

her, and cried, "Good Heavens, Baby!" (How I hate to be called "Baby"!)

Then she just threw some money on to the table to pay the bill and hurried me away.

It was after that that she began to stay in her room so much, and not take me anywhere except for walks at the other end of the town where it was all quiet and stupid, and no music or lights or anything. And though I teased and teased to go back to the pretty, jolly places, she wouldn't ever take me; not once.

Then by and by, one day we met a little black-haired woman with white cheeks and very big sad eyes. There weren't any spangly dresses and gold slippers about her, I can tell you! She was crying on a bench in the park, and Mother told me to stay back and watch the swans while she went up and spoke to her. (Why do old folks always make us watch swans or read books or look into store windows or run and play all the time? Don't they suppose we understand perfectly well what it means—that they're going to say something they don't want us to hear?) Well, Mother and the lady on the bench talked and talked ever so long, and then Mother called me up, and the lady cried a little over me, and said, "Now, perhaps, if I had a little girl like that—" Then she stopped and cried some more.

We saw this lady real often after that. She was nice and pretty and sweet, and I liked her; but she was always awfully sad, and I don't believe it was half so good for Mother to be with her as it would have been for her to be with those jolly, laughing ladies that were always having such good times. But I couldn't make Mother see it that way at all. There are times when it seems as if mother just couldn't see things the way I do. Honestly, it seems sometimes almost as if she was the cross-current and contradiction instead of me. It does.

Well, as I said before, I didn't like it very well out there, and I don't believe Mother did, either. But it's all over now, and we're back home packing up to go to Boston.

Everything seems awfully queer. Maybe because Father isn't here, for one thing. He wrote very polite and asked us to come to get our things, and he said he was going to New York on business for several days, so Mother need not fear he should annoy her with his presence. Then, another thing, Mother's queer. This morning she was singing away at the top of her voice and running all over the house picking up things she wanted; and seemed so happy. But this afternoon I found her down on the floor in the library crying as if her heart would break, with her head in Father's big chair before the fireplace. But she jumped up the minute I came in and said, no, no, she didn't want anything. She was just tired; that's all. And when I asked her if she was sorry, after all, that she was going to Boston to live, she said, no, no, no, indeed, she guessed she wasn't. She was just as glad as glad could be, that she was going only she wished Monday would hurry up and come so we could be gone.

And that's all. It's a Saturday now, and we go just day after tomorrow. Our trunks are "most packed, and Mother says she wishes she'd planned to go today. I've said good-bye to all the girls, and promised to write loads of letters about Boston and everything. They are almost as excited as I am; and I've promised, "cross my heart and hope to die," that I won't love those Boston girls better than I do them—specially Carrie Heywood, of course, my dearest friend.

Nurse Sarah is hovering around everywhere, asking for help, and pretending she's sorry we're going. But she isn't sorry. She's glad. I know she is. She never did appreciate Mother, and she thinks she'll have everything her own way now. But she won't. I could tell her a thing or two if I wanted to. But I shan't.

Father's sister, Aunt Jane Anderson, from St. Paul, is coming to keep house for him, partly on account of Father, and partly on account of me. "If that child is going to be with her father six months of the time, she's got to have some woman there beside a meddling old nurse and a nosy servant girl!" They didn't know I heard that. But I did. And now Aunt Jane is coming. My how mad Nurse Sarah would be if she knew. But she doesn't.

I guess I'll end this chapter here and begin a fresh one down in Boston. Oh, I do so wonder what it'll be like—Boston, Mother's home, Grandpa Desmond, and all the rest. I'm so excited I can hardly wait. You see, Mother never took me home with her but once, and then I was a very small child. I don't know why, but I guess Father didn't want me to go. It's safe to say he didn't, anyway. He never wants me to do anything, hardly. That's why I suspect him of not wanting me to go down to Grandpa Desmond's. And Mother didn't go only once, in ages.

Now this will be the end. And when I begin again it will be in Boston. Only think of it—really, truly Boston!

CHAPTER IV.

When I Am Marie.

Boston.

Yes, I'm here. I've been here a week. But this is the first minute I've had a chance to write a word. I've been so busy just being here. And so has Mother. There's been such a lot going on since we came. But I'll try now to begin at the beginning and tell what happened.

Well, first we got into Boston at four o'clock Monday afternoon, and



Well, First We Got Into Boston at Four O'clock Monday Afternoon, and There Was Grandpa Desmond to Meet Us.

there was Grandpa Desmond to meet us. He's lovely—tall and dignified, with grayish hair and merry eyes like Mother's; only his are behind glasses. At the station he just kissed Mother and me and said he was glad to see us, and led us to the place where Peter was waiting with the car. (Peter drives Grandpa's automobile, and he's lovely, too.)

Mother and Grandpa talked very fast and very lively all the way home, and Mother laughed quite a lot. But in the hall she cried a little, and Grandpa patted her shoulder, and said, "There, there!" and told her how glad he was to get his little girl back, and that they were going to be very happy now and forget the past. And Mother said, yes, yes, indeed, she knew she was; and she was so glad to be there, and that everything was going to be just the same, wasn't it? Only—then all of a sudden she looked over at me and began to cry again—only, of course, things couldn't be "just the same," she choked, hurrying over to me and putting both arms around me, and crying harder than ever.

Then Grandpa came and hugged us both, and patted us, and said, "There, there!" and pulled off his glasses and wiped them very fast and very hard.

But it wasn't only a minute or two before Mother was laughing again, and saying, "Nonsense!" and "The idea!" and this was a pretty way to introduce her little Marie to her new home! Then she hurried me to the dearest little room I ever saw, right out of hers, and took off my things. Then we went all over the house. And it's just as lovely as can be—not at all like Father's in Andersonville.

Oh, Father's is fine and big and handsome, and all that, of course; but not like this. His is just a nice place to eat and sleep in, and go to when it rains. But this—this you just want to live in all the time. Here there are curtains "way up and sunshine, and flowers in pots, and magazines, and cozy books, with cushions everywhere; and books that you've just been reading laid down. (All Father's books are in bookcases, always, except while one's in your hands being read.)

Grandpa's other daughter, Mother's sister, Hattie, lives here and keeps house for Grandpa. She has a little boy named Lester, six years old; and her husband is dead. They were away for what they called a week-end when we came, but they got here a little after we did Monday afternoon; and they're lovely, too.

The house is a straight-up-and-down one with a back and front, but no sides except the one snug up to you on the right and left. And there isn't any yard except a little bit of a square brick one at the back where they have clothes and ash barrels, and a little grass spot in front at one side of the steps, not big enough for our old cat to take a nap in, hardly. But it's perfectly lovely inside; and it's the insides of houses that really count, just as it is the insides of people—their hearts, I mean; whether they're good and kind or hateful and disagreeable.

We have dinner at night here, and I've been to the theater twice already in the afternoon. I've got to go to school next week, Mother says, but so far I've just been having a good time. And so's Mother. Honestly, it has just seemed as if Mother couldn't crowd the days roll enough. She hasn't been still a minute.

Lots of her old friends have been to see her; and when there hasn't been anybody else around she's taken Peter and had him drive us all over Boston to see things—all kinds of things; Bunker Hill and museums, and moving pictures, and one play.

But we didn't stay at the play. It started out all right, but pretty soon a man and a woman on the stage began to quarrel. They were married (not really, but in the play, I mean), and I guess it was some more of that incompatibility stuff. Anyhow, as they began to talk more and more, Mother began to fidget, and pretty soon I saw she was gathering up our things; and the minute the curtain went down after the first act, she says:

"Come, dear, we're going home. It isn't very warm here."

As if I didn't know what she was really leaving for! Do old folks honestly think they are fooling us all the time, I wonder? But even if I hadn't known then, I'd have known it later, for that evening I heard Mother and

Aunt Hattie talking in the library.

No, I didn't listen. I heard. And that's a very different matter. You listen when you mean to, and that's sneaking. You hear when you can't help yourself, and that you can't be blamed for. Sometimes it's your good luck, and sometimes it's your bad luck—just according to what you hear!

Well, I was in the window-seat in the library reading when Mother and Aunt Hattie came in; and Mother was saying:

"Of course I came out! Do you suppose I'd have had that child see that play, after I realized what it was? As if she hadn't had enough of such wretched stuff already in her short life! Oh, Hattie, Hattie, I want that child to laugh, to slug, to fairly tangle with the joy of living every minute that she is with me. I know so what she has had, and what she will have—in that—tomb. You know in six months she goes back—"

Mother saw me then, I know; for she stopped right off short, and after a moment began to talk of something else, very fast. And pretty quick I went out into the hall again.

Dear little Mother! Bless her old heart! Isn't she the ducky dear to want me to have all the good times possible now so as to make up for the six months I've got to be with Father? You see, she knows what it is to live with Father even better than I do.

Well, I guess she doesn't dread it for me any more than I do for myself. Still, I'll have the girls there, and I'm dying to see them again—and I won't have to stay home much, only nights and meals, of course, and Father's always pretty busy with his stars and comets and things. Besides it's only for six months, then I can come back to Boston. I can keep thinking of that.

But I know now why I've been having such a perfectly beautiful time all this week, and why Mother has been filling every minute so full of fun and good times. Why, even when we're at home here, she's always hunting up little Lester and getting him to have a romp with us.

But of course next week I've got to go to school, and it can't be quite so jolly then. Well, I guess that's all for this time.

ABOUT A MONTH LATER

I didn't make a chapter of that last. It wasn't long enough. And, really, I don't know as I've got much to add to it now. There's nothing much happened.

I go to school now, and don't have so much time for fun. School's pretty good, and there are two or three girls just as nice as the ones at Andersonville. But not quite. Out of school Mother keeps things just as lively as ever; and we have beautiful times. Mother is having a lovely time with her own friends, too. Seems as if there is always some one here when I get home, and lots of times there are teas and parties, and people to dinner.

There are gentlemen, too. I suppose one of them will be Mother's lover by and by; but of course I don't know which one yet. I'm awfully interested in them, though. And of course it's perfectly natural that I should be. Wouldn't you be interested in the man that was going to be your new father? Well, I just guess you would! Anybody would. Why, most folks have only one father, you know, and they have to take that one just as he is; and it's all a matter of chance whether they get one that's cross or pleasant; or homely or fine and grand-looking; or the common kind you can hug and kiss and hang round his neck, or the stand-off-don't-touch-me-I-mustn't-be-disturbed kind like mine. I mean the one I did have. But, there! that doesn't sound right, either; for of course he's still my father just the same, only—well, he isn't Mother's husband any more, so I suppose he's only my father by order of the court, same as I'm his daughter.

Well, anyhow, he's the father I've grown up with, and of course I'm used to him now. And it's an altogether different matter to think of having a brand-new father thrust upon you, all ready-made, as you might say, and of course I am interested. There's such a whole lot depends on the father. Why, only think how different things would have been at home if my father had been different! There were such a lot of things I had to be careful not to do—and just as many I had to be careful to do—on account of Father. And so now, when I see all these nice young gentlemen (only they aren't all young; some of them are quite old) coming to the house and talking to Mother, and hanging over the back of her chair, and handing her tea and little cakes, I can't help wondering which, if any, is going to be her lover and my new father. And I am also wondering what I'll have to do on account of him when I get him. If I get him.

There are quite a lot of them, and they're all different. They'd make very different kinds of fathers. I'm sure, and I'm afraid I wouldn't like some of them. But, after all, it's Mother that ought to settle which to have—not me. She's the one to be pleased. 'Twould be such a pity to have to change again. Though she could, of course, same as she did Father, I suppose.

As I said, they're all different. There are only two that are anywhere near alike, and they aren't quite the same, for one's a lawyer and the other's in a bank. But they both carry canes and wear tall silk hats, and part their hair in the middle, and look at you through the kind of big round eyeglasses with dark rims that would make you look awfully homely if they didn't make you look so stylish. But I don't think Mother cares very much for either the lawyer or the bank man, and I'm glad. I wouldn't like to live with those glasses every day, even if

they are stylish. I'd much rather have Father's kind.

Then there's the man that paints pictures. He's tall and slim, and wears queer ties and long hair. He's always standing back and looking at things with his head on one side, and exclaiming "Oh!" and "Ah!" with a long breath. He says Mother's coloring is wonderful. I heard him. And I didn't like it very well, either. Why, it sounded as if she put it on herself out of a box on her bureau, same as some other ladies do! Still, he's not so bad, maybe; though I'm not sure but what his paints and pictures would be just as tiresome to live with as Father's stars, when it came right down to wanting a husband to live with you and talk to you every day in the year. You know you have to think of such things when it comes to choosing a new father—I mean a new husband. (I keep forgetting that it's Mother and not me that's doing the choosing.)

Well, to resume and go on. There's the violinist. I mustn't forget him. But, then, nobody could forget him. He's lovely; so handsome and distinguished-looking with his perfectly beautiful dark eyes and white teeth. And he plays—well, I'm simply crazy over his playing. I only wish Carrie Heywood could hear him. She thinks her brother can play. He's a traveling violinist with a show; and he came home once to Andersonville. And I heard him. But he's not the real thing at all. Not a bit. Why, he might be anybody, our grocer, or the butcher, up there playing that violin. His eyes are little and blue, and his hair is red and very short. I wish she could hear our violinist play!

And there's another man that comes to the parties and teas;—oh, of course there are others, lots of them, married men with wives, and unmarried men with and without sisters. But I mean another man specially. His name is Harlow. He's a little man with a brown pointed beard and big soft brown eyes. He's really awfully good-looking, too. I don't know what he does do; but he's married. I know that. He never brings his wife, though; but Mother's always asking for her, clear and distinct, and she always smiles, and her voice kind of tinkles like little silver bells. But just the same he never brings her.

He never takes her anywhere. I heard Aunt Hattie tell Mother so at the very first, when he came. She said they weren't a bit happy together, and that there'd probably be a divorce before long. But Mother asked for her just the same the very next time. And she's done it ever since.

I think I know now why she does. I found out, and I was simply thrilled. It was so exciting! You see, they were lovers once themselves—Mother and this Mr. Harlow. Then something happened and they quarreled. That was just before Father came.

Of course Mother didn't tell me this, nor Aunt Hattie. It was two ladies. I heard them talking at a tea one day. I was right behind them, and I couldn't get away, so I just couldn't help hearing what they said.

They were looking across the room at Mother. Mr. Harlow was talking to her. He was leaning forward in his chair and talking so earnestly to Mother; and he looked just as if he thought there wasn't another soul in the room but just they two. But Mother—Mother was just listening to be polite to company. Anybody could see that. And the very first chance she got she turned and began to talk to a lady who was standing near. And she never so much as looked toward Mr. Harlow again.

The ladies in front of me laughed then, and one of them said, with a little nod of her head, "I guess Madge Desmond Anderson can look out for herself all right."

Then they got up and went away without seeing me. And all of a sudden I felt almost sorry, for I wanted them to see me. I wanted them to see that I knew my mother could take care of herself, too, and that I was proud of it. If they had turned I'd have said so. But they didn't turn.

I shouldn't like Mr. Harlow for a father. I know I shouldn't. But then, there's no danger, of course, even if he and Mother were lovers once. He's got a wife now, and even if he got a divorce, I don't believe Mother would choose him.

But of course there's no telling which one she will take. As I said before, I don't know. It's too soon, anyway, to tell. I suspect it isn't any more proper to hurry up about getting married again when you've been unmarried by a divorce than it is when you've been unmarried by your husband's dying. I asked Peter one day how soon folks did get married after a divorce, but he didn't seem to know. Anyway, all he said was to stammer: "Er—yes, miss—no, miss, I mean, I don't know, miss."

Peter is awfully funny. But he's nice. I like him, only I can't find out much by him. He's very good-looking, though he's quite old. He's almost thirty. He told me. I asked him. He takes me back and forth to school every day, so I see quite a lot of him. And, really, he's about the only one I can ask questions of here, anyway. There isn't anybody like Nurse Sarah used to be. Olga, the cook, talks so funny, I can't understand a word she says, hardly. Besides, the only two times I've been down to the kitchen Aunt Hattie sent for me, and she told me the last time not to go any more. She didn't say why. Aunt Hattie never says why not to do things. She just says, "Don't." Sometimes it seems to me as if my whole life had been made up of "don'ts." If they'd only tell us part of the time things to "do," maybe we wouldn't have so much time to do the "don'ts." (That sounds funny, but I guess folks'll know what I mean.)

(Continued next week)