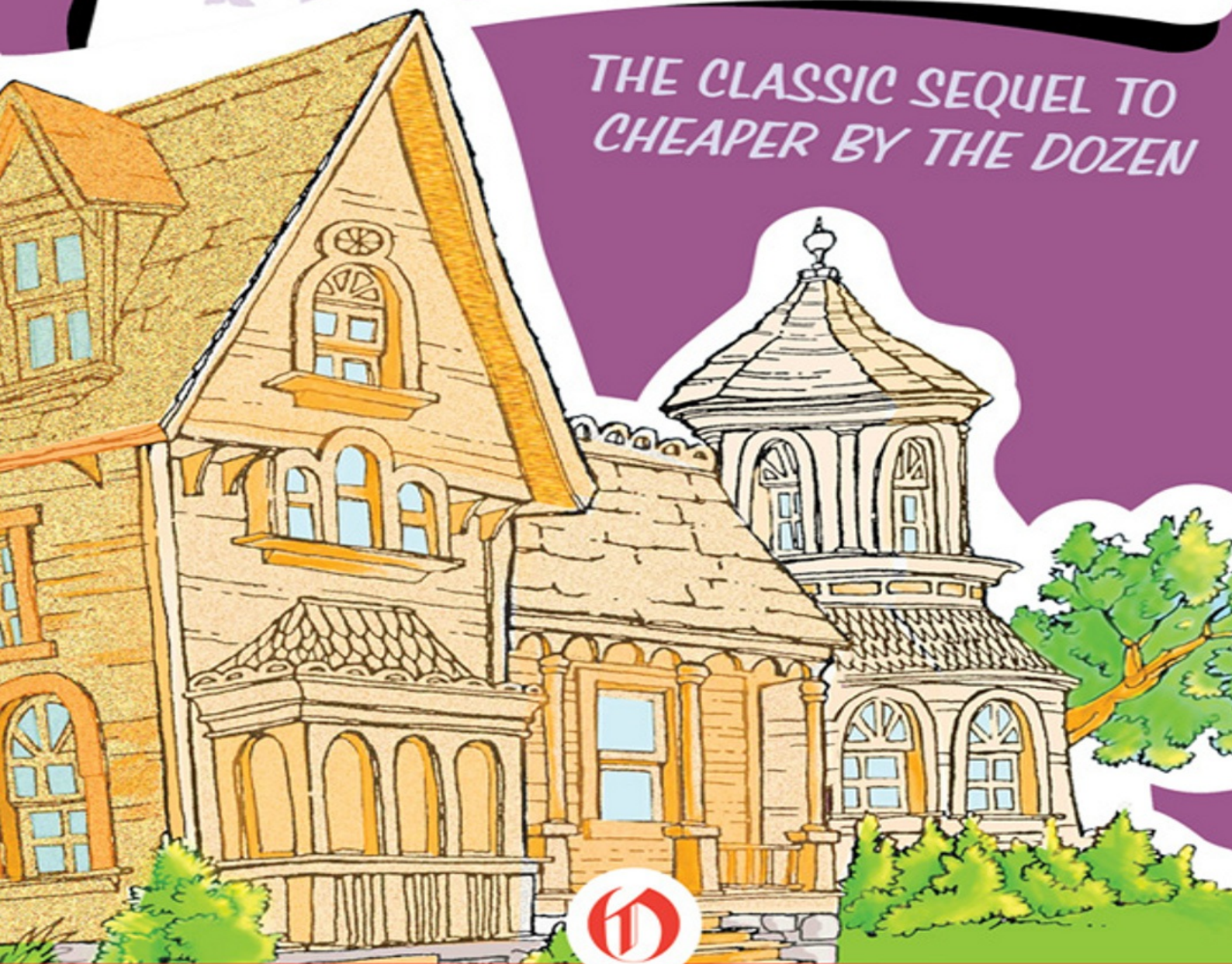


Belles on Their Toes

FRANK B. GILBRETH JR.
AND ERNESTINE GILBRETH CAREY

THE CLASSIC SEQUEL TO
CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN



Belles on Their Toes

Frank B. Gilbreth Jr. and Ernestine Gilbreth Carey



Contents

- [1. Something for Dad](#)
- [2. Austerity Budget](#)
- [3. Troubled Waters, and Oil](#)
- [4. Completely Dead](#)
- [5. Mother's Bathing Suit](#)
- [6. Beating the Rap](#)
- [7. Belles on Their Toes](#)
- [8. Shopping Tour](#)
- [9. Mother's School](#)
- [10. Efficiency Kitchen](#)
- [11. Lynching Party](#)
- [12. Ashtray Christmas](#)
- [13. Platform Manners](#)
- [14. Mother's New Nose](#)
- [15. Crazy Over Horses](#)
- [16. Then There Were Ten](#)
- [17. Pop and the Weasel](#)
- [18. March on Washington](#)
- [19. Mother Was There First](#)
- [20. Pygmalion](#)
- [21. All Alone](#)
- [Authors' Note](#)

[A Biography of Frank B. Gilbreth Jr. and Ernestine Gilbreth Carey](#)

TO MOTHER

who deserves better treatment

1. *Something for Dad*

MOTHER WAS GOING TO Europe and leave us by ourselves. It was not an easy thing, but it was something she had to do for Dad. For us, too.

Frank carried her suitcases down the front steps to a taxicab parked under the porte-cochere of our house in Montclair, New Jersey. The driver climbed out of his air-cooled Franklin, and gave me a hand.

“You the oldest boy?” he asked Frank.

Frank told him he was. Frank was thirteen.

“It’s going to be tough on your Mother. All you kids, and you the oldest boy.”

Everyone knew it was going to be tough. There wasn’t any use talking about that.

“I’ll put them on the train myself,” said the driver, pointing his head at the suitcases. “I heard about your father.”

Frank climbed the stairs and joined the rest of us on the porch, just outside the front door. That was where we usually said good-bye when Dad went away on trips.

Dad had died three days before, on June 14, 1924. It seemed longer. He had had a heart attack at the railroad station in Montclair. It had happened in a telephone booth, while he was talking with Mother over the phone.

Dad liked regimentation and liked everything to be done by a system. He even had assigned each of us a number, which he used for routing intra-family correspondence and memoranda.

Mother wasn’t that way. But from habit we lined up on the porch as we would have for Dad—by ages and in a sort of company front formation.

Anne, the oldest—she was eighteen—was at the tall end of the line. Jane, the youngest—not quite two—was at the short end. In between were Ernestine, Martha, Frank, Bill, Lillian, Fred, Dan, Jack, and Bob.

Anne told us to “dress right” on her. Dad always liked the line to be straight. We waited there for Mother.

We still weren’t accustomed to seeing her in black. She looked tense and alone as she pushed open the screen door and came to the head of the steps. We wished she’d let some of us go with her to the boat, or at least to the Montclair station.

Mother stood there, tall, slim, and quite beautiful. Her figure never even whispered that she had had a dozen children.* Her veil was pushed back over her hat, and her face was white and taut.

A few strands of red hair, the only part of Mother’s person that wouldn’t do her bidding, curled defiantly from under her hat. Everything else was black and white.

Whenever Dad said good-bye there on the porch, he always made believe we were secretly glad

get rid of him. Nothing could have been further from the truth, because we worshiped him, and I knew it. But he'd say we were only waiting for him to get out of earshot, before we'd start a wild celebration that would run far into the night. He'd tell us our long faces didn't fool *him* any, and that some day he was going to ride around the block and come back and catch us decking the halls with boughs of holly, building a bonfire, burning him in effigy, and—the biggest sin of all—even using one of his Durham-Duplex razors.

Mother didn't want us to know how she felt about leaving, so she smiled and tried to act like Dad

“Those long faces don't fool me any,” she boomed as heartily as she could. “Just as soon as I'm out of sight ...” The boom dropped to a whisper, and then she couldn't go on at all. She held out her arms and we broke ranks and burrowed into them.

She didn't trust herself to talk for a while, and neither did we. Finally she pulled herself loose and started down the stairs. Just before she got to the cab, she turned and looked at us—at each one of us.

Mother has a way of making each child know he means something very special to her. Not just as one of the group, but as an individual person who has his own special claim on her heart.

“I love you so,” she said quietly. “I would never leave you, if it didn't seem the only way we could stay together later on. You know that, don't you?”

We knew it, all right. Most of Dad's money had gone back into his business. Mother was going to try to operate the business herself—that was one reason the trip to Europe was necessary. If she failed, the family might have to be divided or to move in on Mother's relatives on the West Coast.

Mother's mother had invited all of us to come and live with her, in Oakland, California. Since there were so many of us, Mother thought it would be a bit of an imposition—more, in fact, than she was willing to impose on anyone, even her own mother. Several of Dad's friends had offered to adopt some of us. None of us wanted that.

“Don't worry about us,” Anne assured Mother now. “Every thing will be hotsy, honest!”

“I'm sure it will, dear,” Mother smiled. “Not only hotsy, but totsy, too.”

The driver started to help her into the cab.

“I'm sorry about your husband,” he said.

“Thank you very much.” Now Mother's voice sounded far away

“I talked to a fellow that saw it happen. It must have been an awful shock for you.”

“Shut up,” Frank whispered fiercely. “Why can't he just shut up?”

Anne nudged Frank sharply, and he was quiet.

We got back into line as the cab started down the driveway. We could see Mother waving from the window in the back.

Lillian, who was ten, burst into tears.

“I want to go with Mother,” she sobbed. “Tell her to come back.”

Anne took two steps and stood in front of Lill, blocking her from view.

“I told you not to do that,” Anne said between her teeth. “I told you the first one who did that before Mother left I’m going to murder.”

Anne sounded as if she meant it, too.

“I can’t help it,” Lill cried. “She’s got to come back.”

All the way up Eagle Rock Way, we could see Mother waving. We smiled and waved back. Lill stopped crying before the car was out of sight, and Anne stepped aside, so that Lill could wave too.

The car disappeared around a curve, and Lill burst into tears again.

“I didn’t mean to,” she sobbed. “Honest, I didn’t.”

“It’s all right,” Anne told her. “We know you didn’t.”

“Do you think she could see me at the end, when I was waving?”

“I’m sure she could,” Anne said. “Of course she could, honey.” Anne burst into tears herself.

We went back into the house, and suddenly we didn’t feel so depressed any more. Perhaps it was the saying good-bye we had dreaded, even more than being without Mother. Mother had gone on trips before, and we had lived through them. And she’d be back in a little more than a month.

“Everybody,” said Anne, drying her tears, “did fine. I think Mother was proud of us.”

“We’ll get things running like clockwork around here,” Ernestine told us. “Mother won’t know when she gets back.”

We began to see that what seemed the end of everything might really be just a beginning. There was even a certain exhilaration in knowing that Mother had had enough confidence in us to leave us by ourselves.

“Yes, sir,” said Anne, almost gaily, “everything went so well that, for the first time, I think we’re going to make a go of it.” She was fairly beaming now. “Everybody behaved so well I could kiss you all.”

“I knew it,” said Bill, ducking. “The minute Mother leaves, you start making threats.”

Anne grabbed him, and planted a resounding, moist smack on the side of his neck. Bill struggled, giggled, and hollered. The noise sounded fine after three days of whispers. The tension began to drain out of us.

“I know we’re going to be able to stay together,” Ernestine said. “I’m so sure of it now that I could almost go build that bonfire Dad always talked about.”

“Let’s see,” Anne grinned. “Where’s the nearest holly tree?”

“You keep away from his razors, though,” Frank warned. “I’ll be needing those one day.”

Ernestine and Martha hooted. Bill mentioned something about how the cat would be fully competent to lick off any whiskers that Frank had at present or might produce for years to come. Anne kissed Bill loudly again, and he hollered some more.

Frank ran an exploratory hand across his chin, but there was no sound of sandpaper.

MOTHER SAILED with the tide that morning aboard the *Scythia* for England.

Dad had been scheduled to speak at the London Power Conference, and to preside over a session of the World Congress of Scientific Management, at the Masaryk Academy, in Prague, Czechoslovakia.

Those two honors meant that his work in motion study and the elimination of fatigue in industry were being recognized internationally.

Dad had been a consulting engineer and efficiency expert, specializing in big industry. He was the creator of motion study, which as one skeptic alleged—and Dad never denied—was designed “make it easy to work hard.”

Dad’s method was to study a worker’s motions, and then to cut down those motions, often by redesigning the machinery that the man operated. Mother was his business partner. She had given him a dozen children and had written with him a half dozen books explaining motion study.

Now she wanted to make certain that he received the recognition the European meetings would bring. And so did we.

She had been invited to substitute for him at the two sessions. At first, it seemed out of the question to accept. And then it seemed to be the one opportunity of keeping the family together. Engineering was, and still is, a man’s field. Mother knew there would be difficulties in trying to continue Dad’s business. But if she made a success of her two speeches in Europe, before some of the biggest engineers in the world, she might have an easier time in convincing Dad’s clients that she could do the work.

Mother wasn’t accustomed to making decisions. Those, in the past, had been left to Dad. He had set the pattern, and she had followed it. Even the idea of twelve children had been his originally. But if Dad thought an idea was good, Mother was convinced it was marvelous.

There was a time when Mother wept easily, when she was afraid of walking alone at night, when a lightning storm would send her shuddering into a dark closet.

All that ended the day Dad died. It ended because it *had* to end. It ended because of the realization that what she really feared was that something would separate them.

Well, what she had feared had happened, and tears would not wash out a word of it. So she gave his speech in London and presided for him in Prague. And she was not afraid any more.

*Mary, the next to the oldest, died of diphtheria in 1912.

2. *Austerity Budget*

DAD USED TO COMPLAIN that if the Bureau of Standards in Washington ever needed a precise definition or an exact measurement of a Jack of All Trades Who Was Master of None, all it would have to do was to build a glass cage, create a vacuum therein, chill to zero degrees centigrade, and send for Tom.

Tom had been with the family for seventeen years as Dad's handy man. The title should not be taken too literally. In a house-hold whose routine was bound by a chain of efficiency, Tom was unquestionably the weakest link.

Tom knew a little something about everything. Not enough to fix it if it were broken, but enough to think he could. He was unwilling to concede that any job was too big for him, or that he had never done a similar, but infinitely more difficult, job before.

He never forgot a mistake, either, and so was able to keep making the same errors over and over again.

Tom was of Irish descent, small, light footed, and tough. Although no longer young even when he first came to work for us, he still clung to the belief that the bigger they came the harder they fell. As a result, he sometimes presented a battered and swollen appearance, and would walk around the house announcing darkly:

"I don't take nothing from nobody, unnerstand? Nothing from nobody."

He was always evasive when asked how he had received the bruises, but would manage to leave the impression that the six club-swinging bullies who sprang on him in the dark, when his back was turned, would be released from the hospital in a fortnight or so.

Tom liked children and animals, and all of us were immensely fond of him. Before Mother left she had decided it would be necessary to discharge either the cook or Tom, as an economy move. It never occurred to any of us, or to Tom, that he should be the one to go.

"Why Tom," Martha had said, putting into words what all of us were thinking, "would be willing to cut off his right arm for us?"

He would have, too. There was no guarantee, though, that in his eagerness to oblige he wouldn't have got rattled and cut off his left arm by mistake.

So the cook had departed and Tom had moved permanently into the kitchen. He now wore a butcher's apron and a chef's cap, and boasted that he never had followed a recipe in his life. This lack of skill was all too obvious.

The discharging of the cook was the only economy measure Mother had had time to effect. She hadn't said anything about our cutting other expenses. But Mother made it a policy never to tell us to do the things she thought we were old enough to do without prompting.

When Mother said good-by, for instance, there was no last minute outpouring about being good

and going to bed early, and brushing our teeth and doing what Anne told us.

We knew Mother wanted those things done, so there was no need for her to repeat them. She may have worried—of course she worried—about whether we'd do them or not. But she didn't intend to show any lack of confidence unless we gave her reason.

There was no doubt that the immediate problem was saving money. For the time being, perhaps indefinitely, there would be little or no money coming in. When there are eleven children in a family there is always money going out.

We talked economy in the dining room before lunch, an hour or so after Mother's departure. From an odor not unlike that of burning leaves, we gathered that Tom was having trouble with the cooking again. Part of the economy drive would have to be aimed in that direction.

Anne had been left \$600 to run the family during Mother's five-week absence. That included the cost of our tickets to Nantucket, Massachusetts, because we intended to spend the summer at our cottage there, as usual. Mother had made the boat reservations to Nantucket, an island off Cape Cod, and Anne was to pay for them when we picked them up.

We thought it would be a good idea to spend only \$300, and to turn the rest back to Mother, as a surprise, when she joined us at Nantucket.

"In the first place," Anne told us, "there is the milk bill. Thirteen quarts a day. More than three gallons."

Anne was sitting at Mother's place, at the head of the oval dining room table. As the oldest one at home, the senior officer present, she was automatically in command. Ten feet away, in Dad's place, sat Frank. The rest of us, including Bob and Jane, who were still in high chairs, sat around the perimeter.

Anne had Dad's check stubs, some bills, and the family budget book spread out before her.

"The milk bill alone amounts to more than \$50 a month," she said. "I don't see how Daddy pays for all these things. Cheaper by the dozen, nothing!"

We decided we could get along with only nine quarts, without anyone dying of malnutrition.

"Each of us is going to have to sacrifice a little," Anne continued, thumbing through the check stubs.

She called out the amounts on the stubs and what they were for. Food and clothes. We were going to have to cut down on them. Doctors' bills. We didn't intend to have any. Dentists' bills. Everybody's teeth that needed straightening had been straightened. Tobacco. Certainly not. Gasoline. We had already sold Dad's car. Dancing school ...

"Frank and I," Bill suggested, "could do our part by cutting out dancing school." Bill was eleven and it was a fight every Monday afternoon to get him into his Buster Brown collar and patent-leather pumps.

"We *couldn't* ask you to do that," Martha smirked.

“We’re willing to sacrifice a little,” Bill said.

Dancing school went into the discard, and Bill ran a relieved finger around his soft and unbuttoned collar. Also abandoned were music lessons, which everybody sacrificed without too much reluctance. We drew the line at cutting allowances, since all of us thought Dad kept them trimmed pretty close to the bone. But we did institute a series of fines that would reduce our take-home pay. Leaving on an electric light or the cold water would cost the offender two cents; hot water, four cents; failure to do any of the things on the process charts, five cents.

Dad had the household organized on an efficiency basis, just as he organized a factory. He believed that what worked in a household would work in a factory, and what worked in a factory would work in a household—especially if the household happened to have eleven children.

The process charts, first developed for industry, were an example. They told each of us what we were supposed to do, and when we were supposed to do it.

The charts were in the boys’ and girls’ bathrooms, upstairs. They listed duties such as washing the dishes, making the beds, combing hair, brushing teeth, weighing ourselves, listening for fifteen minutes a day to French and German language records on the phonograph, sweeping, and dusting.

Dad had things broken down to such a fine point that Lillian, who wasn’t tall enough to reach table tops and high shelves, dusted the legs and the lower shelves. Ernestine did the tops and the high shelves.

We decided we could eat much more cheaply if we cut out roasts and steaks, except perhaps on Sundays. Ernestine was a good shopper, so she would plan the meals, stressing such items as frankfurters and baked beans, and she would do most of the buying. We already got our canned goods from wholesalers, so we couldn’t save there.

Ernestine would also try to teach Tom the necessity for putting such ingredients as baking powder into the corn muffins, and of adding water to fresh vegetables before placing them on the stove.

Martha, who was the most efficient of all of us and could keep her money the longest, was put in charge of the budget. She also would supervise the packing of clothes for Nantucket.

We talked about the matter of college. Anne had just completed her sophomore year at Smith. Dad wasn’t a college man himself, but had believed that two colleges were better than one. At Dad’s suggestion, Anne had made plans to transfer that fall to The University of Michigan.

Ernestine had graduated from high school the night before Dad died. She was registered at Smith and was to start taking her college board examinations in a couple of days.

We knew Mother wouldn’t allow either of the girls to change plans. She insisted that somehow or other she was going to send all of us through college. Dad had wanted that.

As for our getting odd jobs to contribute to the income, maybe that would come later. For the time being, at least for the summer, all the older ones would be needed at home.

“I don’t have to tell you,” Anne said, looking significantly at the bigger children, “that a lot depends on how things go this summer.”

“I wouldn’t want anyone to adopt me, would you, Dan?” Fred asked. Fred was seven and he and Dan, who was one year younger, were inseparable.

“Heck, no,” said Dan. “I wouldn’t *let* anyone adopt me, would you, Fred?”

“Where did you ever get an idea like that?” Anne asked. “Nobody’s going to be adopted, especially if everything goes smoothly while Mother’s gone.”

By the time that Tom announced lunch was ready, all of the duties had been allocated and the new economy budget was in balance.

It was Ernestine’s turn to bring in the food. She eyed askance a leg of lamb that she carried from the kitchen. It was burned almost black and was festooned with charred tomato halves, which looked as if they had become a part of the lamb—a part that needed lancing and bandages.

Ernestine was the only member of the family who didn’t get along well with Tom. They had had a running feud that had started years before, when she had proudly presented him a picture of herself and he had announced that he intended to hang it in the pantry as a rat repellent.

Now, without saying anything, but with the face of a martyr who intended to cooperate if it meant poisoning all of us, Ernestine placed the platter in front of Anne.

Anne was caught off guard. “What,” she shouted in genuine alarm, “is that? Get it out of here quickly, you hear me? And tell Tom no one is in the mood for his jokes.”

“It is supposed to be a leg of lamb,” Ernestine said through pursed lips.

“How do you know?” Anne challenged distrustfully.

“I asked him and that’s what he said. Leg of lamb.”

Anne turned the platter around, studying the contents from all angles. “Any lamb with a leg like that,” she said, “had better see a veterinarian.”

“I’m beginning to think we should have kept the cook and got rid of that man,” Ernestine announced.

“Hush!” Anne warned. “He’ll hear you.”

“I don’t care if he does.”

Tom appeared red faced and furious at the butler’s pantry door.

“You don’t, eh,” he shouted, reaching behind him to untie his apron. “All right, just for that I quit.”

Tom sometimes quit as often as three times in a single day, so the dramatic announcement didn’t have too much effect.

“I don’t have to work here, you know,” he continued. “I ain’t no slave.” He took off the apron and waved it in Ernestine’s face.

“No one wants you to quit,” Anne told him. “We all know we couldn’t get along without Tom.”

don't we, Ernestine?"

Ernestine caught Anne's threatening glance and finally nodded reluctantly. "I suppose so," she said.

"There," Anne smiled sweetly. "You see?"

"What's the matter with the lamb?" Tom asked, somewhat mollified.

"Nothing," Anne replied, "except that it seems just a mite well done. We like our lamb just a little rarer."

"It's lamb ragoon," said Tom, as if that clinched the argument. "And lamb ragoon has to be well done."

"Well why didn't you say so?" Anne asked. "That explains everything."

"Nobody never gives me a chance to explain nothing around here, that's why," Tom mumbled, and he disappeared into the kitchen, tying his apron back on. "You work and slave to make them a special dish like lamb ragoon and then they try to fire you. After seventeen years with the family, too."

"It still looks like something that had better not be touched until the coroner arrives," Ernestine whispered.

"Lamb ragoon," Anne muttered. "I've seen rubber boots that looked more appetizing." Then realizing that as the oldest she was setting a bad example, she started carving, and added: "I'll bet it's good, though."

"Yummy," said Martha sarcastically.

"We'll try to get the cooking straightened out before Mother comes back," Anne promised. "Come on, now. Get the rest of the food, Ernestine. And bring in some cold cereal, will you, for those who don't want lamb."

BILL DEVELOPED a high fever and broke out with spots that afternoon. By the time the doctor arrived Ernestine and Martha were feverish and pimply. Ernestine wanted to cover herself with cold cream and powder, and still take her examinations, but the doctor put her to bed. By noon the next day, all eleven of us were broken out and bedridden.

3. *Troubled Waters, and Oil*

NO CATASTROPHE EVER BEFELL any of us but that Tom, sometime in the distant past, had experienced the same trouble, only more so.

If one of our boys stepped on a nail, Tom would allay fears of lockjaw by describing how *he* once had stepped on a *spike* that went all the way through his foot and into his ankle. Not only that, but he would take off his shoe and show you the scar.

When Bill broke out with spots, Tom was the first to discover them and hurriedly ordered Bill to get to bed.

“But I don’t feel sick,” Bill protested. “Just scratchy.”

“Don’t tell me nothing,” Tom commanded. “You’re sick as a dog.”

“Just scratchy,” Bill repeated, scratching himself.

“I tole you oncst, and I ain’t going to tell you again,” Tom said. “Get to bed, now. And if you don’t stop scratching yourself you’ll be out of the Club for a hundret years.”

Only members of Tom’s Club were admitted to the kitchen after supper. This was true even before he became cook, because Tom always had presided over the kitchen once the day’s duties were done.

For Club members in good standing, Tom sometimes would play the harmonica, pop corn, distribute candy, and perform card tricks. Those who were out of the Club could come no closer to these activities than the back hall. The door was left open, and they were allowed to watch, but not to eat or otherwise participate.

The older children, while professing scorn for Tom’s Club, frequently were found in the kitchen after supper—if they were fortunate enough to be in his good graces. To the younger ones, banishment from the Club was Siberia’s steppes.

Tom’s minimum excommunication, when meting out expulsion, was for a hundred years. Actually, this meant only about fifteen minutes, because Tom’s heart was soft. The maximum anathema, was for a thousand years and four days. This might mean an entire evening, although the sentence was often mitigated if one could manage to look repentant enough.

After Bill had climbed into his pajamas, Tom called Anne to break the news.

“Oh, Lord,” Anne groaned. “That’s the last straw! Just when I was beginning to think things might go smoothly.”

“It’s all right, Anne,” Bill assured her. “I don’t feel sick.”

“I hear you scratching under them covers,” Tom warned him. “I ain’t deaf, you know, I ain’t blind. I tole you twicst, and I ain’t going to tell you again. Mind now!”

“I better call the doctor,” Anne sighed.

“I could tell you how to dose him,” Tom said, “but...”

“Oh, no you don’t,” Bill shouted. “I know about your doses.”

“Remember what Dad told you about dosing them,” Anne said.

“I remember.” Tom’s tone was injured. “I could cure Bill, but I got my orders. I can take a hint.

Anne leaned over and studied Bill’s spots. “It looks like a rash or the hives to me,” she said.

“Hives,” Tom grunted. “He’s sick as a dog, I tell you. Of course, he ain’t as sick as I was once when ...”

“He ate some of that burned rangoon—” Anne stopped quickly. “Maybe he ate something that didn’t agree with him.”

“Didn’t agree with him?” Tom asked. And then accusingly to Bill: “Have you been sneaking out and eating down street again? You don’t know what goes into the food they give you at them drug stores.”

Bill shook his head.

“Anyway, it ain’t his stomach,” said Tom. “I know what it is, all right, but your father give me my orders, so I dassent tell you.”

“He gave them to you the time we had the measles and you said it was scarlet fever, didn’t he, Tom?” Bill said.

“That was the time,” Tom conceded.

“Heck, anyone can make a mistake like that, eh Tom?” Bill asked. Bill was one of Tom’s defenders, and usually in the Club.

“You scared Mother half to death,” Anne said accusingly.

“I still ain’t sure it *wasn’t* that, neither,” said Tom.

Anne went to telephone Dr. Burton, and Tom paced the floor of the room shared by Frank and Bill.

“Of course,” he muttered for the benefit of those of us who had assembled to see Bill’s spots, “I don’t know nothing about it. I’m stupid, I am. I’m so stupid that even though I seen a hundred cases just like it in the war, I don’t know what it is. I seen them dying like flies from it.”

“Is it really bad?” Bill asked. “Will everybody catch it?”

“You’ll catch it, you bold thing you, if you don’t stop scratching. You’ll be out of the Club for a hundred years.”

“Not that!” Ernestine protested in mock terror. “Anything but that.”

Tom pretended not to hear. But there was no doubt that Ernestine—or the Princess, as Tom sometimes called her with an exaggerated courtesy—was out of the Club for a thousand years and for a hundred days.

Tom resumed his pacing and mumbling. “I was an orderly in the horsepittle for ten months during the war for nothing. Had my eyes closed all the time. Sure I did.”

The war to which Tom alluded was the Spanish-American. If, as Tom frequently alleged, he actually had served as a hospital orderly, medicine had progressed considerably since those days. For Tom placed all his reliance on quinine and castor oil. And we weren't completely sure he knew that the practice of bleeding the patient had been pretty generally discontinued.

What was good medicine for humans, he believed, was equally beneficial for animals. Tom was a collector of pets, both wild and domesticated, much to the disgust of Dad. Dad used to complain that feeding almost a score of human mouths was more than any white man's burden, and that it was an outrage to be required to give sustenance to the fauna which followed Tom home or begged handouts on the kitchen window sill.

Let one of Tom's pets show up with a warm nose, sagging beak, coated tongue, fetid breath, and a blood-shot eye, and Tom would swiftly mix a dose of castor oil and Quinine Remedy, add a bit of sugar to make the dose more palatable, and force the solution through the mouth or down the bill of the debilitated creature.

None of them ever died or seemed to hold a lasting grudge. But Tom's cat, Fourteen—Tom numbered his cats progressively—would get down on her belly and start sneaking toward the back door every time she saw him reach up over the kitchen sink, where he kept the Quinine Remedy.

Tom's diagnoses for persons other than himself were varied, uninhibited, and sometimes exotic. But when he was sick himself, he always diagnosed the ailment as pleurisy, regardless of whether the symptoms were a bleeding nose or a swollen foot. On these occasions, he would send out for the Quinine Remedy's large economy flagon, and it never failed him.

ERNESTINE AND MARTHA were in bed too by the time Dr. Burton arrived. Whenever the doctor came to our house, Tom was the medical orderly again. He said "Yes, sir," and "No, sir," and he sucked in his stomach. Dr. Burton knew of Tom's claims of medical experience, and assured himself of Tom's cooperation by treating him as a learned colleague in the profession.

"What is it?" Anne asked anxiously, as Dr. Burton leaned over Bill's bed. "Tom keeps hinting that it's something serious."

"He says he's seen them die like flies from it," Bill said. "But all it does is itch."

"It's obvious, eh Tom?" said the physician.

"Yes, sir. Only I wouldn't tell them nothing because Mr. Gilbreth made me promise."

"Anyone can see it's chicken pox. No need to make an examination, would you say so, Tom?"

"Is that all," Anne sighed.

"That's what I thought, sir," said Tom. "Either that or small-pox, I wasn't sure which."

"It's nothing to worry about," Dr. Burton told Anne.

"I'm not worried," said Anne, glaring at Tom, "now that I know it isn't leprosy or cholera."

"You'll all be up and around again in a few days," Dr. Burton assured her.

“What do you mean, all?” Anne asked. “Chicken pox is a children’s disease, isn’t it?”

“Have any of you had chicken pox?”

“I guess not,” Anne admitted.

“Then you’ll all get it. But Tom will take good care of you.”

“Yes, *sir*,” Tom beamed.

“I’ll have some medicine sent around,” the doctor continued. “And Tom, I’ll count on you to see that they keep regular.”

“I’ve got just the thing,” said Tom, and it was obvious that Dr. Burton’s medical standing had skyrocketed in his estimation.

“Castor oil,” moaned Bill.

“A little castor oil never hurt anyone,” Dr. Burton agreed.

“Did you hear that, Tom?” Bill said, grasping at a straw. “Dr. Burton says a little.”

“That’s right,” the doctor cautioned. “Not too much.” He turned to Tom. “I suppose you’ve had chicken pox?”

“No, *sir*,” said Tom. “When I was a kid I had something that looked just like it. Some people even *said* it was chicken pox. But it turned out to be ...”

“Pleurisy,” Dr. Burton nodded sagely.

“That’s the only disease that ever give me any trouble.”

THE NEXT DAY, when it became apparent that all of us had chicken pox, Anne had Tom move all the boys’ beds into Frank’s and Bill’s room, and all the girls’ beds into Mother’s and Dad’s room. The rooms were adjacent, and by leaving the door open Anne could supervise both wards from her bed.

Anne had no intention of letting any mass epidemic interfere with the family routine. She had each of us get up long enough to wash, remake our beds, weigh ourselves, and make the notations on the process charts.

We got the phonograph from the boys’ bathroom—we usually listened to the language records while we were taking baths or otherwise occupied in what Dad called periods of unavoidable delay—and set it up in the doorway between the two wards. We played French and German records for fifteen minutes. Then Anne got up and looked at the charts, to make sure everyone had done what he was supposed to do.

“That’s fine,” she sighed as she crawled back into bed. “Now we can enjoy our poor health. And chicken pox on the first person who gets me up again.”

None of us felt very sick. We sang for a while, with the boys’ ward carrying the melody and the girls’ ward an alto. Sometimes, to get the song just right, the boys would sing their part alone, and the girls would sing theirs alone, and then we’d try them together. We sang “Yes, We Have No Bananas,” “Oh, Gee, Oh, Gosh, Oh, Golly, I’m in Love,” “Last Night on the Back Porch,” “You’ve Got to See

Mama Every Night or You Can't See Mama at All."

Then we played some of the new dance records and sang along with them. "What'll I Do?" "Alone by the Telephone," "Charlie My Boy," "Limehouse Blues," and "The Prisoner's Song."

We didn't mind being sick, and we hoped Mother wouldn't find out and worry about us.

After a while we could hear the sound of a spoon clinking against a glass down in the kitchen, and we knew Tom was mixing castor oil with orange juice and sugar. All of the boys, from Frank on down the line, immediately feigned deep sleep.

Tom brought the castor oil upstairs, one glass at a time. The stirring grew progressively louder and he mounted the back stairs and walked through the upstairs hall to the wards.

When he arrived with the first dose, the boys were snoring. "You don't fool me none," Tom told them. "I can see them eyes winking. I'll be up with your medicine in a few minutes."

He knocked noisily on the open door of the girls' ward, with his head modestly averted. Tom always made an elaborate ceremony of knocking before entering one of the girls' rooms. He thought that the knocking was a waste of time, and alleged that he had, at one time or another, changed all of their diapers. But Dad and Mother insisted on it. When Tom did, by mistake, happen on one of the girls who was not fully dressed, he never could understand—or made believe he couldn't understand—the ensuing commotion. "That's all right," he'd say, while the girl dived shrieking into a closet. "I don't embarrass me none. I don't mind. I don't mind."

Now, after knocking, he asked:

"All right if I come in, Anne?" He stirred the castor oil harder and louder than ever.

"I guess so," Anne conceded.

"Ain't nobody here," said Ernestine, "but us chicken poxers."

Tom entered and bowed low to Ernestine, the Princess.

"Here you are, Your Highness," he said. "I've brung you a present from the Grand Doochess."

He held out the glass.

"Anne first," Ernestine protested. "She's the oldest. Besides, you've probably spiked my drink."

"Where'd you learn talk like that?" said Tom, genuinely shocked. "I'm going to tell your Mother on you when she gets home."

"Here, hand me that glass and for goodness' sake be quiet, both of you," said Anne.

"Oh, what's the use," Ernestine wailed. "All right, give it to me."

Having reached the decision, she grabbed the glass before her willpower deserted her, and drained it.

"Good girl, Ernie," Tom beamed. "You're in the Club. How was it?"

Remembering she was supposed to set a good example, she smiled bravely.

"Delicious," she gulped. "Positively delicious."

"See what I tole you?" Tom said. "The orange juice cuts the taste."

“That’s right,” Ernestine lied. “Positively delicious.”

“Do you want some more?” Tom asked hopefully. “I wouldn’t mind fixing you another glass.”

“No,” Ernestine shouted. “I mean, no thank you. It was mighty good, but that was plenty.”

“Tomorrow, then,” said Tom, as he departed for the kitchen to mix Anne’s dose.

“I never had so much castor oil in my life,” Ernestine whispered to Anne. “The old idiot must think I’m as irregular as a French verb.”

“If you don’t mind,” Anne pleaded, “please keep quiet until I’ve had mine. My heart bleeds for you, but please hold your oily tongue.”

Anne, Martha, and finally Frank all faced up to their responsibilities by taking their medicine and managing to smack their lips and say it was good. But when Tom came to Bill the era of cooperation ended.

In the first place, Bill wouldn’t wake up, and the more Tom shook him, the louder he snored.

“I never seen such a sound sleeper,” said Tom, deciding it was time for psychology. “Well, if I can’t wake him for his castor oil, I’d better do the next best thing.”

Bill’s snores shook the bedroom.

“Does anyone,” said Tom, “know where the hot water bag is?”

Bill thought he knew what that meant. He rolled over and opened an eye.

“Where am I?” he asked sleepily. “What time is it?”

“It’s time,” said Tom, shoving a glass in Bill’s face, “to drink this.”

“What is it?” Bill asked, stalling as long as possible.

“You know what it is,” hollered Tom, whose patience was becoming exhausted. “Now swallow it.”

“I don’t like it.”

“How do you know you don’t like it, when you ain’t tasted it?”

“I’ve tasted it before. It tastes nasty.”

“Look,” Tom said deliberately. “Ast Anne. Ast Ernestine. Ast Martha. Ast Frank. It’s good. It’s delicious.”

“I know them. They’re just setting good examples.”

Tom now played his hole card.

“Look,” he purred, “I’ve got another glass just like this one, out in the hall. If you be a good boy and drink this, I’ll drink that—just to show you how good it is.”

By now all of the younger boys were frankly awake, and watching. Bill considered the offer carefully.

“How do I know,” he asked suspiciously, “that there’s castor oil in the other glass?”

“You can take my word for it, can’t you?” Tom was shouting again.

“I don’t think so.”

“Call me a liar, then,” said Tom. “Call me a liar.”

He went to the hall and came back holding a glass in each hand.

“Take your choice. If that ain’t fair, I don’t know what is.”

“When I take mine, will you drink a glass with me?” Fred asked.

“Sure,” said Tom. “It’s delicious. Ast Anne.”

“How about me?” Dan wanted to know.

“Certainly.”

“And me?” said Jack.

“Me, too,” Lillian shouted from the girls’ ward.

“Everybody,” Tom agreed. “All hands and the cook.”

Bill examined the glasses closely, and the girls came in to watch him make his choice. The glasses contained the same amount of orange juice, but there was one very obvious difference. On the surface of the juice in one glass were only a few bubbles of oil. On the surface of the other floated almost a half-inch of solid oil.

“I’ll take this one,” said Bill, pointing to the glass with a few bubbles.

“You’re sure you want that one?” Tom asked innocently. “I don’t see no difference.”

“Don’t try to wiggle out of it,” said Bill. “That’s the one I want.”

He was about to take the glass, when he looked up and saw Ernestine just barely shake her head.

“Sure you don’t want to change your mind?” said Tom, obviously pleased with the way things were going.

“Okay,” said Bill, “you talked me into it. I’ll change my mind.”

He grabbed the glass with all the oil on top.

“Hey, wait a minute,” Tom protested, and there was genuine terror in his voice. “You don’t want that one. If you look close, you can see it’s loaded with oil. Here’s the one you want.”

But it was too late. Bill drank orange juice and salad oil.

“Delicious,” he grinned. “Positively delicious.”

Tom looked with distaste at the glass he was holding. He managed a smile, but it was a weak one.

“Good boy, Bill,” he muttered finally.

“Am I in the Club for drinking my medicine, Tom?”

“I guess so.”

“For a thousand years and four days?”

Tom nodded glumly.

“Are you going to drink yours now, Tom?”

He nodded again.

“And are you going to drink a glass with Lillian, Fred, Dan, Jack, Bob and Jane, like you promised?”

Tom looked around him. The girls were biting their lips to keep from laughing. Frank had buried his head in his pillow.

“Drink it,” said Bill.

“It’s delicious,” said Ernestine. “Ast Anne.”

If looks could have killed, the Princess’s body would have been in an advanced stage of rigor mortis.

“Ast Ernestine,” said Martha.

“Ast Martha,” said Frank.

“Ast Frank,” said Bill.

“I don’t know why I work here,” Tom shook his head dully. “Seventeen years with the family, and when I start to get a little old they try to poison me. A hundred and twenty million people in the country, and I got to be the one who works here.”

“No,” said Anne. “Don’t drink it, Tom. It was only a joke, and not a very good one, I guess. We’re sorry, Tom.”

Tom stepped back with dignity, favored us with a withering glance, and drained his glass. Then he stalked out of the room, descended to the kitchen, and returned with the bottle of castor oil and a spoon. He handed them to Ernestine, and he didn’t forget to bow.

“Here, Doochess,” he said. “I know who put him up to it. I seen that guilty look. I ain’t deaf, you know. I ain’t blind. Now you get the rest of them to take their medicine, like the doctor said.”

He left the room again, only this time he backed out, bowing, curtsyng, and grasping his forelock.

Ernestine tried to hand the bottle to Anne, but Anne wouldn’t take it.

“It’s your responsibility,” Ernestine said. “You’re the oldest.”

“Tom’s right,” Anne replied. “I seen that guilty look too, Doochess, so it’s up to you. I delegate the responsibility.”

4. *Completely Dead*

MARTHA WAS RED HAired, freckled, and oblivious to the fact that within the last year she had grown tall, slender, and curvy—very curvy. The realization was to come in time—about the time that the freckles, with considerable prompting from Martha, started to disappear.

But for the moment she preferred blue serge bloomers to skirts, middie blouses to sweaters, and bicycles to rumble seats.

Martha was casual, easy going, steady, and a favorite with everybody. Efficiency came to her naturally, partly because of her temperament, partly because she was at the age when the mere mention of work had a depressing effect. If possible, work was to be avoided altogether. If not, it was to be disposed of as rapidly as possible, and with a minimum of fatigue. Hence, efficiency.

She had just finished her sophomore year in high school, during which she had broken Anne and Ernestine's previous records by carrying home her own books less than a dozen times. She accepted male carriers matter-of-factly, without attributing their attention to anything going on under her very nose. Our house was almost two miles from Montclair High School, and Anne and Ernestine used to say that Martha selected her gentlemen friends solely on their ability to carry heavy weights for long distances.

We recovered from chicken pox in a comparatively short time, and Martha took over the job of supervising the packing for Nantucket. She had Frank and Bill bring three trunks from the attic to the upstairs hall. We carried our clothes to her, and she made sure we had everything we needed before she let us put them in the trunks. Martha herself was established in a comfortable chair, and didn't have to move.

To simplify the matter of logistics, Martha had drawn up a number of check-off lists, from which she seemed to derive more than her share of satisfaction. Martha usually was on the receiving end of orders from Anne and Ernestine, and it was a special pleasure for her to have an opportunity to boss them now.

"Name!" she began by asking Anne, when Anne appeared in the hall with a pile of her own clothes. "Speak out loudly so I can hear you."

"My cow," Anne replied. "It's all right to be efficient, but don't carry it too far."

"Do you," said Martha, offering to hand her the check-off lists, "want to supervise the packing?"

Anne admitted she didn't.

"Then be good enough, please, just to answer a few simple questions. Name!"

"Paavo Nurmi, the Flying Finn," Anne told her. "Age, eighteen. Hobbies, taking orders and showing impudence from a mere slip of a girl."

"Speak out loudly so I can hear you," Martha said, thumbing through her papers and coming u

with Anne's check-off sheet.

"Oh, what's the use," Anne snorted. And then, shouting, answered: "Anne."

"Good," Martha beamed. "Dresses?"

"Six."

Martha made a note of it. "Bathing suit?"

"Sure does, Mr. Bones. Suits just fine."

"Speak out loudly so I can hear you."

"One," Anne hollered. "You're so efficient, I'll bet you're rocking with the grain of the wood."

After running through the complete list, all the way from hair-pins to shoe trees, Martha directed Anne where to stow her clothes. Then the rest of us, by ages, stepped up, gave our names, and went through the same routine.

Each older child, besides being responsible for himself, was responsible for a younger child. Anne was responsible for Jane, Ernestine for Jack, Martha for Bob, and Frank for Dan. This applied not only to packing clothes, but any family project or emergency. In the event of fire, or when crossing a street, or when it came to writing up the daily jobs on the process charts, the older ones were supposed to help their particular charges. Bill, Lillian, and Fred were in the intermediate group—old enough to look out for themselves, but not old enough to help anyone else.

Once the clothes were packed, together with sheets, blankets, tools, dolls, games, scrapbooks, crystal detectors and headphones, stamp collections, free samples and other articles that could not possibly be left behind, we devoted our attention to Departure Day.

Martha, meanwhile, had taken over the budget. Martha was not ungenerous with her own money, although it didn't exactly flow through her fingers. But when it came to handling Mother's money, her fingers had to be pried apart and twisted. It was a waste of time to tell Martha that you can't take money with you. She had long since made up her mind that, if that were the case, no sensible person would even dream of going.

She drew up requisition slips that we had to fill out in triplicate to buy anything for the house, and to get our weekly allowances. We agreed with Bill that it seemed a lot of trouble to go to for fifteen cents a week.

To get to Nantucket, we planned to take a Lackawanna train from Montclair to Hoboken, a ferry from Hoboken to New York, a night boat from New York to New Bedford, Massachusetts, and then a Nantucket boat from New Bedford to our destination. We knew that the transferring, with all our suitcases and the younger children, was going to be a job. But the trip on the night boat was cheaper than going to New Bedford by train.

Martha, who had been duly identified by Anne at the bank, cashed a check and went to New York to pick up the reservations. She was appalled and unnerved when the man at the ticket office on the dock told her the total cost.

“There must be some mistake,” she told him. “It’s Nantucket we’re going to, not Paris, France.”
Would you mind adding it up again?”

The man added again, and then Martha checked him—twice. When she finally became convinced that there was no mistake, she decided to turn back two of the five staterooms Mother had reserved and to exchange two of the full-fare tickets for half fares.

When she returned from the city, Martha, bristling with indignation, told Ernestine and Anne about the prices. She also explained about turning in the staterooms and exchanging the tickets.

“So I saved better than twenty dollars,” she concluded. “There’ll have to be four of us in each of two staterooms, and three in the other.”

“Good night,” said Anne, “even three persons in one of those staterooms is a slum. But I guess we’ll manage somehow.”

“Of course we will,” Martha agreed. “And think of saving ...”

“Wait a minute,” Anne interrupted. “You’ve forgotten all about Tom. Where’s he going to sleep?”

“And if you try to tell us he can sleep in one of our state rooms,” Ernestine put in, “all I can say is that’s carrying economy a little too far.”

“It certainly is,” Anne agreed. “The very idea!”

“I’ll scrub floors,” Ernestine announced dramatically. “I’ll clean out the rest rooms in the Hudson Tubes. But I will not ...”

“Neither will I,” said Anne.

“I didn’t forget about him,” Martha insisted. “And for cat’s sake put down those scrub brushes and get up off your hands and knees.”

“Where’s he going to sleep then?” Anne asked.

“Well,” said Martha, “he was complaining just the other day about how he never slept a wink on the way to Nantucket. So if he doesn’t sleep anyway, what’s the use of throwing away perfectly good money?”

“You can’t do that to him,” Anne protested. “You go right back to New York and get another stateroom.”

“It’s all right,” Martha insisted. “I already told him about it.”

“Poor Tom,” Anne sympathized. “What did he say?”

“Oh, you know Tom. He grumbled about a hundred and twenty million people in the country, and about how Lincoln freed all the slaves but one. But he didn’t really object.”

“Poor Tom!” Anne repeated. “My cow.”

“I don’t know why he puts up with us,” Ernestine agreed.

“Look,” said Martha, fishing angrily in her pocket for the checkbook. “Do either of you want to take over the budget? I ask you, do you?”

