or worried at the start, what will become of us?"

"I'm sure I don't know. I felt like a girl again, planning my trousseau and honeymoon,—but saying goodbye to Shirley has made me think of my responsibilities, I suppose."

"Stop it, then, my dear. This is our second honeymoon. Think of the fun that we are going to have. Remember what we decided. It is true that things calamitous might happen, but how foolish to guide one's life by them."

"I remember, learned professor," said Mrs. Harcourt, responding to the pressure of the hand that reached down to take hers. "We decided that it is entirely wise to accomplish something in this old world, not held back by our fears, and that this year will be an opportunity to Shirley as well as to ourselves. We've made fine plans for her and as usual we pray 'deliver us from evil.' Really, Will, I'm a happy woman and I trust in you and Providence just as much as ever. You don't blame me that I find leaving Shirley behind a little wrench, do you?"

"Not a bit of it. But I think that it will do you both good. What did I do with that Baedeker? The last report of our archæological expedition is in it. I put it between the pages and I hope that I've not left it at home!"

"I have it in my bag, Will. I'll find it for you in a jiffy."

Dr. and Mrs. Harcourt were embarking upon the steamer bound for the English coast at about the same time that Mr. and Mrs. Lytton, their son Dick and cousin, Shirley Harcourt left the college town for their adventures in the West.

"Don't do anything a Dudley wouldn't do," brightly said Shirley's great-aunt as she embraced her for the last time. "Take good care of my only niece, Dick, if you go off on any of those wild trails. I hope that you will be armed for bandits."

"Why, Auntie,—who would think that of you? These aren't the old days in the West."

"Twentieth century bandits are the worst kind, child. Remember, Dick."

"Trust me, Cousin Anne. When you see us again we shall have climbed the Rockies in Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, and California, so to speak. Shirley, do they have the Rocky Mountains in California?"

"Don't ask embarrassing questions, Dick. We'll look it up on the map, for

we'll have plenty of time for that on the train. I'm going to study geography and a lot beside this trip, Aunt Anne. Please take good care of your dear self. I wish that you were going too."

"I couldn't stand it, Shirley, not all that you are going to do. Take her away, Dick, before I change my mind about letting her go at all!"

This time it was not to the Lytton car but to a taxi that Dick escorted his cousin, a taxi which ticked away in front of the Harcourt home. Aunt Anne would lock the place finally. Shirley whisked inside, taking her seat beside Mrs. Lytton and giving a sigh of relief as she sank into it.

"Tired, child?" inquired Mrs. Lytton.

"Not so much tired as glad that the last thing is done and that we are really off. Are we?"

"I judge that we are. I am glad, too. There was so much to do at our house and I had to see that Dick and your cousin Steve left no essential article behind."

Both Mr. Lytton and Dick protested at this aspersion upon their ability to look after themselves, but it was all in a joking way and Shirley sat still and tense with the excitement of beginning such a big trip, the longest that she had ever taken. At the station there was a group of girls who had come to see Shirley off. Several of Dick's friends, too, had made it a point to be there just before the train came in.

"The worst of it is that it is going to be so long before we see you again," said one high school friend of Shirley's. "It seems a shame for you not to graduate with the class!"

"Yes, it does; but I'll go into college with you anyhow, and it would be pretty hard to be here all year without Father and Mother."

"I don't blame you, Shirley," said another girl. "If I had your chance I'd take it in a minute. Write us all about it, won't you?"

"Oh, yes, Shirley," cried the first girl. "We'll want something about you for our little bulletin, and if you will tell me about your trip I'll use it for a theme!"

But the train whistled. Goodbyes were at last over, the goodbye that had seemed to Shirley to stretch out endlessly ever since her father and mother started away. From the window Shirley waved and blew kisses, at last sinking back on the cushioned seat to find herself beside "old Dick," who picked up a magazine to use as a fan.

"Come to, Shirley," said he. "You stood all that like a Trojan. Imagine me if the boys had treated me to all that embracing."

"They slapped you on the back, Dick, as *I* should not like to be slapped. I think I prefer the girls' way."

CHAPTER III.

PUZZLING ENCOUNTERS.

“THANKS, Dick; I’m recovered,” laughed Shirley, waving away the magazine. “Besides I have this little fan in my ‘under-arm’ bag. It is rather hot today. We are not near enough to the electric fan to get any good of it.”

“We have a fine location, Shirley, in the very center of the car. Your uncle Dick saw to that! I made the reservations, but I can’t vouch for all that are ahead of us. We go from one line to another, you know.”

Shirley did not know. With a bland indifference to detail, for all that would be looked after by somebody, she was ready for all adventure and surprises. “All right,” she said. “I’m perfectly content to let my ‘uncle Dick,’ with some little help from his parents, no doubt, look after all these things, without bothering about any of them myself. But I may as well say at the start that I am perfectly happy, grateful to you all, and every other nice thing that I ought to be! Why, I can hardly believe it, Dick, honestly!”

“It’s a big chance for me, too, Shirley, and remember that you are going to keep the account of what we see for me, too.”

“Indeed I will, always provided that you keep the bandits away.”

“Did I forget to promise Cousin Anne? But she was just joking, the way she does. Say, Shirley, I’m going to see who’s on this train. I was too busy with family affairs to see if anybody got on that I knew, and the taxi made it anyway.”

“Who knows? Somebody may be going as far as Chicago at least.”

Shirley was beginning to look through her pretty new pocketbook that held so much and was so complete inside and out. She was rather glad to be alone for a little. Dick had settled them all comfortably, doing the little things that a well brought up young man can do.

Now with the male enjoyment of freedom he would stroll through the cars at his own sweet will and Shirley dismissed her cousin’s doings, for her own happy thoughts. Father and Mother were off and on the way to great things. Dear Auntie, to whom she owed this trip, would really not be lonesome, for she, too, had pleasant plans for the summer. It was just wonderful how it had all come about.

Professors in colleges have to plan for trips like this one, for great sums of money do not grow on bushes in universities. Dr. Harcourt's resources would be strained to finance the European trip, to say nothing of Shirley's expenses. But Aunt Anne had been heart and soul with the matter from the start. It would be of professional importance for Dr. Harcourt to take the trip, join the expedition in which the university was interested, and get material for the book on which he was working. At once Miss Dudley told them that she would undertake the care or plans for Shirley and it was by her advice that the decisions were made. The Lyttons were going on this long western trip and would be only too glad to have Shirley with them. Arrangements were made almost a year ahead of the time for Shirley's entrance at the girls' school.

Thoughtfully Shirley drew out her little black note-book, in which she was going to keep an account of expense as well as little notes of the trip, to be filled in by herself or Dick when they wrote letters. She was thinking what a fortunate girl she was. Cousin Molly had given her the new pocketbook. Her "lovely" new blue coat and the pretty, becoming hat Aunt Anne had selected, with her approval. Shirley's eyes rested on the coat hanging beside her. Here came the porter with bags for the hats, and Shirley took off hers, fluffing out her golden locks with a glance at the little long mirror.

Shirley Harcourt had enjoyed very little travel, though a short trip somewhere was not unusual in the summer vacations. But Dr. Harcourt was hampered by a modest income and then he liked to stay around home, working in his library at the writing, reading books which were beyond Shirley's comprehension, or interest.

Mr. Lytton enjoyed far more means, though the Lyttons, too, had responsibilities which kept them from travel. This was a trip long planned, one which would take almost the entire summer, with the stay that they intended in various places.

Richard Lytton was almost twenty and entering the junior year at the university in the fall. Shirley, who knew him as well as a sister would know a boy, was always deeply interested in such of his doings as he confided to her. She knew the pretty sophomore girls whom he took to the class affairs and the coquettish freshman girl of the year before, who was such a "peach," but who left school at the close of the freshman year. Shirley wondered if Dick still wrote to her; but like a little lady, Shirley never asked questions. It was fine to have a cousin in the university and she was glad to think that Dick would still be in school when she entered. He could tell her such things as she ought to know, matters which were entirely outside of her father's knowledge, or so she thought.

But Shirley did not know that the professors, whose minds are supposed to be upon the subjects they teach,—and they are, indeed,—are fully aware of other problems connected with the social relations and the discipline as well as the privileges of the young people in their care. To Shirley, “Dad” was just a “dear dad,” who knew “a lot” and worked “terribly hard” and was always having to see some student about lessons or his private affairs, concerning which the professor was annoyingly secretive.

Mrs. Lytton glanced at Shirley, after Dick had disappeared, but she saw that Shirley was fully occupied. After an approving survey of her pocketbook’s contents, a few scribbles in the new note-book, and a comfortable adjustment of the pillow which had been given her, Shirley was watching the rapidly flying landscape with great interest. Dick would be back when it was time for dinner in the dining car. Then it would grow dark after a while, she would have the new experience of being in a berth in a sleeper, and in the morning they would be in Chicago.

It must be said that Shirley, though keen about the coming thrills of the parks and the Rockies, had anticipated perhaps most eagerly of all seeing this huge and interesting city. It was the biggest thing in its line that she had yet seen, for Shirley’s visit to New York was yet to come.

They took rooms, engaged beforehand by Mr. Lytton, in a modest but very neat and respectable place. Part of the time with Mr. and Mrs. Lytton, part of the time with Dick, part of the time with all three of the Lyttons, Shirley saw Chicago. The banging cars, the conductors, some of them, so foreign that they could scarcely pronounce intelligently the names of the streets; the roar of the elevated trains and the fun of finding how to take them, climbing high above the surface cars and stepping hurriedly off the platform to the car that glided up so quickly; the big sight-seeing ’busses,—everything was new to Shirley.

Dick liked to go around by himself part of the time, but he also enjoyed taking Shirley around when his parents were either tired or preferred some other amusement than that which the young people chose. They would drop in to hear one of the concerts at Lyon and Healy’s, or find a popular eating place that looked attractive in between times. They visited the Art Institute together, and the museum in Grant Park, though that was too much for them. “We’ll have to take that by degrees, Dick,” said Shirley. “I can’t carry so much in my feeble mind at one time. I imagine that Mother and Father will have an awful time taking in so much in a short visit to the foreign galleries.”

“Best way is to pick out what you are interested in for details,” said Dick, “and then take a casual look through at the rest. Let’s go to Lincoln Park this

afternoon.”

“All right, and remember that I have to see the Lake every day. Oh, I just dread going across Michigan boulevard again. I didn’t know that there were so many machines in the world as there are in Chicago!”

“Don’t worry. I’ll see you safely over. It’s somewhat worse than our little town at Commencement time, isn’t it?”

“Yes. To think that I thought that congestion!”

Wherever they went Dick noticed that Shirley drew the eyes of people. That, to be sure, was not so unusual, for even at home, Shirley was considered a very pretty girl. But there was a look almost like one of recognition that he noticed several times. Once, on the top of a ’bus, as they stood, undecided, in the aisle because there were no two seats together, a gentleman rose from an aisle seat, next to which another was vacant. Smiling at Shirley and tipping his hat, he moved to where a single seat gave him room and made it possible for Shirley and Dick to sit together. Shirley, standing with that air of detached poise which was natural to her, thought it only a pleasant courtesy, smiled a little in return and took the inside seat.

Dick glanced after the gentleman. “That chap thinks that he knows you, Shirley,” he said.

“Oh, no; he couldn’t,” replied Shirley, “unless he is some graduate of our school.”

“That might be,” Dick assented. “We meet ’em everywhere.”

But the next encounter puzzled Shirley a little. She and Dick had dropped into a very attractive cafeteria for lunch, on one of their trips downtown. After they had finished their lunch Shirley moved toward the door, standing aside, out of the way of people, while Dick was paying for their checks.

While Shirley stood there, interested in the scene, but not feeling a little apart from it, a short, slim little person came hurrying past, and stopped short upon seeing her. “Hello!” she said. “Seeing how the *hoi polloi* do it? I thought you had gone for the summer. Passed the house today and it’s all shut up. Nice looking young man you are with. Have a good time for me. Little Ollie has to earn her wages now. So long.”

Shirley stood smiling during this address, delivered rapidly, for the girl seemed to be in a great hurry. There was no chance to tell her that she must be mistaken, though Shirley’s evident surprise at being addressed might have suggested it, Shirley thought afterward.

Dick joined her immediately. “Who’s the old friend?” he asked, looking after the prettily dressed girl who was now mingling with the rest of the hurrying

noon crowds on the sidewalk.

“I’m sure I don’t know, Dick, some one that thought she knew me. She stood right in front of me and never stopped to wonder if I were the right one. I must look a good deal like some one she knows.”

Then Shirley repeated the girl’s speech. “She asked me if I were seeing how the *hoi polloi* do it; so the girl I look like can’t be in the habit of frequenting cafeterias. And this one is a nice one, too.”

“Well, just look out that some one doesn’t try to scrape an acquaintance with you on the strength of your resemblance to somebody.”

“I don’t see how that could be done, Dick.”

The next episode, however, was very harmless and occurred the next day. Shirley was alone, stepping out of a candy shop not far from where they were staying. A handsome car drew up to the curb and permitted a lad of possibly twelve years to hop out, then drove rapidly away. The boy was well dressed, his knickers, stockings, shoes,—the whole outfit, in the latest style for boys. He started to run across the pavement toward one of the doors in the tall building, when he caught sight of Shirley.

“Oh, that’s funny,” he said. “I thought that you were out seeing the Indians by this time. Mother said,—” but here the child broke off, for some one called him from the door. “Goodbye,” he called back, as he started on after his brief halt, with a touch of his cap.

“A sweet little gentleman,” thought Shirley, who had enjoyed the friendly little speech and looked with pleasant acknowledgment at the lad when he spoke to her.

“Whoever my double is, Dick,” said Shirley, after she returned to the hotel and found Dick in the lobby, “she is due out where the Indians are, I’ve just discovered. I hope that I run across her. No, I don’t either. I’d rather there were just one of me!”

“I don’t blame you, Shirley. But you will probably never see her, especially if she has gone on West ahead of us. Besides we may not be going to the same places at all.”

“It is not very important, Dick. I’ll probably forget all about it.”

Shirley was with Mrs. Lytton later in the day, when they went with a guide through the great store of Marshall Field’s and afterward had lunch together there and shopped. Shirley wanted to send her Aunt Anne something from this particular store, just because Miss Dudley had spoken of liking it so much. It must be something nice, from her own little private fund.

For any purchase of her own, Shirley would have sought bargains, but for

Miss Dudley she looked among many things far in advance of what she could pay and she rather wondered that the clerks took so much pains. It was an evident disappointment to a clerk who sold her a delicate handkerchief that she bought nothing else, and when Mrs. Lytton asked to see something less expensive than an article which was offered her, the young woman behind the counter looked decidedly surprised, giving Shirley a glance which she could scarcely interpret. But all through the store they were treated with a little more than even the customary courtesy. "I should almost think," said Mrs. Lytton, "that they knew us."

Shirley had not mentioned to her cousin the little encounters with those who seemed to think that they knew Shirley, and it did not seem worth while to comment upon it. But she did wonder if the resemblance had anything to do with the very particular courtesy of the clerks. She was accustomed to much the same consideration at home, for her father's position and personality commanded the respect of his fellow townsmen. But the Harcourts by no means were expected to buy the most expensive articles upon a trip to the home shops.

The last occurrence which could be attributed to a fancied resemblance took place at the hotel, just as they were all waiting in the lobby, preparatory to leaving. A porter was standing by their luggage. Mr. Lytton was paying the bill at the desk. Dick was buying a paper. Mrs. Lytton was sitting in one of the big chairs and Shirley was standing by her, a little back of the chair, with one hand and her pocketbook resting on its well padded top.

A gentleman, conservatively dressed and looking like a prosperous Chicago business man, had previously passed them on his way from the entrance to the desk, where he talked with one of the clerks a moment and turned to make his way as rapidly out. Seeing Shirley, he paused a moment, with a look of surprise. Then he left the straight path to the door and walked briskly toward her. Mrs. Lytton, who was watching her husband from this distance, did not see him. But Shirley saw him coming and wondered what next. It might be some one whom she ought to know.

In consequence, when the gentleman offered his hand, Shirley extended hers. This might be an "old grad," and it would never do not to remember him. There were hosts of folks who were entertained at her father's table every Commencement and she could not always remember them.

As in the other instances, this stranger was in a hurry. Not yet had Shirley had an opportunity to say, "You are mistaken!" Nor yet had one mentioned the name of her "double!"

But this was not an "old grad." It was evident at once as the gentleman

addressed her. "Why, my dear, it is pleasant to see you in town yet. I thought that you had gone with your father. We shall miss all of you, though I expect to be in and out all summer. Mrs. Scott and the girls have gone on up to Wisconsin, you know. May you have a very delightful trip. You are looking very much better than you did when you returned at the close of school. Goodbye, my child, I must hurry back to the bank."

Tipping his hat, this kind-looking, fatherly man sped on with true Chicago hurry. Twice Shirley had thought that she might get in a protesting word, and got no further than an apparent stammer. For Shirley was not supposed to interrupt older people and it would not have been possible to stop this rapid speech without an interruption.

Mrs. Lytton had turned, but with the confusion, inside and out, she did not catch what was said. Mr. Lytton and Dick were joining them now, the porter was gathering up the bags and in a moment they were in a taxi, on their way to the station to catch their train.

CHAPTER IV.

ON WITH THE PANORAMA.

“WHO was the old codger with whom you were shaking hands, Shirley, as I came up?” Dick inquired, as once more he went through the process of settling everybody’s baggage and settled himself, too, down on a Pullman seat by Shirley.

“His name was Mr. Scott,” said Shirley demurely. At last she had one name of some one who knew her double. “I would not say that he is very old, and I’m sure that ‘codger’ does not describe him.”

“Why didn’t he shake hands with Mother first?”

“He probably did not recognize her.”

“How did you happen to know him?”

“I did not know him.” Shirley was enjoying this.

“Then why on earth would you shake hands with him?”

“Because I thought that he might be some graduate or even an important trustee that knew Father and remembered me, though you might think that I am flattering myself.”

“And he turned out not to be a trustee or anybody?”

“He was somebody, all right. He said that he supposed I had gone with my father and that I was looking better than I did right after school was out, and that Mrs. Scott and the girls had gone on up into Wisconsin ‘you know.’”

Dick threw his head back and laughed. “I saw him give a quick look back when he saw me going toward you, Shirley. He stopped a moment, almost as if he intended to come back; then he took out his watch and shot out of the door.”

“He was going to the bank,” said Shirley. “Oh, I know Mr. Scott very well indeed!”

“It is a good thing that we are leaving Chicago. Have you told Mother?”

“No; I’d forget to do it, and we have been doing such interesting things that it has not seemed very important. It’s rather mildly interesting, though, to know that some girl, probably of a well-known and wealthy Chicago family, looks enough like me to have me taken for her in broad daylight, at least by persons in

a hurry, or by clerks that do not know her any too well. Perhaps I'll write to Mr. Scott and ask him what her name is."

"How would you address him, my dear cousin?"

"Yes. That would be a difficulty. 'Mr. Scott, Chicago, Illinois,' might be a bit indefinite."

"Well, I'll say for you, Shirley, that you look like a million dollars in that new rig of yours. You probably look so much more stunning than the original that they have to stop to speak to you."

"Now *you* are a cousin worth having, Dick. Thanks awfully. Next year,—no, I can't—the year after, when you are a senior, I'll have all the girls that you like best in for teas and things and invite you over. Maybe the senior girls wouldn't come to a party given by little me, though."

"They'd be delighted to be asked to the professor's house, even with you out of the question, which I should not admit. Moreover, my dear Shirley, how do you know that by that time a senior girl would be interesting? Now the reverend seniors are often known to have the most serious cases of their college career with sophomores, or even freshmen girls."

"That is so. Good. I'll know all the freshmen girls, perhaps, and I know some of the sophomore girls as it is. Just pick out one that Aunt Anne will welcome into the family!"

"That remains to be seen, Shirley. Now, look here. Let's plan what we do when we get to Denver." Dick pulled from his pocket one of the illustrated advertisements, published by the railroad companies. Everything else was soon forgotten in studying Colorado and its possibilities.

From that time on there was one delightful panorama of prairie, irrigating ditches, rivers, mountains, with rides among the foothills and climbs to the heights; of new birds and flowers and trees; of unafraid wild animals in the national parks; of snowy summits; of glaciers in Glacier Park and sure-footed horses on narrow trails. Shirley was not afraid to go into quiet raptures over dashing mountain streams, all the scenes so new and inspiring to her, and each new expedition. Mrs. Lytton declared that it was "as stimulating as a cup of coffee" to meet Shirley's eagerness every morning.

"Never having had a daughter, Shirley, I did not know what I had missed, till this trip. Dick could not be spared, but I wish that we could adopt you."

"I never made a good girl, did I?" queried Dick.

"You are a fine son," said his mother, "and that is enough for me."

Shirley was glad of that little speech of compliment from her cousin Molly. Thoroughly appreciating the privilege of this trip with them, she had tried in

every way to make her cousins glad that she had come. There were many little ways in which she could be of service, and when they were out together, as they sometimes were without the gentlemen, they were as jolly as two girls. Mrs. Lytton was active and strong, taking part in all the rides upon the narrow trails as bravely as any of them.

One delightful experience followed another. They grew weary at times, to be sure, and there were some narrowly averted accidents, but no calamity occurred to mar their trip. When it was wise to let time intervene between undertakings, they merely tarried a little longer in some camp or hotel until they felt like resuming the onward way. They met many friendly people at different places and with the informality of American tourists, they joined forces for some trip, or discussed frankly the problems of a common country. There was one group of girls, traveling with two chaperons, who were attracted to Shirley. Their companionship made the trip through the Yellowstone lively, for they often found themselves upon the same 'bus. Dick, too, attached a young man of about his own age, a student in a different university.

But it was not until they had reached a hotel in the big and wonderful state of Washington that Shirley saw her double.

It happened in one of the corridors on the second floor about noon. The Lyttons and Shirley were leaving that night. Shirley had just been downstairs to the lobby, and as there was but one easy flight of stairs with a landing midway, Shirley did not take the elevator, but ran up the stairs instead.

Between the stairway and her room were the doors to the elevator, and as she turned from the last stair down the corridor in the direction of her room, she saw herself, apparently, standing in front of the elevator door. Even the hat was of the same color as her own, and a little fluff of golden hair curled around near the place where ears were supposed to be. The coat was not like her own, however.

The young girl was laughing and talking in an animated fashion to two girls who were with her. She faced Shirley, and Shirley, now surprised and interested, took an eager step toward her. But it was quite evident that the other girl had not seen Shirley. The elevator doors slid open just then; the three girls stepped in and were out of sight in a moment.

More mechanically than otherwise, Shirley went on toward the room with something that she was bringing Mrs. Lytton. "Why, Cousin Molly, I've just seen my double. It's the queerest thing. I didn't suppose that two people of different families *could* look so much alike. Oh, I haven't told you a word about how in Chicago people kept taking me for some one." Shirley paused, rather dazed by the experience.

Mrs. Lytton looked at her rather soberly, Shirley thought. "I wonder who it could be. Why don't you try to find out who she is? Has she a room on this floor?"

"How stupid I am, Cousin Molly! Here I stand! It *would* be rather interesting to know who she is, perhaps."

Shirley flew out of the room and down the stairs. But there was no sign of the girls in the lobby. She even went to the desk and asked rather hesitatingly if the clerk had seen any one who looked like herself pass just now.

The clerk to whom she addressed the question looked at her closely. "Yes," he said. "A young lady enough like you to be your twin came to the desk for a moment with another young lady, who left her key. Let me see. The young lady's name was Penn, Miss Penn. She and her mother just checked out, but she came back to get something which she had forgotten or thought that she had forgotten she said. From what was said I took it that they were going to some other hotel in the city, here. If they are friends of yours, or relatives, I may be able to trace them for you." The clerk, as he talked, noted Shirley's hesitation. He came to the correct conclusion that she did not know the young lady who looked so much like her. Odd, he thought.

"Thank you," said Shirley. "I will ask my cousin if it is best to find them. We are leaving in a few hours ourselves."

But Mrs. Lytton did not think that it would be worth while to try to find the girls. "It would only be a matter of curiosity, perhaps, and neither of you would care for acquaintance, since you say that it has not made a pleasant impression to find yourself taken for some one else. And if the girl should be some distant relative, my experience is that unless there is something in common, looking up one's relatives is not very satisfactory,—though interesting, of course, and kinship does make a bond, unless too distant. If you really want to do it, Shirley, we can remain another day. I will let you decide the matter. We might get into touch by this evening, I've no doubt, and perhaps you would feel better satisfied."

"If you leave it to me, Cousin Molly, I'll say to go right on with our trip. For a moment, I felt like going right up to the girl and saying, 'Look in the mirror, please,' just for fun. But my curiosity has all oozed out and my natural timidity, Dick, has come to the fore."

Dick Lytton, who was present at the discussion, laughed and asked Shirley again if she had told his mother all the details.

"Most of them Dick. I'll give her the whole story while we pack up. Now let me fold up your frocks, Cousin Molly. You know you like the way I do it. Is it

too soon to pack them?”

“No. Better have it done before we go out. Where did you say you were going to take us, Dick? Oh, yes. We get another and better view of the old Pacific, Shirley. Go and find your father, please, Dick.”

CHAPTER V.

SENIOR PLANS.

IT was past the middle of September, but the well-kept, well-watered and closely shorn lawns of the school still looked like velvet. A little rolling, with concrete walks, flower beds, fine shrubbery, great old trees with heavy foliage, close as a grove in some portions, the large grounds contained some handsome buildings of modern make, as well as several of stately old style no longer built.

Most attractive of all, perhaps, was the lake front, where Lake Michigan stretched out widely and a boathouse of a conservative style stood by a small dock, to which were tied a number of boats. What had probably been a bluff, of no great height, had been smoothed into a gentle incline toward a strip of sandy beach. Out at some distance a strong breakwater had been constructed to protect the small shipping of this girls' school.

Back a little in the quiet open grove, on two of the rustic benches, which had been drawn close together, a small group of girls in their summer frocks talked in animated fashion.

Any group of girls is interesting and attractive, but these girls, representing the cream, so to speak, of girls who cared enough for education to receive it and who had reached the senior year successfully, might claim a second look from anybody.

"Oh dear," said one, "classes begin tomorrow!"

"Hate to take up the grind, Fleta?" queried another, whose locks of a reddish gold were gathered into a little net over the fluffed mass at the back of her head. Irma Reed was letting her "bob" grow out.

"Sort of," laughed Fleta, a tall, grey-eyed girl with good features, whose hair she declared was grey at the start, though its soft ash color was becoming to Fleta's fresh complexion.

"I shall quite welcome it," a plump, brown-haired lass contributed. "I have had the pokiest summer that you ever imagined. It is one grand adventure to get back to school! Mother was sick all summer, too sick to leave town, even, and we could not get to our summer cottage at all. Of course no help wanted to stay where there was sickness, and beside the trained nurse I had one lone woman in

the kitchen and I had to take care of one small brother and two smaller sisters and keep them quiet on account of Mother.

“I was glad to do it, of course, and you may know that I learned first aid to the injured, beside a whole kindergarten and primary course! The only poetry that I can repeat is Mother Goose and the like. But perhaps it paid. I’ve been up against some real things, girls; and I am so thankful that Mother is well now and that things are so I can come back here!”

A pair of beautiful dark eyes were watching Edith Stuart as she related her summer’s experience. A pretty little chin lifted as Sidney Thorne remarked, “‘All’s well that ends well,’ as the immortal Shakespeare hath it. You have had a hard summer, Ede. But I am rather glad, too, to get back, though I had quite as full a summer as usual of good times. It is our last year here, girls. Can you realize it?”

“Sidney has been East this summer girls,” a very slight, dainty girl remarked, with a gesture of complete information. “That’s the Boston accent she is bringing back. Yes, Sidney, I’m ‘ratheh’ glad to get back, too, and it is ha’d to realize that indeed it is our *lawst* year!” The girl’s face was dimpling with mischief and she shook back from her face hair almost as golden as Sidney’s own.

Sidney looked a trifle taken back at this. Sidney Thorne did not like to be made fun of and preferred to do the criticising herself if there were any to be done; but after a moment, during which she did not know whether she wanted to freeze up or not, she gave way to smiles instead.

“Little sinner,” she said, “don’t you make fun of me! But you are all wrong, though I have been with my aunt all summer and I talk more or less like her all the time, which is *perfectly* proper for any Standish to do! I haven’t been East at all. I was on a big western trip, partly by rail, partly by auto. If you are good, I will tell you about some of the good times I had. But give me hotels and cars, no camps except for very limited stops. I did some mountain climbing, though, and I like the riding, though I had one terrible scare, riding on a ‘sky-line,’ when the horse slipped and there were only inches to slip in.”

“Oo-oo!” shivered Dulcina Porter.

“Not so bad,” said Sidney, “after it is over. Think how many times you just miss being hit when you cross a street, or your car just escapes a collision. The great event of the trip was going up into Alaska, where I had never been before.”

As if in memory of cool places, Sidney drew her light scarf closer around her shoulders. But the breeze from Lake Michigan’s waters was blowing more strongly just now.

“To change the subject, Sidney,” said Fleta Race, “what plans have you for the Double Three this year, and what must we have in senior doings? How about the elections and everything? What’s our play going to be and how are we going to work it diplomatically with you know whom, to have what we really want instead of working at something we’ll hate?”

Sidney smiled a little, though she was annoyed. It was like Fleta to blurt everything out, she thought. She dropped her eyes, playing with the end of her gay scarf. “Why ask me, Fleta?” she asked.

“Because you have the most influence of anybody in school, and because you are the president of the Double Three,” Fleta replied. “I’m sure that you have some little ideas. What’s been floating around in the little old brain this summer while you have been climbing and sailing and swimming and everything?”

“Don’t push our president, Fleta,” gently said Edith, who sat next to Sidney. She tapped Sidney’s proud little shoulder with a soft finger as she continued. “Of course, Sidney has ideas, but let her have a chance to work them out. If she has any plans she will tell us fast enough. This isn’t a formal meeting anyhow. It just happened.”

Edith’s remarks made Sidney feel in a more responsive mood. Fleta’s compliment, too, was not unacceptable. She had no objection to an addition to the idea, either, and said in a low tone, as if some listening spirit might be near, “What do you think, girls,—the dean spoke to me about Miss Gibson this morning. I was talking to her about several things and she said, ‘By the way, Sidney, I noticed that a number of the girls were making it hard for Miss Gibson last year. I wish that you would use your influence among them. Your scholarship is uniformly so high and your courtesy is always so irreproachable that I am sure you will want to help Miss Gibson. She was new last year, you will remember, but her knowledge and standing are such that I expect loyalty from my girls!’

“Excuse my repeating a compliment to myself, girls, but I just had to say the whole speech as she said it. Moreover, was it so much of a compliment as trying to get me to do something? I did not tell her that I detested Miss Gibson, of course, and it wasn’t the time to tell her how autocratic and disagreeable Miss Gibson is. Indeed, there were people waiting to see the dean. All that I said in reply to the dean was, ‘Yes, Miss Irving,’ though I looked attentive, and inquiring, at the proper places. Why should I tell the dean what I was thinking? Most certainly none of us intend to do any thing that is not in good form, like a few of the girls. You remember what happened in the junior English last year that time. At the same time, I do not think that they should have retained a

teacher who is so objectionable to many of the best girls.”

Sidney Thorne naturally included herself and her companions among the “best girls” of the school, as she spoke in her most dignified way, with careful choice of words. If Sidney ever fell into the modern carelessness of school girl speech, it was not because she had not been trained from childhood in the best English, chiefly from having always heard it from her parents.

“I got a good deal out of my work with Miss Gibson last year, Sidney,” said a girl who had not spoken during these interchanges, though she had joined in smiles or laughter. She was not a particularly pretty girl, but had a pleasing face, one of high intelligence. A pleasant mouth and a firm, though not prominent chin, clear blue eyes, a nose as straight as Sidney’s and a broad brow, such of it as could be seen, presented a wholesome combination. Some day, when Hope Holland cared a little more about her looks, she would make a handsome young woman, but at present she was far more interested in other things. Today she wore the simplest of dark blue georgette dresses over a dark slip. Not a ring, a pin or a string of beads decorated her. Her small hands were clasped around her knees, as her heels went back under the bench to a cross bar there. Her silk hose were black and her shoes, while neat, were not as new as those of the other girls. Hope could have had them, but had not bothered.

The rest of the girls wore light dresses, with all the pretty accompaniments, though these were all in good taste and surely not out of style. No girl who had been at least a year in this school was ever seen to be over-dressed, for with the lessons from books, other lessons were taught about the fine arts of living. Whatever their private tastes, and it would be odd if no girl ever attended the school whose personal ideas were different, while here the atmosphere prevailed and had its present and often permanent influence.

“You have never said so before, Hope,” returned Sidney. “Why didn’t you come to the rescue last year? Have we a disciple of Miss Gibson among the ‘Double Three?’”

Hope laughed a little. “It takes me longer to make up my mind, Sidney, than it does some people. I could see that Miss Gibson was making a mistake in the way she handled some of the girls, but I got more inspiration out of the way she reads and the interest that she gives to all”—here Hope hesitated and Fleta inserted, “that old stuff!”

“Yes. That’s it, Fleta. Another thing I found out, and that is that Miss Gibson writes herself and gets it accepted, which is more to the point, I imagine, from what my brother tells me. So I’m going to ask her questions in class and get her to tell us things, if I get a chance.”

“Don’t imagine that she’d let you! She thinks that she has to pour the course of study in and assist the process of digestion as little as possible!”

Hope could not help smiling at Sidney’s vehemence, but to herself she thought that Sidney was not fair, as sometimes happened when a prejudice seized Sidney. Hope wondered what it was this time. Did Miss Gibson lack family, grace of manner, or was there some personal peculiarity that offended Sidney? Miss Irving was right about Sidney’s grades. Miss Gibson had not offended by any injustice to the one whom Fleta called the most influential girl in school. Was that true? Very likely.

“Nearly time for dinner, girls,” said Sidney, looking at the little jeweled watch which she wore. “Let’s walk to the beach for a minute. After all, this is a dear old place. I shall hate to leave it next spring, I suppose. One thing I want to say right now, girls, and you must make your plans accordingly. As it is our last year together, I want you to spend either all or at least part of the Christmas Holidays with me. We’ll have a house party of the Double Three. I want them all in my house, Hope, if you don’t mind, and you must come over all the time and stay all night as much as you can.”

Exclamations of delight at the plan were heard for the next few minutes. “If we *should* decide to take in any one else and make it a Double Four, we can still have our house party, of course. It is all fixed up with Mother.”

Hope, who lived in the same city, rather protested at her not having any one at her house, but she gave it up when she saw that it would make Sidney unhappy to interfere with her plans. Hope often gave up to the more insistent Sidney, but she was fond of Sidney and knew her good points as well as some of her faults,—the drawbacks, either in disposition or in perception of the facts of life, from which no one can be entirely free.

Together, in happy mood, the girls walked to the edge of the shore, where the restless waves of Lake Michigan broke on the sand and pebbles. Coming events of their senior year were discussed, for by this time the girls were well acquainted with the customs and traditions of their school. Events social, athletic and intellectual were talked over, from hockey and basketball to the marvelous “Prom” in the spring, perhaps the most delightful and exciting of all.

Other groups of girls were drifting toward the buildings when at last Sidney, Hope and the rest of the Double Three turned their steps in that direction. For all of them these first days were filled with expectation, along with the pleasure of meeting each other again after summer days. Adventures of one kind or another were certain to come, adventures of success or failure, adventures of friendship and adventures of good times.

CHAPTER VI.

THE "DOUBLE THREE."

THIS small association of six girls, who were known as the "Double Three," and who so denominated themselves, had drifted into the very informal organization on account of an accidental performance at Hallowe'en in their junior year. They were friends, more or less intimate then. It chanced that the Mistress of Hallowe'en celebrations, a senior of the year before, had appointed Sidney and Hope to manage some sort of a "stunt," as those events are called.

The result was an amateur one act play, portraying more or less of a mystery. Sidney wrote most of it, or managed its production. Masks and loose black dominoes were the costume, to which the final touch was given by an oblong badge which represented the face of an ordinary ivory domino, the "double three." The domino robe had suggested the word; the number of the girls who had been asked by Sidney and Hope to help had suggested the badge; double three sounded so much better than plain six, if something from the game were taken as a symbol.

So much was said about the stunt of the "double threes" that it was only natural for the girls to drift together more often and finally to call themselves the Double Threes, with occasional meetings and good times. But it must not be supposed that it was a definite or recognized society or anything like a sorority, for sororities did not exist in this school.

Fleta Race, Irma Reed, Edith Stuart and Sidney Thorne occupied a suite together. Dulcina Porter and Hope Holland shared one of the single rooms in the dormitory. In their junior year Sidney and Hope had roomed together; but without having any trouble, both had come to the conclusion that it would be good to try not being together, for they were friends when at home. Each would room with a "stranger" and Sidney would try being in a suite. Hope privately thought that she would not like it, for all the ways of simple school living were not what Sidney enjoyed at home. But at that Sidney was an independent soul that wanted to see if she could do what other girls did. She was not the only daughter of wealthy parents among the students here.

Previous to her sophomore year Sidney had been tutored at home, and hard

indeed she found it to make up all the loose ends of her freshman year. Hope had attended another school until her junior year, when she had come to join Sidney after hearing her accounts of its superior advantages. But then, everything that Sidney did, everything that she had, all connected with herself and her family, were considered just right by the cool Sidney, so sure was she, so blandly superior to mistakes or criticism.

Hope felt a sense of relief to have no one but dainty unselfish little Dulcie around. Yet there was a charm about the superior Sidney after all, and Hope loved her. In the real living together, Sidney's gentle training made it impossible for her to be discourteous or disagreeable. It was that unconscious assumption of superiority that Hope disliked, though she could not have analyzed it. Sidney was "proud," she would have said. Money had nothing to do with it, for Sidney at least *thought* that she admired achievement and ability above everything. It was quite likely that she did not even give her father credit for having successfully managed a large business and money which he had inherited. Practical ability is not to be despised, and it is only the love of money that is the root of evil, or the silly ostentation that sometimes accompanies it.

Leaving the campus, the girls of the Double Three strolled into the parlors, where several other girls at once ran up to Sidney, as she was the latest arrival.

"I looked everywhere for you, Sidney," said one. "Where in the world did you disappear to?"

"Oh, the girls got hold of me after I was dressed. We had so much to talk about that we went down in the grove to look at the lake and stayed there, gibbering, longer than we intended. I wanted to hunt up some more of you." Sidney was swinging hands with this bright-eyed girl as she spoke.

"Hello, Thorne in the flesh," cried another very tall girl, who looked down upon the shorter Sidney as she spoke. "Going to beat me in everything this year?"

"Going to try to, Olive," returned Sidney, whirling around to look up at her old rival and exchange mild embraces.

"Well, look out, that's all," laughed Olive, moving away with a salute.

"Listen, Sidney," said another miss who was trying to get to Sidney through the group. "There is going to be a meeting of the athletic board right after dinner in the library. Don't you forget it and do something else!"

"All right, Dorothy. I'll be there."

There were other girls, who did not rush to meet Sidney, and one who joined the tall, competent looking Olive Mason, as she walked away from Sidney's group, made a somewhat critical remark. "I don't see why you should welcome

Sidney Thorne so cordially, Olive. She did everything but cheat to beat you last year.”

“Good sportmanship, my dear,” replied Olive. “She didn’t cheat and it is up to me to see that my work is better than hers.”

“I think that it is, Ollie. It was just favoritism that gave her the higher grades! Sidney Thorne is a little snob!”

“I’d show myself pretty small, if I said that favoritism gave Sidney the higher grades, so never mind, Barbie. Please don’t say anything like that around where the girls can hear you. They all know that you are such a friend of mine and they might think that I felt that way. It wouldn’t look well, to say the least, Barbara.”

“Don’t worry. If I express an opinion about Sidney, I’ll see that the girls know it is my own, not yours. I’ll say this for Sidney Thorne, that she doesn’t push herself in; but she just loves it that they put her on all the boards and committees and make much of her.”

“Why shouldn’t she?” asked the fair-minded Olive. “Who wouldn’t like it? She has ideas, and is pretty and charming. I don’t say that it does not spoil her a little, but I thought it out this summer. I was jealous and disappointed, Barbie, but I decided to go right ahead seeing what I can do on my own account. I imagine that every one of us can make some place for herself if she tries!”

Barbara Sanford looked keenly at Olive. “You’re one mighty fine girl, Olive!” she exclaimed. “The girls know it, too!”

“That is good of you to say, Barbie, but it would be a pity if I hadn’t learned a few things by being in this school three years and ‘playing the game’ under our athletic director,—and isn’t it terrible, Barbie?—she’s engaged!”

“What! The Water Nymph going to leave us?”

“Sh-sh! There she is. Why, she is back for part of the year anyhow, and perhaps she will not be married before next summer.”

“I wish it had been Miss Gibson, or the math teacher. But that is the way it always is!”

“Barbie the pessimist!” laughed Olive.

After dinner Sidney was promptly on hand at the meeting of the “athletic board,” announced also at dinner. Sidney was feeling especially happy about everything. It was really glorious to be a senior, with more privileges, among the “high and mighty,” so far as age and position were concerned. Sidney knew too, that she had worked hard in these years, to justify her parents’ faith in her and to satisfy herself that she could.

The meeting was a short one, however. There were no lesson hours, but as the girls were expected to be in their rooms at a reasonable time, Sidney ran up to

her suite immediately, to help her suite-mates put everything to rights. She was glowingly happy. "This is going to be the greatest fun yet," she said. "What do you think one of the girls said to me? I won't tell you who it was, though. She said, 'why don't you and the rest of the Double Three set it up about some of these elections? You could have things the way you want them!'"

Dulcie and Hope had come in and were sitting on one of the single beds, watching Fleta unpack and hang away a few last garments. Edith, mending one of last year's cushions too pretty to be thrown away, came in and plumped herself down beside Hope.

"What did you say to that?" asked Hope, watching Sidney, who was looking critically at the arrangement of the dresser and was changing the position of several knick-knacks.

"I said nothing, says I," facetiously answered Sidney, looking into the mirror and giving her aristocratic nose a dab with the puff from her vanity case. And it may be remarked that Sidney was also enough of an aristocrat to powder that same nose nowhere else than in her boudoir or some equally private place.

"However," she continued, "why not use a little influence if we have it? Why be seniors for nothing?"

"They will say that we do it anyhow," approvingly Dulcie added, swinging her slippared feet under the bed and out again. "They did last year; don't you remember, Hope?"

"Being accused of a thing and really doing it," said Hope, "are two very different things."

Sidney thought that Hope was being "snippy." She cast a glance in Hope's direction and brightly asked, "Any objection, Hope?"

"I never cared to belong to a political gang," laughed Hope. "We see enough of that in Chicago."

"Calls us a 'gang,' girls," whimpered Fleta, making a comical face.

"Time enough to worry about politics when there is any reason for it," comfortably said Edith Stuart. "There isn't any objection to our having our own ideas and working for them, especially if they are for the good of the school and not just to get our own way. Being determined to get her own way and run everybody is like Stella Marbury. I am pretty sure that it was Stella who suggested that to Sidney. Own up, Sidney. Stella wants to be one to make this a Double Four, Sidney."

Sidney was now sitting on a straight chair in a corner by a window. "Does she?" she asked, with no change of countenance.

"If it was Stella, you'll not get Sidney to acknowledge it now," said Irma

Reed, leaning up against the frame of the door and watching Sidney Thorne with amused eyes. “My opinion is that the Double Three’d better keep in the background unless we want the dean to consider us a sorority and tell us that we simply can’t exist. We might make it a little reading club, if we want to have it a real club. There would be no objection to that.”

“I wouldn’t even do that,” said Edith. “We are just congenial friends. If anybody reaches the same intimacy with us we might be a Double Four, perhaps. But we are not considering applications, are we, Sidney?”

“I should think *not!*” said Sidney, with emphasis.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SENSATION.

COMING as she did from a trip which had filled her mind with impressions of breadth and beauty, Shirley Harcourt was delighted to observe that her school environment was not to be one that was close or confined. As she was borne around the drive to Westlake Hall, she caught a glimpse of the lake's shining waters and wound through the woods of its attractive acres.

But Shirley was tired and she wished that the summer's travel had not taken off the freshness of the pretty coat, in which Dick thought that she looked "like a million dollars," or faded a little the becoming hat. And she had been careful, too, wearing something else on the outdoor trips on the mountains. Her bathing cap sufficed on the California beaches.

It had not been possible for the trip to be planned for Shirley's convenience. As they came home by a southerly route, one which Shirley thoroughly approved, nevertheless, she had found it necessary to strike north to Chicago again. This route was comparatively so near to home that she was tempted to go there, if only for a few hours.

But there was the extra expense to be considered first. Then it would be quite forlorn, after all, to go into that house and find the strangers to whom it had been rented for the year. Miss Dudley would not return until the first of October. With determination, then, Shirley put aside all home-clinging thoughts and wondered why she were not more keen about the school experience before her. She had thought it such a wonderful plan, something that she had always wanted to do,—that jolly life in a dormitory with other girls!

But Shirley's depression was chiefly physical and a natural result of the continued delights and strain of the long summer trip. Now she was feeling refreshed by the cool, fresh lake air, and the sight of the school environment cheered her. No one was arriving with her, for Shirley was late. This was another drawback, for Shirley's habit was to be ahead of her work, and the thought of a number of lessons in which to catch up was not a happy one. She counted up the days which had passed since the opening one,—only three. There would be no lessons recited on that day, perhaps not on the next one. She would *do* it,

anyhow, and Shirley set her lips firmly together at the thought of it.

With rising interest, Shirley looked at the massive building with its porches and vines, as she turned from paying the man of the taxi and went up the steps. Her bag was light, but she took her time to ascend, looking around at the walks and buildings seen through the trees, and noting that there were no girls around. Glancing at her watch, she saw that it was the dinner hour.

Shirley rang the bell and was admitted promptly. The sensation had arrived. The maid gave her one look, first surprised, then questioning. "Why Miss (Shirley did not catch the name),—are you masquerading already?" she said.

Shirley looked surprised in her turn. "Will you show me to my room, please, or to some one who will direct me? Or perhaps I should see the dean first." That, Shirley knew, would probably be impossible, if she were at dinner. "I am Shirley Harcourt, and my arrangements were all made for me." "Yes, certainly," said the maid. "The dean is at dinner, but there is always some one in charge at the office during these first days. I will take you there."

More than one curious glance the maid cast at Shirley as she showed her to the office. It was as if she could not believe her eyes, and Shirley, who had almost forgotten her Chicago experiences by this time, wondered if this were not some one from Chicago, who must know her "double."

"It will be possible, I think, for you to have dinner," said the maid. "I will be ready to see you when you are through in here. Miss Schiff, this is Miss Shirley Harcourt, who wants to see you about the room reserved for her."

The maid was enjoying this introduction, it was very evident. She was quite a superior sort of maid, Shirley could see. Probably she was some girl who was paying her way with this part service. Shirley was accustomed to that in her college town. She dimly saw the neat office with its desks and safe, its tables and chairs. Miss Schiff was looking at her with bright amusement. "What in the world?" she asked. "Are you joking me, Emma? But no,—” Miss Schiff was looking at the traveling garb, the bag and the tired girlish face.

"I am Shirley Harcourt," firmly said Shirley. "If you will find the list of girls and their rooms, you will see my name. I have been on a western trip and I could not get here before."

"I see," kindly said Miss Schiff. "Excuse me. I took you for some one else at first. I will look up the matter at once. Just sit down. You can go out to dinner with me presently."

"Thank you, but my head aches a little and I should like bed better than anything else. I had a late lunch in Chicago, and then I had some fruit and a sandwich on the local train that brought me here. Probably they gave me the

headache.”

“Perhaps a hot drink would help you,” Miss Schiff suggested, “but that is as you like.”

In a few moments Shirley knew the number of her room, and the maid whom Miss Schiff called Emma took her to a room on the second floor. It was already occupied, Shirley saw, but there stood her pretty cedar chest, already uncrated and ready to be unlocked for the sheets and pillow slips which must go on that comfortable looking single bed. The big portmanteau which had accompanied her on the western trip also stood on one side of the large closet.

Pretty frocks hung in the closet, all on one side. Shirley wondered who her room-mate was to be, but her head throbbed too unpleasantly now for her to do anything but make up her bed, take a hurried bath and crawl thankfully under the covers. Her room-mate, of course, would be surprised to find her there, but she couldn't help that.

It happened that her room-mate did not come in or think of doing so until after the time for study hours to commence; for with the other girls she had gone out on the campus for a while, and meantime she heard that Shirley Harcourt had arrived. “You will find a little surprise in your room,” said Miss Schiff to Madge Whitney, whom she met as she went to dinner, through the flocks of girls that came from the dining hall.

“My room-mate's come, has she, Miss Schiff? Why doesn't she come to dinner?”

“She had a severe headache and wanted to get to bed. You might study in the library, Madge, or with Caroline again. I will give you permission.”

“Oh, thank you, Miss Schiff! My books are all in Cad's room anyhow. Did she look like a nice girl?”

Miss Schiff laughed. “Yes, she looked *like* a very nice girl, so much like one, in fact, that you may find her more of a surprise than you think.” With an amused look, Miss Schiff hurried on.

“Now what did she mean by *that*?” asked Madge of her friend Caroline Scott. “Do you suppose that she is some precise prunes, prisms and persimmons creature that I won't like at all? I've a great mind to run up and see!”

“And make a great hit right at the start!” Caroline suggested.

“That is so. If she has a headache, she may be in a warlike frame of mind. I'll not risk it. Poor thing! It's bad enough to be late getting to school, let alone having a headache 'right at the start.' Will you lend me a pencil, Cad? Then I'll not have to go to the room at all till bedtime. Dear me,—if we only could have roomed together this year!”

“Yes; but I am not going to let rooming with Stella Marbury spoil my senior year. We get along all right, and she spends half her time away from the room practicing anyhow. It would never have done not to room with the girl from my home town.”

“I know it, and Stella wants the ‘prestige’ of rooming with you, Cad. Stella is one little worker for prominence!”

Due to Madge’s meeting with Miss Schiff, Shirley’s slumbers were not disturbed by any intruding room-mate. She expected it, dozing uneasily for a while, but as the medicine which she had taken for her headache began to take effect and she felt more comfortable, she fell into a deep slumber.

When Madge Whitney entered, she did so quietly, though she was obliged to put on her electric light. She tiptoed around, finding everything that she needed, and looking curiously toward the bed in which Shirley lay without stirring. Madge saw the shining gold of the hair that spread over the pillow, but only a cheek and a very pretty arm and hand that had been tossed free of the covers could be distinguished.

A lake breeze was coming in quite coolly now from the two open windows. Madge shut the one nearest the beds partly down, and though she did not dare to touch her room-mate, she drew up the bathrobe that lay across the foot of the bed and put a corner of it over the arm and shoulder, as she had sometimes found that her mother had done for her. Then she put out the light and undressed by only the dim light which came in from the hall through the door set ajar for the purpose. Shirley was a fortunate girl to have so thoughtful a room-mate waiting, though, it must be acknowledged that Madge might not have thought of this had it not been for considerable interest and curiosity. Some way, that hand looked familiar. But hands were much alike!

In the morning Shirley woke wondering where she was after a dream of mountain climbing. But the headache was gone. A renewed Shirley sat up in bed and looked around. Why, this was fine. Here she was at last. Why should she worry about lessons? They would be good to her and let her make them up as she could. She naturally looked first at the stirring form in the other bed. The rising gong was ringing loudly.

A flying mop of curly black hair was all that Shirley could see; but hands were raised to rub a pair of sleepy eyes, as the girl turned over on her back, trying to wink those same blue eyes open.

“Good morning,” clearly and pleasantly said Shirley. “Is this the Miss Madge Whitney with whom Miss Schiff said I was to room?”

“It certainly is,” replied Madge, “and I suppose that you are Shirley

Harcourt.”

“Yes,” said Shirley.

The blue eyes came open, after a last blink, and suddenly Madge set up. “Why, the idea! Was it you, Sidney Thorne, all the time, here in my room in bed last night? And to think that I covered up your shoulder and tiptoed around and put the light out and everything! What became of the other girl? And why on earth,—?” But Madge stopped and stared again.

“It was good of you not to waken me,” Shirley’s musical voice continued, “but I really am not anybody by the name of Sidney. I do suppose that of all things I had to strike the same school as my ‘double!’” Shirley looked rather disgusted.

“If you are not Sidney Thorne, then you certainly *have* a double. Why, it is the *strangest thing!* Please excuse me for having stared so. I am so surprised!”

“I do not blame you. There must be a strong resemblance, for I remember in Chicago several people took me for some one, I did not know who. It is rather enlightening, as my dad says, to know who she is,—unless I have *two* doubles! Wouldn’t that be terrible! I didn’t know that my ‘style of beauty’ was so common.”

“It isn’t. Sidney lives in Chicago all right, and is very well known there, or her father and mother are, which is the same thing. So you found out that you had a ‘double’ when you came to Chicago?”

“The first time. I stayed there a little while with my cousins. Then we went on with our big western trip that has made me late coming back to school. We got delayed toward the last. But we ought to get up, I suppose.”

“I should think we *should!*” cried Madge, looking at her watch, and hopping out of bed. “There will be *some sensation* this morning at breakfast! Shirley, Shirley, Shirley Harcourt,” Madge repeated reflectively. “Let me get used to it. I hope that you will not mind if I should call you Sidney by mistake. I do see something different about you, Shirley, but I can’t tell what it is for the life of me.”

“Thank fortune for that!” laughed Shirley, busy pulling on her shoes and stockings. “I’m afraid that it is going to be embarrassing all around.”

Madge said nothing in reply to that, for she was wondering what Sidney would think of it. That she would not like it at all was a foregone conclusion. How queer it was; but Madge had heard of such things.

Hurriedly the girls dressed. Shirley was quite glad that they wore a uniform at the school, though it occurred to her, as she slipped the one piece blue dress over her head, that the uniform would complicate the matter of identity. She had

never thought of this possibility. There were too many wonderful things taking her attention every day, too many adventures planned in advance for much reflection. Letters to Europe and to Aunt Anne had taken her spare time. That she should meet her double at school!

Madge slipped a friendly hand in Shirley's arm as they went downstairs and through confusing corridors to the big dining room. It was not as much of an ordeal to Shirley as it might have been to some girls, for she was accustomed to be invited with her parents to dinner at the dormitory where the co-eds at home held forth. This was very similar, Shirley thought. But she had determined not to say one word about her family or the professor of whom she was so proud. This year should be unique,—and, indeed, its opening adventures promised that it would be.

No one paid any attention to her until after grace had been said by the dean and the girls were all seated. "Staying with Madge, Sidney?" asked one, unfolding her napkin and taking up her spoon for her fruit.

"This, girls," said Madge, without the suspicion of a smile, "is my new room-mate, Shirley Harcourt. She got in last night. Shirley, this is Betty Terhune." Madge continued the introductions around the table, at which there was no teacher, one of the senior girls occupying the place at the head. Some of the girls gave Shirley a second look, as she acknowledged the introductions, but most of them thought that it was a joke.

"Oh, what's the point of this?" asked Betty. "I suppose you stayed all night with Madge, Sidney. Your new room-mate is going to be pretty late in her classes, Madge."

Shirley now sat quietly, eating her orange and smiling aside at Madge. "Listen, girls," said that young lady. "I don't blame you for thinking it a joke. I could scarcely believe Shirley this morning when I finally got awake and found her there. But if you don't believe me, look over there at Sidney Thorne!"

The astonished girls looked toward the table at which they were accustomed to see Sidney Thorne. Sure enough, there she was, calmly eating her fruit, with no idea of the surprise in store for her. Shirley was as much interested as the rest and gave a comprehensive look at this heretofore elusive double of hers.

"My!" Betty exclaimed. "Even the profile is the same! Why, how could it happen? Are you sure that you are not related?"

"It must be very distantly, if we are. I never heard of any relatives by that name." Shirley felt decidedly strange. It was like a dream to be here in this different but attractive school, so far from her mother and father, where a girl who looked almost exactly like her, so far as she could see, was already a pupil

in the school.

“Tell me about Sidney Thorne,” she said to Betty. “You can’t imagine what a queer surprise it is to find a girl so like me here!”

“I can imagine how I would feel,” sympathetically said Betty. “But if you have to have a double, it is a good thing that she is a nice girl. Sidney lives in Chicago, as Madge may already have told you. She hasn’t any brothers or sisters that I ever heard of, but occasionally her mother and father drive here to see her. They have all kinds of money and they are very fine, cultured people,—so everybody says. Her mother is just the prettiest thing!

“Sidney is one of the smartest girls in school. She belongs to a little crowd that they call the ‘Double Three,’ since a Hallowe’en stunt last year, but they are only her most intimate friends. She’s in almost every club there is here.”

Immediately the thought crossed Shirley’s mind that if such were the case she might as well pay no attention to clubs or societies, those, at least, whose membership was elective. For some reason she felt that no “double” would want to elect her—but then she had a second thought: If *she* were the one whose double came into a school, she would think it a test of her generosity to admit her to its advantages.

There was little time for thinking about this comparatively small matter, for class time was not far away. Every girl had some important thing to do next. The conversation between Madge, Shirley and Betty whisked to the day’s program and Shirley had much to find out. Her courses had been arranged long since. Books, the location of the class rooms and matters of registration were now Shirley’s concern.

As they hurried from the dining-room after breakfast, Madge asked Shirley if she would like to meet Sidney. “Oh, no, Madge,” Shirley replied. “I haven’t time for one thing extra, and then I think that it would be better for her to hear about me first, if possible, rather than to have the shock of seeing me. I caught a glimpse of her on my trip, but she has never heard of me.”

“It’s good of you to think of that,” returned Madge. “I think that I like you pretty well, Shirley Harcourt.”

CHAPTER VIII.

SHIRLEY'S FIRST DAY.

As Miss Schiff had notified the dean about the strange resemblance, Shirley was obliged to meet no surprise on the dean's part, or embarrassment on her own during her first conference. She found the dean dignified, receptive, kind in rather a reflective, serious way. Shirley ascribed her manner partly to the fact of the resemblance, but it was not even mentioned. Miss Irving asked her a few questions, then directed her in regard to her immediate movements.

Soon Shirley was armed with the cards on slips which admitted her to classes. These, she knew, would serve also to identify her. In consequence, she went with quiet assurance to her class rooms, determined to show no self-consciousness if she could help it.

In the college atmosphere, with her father one of the best loved professors on the faculty, Shirley had been taught to think of others, and that altruism, together with long custom in meeting teachers and crowds of young people, helped her now. These classes were small and held in pretty class rooms that pleased Shirley.

Sometimes Shirley felt a little amusement over the situation, but she thought how very annoying it must be to the other girl to have a double appear so unexpectedly, a girl who was to live under the same roof, go to the same meals, attend the same classes for a whole school year. But in spite of Shirley's kind thought of the other girl, just how annoying it was to Sidney Thorne she could scarcely know.

As she entered the first class, Shirley was more concerned with her lack of preparation than with anything else. It was the class in English. She went at once to the desk to speak to the teacher and offer her name for enrollment. This teacher, too, must have had the word passed to her, or must have seen her at breakfast, for she showed no surprise and when Shirley said, "Of course, Miss Berry, I am not prepared this morning," she nodded pleasantly. "You may make up such work as you have lost," she said.

But while Shirley was detained at the desk for this enrollment, she was in full view of the class, which had gathered before Shirley came in. The conference

with the dean had made her almost late.

There was a general gasp of astonishment, and a turning of heads toward the row where Sidney Thorne sat, as if the girls found it necessary to assure themselves of there being two. If any of them had seen Shirley in the halls, or even noticed her in the dining room, it was most likely that they had taken her for Sidney. That young lady was looking at Shirley in well-bred surprise.

It cost Sidney something to control her surprise and dismay, but control herself she did, turning to Hope, who sat beside her, whispering with raised eyebrows, "Who is she?"

But the teacher was calling the class to order and the amazed Hope only shook her head as unable to account for Shirley.

Madge, who sat just in front of Sidney, heard the question, turned slightly, and said out of the corner of her mouth, "my new room-mate."

The class was conducted as usual. Shirley, who had been directed to a seat at the end of a row, was busy taking notes most of the time, for Miss Berry was reviewing the main points of the previous lesson as well as presenting the new one and calling on the different seniors for recitation or comment.

It could have been her own voice reciting, Shirley thought, when Sidney Thorne was called upon, and she wondered; yet enunciation and intonation—something was different, and Sidney was using that "Boston" variety of pronunciation at which the girls had laughed. Shirley felt interested and a little drawn toward her double in spite of her wishing that it might have not been this year, and this place of all others, when the meeting had to occur.

Not all the seniors were present in every class. Some who were not taking the regular college preparatory course were away from the Latin class or from the class in mathematics. In consequence there was usually some one to exclaim over the "new girl who looks exactly like Sidney Thorne," as the word went around. But Shirley paid no attention to any slight commotion on her account. She could have recited in Latin, but forgot to tell the Latin teacher that fact and was not called on for a recitation. She wanted to hold up her hand several times when questions of syntax came up. But something kept her from doing so. She could wait.

She was glad now that her father had made her read that first two hundred lines of Virgil with him. How she had hated it at the time, for her schedule was already full enough, she thought. But he had insisted. "I am not going to have my girl floundering around with her first experience of Latin poetry," said he. "It is very easy, but it will seem hard at first, and with all due respect to the teacher, whoever it may be, I should like to show you a few things myself about scansion

and get you into the easy rhythm of it. Come, now, sing of arms and the hero!"

Shirley found herself thinking of her father during the recitation. Two girls recited particularly well, though they were finding Virgil none too easy at first, it was clear. They were Sidney Thorne and Olive Mason.

Nothing happened of any great annoyance to Shirley that day, though several times she was taken for Sidney. She felt that life had really begun and when she found that the only lessons so far in mathematics were in the nature of a review, her worries disappeared. She was a rapid reader. Her English would be caught up in no time. French was easy,—nothing could make a wave of trouble roll across her peaceful breast, she told Madge and Caroline.

With them and Betty Terhune, after classes were over, Shirley went out upon the campus again to wander there and in the wood and more open grove. The girls were rather enjoying the distinction of having the new girl in tow and being the center of so much interest among the girls. Shirley quite forgot that her arrival was a sensation in exploring the delights of the place. Once Caroline called her Sidney and Betty started to do so later on, but changed. "Sid—" to Shirley.

"Duck on the rock" was fun down in the midst of the sand and pebbles. Then the girls had her peep through a little window into the boat-house to see the school launch. "We call it the yacht," said Madge, "and I guess it is a kind of one. It was given to the school, and the big boat house, too, was given by one of our alumnae. See,—there is room for the smaller boats inside, too. They all go inside to stay when real winter comes."

Shirley looked in. There was the pretty launch with its brass railings and its mahogany finish. Shirley read the name, "Westlake," and exclaimed over the future delights which its very existence promised. "I don't see how I can wait for Saturday!" she cried, when Betty told her that the seniors were to go out in it Saturday.

Perhaps it was largely from curiosity, but that evening, both before and after dinner, a great many of the younger girls and most of the seniors managed in some way to meet Shirley. "Introduce me to your room-mate, Madge," one of the girls would say. Or Betty and Cad, as Caroline was almost universally called, would come up with a bevy of girls to be introduced. Shirley appreciated Madge's convoy, and knew that Madge wanted to keep her from the embarrassment of being alone. It was not really necessary, for Shirley was quite able to take care of herself; but the circumstances were unusual, to say the least.

There was music in the parlors, with much lively conversation after the girls had tired of being outside. They dressed for dinner, as it was directed and their

light, cool frocks were more suitable for the house when the lake breezes blew strongly. Shirley had had an opportunity to press her pretty orchid dress of soft silk, which looked suitable and was becoming. She felt more at home in it than she had been able yet to feel in the uniform, neat as it was, and comfortable.

Shirley's wardrobe, however, was limited. It had seemed better to do the big things, like the trips and the year at school, even if economy were necessary in the doing. From the catalogue Mrs. Harcourt and Miss Dudley had found the list of garments permitted, or required. These Shirley possessed. It was good fun to be away at school, Shirley was thinking tonight. Suppose she did look like some one else. That would be a nine days' wonder. But she noticed that Sidney Thorne did not come up to meet her. When Shirley entered the parlors with Madge, Sidney immediately found it necessary to go to her room and begin work on her lessons or some committee report. "Poor girl," Shirley thought, as she noticed Sidney's hurried departure, "she has had a shock!"

It was not long before Shirley herself thought that she must waste no more time with the girls. She, too must master her lessons. Madge went upstairs with her, but said that she would not study until regular hours began. Leaving Shirley to her usual concentration, Madge hurried around to Cad's room to "indulge in a little harmless gossip," she told her hostess. "I'm glad that Stella isn't in. Lucky that she practices half the time."

"Yes, and the rest of the time she is with her musical chum. It is a wonder that she does not want to room with her."

"How did you like my room-mate?" Madge asked Betty.

"Very much. It's eerie, though, to see how much she looks like Sidney. When you are with her for a while you do seem to see that she is different."

"A different personality altogether," airily stated Caroline. "It's funny, though. She even walks like Sidney,—that light springy way, awfully independent, you know, with her chin up. But Shirley seems more interested in everything than Sidney will let herself be."

"Sidney thinks that it is not 'good form' to show surprise at anything. It is new to Shirley, too. Then she isn't as stand-offish as Sidney was when she first came here. It certainly is going to be fun to watch the differences and to tell them apart. The uniform, too, makes it worse. If they only could dress differently!"

"Sidney will have something on tomorrow, Betty," said Madge, "depend upon it, girls, that will let her friends know which is which!"

"Yes," replied Betty, "and poor old Sidney is thinking right now that she would like to leave and go to some other school."

"Suppose she did!" cried Caroline.

“No,” said Betty, “I think that I know Sidney well enough to say that she will stick it out and not be driven away. She may want to go, and hate it like everything to have some one look like her very twin, but she will stay, for pride’s sake if for nothing else. And nobody will know how she hates it, either.”

“Oh, I don’t know. The Double Three will know it.”

“She may say something at first, when she is so surprised. But nobody will be *sure*. Maybe she will not care as much as I think she will. But I think that it would be something of a shock to any one, and especially to Sidney.”

The girls agreed that having a double who wasn’t your twin would scarcely be desirable. Still, Shirley Harcourt was a very attractive girl.

Other girls beside Madge and her friends were commenting that evening upon the sensation of the day. Some of them declared that they could see a difference in the two girls; others exclaimed that the new girl looked *exactly* like Sidney.

Sidney Thorne herself was very deeply annoyed, as she said frankly, though with reservations, to Fleta. “Yes, it will be a perfect nuisance to be taken for some one else or have some one taken for you. Fortunately the new senior seems to be unobjectionable so far as we can see. On the whole, I suppose that it is not very important. I shall ask the dean if I may not wear something which will identify me, to you girls, at least. In time every one will recognize some difference, I hope. We certainly can not look exactly alike and I shall adopt some different arrangement of my hair. Wouldn’t you, Irma?”

“That would be a good idea,” said Irma, who was quickly getting into something more comfortable than her dinner dress.

Sidney disappeared into her bedroom and came back with a pretty cluster of artificial flowers taken from her coat. “There,” she said, “I’ll wear this tomorrow. Everybody has seen me with this new bunch of posies.”

“You’d better wear something over your shoulders behind, too,” said Fleta. “I’d suggest a placard, ‘This is Sidney.’”

“Fleta!”

“Excuse me, Sid; I was trying to be funny.”

Sidney did not reply, but stood pulling out the flowers for a better effect. Fleta gave a quick glance at Irma, who frowned at her; and Edith, who also caught Fleta’s eye, shook her head, and lifted her hands in an expression of “It’s beyond me!”

Sidney now picked up her uniform and fastened the flowers high upon its shoulder. “Now,” she said, “that will be seen from either direction, Fleta. We can dismiss it all, I hope. It probably will not be very disagreeable as soon as it gets past the stage of mixing us up. Better not tell any of your secrets, girls, or talk

about the Double Three, until you are sure it is I. Odd,—they say that twins think it fun to be taken for each other and like to mystify people.”

Fleta reported this to Dulcie, when Dulcie, in bathrobe and slippers, met her in the hall and asked her what Sidney thought of the “new girl who is her image.”

“She can’t like it very well,” Fleta answered, “but she is very dignified about it.”

“Sidney would be. I hope that she won’t make it hard for the new girl. She could, you know.”

“Yes; but Sidney never does mean things.”

“Sidney is honorable, but she can let a girl alone about as well as any one I know; and it makes a difference here, whether you are a friend of Sidney’s or not.”

“Yes,” thoughtfully Fleta assented. “She says now we must make sure that it is she we are talking to, when we tell any secrets or talk about the Double Three.”

Dulcie laughed. “We must have a pass word, then,” she said.

CHAPTER IX.

LETTERS.

FOR a few days all of Shirley's extra time, except enough for outdoor exercises, which she took in a general way, was spent in catching up and in reciting her missed lessons. She would not risk putting it off. There was much less of it than she had expected, she wrote to the dear folks in Europe, from whom she had received the longed-for fat letter. To them alone she repeated a few complimentary remarks from her teachers in proof that she was "getting along all right," as she told her parents. All the happy details left to be told about the trip she related as well as her impressions of the school, but not a word did she say about finding her double in existence. Why tell it, she thought. To Dick, however, it made the main subject and Shirley chuckled as she started in on a letter to him.

It was Friday night and Madge, who was preparing to go with Cad to the library, asked what she was laughing about. "What I'm going to write to Dick," replied Shirley. "Dick is my cousin, who was along on this summer trip with his father and mother. Perhaps I was the one who was 'along,' though. They all took care of me."

Madge looked interested, but hurried off, as Shirley had told her that this was her great opportunity to catch up and write home. The usual Friday night affairs had not begun so early in the year. Lessons could be divided between now and Saturday, though the boat trip was in prospect for the seniors.

"My dear Dick," wrote Shirley: "You will, perhaps, know what has happened from my writing to you. Otherwise, I will frankly say, I would not think that I had time thus early in my school career. Think of it, Richard,—I am a senior, with all the glories of the position! And by the way, the school is all that I had hoped to find it and more. There are ever so many pretty fine girls here, too, from all appearances, though I do not know many of them yet, and you are invited now to our 'Prom' in the spring. It will be at a week end and you can come as well as not. Plan for it and mystify your fraternity friends accordingly.

"You will remember, if you can spare the thoughts from your exciting rushes and affairs of your own opening weeks, that you were laughing at me once, right

after I saw my 'double' on the Pacific coast. (I hear you laugh and say—a big place to see her in). You said, 'Don't worry, Shirley. I prophesy that you will see her again and find out about her. She will probably be waiting for you at school. Notify me at once,'—and a lot more of nonsense that we both immediately forgot.

"But the joke of it is, Dick, that she really was 'waiting for me' here. It has been a shock to both of us, and she has not come near me to meet me yet, a whole week, or almost. I don't blame her. Her name is Sidney Thorne and her parents are wealthy people of Chicago, a fact which we very well guessed at from my experience there. Looking exactly like me, of course she is all that one could desire,—in a double. I will tell you more anon. Tell Cousin Molly, if you like, but I am not going to write it to Dad and Mother, or to Aunt Anne, for the simple reason that they will think it an annoyance to me, which it isn't, that is, not much of one, and rather funny. And I want them to feel that my year is almost a perfect one, since they have all done so much toward making it so. Oh, I may change my mind, of course, for I'm so used to telling Mother everything; but my best judgment is to wait.

"A fine time to you. May you get all the new boys that you want for the frat and have a marvellous time of it. And don't have too serious a case until after you see some of these girls!"

Shirley laughed again as she folded her letter to Dick. For a moment she almost regretted being away from those scenes of college life. "Now, Auntie," she said, choosing the most perfect sheets of her best writing paper for her letter to Aunt Anne.

"Dearest Great-Aunt," began the letter. "You would be pleased to death to see this beautiful, beautiful place. At night I can hear the waves lapping the shore and the cool breeze comes into our windows. We have had bright days, and you know how blue the sky and lake can be, with the 'bright sparkles' on the water. The school campus, or the wood, goes right up to the shore. Tomorrow we are to have a ride in the school launch, which is called the Westlake. It is big and handsome. The seniors are to go, and perhaps some others. Madge Whitney, my room-mate, did not know and it has not been announced yet.

"I do not know where you and Mother and Father could have found a school that I should like so well. After the big trip, I did hate to be penned in anywhere, in spite of always liking school more or less. It was a habit, you know. But here, right on the lake, you get an impression of space just about as you would on the sea-shore. The waves aren't as big, nor are they salty,—but it is different and lovely. Thank you for your part in it, to begin with!

“I have had no trouble in making up the lessons that I missed. The teachers all helped me to start in. The dean, Miss Irving, is dignified and not easy to become acquainted with, but deans have to be that way, I suppose, or the girls would run all over them. You know how it is at home. I do not know anybody real well yet, but I am not homesick. It is just another big adventure on top of all that I had this summer.

“My room-mate is a real dear sort of a girl. She is Madge Whitney and has the blackest of hair and the bluest of eyes, a real Irish combination, and one of the other girls, such a funny, nice one that Madge calls ‘Cad’ (Caroline Scott), sometimes calls Madge ‘Irish.’ Cad says Madge ought to have my eyes, or I ought to have Madge’s hair, instead of being all mixed up the way we are. There will be plenty of good times, you can see. Tomorrow we are to have a ride on the school launch, which will be a great treat. There was nothing special on for tonight so I thought that I must get a word in to you and ‘the folks’ and Dick. I’ll study a little after I get this letter finished. I am sending it home, for I think that you will be there by that time, as nearly as I could understand your card, which was not the clearest that you ever wrote, my dear aunt,—no disrespect intended! I’ll write as often as I can, but it is going to be a busy life. I can see that you were wise when you gave me that box of correspondence cards and told me to write often if not so much at a time. But I’ll get a real letter off every once in a while.

“Oh, yes,—my room is on the second floor, which isn’t much of a climb to any one used to the mountains this summer. Some of the girls are in suites with a study room, but this, as you know, shares a bath with girls in another single room, on the other side of it (the bathroom). We are on the other side of the building from the lake, though we get the breezes just the same, and we look out on trees and campus and pretty shrubbery. But you know how it is from the pictures in the catalogue.”

A very little more Shirley added, then folded the letter and put it in its envelope, sighing as she did so, for she thought of all the girls to whom she must write at least once. Dozens of cards she had sent home from different places, and jolly, friendly cards they were, for Shirley could write a good message in small space when she tried. But there would be more to tell that the girls in the senior class of the home high school would enjoy after Shirley became better acquainted and had a greater supply of real boarding-school lore to impart.

Putting home, her people, and even her present surroundings, including her “double,” out of her mind with determination, Shirley plunged into her lessons, in which she was still absorbed when Madge came back from the library.

“Say, Shirley,” said Madge as she entered. “Hope Holland says that they want you to do something on the program of the classical club that meets next week. She said that anybody who can ‘walk away with Virgil’ the way you do should be able to step right in on our programs. I told her that I thought your father was a teacher or something from what you said about his having you read some Virgil with him. Was that right?”

“Yes, he is,” demurely Shirley replied. “Why, yes, I suppose I could do something. What do they want?”

“I guess they’ll let you do anything you wanted to, for the program committee is having a time to think up things.”

Shirley thought a moment. “I brought some of my old themes and things,” she said, “and there is a short one on Latin poetry that might do, since we are all studying Virgil now.”

“Just the thing! May I run back to tell Hope that you will? She is worrying about it. Nobody wants to do anything, and we are supposed to have a decent program.”

“Of course I will do it. It certainly will not be much trouble to get up and read something that I’ve already written.”

“Does your father teach Latin?”

“Yes. You see why I have to get my Latin lessons, don’t you?” Shirley was laughing, and Madge nodded brightly at her as she ran off to tell Hope that Shirley had something on Latin poetry and that it probably was good because her father taught Latin.

Study hours had been over for a little while. Shirley piled up her books, undressed and was in bed when Madge came back. That night she dreamed that her father and mother came back from their trip across the waters, met Sidney Thorne and thought that she was their daughter. Sidney went off with them happily and none of them paid any attention to Shirley’s cries, while Shirley looked down at herself and saw that she was all wrapped up like an Egyptian mummy!

CHAPTER X.

WHEN DOUBLES MEET.

GENERAL rejoicing showed in the smiling faces of the girls around the tables Saturday morning at breakfast when it was announced that the Westlake would leave the dock at nine o'clock for parts unknown. Applause followed the statement from the dean, who went on to say that it would carry the senior girls and some of the teachers, and that lunch would be provided.

"You will wear suitable hats and wraps, for we shall stop at one of the towns to do such shopping as by this time you may have wished that you had done before coming. As it is not a picnic, there is no need of picnic garb. Lunch will be enjoyed on the Westlake. Make your wants known to one of the teachers. You will be chaperoned in small groups while shopping."

"Oh, good hunting!" cried Madge, though softly, as soon as Miss Irving had finished. "I was unusually stupid about some of the little things that I might have known I wanted. Will you want to shop, Shirley?"

"I'll *want* to," smiled Shirley, "but I spent too much on different things while I was on my trip. Little Shirley will have to count the pennies, alas. But I might buy a hankie, to remember the first trip in the Westlake, and indulge in a sundae if they let us. Do you know where we shall stop?"

"Haven't an idea. It all depends on where we go."

"You don't mean it," laughed Shirley. "Of course it will not be Chicago?"

"No, I think not. We'll probably start north, but as the lake is lovely this morning we'll go out quite a distance and have a fine ride."

Shirley hesitated to put on the coat in which she had traveled. It was still pretty, but needed cleaning very much, and pressing had only seemed to bring out a few dingy streaks all the more. She brushed up and wiped off the hat, and fastened down its few ornaments more tightly in order that darker and less faded portions should not show. "Can I have cleaning done from here, Madge?" she asked.

"Yes, but it may be some time before you get back what you send."

"Then I suppose I'll have to wear this coat as it is, till time to put on my winter coat."

Madge nodded an affirmative. "Oh, it doesn't look so bad," she said, not very tactfully, for there was no consolation for Shirley in that remark.

"No one would ever know that it was new when I started away in June," ruefully said Shirley, "and I tried to take care of it, too. Well, it can't be helped. If it weren't for the Sunday service, I could get along here on the campus without it. Luckily I did not catch it on anything to tear it. It will be all right after it is cleaned, I hope, for I shall have to wear it next spring again."

While Shirley might feel uncomfortable at the start, she was too sensible to let any coat or hat spoil her enjoyment of the trip; but she did wish that she could make herself a little less conspicuous. She would slip into some seat and just stay there! Yet Shirley knew well enough that there was probably no new girl in any school who came into quicker prominence than herself. Seniors and freshmen, music students and irregulars of any sort by this time knew "Sidney Thorne's double" and were enjoying the fun of trying to tell them apart by stares and looks that tried to be unnoticeable but were often felt, or seen, by both Sidney and Shirley. Sidney resented some of it and had told one of the freshman girls, in a half laughing but quite decided way to "do her staring at the new girl" not at her.

"But Sidney," explained the freshman, who knew Sidney in Chicago, "I wanted to speak to you, and I had to look, to see if it were you or Shirley Harcourt."

"Look at our clothes," said Sidney. "I always wear something different, and she doesn't, so far. Besides, we can't look so much alike as you all seem to think! It is ridiculous."

Sidney was in much the same sort of a mood today. Of course this girl would have to be in all the class affairs and it would not be as easy to avoid her as it was about the hall or in classes. Well, there she was, in that old coat and hat, and if Hope Holland was not with her, and Ollie Mason, too!

The sun was warm as Shirley traversed the walks of the campus between Hope and Olive, who had joined her to talk about the classical club program. Madge and Caroline were behind them, and Betty Terhune from a group in front called back that they were early enough to choose their seats. Between the tall trees, then down to the shore they briskly walked.

The Westlake looked prettier than ever, its deck smooth and clean, its sides shining. None of the teachers had yet arrived, but there were two men in charge of the boat. They saw that the girls were safely aboard and kept a wary eye out for a possible reckless one.

Of course the girls with whom Shirley was walking wanted to sit in the very

front seats, where Shirley would be in plain view of everybody! But then, the front of the boat was the most desirable place and Shirley knew that she would enjoy cutting the waves there, with the prow, and seeing the water tossed aside. Hope was being “nice to her,” Shirley knew, as she asked Shirley to sit in a certain spot that was a favorite location and took a seat beside her. Shirley already knew that Hope Holland came from Chicago and was a member of the “Double Three.” She found Hope a very pleasant companion, but she had Madge also, on the other side of her, and Dulcie sat beyond Hope.

Sidney, with Fleta and Irma, was now making her way toward the prow and girls were coming to the dock in numbers. “Nobody is going to take Shirley Harcourt for me today,” Sidney thought, as she saw the hat and coat and glanced with some satisfaction at her own soft sport coat, new and trim. A gay, close little red hat confined her golden locks. A scarf of the newest design fluttered its ends in the wind.

Shirley, as she caught a glimpse of the red hat and the white coat, sighed and thought much the same thing that Sidney had thought, though with a difference. She could hear Stella Marbury’s voice exclaiming not far away. “Sid! That must be a new coat; I’ve never seen it before. It is certainly nifty.”

“I’m glad that you like it,” said Sidney, drawing it a little more closely around her and putting her hands in its pockets. “Yes, it’s new. I got it for just such occasions as this. Thank fortune, we don’t have to wear those uniforms off the school grounds!”

“Why I thought that you liked the uniform idea. I’m sure I heard you say once that it was so democratic and sensible.”

“Probably I did,—last year. It is different now.”

“And I know why,” replied Stella. Then Stella dropped her voice and said something else. Hope spoke to Shirley then, asking her about her summer’s trip, which Madge had mentioned. As Hope had been through the western parks, both girls expressed their enthusiasm over the scenery, the tramps and the horseback rides, and Shirley was glad not to hear any more of Stella’s conversation. Dulcie she liked very much. “Dulce” had a quaint touch of humor all her own at times. It was not long before Shirley forgot her coat and hat that were not all she could wish. She was her own interested and interesting self, friendly, but not too talkative, and giving the other girls a chance to lead the conversation and to be as friendly as they evidently wanted to be. She suspected Hope of some intention in the matter, but what difference did it make why they were with her. She would enjoy the fun.

Cad Scott had brought her guitar, and two of the girls, Betty Terhune and

Olive Mason, had their “ukes.” Tall Olive clasped her ukelele and beat away upon its strings with the greatest enjoyment, in the latest popular songs or the old ones that everybody knew. Shirley heard the school songs for the first time. They were clever and pretty, she thought, and different from the university songs. She was glad that she had come. It was nice girl stuff! There sailed a white schooner with full sails under the strong wind. Gulls and other water birds flew sometimes near them.

Her mind a blank, as she would have said, except for present impressions, Shirley leaned back to watch the water, the boat and girls, and to listen, humming such tunes as she knew and singing such new words as might be repeated in choruses. “You have a good voice, Shirley,” said Hope.

“Thank you,” Shirley returned. “I want to take lessons some day. My mother sings, though her voice is of a different quality.”

A few minutes afterward, Hope said something to Caroline, who started some new chords. She squealed loudly above the noise of the motor, “We’ll sing ‘Westlake Forever.’ Sidney, you take the solo.”

“All right,” called Sidney across a few girls. The guitar twanged; and the ukes gave a few opening strains, then were silent. Sidney began to sing, in a rich contralto that showed a little training in the careful enunciation of words and free tones.

Shirley gasped and was silent. That was the reason Hope asked Sidney to sing. She had heard Shirley’s voice and wondered. It was scarcely kind of Hope. Yes, perhaps it was, to show Shirley the similarity in voices and leave it to her to decide about whether she should reveal this phase of likeness or not.

“You can get the chorus to this, Shirley,” Madge stopped at the end of the first chorus to say.

“I’m thinking that I will not sing any more today,” said Shirley, smiling.

Madge reached over and patted her hand. “I noticed. I think that you have had some training, too.”

“A little from my mother, just so I’ll not sing in a way to spoil my voice.”

“Sidney began lessons here last year. She’s going on in Chicago when she gets a little older. Her parents are going to give her all of that sort of thing that she wants. So Cad says.”

But the girls were all singing again, Sidney having refused to do anymore solo work against wind, waves and the engine. Shirley hummed a little. That would let Hope know that she had not minded the revelation.

They were far out upon Lake Michigan to all appearances when lunchtime came. But after they were all well fortified against future contingencies by a

variety of sandwiches, potato chips, pickles and similar articles of a picnic lunch, Shirley saw that land was in sight. They made for a port which proved to be Kenosha, on the Wisconsin shore. There they spent a few hours, Shirley, to her surprise, in the same group with Sidney Thorne. The girls had been assigned to certain teachers, of whom there were a number out today. Madge said that the ride was popular with the teachers. Two of them wanted to go to the same shops and joined forces, hence the combination.

Shirley naturally kept with Madge and Caroline, but when they found a place for the inevitable sundae or soda, Shirley discovered that Hope Holland and Sidney Thorne were sitting down at the table where she and Madge had seated themselves. Caroline, at the last minute, had accepted the invitation of a beckoning hand from another small table like theirs.

Shirley did not know that Hope had dared Sidney to this but she looked at the well-dressed girl so like herself and smiled in a friendly way, as she acknowledged Hope's introduction. "Miss Thorne" also spoke as she would have done to any other girl and they all proceeded to give their orders. It was over, and very naturally, the meeting of the "doubles." It could scarcely be called an adventure, and yet Shirley had a strange feeling about it. They talked, as girls talk, of school affairs chiefly, as they enjoyed the tempting dishes brought them. Hope, Sidney and Madge told bright stories of former adventures for Shirley's benefit, but Sidney seldom looked at Shirley as she talked. She *was* a dear girl, Shirley thought even if she had waited so long to say a word to her. How could it have happened? *Could* there be any common ancestor not so far back, or was it just one of those strange duplications of which she had read?

Let it go for the present, the manner of both girls said. Sidney was her most charming self, appealing to Madge or Hope about this fact or that fancy. She called Shirley Miss Harcourt, which set Shirley off just a little farther than the other girls. But it was going to be much more comfortable for both Shirley and Sidney after this, with no efforts to avoid each other. Shirley decided that Sidney would have to be the one to make any advances, if they became really acquainted, but nods and smiles were possible now.

It was nearly dinner time when the launch at last brought its load of girls home to the school grounds. Madge took Shirley's arm as they walked up from the dock. "Hope said that she engineered that meeting," Madge told Shirley. "She said that she thought it ridiculous for Sidney not to know you at all."

"I hope that she did not force Sidney Thorne into it," said Shirley, "not that it matters so much, but it is better."

"She said that she dared her to sit there with you and Sid took the dare. I think

that she enjoyed it at the last.”

“It makes everything less noticeable now, I think,” Shirley thoughtfully said. “After a while the girls will not think so much about it, and I am sure that I shall not. I am glad to have met Sidney and I think her a fine girl. What do you think of Hope? Did she mean it kindly, do you think, when she asked Sidney to sing the solo, and was it to show me how like our voices were?”

“Yes to both, I think,” declared Madge. “She probably did it on an impulse, and if she thinks that you do not understand, she will very likely say something to you about it. By the way, you and Sidney could have a lot of fun at the Hallowe’en masquerade if you dress alike.”

“I’d not like to suggest it, but it *would* be fun.”

CHAPTER XI.

GOSSIP AND HONORS.

ALTHOUGH Sidney Thorne would like to have done so, she could not very well dismiss Shirley and all her works. Shirley was too bright in her lessons and making too much of an impression upon both girls and teachers. Shirley was a little more reserved than was quite natural to her because of these unusual circumstances, but she tried not to notice some of the little things that happened. Then that little fighting reserve, that is in most of us, came to the rescue, not to push her way, but to resist any influence that would quietly relegate her to the rear, so far as lessons or ordinary activities were concerned. She possessed the same qualities of leadership that Sidney had, though whether they were exercised among her classmates or not did not matter to her. Indeed, Shirley scarcely knew that she possessed it.

Other activities followed the picnic launch ride. Shirley played tennis, outdoor basketball and other active games, taking care not to join a group or team in which Sidney might be playing. But there were other girls, some of whom in the excitement of the games would call her Sidney and perhaps not know till the game was over that they had been playing with Shirley. Several times, when Shirley thought that some girl was speaking more freely of something than she would have done except before Sidney, Shirley smilingly reminded her with, "I am Shirley, remember."

All this and the keen, though unobtrusive, interest which Shirley showed in everything connected with the school's activities made the girls like her and trust to her sense of honor. She was fair in the games, though she tried to win, and she had the advantage over some of the girls in having come from a school where a spirit of real sportsmanship was fostered. Shirley knew that and it made her less ready to resent any lack of it in the girls with whom she played.

But volley ball and all the other kinds of ball in the courts were played less as it grew colder and the fun of Hallowe'en drew near.

"Is the Double Three going to repeat the stunt of last year, Sidney?" asked Caroline Scott, the room-mate of the girl who thought that she and Caroline ought to make the Double Three into a Double Four.

Caroline and Sidney had never known each other very well in Chicago, though their fathers were associated somewhat in a business way and their mothers were in certain club work or church activities together. They had become better acquainted, though not intimately so, since they came to the same school.

“The Double Three never repeats,” laughed Sidney. “It’s the rest of you girls that’s made a club of us anyhow. We don’t acknowledge that the Double Three exists.”

“I see,” said Caroline, not believing that Sidney was at all in earnest. “Then you are going to get up your costumes each one on her own, I suppose.”

“I suppose so. I’ve sent to Mother for ideas, but the dean says that she’ll not allow any expensive costumes to be sent in and if we have any, we’ll have to make them, or use something we have. I’m very much provoked about it.”

“Couldn’t you have something simple made in Chicago, Sidney?”

“Perhaps so but I’m too cross with the dean to ask about it.”

“She has not made any announcement yet.”

“No, but she will. I was waiting to see her, and she was telling all this to one of the teachers who is going to have charge of the Hallowe’en performance.” Sidney made a gesture as if the whole thing were not very interesting to her.

“Do you mind telling who the teacher is?”

“Not in the least. You might know it is Miss Gibson.”

“That is why you are so disgusted, then, I suppose. Poor Gibby has a hard time winning you over to her side.”

“She certainly need not try; but I am very respectful, don’t you think?”

“In class, at least, Sidney, looking out for your grades.” This was Fleta, who was laughing as she said this. But Sidney shrugged her shoulders. “I am never impolite to her anywhere, for my own sake,” she said.

The girls were gathering in the beautiful chapel of the school before morning worship. Hope, Fleta, Dulcie, Caroline and Madge were standing in the aisle before passing to their regular seats. None of the teachers had come in yet. Shirley was in her seat, but concealed from Sidney’s view by the other girls who were in the way. Sidney continued speaking.

“Miss Gibson has a loyal adherent now in Shirley Harcourt, and that must console her for the rest of us. Shirley drinks in everything Miss Gibson says with open mouth. Madge, didn’t you say that her father is a teacher?”

“Yes.”

Shirley, who had been writing up her notes from the class before the chapel

exercises, had been dimly conscious of this conversation, but on hearing her name, she paused in the movement of her pencil and looked toward Madge's back. Well, let them talk. She was tired of reminding people!

"She is probably from some little country town and this is the biggest place she ever saw," continued Sidney. "I suppose her father is some village school teacher that teaches Latin. Didn't you say that he made her get ahead on her Virgil?"

"Yes," again said Madge, wavering between her loyalty to Shirley and her customary admiration for Sidney, attractive, influential girl, that she was. "I don't know anything about her family. She reads her letters and puts them away, but she gets some from abroad."

"Somebody must have sold a farm," lightly said Sidney, whose speech indicated no spiteful feelings in intonation, but surely did not spring from any sympathy of heart.

Shirley set her lips together and began to write slowly again. She was angry for the first time. Before she left this school the girls should know who her father was and that even country school teachers—supposing he had been one—and the people on the farms that raised everything foolish Sidney had to eat—but Shirley made her resentful thoughts stop racing on. How silly she was! People who had those ideas would probably keep them. What difference did it make?

"Well, Sid," Fleta was saying, "you'd better be careful how you make fun of your double. She may be related to you, you know."

"Not a chance of it," said Sidney. "It's just one of those freaks of nature by which we happen to look alike now. We'll probably change in a few years, except for our coloring, and I think that my hair is a little lighter than hers."

"Yes, and you are not quite so tall as Shirley, Sid," said Fleta. "I noticed it first when you both stood up together from the same table in Kenosha."

"It would be funny if you went to the same university, wouldn't it? Shirley is going to college, she says."

"I am not sure that I shall go to college at all," said Sidney. "It would be fun, I suppose, but Mother wants me to be with her and it would only mean living at home and going to the university in Chicago."

"I thought you were keen on your studies, Sidney," said Caroline, in surprise.

"I am, some of them," replied Sidney, "but I can have lessons on what I like, read French and other literature at home and all that. You see, I shall be eighteen before long, and Mother will bring me out in society then. Why, Caroline, you and Hope will be doing the same thing!"

"Perhaps," said Hope. "I am thinking of going to the university, and I can't do

both.”

More girls had come in by this time. The dean had mounted the platform and the teachers were in their places. The group around Sidney broke up and Madge turned, to see Shirley busily writing in her notebook.

“Gracious!” exclaimed Madge. “Do you suppose, Caroline, that she was there all the time?”

“Not likely,” replied Caroline. “I’d be so mad I couldn’t write if I had heard Sidney talking like that about me. But Shirley is writing away as cool as a cucumber. Shall you ask her?”

“My, no! If she has heard and says anything about it, I’ll tell you, but I’ll not start any trouble for Sidney, and I would hate to have Shirley know that Sidney would speak of her in just that way. Some way—I like Sidney—but it didn’t seem just as kind as a girl ought to be that has everything, like Sidney.”

“No,—it did *not*. But Sidney is proud, and Shirley Harcourt is making too much of a success at everything to suit Sidney.”

“I wonder,” said Madge.

Shirley could scarcely keep her mind upon the Scripture lesson that morning, beautiful and helpful as she had always found the passage selected by the dean. But Shirley would scarcely have been human if she had not been disturbed. ‘Open-mouthed,’ was she? And this was the biggest place that she had ever seen! But she could fancy her large-minded father laughing at it all. What would it matter to him? Just nothing at all. Nevertheless Shirley seethed a little. Sidney was a proud, empty-headed little minx! No, she wasn’t either; she was smart, and Shirley *could* have liked her so *much*!

That last week before Hallowe’en everybody regretted having any lessons to learn. Little groups that were getting up “stunts” had important conferences, marked by laughter and secrecy, for mystery made the Hallowe’en surprises all the more entertaining. Although Miss Gibson had charge and girls were supposed to ask her about the propriety of what they proposed to do, this was not one of the English teacher’s frequent duties, presenting a play or a program. She appointed a committee, however, to help her and for its chairman chose Shirley, to that young lady’s surprise. She had intended to wear a costume for the occasion, and the little black mask which she had worn in similar affairs at home reposed in her box. She reported at the first meeting of the committee without much idea of what would be required of her.

Miss Gibson very well knew that in her enthusiasm that first year she had made some mistakes with the girls and had antagonized some of them unnecessarily by her manner of pushing perfectly reasonable requirements in a

dictatorial way. In Shirley she knew that she had a girl who was thoroughly enjoying the course under her teaching and one who was not affected by any criticism that she might hear. Naturally a teacher chooses her most loyal supporters to help her.

The meeting was at the close of recitation hours. Not one of the influential Double Three was present! Caroline Scott and Betty Terhune were the other seniors. One from each of the other classes filled out the large committee of six. But they were supposed to assist in decorating the immense reception room which would be used for the celebration and in locating and suggesting the setting for the different features.

“Miss Harcourt,” said Miss Gibson at the beginning of the meeting, “you are the chairman of the senior committee. You, Caroline and Betty are to help with the senior stunt and also to have such oversight as may be necessary over those of the other classes. It may scarcely do to remind you that you are to keep any secrets entrusted to you, in case of surprises. The general decorations are put into the hands of all of you, and Shirley Harcourt may preside when I can not be present at your meetings. I am too busy to plan the details, but they are all to be submitted to me. That is clear, I believe. Now I will hear such ideas as you may already have.”

Nobody seemed to have any. Miss Gibson looked from one to another of the committee and smiled. Then Shirley rather timidly asked if there were any decorations that were kept from year to year. “There are certain things that one always has for Hallowe’en, Miss Gibson, and it would save time.”

Miss Gibson did not know, but Caroline told Shirley that the celebration last year was in the chapel and consisted of the one-act play and some pantomimes given on the platform, with curtains and home-made scenery. “Then we went to the parlors in our costumes and had our social time.”

“You will have to talk it over first, girls,” said Miss Gibson. “Have a meeting by yourselves and think up everything that you know, about what to do on Hallowe’en. I think that the dean does not want the chapel used this year.”

With this, Miss Gibson left the committee to its own devices and joined another teacher, who was waiting for her just outside the door of her classroom.

“Well, what do you think of that!” Betty Terhune exclaimed. “The girls last year said that Miss Gibson always wanted to do everything herself and now look at her!”

Shirley laughed. “Probably she has heard that criticism.”

“Yes,” said the junior, Marie Petersen, “but she ought to have picked out the girls that were so smart and *wanted* to do it themselves.”

“Let me say something, Marie,” said the sophomore, Laura Jones.

“Speak up, if you are but a young thing,” laughed the junior.

“Miss Gibson has confidence in us, or she wouldn’t have turned it over to us. Let’s get up the best ever!”

“Hear, hear!” said the freshman, a “very young child,” according to Caroline. She was letting a boyish bob grow out and had two wisps on either side of her head now, each tied with a piece of pink baby ribbon. These wisps were supposed to be braids.

Shirley looked at her freshman assistant and nearly laughed out. “Good!” she cried. “That’s the spirit. I’m afraid, Pansy, that you can’t be Bluebeard’s wife *this* year.”

“Why not?” stoutly inquired Pansy Layne. “Couldn’t I wear a wig?”

“Yes, you could, Pansy,” laughed Shirley. “Why, do you know how to do a Bluebeard stunt?”

“No; but Bluebeard’s wives were hung up by their hair.”

“Smart girl! Now let’s put our thinking caps on. I have seen plenty of Hallowe’en parties, but I never had to get up anything like this, and it seems scarcely fair to expect me to be chairman here, the first year that I am in the school.”

“I can tell you what they have had lately,” said Caroline. “You just go along and be chairman and we’ll help. But remember that each class is supposed to think up its own particular stunt, so we aren’t so responsible as you would suppose. Only it makes it worse about helping them if they are too late deciding what they’ll do. Madam Chairman, I move that we go ahead first on decorations for the parlors and halls, and meanwhile think up what else we can.”

“There are limitations, too,” said Betty. “Hallowe’en has certain emblems. Caroline, you write and ask your folks what they can get in the way of pumpkin lanterns and other suitable Hallowe’en things for decoration; and we ought to have some black, and red, and white paper to cut cats and things out of, and perhaps some draperies, cheesecloth, I suppose, in the same colors. We have some money from the classes for this, Shirley, if we need it.”

“It is a relief to hear that, Betty. Caroline, will you send for those things?”

“Yes. I’ll telegraph and they’ll be sent right out from Chicago. What with our costumes, we won’t have much time for cutting out ‘cats and things,’ Betty.”

“Luckily I have my costume,” said Shirley, “and if it will give you any ideas for anything that we could get up, I’ll show it to you. My aunt helped Mother make it for something that we had at home. It’s hanging now in my closet to get the wrinkles out. I’ll have to press it, too, perhaps.”

The girls trooped to Shirley's room for the inspiration which looking at a real costume might give them. Madge was there and admitted to their councils, while Shirley brought out her costume for inspection.

"Now that is a real one and different. Who painted that cat's head is an artist!"

"It was Auntie that did that," laughed Shirley, "but I can copy it for anybody that wants one."

"We'll keep you painting, then," said Pansy. "I'll perish if I can't be a witch or a cat."

"They say that girls are 'catty,'" said Marie, "so I don't know about being a cat."

"But Shirley ought to be a witch with that tall hat and have a sort of Cat Brigade to drill."

"How would the freshmen like to be kitty-cats, then?" asked Shirley. "It would be funny, Pansy, if they would do it, and we could have a drill and a song, _____"

"Oh, yes, with a chorus of growls and meows," Pansy added. "If the girls don't want to do it for their class stunt, let's have it extra."

"Everything must be submitted to Miss Gibson, you know," said Shirley.

Other suggestions followed. It would not be so bad to be on the committee, the girls concluded. Meetings of the classes were to be held at once. There was to be no putting off if their appearance was assured for Hallowe'en, and no class wanted to be omitted on the program of fun. When forced to it by the exigencies of time and occasion, there is little that girls can not think up, for the amusement of each other and usually to the entertainment of everybody concerned.

CHAPTER XII.

HALLOWE'EN PLAYS.

THERE was advantage in being on "the committee," that of being excused from classes the afternoon before Hallowe'en to do the decorating. Pansy said that she wished Hallowe'en came every week and that she might be on the committee, and she only wished that she had had more recitations to miss than she had!

Shirley said little, but worked hard; for she knew of at least one critical eye, who would scan the rooms, not inclined to praise. Drapings in orange, red, black and white, in varied combinations, pumpkin shades for the bulbs, black backgrounds for gay posters, and even flowers of the appropriate colors made the Hallowe'en setting. Shirley tried not to have it too "scrappy," but the girls told her that it had to be more or less so. Every one had some favorite poster that must not be left out. But Miss Gibson came in at the last, with directions that vindicated Shirley's ideas and saved the day.

When the girls began to come into the rooms in their costumes and masks, the fun began. They changed their voices, and it was almost impossible to tell who any one was, though there were some mild shouts of "Oh, I know who *you* are!" But it was easy to be deceived. Shirley wore a ghost costume until after the freshman stunt, for her witch's costume had to be used by the leader. Pansy's first idea had been for Shirley to lead the drill of the freshmen; but Shirley told her that it would never do to have a senior in the freshman stunt. Shirley suggested a funny variety of drill modeled after a "gym" drill, which would be mysterious, creepy and catty, in movement and rhythm. She also composed a song for the Cat Brigade, which was accepted by the freshmen committee and sung with great gusto. The only difficulty was to keep its ghostly melody from becoming known till the time to sing it.

The pumpkin shades mellowed the light in the great room. In one corner stood a queer booth for which the committee had been obliged to have a janitor's assistance. A placard warned "Danger,—Witches' Caldron," and one of the senior witches stood there to keep out the curious till after the senior stunt.

There would have been fun enough in the mere costuming and social fun of the occasion. Shirley, from behind her sheet and white mask, ready to help with

the stunts if necessary, enjoyed the scene. She wondered which costume concealed Sidney, but did not see any one that looked like her so far as she could tell.

Madge Whitney declared that she would *never* dress to make herself look *hideous*. As Autumn, she wore a wreath of artificial leaves, in the gay colors of fall, and carried a cornucopia from which trailed grapes and their vines, over red and yellow apples. Her dress was gay with the autumn colors. One of the sophomores came as Autumn, too, but carried a “sheaf” of wheat and a basket of corn and fruit.

There were ghosts galore, for every one who had neither time nor energy to do anything else fell back on a sheet, with some slight addition. Clown costumes, too, were popular, in all varieties. Bluebeard, Spanish pirates, characters from history and from fiction, high and low, challenged recognition.

If Madge went as Autumn, Caroline had decided to go as Winter. She wore kingly robes, white, with a frosted crown, a white beard, sparkling with frost, purchased for the purpose, and a white wig to cover any trace of her own locks. Some glass pendants and the artificial snow or frost made a very realistic appearance.

Some lords and ladies in suits which were used at the senior plays were elegant in their carriage and speech. It was a motley company and the little bells of the clowns tinkled as they walked.

The teachers did not join the masked company, but sat or stood around the room to watch the fun.

Madge stood by Shirley when Miss Gibson clapped her hands for order and announced that the company would be entertained by the seniors, who were presenting the witches scene, Act four, Scene one, of Macbeth. Neither of the girls had seen this practiced, as Miss Gibson had consented to train them for a good presentation of it.

“Sidney wouldn’t be in it at all,” said Madge.

“Yes, I know,” said Shirley. “It was just as well, for it gave Olive a chance to be Macbeth. They give it only as far as the vanishing of the witches, Miss Gibson says, and they make the apparitions just ordinary ‘ghosts.’ Stella is one of them.”

The curtains of the odd booth were thrown back and found to be painted into some likeness of a cavern, suggested, at least. Even the opening thunder was given by the roll of a drum back in the “cavern.” There was the cauldron and something to imitate the appearance of fire under it. The girls enjoyed the pretense of being witches with their uncanny parts and the

“Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.”

All the girls spoke their lines distinctly, though Miss Gibson had deleted some, to shorten the scene and to leave out those that were too unpleasant for such an occasion. Olive as Macbeth made quite an impression. She withdrew with the witches, but witches, apparitions and Macbeth were obliged to come out again in front of the cavern to receive further applause.

“The rest will be anti-climax,” mourned Pansy, the kitty-cat, who had joined Madge and Shirley.

“The freshman fun will be the relaxation of the evening,” said Shirley, “and how can you speak thus to the author of your beautiful verses!”

Pansy laughed. “That is so. I had forgotten our beautiful poetry.”

“To tell the truth, in comparison with this, our lines may fall a little flat; but just looking at you kittens, you black cats, I should say, will be enough. I thought that I saw two costumes like your witch’s, Pansy, a while ago.”

“I did, too,—I wonder whose the other is.”

The sophomore entertainment was even more gruesome than the witches of Macbeth. When a curtain was drawn aside at the end of the room, there, against the white background of another curtain, which represented a wall, hung the white faces of Bluebeard’s wives. A ghostly sophomore read the story, briefly told, in its most exciting parts, while the wife who entered the forbidden chamber, Bluebeard, and Sister Ann played their parts in pantomime, with the addition of ghostly groans from the wives who had, supposedly, been disposed of long since. This was a little too realistic and made more than one of the audience jump a little at first. But it was soon over.

There was relief from spookdom when the juniors came in to give very prettily a “Dance of the Pumpkins.” “Pumpkin” costumes and one funny rolling movement gave the “motif.”

But how they laughed when the freshmen came in as black cats, managed by a rather frisky looking witch with her tall black hat, her black robe and the broomstick on which she expected to make her exit. On the front of the robe was the large cat’s head with its big yellow eyes, and a whole cat was depicted on the back between the witch’s shoulders.

First the witch led the march, while the piano crashed and two girls who had violins tried a little hideous jazz at certain points. Next, the witch stopped and from the side gave orders for a standing drill with rubber mice. A few squeals from the audience at the first appearance of the mice, swung forth by their tails,

was so natural and suggestive that the whole audience laughed and one girl called out, "nice kitties!"

The comical appearance made by the backs of the girls, as they wheeled and faced away from the audience, brought more laughter. Shirley had despaired of painting enough cats for all the freshmen in the drill, but the bright idea occurred to her after it was decided to put cats on their costumes, to stencil the cats. Accordingly, on the square white patch of muslin, similar to the one upon her own costume, which the witch wore, in stenciled patches of black, the clawing limbs and wildly waving tail of the witch's cat appeared.

As a result of careful measurements, this made a line of cat pictures funny to behold, with the black whiskers and yellow eyes added by Shirley's brush afterward. The cat's head in front was striking, too, but not so funny as the whole cat between the shoulders behind. It was scarcely necessary to do anything "smart," Madge declared to Shirley. Just to look at them was enough, Madge said; and Shirley, grinning herself at some of the evolutions, nodded assent. "Maybe that's so," she whispered, as the freshmen girls made their eyes big, held out the mice with one "claw" and scratched at them with the other. They laid them on the floor and played with them, or took them away from each other and "howled" in chorus, all to the music. This changed now to the lively melody of which Shirley was the composer.

Facing the audience and lined up in one row, the freshmen pinned the rubber mice on their costumes by the tails as badges and stood for a moment to get their breath while one of the teachers, who had made an accompaniment to Shirley's melody, played a brief prelude.

"Mother Goose stuff," said a low voice near Shirley. Shirley did not turn to see what the speaker looked like, in some gay costume, she supposed, for the voice was Sidney's. Madge heard it, too, and nudged Shirley, whose ghost costume, of course, could not indicate to Sidney that the chairman of the committee was close by. "She's jealous," whispered Madge, but the sarcastic little phrase spoiled what followed for Shirley. "It *is* silly," she thought, "but, somehow, they couldn't think up anything better, and we had to have *something*." Quietly she stood to see how the girls would sing the foolish song.

But the rest of the audience were in the spirit of fun and "Mother Goose stuff" was quite acceptable to them. Youthful freshmen voices started in after a loud crash from the accompanist and a wail from the violins.

Oh we are the witch's cats;
We creep and we snoop and we prowl;
We watch the brimming, boiling pot,—

At strange approach we howl.

Hist! St! Meow! Meow!
At strange approach we howl.

Don't try to catch,
For we can scratch,
Don't lift our latch,
Or strike a match!

Hist! St! Meow! Meow!
At strange approach we howl!

Oh we are the Cat Brigade;
On Hallowe'en night we may ride,
And trail her broomstick in the air
Or guard her at her side.

Hist! St! Meow! Meow!
We guard our witch's ride!

Beware the knell
In darkness fell
When witches spell
The fates they tell!

Hist! St! Meow! Meow!
Beware the Cat Brigade!

With further evolutions, at the direction of the witch, and repeating the last lines softly, the Cat Brigade marched out followed by applause and laughter. The freshmen had put over their little play quite effectively and Shirley drew a long breath of relief. The last "stunt" was over. The rest was in the hands of a sub-committee, who had the management of the refreshments. The fun of fortune telling and the other customary Hallowe'en features could go on without further supervision. Shirley hurried out to get into her own costume, for the freshman witch had another one which she wanted to wear. Like Madge, she preferred to be beautiful rather than funny.

Again Shirley saw the costume which was so like hers, except for the cats,

painted by some other artistic hand. The cat upon the back was directly on the black robe and was such a funny, big yellow cat that Shirley drew nearer to see it. But the girl who wore it was getting out into the hall as quickly as possible through the crowd of girls, not noticing at all the “ghost” which followed her.

Shirley heard a shepherdess who accompanied the “Yellow Cat” witch arguing with her in a low voice. “Why should you care, Sid?”

“Caroline knew that they were going to do that stunt! She suggested this to me on purpose! Perhaps I’ll come back, if I can find all of that Turkish costume; but I’m afraid that it isn’t with that stuff that I left here last year, and besides, I’ll have to go all through that big box! I’m sure that I took the red sash home!”

“That’s all right, Sid! I have——”

Shirley heard no more, for she, too was trying to get past a group of girls who blocked the way and wanted to hear no more. How odd it was. How had Sidney happened to make such a costume? Perhaps it was easier, for the robe may have been the Double Three domino of last year. But Caroline’s suggesting it! Shirley could not understand.

The cat costume did not return. No Turkish costume mingled with the rest, for Shirley, returning in the cat costume, noticed particularly. It troubled her, though she thought that she was silly indeed, to take so much interest in a girl who cared nothing for her. The freshmen kitty-cats, all alike, were enjoying themselves immensely and performed amusing antics occasionally around their witch, Shirley now. She had no fear of being discovered, for naturally enough every one supposed her to be a freshman.

As a prize was offered for the most striking and original costume, the judges came to Shirley to notify her that her costume was being favorably considered on account of the cleverly painted cats. This was before the masks were removed. “Where is that costume like yours, with the big yellow cat on the back?” one of the girls asked Shirley. “Did you do them together?”

“No,” said Shirley, changing her voice as well as she could. “I did not know anything about it till I saw it here tonight.”

“We’d like to see it before we decide; yet, girls, the black cat is more appropriate to witches, and I think that this costume will take the first prize anyway.”

The judges hurried off. If it had not been for that last remark, it might have been Shirley’s duty to say that she knew who the girl was who wore the yellow cat costume, though even then it would have been a question whether to tell or not. Shirley had a feeling that Sidney would prefer to lose a prize rather than admit having a costume like Shirley’s. How had it happened? she asked herself

again.

CHAPTER XIII.

FLETA TO THE RESCUE

SIDNEY did not do anything so foolish as to remain away from the Hallowe'en fun. However unhappy she felt over the apparent copying of her costume, or perhaps a deliberate suggestion by Caroline, who knew that the freshman witch would wear such a costume, she reached a better frame of mind under the urging of Fleta, pretty in shepherdess gayety.

The Turkish costume was one which she had used in Chicago and had brought with her the year before. Then, the little play called for the "Double Three" domino. "Luckily it hasn't been worn here, Sidney," said Fleta, as she helped Sidney hunt through the big box and took smaller boxes down from the top shelf of the closet.

"But it is so terribly mussed," wailed Sidney. "I can't wear it at all!" The main part of the costume was, of course, at the very bottom of the big box which formed the window seat in their study.

"Yes, you can, Sid! Hunt up the sash, and if you can't find it, there's that red one of mine that will do. It's in my drawer, somewhere in a box. I'll get my little iron and run down to the kitchen. They'll let me press there, under the circumstances. Wait till I get a sheet to lay on the table, if I can't get hold of an ironing board. Where's the cord to my iron? There, now!"

A very capable shepherdess, still wearing her mask, flew down to the kitchen, where refreshments were being prepared for a real Hallowe'en banquet, the first one of the kind that they had ever had there. Fleta explained that there had been a great mistake and that somebody would miss all the fun if this costume could not be pressed and made fit to wear.

"If you can find a place to do it, go ahead," was the reply to Fleta's explanation and request, and determined Fleta found a place where she could attach the cord to her electric iron and press the costume well enough.

Sidney, who was accustomed to be waited on, thanked Fleta, however, very sincerely. She had found the sash and some other little accompaniments and was ready to slip right into the newly pressed garments. It had taken scarcely half an hour from the time when she and Fleta had left the parlors. Sidney quite enjoyed

one feature of wearing a different costume, that of deceiving her other suite-mates, for they all dressed together.

“Where is Sidney?” Irma inquired of Edith.

“I don’t know. There’s Fleta. Ask her.”

“What has become of Sidney, Fleta? I haven’t seen a thing of her since that cat performance. Do you suppose that she hated it to have made a costume so like that of the witch?”

“Yes, she did, but she got over it. She’s somewhere around. I persuaded her to come back.”

“Oh, she did run off, then!”

“Yes. Better let her say the first word about it.”

“Yes, indeed. I know Sidney too well to make any uncalled for remarks!”

Great was the surprise, when the masks came off, just before the Supper, and Sidney was found by her suite-mates in Turkish garb. Shirley, also, was asked many times if she had led the Cat Brigade; but she explained as best she could, and it was all made clear when she was announced as the winner of the first prize, and as “having the costume which is considered the most original. It gave the idea, also, for the freshman stunt and was worn by the freshman witch in the cleverly performed drill. Miss Shirley is the composer of the song which they sang.”

The “banquet,” served early enough, it was hoped, not to upset the young ladies, and simple enough to ward off all criticism, was funny chiefly in its decorations, place cards and the names of dishes upon the menu cards. It was too bad that there should be any one not able to throw herself entirely into the enjoyment of the evening. But Shirley was too tired, after her strenuous efforts of the day, to throw off altogether the unpleasant impressions made by Sidney’s remarks, which she had overheard.

Madge noticed how quiet she was, but laid it to her being tired. As they went into their room, after all the fun was over, Madge said, “I hope you didn’t mind what Sidney said that time about ‘Mother Goose stuff.’ Your song and the way the freshmen sang it nearly made me double up laughing, and to think you won the prize makes me swell with pride to have such a room-mate.”

“Nonsense! I’d think you’d be ashamed of me for the style of literature that I produced, to say nothing of that tune.”

“It was as funny as the words, and the jazz was thrown in by the piano and violin. The queerest thing, Shirley, was that as I looked back, out of the corner of my eye when Sidney’s voice spoke so near us, I found that she was wearing the witch costume, the one with the yellow cat. You can imagine how surprised I

was to see Sidney as a Turkish lady, after masks were off.”

“I knew that Sidney was the yellow cat witch, Madge, for I heard Fleta talking to her when they left the room. I happened to be near her again when I went out to change my costume. I watched to see if she would come back, and she didn’t come for so long that I gave her up. Then I found her later, or the costume that I imagined was the one they had spoken about. I felt worried, for some reason.”

“Sidney is sort of peevish about things lately, Caroline says.”

“Perhaps it is my being here. I’m sorry; but it doesn’t seem to be possible to help it.”

“You are a little too bright at your lessons and too influential yourself Shirley, to please Sidney, who is used to being the center of things. That is my private opinion.”

“I don’t care for any particular influence, Madge, but of course I do care for standing well in my classes. I’ll try to keep off of committees after this.”

“You must do nothing of the kind. It isn’t fair.”

“Yes, it is Madge, because all I want is to have good reports for my father and mother and to enjoy as much of the good times with you girls as I have time for.”

“You are too capable, Shirley. You can’t get out of things like that.”

The next morning Shirley, going upstairs, met Sidney coming down; but instead of the usual courteous greeting from Sidney, she passed with her head in the air and without looking at Shirley. Shirley frowned thoughtfully and went on to her room. Was Sidney blaming her for the costume affair?

At her first opportunity, she reported the cut to Madge and asked if she could tell Caroline to come to their room after classes at noon. “There is no need of Sidney Thorne’s taking such an attitude toward me,” Shirley said. “I shall go to her to-day and ask her what the trouble is, apologize, if I have done anything, or receive her explanation. I do not think that she is the sort of a girl who would refuse one.”

Shirley repeated to Madge what she had overheard and asked Madge if it would be best to repeat it to Caroline.

“No, Shirley,” said Madge. “Of course, you want to get at the bottom of this, but it will only make Caroline mad to tell her what Sidney said, when Sid was out of patience, too. We’ll just ask Caroline if she knows how it happened that Sidney wore the witch suit.”

Shirley agreed with Madge that this would be the best course. The less trouble stirred up the better. But Shirley was surprised to realize how it troubled her to have a misunderstanding with Sidney.

Before lunch, Caroline, with her arms full of books, rushed in on her way from class. A little tap on the door was all that announced her arrival, and she pushed the door open without waiting for an invitation. “Hello, Cad,” said Madge. “I waited for you, till I saw that you were going to be too long.”

“Yes, I thought that Miss Gibson would never let me go. Here are all the books that I have to read for my essay on—what is it that I have to write about?” Caroline with a look of pretended ignorance, consulted a large sheet of paper filled with notes.

“Never mind that,” laughed Madge. “We want to ask you how it happened that Sidney wore the yellow cat witch costume? Do you know anything about it? Has Hope said anything, or any of the Double Three?”

“What makes you think that I know anything about what Sidney wore? *Did* she *really* do that? That certainly is a joke on her!” Caroline was so absorbed in the idea that she forgot to push the question why they thought she would know about it.

“I wonder if what I said to Hope was at the bottom of it. We girls were talking about costumes for the party and I said that the cutest costume I had ever seen was a witch’s costume with cats painted on it. Remember, Madge? You had shown me Shirley’s costume, and began to tell about the big eyes in the head in front and the big cat ready to spring that was between the shoulders. Hope said that Sidney was uncertain about her costume, and I started to say that the costume I was describing had better not be copied, but some one broke in with something so funny that we all laughed and I forgot all about what I had said. But Sidney wore a Turkish costume when we unmasked.”

“Yes, but that was after the Cat Brigade. She was in the senior stunt as a witch, you remember. Don’t you remember what an impression the yellow cat made?”

“No, Madge,” said Shirley. “That was not Sidney. She must have done what I did; for she wouldn’t do anything, you remember, in the Senior stunt.”

“That is so. I had forgotten. Some one just wore her costume to save making another witch costume. Mercy, how mixed up everything was!”

“All the better for a costume party, Madge,” said Caroline. “But what is the trouble? Why do you want to know about it?”

“Oh, just because Sidney cut Shirley this morning, and Shirley thinks that it must have something to do with the costumes that were so much alike.”

“Whew! Wouldn’t Sidney *speak* to you, Shirley? Are you sure?”

“I met her, by myself, and I was by myself. But it is not fatal, Caroline, and I would not pay any attention to it, except that with a girl like Sidney there must

be some reason for it. She must think that I have done something. Please do not speak of the cut. I did not mean to have Madge mention it.”

“I’m perfectly safe, Shirley. I’ll speak to Hope about the costume. She need not know how *I* know that Sidney wore it. She does not room with Sidney, but as a member of the Double Three she probably knew what all of them were going to wear.”

“I’d appreciate it, Caroline,” said Shirley. “I am going to see Sidney to-night anyhow and ask if I have offended her, but if I had some idea of how I have happened to do so, it would help.”

“Yes, it would. I’ll see Hope some time this afternoon, Shirley, and report before dinner.” Caroline ran out with her books, while Madge and Shirley started out on their way downstairs, for it was nearly time for the gong.

CHAPTER XIV.

“MUCH ADO.”

“YES, Irma,” said Sidney, sitting in the study shortly after dinner. “Considering the fact that there were about half a dozen witch costumes last night, the decision of the judges that Shirley Harcourt’s costume was the most original was nothing short of ridiculous. But that would not annoy me at all. What I feel provoked about is that those girls so evidently made it up to get me to wear the same sort of suit that Shirley did. I couldn’t get much out of Hope, when I asked her again about it; but she certainly told me that Caroline described a costume that would be just the thing for me!”

“I can scarcely believe it, Sidney. Shirley Harcourt is not that sort of a girl; and if Caroline suggested it, I don’t see that it involves Shirley at all.”

“Oh, all right, Irma. But I think what I think. My, how cold it is tonight! I wanted to go down to the lake, but there is frost in the air and the wind is unpleasant.”

“You must be taking cold, Sidney. I was out and did not notice it at all.”

A light knock came at the door of the study. Irma went to the door and opening it, found Shirley Harcourt there. “Why, how do you do, Shirley; come in,” Irma said.

Soberly Shirley entered with a return of Irma’s greeting. Hesitant she stood within the room, seeing the girl in the pretty, blue negligé, who sat on the other side of a central table. Sidney had just had time to turn her back before Shirley came in. “I wanted to speak to Sidney Thorne just a moment, Irma,” Shirley continued. “I had reason to think this morning that I had offended her and I want to ask her what is the matter. I am very willing to apologize, if I have done anything, without knowing it.”

Shirley paused and looked at the shining hair, one well-shaped ear, and a cheek fair and pink with only the natural tints of youth. But Sidney made no move.

Irma stood quietly. She knew that it must have taken an effort on Shirley’s part to say that she was willing to apologize. But Sidney, listening, thought that Shirley knew well enough. She had not yet been addressed. She would not turn

around until she was.

Shirley looked at Irma, but Irma, puzzled and annoyed, did not know what to do. She started to speak and then stopped, and Shirley, wishing that she had not come, smiled at Irma as she opened the door again, stepping outside. "It was a mistake to come, I see," said Shirley. "Thank you, Irma; good night."

Irma closed the door and without a word to Sidney went into the bedroom which she and Edith occupied. There she moved around for some time before coming into the study again. Taking the same chair by the table which she had occupied before Shirley knocked, she resumed her study. With the ringing of the gong for study hours to begin, Fleta and Edith came in, full of life, hoping that they didn't interrupt, but it was most important to tell the latest news, that the "Water Nymph" was going to be married at the Christmas Holidays.

It was a relief to Irma when they came. She was not enjoying her silent companion, though silence was better than speech if speech should take up the subject of the call. But Sidney knew that for once in her life, at least, she had been discourteous. Of that Irma very likely disapproved. She would say nothing. It was a relief to her, as well, when the other girls joined them.

Shirley had found that Hope had little recollection of what she had said to Sidney. "Why, Caroline," she replied to Caroline's questions, "I was trying to help Sidney about her decision. I remembered your describing a cute one, and I had the impression that it was one you had seen somewhere. I knew that you were wearing something else. So I told Sidney about the painted cats. Mercy, what have I done? I never even thought of it that night, for we had witches in the senior stunt and I supposed that it was Sidney's idea, though I did hear her say that she would not have a part in the performance."

"It's just that Sidney may think Shirley had some hand in it. I only want to let *you* know that Shirley did not *even* know that Madge had *shown* me the costume when she did."

"If you want me to say something to Sidney,—” Hope began.

"Not yet, Hope, and perhaps not at all. Haven't you heard Sidney say a *word*?"

"I have scarcely seen Sidney at all. I can't quite understand,—did you say that Sidney has been *blaming* you girls for her having something just like Shirley's?"

"Hope, you dear little goose! You are too broad-minded yourself to take all this in. Just keep quiet about it. If we call you in as witness, tell the truth!"

"I certainly can do that, Cad. I wish that Sidney weren't quite so proud."

"Sid would not be herself if she were not proud. What a pity that we can't all be Standishes of New England!"

“You are a sad case, Cad Scott,” laughed Hope. “Good luck to you.”

So it came about that Shirley decided to go directly to Sidney,—with the embarrassing results. Had she persisted, it is most likely that Sidney would have entered into conversation with her. But Shirley’s pride came in there. It had been hard to go to Sidney’s room. She could not stay where she was not wanted. Thinking about it, she concluded that it was, as Madge said, “much ado about nothing.” “Just go right on, Shirley. If Sidney is mad about anything, you have shown that you are ready to make it right. That is enough. If it were any other girl than Sid you would not care. I believe that you are twins!”

Shirley laughed. “It isn’t my way to let things go, unless I’m sure that the other side is altogether unjust. But I can’t help myself, it seems. We’ll drop it.” Within herself Shirley decided not to avoid Sidney, to speak if the opportunity given, but to go right along as usual.

Shirley’s other school-mates were more friendly than ever after the masked party. Without trying, Shirley was taking a position of influence among the girls. She was consulted and sought. She joined one or two clubs, but worked busily at her lessons, encouraged often by the warm letters from her mother. Her father was too busy to do more than to scribble a few lines of affection and advice upon her mother’s letters.

In one of Miss Dudley’s letters she asked, “Have you remembered, Shirley, that you were born in Chicago? I don’t know that we have thought of it in connection with your going to school so near the city. Your father was getting another degree at Chicago University, and your mother was with your grandmother and me in a house that we had rented for a while in Glencoe,—a very attractive suburb,—you must stop off and see it some time.”

To this Shirley wrote, “If I’ve ever been told that I was born anywhere else than at ‘home,’ I have forgotten it. I can’t say that I am pleased to hear it particularly, though it does not matter so much where a body was born, I guess, as who—whom she was born to! I’m certainly glad that I belong to your family, Auntie. Can’t you come on at the Holidays to see me?”

But Miss Dudley could not manage it. The fact was that she was taking every spare cent to meet the expenses for her niece, though she had indulged in an economical summer vacation. She would not tell Shirley this. Let Shirley think that Auntie had plenty.

As the first term speeded to its close, Caroline had several conferences with Hope Holland relative to Shirley, who was expecting to spend the vacation at the school with several other pupils, for whose benefit it would not be closed. Hope wanted Shirley at her home, but so did Caroline, and the fact that Hope belonged

to the Double Three made it embarrassing.

“I don’t have to go over to Sidney’s all the time,” she said. “We see each other all the time at school and Mother and Father and the boys will want me there. I suppose I’ll have to go to Sidney’s parties,—not that they will not be fine, as they always are, but I don’t see why I should not invite Shirley.”

“If you do, Sidney will never get over it. I’ll tell you. You let *me* invite Shirley and have her *part* of the time. Then when you are not in anything with the Double Three, or entertaining them yourself, she can be with you.”

“If I have a party,” said Hope, with determination, “if I have a party,” she repeated, “and Shirley is in Chicago, she will be invited. Sidney can have a headache if she does not want to come!”

“Well, then, may I have Shirley?”

“Yes, on those conditions, that I have her part of the time, to stay all night, you know.”

“All right. We’ll not quarrel, Hope. Shirley is such a big-hearted and broad-minded girl, like yourself, Hope, that I couldn’t be jealous of either of you if I tried.”

“That is because you are nice yourself, Cad, my dear.”

All of this was not imparted to Shirley. But she knew that she was invited by both Caroline and Hope, and after a letter of permission from her great-aunt, Miss Dudley, she accepted her invitations very happily. When she heard that the Double Three were having a house party at Sidney’s, she wondered about how things would be managed; for she “felt it in her bones” that Sidney would not invite her to her home, and she knew that Hope was a “Double Three.” But Shirley said nothing. That could be handled by her hostesses, she knew. She would go and have a wonderful time.

It had happened that Sidney’s parents had not driven to the school that fall. It was Sidney’s second year. They were accustomed to the separation as well as she. She spent one or two week ends in Chicago, as well as the Thanksgiving vacation. Early in the year, also, Sidney had asked Hope and Caroline not to speak of the strange resemblance between Sidney and the then “new girl.” “If you write home about it, Father and Mother will hear of it, and it will not strike them very pleasantly I am sure,” said Sidney. And after some consideration Hope and Caroline had promised, though Caroline had said, “We’ll not say anything now, shall we, Hope? But if our parents ever do see Shirley or hear about her, don’t flatter yourself, Sid, that we can muzzle our fathers. Our mothers might hesitate to say anything, but if I know Dad, he would be just as likely as not to mention it.”

“I suppose he would,” said Sidney, with a look and tone that made Caroline want to resort to “primitive measures,” she told Hope. “If we had been about six years old, Hope,” she said, “I would have slapped Sidney Thorne and not regretted it.”

“Tut-tut, Caroline,” laughed Hope. “It’s a primitive society, indeed, that can’t control its angry passions.”

None of the girls had forgotten all this, and now Hope and Caroline expected to enjoy the surprise of their respective families upon their first sight of Shirley. “You will not mind, will you, Shirley, if anybody takes you for Sidney?” Caroline asked.

“I am used to it by this time,” said Shirley, “and *this* time I shall know why Chicago people, or some of them, think that they know me.”

CHAPTER XV.

AN ACCIDENTAL MEETING.

LONG since Sidney Thorne had spoken to Shirley, for she found out that her suspicions of an intent to embarrass her were entirely unfounded. Her manner toward Shirley had not even been unfriendly for some time but when she found that Shirley was going to Chicago as the guest of Caroline, she was almost indignant. The girls knew that it would be embarrassing for her. Why did they invite Shirley? Now, unless she wanted to have complications arise, she could not invite Shirley to the affairs that she wanted to have for the Double Three. Well, she would just *leave* Shirley out, if she did come from the same school. You did not have to be intimate with everybody!

Such was Sidney's attitude. Shirley thought of it, too, and felt rather sorry for Sidney, supposing, of course, that Sidney wanted to be courteous, as she had always been except on that one occasion, which had never been explained between them. But it would not affect Shirley's good time in the least.

The Double Threes had gone on ahead, leaving on the first train, with the exception of Hope Holland, who waited for Caroline and Shirley, the three preferring to go by themselves, though it was only a tacit understanding among them.

How jolly it was to have no lessons and to be facing the best vacation of the year in thrills and Christmas festivities. Shirley's winter coat was all that could be desired, and she was to buy a new hat in Chicago, though the hat which she had brought, with her coat, was becoming and still good. Sidney would have no reason to be ashamed of her double.

Cards from Hope and Caroline had warned their families of showing too much surprise at a remarkable resemblance between Shirley Harcourt and Sidney Thorne. As a result, while they were almost startled, in spite of the warning, there was to be no embarrassing moment for Shirley.

She was to go first to Hope's; but at the station two cars met the girls, one from each household. Mr. Scott reached them first and was introduced to Shirley. "I have met you once before, Mr. Scott," said Shirley after shaking hands.

“Why, when, my child?” asked kindly Mr. Scott.

“Last summer, when I was in Chicago for a few days. You came up to me in a hotel and shook hands with me. I thought it was some graduate of our university, till you told me that Mrs. Scott and the girls had gone up to Wisconsin and assumed that I knew about it.”

“Then it was you instead of Sidney!” laughed Mr. Scott. “I remember that I was puzzled, for Sidney was supposed to have left the city some time before.”

But here came two youths hurrying across through the crowd to them. “Hello, Hope. How do you do, Mr. Scott? Caroline, how you’ve grown! Isn’t that always the thing to say to returning children?” The taller of the two boys was shaking hands with Caroline, after this speech, and put an arm around Hope, as he waited to be introduced to her friend.

In a moment Shirley found herself in a handsome car, sitting behind with Hope, while the two young men sat in front, the older one driving skilfully through the traffic of Chicago. “Little did I think, Hope,” said Shirley, “when I was here last summer, or even last fall on the way to school, that at Christmastime I’d be back to visit with a dear girl like you.”

“I want you many more times, Shirley. I’m sorry that Madge had to go home, but after all, it’s nice to have you to ourselves. Some way, people get to loving you, Shirley, did you know that?”

“No I didn’t,” laughed Shirley. “I think that it’s ‘your imagination and a beautiful dream,’ as Auntie is fond of saying.”

“You did not know that I had such big brothers, did you? I told them all about you, though. I have one more, and no sisters at all.”

Shirley looked at the two young men in front of her, used to the ways of the city, capable, interesting. Mac, who was driving, looked not in the least like Hope, though he had her serious look when his face was in repose, as now. Good, clear features marked the profile that Shirley saw. His face was rather thin and the hands on the wheel were well-shaped. Ted, the other brother, was not as tall as Mac, but looked as old; his eyes and the shape of his face were like Hope.

“They look as if they were the same age, don’t they?” asked Hope. “Ted is not quite a year older than I am, and Mac is just a year older than Ted. We were all little together and my, how Mother ever stood our playing and fussing I don’t know. Kenneth is fourteen, only three years younger than I am, but he is somewhat spoiled as the ‘baby’ of the family.”

It was pleasant to be welcomed into the beautiful home of the Hollands. Shirley shared Hope’s room and thought it “lovely;” but Hope said that they were selling the house soon and would move into a suburb farther out.

Shirley knew little about changes in a city and these things did not concern her. Immediately she entered upon one happy event after another. Mac, so full of fun, yet so serious upon occasion, took a great fancy to Shirley and saw that she missed nothing. When she went to Caroline's just before Christmas Day, Mac did not desert her, but drove over, with gifts from the Hollands, while Caroline said that she never had so much attention in her life as now from the Holland boys and their friends. Shirley did not even know that Sidney had had a great party for the Double Three, for Hope was over early that evening and went to Sidney's late, in plenty of time for this event. Caroline sent regrets because of a previous engagement, which was an evening with Mac and one of his friends.

"I thought that you were like Sidney at first," said Mac, "but I'd never confuse you two after a good look, Shirley. Sidney is a fine girl and she may learn a few things about people after a while; but you have a different viewpoint and it makes you sweeter."

"Why, that is nice of you to say," said the surprised Shirley, "but I didn't know that you were so—," she paused for a word and Mac said, "'observing,' isn't it?"

"No; that would be admitting that you are right."

"Analytical, then, or philosophical. Remember that I am going to college!"

"Oh, you ought to know Dick. He is in our university at home, the one where my father teaches." There, it was out. Shirley had changed her mind about not speaking of her wonderful father.

"Is your father a university professor? That explains it, then." Mac looked as if he would like to go on, but was not sure whether he dared or not.

"What it explains I don't know," laughed Shirley, "but so far as Dad is concerned, he is mighty fine, even if he never has much money and puts it into his line of work or gives it back to the college. And he's always doing things in one way or another for his students."

"That is about what I was going to say, Shirley, doing big things on next to nothing. The reason I know anything about it is that we have a friend like that. But who's Dick? Her best college friend? Don't tell me that I have to label you 'Taken!'"

"I don't know what to make of you, Mac. Ought I to be offended? You are so funny that I can't be. No; Dick is my cousin and I'm going to bring him up for the Prom to meet our girls. I told him not to have too much of a college 'case' till he saw them."

"I tell you what would be delightful to do," said Mac. They were sitting together on a hall seat at the Hollands, while they waited for Hope, who had

gone upstairs after her gloves which were missing. Mac was to drive them to Caroline's.

"There are other young men who would be interested in being entertained by some charming damsel other than their sisters." Mac paused and looked meaningly at Shirley. "Why not arrange for Dick with, say, the sister of one of said young men, or one of her other friends?"

"It would be possible, even if Dick came as my guest," said Shirley, "for me to see something of, well, any of 'said young men.'"

"How dearly I love my sister, only time will prove," said Mac, rising and taking hold of Hope on the lowest step. Hope looked suspiciously at her brother, stopping in her descent.

"What now, Malcolm?" she said, severely, but breaking out into her own cheery smile as she looked at the laughing Shirley. "Such displays of affection usually mean something, Shirley," Hope continued, "but I'll do almost anything for you, Mac, for taking us around the way you are doing."

"I am always willing to sacrifice myself for my only sister," asserted Mac, with a perfectly serious face. But Mac Holland did not keep up his joking about the Prom or indulge in any personal remarks after this, and Shirley liked him all the better when he was his normal self, full of fun, to be sure, but with something better than that about him. He saw that Shirley and his sister heard some of the holiday entertainments that Chicago can supply, quietly taking care of them in a gentlemanly way.

The girls had two weeks' vacation, which they enjoyed to the full. After Shirley had visited with Caroline, she came back to Hope, yielding to many urgings, for Mr. and Mrs. Holland liked Shirley. There were only a few occasions on which Shirley met people who took her for Sidney Thorne; but Hope repeated a remark that had been made to Mac. "I did not know that you knew Sidney Thorne so well, Mac, and went around with her so much," somebody said to Mac the other day, Shirley," said Hope. "And Mac never explained at all!"

It was not until toward the last of her stay in Chicago that Shirley met any one connected with Sidney. As the girls had told Sidney, they could not muzzle their fathers. Mr. Scott, in particular, Caroline made no attempt to caution. Why should she? Sidney might just as well let her father and mother know about the lovely girl that looked like her. It happened, then, that Mr. Scott said to Mr. Thorne, "Odd, Thorne, but my daughter brought home from school a young girl who looks enough like your daughter to be her twin."

"There are close resemblances sometimes, I suppose," returned Mr. Thorne,

who was preoccupied with the bonds about which he had come to the bank.

“But this isn’t any ordinary close resemblance, Thorne. Did you ever have any relatives named Harcourt?”

“None that I ever heard of. Say Scott, I’ll drop in tomorrow to see if you have gotten hold of what I want beside these. Regards to your wife. Mine is happy these holidays with her daughter from school. Good morning.”

That very afternoon the incident occurred which brought Shirley to the notice of Sidney’s father, a surprising experience. The Holland chauffeur, who had little to do when the Holland boys were at home, had taken the girls to do some shopping. It was Shirley’s last opportunity to make such purchases as she needed before going back to school. They had run across Caroline, who accompanied them when Shirley went to have a dress tried on, one which she had seen before but just decided to buy. Some alterations were to be made and when Shirley saw how Hope looked as she sat waiting she suggested that the girls need not wait for her. “You have a headache, Hope, I know, and I shall have to wait a little while. Go on home, do. I can come by street car. I know right where to go, for Mac told me one time, for fear I might get lost.”

Caroline looked at Hope. “Yes, Hope, you are half sick; but I tell you what we’ll do. I’ll take you home, and Hope can tell her chauffeur to wait for Shirley. Shirley knows where the car is parked. I’d have to leave you in a minute anyhow, because I told Mother that I’d be right back, and she will be through her shopping by this time.”

So it was arranged, and Hope was glad to go with Caroline. Shirley did not have very long to wait, not as long as she had expected. Hurrying from the store, she mistook direction and had a great hunt for the car. At last she saw it, smooth and shining, and with a sigh of relief she approached it, entering it without waiting for the chauffeur, whom she saw standing at a little distance in conversation with some other man. Shirley sank back against the cushions in relief. Her dress was a pretty one and would be sent to her at the school. Her other packages would be delivered at the Hollands’. What luxury this was. Could this be Shirley, ready to say, “Home, James?”

The chauffeur, whom Shirley had scarcely noticed before, apologized for not being there to open the door, which Shirley had found unlocked. “I was only a short distance away,” said the man, “but I saw a man that—,” but the chauffeur was busy with getting his car out into the street successfully and Shirley lost the rest. She closed her eyes and leaned back again. They had not taken time even for some ice-cream and she was really hungry. Ho for the good dinner waiting at the Hollands’!

Shirley was almost ready to doze off, for traffic in Chicago disturbed her no more, when the car stopped at a curb, to let a fine-looking man of middle age enter. Shirley looked up with surprise. Perhaps this was some guest,—but it was funny that Hope had not mentioned it. The gentleman was dressed in unobtrusive but the finest of business outfit,—clothes, tie, shoes, the heavy, handsome overcoat and the well-fitting hat.

He, too, leaned back as if tired. “You may go home now,” he said to the chauffeur.

Shirley sat up, startled. Who was this? She turned and started to say something, but the gentleman looked at her and said, “What is the matter, Sidney? Have you forgotten something? I see that you left your fur coat to be fixed, but I hope that you will not take cold in that one.”

Shirley ceased to be startled when she heard herself addressed as Sidney. By some mistake she had gotten into the Thorne car and this was Mr. Thorne! She smiled and said, “I see that I have made a mistake. I am not Sidney, Mr. Thorne, I am Shirley Harcourt. Hasn’t Sidney told you about me?”

“Do you mean to say that you are not Sidney? Why, Sidney, child, you are just joking!” Mr. Thorne looked scarcely puzzled.

“Well, I don’t know how to convince you, but poor Sidney must be somewhere wondering what became of her car. I thought that this one was the Holland car that was to take me home. I should have known the chauffeur, but the boys have driven us around most of the time. I am visiting at the Holland home, and I go to the same school that your daughter attends.”

Mr. Thorne was sitting forward now, looking seriously at Shirley. The chauffeur was looking back occasionally, as much as he dared. “I seen that she had different clothes on,” he said, and was answered only by a sharp glance from Mr. Thorne. But the reproving look was quite wasted.

“I was quite deceived,” said Mr. Thorne. “My friend, Mr. Scott, told me only this morning that a young girl who resembled my daughter was visiting his daughter from the school.”

“Yes, sir. I visited Caroline part of the time. Caroline, Hope and I have been together nearly all the time.”

Mr. Thorne then directed the chauffeur to go back to the place where he had parked the car to wait for Sidney. Meantime, he exerted himself to put Shirley at her ease. “I do not wonder that you mistook the car. Holland has one almost like it, perhaps exactly like it, though I never thought about it. Tell me a little about yourself Miss Shirley. Where do you live?”

Under Mr. Thorne’s kindly look Shirley found herself telling as she had told

no one but the Holland family, about her home, her father and mother, the university and her one year at the girls' school.

"Has it been a happy one so far?" asked Mr. Thorne kindly. He looked at her so thoughtfully and with so much interest that Shirley felt comforted some way. Here was one who did not resent her looking like Sidney.

"Not altogether," Shirley frankly told him, "but it was all new, and with my father and mother so far away I have been a little bit lonely once in a while, but not very often, for there is always so much to do."

"Has the close resemblance between yourself and my daughter made any complications?"

"A few, but nothing serious," smiled Shirley. No one should criticise Shirley from anything she might say here in Chicago.

When they arrived at the place from which Shirley had started, Sidney and her mother could be seen, coming from the entrance of the store where Shirley had shopped. "Oh, I hope that they have not waited!" exclaimed Shirley.

"If they have it is not your fault."

"I'm afraid it is."

Mr. Thorne helped Shirley out and drew her with him to meet his wife and Sidney. "I will take you to find the other car," he said. "You must be safely started to the right place this time."

It was a curious meeting. Sidney's face was flaming, and Mrs. Thorne's was full of amazement. "Mother," said Mr. Thorne, "this is Miss Harcourt, who attends school with Sidney. I ran across her accidentally. Have you been waiting for the car?"

"No," replied Mrs. Thorne, after saying a few words to Shirley and extending her daintily gloved hand from her furs. "We have only now finished. Sidney expected to go home alone, for I intended to join one of the ladies for tea at the club."

"That accounts for Carl's expecting only Sidney in the car, then."

Mr. Thorne was watching the two girls, who had pleasantly exchanged greetings as school girls would. He gave his wife a long look, then said that he must find the Holland car for Shirley. "I will be back in a moment," said he. "Come, Miss Harcourt; no telling where your car may be parked by this time, but the chauffeur is doubtless on the lookout for you."

"I am sorry, Mother," said Sidney, as the two entered their own car, "that I did not tell you before about Shirley Harcourt. But I thought that it might annoy you as it annoyed me to have some one else look so much like me."

“It was startling,” replied Mrs. Thorne. “It is strange, too, that she happened to attend the same school. I am afraid that you have not enjoyed your term. Would you prefer to go somewhere else?”

“Perhaps,” said Sidney, “but Father will want me to get my certificate there, I think.”

To Mr. Thorne, when he joined them, Sidney again apologized prettily for not having told them of Shirley. “I am wondering how you happened to meet her, Father,” she said.

Mr. Thorne related the circumstances and seemed to be surprised at Sidney’s rather critical attitude, when she said that Shirley “might have known the difference in cars and chauffeurs.”

“It was merely a mistake, Sidney. You might almost as well say that Carl ought not to have mistaken her for you. I found Miss Harcourt a very charming young girl. She told me of her father when I inquired. He is abroad on some archæological expedition this year. I fancy that he is rather a big man in his line.”

Then Mr. Thorne changed the topic and Sidney was relieved to find that her parents did not pursue the subject of the resemblance.

Mr. Thorne’s explanation of a delay satisfied the waiting chauffeur, who drove home as rapidly as the traffic would permit after Shirley was safely deposited in the car. It had not been so long after all, since Shirley’s wait in the store had been shorter than she had expected. Nevertheless, she found that Hope had been uneasy.

“I believe that you are ‘psychic,’ Hope,” joked Shirley, “but my double, that ought to be where I am concerned, if she is so like me, is not even interested.”

“You are mistaken, Shirley. Sidney is attracted to you, but fights it.”

“I wonder if you are right,” mused Shirley.

“Sidney can’t *share* anything,—not even looks!”

CHAPTER XVI.

SIDNEY'S "GHOST."

ABOUT lunchtime the next day, Mrs. Holland answered the telephone to find Mr. Thorne on the line. After some preliminary conversation, he came to the point of his message. "I called you to inquire about Hope and her guest. We were so interested yesterday in meeting the young lady who looks so much like Sidney, that Mrs. Thorne and I would like to meet her again. Sidney's guests left yesterday and we have just seen Sidney off; but if your girls are not going till later, could we not have them for dinner. I seem to remember that Miss Harcourt spoke of its being doubtful about her leaving till late to-day. Mrs. Thorne is right here and she will speak to you when I am through."

"Thank you Mr. Thorne; the girls may not get off until to-morrow morning. Hope is wretched and I am not sure whether it is too much Christmas holiday excitement or an attack of *la grippe* coming on. Shirley says that she will wait to go with her, if she is able, in the morning. They will scarcely miss anything. Oh, is this Mrs. Thorne now? How are you, my dear? Yes, Shirley can come,—I will properly present the invitation,—but Hope is too miserable. Wait a moment, please."

Mrs. Holland duly called Shirley, who said that she would be very happy to go. Mr. Thorne, again at the telephone, said that he would call for her on his way home.

"Hope, what have you gotten me in for by being sick?" queried Shirley of Hope, who was lying in bed, being plied with various remedies at different intervals.

"A pleasant acquaintance, I hope, that will make up for Sidney's snippiness! Has Caroline gone, do you know?"

"Yes; I forgot to tell you. She telephoned early and she very likely took the same train as Sidney. I rather dread going to Sidney's home, and what will she think—my being invited after she has gone?"

"Mr. Thorne evidently wants to see you and perhaps he'd rather have Sid out of the way, especially if he saw that she feels as she does about it."

"Well, I'll try to be a 'good girl!'"

“I don’t think that they will try to find out about how it went at school. You might think up some of the mistakes to amuse them, though. But don’t you imagine that Mr. Thorne wants to see if any relationship can be traced between the families?”

“Perhaps.”

Shirley dressed for dinner early. There was no telling when Mr. Thorne might come. She was ready to slip on coat, hat and furs when the chauffeur rang the bell. Soon she was in the car which she had so mistaken yesterday and in conversation with Mr. Thorne, who looked at her in puzzled but kindly fashion. “Even your voice, Miss Shirley, is like my daughter’s. Wearing her clothes, you might utterly deceive me if you tried.”

“I shall not try, Mr. Thorne; but you would find differences, if you were with me for any length of time. Try to find them this time; I shall not mind.”

“What I thought, that I might find is some common ancestor who may account for this,” smiled Mr. Thorne. “You must tell us all about your family and I want Mrs. Thorne to hear it. Now you must tell me how you like Chicago. Have you been up in our sky-scrapers, and have you seen the other features that we can furnish?”

“I did most of that last summer, when I was here. It was a better time than the winter, though the weather has been better than usual, Mrs. Holland says, for the ‘Windy City.’”

It was a curious experience for Shirley. She found Sidney’s home more beautiful and luxurious than that of the Hollands. Mrs. Thorne was charmingly gracious, as puzzled as her husband, and even more interested in affairs of Shirley’s family. Served by the butler at the table, Shirley tried not to make any mistakes, for the sake of her mother, whose household was conducted just as daintily, but by necessity, much more simply.

“Yes,” said Shirley, when asked about her ancestry, “my aunt, Miss Dudley, takes a great interest in those things. She says that we are descended from Governor Thomas Dudley, the second governor of Massachusetts, and that ’way back we came from William the Conqueror. That is on Mother’s side, and I think she said Harcourt was a name in the line, too.”

“Why, my dear,” said Mrs. Thorne to her husband, “Aunt Abby found that the Thornes are descended from William the Conqueror through Mary Thorne, who was the mother of Susanna Thorne; and Susanna Thorne, if I remember correctly, was the mother of Governor Dudley.”

Mrs. Thorne sent a maid for a certain book in the library which contained the proper authority for her statement, together with a paper on which Miss

Standish, who was "Aunt Abby," Shirley found, had recorded the Standish and Thorne lines. So Sidney had been brought up on this!

"My aunt," said Mrs. Thorne, "is very proud of our Standish line and has made Sidney think more of that than of her father's, especially as he makes fun of it all. Here is your Dudley motto, Shirley: 'Nec gladio nec arcu.' Can you translate it?"

"Neither by sword nor by bow," quickly said Shirley.

"She is the daughter of a Latin professor, my dear. Well, I think that we have discovered a common ancestry for the two girls. Do you suppose that this style of beauty breaks out occasionally during the centuries?"

Mr. Thorne was laughing as he spoke, but Mrs. Thorne was quite serious when she said that it could be accounted for in no other way. "Take it up in your club, dear," said he. "They will settle it!"

But after Shirley had been again safely delivered at the Holland residence, Mr. Thorne in his car gave himself to serious reflection. Shirley, too, was thoughtful. What a queer experience,—to be sent to Sidney's room, to see the fine pictures, the handsome rugs, the large rooms, with all their tasteful furniture and fittings, and to be, in a sense, in Sidney's place, temporarily. They were dear people, Sidney's father and mother.

"I almost played Sidney's ghost, Hope. You don't know how strange it seemed to be there, in Sidney's home, without Sidney. It was odd for Mr. and Mrs. Thorne, too. But I can see that they wanted to know me and everything about me. We found that the Thornes are in the same line, 'way back, as the Dudleys, my mother's people, and Mrs. Thorne thinks that accounts for our resemblance. But Mr. Thorne did not think so, and joked her about having her club decide it."

Meanwhile Mr. Thorne was saying to his wife that he thought she more than half believed all the stuff that her aunt, Miss Standish, had taught Sidney. "You have made a mistake, I am afraid, my dear, to let Sidney get those ideas. They will make her snobbish,—and perhaps unhappy."

"I never have the heart to stop Auntie, and what is the harm?"

"This resemblance, little wife, is very odd."

"What do you make of it?"

"Nothing at present."

But Sidney's Ghost went back to school, where busy days waited for both girls; and Mr. Thorne was plunged into such a rush of affairs, with some new undertakings in which he was interested, that any importance attaching in his mind to the fact of Sidney's having a "double," was at least partly erased by

more immediately important matters.

One little fear in the back of Shirley's consciousness caused her enough uneasiness to make her write about her latest experiences in Chicago to her mother. It was after the second term was well started and followed the first long letter and several cards. It was her first reference to the resemblance.

She gave the details of the accidental meeting and of her visit at Sidney's home. Then she asked the question. "Mother," she wrote, "you don't suppose that I am anybody's child but yours, do you? You haven't adopted me? I am your child as little Betty used to say 'by borning?' I feel sure that I am, and yet this queer likeness has given me a miserable doubt, when I let myself get foolish about it. I don't want to say anything to Auntie, so I write straight to you. Tell me what you think, or know, the next time you write, please.

"Meanwhile, I'll not worry, for everything about school is going wonderfully. I've written reams, I know; but you had to be told about the various complications. I like Sidney, in spite of her being such a proud piece of humanity. Several days after we came back to school she said to me, going in to class, 'Why didn't you tell me that you had been out to our house?' I was surprised to find her behind me and I said, 'I'd have been glad to if there had been a suitable opportunity.' And Sidney flushed up at that, for she had not been near me, and the only time I ever went to her room to speak to her she was not exactly hospitable."

CHAPTER XVII.

SIDNEY MAKES A DISCOVERY.

MORE and more Shirley grew into the life of the school. Hope Holland was her most intimate friend, though her room-mate, Madge Whitney, continued to be a close chum. Dulcie Porter, Hope's room-mate, was often with Shirley after the Christmas vacation, and Hope and Dulcie, it will be remembered, were of the famous Double Three. Caroline Scott, Betty Terhune, and later, more in class relations, Olive Mason and her chum, Barbara Sanford, were Shirley's firm friends.

Though she was invited by both Hope and Caroline to Chicago for the spring vacation, Shirley accepted the urgent invitation of Madge and went with her to a quiet little town on the lake shore in Michigan, where she met Madge's friends and had a real rest besides. This was due largely to Madge's sensible mother.

Letters and cards came from Dr. and Mrs. Harcourt, but there was no reference to Shirley's question. From different comments Shirley knew that they had not received that letter, though later news from her was acknowledged. They had been at that time upon an African expedition and had returned by a different route than that touching the point where they had ordered their mail to follow them. In consequence, the letter was received only just before their sailing for America, having followed them around as letters to travelers abroad sometimes do.

Hope, who had never cared much for clothes, blossomed out after the vacation with some particularly pretty and tasteful frocks, chiefly hung away, however, during the days of the uniform and the dinners when the old frocks would do as well. But the time of the spring Prom was appearing.

Mac Holland had instructed his sister to arrange that he should be with Shirley on that occasion and Hope had talked it over with Shirley. The result was that Dick was to be one of this foursome, as Mac called it, though Hope insisted that Shirley must introduce Dick to all the girls. Knowing Dick, Shirley consented to this, and hoped that it would turn out as it should.

When Shirley saw Sidney on her return, she was shocked at Sidney's white, worn face. "What is the matter with Sidney Thorne?" she asked Hope.

“I don’t know. Mrs. Thorne is worried about her, Mother says. She seemed to get sick all at once, but the doctor says that there is nothing the matter with her. She does not sleep very well and is nervous. The doctor gave her something, but Sidney says that she does not want any medicine. I think that Sidney has changed, too. It is odd.”

Shirley felt drawn toward the pale, quiet girl who came to classes, recited well, but without any enthusiasm. No one but Olive now would be a rival of Shirley’s for highest grades. These easily would be Shirley’s though her only motive for her hard study was to please her father by as high marks as possible, rivalry not concerning her at all.

But Sidney Thorne had during the vacation received a shock from which she had not been able to recover. Her pillow at home had received many bitter tears whose traces were carefully removed when necessary. But at night she usually cried herself into a sleep of exhaustion which left her merely pale in the mornings and brought much concern to Mr. and Mrs. Thorne. It would have been better if she had confided her grief to these dear people who loved her; but she could not bring herself to do it in the short time that she was at home. Uncomforted, therefore, she returned to school, struggling to readjust her thoughts, and stricken in heart.

The girls asked her what was the matter and the Double Three said that Sid didn’t “eat enough to keep a bird alive.” The most delicious fudge did not tempt her. Miss Gibson, “Gibby,” she hated, found Sidney one afternoon, strolling alone in the farther part of the grove under the pretence of looking for wild flowers. This was one of the times of rebellion, when it was all Sidney could do to keep back her tears. But Miss Gibson was purposely blind to the evidences of trouble and succeeded in interesting Sidney enough to forget herself. They sat down on one of the benches which faced the lake while Miss Gibson, talking away, told Sidney a little of her early struggles for an education. “But grit carries us through anything,” cheerily Miss Gibson closed her brief reference, “and I have such a wonderful opportunity here that I am very happy about it.” With that she left Sidney to her own reflections, waving to another of the teachers who was passing along not far away.

Sidney turned a little to watch Miss Gibson as she went away. She felt a new sympathy. Why, Gibby probably *needed* this position, and she *was* a good teacher and knew what she was about. How awful if the girls drove her away! Well, weren’t things mixed up in this old world? She would do what she could to keep Gibby now! Strange that it takes a touch of misfortune to teach us what others go through. Sidney had never known anything but having a home and

protection. Helping the poor was one thing; but to Sidney the unfortunate were a world apart.

Grit. That was it. Thanks to Gibby for suggesting it. She had not quite gone to pieces anyway. Sidney had not realized how much of her life had been built upon what she knew now was not hers. Foundations were slipping from under her. Little thoughts of pride brought a realization that they had no root in fact. These were bitter days. But Sidney kept up her lessons automatically, glad of their thought-compelling frequency.

One Saturday the Double Three and some others had gone on a picnic. Sidney made the excuse of not feeling equal to the jaunt and remained in her room, glad to be alone. Shirley, as it happened, was alone, too, Madge had gone with the rest; but Shirley had work to do for Monday. She, too, had begun the day with a headache, but that had disappeared by noon and a box of delicious fruit had arrived from her aunt. It was not the fruit season, but Aunt Anne had found various things, among them some strawberries which had kept beautifully on the way.

Shirley hastened to prepare them, but they were too ripe to keep, for they had come from the South. She thought of the teachers, then of Sidney. Perhaps they would tempt Sidney's flagging appetite. While she opened the package of confectioner's sugar which her aunt had sent, she considered. Should she run the risk of disturbing Sidney? Well, why not? At the worst Sidney could only be inhospitable, and that would not hurt Shirley in any vital way.

With a tempting dish of the red berries sprinkled with the white sugar, Shirley swallowed her hesitation and rapidly walked through the halls to Sidney's door. Lightly she rapped, thinking of the last time she had entered.

A faint voice said, "Come in." Shirley opened the door, to see Sidney through the open door from the study. She was lying on her bed, but dressed.

"Oh, excuse me," said Shirley. "Were you trying to sleep? I'll run right away, but my aunt sent me some berries and I thought of you, for the girls say that you have spring fever, or something and have lost your appetite."

Shirley made her voice as bright as possible, as she put the attractive dish of berries on the study table.

"Oh, isn't that good of you!" said Sidney, in a tone of pleased surprise. She sat up, saying, "Wait a minute. I don't want to sleep,—and I have to make up for being so mean when you were here once before."

Sidney had not expected to say that and Shirley showed her surprise for a moment. "Oh, there is nothing to make up," she said. "Aren't you a bit well, Sidney? Is there anything that I can do for you?"

“Nobody can do anything; but I’m really better, a little. I just didn’t want to go on a picnic. Oh, these are lovely! So many of the berries that we begin to get early are not ripe. But where are yours? Haven’t you any for yourself?”

“Oh, yes, plenty.”

“Do you mind going to get them, then? Come in to eat them with me. I have some delicious cookies that Edith had sent her from home. She *would* give me some, and I did not want them then.”

Shirley looked at Sidney to make sure that she really wanted her; she hurried back to bring a dish of berries for herself and another spoon. How odd this little lunch was, but how charming Sidney could be. No wonder that she had been influential in the school. They sat in the window seat together, while one by one the red berries disappeared, and the cookies took their place among the things that were. Sidney looked like a more sober and thinner edition of Shirley. “Wouldn’t a snap shot of us be funny?” she asked, a smile dawning with the thought. “Shirley,” she added more soberly, “do you suppose that we could be—closely—related?”

“I don’t know, Sidney, though I have thought of it, of course. What do your parents think, Sidney,—anything at all about it?”

“Nothing so far as they have said anything to me. But, Shirley, when I was home on the vacation I found—” Sidney stopped and bit her lips, while the tears came into her eyes. Shirley leaned over to take the dish from Sidney’s hand. With hers she deposited it on the table and returned to the seat beside Sidney. Sidney’s face was in her handkerchief for a moment, while she tried to recover herself. The girls had first talked about school matters, but now at last the veil was dropped between them.

“Let me tell you about it,” shakily said Sidney, wiping her eyes. “Daddy was away. He has been away a great deal lately on business. Mother wanted something out of Dad’s deposit box in the bank, something that he sent for, and as they had arranged long ago, I could be permitted to go to either box. So Mother sent me to the bank instead of going herself. I could not for the life of me find anything marked as he had written it was, though there was one envelope that *might* be it.

“But I thought I ought to make sure, and there was one large white envelope that had nothing marked on the outside. I hesitated to break it, for it was sealed, but Dad was in a great hurry for his papers, so I tore open the envelope. And there, Shirley, was another envelope, marked,—” Sidney broke off and wiped her lips with her handkerchief.

“Oh, don’t tell me, Sidney, if it is so hard for you.”

“I want you to know, and I must tell somebody!”

Shirley waited. What dreadful thing was coming?

“The inside envelope was marked, ‘Papers regarding the Adoption of Sidney’!”

Sidney stopped, while Shirley, amazed, and yet relieved, said, “Oh, Sidney!”

“You can imagine how I felt. No, I don’t believe that you can either. Suppose you thought that you were your father’s and mother’s own child and then suddenly found that—well, you didn’t know who you were!”

Soberly Shirley nodded. “Didn’t you find out any more?” she asked.

“No. I would not open what I was not supposed to know about; I took the first package that I had thought might be the right one and I went away as quickly as I could. I could scarcely believe what had happened, and I cried all night. Then I went down again to the bank with the key to my father’s box and some big white envelopes like the one I had broken open. I read again what was written on the inner envelope and I realized more than at first what it meant. Then I put it in one of the envelopes most like the other and sealed it up again. I suppose that I should never have known! They must have meant never to tell me. Why, my great-aunt does not know I am *sure*, or she would never have talked about my being a Standish, and a Thorne, and all that stuff!” Sidney’s tone was bitter now.

“Even Mother used to join in, but Dad never did. I’ll say that for him. And poor Mother loves to deceive herself about anything that she wants to be so!” Sidney was more tender now, and Shirley recalled with some surprise how Mrs. Thorne had spoken as if Sidney’s ancestry were theirs, or, rather, theirs hers. “I can imagine how my dear, sentimental mother must have persuaded my father never to tell me.”

“And then I came along,” said Shirley thoughtfully.

“Yes, and I can see that my father has been thinking about it. He has made several remarks to Mother that I remembered after I found the envelope. But your coming, Shirley, had nothing to do with my finding the facts.” Sidney was fair. Shirley was not to blame. “That was why he wanted to have a talk with you, I suppose, Shirley,” Sidney continued, “and Mother invited you there after I had gone on to school.”

Shirley reached over and took Sidney’s hand, looking at it. “Sidney, he asked all about my people, my father and mother, and I even told him all about my ancestry, for I have a great-aunt, too, that thinks a great deal of our family tree. Isn’t it queer? And I wrote to my mother, Sidney, to ask her if I were really her daughter, ‘by borning’ as my little sister that died used to say. I had a sister and a brother that died several years ago. It may be, Sidney, that we are sisters, twins,

most likely and that neither of us belong to the families where we are.”

“Well, I’m sorry for you, Shirley, if that is so,” and Sidney’s hand tightened on Shirley’s. Then Sidney’s head went down on Shirley’s shoulder and her slight body shook with sobs. “Oh, I know that they did not mean to be cruel, Shirley,” she said as soon as she could control herself, “but it is so *terribly* hard now.”

“I do know a little, Sidney,” whispered Shirley through the golden waves of Sidney’s pretty hair, “because of all the pangs I have when I think about it and wonder about myself.”

“Yes,” said Sidney, “and oh, I *do* want so to belong to Father and Mother!”

“I wonder if it would not be best to tell them all about it,” Shirley suggested. “You will want to know how it all came about.”

“I’m not so sure,” said Sidney. “It depends on where I came from.”

“You are sure of this, that they do not want you to leave them and that you are legally their child. Isn’t that some consolation?”

“A little.”

“And they have known it all along and yet have loved you to pieces and been so proud of you and everything.”

Sidney brightened a little at this suggestion, but soon she sobered again. “There is one thing, though, Shirley, I’m going to *bear* it and never complain to either of them. I do know what they have done for me. I have thought of that, Shirley. But I have to wait a little. I can’t do it now. I am glad that I have told you and it will be good to see you occasionally. You will stand by, won’t you, and keep the other girls from knowing what is the matter?”

“Mercy yes!” Shirley gasped at the very idea of her telling any one.

“I always have liked you down in my heart, Shirley, though I just couldn’t stand it to have you look so like me.”

“I don’t blame you,” laughed Shirley. “I didn’t exactly relish it myself, but I thought that it would only be for a little while, and wouldn’t spoil the fun much.”

Sidney laughed with Shirley and then led her into her bedroom where she drew her before the mirror. “If twins ever looked more alike than that,” Sidney finally said, “then, as my friend Ran Roberts says, I’m a fishworm!”

“You are coming on, Sidney,” said Shirley. “Goodbye, Twin. If you get lonesome, come around. I’m studying, or shall be, but ever and anon I shall long for intermission.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

LIFE BECOMES ENDURABLE.

As the school year drew near its close, the girls were treated to the strange sight of a frequent association of the "doubles." No other relations were disturbed. The Double Three never became a Double Four. Interest had died out in adding to its numbers. But there was a sympathetic understanding between Sidney Thorne and Shirley Harcourt, not exactly to be explained. It simply existed.

It was not to be supposed that the girls would notice it and let it escape comment. Hope exclaimed over it. "Why, after all Sid's snippiness, here you are the best of friends! What happened?"

"Oh, we had a talk once," Shirley replied, and that was the only explanation that she ever gave.

"You ought to have seen yourselves, you and Shirley, Sid, down on the beach to-day like twin mermaids!" cried Fleta after a senior beach party. "How come?"

"I have discovered what a fine girl Shirley is," Sidney replied, "and looking like her and having her look like me is rather fun now."

"Of all things! Did you hear that, Irma?"

"Yes. Sid has stopped wearing anything to make her look different. I think that she and Shirley are going to do something to fool us all!"

"We are going to change clothes at the Prom," soberly stated Sidney, while the girls looked at her dubiously to see if she were in earnest or not. But the suspicion of a smile hovered about Sidney's mouth.

Sidney was looking better now, though not quite like herself. But she and Shirley were not so often mistaken for each other, as Sidney was decidedly thinner. The way in which she had been wearing her hair, too, since shortly after Shirley's arrival, made it easy to distinguish the girls unless they wore hats. Hats and coats being different, and soon recognized among any closely associated group of girls such as a boarding school affords, they were a good means of identification.

But Shirley still kept close to Madge, Caroline, Hope and lately Olive. She and Sidney merely drifted together or sought each other when there was some idea to exchange upon the subject common to them both. Not that they talked

much about it either, for it was too sober a topic to discuss as girls often discuss other things. "Heard from your mother yet, Shirley?" Sidney would perhaps ask.

"Not yet, Sidney. I wrote again, but I am mixed up about their itinerary, for it has changed. I keep hearing from them, and I think that they finally receive my mail, but all of it very late."

"Let's go down to the shore a while. I need to be with you, Shirley."

Then the two, arm in arm and not saying a word, might stroll to the shore or off into the wood. Sidney refrained from suggesting a like unhappy fate for Shirley, yet her interest in knowing what word Shirley would have from Dr. and Mrs. Harcourt was plain. Shirley, for her part, never introduced a reference to Sidney's woeful revelation, but if Sidney spoke of it, she would try to cheer her and she advised that Sidney tell Mr. and Mrs. Thorne, in order to know how they had come to adopt her. Sidney at first said that she was afraid to know, but later she was considering it.

Shirley determined not to cross the bridge before she came to it, but there was the awful possibility that she, too might have been adopted. Perhaps they were two stray little twins without anybody but each other. That consciousness and the odd feeling of kinship that she had toward Sidney made her very sympathetic. There was nothing the matter with Shirley's imagination, though she tried to be sensible. Little Betty looked a little bit like her. Her brother had had the same combination of dark eyes and light hair. Oh, it simply could not be that she did not belong to her father and mother!

Nothing in Sidney's life had been changed in the least, yet she was like a lost child in her heart. Finally she told Shirley that she would write about it to her father just as soon as the Prom was over. "I don't think that I *could* bear any more and go through the Prom," she said. "I'm going to make myself have a good time. Ran Roberts is the boy from our suburb that I like best. He is such a gentleman, too, and I want you to meet him. Then he is bringing some of his friends for some of the other girls who can't ask anybody they know to come so far, so it will be a jolly lot of guests that we have. And if Mac comes, as Hope says, and your cousin Dick doesn't fail you, we'll all see that everybody has a fine time. Remember that I want you this time, Shirley. I suppose that I'll always be proud, whether I have anything to be proud of or not,—” here Sidney laughed a little and Shirley's eyes twinkled. "But I have learned a *few* things these awful weeks and one of them is to be sincere with myself and face the facts. For pity's sake, remind me, Shirley, if I get on my high horse again."

"Nothing of the sort," firmly said Shirley. "A body has to have some self respect and your 'superiority complex' mustn't go into total eclipse!"

“Aren’t you comforting?” smiled Sidney, “and you ought to be telling me what a snob I’ve been!”

“Hush and shush, as Madge says. I made up a new saying myself the other day, though not thinking about you.”

“What is it?”

“It’s a small potato that can’t grow an eye.”

“Shirley the philosopher!” grinned Sidney. Life might be worth *something* after a while. And the clothes that she was to have for the Prom and the days after it were lovely!

Ah, that senior Prom! Beautiful lights were about the campus. Within chandeliers sparkled or soft lights came from pretty shades over the side lights. Girls in their prettiest frocks, fluffy or silken evening dresses, duly inspected by the dean, though silently so, as the girls reported to her, were met by masculine figures in correct attire. No orchestras in Ravinia Park ever discoursed such music as that senior Prom orchestra, engaged for the occasion, furnished to these happy boys and girls.

Dick Lytton arrived, full of news for Shirley and a glad sight for eyes that rather longed for home occasionally, she told him. She was very proud of her university lad and introduced him to all of her friends, though Hope was first and Shirley was glad to see how pleased Dick was with the girl for whom he had been invited, in one sense, though Shirley would have had Dick if no one else came to the Prom.

Sidney was true to her word that Shirley should meet her group of friends, though Mac Holland was always in evidence wherever Shirley was. He, too, knew Sidney well, of course, but Randall Roberts was the favored lad with her, Shirley could see. The acquaintance between the girls and boys from Chicago and its suburbs made a pleasant circle; yet Shirley did not forget to see that Dick’s acquaintance was still wider.

The girls were permitted to have calls on Saturday, also, and at Sunday dinner, which made an exciting week end for many of them, whose friends stayed in the nearest suburb and spent as much time at the school as was allowed. Shirley had an opportunity for a satisfactory visit with Dick, who had intended to leave for home on Saturday, but stayed for Sunday dinner and a visit instead.

“Can any mere professor in a university expect me to leave this bower of beauty for anything so stupid as Monday’s lessons?” asked Dick, when Hope inquired if he could stay. With Sidney’s cordial manner Dick was pleased, but he could scarcely get over the close resemblance, and after having met her he looked closely at Shirley every time he came, for fear that he might make a

mistake. "Shirley," said he, when they were alone on the campus Sunday afternoon just before he left the grounds,—“Shirley, I can’t help wondering about this resemblance between you and Sidney Thorne. Have you told your mother about it yet?”

“Yes, Dick, but I have not heard from her in relation to it. I’d like to tell you something that I know, but I can’t.”

“Well, I’ll not be surprised to learn that Sidney is your twin. But I suppose it can happen and has happened that people who are not related are duplicates, so to speak. By the way, Hope Holland promised to write to me in reply to the letter which I must, of course, write to my young lady of the Prom.”

“All right,” laughed Shirley, “but don’t forget who was at the bottom of your coming. I might enjoy hearing about our school myself.”

“Wait till I tell you of a prospective student next year. Don’t tell me that I can’t work for my own middle west university! To be sure there might be another attraction, but I impressed upon him the superior advantages of a smaller school!”

“Dick! I know whom you mean,—but it would be crazy for—.”

“Don’t hesitate, my dear; it was Mac Holland.”

“For Mac, then not to go on here. Think of the schools right at hand!”

“Often it is wise to have another environment. Why did you want to go away to school?”

“Because Father and Mother were going away!”

“Is this my truthful cousin?”

“Well, I will acknowledge that I’ve always been crazy for the experience. So, I’ve had it!”

“Seriously, Shirley, has it been all right for you?” Dick was her sober, brotherly cousin now, who had taken care of her on the summer trip.

“Yes, Dick. I have learned a great deal in several ways. There are things that have happened that have not been just what I would have chosen; but in the lessons and everything about the school, and in the lovely friends that I have made,—well, I wouldn’t have missed it.”

“I will tell Aunt Anne that, then. You have satisfied her with your letters and cards, she said.”

“Then tell her all about Sidney, won’t you now, Dick, since you have seen her. Tell her all about what happened from the first and get her interested. I will write and refer to it, but it would take so long to write it all now.”

“All right, Shirley. But why not wait until you come home, since you have

waited this long?”

“Something might happen. I’d like to have Aunt Anne know about it.”

“You are very mysterious, Shirley. I can’t imagine what could happen; but, as you say. I don’t even see what difference it would make if Sidney Thorne *were* your twin.”

“You *can’t*? Well, maybe it wouldn’t make any. I’m sorry, Dick, to see you go. It has been like home to have you here. I shall be quite ready to go home and stay with Aunt Anne till Father and Mother come back.”

But Shirley did not know that she would not spend the summer with Aunt Anne.

CHAPTER XIX.

ASSURANCES.

THE excitement of the "Prom" over, Shirley Harcourt and her friends turned their attention to the usual preparation for examinations and the Commencement exercises not far away. Like most schools of the sort, Westlake would have graceful outdoor pageants. Both Shirley and Sidney were in the senior play, which was a good thing for them. There was little time for anything but lessons, practising and constant association with their friends.

At last Shirley heard from her mother, relative to her question. She did not know how anxious she had been until she felt the relief that came with the reading.

"Yes, dear," wrote Mrs. Harcourt, "you are certainly my own little girl 'by borning.' I am sorry that you have had this long wait for a reply, but I hope that this thought was only a fancy and not a worry. No, I have not received the first letter you mention. I am very much interested in this other girl, so like you. Tell me more about her. When and where was she born and on what date? Your father wants to know, too. O Shirley, you have no idea what this trip means to him. In spite of his hard work, he looks ten years younger, feels like a boy, he says, and knows that this will mean everything professionally."

Shirley was almost sorry to tell Sidney that she had received word, but Sidney herself asked her if she had received it. "I saw Madge going up with a foreign looking letter in her hand. I wondered if you could have received word from your mother, Shirley," said Sidney, meeting Shirley after dinner.

"Yes, Sidney, and I want you to read it. Let's go up right now. Nobody is there."

The two girls ran up the stairs together. Sidney sat down in the chair Shirley offered, afraid to ask Shirley what her mother had said. She looked searchingly at Shirley, however, saying, "I think that it is good news, from the way you look."

"Yes, Sidney,—but read the whole letter, please. It is especially interesting. I'm crazy to see the things that they are bringing home. At Christmas, you know, they were in the wilds and couldn't even send me a present. She's bringing me

an Egyptian scarab and all sorts of things from crazy places, besides some of the regular treasures that she will pick up this summer in Europe. They haven't so much money, though, because the trip has taken so much. My father will make something, though, by writing everything up."

Sidney was holding the letter and listening to Shirley. "And you think that all that sort of thing is better, don't you?"

"Yes," Shirley simply replied.

"I begin to understand about you, Shirley."

That was all Sidney said until after she read the letter, looking up to smile at Shirley, however, when she came to the important statement. Then she read on again, soberly, to the end, and handed the letter back to Shirley. "That is a fine letter. How beautifully she writes of what they have seen. I could wish that my real mother, if she is anywhere, could be as interesting as that. I'm so afraid, Shirley that—oh, well, I've no business to harrow you all up with my woes!"

"You must remember that a very beautiful lady selected you and made you her own," Shirley suggested.

"Yes, and I have so much that they have given me. I guess that I am a pretty 'small potato,' Shirley!"

But the suggestion of being "selected" jarred upon Sidney's sensitiveness. Where had her parents found her? There was one possibility that she had not considered, and that brightened her when she thought of it. It might be that she was related after all, a child of some relative.

Sidney had now come to the point where she felt that she must know. That night she wrote to her father, telling him of her visit to the deposit box and its results. She addressed the letter to his office, but she said that if it was his judgment to show her mother the letter, she was ready for her to know. "It was a great shock," she wrote, "but I am trying to be sensible about it. I dread and yet I want to know the rest."

She sent the letter by special delivery the next morning. That night she received a telegram from her father to the effect that he was driving up to see her on the following day. Sidney's heart was comforted by the prompt response, though she could scarcely suppress her excitement. She did not tell Shirley, could not, for some reason. The girls in her suite knew of her telegram, but it was nothing new for Mr. Thorne to telegraph his movements.

It was just after lunch when Sidney saw her father's car coming around the drive. She had been staying near the main building except during recitation hours and now, with several of the girls, she was out upon the campus near by. She ran toward the drive, waving, and stood till the car reached her. Her father

was alone, driving the car himself. How fine he was, and how kind!

Mr. Thorne reached out from the car and took Sidney's outstretched hand, patting it and looking searchingly into the earnest brown eyes that were raised to his. "So that was what was the matter, childie," he said. "Run in and ask permission to be carried off. We'll get away from the school to talk. I will drive up to let any investigating authorities know that it is your father who wants you."

"Good. Shall I change to a dress?"

"Yes. Take off your uniform and bring a coat and hat. We shall have dinner somewhere, probably, and then I will bring you back. Will you miss any recitations?"

"One, but I can fix that."

It was on the lake shore, below a sandy bluff, with their car parked above, that Mr. Thorne and his daughter sat down to have their talk. The fresh air was exhilarating. There was movement in the waves and in the flight of birds, around them and out above the waters; but there was not a soul on the beach to overhear or distract.

Before this they had talked about unimportant things, and Mr. Thorne had said that he had not yet mentioned the matter to her mother. Now he began by reminding her, as Shirley had, that all this had been known to them and that their love for her had only grown with the years. "You belong to us, Sidney. You are our own child by adoption and in every way you have grown into our hearts. Your mother was wondering only the other day how she would bear to have you grow up, come out into society and leave her, very likely, to marry some one,—as she did herself. 'It's a little too near,' she said. Now can you realize that this is all true?"

"I think so," soberly Sidney replied. "Seeing you and hearing you say these things makes me feel as I always have,—that I belong!"

"Indeed you do, my child. I'd like to see any one take you away from us! But I know that you are anxious to hear how it all happened. Let me see. You were seventeen in September, weren't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then eighteen years ago or so your mother had something of a collapse after undertaking too many things socially. In the middle of the winter I took her to California, and when it grew warm, we went immediately to the cottage in Wisconsin for the summer. We did not even stop in Chicago and your mother only longed for the woods and the little lake. We lived quietly, though I had to go back and forth. There were the usual servants, though your mother did not want many around. No one lived in the cottage except one quite intelligent girl

who was a nurse, on her vacation, and just the one to stay with your mother.

“They were outdoors as much as possible and your mother began to get her tone again, even telling me that she must go back to Chicago, to avoid the necessity of my frequent trips. But I persuaded her to stay through October at least, or a part of it, if I remember correctly.

“Once this young woman who was with your mother stopped with her at her home and there your mother found you, about two months old by that time, they said, and unusually pretty. They tell me though that a kiddie does not look like anything till it is about three months old. It was a new interest, and when your mother found that your mother and father were dead and that these good people had taken you for their daughter’s friend, your aunt, also a nurse, she began to wonder if she might not have the baby herself. You were like a new doll to her, Sidney, and she was temporarily disgusted with so much society.

“She began to visit the country home, to take pictures of the baby, to get pretty clothes for it,—you can imagine how your mother would.”

“Yes,” laughed Sidney, and the two who loved Mrs. Thorne so dearly exchanged understanding glances.

“We learned that your parents were people above reproach and as your mother found that their name, Sampson, was one in the Standish lineage, she let your aunt go on about the Standishes to her heart’s content. But I think that your mother has almost forgotten about your having no real connection with our immediate ancestry.”

“I suppose so,” mechanically answered Sidney, stunned at the new name.

Mr. Thorne had seen her wince, but he nerved himself to go on. It had to be told. How much better it would have been for Sidney to have known the truth. Yet, there had been some point, too, in Sidney’s growing up to this lovely young womanhood as a child of the house. What would have been the psychology of it Mr. Thorne could not decide, though he had thought of little else since he had read Sidney’s pitiful letter.

“But now, Sidney, I am realizing that we have known very little of everything perhaps interesting to you in this connection. There are several things that I recall about the arrangement that I must look into for your sake. There was no birth certificate, for one thing. Everything was fixed up as tight for us as could be, and all that we cared for was that your parents should have been good people. The chief attraction was your small self.

“But now I am going to do a little detective work on my own account and I shall say nothing to your mother at present. I have a fancy that it may or may not amount to anything, and I must say, Sidney, that I was astonished at the

duplication of yourself, almost, in Shirley Harcourt. Is she sure that she is the child of Dr. and Mrs. Harcourt?"

"I have just read a letter from Mrs. Harcourt in answer to that very question. She is, and she was born in Chicago. But we haven't the same birthdays."

"I am not sure that we know your birthday, Sidney. You seemed to your mother's aunt a little older than you were according to accounts, though we told her nothing. She thinks you ours."

"If you look things up and find anything dreadful the matter, Daddy, don't tell me!"

"There will be nothing dreadful. Sidney, there has always been a quality about you that can be only accounted for by something innate. It is not all our training and the environment of refinement. There was something in you, my child. You were always dainty and beauty-loving and responsive,——"

"Can't account for it in that way, Daddy," interposed Sidney, as Mr. Thorne paused. "Think how different children in the same family are. I admired Mother and Auntie so much and was so proud of our family, that I just grew up with the idea of being like Mother."

"That would support your mother's idea that it was better for you not to know. Well, we'll not discuss that now. I have already written to the people in Wisconsin and in a few days, after some pressing business matters are disposed of, I may go there myself. I know how I should feel in your place, Sidney. I regret beyond words that you have had the suffering which you have had. We could not imagine why you were suddenly so upset and ill. But I am glad to see that you have gotten beyond that."

"It is partly due to Shirley, Father. She brought me some fruit when I was so miserable and we became really acquainted. It is queer the way we feel about each other. I know that Shirley feels as I do. It was uncanny, I thought at first, and I did not like it at all. Really, I have had a big lesson, I suppose, but my, what a hard one it has been! I hadn't the least idea that I was so proud. But you would have laughed at what Shirley said to me about that. Shirley has a big soul and doesn't seem to hold anything against me no matter how silly I've been. She said that my 'superiority complex' mustn't go into 'total eclipse!'"

"You have talked to her, then, about this?"

"Yes. I have seen the pictures of her parents, too. Her father makes me think of you. Once I would have said that they had 'quite intelligent faces,' I suppose!"

"Life has a great way of taking down our 'superiority complexes,' Sidney, but it is just as well to keep our self-respect."

“That is what Shirley said. She lives almost in the university there, I suppose, and hears faculty conversation,—perhaps as elevating as ours, Daddy!”

Sidney laughed as she spoke, and her father agreed that there were opportunities for culture in other circles except their own. More nonsense of comparisons followed, while Sidney wrote in the sand with a stick and Mr. Thorne tossed an occasional pebble. Then he rose and held a hand to Sidney. “Come, now,” he said. “I told your mother that I was not going to be home until late. I want to take you far enough away to get all the cobwebs and kinks out of your brain and then we shall stop somewhere for the best dinner that we can find. Please try to have a few care-free hours with an old daddy that is very fond of his child.”

“I can do it,” gratefully cried Sidney, “but you mixed your figures terribly when you talked about cobwebs and kinks!”

CHAPTER XX.

AT LAST.

FOR the girls of Westlake the rest of the year went on wings. Sidney Thorne told Shirley, in one of their whirlwind conferences, that she was living a dream most of the time, and Shirley said that she felt that way, too.

Sidney had the chief part in the Shakespearean play which the seniors were giving, under a Miss Gibson whose girls were more appreciative and loyal since Sidney had changed her attitude. Sidney's part as heroine was of some consolation to her injured pride, but she resolutely refrained from any directions to others, or any remarks which could be at all construed as self-congratulatory. "Sidney isn't as cocky as she used to be," was the inelegant comment of the blunt Stella.

There were beach parties, jaunts in the launch, rowing and even swimming in Lake Michigan's still chilly waters. Shirley regretted leaving the beautiful place with its fine teachers, its fun and the dear girls that were, some of them, to be life-long friends. "You will be visiting Hope and Caroline and me in Chicago," Sidney reminded her. "I am wanting you very much this summer, though I've hardly had time to think about it. We'll just be in the Wisconsin cottage, Shirley, the greater part of the summer; but Mother says that I may have anybody that I want. When are your father and mother coming home?"

"Probably not until the last thing before college opens in the fall. It gives Father an extra three months, you see, to stay through another summer."

"Then you can stay with me as well as not, and if you'd rather have Hope and Caroline, I think that they could be induced to come, too."

"I shall need no other inducement than yourself, Sidney. Why, I have never been to one of those northern cottages and it is a rare treat you are offering me."

"I am glad that you think so, and I believe that I'd rather be by ourselves part of the time, till my father finds out something, if he can."

Mr. Thorne, in the meantime, was meeting various difficulties. He had lost trace of people during all these years. Finally he put a carefully worded advertisement in the Chicago papers, by which X offered a considerable sum for definite information about certain matters. The names of Mr. and Mrs. Sampson

were given with their supposed former address.

This brought results. It was toward the end of the summer, when Shirley was packing to go home from her long visit in Wisconsin, that Mr. Thorne came from Chicago with success written in his face. "Oh, you have found out!" gasped Sidney as she hurried toward him from the wooded nook just beyond the house, where she and Shirley had swung a hammock. Mrs. Thorne, who sat on the wide porch of the log mansion, with its gay Indian rugs and comfortable chairs, came smilingly down to join the others. For some time she had known of Sidney's discovery, but as Sidney was so self-contained and cool about it by that time, she never did quite realize what the first shock had meant.

"Can you stand finding out that you are not a Sampson or a Standish, Sidney?" queried the smiling gentleman, brushing back his slightly graying hair as he removed his hat and sought a comfortable seat on the wide veranda.

"Oh, don't tease me, Daddy! It's too serious!"

"So it is, little girl. How shall I begin? Probably the best thing is to dash right into it and announce that you and Shirley were little twin babies."

"Oh!" said Sidney and Shirley in one low breath. "Then,——" Sidney began, but put her hands to her face for a moment, taking them away to put her head down on Shirley's shoulder as she had done once before; for Shirley was standing beside her.

"I'm not *sorry*, Shirley,—don't think that—" Sidney shakily began. "But it is such a relief,—and I can't quite stand it!"

"Come over here to your daddy," said Mr. Thorne, drawing Sidney, big girl as she was, to his knee. "Now just have a little weep if you like. I'll tell you how it happened after a while. Yes, Mother, you will have a rival in Mrs. Harcourt now; but some way I do not think that they will rob us of Sidney."

Mr. Thorne smiled into the disturbed face of his wife. "Oh dear," she said, "would he, Shirley?"

Shirley was just thinking of that herself, but she said, "My father will do what is best for everybody. He always does."

"But how about your mother? Oh, your poor mother, never to have *known* of Sidney!"

At that Sidney, now wiping her eyes looked at Shirley and laughed. "I guess she had the better girl," she said, "and here I have *two* mothers! Well, Twin, how about it?"

"I'm a little stunned," replied Shirley, "but I seem always to have known it!"

"You may read the letters, my dear," said Mr. Thorne, taking a small packet from his pocket and handing it to his wife. "I have just come from an interview

with the writer. She will see us again if necessary.

“I think,” continued Mr. Thorne, “that I prefer to give you girls a brief outline of what happened rather than have you in touch with this person. She saw you girls together last winter, at the time of the mistake about the car. From what she said, she must have been worrying since then. I should say that ignorance and fear, with the lack of a strong sense of honor, were at the bottom of it all. The fact that no one by the name of Sampson had anything to do with this stopped my search for a while. That story was all made up, though not by the people who had our Sidney when we found her.

“A sudden impulse made a young and inexperienced nurse pick up one of the wee bundles of babies at a hospital and carry it a short distance down the street to an apartment where her older sister was delirious and calling for her baby that had died several weeks before. This woman, who is really responsible, was perplexed and troubled at first, but as the presence of the child seemed to have a good effect upon the sick woman, she encouraged its being kept for a few days, though this nurse had meant to keep it only a few hours. By the woman’s direction, after they had discovered that the baby was one of twins, the record was changed. As Mrs. Harcourt had not yet seen her babies and several odd calamities, to the people who knew, had happened, the deception was not discovered. Getting a baby back to the hospital was a risky performance after so long. They gave it up, though the woman for whose benefit they had stolen the child did not live.

“So the babe was passed from one to another in that circle of friends, until a very dear lady found her not far from this very place, and here you are, Sidney!”

“Yes, and fortunate I am! Were they sure of my name, Father?”

“Oh, yes. You were correctly labeled, my dear! And the woman, whose name I will not give you, had carefully preserved all that she knew. But, she said during the years she had consoled herself with the thought that you could not be better off, though that was largely for my benefit, of course. She did not know where your parents lived, as the address at the hospital gave only that of your Grandmother Shirley, Mrs. Dudley, who was then living at Glencoe.”

“Of *my* grandmother, you mean,” said Sidney seeing something funny in it. “Shirley, I’m a Dudley now. Write to your great-aunt about it.”

Mrs. Thorne did not particularly relish the trend of this conversation and rose to go into the house with her letters. “Try to be especially good to your mother, Sidney,” Mr. Thorne suggested, in low tones, as his wife left them. “You have kept from showing your worry so wonderfully of late. Now she may need a little comfort.”

Sidney, who had been sitting at her father's feet for a little while, held his hand a little more tightly and assented. Shirley excused herself and slipped away, for it was not the time for claiming her twin sister, or talking of gay girl affairs. It was fortunate, she thought, that she should be leaving them to this readjustment. What would be the next step?

The next step, so far as the Thornes were concerned, was a long letter to Dr. and Mrs. Harcourt, sent on by Shirley, who could arrive at home only about a week before her parents. No plans could be made, if there were any to make, before the Harcourts arrived. Sidney, however, told Shirley to tell Hope that they were sisters. "Mother and Father say that there is to be no secrecy about it, though we do not intend to announce it. But we all agree that I am fortunate to have such a fine family and that the resemblance between us would be foolish for us to ignore it. The friends may as well understand, though no one need know exactly how the separation happened."

"That should be entirely in your hands to say, I think," Shirley returned. "Think of the excitement that I'm going to have! You may expect to see a wild looking college professor springing along, with a step just like yours, up your front yard,——"

"And they say that you and I walk just alike!"

"Do we?"

"Will he really look wild?"

"That was my little joke, Sidney. You will not be ashamed of your real father, though he does not always dress as Mr. Thorne does. How could he?"

Shirley rode alone to Chicago, thinking of how the future would be managed, wondering how Sidney would feel about seeing her parents, feeling almost that she did not want to share them with Sidney and reproving herself for her selfish thoughts. She was glad that she had a twin sister! She loved Sidney. That was enough.

Mac Holland and Hope met her at the station and took her for a day's visit with them. It was decided that Mac was going to spend a year at Shirley's university. "I'll not be saying goodbye for very long," said he. "Tell Dick Lytton to have the brass band at the station."

"I'd better not," laughed Shirley. "He might do it."

CHAPTER XXI.

IN HER FATHER'S HOME.

TOWARD the middle of September, Mrs. Thorne and Sidney were sitting in Mrs. Thorne's luxuriously furnished sitting room upstairs, waiting. Sidney, near the windows in front, suddenly exclaimed, "Here they are! Oh, Mother, what shall we do now?"

The Thorne car passed the front of the house, in the street, and went into the drive at the side. Sidney watched and presently saw the erect figure, that followed Mr. Thorne across the lawn with the springing step that Shirley had mentioned. Sidney could not see his face very well and they both disappeared near the entrance. Now the chauffeur brought a little baggage.

Mrs. Thorne was answering Sidney's question. "When your father has had Dr. Harcourt shown to his room, and he has had an opportunity to refresh himself and dress for dinner, he will be directed to the library, where I shall probably be by that time, with your father. Then, after we have had a little talk, you will be sent for, and I think that we shall let you meet Dr. Harcourt by yourself. I am sure that *I* do not want to be there."

"Mother is glad that Mrs. Harcourt did not come," thought Sidney, and to tell the truth she thought that her real mother had taken the proper course. It was Sidney's place to go to her mother, just as it was proper for Dr. Harcourt to come at his earliest opportunity. But the Thornes had invited them both.

As Mrs. Thorne had said, she joined her husband in the library as soon as she thought it advisable. Dr. Harcourt, properly conducted by a servant, made his appearance, when he was suitably prepared for the occasion, and met Mrs. Thorne, rather particularly gowned for the occasion. Any details, however, were wasted on Dr. Harcourt, who thought her a pretty, attractive, refined woman but was incapable of being impressed with more. Indeed, the girls and faculty women of his university were accustomed to the same sort of thing, and evening dress was no novelty to the professor.

The talk which had been begun by the gentlemen on their way from the station was continued. Mr. and Mrs. Thorne were very much relieved to note that Dr. Harcourt had no wish to upset existing arrangements at present, if at all.

“Unusual things have often a way of disposing of themselves,” said he. “Suppose we wait to see what ideas develop. My wife and I hope that our daughter will like us. That is the extent of our hope at present. We are so utterly surprised, you know, in spite of Shirley’s having written about the resemblance. It is gratifying to know that we have another daughter, and my wife’s heart is yearning to see her. Our home is open to her, like our hearts, but a young girl with her home and training here, her love yours,—it must be bewildering, indeed.”

Mrs. Thorne was gratified to hear such sentiments and to see what a distinguished looking gentleman the professor was. To him she suggested that they withdraw for a little while and send his daughter to him. “Very well,” said he. “That would probably be less embarrassing to her.”

Sidney, too, had taken great care with her toilet. Her stylish little frock became her, and she had a pathetic smile for her father as she crossed the room to meet him. He rose, laying a book on the table by him, and took several steps toward her.

“Why,” said he, with a puzzled, half-believing look, “this is not Shirley, by any chance?”

“No, sir; this is Sidney.”

Sidney had dreaded this meeting. Would her father, perhaps fold her in his arms and weep over her? How she would hate that! But so would this father. With kind eyes he looked down at her, holding her cold hand that had been held out to meet his. “My dear child, to think that we have been missing your life with us all these years. Come, sit down by me for a few moments. As I have been telling your—parents, it is a bewildering situation, but I assure you that neither your affection nor a choice of homes will be forced on you. We must think out what is best. We shall try to enter into our daughter’s life without making her unhappy.”

“Oh, you are like Shirley, aren’t you?” said Sidney, trying to realize that this was her father. More than one student had been put at his ease by the kind understanding of this professor. It was impossible that his own daughter should not like him.

“Am I? In what way?”

“Thinking what is good for everybody, as she says.”

“Habit, I suppose,” said Dr. Harcourt, with a smile. “We deal with problems in the faculty. But this is a new one. Some good fairy has changed one daughter into two, while we were away. Shall we not be happy over it?”

“Why, I believe we could be,—Father.”

“Thank you, my child.” Dr. Harcourt seemed to be affected by Sidney’s sweet way of addressing him. He paused for a moment. “Now, I can not be here long. I must go back to the university to-morrow. But your mother sends you her love and wants you to come to us, for a visit, or to stay. She wanted to see you, but could not quite bring herself to meet you here. Then I want to have a talk with you, either to-night or to-morrow morning, to learn something of how you feel in regard to this, and to know what are your ambitions;—you can guess how interested I am in everything concerning you.”

“Yes, sir. I am not sure that I have any big ambitions, like Shirley, but it may do me good to think about it. I *will* go to see my mother, and you, and the university,—and I am glad that you understand how a girl would feel with two fathers and two mothers. But you can scarcely know how thankful I was after having been nearly distracted, to find that my *real* father is you!”

Sidney was making a fine impression of sincerity upon her father. After one or two more references to the chief subject of thought, Dr. Harcourt suggested that Sidney summon Mr. and Mrs. Thorne. From that time on, through dinner and for a large part of the evening, a strange evening to Sidney who sat to listen, the conversation turned on general matters, national, local, business, the university where Dr. Harcourt taught, the results of his trip, the interests of the Thornes. And after Sidney had gone to her room, Dr. Harcourt took pains to express his feeling over the fact that a home of such “high ideals” had been provided for his little unknown child, who fell into such dangers. It was like Dr. Harcourt not even to think of the evidences of wealth around him.

Shirley, at home, and a sober mother of a daughter whom she had never seen, thought of that Chicago meeting; but Shirley was too full of her entrance as a freshman in the university to worry about Sidney. Everything would be all right now, or soon. Of course Sidney would love her very own parents. Didn’t she know her twin?

Not long after Dr. Harcourt’s hurried Chicago trip, Sidney, chaperoned by Miss Standish, visited her father and mother. Miss Standish, after her first disappointment, had taken a great interest. She met and heartily approved the new father, Dr. Harcourt, thinking Sidney very fortunate in her family. She looked up the Thornes and the Harcourts and the Dudleys again until Sidney begged for mercy at the array of names and facts. “Never mind,” said her great-aunt, “some day you will be interested again; and I am sure to find Miss Dudley keenly interested and well informed about our New England families.” She noted Sidney’s inward excitement as they drew near the pretty little college town, and she was very much alive herself to every impression of people and

environment. Neither of them came in a critical attitude.

Gently and affectionately Mrs. Harcourt welcomed her daughter, trying not to disturb the poise which Sidney strove to maintain. But when it came to the point, neither could help being somewhat shaken by all that it had involved. It was a softer and sweeter Sidney than Shirley had first known, who came on to the home which should always have been hers.

A decided stir in the student circle was made by the sudden and unheralded appearance of "Shirley Harcourt's twin." Dr. Harcourt longed to put Sidney into college with Shirley, but he saw that she was not physically as strong and after a long talk with her, he gave up the idea for the present.

There was plenty of fun, for Shirley's friends flocked in at her invitation. Sidney was admired and made much of till she told Shirley that her head would be quite turned. She had not been unaccustomed to admiration, but this gay yet earnest group of university girls and boys, most of them older than herself, made a new and attractive feature. She noted their respect toward her father and the grace with which her mother managed the various situations. There was one maid, who spent the day and went away at night, but the home was full of books and things that spoke of taste and culture if not of wealth. Too bad that such dear people could not have both, Sidney thought, and she helped Shirley or her mother in little ways while she was there, trying to learn. Shirley understood.

Mac Holland had surprised Shirley by bringing Hope to the university with him. Mac and Dick were full of fraternity affairs just now, for Dick had engineered Mac's pledging, "before any of the other frats got hold of him."

On Saturday evening, after a big athletic rally, a roomful of young friends were eating pine-apple ice and cake at Dr. Harcourt's when Shirley called Sidney's attention to Miss Dudley and Miss Standish. Sidney had been helping Shirley serve the guests and they were about to offer a pretty plate each to the great-aunts. "Wait," laughed Shirley. "Aunt Anne is on the Dudleys."

The two bright-eyed, modern women were sitting together on the large davenport under a tall lamp. Several books lay around them and they were so absorbed in their conversation that they scarcely noticed the chatting students around them.

"Hear 'em?" asked Shirley again.

"Yes," returned Sidney. "Auntie is laying it off about the Standishes and the Thornes. It's all right now. The last obstacle is removed!"

Yet it was not with the superficial phases of family and ancestry that Miss Dudley and Miss Standish were dealing. Pleasantly they accepted the plates from the pretty girls so strangely duplicated and continued their conversation after the

girls had left them.

Soberly Miss Dudley followed them with her eyes. "What," she asked, "do you think will be the result of this discovery?"

"I do not know," as seriously Miss Standish made answer. "I am impressed with Dr. Harcourt's attitude of not forcing Sidney to a decision and, in general, of not hurrying matters."

"In this whole bewildering disclosure it has been hardest for Eleanor, I think."

"You mean Mrs. Harcourt, I suppose. Yes, it would be."

"To us it is like having two Shirleys. My first impulses are to say that Sidney should come to her mother to stay. Eleanor wants her."

"You have not seen Mr. and Mrs. Thorne, and you have no idea what a blank it would leave in their home."

"That is what my nephew considers, together with gratitude that his child came into such a fortunate environment. Sidney will go back to Chicago now, knowing and appreciating her own father and mother. Dr. Harcourt is trusting Mr. and Mrs. Thorne to see that she is not carried away by any merely social life. They are too broad-minded and just, he says, to be selfish about Sidney's relation to us. I like his opinion that this cannot be adjusted in a moment, and that none of us must make a tragedy out of a discovery which should be a happy one."

"It is a happy one," began Miss Standish, "rather than a blank about Sidney's origin." But just then the two girls came bringing Mrs. Harcourt between them from the regions of the kitchen and pantry.

Removing a book or two from the way, they put her into the comfort of the davenport, by Miss Dudley and Miss Standish. "Not another thing do you do, Mother," said Sidney, with smiling decision. "Lean back on the cushions now and be served by your daughters! Come on, Shirley."

With a glance of understanding, the two girls started away, followed immediately by Dick, Mac, and another university lad, who sprang up to assist in the last servings.

The somewhat weary but content faculty wife leaned back with a sigh and a smile. "I enjoy my two daughters," she said, "and I only wish that this could be permanent. But we must be very wise just now. That Shirley and Sidney know each other so well and have felt drawn to each other is one of the happiest circumstances. I consider it providential that they were sent to the same school."

"So do I," returned Miss Standish, who might have been pardoned for some regrets. "Happy days in the new relations are before both of them; and the expectancy of their own adventures, in such a life as they shall make for

themselves out of their opportunities, is theirs, just as it was before.”

The girls themselves put problems out of their minds, after Sidney had confided her present plans to Shirley: “I’m going back to Chicago, Shirley,” she said, “and let my other mother do what she wants to do about the ‘debut,’ in the winter or spring. But I’ll not disappoint *our* mother and father by giving up study and improvement so early. Could you stand it, Shirley, to have *me* come to *your* school?”

“It would be a pity if I couldn’t!” warmly exclaimed Shirley.

“I think that I may come, then, next year. Luckily I did pretty well in Latin and I want to take some courses under my very own father. I’m very proud of him. After my other mother gets used to the idea, it will be almost like letting me go away to school as before.

“Then I can be with *our* mother and father, see how it goes to be a faculty daughter along with you, and cover myself with glory to my own dad!”

“Noble ambition!” laughed Shirley, “the sooner the better, Sidney. Be sure to tell him that before you go.”

“Perhaps I will,—and that if I am going away, I am also coming back.”

THE END

THE STRANGE LIKENESS

By Harriet Pyne Grove

Classmates in a girls' school on the shores of Lake Michigan, Shirley Harcourt, from an eastern state, and Sidney Thorne, whose home is in Chicago, bear a remarkable resemblance to each other. At first they resent the likeness, but afterwards become very good friends, and often wonder about their lineage. At last Sidney discovers she is an adopted child, and her foster father traces her parentage very carefully to find she is indeed the twin sister of Shirley.

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The Adventure Girls at K-Bar-O
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The Adventure Girls at Happiness House

Transcriber's Note:

The table of Contents has been added by the transcriber.

Punctuation has been standardised. Hyphenation and spelling have been retained as they appear in the original publication. Changes have been made as follows:

- Page 24
know that the profesors *changed to*
know that the [professors](#)
- Page 39
the two girls stepped in *changed to*
the [three](#) girls stepped in
- Page 46
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shivered [Dulcina](#) Porter
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- Page 200
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