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Author: Maria Thompson Daviess

Illustrator: Percy D. Johnson

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Down that garden path I flew

PHYLLIS

By

MARIA THOMPSON DAVIESS

Author of "The Tinder Box," "The Melting of Molly," Etc.

With Illustrations by

PERCY D. JOHNSON

NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.
1914

TO

HELENA RUTH KETCHAM

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PHYLLIS

CHAPTER I

The country is so much larger than the city and so empty that you rattle around in it until you wonder if you are ever going to get stuck to any place, especially if there isn't a house numbered anywhere. Our street is named Providence Road and the house Byrd Mansion and I am afraid I'll never be at home there as long as I live. But the doctor says Mother has to live in the country for always, and I'm only glad it isn't any country than Byrdsville.

The worst thing about it to me is that this house I live in and the town I live in are named for the lovely dark-eyed girl who lives down in the old-fashioned cottage that backs up on our garden. She moved out for me to move in, just because I am rich and she is poor. I can't look at her straight, but I love her so that I can hardly stand it. All the other girls in school love her too, and she is not at all afraid of the boys, but treats them just as if they were human beings and could be loved as such. That awful long-legged Tony walks home with her almost every day and they all laugh and have a good time.

I always wait until everybody has gone down the street with everybody else so they won't see how lonesome I am. Crowded lonesomeness is the worst of all. There are many nice boys and girls just about my age here in Byrdsville; but they can never like me. I'm glad I found it out before I tried to be friends with any of them. The first day I came to the Byrd Academy I heard Belle tell Mamie Sue how to treat me,

and that is what settled me into this alone state.

"Of course, be polite to her, Mamie Sue," Belle said, not knowing that I was behind the hat-rack, pinning on my hat. "But there never was a millionaire in Byrdsville before, and I don't see how a girl who is that rich can be really nice. The Bible says that it is harder for a rich man to get to heaven than for a knitting-needle to stick into a camel, because he and it are blunt, I suppose; and it must be just the same with such a rich girl. Poor child, I am so sorry for her; but we must be very careful."

"Why, Belle," said Mamie Sue, in a voice that is always so comfortable because she is nice and fat, "Roxy said she was going to like her a lot, and she's got Roxy's lovely house while Roxy has to live in the cottage, which is just as bad as moving into a chicken coop after the Byrd Mansion. If Roxy likes her, it seems to me we might. She didn't turn us out of house and home, as the almanac says."

"Don't you see that Roxy has to be nice to her, because if she isn't we will think it is spite about the house? Roxy can't show her resentment, but her friends can. I'm a friend."

Belle uses words and talks like a grown person in a really wonderful way. She is the smartest girl in the rhetoric class and, of course, she knows more than most people, and Mamie Sue realizes that. So do I. I saw just how they all felt about me, and I don't blame them—but I just wish every time Roxanne Byrd smiles at me that I didn't have to make myself stop and remember that she does it because she has to.

"But I believe Phyllis is a nice girl," Mamie Sue said. Mamie Sue reminds me of a nice, fat molasses drop, with her yellow hair and always a brown dress on.

"The city is an awful wicked place, Mamie Sue, even if it is only just a hundred miles away. Let's don't think about the poor thing." Belle answered positively, and they went out of the door.

I wanted to sit down and cry as I feel sure any girl has a right to do; only I never have learned how to do it. Crying with only a governess to listen to and reprove a person is no good at all; only mothers can make crying any comfort, and mine is too feeble to let me do anything but tiptoe in and hold her hand while the nurse watches me and the clock to send me out. Fathers just stiffen girls' backbones instead of encouraging wet eyelashes—at least that is the way mine affects me.

No, I didn't sit down and cry when I found out that I wasn't to have any friends in Byrdsville for the just cause of being too rich, but I stiffened my mind to bear it as a rich man's daughter ought to bear her father's mistakes in conduct.

What made me know that the girls had the right view of the question was what I had found out about it for myself this spring from reading magazines, and I have been distressed and uneasy about Father ever since. His own cousin, Gilmore Lewis, who is a fine man, as everybody knows and as is often published, runs one of the greatest weekly magazines in New York, and he put a piece in it that would have proved to a child in the second reader how wicked it is to be millionaire men. Father's name was not mentioned, but many of his friends' were, and of course I knew that it was just courtesy of his Cousin Gilmore to leave it out.

I know it is all wrong, with so many poor people and starvation at every hand. I see that! But in spite of his terrible habit of making money I love and trust my father and expect to keep on doing it. He understands me as well as a man can understand a girl, and he is regardful for me always. He looked at me for a long time one night a week before he moved down here in this Harpeth Valley, where the air is to keep Mother a little longer for us to know she's here even if we can't always see her every day, and then he said:

"Phil, old girl, I'm not going to take Miss Rogers with us to go on with your solitary brand of education. There is a little one-horse school in Byrdsville that they call the Byrd Academy, and I watched a bunch of real human boys and girls go in the gate the morning I got there. I think you will have to be one of them. I want to see a few hayseeds sprinkled over your very polished surface."

I laughed with him. That is the good thing about Father: you can always laugh with him, even if you are not sure what you are laughing about. Laughing *at* a person is just as rude as eating an apple right in his face. Father always divides his apple. Though rich, he is a really noble man.

But although I didn't cry when I heard Belle talking a course of righteous action into fat Mamie Sue about me, I made up my mind that I would have to have some sort of person to talk to, so I bought this book. I am going to call it "Louise" and do as good a stunt of pretending that it has got brown hair and blue eyes and a real heart as I can. All I have written up to now has just been introducing myself to Louise. Our real adventures and conversations will come later.

Before I have gone to bed all this week I have been taking a peep out of my window down over the back garden to Roxanne Byrd's cottage and asking her in my heart to forgive me for taking her home, and asking God to make her love the cottage as I would like to be let to love her. To think that I have to sleep in her great-grandmother's four-poster bed that Roxanne has always slept in! I have to pray hard to be forgiven for it and to be able to endure the doing of it. Good-night!

This has been a very curious and happy kind of day, Louise, and I feel excited and queer. I have had a long talk with Roxanne Byrd over our garden fence, and she is just as wonderful as I thought she was going to be. A person's dream about another person is so apt to be a kind of misfit, but Roxanne slipped into mine about her just as if it had been made for her.

The little Byrd boy is named Lovelace Peyton for his two grandfathers, and he looks and sounds just like he had come out of a beautiful book; but he doesn't act accordingly. He is slim and rosy and dimply, with yellow curls just mopped all over his head, and he has blue eyes the color that the sky is hardly ever; but from what Roxanne says about him I hardly see how he will live to grow up. He falls in and sits in and down and on and breaks and eats things in the most terrible fashion, and he has all sorts of creeps and crawls in his pocket all of the time. He pulls bugs and worms apart and tries to put them together again; and he choked the old rooster nearly to death trying to poke down his throat some bread and mud made up into pills.

That is what I ran to help Roxanne about, and the poor old chicken was gaping and gasping terribly. I held him while she made Lovelace Peyton put his finger down in the bill and pull up the wad he had been trying to push down.

"That old rooster have got rheumatiz, Roxy, and now he'll die with no pill for it," said Lovelace, as he worked his dirty little finger down after the mud and bread; but he got it out and the poor old chicken hopped off with all his feathers ruffled up and stretching his neck as if to try it.

"Oh, Lovey, please don't kill the chickens," Roxanne said in a tone of real pleading.

"I don't never kill nothing, Roxy," he answered indignantly. "If a thing can't get well from me doctoring it, it dies 'cause it wants to. Since Uncle Pomp let me put that mixtry of nice mud and brick dust on his shoe he don't suffer with his frost-bit heel no more. He's going to stop limping next week if I put it on every day. I'm going to pound another piece of brick right now," and he went around the house with the darlinest little lope, because he always rides a stick horse, which prances most of the time.

"Oh, isn't he awful?" said Roxanne; but there was the kind of pride in her voice and the kind of look in her eyes that I would have if I had a little brother like that, even if he was so dirty that he would have to be handled with tongs.

"He's so awful I wish he was mine," I answered, and then we both laughed.

I had never thought, leather Louise, that I would have a nice laugh like that with a girl who was only treating me kindly to keep from the sin of spite. It was hard to believe that Roxanne didn't really like me when she went on to tell me some of the dreadful funny things Lovelace Peyton does almost every hour. I forgot about her feeling for me and was laughing at her description of how she came home from school one day and found old Uncle Pompey, who is as black and old as a human being can be and is all the servant Roxanne has to help her, cooking dinner with a piece of newspaper pasted in strips all over his face, which was Lovelace Peyton's remedy for neuralgia.

But just as I was enjoying myself so as to be almost unconscious I saw Belle and Mamie Sue and Tony Luttrell coming around the corner of the street past the front gate of Byrd Mansion and down toward the cottage. Nobody knows how hard it is for me to see every nice body my own age pass right by my gate in a procession to see Roxanne when I can't go, too.

Tony didn't see me standing by the garden fence, and he gave the funny little whistle that he calls the Raccoon whistle for the Palefaces and which he always whistles when he wants to signal something to one of the girls. Then suddenly they all saw me, and that politely enduring look came over all three faces at once, though Mamie Sue's face is so jolly and round by nature that it is very hard to prim it down suddenly, and I don't believe she would always trouble to put it on for me, only Belle seems to demand it of her as an echo of her sentiments toward me. Some people can't seem to be sure of themselves unless they can get somebody else to echo them and I think that is why Belle has to keep poor Mamie Sue at her elbow all the time.

But when I saw the politeness plaster spread itself over all their faces at the sight of me enjoying myself like any other girl, I just turned away wearily and started back along my own garden path, back to my own house which I felt that I ought not to be living in. But something sweet happened to me before I left that makes me feel nice and warm even now to think about.

"Please don't go away, Phyllis," said Roxanne, looking right into my face with such a lovely look in her own eyes that it was almost impossible, for an instant, for me to believe it was charity.

For a moment I wanted to stay, and almost did; but if she could be generous, so could I, and I didn't intend to spoil their fun for even a minute, so I just smiled at her and bowed to them as I walked away.

Nobody knows how it does hurt me to be this kind of an outcast! I have lived fifteen years with a sick mother, and a governess and trained nurses, and never a chance of having friends; and now that one is just at my back door I can't have her because useless wealth is between us. Is there no way the rich can turn poor without disgrace? But I've got that smile from Roxanne and I'm going to believe it was meant for the real me. Good-night!

I'm so full of happiness and scare and a secret that if I didn't have this little book to spill some of it out to I don't know what I would do. A secret sometimes makes a girl feel like she would explode worse than a bottle of nitroglycerin, though it makes me nervous even to write the word when I think of what might have happened to Lovelace Peyton if I hadn't had a father who is cool enough to keep his head at all times and handed that quality down to me.

Tony Luttrell is the leader of the Raccoon Patrol of the Boy Scouts, and he has a star for pulling Pink Chadwell out of the swimming-pool one day last summer when Pink had eaten too many green apples and the cold water gave him cramps. Tony had to hit him on the head to keep them both from being drowned. It was a grand thing for him to do, and everybody in this town looks up to Tony as a hero. Roxanne says the thing that hurts her most is that she can't tell all the boys and girls how brave I am because of the secret which I had to find out when I saved the life of Lovelace Peyton.

"Oh, Phyllis, to think they can't all know what a noble girl you are to risk your life, when you knew it, to get Lovey out for me," Roxanne said, after we had locked things up and got Lovelace to promise never to go near that window again and were sitting on the little back porch of the cottage trembling with fear and being very happy together.

"I don't care what they think about me, Roxanne, just so you will be my friend sometimes in private when the others are not around," I said, in a voice that wanted to tremble, but I wouldn't let it.

"Do you think I would do a thing like that, Phyllis—be a girl's friend in private?" Roxanne asked, and her head went up into a stiff-necked pose like that portrait of her great-grandmother Byrd that looks so haughtily out of place hanging over the fireplace in the living hall in the little old cottage, in spite of the room full of old mahogany furniture and silver candlesticks brought from Byrd Mansion to keep her company. "I'm going to be your friend all the time, and it is none of the others' business. I have always wanted to be, but you were so stiff with me; and Belle said she felt that you had so many friends out in the world, where you have traveled, that you wouldn't want us."

If I had answered what I wanted to about Belle Kirby, I should have been very much ashamed by this time. Like a flash it came over me that it would be a poor way to begin being friends with Roxanne to make her see what a freak one of her best friends was, so I held the explosion back.

"She was mistaken, Roxanne," I said; and I couldn't help being a little sad as I spoke the truth out to her, for I am fifteen years old, and fifteen are a good many years to live lonely. "I haven't any friends in all the world. We have traveled everywhere trying to get mother well, but I've had no chance to make friends. This is the first time a girl ever talked to me in my life, and I never did talk to a boy—and I never want to."

"Oh, Phyllis, how dreadful!" said Roxanne; and she gave me such a hug around the neck that it hurt awfully, only I liked it. It did feel funny to have somebody sniffing tears of sympathy against your cheek, and I didn't know exactly what to do. Petting has to be learned by degrees and you can't come to it suddenly. But I was happy.

And I'm happier to-night than I ever was in my life, only still scared quite a little, too. I wonder how the boys and girls are going to like Roxanne's being friends with me. How can they hate me if I haven't ever done anything to them? It makes me nervous to think about it, and that combined with the secret and the accident that didn't happen to Lovelace Peyton make my writing so shaky that I may never be able to read it.

This is the accident and the secret. Of course, I knew that there never was such a glorious person born in the world as Roxanne's grown brother, Mr. Douglass Byrd, but I didn't know what kind of a genius he was. It was something of a shock to find out, for I felt sure he was a wonderful poet that the world was waiting to hear sing forth. That is what he looks like. He's tall and slim except his shoulders, which are almost as broad as father's, and his eyes are the night-sky kind that seem to shine because they can't help it. His smile is as sweet as Roxanne's, only the saddest I ever saw; and his hair mops in curls like Lovelace Peyton's, only it is black, and he won't let it. This description could fit a great artist or a novelist or an orator, but he isn't even any of these; he's an inventor.

The invention has something to do with the pig iron out at the Cumberland Iron Furnaces that father owns in the Harpeth Valley, and Mr. Douglass works for him. It turns it into steel sooner than anybody else has ever discovered how to do it before, and it is such a wonderful invention that it will make so much money for him and his family that they won't know what to do with it. Roxanne is going to tell me more about it to-morrow.

I didn't say anything to keep Roxanne from being happy over her brother getting all that money, but it made me sad. The more money you get the less happiness there seems to be on the market to buy. All Father's dollars couldn't have bought me even one of those hugs around the neck from Roxanne—I had to risk my life to get them. And that's where Lovelace Peyton and his badness come in. I'm catching my breath as I think about it.

Mr. Douglass has a little shed down in the cottage garden boxed off to make his experiments in. He keeps it locked up with a padlock, and has commanded that nobody is to go even near the door. There is one big bottle that has some kind of nitroglycerin mixture in it that is going to blow the iron into steel while it is hot, he hopes. Roxanne knows it because he showed it to her, and he told her if the cottage ever got on fire to run and get it and carry it carefully away first before it could blow up the town. It must never be jolted in any way. She has a key to the shed that she guards sacredly.

If there is one thing in the world that Lovelace Peyton wants worse than any other, it is bottles. He takes every one he can find and just begs for more. He has a place down by the garden wall, behind a chicken coop, where he makes his mixtures and keeps all the bottles. He's going to be a famous surgeon and doctor some day if he lives, which I now think is doubtful.

I was down in my garden on the other side of the wall from him picking some leaves off the lavender

bushes Roxanne's great-grandmother had planted in that lovely old garden, which is so full of Roxanne's ancestral flowers that it grieves me to think I have to own them instead of her. I haven't been letting myself go down there often, because I was afraid she would suspect how much I wanted her to come out and talk to me like she did the day of Lovelace Peyton's rooster excitement; but sometimes I think my dignity ought to let me go and pick just a little of the lavender, and I go. I went this afternoon, and I believe God sent me and so does Roxanne.

Suddenly, as I bent over the bushes picking, I heard a wail in Roxanne's sweet voice and I looked up quick. There she stood in the back door, as white as a pocket handkerchief, shuddering and pointing to me to look down at the end of the garden right near me.

"Oh, Phyllis," she chattered through her shaking teeth just so I could hear it, "if he drops that big bottle, the whole town will be blown to pieces. How can we save it and him?"

And when I looked and saw Lovelace Peyton, I began to shudder too. He was hanging half in and half out of a little window high up in the shed like a skylight, and the big bottle was slowly slipping as he tried to wriggle either in or out. There was no ladder in sight, and neither of us was near tall enough to reach him. He was beginning to whimper and be scared himself, and I could see the heavy bottle start to slip faster from his arm. We had less than a second to lose. I thought and prayed both at the same time, which I find is a good thing to do in such times of danger. You haven't got time to do them separately. The idea came! I have had lots of teaching by different gymnasium teachers wherever we happened to live for a few months, and I'm as strong as most boys. I know how to do things with myself like boys do.

"Hold your bottle tight, Lovelace Peyton; don't let it fall; it'll be good for mixing in and I can get you loose," I called as I scrambled over the wall and met Roxanne just under the window. I saw him hug it up tight again as he stopped squirming.

"Quick, Roxanne, step on my shoulder," I told her; and I bent down and held up my hand to her.

"Oh, can you hold me up, Phyllis?" she gasped; but she put her foot on my right shoulder and, leaning against the wall, I pulled myself up little by little, holding her hand while she clung to the wall to balance herself.

"Keep still, Lovey, just a minute longer," she said shakily. "Just an inch more, Phyllis," she whispered to me; and, though I was almost strained to death, I stretched another inch. Then I heard her give a sob and I knew she had the bottle.

But even if she did have the bottle we had to get it down without a jar, and I was giving way in every bone in my body. But I thought of Napoleon Bonaparte and Gen. Robert E. Lee and braced a minute longer as Roxanne climbed down over me with that horrible bottle in her arms.



Then Roxanne and the bottle and I all collapsed on the grass together

Then Roxanne and the bottle and I all collapsed on the grass together; and if we had known how, I think the poetic thing for us to have done was to have fainted. But we did know how to giggle and shake at the

same time, and that is what we did until Lovelace Peyton howled so loud we had to begin to get him down. And the getting him loose took us a nice long time that was very good for him. We had to get the key and unlock the shed and get a table and a chair on both the inside and outside, and Roxanne pushed while I pulled. We tore him and his clothes both a great deal, but at last we landed him. Then Roxanne put him to bed to punish him and to mend his dress at the same time. That was when she told me the great secret that it is hurting me to keep, because it has got my Father mixed up in it in a sort of conspiracy like you read about in books. I don't dare write it even to you, leather Louise.

CHAPTER II

Changing a lifelong principle is almost as difficult as wearing new shoes that don't exactly fit you, and it makes you feel just as awkward and limp in mind as the shoes do in feet. Still I believe in adopting new ideas. I have never liked the appearance of boys, and I never supposed that when you knew one it would be a pleasant experience; but in the case of Tony Luttrell it is, and in the case of Pink Chadwell it is almost so.

I don't know what Roxanne said to them all to explain her relations of friendship with the heathen—myself—but it was funny to see how they tried to please her by seeming to like me, only Tony didn't *seem*. He offered me himself as a friend along with all the bites I cared to take off the other side of a huge apple he was eating. I took the bites and Tony at the same time with fear and trembling, but my confidence in him grows every day. It grows in Pink, also, only much more slowly.

Tony is long-legged and colty looking, with such a wide mouth and laughing kind of eyes that the corners of your own mouth go up when you look at him, and he raises a giggle in your inside by just a funny kind of flare his eyes have got; but Pink Chadwell is different. Poor Pink is so handsome that he is pitiful about it. He carries a bottle of water in his pocket to keep the curl of his front hair sopped out, but he can't keep his lovely skin from having those pink cheeks. Tony calls him "Rosebud" when he sees that he has got used to hearing himself called "Pinkie" and is a little happy.

The surprise to me was that the boys were so much nicer to me than the girls when Roxanne adopted me; but then it didn't make so much difference to them. The girls are always together in all of the important things of their lives, while most of the time the boys just forget all about us, unless they need us for something or we get ahead of them in class.

"I'm so glad that you are going to stay and have lunch with us to-day," Belle said to me the first time I let Roxanne beg me into bringing my lunch instead of going home for it, as I had been doing every day to keep from seeming to be so alone, eating all by myself while they had spread theirs all together out on the side porch or even out on the big flat stone when it was warm enough. "When Roxy wanted to invite you, I felt sure you wouldn't come."

Some people have a way of freezing up all the pleasure that they can get close enough to talk over. Belle is that kind. She made me so uncomfortable that I was about to do some freezing on my own account when Mamie Sue lumbered into the conversation in such a nice, friendly way that I laughed instead.

"I hope you brought a lot of food, for I'm good and hungry to-day," she said. "I ate so many biscuits for breakfast that I left myself only five to bring for lunch. Our cook makes the same number every day and I just see-saw my lunch and breakfast in a very uncomfortable way. So many biscuits for breakfast, so few for lunch!" That jolly, plump laugh of Mamie Sue's is going to save some kind of a serious situation yet, friend leather Louise.

If you are the kind of person that has dumb love for your friends, you see more about them than folks who can express themselves on the sacred subject. That lunch party with those five jolly girls out in the side yard of the Byrd Academy gave me a funny, uneasy feeling, and I now know the reason. Roxanne Byrd brought one small apple, two very thin biscuits, and some cracked hickory nuts. She carefully ate less than she brought. Something took my appetite when I saw her eat so little, and there was a quantity of food left for somebody to consume, and *she* hungry. I was afraid we'd have to send for a doctor for Mamie Sue after she had cleared my large napkin we spread to put it all on. The Jamison biscuits are cut on the same plump pattern that Mamie Sue is and all my sandwiches were good and thick.

But when Roxanne didn't eat I suffered. One of the most awful situations in life is to have one of your friends be the sort of girl that has a town named after her and wonderful family portraits and such dainty hands and feet that shabby shoes don't even count, and then to know that she is hungry most of the time from being too poor to get enough food. For two days I have had to keep my mind off Roxanne Byrd to make myself swallow one single morsel of anything to eat. I suspected it at the school lunch but I was certain of it from the way Lovelace Peyton consumed the first cooky I offered him over the fence. Thank goodness, he has no family pride located in his stomach, and when my feelings overcome me he is the outlet. I can feed him anything at all hours and he is always ready for more. It may be wrong to keep it from his sister when I know how she feels about it, but I can't help that. I have to fill him up. His legs look too empty for me.

But, to do Lovelace Peyton justice, he has got his own kind of pride, and I understand it better than I do Roxanne's.

"For these nice eatings, I'll cut a cat open for nothing and let you see inside what makes him go, if you

get the cat," he offered, after he had eaten two slices of buttered bread and the breast of half a chicken out behind one of the lilac bushes in his ancestral garden that is now mine.

Now, I call that a fair proposition, considering the circumstances, and I wish I could make Roxanne be as sensible in spirit. But I can't. Family pride is a terrible thing, like lunacy or hysterics when a person gets it bad.

However, I decided to talk to Roxanne about her financial situation, and I began as far off from the subject as I could, so as to approach it with caution.

I made a start with a compliment. A sincere compliment is a good way to start being disagreeable to a person for her own benefit.

"Roxanne," I said, with decided palpitation in my heart that I kept out of my voice, "you didn't know, did you, that you are one fifteen-year-old wonder, done up in a feminine edition with curls and dark eyes? How do you manage it all?"

"I'm not, and I don't," answered Roxanne with a laugh as she drew a long needle across a mammoth darn she was making on the knee of a stocking which was quite as small as the darn was large. "I don't manage at all; everybody will tell you so. Miss Prissy Talbot says she can't get to sleep at night until twelve o'clock because she has to pray about so many things that might happen to us poor forlorns if she didn't. I am mighty thankful to her, for I don't have time to pray much. I am so tired when I go to bed. I just say 'God, you know,' and go to sleep. He understands, 'cause Miss Prissy has told him all about it beforehand."

"I just guess He does—without Miss Talbot's telling Him either," I answered as I came and sat on the front steps beside Roxanne. "And another thing, Roxanne—I—er, I don't quite know how to say it—but you—you talk like you are—that is, you seem to be friends with God just like you are with Tony Luttrell and Belle and Miss Prissy and the Colonel—and me," I continued with embarrassment.

"I am," answered Roxanne, with beautiful positiveness. "I decided to have Him for one of my friends 'most two years ago after Father and Mother died almost together. When Douglass told me that we would have to sell Byrd Mansion and move down here in this old cottage that had been great-grandfather's gardener's house, with only Uncle Pompey to help me take care of it and him and Lovelace Peyton, he asked me if I couldn't stand by. I held my head up just as high as great-grandmother Byrd does in her portrait and said: 'Yes!' 'Then God help you,' he said, and he hugged me up under his chin. Then we all moved; and God *has* helped."

"He must have," I answered devoutly, meaning what I said. And as I spoke something in me was loosened and I felt a wonderful difference about God. The God that a governess explains out of a book to you and the One that really comes down and helps a girl friend so that she can speak of Him with confidence as a friend, are two distinct people. I am going to feel about Him as Roxanne does and speak of Him when I want to and write about Him to you, Louise, just as I do about all of the other interesting inhabitants of Byrdsville.

"Oh," laughed Roxanne, as she snipped a thread and began to cross-stitch the mammoth cavern, never dreaming of the momentous resolve she was interrupting in my heart, "it is not so bad this year, because Lovey has got so nice and steady on his feet and doesn't put things in his mouth any more. Now he is so busy hunting and doctoring his 'squirms' as he calls them, that I have lots of free time to mend and darn and work. Of course, it is hard to have him keep them in his apron pocket and always carrying them in his hand when he hasn't a bottle that smells bad to carry. Just yesterday he brought a queer kind of—Oh, what do you suppose he has found now?"

And with the fear and trembling that all girls have the right to feel of "squirms" both Roxanne and I sat petrified while Lovelace Peyton came around the house at full gallop and drew up in front of us on the brick walk. His face was streaked with mud, and in one hand he held an old tomato can and in another a dangerous-looking pointed stick.

Lovelace Peyton is freckled and snub-nosed and patched in various unexpected places and his eyes were sweet like Roxanne's as they flared with excitement when he paused for breath before he unfolded his tale of the adventure from which he had just arrived.

"Guess what crawl I have founded now, Roxy?" he demanded with confidence that sympathy would be extended him over his good-fortune.

"I can't guess, Lovey, but please don't let it out," answered Roxanne with the expected sympathy slightly tinged with entreaty in her voice. I moved down one step so as to be nearer the capture, for Lovelace Peyton's enthusiasm was contagious.

"It's a chicken sk-snake," he proclaimed proudly; and while both Roxanne and I tucked our feet up under our skirts and squealed, he drew with triumph a very fat, red fishing-worm out of the can and displayed it, hanging across one of his chubby fingers. "It's a lovely chicken-eating sk-snake," he said with breathless admiration.

"Y-e-s," I said doubtfully. "But it couldn't eat a chicken very well, could it, Lovelace Peyton?" I asked politely, with my doubts of the helpless red string hanging on his finger well under control. Roxanne had gone back to her darning with relief plainly written all over her face.

"This sk-snake could eat up five chickens or maybe more if you give him time," defended his captor warmly.

"It—it looks rather small to be so savage, Lovey," argued Roxanne mildly as she went on darning.

"It's sick some—wait till I put it in pepper tea," said Lovelace Peyton as he lifted the worm.

"Ask Uncle Pomp what he thinks," advised Roxanne, hoping to get rid of the squirm.

"I bet Uncle Pomp will be skeered to death of him," answered the proud hunter as he took his departure around the house.

"Oh," sighed Roxy, "some day he will find a real snake and then what will I do?"

"That is just what I was talking about, Roxanne," I said, returning to my subject, which is the way my slow, methodical mind works in direct contrast to Roxanne's way of forgetting one thing because of enthusiastic interest in the next. "I don't see how you attend to all of this, this—" I paused to find a name for Roxanne's tumultuous household.

"Menagerie," Roxanne suggested, with a laugh that floated out over the bed of ragged red chrysanthemums as sweet and clear as the note of the cardinal in the tall elm by the gate.

"It's how you get your lessons and stay high up in your class I don't understand," I answered, still using my compliment tactics. "I've only known you less than a month, so it might be just luck that you got first mention for your character sketch of Hawthorne in the rhetoric class; but Tony says you always get it. You recite your German poems like they were English, and you feel them as much as you do Cassabianca. When do you study?"

"Never," answered Roxy with a ruthless smile; "but, Phyllis, in school I listen. I have to. Just school hours are all I have; but I learn lessons while they are being recited, and write exercises and things in that one free hour I have at ten o'clock. If nothing like mumps or whooping-cough happens to Lovey this winter or next, I believe I will be ready to go to college with you and Belle and Mamie Sue and Tony and Pink. I've asked Miss Prissy to be sure and pray away those mumps and whooping-cough. I could manage measles."

"But you are just one girl, Roxanne, with the usual number of hands and feet and eyes and things," I said, with an intention of bringing things to the point of the embarrassing hunger. But my point was reached in the conversation by Roxanne herself without my being quite ready for it.

"Yes, I know that, but for a little while I have got to be several," she answered with a laugh. "Douglass has succeeded in the experiments out there in the back yard, but he can't be certain of the process until he tries it on a whole oven full of ore some night out at the furnaces. He just works every minute he can get, all night sometimes, and that is why I mend and darn and save and save—it costs so much for him to get the things he needs out in his shop. Of course, I never let Lovey or Uncle Pomp get really hungry, but Douglass and I do—that is—" Roxanne stopped, for the pain *would* come out on my face. "Oh, Phyllis, not really hungry," she said mercifully, "but just tired of corn-bread and molasses. Douglass kisses me and I kiss him good-by in the morning and we pretend it is butter on his bread, like the poet said. Please don't feel bad about it, Phyllis. It was cruel for me to tell it when I am as happy as I can be."

"Well, you'll never be hungry again while I have two feet and hands to 'tote' food to you, as Uncle Pompey calls it," I answered with a masterly control of that troublesome lump in my throat that I had discovered for the first time since I began to love Roxanne Byrd.

"I couldn't let you do that—bring me food, Phyllis," said Roxanne gently; and her little head with its raven black, heavy curls again rose to the stately pose of the Byrd great-grandmother.

"I don't see why not," I answered bluntly.

"Taking food and clothes would be charity, and I couldn't do that. I couldn't even let Miss Prissy give Lovelace Peyton any aprons, only I did take some scraps of her pink gingham dress to piece him with—that's why he looks like such a rainbow with his pink on blue. Please don't be mad with me, Phyllis. I don't mind at all doing without grand things to eat, but I can't—can't do without your—your love," and Roxanne hid her head on my shoulder, much to my surprise.

"You'd better have my cookies and roast chicken," I muttered as I shook her back into her own place again.

"The taste of love lasts longer than any kind of cake," answered Roxanne with a comforted laugh. "And truly, Phyllis, it has been a comfort to tell you all about it. It is hard to have to skimp like I do and it makes a girl nervous to have to keep looking down at her feet to be sure that a toe isn't poking out of the shoe since the last time she looked, also to know that the last inch of hem is let out of her dress and her legs are growing while she sleeps. I can take Douglass's old shirts and make shirt waists for me and aprons of the scraps for Lovey, and lots of things for Lovey out of his old trousers, only he says that he has to wear them himself until he feels ashamed of his appearance whenever he meets anybody; but my own skirts are what seem the last straw, or rather the bricks that I haven't any straw to make. The last one was made out of some dead Somebody Byrd's black cashmere shawl, I don't know whose, but I can't see the next even in the dim future."

"I heard Belle Kirby say that your white linen is the most stylish dress in Byrdville, and I agreed with her," I said, with the emphasis that truth always makes possible. "In fact, you always look different from other people, Roxanne—like—like the town was named for you—as it is."

"Oh, that linen dress is really a wonder, considering," laughed Roxanne with pleased delight. "It is made out of a linen sheet that came off one of my great-grandmother's looms, and I found it in an old trunk. Miss Prissy embroidered it and helped me make it and a suit for Lovey and a shirt for Douglass out of the other one of the pair. Uncle Pompey helps me wash and iron all three of them every Saturday. He has a necktie off of them, too, and Sunday we all go to church 'of a piece', he calls it. Douglass says, when the Emperor of Germany invites the great inventor and his family to come to court to meet the royal family we are all going to wear our parts of the family sheets, if only folded in our pockets like handkerchiefs. Sometimes in the middle of the night, when something goes right in the shop, Douglass comes in and wakes me up. I dress up in a blanket for a court dress, and we wake up Lovey and play our royal visit. Do you blame me for not minding washing and ironing and cooking and toe-poking or dress-shrinking with a brother who is an idol like that?"

"No, Roxanne, I don't blame you. He—er—Mr. Douglass is worth it all," I answered with controlled emotion. I thereupon adopted the word "Idol" to use for him in private between you and me, good Louise. He deserves it. "He is so perfectly grand that I step on my own toes whenever I see from a long way off that I must meet him on the street," I continued. "I turn a corner rather than speak to him. I never intend to. The sight of him makes me so shy that it is agony." I didn't in the least mind confessing such a feeling to Roxanne, because she is the "Idol's"—it looks nice written—sister and will understand.

"And all the time he is afraid that he will have to back up against a fence sometime to hide his patches from you," laughed Roxanne in such merriment that anybody with any sense of pleasant humor would have joined her at the thought of the Idol and me dancing a minuet to keep out of each other's way.

The way Roxanne feels about her brother is the way I feel about Father even after I saw that article in the magazine. He is my father and nobody is wholly bad. I always will love him devotedly and go to him with my sorrows.

At night in the study of Roxanne's forefathers, before the log fire where the fifth old Colonel Byrd used to entertain Andrew Jackson, I told him all about that terrible starving that is going on down at the little cottage beyond the garden.

"Well," said Father, in the voice I still think so noble and good and that still comforts me, "we'll have to see to all that. When I bought this place from young Byrd, I liked him better than any youngster I had met in a long time, and I offered him a better place out at the furnaces than he could fill. I have tried to have him advanced twice, but the young stiffneck says he won't have more than he earns. Still he gets a hundred a month and things ought not to be so tight down at the Byrd nest. Wonder what he does with the money? He's not a gamer, I take it."

"Oh, Father, no!" I answered, shocked that anybody should think that of the Idol. "It's for the experiments that all the money goes. Roxanne's so proud of him for the wonderful thing he has discovered that she will starve herself to death, and him too, before all the world hears about it, even the Emperor of Germany."

"Experiments?" Father asked, with a quick look that he has when business and things interest him very much. "What experiments?"

"I can't tell you that, for you're the very person not to know," I answered quickly, a little bit scared.

"Then don't," answered Father, looking me square in the face in a way that I wished that magazine could have seen. "And if you have a secret of importance, don't ever even hint it, Phil."

"I won't," I answered, glad to see that he wasn't going to ask any more about it all.

"And, Phil," he continued, speaking slowly and looking at me as lovingly as any father could look at a daughter, even a poor one, "you go right ahead filling up the youngster and standing by the Byrds. That's what I want you to learn—standing-by-ness. Have the other 'poor but prouds' thawed to you to any extent?" I had told Father some of the ways Belle and the others had treated me, only not so as to hurt his feelings about his money being the cause of it.

"Some of them have and the others are going to, I think," I said, even more hopefully than I really felt about it.

"Here's hoping," said Father, and this time he did laugh.

A great resolve has come into my mind since this talk with Father. I am going to reform him about money-making if it takes me all my life. He is too good a man for God not to have in heaven. His honor must be saved. Amen!

CHAPTER III

Miss Priscilla Talbot might by some people be called an old maid, as she must be either a little before or

after fifty years old; but if I had to invent just one word to describe her darling self it would be "precious."

Tony Luttrell calls all of the girls collectively and singly "bubbles," which is both disrespectful and funny at the same time. But real affection in any disrespect can keep it from being at all wicked—and Tony's always is affectionate, especially when he insults Miss Priscilla by calling her Miss Bubbles right to her face. Nobody else dares to do it, but she likes it. It is a good thing that she is fifty years young instead of old, for if she wasn't I don't know what the Palefaces and Scouts would do without her. She lets Tony beg her into doing everything with us so the grown-up people, like mothers and fathers, will be deceived into thinking that we are being taken care of, while the truth is that Miss Prissy is just as much trouble for us to look after as Lovelace Peyton and we love her in exactly the same way. We also love the Colonel a great deal for her sake, and to make up for the way she treats him.

Miss Prissy lives just next to Roxanne, on the other side, and she is such a comfort to her, though a great added responsibility. She worries so over everything that Roxanne doesn't have that it gets on Roxanne's nerves, as the people say when things make them cross. Not that Roxanne ever is cross with Miss Prissy. But I made up my mind after that first remonstrance that if Roxanne Byrd had the pluck to let herself go hungry and cold and ragged for a great proud cause like an inventor in the family, I was going to let her get all the fun out of it she could and not mope over it. I still fill up Lovelace Peyton so regularly that he is getting so fat I am afraid Roxanne will notice and suspect something. I may have to diet him soon.

Roxanne and I were just talking about Miss Prissy and the poor Colonel out on the front steps of the cottage when there came one of the proud moments of my life. It's wonderful how Roxanne's enthusiasm can throw such a magic over her shabby shoes and the little cottage with the young green vines running over the eaves and old Uncle Pomp and a darning bag full of ragged stockings, that you want to stay feeling it forever and ever. It doesn't even take the rosy hue off the dream to talk about Lovelace Peyton.

"Oh, Lovey will be a famous surgeon some day, I feel sure," Roxanne said, as she began on another interminable job of stocking-patching. "And Douglass is going to be a Supreme Judge of the United States while I help him. Just as soon as the money comes we shall all go to college, Lovey, Douglass, Uncle Pomp and I, to get ready for our life work."

"What course will Uncle Pompey take?" I couldn't help asking, because Uncle Pompey is so old he couldn't learn to turn one of his own batter cakes the wrong way around.

"Domestic Science," Roxanne laughed back at her own self; and just then Tony came in with his pie catastrophe that caused so much trouble.

"You two hubbies, you had better lay aside the darning-needle and seize the pie plate," he said, fanning himself with Roxanne's scissors. "We've just decided in Scout Council to take the Palefaces out to the Harpeth ridge to hunt spring shoots and roots, and we always count on you for pies, Roxy, Stocking-darner."

"How lovely, Tony!" exclaimed Roxanne, rising right above the pies which sank my heart like lead to think of her having to furnish; and where would she get them? I was so dismayed that I never thought of being embarrassed about being left out, as I, of course expected to be; and so it came as a proud surprise when Tony asked me, in the nicest way a boy could think of, to go with them. That is, he didn't ask me, but ordered me what to bring like I had been going on the Raccoon outings since infancy.

"You are to bring a white mountain cake in a cocoanut snowstorm, City Bubbles," he said, with that funny flare of his eyes that always sets me laughing inside whether I want to or not. "Belle is brewing sandwiches and Mamie Sue is croquetting with some chicken. Don't tell the dumpling, but we are going to rub asafetida on her shoes and leave her to rest on a stone so as to lose her good and then find her by smelling her track like true Scouts. Now, don't spoil a single pie, Roxy; we'll need all six."

"I won't, I won't," answered Roxanne; and I saw that grandmother pose begin to come to her head and I knew that it meant that she would shake six pies out of that empty larder like the widow in the Bible did the meal. "Did you ask Miss Prissy, Tony?" she asked, as if to change the subject for an instant's relief.

"I did," answered Tony with a laugh; "and Miss Bubbles said she would go accompanied by a basket of stuffed eggs to return accompanied by a bunch of stuffed Scouts. We also asked the Colonel, and he made us a speech of acceptance twenty minutes long, Pink and me. But I must hurry along and encourage Mamie Sue not to eat all the chicken tasties as she makes them. Do you two Palefaces promise to rustle around as soon as I go?"

"We do," we both answered as he went out of the gate. Then we sat still, paralyzed, instead of the promised rustling. Only I was the most upset. Roxanne always brings out the rainbow and shakes it when the clouds get down very low.

"What are you going to do about the pies?" I asked, forgetting my promise to myself never to force Roxanne to look any kind of problem in the face as long as she could keep her back to it.

"Well," she answered so placidly that I felt ashamed of myself, "I have just been thinking those apples up. I can starve Lovey and myself enough to get the things for the crust, but where are the apples to come from? Won't it be fun to look back from richness and remember when an apple looked as big as one of the Harpeth Hills?"

"But, haven't you got any apple plan at all?" I again forgot my resolve and asked. I'm often ashamed of myself for being so practical about things, but I can't help it, and I couldn't see those pies coming down on a rainbow. She had to have the apples to save her family pride, and apples don't grow on dream trees.

"Not a plan," she answered, snipping a thread with a steady hand. "But they'll come from some place. Now, I've got to think up stories to make Lovey forget that he wants anything but some corn-bread and buttermilk for supper. That'll save the batter-cake flour for the pie-crust and some of the lard and butter too. If I can amuse him past breakfast with just corn meal mush, I'll have enough flour for them all. Uncle Pompey has lots of spice and things, so it'll only be the apples. Maybe I can—"

"Wait a minute, I've got a plan!" I exclaimed quickly; for being Roxanne's friend often makes me need to think very quickly indeed. "You go on believing they'll come, and your believing and my plan will be almost sure to get them. I'll have to go home right now."

"Your plan won't make me have to—to let anybody give them to me, will it, Phyllis?" And Roxanne's eyes were so soft with entreaty to spare that family pride that I had to swallow the inconvenient lump in my throat again. I wish my eyes knew how to mist with tears like a girl's ought to do instead of my choking up like a boy. But I had my voice good and steady by the time I got opposite Father across his office table.

"And so," he said, as he looked at me with an expression I feel on myself when I am going to take hold of some of the knots in Roxanne's affairs, "I am to buy two barrels of apples here in the spring when they are gold nuggets, and help you pack up ten baskets of them for me to send to the furnace office force as a seasonable compliment, just so that stiff-necked young Byrd can carry his family pride along home in the basket with the apples for the making of six pies. Right expensive pies, those!"

"Yes, Father, I know they are," I answered firmly but pathetically. "But I told you Lovelace Peyton and Roxanne are starving to save the crust; and my friends' troubles are mine. When he gets the chance to prove that steel explosion thing and people buy the process from him, they won't need friends, or rather they will need friends more than they ever did, with all that money, but they won't need apples. I'm sorry it is being such an expensive thing for me to have a friend, but I must stand by her now if you will let me."

"Steel!" said Father, and his eyes went into narrow slits in a way I don't like, because he forgets I'm living. And he was in one of those spells of turning himself inside himself to think, when I glanced at Rogers, his foreman at the furnaces, who was going over some papers at another desk. And as I glanced at him Father came out of his inside and looked at him too. I never did like Mr. Rogers.

"Rogers," said Father briskly, "go telephone the Hill Grocery Company to pack up ten large baskets of apples and send them over to the office. You go over and give them to the boys and cover up Miss Phyllis's track effectually by a speech of presentation. And remember, Rogers, that whatever Miss Phyllis says in my office is strictly business and is to be observed as absolutely confidential."

As Rogers went out of the door I felt my heart sink in a queer way, and I turned to find Father looking at me sternly.

"Phil," he said, in the tone of voice I feel sure fathers use to their errant sons, "if you have another person's secret to guard, do it carefully and do not let the excitement of the moment make you let it slip."

"Oh, Father," I fairly gasped, "did I tell you anything about Mr. Douglass's secret that I ought not?"

"You told about all you know, daughter; but fortunately you didn't know enough to do much damage. I happen to know I can trust Rogers as myself. Now, go to your pie fixings, for I'm unusually busy."

I turned to the door with a queer sinking feeling coming up in me when he called me back again.

"Of course, Phil, you know what a pleasure it is to me for you to shower apples on the Byrds and others, and I want to speak to you about a little matter that is troubling me and ask your help. We have got to spend some money in Byrdsville, and you must help me to do it. I can't get Henri to buy his supplies for the kitchen here, under any circumstances—he shrugs his French shoulders, gives me two uneatable meals, and orders from New York as usual. I can't very well wear Byrdsville clothes myself, and there seems no way to drop cash in the town unless you can find some way. Buy things at all the stores and charge them to me. Give away and use what you can, but *buy*. We owe it to the town and we must do it. Can you promise to take part of the job for me?"

"I'll try, Father," I answered doubtfully. "I like the kind of clothes the girls wear, so I will get mine in the stores, and I can give presents to all who will allow it."

"That's it—presents—presents to your friends," said Father in a relieved tone of voice, and I could see that he had no idea of the burden he had put on my shoulders. "Now fade away, and let me work, kiddie. You are all to the good!"

As I walked along home my heart was so heavy down in my toes that my feet almost stuck to the pavement—not only about the task of spending the money, but about the secret. However, I reasoned it up into my breast again. If my father is one of the men that magazines write against and say is too rich to be good, he has always told me the truth; and when he said I hadn't done the great secret any damage I believed him. If he can trust Rogers as himself, I can, too.

But after this, when I know anything that all the world can't know I'm going to wear a horsehair ring,

like Belle makes Mamie Sue do, to remind me not to forget and tell. I thought I was stronger-minded than that, but I see I'm not. You see, leather Louise, I must be more trustworthy than just any girl; for if I'm untrustworthy, then it will be a tragedy, because it will prove that I inherited it and so be an evidence against Father in my own mind and the world's too.

Since I have been with Roxanne so much, and seen so many things which prove that God is looking directly after her, as my getting the apple plan shows, I feel so much nearer to Him. I am going to pray to Him to help me to help Father, and take both our honors in His keeping. Amen! Goodnight!

Of course, the whole spring keeps springing wonderful days on a person, each one lovelier than the last; but the one that came down from over Old Harpeth, as the tallest hump on the ridge is called, was so lovely that it was hard to believe that I was not just seeing it with Roxanne's eyes. If it was so beautiful, with its orchard smells and blooms and buzzing of bees and soft little winds, to me, I wonder what it did look like to *her*. And to think that Roxanne was almost in tears before it was nine o'clock.

The interurban that runs by Byrdsville and out over the ridge to the city has cars only every two hours, so if we didn't catch the eight-ten one, we couldn't go until the ten-ten, and that would make it very late for the Scouts to go through all the kinds of drills they had planned for. Some of us had to sprain ankles and make believe to step on snakes, and then Mamie Sue had to be lost and traced, only she didn't know it yet; so Tony said that we would have to start very early. It was about half past seven when he came for me while all the rest of them waited at the corner for us. We then trooped down to get Roxanne and Lovelace Peyton; but disaster met us at the door. It was Lovelace Peyton dancing and yelling like a wild Indian while Roxanne tried to quiet him and unbutton his white linen dress-up at the same time.

"Please everybody go on. We can't come," Roxanne called to us at the gate. "Lovey sat down on one of the hot pies that Uncle Pomp had just taken out of the stove for me to put in the basket, and it burned him through his trousers and blouse and all. Uncle Pomp has got a dreadful fit of asthma, and the pie is all over everything where Lovey ran around and around. I've got to scrub him and the whole house. Please go on and don't be late for the train." And as Roxanne looked out at us over the dancing Lovelace Peyton that was the first time I had ever seen her face without its dimple on the left side of her chin, or her head down out of the rosy cloud.

"It always happens just this way, Roxy," said Belle in a reproving tone of voice. "You promised to begin to get ready last night, so as not to delay anything or anybody. We're just not going to wait!"

"I did try, Belle," answered Roxanne, with a little sob coming into her voice that made both Tony and me so mad at one time that it is a wonder that we didn't both explode together.

"Here, you bubbles," said Tony, jumping the gate as I went through it, "get busy with this situation. We've got almost a half-hour, so be doing something, everybody. Belle, you help Roxy skin that kid and get him into clean clothes while I swab up and light old Pomp's jimson-weed pipe for him?" And as Tony spoke he started to the rear of the house.

"No, no. I'm hurted bad, and I won't let anybody but Phyllis touch me. I'll out off Belle's arm if she comes nigh me," said Lovelace Peyton in the rudest voice; but it did me good to get hold of him and begin to peel him while Roxanne stood petrified at the idea of hurrying all her calamities onto the car in twenty minutes.

"Oh, I'm not dressed and the pies are not packed and—" began Roxanne, but the dimple also began to play at the same time.

"I'll help you dress, Roxanne," said Belle meekly; for Belle is more afraid of Tony's explosions than of anything else on earth, and he had looked at her with a stern expression as she had fussed at and threatened to leave Roxanne.

"I'll pack the pies," said Mamie Sue, with plain delight at the prospect.

"Well, hurry, Dumpling, and don't take a bite out of a stray corner of more than half those pies," Tony answered her as he rolled up his shirt sleeves and started toward the kitchen. All the other members of the Raccoon Patrol were with the other girls at the station, and nobody could go without Tony, who had bought the combination ticket for everybody, at a bargain.

It is all very well to say that "haste makes waste," but there is a kind of hurry that gets things done, and Tony knows how to put that kind into action. He and Mamie Sue kept to the kitchen as their scene of operations, and before we knew it old Uncle Pomp was seated humped over his pipe and beginning to breathe easy. Mamie Sue had hopped around to keep out of the swirls of Tony's mop while she packed those ill-fated but precious pies in the basket, and she was breathing almost as hard as Uncle Pompey.

I did the best I could with Lovelace Peyton, though only the blue apron with the largest pink patches was whole and clean; so he had to go that way, which I know hurt Roxanne, for he had been so lovely to look at in his part of the grandmother's sheet.

Belle was buttoning Roxanne's festive white linen up the back as Tony came down the hall shoeing panting Mamie Sue with the basket in front of him, and collected us all. I grabbed Roxanne's hat from the closet for her and swung Lovelace Peyton up on Tony's shoulder so he could run on ahead with him. Belle followed Roxanne, buttoning her up all the way to the front gate, while Mamie Sue trundled along steadily with the two baskets.

I've heard about the excitements of the city and the quiet of the country, but I have the opinion that the terms in this case are mixed. We all fell aboard the car half dead, but we caught it!

I'm not going to describe this Scout outing in detail to you, my leather-bound Louise, because it would take all night. I'm so tired that I doubt if I get up in the morning until it is afternoon, but there are a few high lights I will mention because I never want to forget them. A girl wants to keep the details of the first happiest day of her life always, even if she has many others.

Mamie Sue got lost satisfactorily, but they forgot she had Belle's basket with her, and when they found her some of the sandwiches were lost forever; but Mamie Sue was happy. It was wonderful the way Pink tracked her shoes by the asafetida. That is one of the reasons Scouts can't smoke: they must keep their sense of smell to track things with. One of the Willis girls let Sam Hayes treat her for snake-bite by the rules of the book and never said a word; but then neither one of those Willis girls ever says anything except what they have to in classroom, and we like them immensely. They are Tony's first cousins and both are of the first families of Byrdsville.

But the sensation of the day was when Tony really fell and skinned his arm bad—and what do you think he did? He let Lovelace Peyton do all the things to it that he showed him how to do out of the book. I never saw any human being in my life so happy as that little patched boy was, and it was marvelous how he understood just what Tony said and did it quicker than any of us could. His slender little fingers worked like a grown-up's.

"Oh, if his father, the doctor, could have just seen him," said Miss Prissy in such a sweetly sympathetic voice that the Colonel blew his nose. He was Roxanne's father's best friend, and had watched him cut up what was left of people on the battle-field in the Civil War. He told us all about it. I feel that we must take better care of Lovelace Peyton, but I am sorry for Roxanne to have two geniuses in her family to watch over. It is such a responsibility and requires even more of my help.

The luncheon was a success. Everybody ate everything, especially the great surgeon and Mamie Sue. The dried sticks made the sparks on the leaves for Pink so much to his pride that Tony had to call him Rosebud to keep him cool, he said, and Sam's kettle hung on the forked sticks the first time and boiled the best potatoes I ever tasted.

The boys signaled to the Colonel by the Scout language and he got the signals perfectly. Then he told them war tales until time to start home. He carried Lovelace Peyton, who had gone to sleep on the car, home in his arms, while Miss Prissy walked behind him with Roxanne. I wonder why Miss Prissy doesn't want to marry such a grand man as the Colonel is?

But a strange thing happened to Tony and me as we came by the side wall of our garden after we had taken the quiet Willises home and he was bringing me to my front gate. It makes me nervous to think about it. That secret about the steel, which is going to keep Roxanne from living in such poverty, weighs on my mind so that I never forget it. It is right out there in the little shed and it is both dangerous and precious.

Suddenly Tony stopped me right opposite the shed and gave the Scout signal of warning.

"Tip-hist-toe," he said under his breath. "Did you see a shadow dodge behind Roxy's cottage just a minute ago, Phyllis?" he asked, in a whisper that was enough to make almost any girl's blood run cold in her body.

"I did," I answered him in just as blood-curdling a whisper, "but Uncle Pompey goes out to see after his hens just about this time every night. I think that was the shadow."

"Of course," Tony laughed in a human voice again. "Say Phyllis, you are one brick, a yard wide, all wool, and a foot thick. There are not the usual bubble squeals in you." I never was so confused in all my life. I don't know how to answer people when they express a liking for me, because I have never had many compliments passed on me.

"Thank you, Tony," I said, just as humbly as I felt, which was very humble indeed.

"Now, Phyllis, I wasn't patting any Fido on the head," Tony laughed in a funny way; for what I said had teased him, though I don't know just why. "And also I didn't say that to you because you didn't yelp when I scared up a bogie for you, but because I saw how you came near beating me to Roxy's catastrophes this morning when Belle wanted to give her the jolly go-by. Old Roxanny has some rough going at times, and it is good to know that she has got a bubble next door to stand by her in a stocking-darning way a fellow can't. Good-night!"

Tony Luttrell is an honorable gentleman, if he is just in short trousers yet, and I appreciate his friendship.

That shadow *will* make me uneasy. I feel like that cross, nervous white hen of Uncle Pompey's, only as if I were sitting on dynamite bottles instead of eggs. I will and do trust my father, but can I trust him to trust Rogers? Oh, I wish he was just a lawyer with almost no practice, like Tony's father, and was sitting in the office all day long doing nothing, where I knew he was, instead of going back and forth from the city with other men that have more money than it is right to have! I'd even be willing to have him keep the grocery store even if it did mean that he wasn't quite as first-family as Judge Luttrell and the Byrds.

Oh, I do love my father—I do—I do!

CHAPTER IV

It does seem a pity that a person can't put an Idol on a pedestal and keep it here without having it come down and bother around the house. The idea of being introduced to Mr. Douglass Byrd and having to speak directly to him with my own voice has kept me miserable all this month in which I have been so perfectly happy being Roxanne's friend and confidante, but it has happened and I'm glad it's over, though it was under trying circumstances.

These are they. My fears have come to pass and in this eventful month Lovelace Peyton has grown from a slender, frail little boy into almost as much of a roly-poly as Mamie Sue, and looks more like her than he does like Roxanne. I try not to feed him more than four times a day extra, but he is stern with me about it. Sometimes he will trade the cake I give him about four o'clock for a new shaped bottle, but lots of times he gets the bottle and the cake both away from me. I just can't be strong-minded with Lovelace Peyton, like I ought to be to make up for the way Roxanne forgets to see him from the rosy cloud.

"If you'll give me a bottle, I'll give you one mouth-kiss, Phyllis; but for cake and bottles too, I can maybe make it two," is the way he bargains with me. Fifteen years is a long time to starve for a little brother to love, so Lovelace Peyton almost always gets both the cake and bottles.

But his fat has begun to burst out of all the clothes he has and somebody has got to get him new ones. Roxanne and I were managing it when Mr. Douglass interrupted us this morning; and I'm glad a man is so much stupider than a woman or maybe his feelings would have got hurt and I'd have had to argue him into my plan like I did Roxanne. I feel sure I would have failed with him. He is the first Idol I ever had and I am new at managing either friends or idols. However, I have got so I can get the best of Roxanne when it is urgently necessary.

"It's the funniest thing to me, Phyllis," Roxanne said the other afternoon, as I went over to see her about my rhetoric lesson, "but rich as you are, I don't at all mind your seeing my scrimps like I do the other girls, even Mamie Sue. You are like finding a grandmother's thimble that fits you exactly and is pure gold."

Oh, I wish I could learn to be gracious and say lovely things like Roxanne, but I'm just a corked bottle and I can't get the stopper out.

"What are you doing?" I asked her instead of giving her a squeeze and saying, "You are the dearest thing on earth to me, Roxanne," which was what I really felt.

"I'm sitting here before this old dress I found in the trunk in the attic and trying to think how I could make Lovey wear the flowered aprons I can make out of it. I almost know he won't, for he has begun to say what 'looks boy' and what 'looks girl.' I did hope I could keep him ignorant of the difference this summer at least. Would you ask him before you make the aprons or trust to his not noticing?"

The old dress was the full skirt of fifty years ago, with huge red roses on a white-and-green dotted background, and, as aprons, would have made the snake doctor look like a very young circus. I couldn't stand the thought and cranked my mind as hard as I could for a half minute. The idea came, and it is a good thing to be perfectly straight in the treatment of your friends at all times, so that when a crisis comes they will depend on you.

"Roxanne," I said, looking determinedly and sternly into her face with Father's own expression, "have I ever offered you a single thing to eat except when you were company like the other girls, or anything else that would hurt the Byrd pride?"

"No, you haven't, Phyllis, and that's why I don't mind telling or letting you see things. You understand that it is for the cause, and I don't have to be afraid that you will hurt—hurt my feelings."

I never thought it would be possible for a girl to look at me like Roxanne Byrd looked at me across the pile of ragged little aprons and old dresses. I thank God for it!

"Well," I said, "for that dress I want to trade you this blue gingham I have got on to make the aprons out of. It will make three if the tucks are ripped out of the skirt. I want the old flowered skirt to make some cushions for the window seat in the room I sleep in, for it will be just the thing to go with the old mahogany of your grandmother's. It is real old-fashioned chintz and is worth just about ten times as much as this dress I have got on, which you know I bought at Mr. Hadley's, with the other dozen ones that Miss Green is making for me, at twenty-five cents a yard. Will you?"

Roxanne doesn't know about that awful spending burden I have had laid on me and she is just as interested in helping me go and buy myself Byrdsville clothes as a friend can be in another's pleasure—not knowing it to be painful responsibility.

I locked the box that came from New York with all my spring and summer things in it, in a closet the day it came, and while these things are, of course crude, I like to be in clothes like the other girls. I seem to fit in better. I spent seventy-five dollars at that store by hard effort, and I think won Mr. Hadley's good will

for life for both Father and me. Also Miss Green's check was gratifyingly large both to her and me.

"Will you trade, Roxanne?" I asked again, keeping the eagerness out of my voice with my father's stern will.

"Oh, I don't think I ought." Roxanne hesitated and then said: "Are you sure you don't—that is, are you sure?"

"I am," I answered briskly, and in a business like tone. "You can't say that lovely old stuff won't make the very cushions for that very room, Roxanne."

"They truly will be lovely, Phyllis, and that gingham will solve the problem for Lovey's whole summer. To-morrow we will—"

"Not to-morrow; right now, and I'll help you rip and cut out from the skirt," I said, and began to undo my belt. I knew better than to let that family pride get to simmering in Roxanne in the wee small hours of the night. "A trade is a trade, as soon as it is made. Give me my dress."

"Oh, Phyllis, there never was anybody like you," laughed Roxanne in a voice that is like music to a person who understands what friendship really is and hasn't had very much.

We both laughed as I slipped the quaint old dress over my head and buttoned the low-necked waist, with its short puffy-sleeves, straight down the front. It had such a style of its own and fitted me so that I began to prance in front of the long mirror in the living room, which is gilt, a hundred years old, and belonged to the stiff grandmother over the mantel who had probably pranced in the same gown in the same way fifty years ago, if her heart was as young and happy as mine.

And those were the trying circumstances under which I met the Idol. He stood there in the doorway and laughed until his big shoulders shook, and his wonderful eyes danced like sparks. I blushed so painfully that it felt like measles; but when he saw my embarrassment break out on me like that, a wonderful sad kindness came into his eyes and he stopped laughing.



He stood there in the doorway and laughed until his big shoulders shook

"It's Miss Phyllis Forsythe, isn't it, that I have come home to find masquerading as my own grandmother?" he said, in a warm voice so like Roxanne's that the scarlatina on my face began to subside and my knees stopped trembling. "You don't know how indebted to you I am for coming over to make Roxy take a playtime."

Playtime, with all that pattern and darned aprons and my gingham dress in a pile on the ancestral sofa in the corner with the scissors and needle and thread gaping at Roxanne and me from the table! Women ought to be very thankful at times for men's stupidity.

It was all very well for the red on my face to pale and my breath to come easier again; but no fifteen-year-old girl has an answer ready for a remark of a man who is as great and wonderful and famous as Mr. Douglass Byrd is going to be soon. I was just getting so loose-jointed from mortification that my mind had

fainted away at the very time I needed it, when Tony and Pink Chadwell came and broke into the situation with the Raccoon whistle for the palefaces. They also broke through the side window with their "Tip-hist-toe" signal that always gives the girls cold creeps even in daytime. Mamie Sue calls it goose-flesh and Tony reproves Belle for telling her that was what she had all the time. I don't know what we would do with Belle if it wasn't for Tony's powerful disposition. And one thing I am sure of, never were there in this world such grand boys as Anthony Wayne Luttrell and Matthew Foster Chadwell—that's Pink's whole name—for they didn't any more notice that old flowered dress than if it had been the blue gingham, or either Roxanne or me, but they gave the scout-master salute to Mr. Douglass and began their business right away.

"Raccoon Chief," said Tony, "the patrol awaits you in the Crotch, at your call."

"On my way," answered Mr. Douglass with just as much seriousness as Tony had in his voice. Tony had told me how Mr. Douglass had organized the Raccoon Patrol and taught it all it knows and was just the guiding star of all their young lives, only Tony didn't put it that way; he called him their "jolly old peace-maker." That means that all the Raccoons look up to him and adore him and try to be exactly like him. In the Bible if David had been eight years older than Jonathan, there would have been the same situation in Jerusalem as in Byrdsville, Tennessee.

"I wonder what is the matter with the Scouts," said Roxanne, as we both began to rip on the dress so I could help her cut the aprons. "Douglass didn't say what he came home for in the middle of the afternoon and Tony was so serious that I hardly knew him. Pink was speechless from excitement. They all acted that way when they found out about the queer man who hung around selling patent medicine, trying to find out where Miss Prissy kept the Talbot emerald necklace that came from England before the Revolution."

Because Miss Prissy lives alone it is the duty of all of the Raccoons to patrol her ever so many times in the day, and Judge Luttrell lets Tony go out the last thing before he goes to bed and give Miss Prissy that signal we hear every night about half past nine. Miss Prissy says it makes her comfortable the whole night, and the Colonel gave the Raccoons their wireless outfit for being such "Knights of the Round Miss Prissy" instead of the "Table," Pink said; though the Colonel never mentioned Miss Prissy in the speech of presentation at all, but called it Table.

I'm not romantic myself, but I could never treat a man with the lack of heart with which Miss Prissy treats Colonel Stockell. She makes herself as beautiful as possible and sits on the front porch with him, and I would call that an honorable cause for marriage, but Roxanne says that in Byrdsville no tie binds a lady to marry a gentleman until after it is done. Such treatment does not look to me like what father calls a "square deal"; but Miss Priscilla may have some way of squaring it to her conscience, as she is very religious and charitable.

"I'm glad Douglass doesn't have to know that we traded dresses, Phyllis," said Roxanne, as we both snipped away on the long seams, after he had gone with Tony and Pink. Why it is so much more fun to rip things than to sew them, is a question I put to you, leather Louise.

"Just last night," Roxanne continued, "he made me sit out here on the porch with him and he told me it might be all summer that he will have to use his wages to get the things for the experiments. Mr. Rogers has acted queerly and he is afraid to try anything out at these furnaces, so we have to save up enough for him to go up to Kentucky to some little furnaces there and make the experiment. It will cost a lot for the trip and the things, but I think we can do it. This simple life agrees with us all. Just look how fat Lovey is getting with hardly anything but buttermilk and corn-bread. It makes me happy to look at him."

The giggle that I had to smother down in my heart was one of the good things that come in a person's life and leave a mark on their natures for always. I think it is a fine plan to save little happinesses and put them up on a spirit shelf to take down to feed your remembers on in days when pleasures are scarce. I can't believe that this life of being with and of other people is going to last for me; so if I have to go back into loneliness I will have had it to remember.

Any mention of that dynamite secret and Rogers in the same conversation always makes me uneasy and that is why I had loneliness thoughts.

"What has Mr. Rogers done to make your brother uneasy about the secret?" I asked Roxanne in a voice that I could see, myself, was worried.

"Nothing at all," laughed Roxanne; "but we are all just as superstitious as old Uncle Pompey, and because Douglass has a 'feeling' about Mr. Rogers, we all have to have it, too. We make it a point to 'feel' with each other as both Douglass and I did when we just knew with Uncle Pompey that the white rooster would die from the lye soap that Lovey made him take in a pill. It took Douglass and me two whole days to get Lovey to go on his honor about doctoring the chicken, but he finally agreed, if we would promise to let him do things to all of us whenever he wanted to. Douglass lets him treat his head with cold water, which is just hard rubbing that he likes better than anything, every night before supper. I'm wearing a yarn string around my ankle now for rheumatism that I haven't got. In fact we are all 'on honor' with Lovey, to save the 'live stock,' as Uncle Pompey calls himself and the chickens."

Never having had any experience with little boys, I can't say positively that Lovelace Peyton is a wonder, but I firmly believe it and his honor is entirely grown up while he is not quite five. I've seen it work. If he says he will or he won't, he acts accordingly, no matter what happens to him or anybody else. But he is careful how he promises and he leaves himself plenty of room to carry on what he calls his practice, to the

uneasiness of himself and all the neighbors. It cost Miss Prissy ten bottles, a pint of red paint, and a package of sulphur to buy the life of her gray cat for this year, but now she has no uneasiness about Tab at all.

I suppose if Roxanne and I sat down and talked one month straight through without eating and sleeping we might make up all the time we have lost out of each other's company, at least just skim the cream off each other's lives, but we'll never get to it. Too many people want Roxanne besides me, and I'm grateful to be allowed to be in the things she is in. I try to keep the other girls from feeling that I am in the way, and I don't believe they would feel that way at all if Belle didn't still keep prodding them up with her distrust of my money. I wish Belle just had a little wealth and would find out that it isn't anything at all and can be forgotten without the least trouble.

Mamie Sue wants to like me and the two silent Willises do, also, but Belle dusts my gold into their eyes so they can just blink at me so far. But the blinks get friendlier every day and I hope some shock will make them open their eyes to me like kittens do on the ninth day—and their hearts, too.

The tallest Willis gave me the first peony that bloomed on their bush to take to my mother, and I caught a sight of her awkward heart that did me good. I defied the nurse and told the white, white little thing on the pillow, that is all the mother I ever had, that one of my friends sent it to her, and I got a flash of a smile, such as I had never had before. The nurse said just that little bit of excitement made her worse, and I've promised never to do anything but take my daily look at her again—but—she *is* my mother, even if—

Well, anyway, Louise of leather, just as Roxanne and I had got the skirt ripped up and the pattern straightened out, we saw all the girls coming, and from the way they were talking we saw something interesting was surely happening, had happened, or was going to happen.

"Hide the gingham, Roxanne, while I slip over the wall and change my dress," I said quickly. "Our business arrangements are nobody else's business."

"Will you come right back?" asked Roxanne in a way that made me know she would worry if I didn't.

I would rather have stayed at home until the girls had had their visit and gone home, but I have thought out just how I ought to act about Roxanne and her friends and me. It is only fair to pay no attention to how they feel, but to do what makes Roxanne happy in case of the mix-up of us all. My pride and Roxanne's are different. Hers has been handed down for generations and she can act on it without argument with herself, but mine is my own kind and only I understand it. It is new and I have to plan it out by thinking. The girls all think that because I have finer clothes and travel and am rich, that I think I am better than they are and am proud of it. Richness is not my fault, any more than a hunched back would be, and it is my duty to forget it whether they do or not. I act accordingly.

Another thing: I believe something is making my father see the error of his ways and I hope that some day I will see him settled into being a good and great man just like Judge Luttrell and the Colonel are and Roxanne's father was. He has acted in a peculiar way just lately. Last night he drew me up close to him and stood by the window a long time without speaking.

"Phil," he finally said, not in the voice he generally uses as if he were speaking to his only son—but with a daughter tone in it—"you have made good in Byrdsville, and I want to tell you that I'm proud of you. I doubted whether you could do it. A bunch of such youngsters as you have made friends with would be a test for any man, much less a young woman. I'm their friend because they are yours, and pretty soon I am going to prove it—like the sentimental fools that all fathers of almost-grown daughters get to be. Go to bed, kiddie, and say an extra one for Father."

Now all this is directly connected with the state I found the girls in over at the Byrd cottage, when I finally dressed and got back again, after stopping to bargain with Lovelace Peyton to go without the four-o'clock cookies for half a tube of perfectly harmless tooth-paste that he wanted for some kind of plaster to put on Uncle Pompey's heel, which is always painful enough to occupy most of the snake-doctor's time.

"No, I don't see why we should always tell Phyllis every interesting thing that happens to us or is going to happen," Belle was saying in such a decided tone of voice that it carried through the front door, across the porch, and halfway down the front walk.

Disagreeability has a kind of force that knocks one down before pleasantness hardly gets to him. I knew Roxanne said something in answer to that; in my heart I knew, but I couldn't hear what it was with my ears.

"Well," came Mamie Sue's voice, muffled through a piece of fudge she always carries in her pocket, in case she goes a square away from home and is overtaken by her appetite. She always has enough for everybody else, too, I must not forget to add. "Well, if it is Miss Prissy's robber come back, that makes the boys act so, Phyllis might just as well be scared as the rest of us; and if it is something pleasant, why, let her have a share of that, too." Some day I'm going to break loose from myself and hug Mamie Sue's funny fatness until she squeals.

"I don't believe that if it was just a frolic the boys would have got Douglass to come away from his work to the Crotch; but maybe he was going up-town anyway, and they knew that," said Roxanne as I came in the door and was given welcomes of different degrees. The tall Willis is getting so that she moves over for me to sit down by her, even if she is just sitting on one small chair. I wish she could know how that pleases me.

"Did the boys look to you as if the thing that is making them all act so important was nice or disagreeable, Phyllis?" asked Roxanne as she got out the inevitable darning bag.

The short Willis moved nearer and began to help sort and get ready for patching. I always keep a thimble in Roxanne's darning bag now, but sometimes the short girl beats me to it. The others never notice that Roxanne's hands are never empty of patching jobs. Still Mamie Sue does attentively feed her fudge in hunks while she darns.

"I don't know boys well enough to diagram their expressions," I answered. "They always look excited and queer to me, and I can't tell their jokes from their other affairs. What have they been doing?"

"Being as hateful and secret as they know how to be," answered Belle crossly. "Boys are nothing but rough, rude miseries; and the next time Tony Luttrell tells me to 'bubble along' as he did Mamie Sue and me, when Mamie Sue only wanted to stop him to give him a piece of fudge, I am going to tell him what I think of him."

"Hope I'll be there," said the tall Willis behind my shoulder, and I never enjoyed a silent remark more. Belle is as afraid of Tony's laugh as she is of a cow in the lane.

"Now I know that something awful has happened or is coming if Tony spoke that way," said Roxanne, with such anxiety coming into her face that the timid Willis dropped her stocking and Mamie Sue gulped down such a large piece of candy that she almost had to choke. "Oh, girls, do you suppose that dreadful man has got out of jail in the city and is coming back to maybe—maybe—?"

But the words were stopped in Roxanne's mouth with a great, pleasant laugh as the Idol stood in the door. You would know that "Idol" is the name for him by the way all the girls look awed and afraid of him, but interested too. Tony and Pink and Sam were in the background like the angels in the picture of Sir Galahad.

"This is an official committee to invite you to be the guests of Mr. William Forsythe on a hay-mooning on Friday next, to start from his home at the hour of seven-thirty, in honor of the birthday of his daughter, Miss Phyllis, who is quite as surprised as the rest of you. The rest of this speech will be continued on that evening." And he was gone before anybody got any breath again.

That's what my father meant by showing my friends that he appreciated them.

But Belle Kirby's expression would make anybody with a sense of humor laugh. Can live coals be showered on a person if nobody ever intended it?

CHAPTER V

The desire to be popular may be one of the unworthy ambitions of a person's heart, yet there is nothing in the world so delightful as having it happen to you. And if having almost everybody like you, and show it by being nice and friendly to you on all occasions, makes you happy your own self, how much more happy you are when somebody you love gets a slice of it all along with you!

My father is getting to be one of the beloved men of this town, like Judge Luttrell and the Colonel. It has been going on gradually for some time, but I was afraid to notice it for fear I was mistaken. Such is the result of the sincere prayers of a daughter, and I certainly was sincere in wanting this reform. And better than even his sitting and smoking and joking in the Judge's office and walking down the street in a friendly manner with Mr. Chadwell is the notice that Mr. Douglass Byrd has been taking of him lately. The Idol has been to see him twice, in the evening, and both times I have heard my father's jolly laugh boom out in a way the nurse says will have to stop, for it made Mother ask to see him and be ill because she couldn't. And just day before yesterday Father came up the street with the great inventor, and they both came in and sat with Roxanne and me on the cottage porch to smoke their cigars. Roxanne was just sweet and good and easy with Father like she always is. I don't believe that girl was ever conscious of her feet and hands and blushes in all her life. I forget mine when I am with her.

Well anyway, Father was delighted with her and showed it plainly. And if he liked her, he was positively funny when he met Lovelace Peyton. The snake-doctor came around the house, as usual galloping on the stick horse, and in one hand he had one of his best bottles full of something awful to look at and that smelled worse, even through the cork.

"Mister," he said, looking Father gravely and courteously in the face, "you got cholera bad and might die to-night if you don't take medicine quick. It's in this bottle; shake it well." And while the Idol made a grab for him he put that bottle right in Father's hand and backed off out of reach.

Roxanne was distressed at Father's having taken that awful smell into his hands, and Mr. Douglass tried to make him give it back to Lovelace Peyton; but Father wrapped it in two handkerchiefs and put it, smell and all, into his pocket.

"Thank you, Doctor Byrd," he said, just as gravely as he talks to the great surgeons and doctors that come to see Mother. "Shall I report my condition to you to-morrow?"

"That medicine will work fine," answered Lovelace Peyton; "but if it kills you, can I cut you open to see

how you work inside? When Douglass dies, I'm going to cut him into little pieces; he's done promised."

"Oh, Lovey," was all Roxanne could say, while Father and the Idol both roared.

I never saw my father's face so lovely as it was when he looked down on that little raggedy boy as we left him swinging on the front gate. His heart is softening away from wealth to his fellow-man, I know. And, as if it had not made me happy enough to have Father sitting and smoking with such a great character as Mr. Douglass Byrd, what should happen but for us to meet Tony at our front gate, coming to see Father especially? They made me go in and wait on the front steps while they talked, because they didn't want me to hear; and they both laughed so that Father tried to get out his handkerchief and succeeded in dropping the awful bottle Lovelace had given him, while Tony leaned against the fence and shook with chuckles at Lovey's giving him such an awful smell. Oh, if they were to elect my father an honorary member of the Raccoon Patrol like the Colonel and the Idol, I could not stand the happiness. Tony's friendship for him gives me one of the deepest joys that ever came to me. Tony's high sense of honor cannot help but impress Father.



I never saw my father's face so lovely

This little town of Byrdsville, that nestles down in a hollow of the Old Harpeth Hills on the old pioneer road they called the Road to Providence, when the first settlers traveled it from Virginia to Tennessee, is the most wonderful place in the world, I think, and I wish Father could have been born and reared here, for then he wouldn't have strayed into a career of making money. Nobody in Byrdsville ever did, and Mr. Douglass Byrd will be the first one. And besides having the soul of honor and loving-kindness in it, Byrdsville looks like it might be one of the outposts of heaven, where tired souls can come to rest before going up the shining ladder.

All the houses are old-fashioned, with wide doors for welcoming and with vines running over the chimneys and up to the eaves, while blooms and buds tumble over the walls and burst from the gardens into the street. Yes, I think Byrdsville might be called the smile-place on the old earth's round face.

But to return to Father and Tony at the front gate; only I didn't. Father went on down the street and Tony came in to sit on the steps and talk to me. I wouldn't be so frivolous and growny as to have a boy come sit on my front steps talking to me like a "suitor," as Belle thinks it is smart to have; but Tony is different. He's my friend, and I would almost as soon talk to him as Roxanne.

"Well, I must say, girliky, that it was mighty considerate of you to be born about the full moon time of the first of May," said Tony, with one of those funny flares of his eyes. "Suppose you had opened your peepers along in December; we would have had to have an apple-roasting to celebrate for you, and I, for one, prefer the hay-lark. Your parent is one fine old boy, and me for him."

"Oh, Tony, I am so glad you like Father, and it was fine of him to have the hay ride for me. Do you suppose they will all go?" When I said "all," I really meant Belle.

I don't know why, but somehow I hoped this hay ride would shake up Belle's heart into being soft toward me. There are just eleven of us in the junior class in the Byrd Academy: Tony and Pink and Sam

and the two Logan boys, while Roxanne and Mamie Sue and Belle and the two Willises, with me, make up the girls. Eleven is a sacred number, and I don't like for Belle and me to break the link by not being friends.

Tony is such a wise boy that he sometimes knows what a girl is thinking about when she doesn't tell him. Most of the time he just grins and leads us all on and we do tell him everything; especially Mamie Sue, if we don't warn her beforehand and make her wear a horsehair ring not to forget when he asks her questions. It makes Belle mad for him to do Mamie Sue that way, and she calls it "prying"; but I think it is just kindness. How can you sympathize with your friends' affairs if you don't make them tell you all? And sympathy applied to life is like the gasoline in a motorcar, I think.

"Well, I should say they were all going," answered Tony enthusiastically. "Even Belle, the beauty, can hardly wait for the get-away. She is putting buttermilk on her freckles so that the moon won't see 'em. Miss Prissy is over at Roxanne's now, trying to baste Roxy together for the frolic."

"I think Roxanne always looks lovelier than anybody," I said quickly; for I didn't think I could bear to have even Tony, when I know what a great love he has for her, criticize Roxanne's shabbiness. They don't any of them know what a heroine she is, and about the great cause.

"Course she looks good, 'cause she is the pretty child; but I always feel like carrying a needle and thread and a card of pins when Roxy is along. And let me tell you the bug-doctor is about to burst out into the cold world from his aprons. I know old Doug makes enough to rag the family, but Roxy is just behindhand getting rabbit skins to wrap the buntings in. Lots of girls are poky about doing around."

If Tony Luttrell had known how cruel that sounded, it would have broken his heart. But I couldn't tell him what a heroine Roxanne is and I just had to shudder in my soul to see her so misunderstood—Roxanne, whose every day is just one big patch on life.

"It is lovely of Miss Priscilla to go with us," I said, to change the subject.

"It would be a dry hay ride if the Miss Bubble wasn't sitting in the very midst of the crowd and the wagon, with the Colonel prancing along beside on old White. Your father is going to ride out with the Colonel and—but that's the surprise. Being with your gingham gang so much, I am about to get the talks." And Tony put his hand over his mouth and moved away from me as if I had the scarlet fever.

I laughed at Tony and from sheer happiness at thinking that my father was going with us in the fine company of the Colonel and Miss Priscilla. I wonder what we would do, if we had to have somebody go to places with us who thought they had to chaperon us? Miss Prissy is just one of us and would go if we had to ask somebody like Belle's mother, for instance, who is always talking about chaperons, to go also.

As I have remarked before, Byrdsville is a very different place from most of the world, and I thank God that he led me to it and "made me to lie down in its green pastures, beside its still waters." I found that in the Bible the other night, and it fitted me and Byrdsville. Good-night, Louise!

Of course when I grow up I shall have many things happen to me, like graduating from Byrdsville Academy, marrying, and being president of clubs, and going to balls and theaters in the city, if I have to; but there will never be a night like this one of my sixteenth birthday, April twenty-second.

Miss Priscilla Talbot was the first slice out of the happiness birthday cake when we met down at her house to get into the wagon. I can never have things here at my home like that, because of the precious sick thing upstairs that cannot be disturbed, but who is the core of my heart, anyway, even if she doesn't know it.

But of all astonishing things, this is what Miss Priscilla did as we were all lined up for Father and the Colonel to help us into the wagon on the great mound of hay, to the front of which four horses were hitched.

"And now to start off the birthday we must each give Phyllis a kiss, as we would do if we were blowing out the candies on the cake that is packed in the basket; and each one whisper a wish to her, as they give her a kiss. I will be first and the Colonel next," she said and she bent down and kissed me and whispered: "A happy sixteenth year."

I never had been kissed—even Father never did it to me, because I have been more like a son than a daughter, and he hasn't thought of it. To get a whole wagonload of them at one time, and unaccustomed to them, was enough to paralyze any girl, and I stood dumb and took it—them, I mean. The blow-out-the-candle-with-a-kiss-wish is one of the first family birthday customs in Byrdsville, and I felt that it was right to subscribe to it. I didn't mind when I saw the boys were going to refuse firmly to do it and just shake hands instead.

"Bully for you, Bubble, and a pound or two to cover your elbows," Tony exploded while he nearly pumped my arm out of the socket. Everybody laughed, because I *am* getting thin with so much growing.

The Colonel's kiss was a ceremonial, like you have in church or at graduation day, and his wish took five minutes to say, but the tall Willis choked up my throat with the lump by whispering a hope for my mother, which can never be, I know.

Next the Idol kissed my hand with grace like is in a story-book and which made my whole arm act like a

poker. Father hugged me with all the energy he hadn't been using on me all my life. It hurt me happily.

Roxanne came last and she saved hers until the Colonel had packed us down together in a nest of hay at Miss Priscilla's feet like two kittens in a basket, with Lovelace Peyton squirming around as a third.

"You never encouraged me to kiss you before, Phyllis," she whispered, with her arm around my neck; "but I'm going to whenever I want to after this, and here's a wish that we will never get separated farther than kissing distance, now that we have found each other."

Only Lovelace Peyton kept me from crying out loud like a baby from happiness. He burrowed between Roxanne and me in a search for some peppermint he smelled in the hay, and stuck one knee right into my mouth to stop the sob, which was a laugh when I removed the knee for it to get out. My first hug around Roxanne's waist was mighty awkward, but I know she understood.

After that the picnic unfolded its minutes in such a cloud of moonlight and rosy happiness, accompanied by song, that I don't know very well what really did happen. For once I felt that I was looking on life from the same exalted point of view that Roxanne always has, and I hope it will become a habit with me. Only I know it won't.

Tony's surprise, that he had got Father to help him about, was a hot-air balloon that the Scout book tells them how to make, and they sent one up from the place we stopped at, out on Providence Road, with "Phyllis," cut out in great big letters and lighted with a candle inside, which wobbled and set the whole thing on fire before it got much higher than the trees. Still, it did go up and it had my name on it! When I got off the train in Byrdsville two months ago I couldn't have believed in that balloon, if it had been revealed to me in a vision. Do I deserve it all?

One of the reasons of my rosy view was that the Idol rode upon the front seat of the wagon, with the farmer who drove, and smoked one of Father's cigars and led all the songs in the most marvelously beautiful voice I ever heard. He was on the Glee Club at Princeton, and of course to have him come to the party at all was a compliment. He helped Miss Priscilla and me unpack the suppers out on Tilting Rock, and acted only a little more grown-up than Tony and Pink, I don't know whether I quite liked to have him unbend so far as to throw a biscuit back at Tony. He is too great a man for that, and I was relieved when he took the Colonel's horse and started back to town, because he said he had something to attend to. It is more comfortable for me to have him on the pedestal I keep for him, than down in the ordinary walks of life with me and the rest of my friends—fine and unusual people as they all are. Also I am afraid I might betray in some way my great affection and veneration for him if we got too familiar over a pickle jar, and he might not like it. How do I know he wants to be enthroned and "idolized" in my heart?

Yes, I was glad to see him go home early before I got so light-headed with happiness as to squabble over pie with Pink and put a lightning-bug into Tony's lemonade glass. Father went with him, and how good it did seem to see them ride away together through the moonlight down Providence Road to Byrdsville, which lay in the dim distance with its lights making it my huge birthday cake, decorated with all the lilacs and roses and redbud abloom in the Harpeth Valley. Some people are so accustomed to happiness that they don't even notice it. I'm glad I haven't had that much.

One of the nice things about Miss Priscilla and the Colonel is that they go off and sit by themselves and entirely forget to ever say go home, until we have all had our fill of fun; then they begin to hurry at a terrible rate that gets up a pleasant excitement. They seem to know just the minute when we might begin to get tired, and they never let it come. Some people are geniuses about good times, and the Colonel and Miss Priscilla are two of that kind.

The ride home was almost the best of all. The boys sang and gave Raccoon calls and practised different kinds of wood signals and ate the things we had saved from supper, with Mamie Sue to keep them company, also Lovelace Peyton, who slept part of the time with his head on Tony's knees, but waked up if any stray refreshments threatened to get past him. We all hushed at the edge of town, for the Colonel said it was after midnight, and he unpacked each one at his or her own front door so softly that not even a dog barked. He put me out at the cottage because he didn't want to stop the wagon in front of our house on account of disturbing Mother, and I went in to unfasten Roxanne's dress and to get mine done likewise, then I could slip home through the garden, which is always so lovely with the moonlight making ghost flowers of Roxanne's ancestral blossoms.

I wish I didn't have to write you, leather Louise, what happened next, at the same time as the birthday, but I can't sleep unless I do. Would God be so cruel to me as to let me get just this one little taste of being happy and then take it away from me? I won't believe it!

This is what happened, set down in black and white, and I can draw no conclusions from it. I refuse! As Roxanne and I stood in the living hall, under the stern old Byrd grandmother, giggling and having a good, girl time like I have just been learning to do, suddenly the door opened and the Idol stood in the light we had lighted, with his face so pale I thought he was going to faint.

"Roxy," he said, not seeming to notice me, "you haven't been in my shed working with my bottles, have you? Or could Lovey have got in? I have the key and the window is barred, as I always keep it."

"Oh, no, Douglass, I haven't been near the shed this week. My key is here on the hook in the left-hand bookcase," and she reached behind her, took it, and showed it to him. "I know Lovey hasn't been there either, because we can trust him on honor. Oh, what is the matter?" As Roxanne asked the question she was trembling all over, but not in the deadly cold way I was, I felt sure. She couldn't have stood it and

lived.

"Some one has been in the shed, taken samples of all my material, including the steel shavings that came from the last melting, and my notebook is gone. The process is stolen, Roxy, and all the sacrifices gone for nothing. I don't care for myself—but—you." His head was up in the same old portrait pose, but his arms trembled as he held them out to Roxanne.

I stood still and cold and never said one word, but a pain hit into my heart that I didn't know I was strong enough to stand and still live.

"When did you find it out?" I asked; and I was surprised at the cool note that sounded in my voice and made it like Father's when he talks business.

"Just now," he answered me over Roxanne's head that was buried on his shoulder. "I stopped down-town to help Judge Luttrell with a brief that he was writing and came home only a few minutes ago. The thief was in the shed between the time I went on the hay ride and now. I was in the shed just before I started."

I don't know how I said good-night to them; but I did the best I could, and came home through the moonlight with a great heaviness of heart and feet. I dreaded to see Father, and yet longed for him in a way I never did before in all my life. If anything awful is true, then he is more mine than ever. But it can't be! And when I looked for him I found him—in a way I never had before. He was standing at my mother's door and the great big man was crying just like a girl, with his shoulders shaking and big sobs coming.

"Bess, Bess," he sobbed Mother's name under his breath, "she's going to be a grown woman and I don't know what to do without you. Ten long years. Oh, Bess!"

Yes, I suppose I'm nearer a grown woman than most girls of my age, and I'm tall enough to take a big man in my arms, which are so long and thin as to be a joke, and hold him close enough to make the sobs stop coming.

"Now, Phil, I leave it to you if you are not enough to upset any man, with your moonlight picnics and folderols," Father said, in just a few seconds from the time I hugged him up. He was both laughing and sniffing into his handkerchief at the same time, and I had a lovely Lovelace Peyton feeling about him, because he looked so young and ashamed of himself for being caught crying.

"I'm just as much your son as I ever was, Father," I said with a gulp and a lump in my own throat. "I'm never going to be a daughter, if you don't want one."

"I do, Phyllis, I do; but I want the son-girl sometimes, too. You go to bed." And with a sound hug that nearly broke my ribs, as neither he nor I were used to them, he went into his room and shut his door decidedly.

CHAPTER VI

A serious disposition can make more trouble for itself by its own seriousness than all the misfortunes that come can make for it. If I had just a little touch of Roxanne Byrd's foamy spirits, I would be a much more comfortable companion for myself. All night I lay awake, anchored in the middle of the huge old Byrd bedstead, and sorrowed over the misfortune that had come to Roxanne and the Idol. Over and over I went in my mind to see where I could clear Mr. Rogers of my suspicions until my thoughts were so pale in color that I could hardly make them out, and at last I fell asleep in despair.

In the morning I dressed so slowly that it was nine o'clock before I was buttoned into my dress and felt that I could go over and help Roxanne bear the calamity. It was Saturday, so I knew she would need help in doing all the things she leaves undone until this blessed day of relief from school cares and responsibilities comes.

It is strange how ignorant one can be of the disposition of the very person she loves best on earth. Did I find Roxanne Byrd dissolved in an indigo sea on the day after she had lost a huge fortune? Not at all! She was floating still higher on a still more rosy cloud and eating a large slice of the most delicious nut cake, while Lovelace Peyton did likewise.

"Oh, Phyllis, I was just going to call you to get a piece of Uncle Pompey's nut cake before it gets cold. It is famous in Byrdsville, and I've been dying to have one made to give you ever since you came; only I couldn't get the materials. It takes every good thing in a grocery, from ginger to preserved cherries, to go in it, and it is best hot. Uncle Pompey said for me to wait until the second pan came out of the stove to call you, because it is always best. He has out the Sheffield tray with the old point cover on it and one of great-grandmother Byrd's willow plates to put it on for you. I'll let him bring it to you and see you taste it. Poor Uncle Pompey is a famous cook, and economy has been agony to him. I'm going to let him make every good thing he wants to this week. He has been held down so long." Roxanne bubbled along like a lovely mountain torrent of cheerfulness, while I stood rooted to the spot in an astonishment that I could not conceal.

"Oh, Roxanne," I said weakly, as I sank into a chair.

"Yes, Phyllis, I suppose it is funny to see me enjoying the cake like this after what happened last night;

but the Byrds always make other plans as soon as anything happens to the first one. Douglass and I decided to rest from the steel invention by having things we want for two or three months, and then he knows something greater to invent than steel could ever be. He hasn't told me yet, but I'll tell you when he does. Oh, there's Uncle Pompey with the cake. It's lovely, isn't it, Phyllis?"

If a person went to a funeral and met the dead friend at the door handing her a piece of cake, I suppose she would feel about like I did when that funny old black man handed me that lovely and elegant tray with a grin on his face so wide that it is a wonder it didn't meet itself at the back of his head. I wonder to this moment where I got the enthusiasm with which I accepted it.

"Eat all you want to, Phyllis, 'cause I've got a good plaster to put on the place when the ache comes," Lovelace Peyton advised from his seat on the floor where he was alternately eating his piece of cake and rolling black pills from the crumbs that he caught in a pasteboard box.

And as I sat and munched that piece of historic Byrd cookery my brain turned over in my head and settled itself in a new way. My whole nature underwent a revolution. I saw that a person can either accept life as a piece of fluffy cake when it is handed to her or look on it all as—soggy. I'm going to follow Roxanne's example after this and see the fluffiness of the cake determinedly.

"And, Phyllis, I'll tell you what else I'm going to do," continued Roxanne, rocking and nibbling and smiling so that I would like to have eaten her up, from shabby shoes to the curl down the back of the neck. "When I went down to the grocery before breakfast to get the things to console Uncle Pompey after we had told him about the robbery, I saw the loveliest blue muslin in the window at Mr. Hadley's store, and I 'in going to buy it to-day and make me a dress for commencement. I had expected to wear the family linen, but Douglass says let's spend all his salary this month in having things we want; so the blue muslin will be my part. Do you think blue will be prettier than pink, or would you have—?"

But just here we were interrupted by Tony's appearance at the door, and the expression on his face matched the one I had had of condolence as I came over through the garden; but he has known Roxanne longer than I have and boys' minds are supposed to be stronger than girls'—privately I don't think they are—so he accepted the situation and the cake with more grace than I had.

However he was cruelly insistent about questioning and talking about the robbery. The Idol had told him about it as Tony walked out to the furnace with him, which is a Saturday habit with Tony as the Jonathan to Mr. Douglass. Tony had known all along about the steel, but was surprised to know that I had been able to keep it to myself. I suppose it is best never to notice an unconscious insult, and boys are often that way with girls.

"Doug and I both think that this is not the first time the robber has been in or around the shed," Tony said thoughtfully. "Do you remember that shadow we saw dodge through the yard the evening we came from the Raccoon outing, Phyllis?"

"Yes," I answered; and the uneasy feeling I had about Mr. Rogers that night so I couldn't sleep slightly tipped the rosy cloud I had decided to climb upon and stay upon forever. "But it may have been Uncle Pompey, like I thought it was," I added hopefully.

"Well, Doug told me to come and nose around and see what I could find in the way of clues. Want to come out and have a look with me? You two Palefaces might as well learn something about gumshoeing a villain now as ever."

Lots of boys, and grown-up people for that matter, like to keep interesting things and doings to themselves; but Tony Luttrell is as generous in disposition as he is in mouth.

We went out to the shed with him, and Lovelace Peyton went too, but refused to come in the shed door because he said he was still on honor to the Idol, no matter what Roxanne said, not to come nearer than one yard, which was marked with sticks all around the shed. It was funny to see the snake-doctor lean across the dead-line and crane his sweet little neck to try to hear and see Tony inside the shed. And after Tony had squinted at and touched and nosed almost every inch of the shed, he came out with his hands in his pockets.



Tony ... nosed almost every inch of the shed

"Any clue?" asked Roxanne, as anxiously as Roxanne could ask about anything from the cloud.

"N—o," he said in a hesitating sort of way that seemed just as professional as the way the detectives talk in the wonderful stories in the magazines that my governess always reprov'd me for reading. "That was a slick artist who got away on greased heels, but there is a—smell in there that I've never felt before in the shed. And yet I have met it somewhere, I feel certain. It seems to my nose somewhat like the bug-doctor at his worst."

"No, Tony," said Lovelace Peyton, positively but perfectly calmly, "I ain't been in that shed and my bottles ain't got legs."

We all laughed and came to the house—but I had got a whiff of that odor and I knew where I had met it before. It was raw onion and tar, and it was the mixture that Lovelace Peyton had given Father in the bottle he wrapped in his handkerchief and put in his pocket. I felt weak all over for a second, but I immediately remembered my duty to respect my father even in my thoughts. I had decided that in the watches of last night, after I had found his heart and hugged it up outside of Mother's door.

In the first place, I had no business to read those magazines that my governess told me not to, even if she did have so little sense that her brain must have been made of tatting work originally, which she was always doing by the yard. And while the explanation of what an evil it is to get millions and millions of dollars together when the poor have so little, and that no man who has a human heart in his breast would want to do it is perfectly true, still that man who wrote the article might not have known about my father. I can see how a man might go on for years and do a great wrong to his brother man and really not realize what a monster it makes of him. I believe my father is just blind on that side of things like some people are in one eye. I pray God that he may wake up sometime, and die happy but poor! Of course, I know he had nothing to do with taking the steel secret, and I am going to get on the cloud again and not worry over Roxanne's troubles until she needs something; and then I will come down and get it for her while she stays in the air,—if I can.

The really important things in a person's life underlie the daily occurrence like the sand that is at the bottom of the rose-bushes. School is the sand-bank of a girl's life, rather heavy, but supporting the roses of debates and picnics and commencement and expression impersonations like the one Friday night is to be.

Of course Byrd Academy graduated Judge Luttrell and the Colonel and Roxanne's Father as well as Miss Prissy, and all the other learned ladies in the Browning Society; but for all its historical antiquity, it is one of the most advanced places of learning in the South, and mostly on account of the progressiveness of the Junior Class, which is Tony and Roxanne and the rest of us.

The Senior Class this year is a great failure, because all are girls but the Petway boy, who is terribly feminine, and crochets his own silk ties, Tony says. I don't approve of the seniors at all, and both Roxanne and I are worried over the way Helena Kirby, Belle's sister, will insist on talking to the Idol when we come out of church. We both know how important it is for a great man to have lady friends that are great

enough to appreciate him. Of course, Helena can only admire his wonderful eyes, which makes no difference to us at all, for she could never gauge his high soul and genius. Roxanne says she trusts to the patches on his trousers to keep him from going to walk with her and from sitting on her front steps. Oh, if we just can keep him pure from prosperity in the shape of new clothes until he makes this second great invention, we will be so thankful, I encourage Roxanne to spend the money on food and her own clothes, so he will not be able to buy a new suit. We feel so safe with him mortifyingly shabby.

"Oh, Douglass is never going to be in love or marry anybody," said Roxanne when we were speculating on why Helena would flirt her eyes so at him. "I feel perfectly sure we'll have him always."

I felt relieved that Roxanne felt that way, but I had to remind myself often of her rose-cloud disposition and watch carefully to see that no troubles that I can avert—like Helena Kirby—shall come to her or the Idol.

But I started on the subject of the impersonations that the Expression Class of Juniors is to give the last day of April, before the whole academy is turned over to the affairs of the Seniors, like graduation essays being practised from morning to night until you speak each one in your own dreams. This is the first time they ever had such a thing in the academy, and the whole town is as excited and interested as it well can be.

Mr. Douglass Byrd thought it all up a month ago for us Juniors because of our Senior oppression and after his great loss he went on just the same helping us practise and seemed to be as interested in us as if we had been explosives in a bottle or a test-tube or a retort. His great serenity of soul is a constant lesson to me. Good-night, Louise. You are a comfort; you settle my thoughts, though just of leather.

This is the night of the impersonations and they are over. It was one of the greatest triumphs ever experienced at the Byrd Academy. It will probably be mentioned in the future with the same praise as the Colonel's valedictory that left not a dry eye in the house, because they all knew that all the boys in the Senior Class of sixty-one would go to the war the next week. I choke up whenever I hear the Colonel tell of it, as I have many times in these last two months of my life in Byrdsville. Miss Prissy always cries copiously when he gets to the place where she gave him a flower when he had walked home with her—she only fourteen years old and in short dresses—and which he wore in battle in his pocket Bible. What would she do if she should lose the Colonel by sudden death before she has rewarded his affections by marrying him? She ought to think of that.

Belle did beautifully, first on the program, dressed up in gown clothes and having a Byrdsville society conversation over an imaginary telephone. It sounded just like Helena, and I thought it was not very nice of her to impersonate her own sister, but it was a comfort to see how the Idol enjoyed it. If he liked Helena to any extent, he would have displayed indignation. Instead the corners of his mouth twitched for minutes afterward. I believe at some time Helena must have telephoned him.

Mamie Sue did a delicious old lady telling about her grandson to the two Willises, who were company to tea, that made Hie audience shake with jollity. There was a perfectly darling trace of Miss Priscilla in the way she did it, that made the Colonel almost unable to keep his seat, and Miss Priscilla laughed out loud twice. The affection I bear Mamie Sue fattens in my heart at the same rate the object does in real life.

"The way the two Willises impersonated their own silence was a triumph of art," the Idol said in my ear after it was over. It embarrassed me greatly to have him be obliged to crowd into a seat with Lovelace Peyton and me, but it was crowded everywhere else, too. If I had had my way he would have had the best seat in the house, comfortably alone.

Sam Hayes was "Old Hickory," General Andrew Jackson, the night before the battle of New Orleans. Mr. Douglass Byrd wrote his piece and Judge Luttrell, who is the son of one of that famous Tennessee hero's best friends and staff-officers, was so affected he blew his nose feelingly.

Pink would be a negro, so as for once to be rid—by the aid of burnt cork—of the disgrace of his unmasculine beauty, and he was so like Uncle Pompey that Lovelace Peyton insisted on calling out to him from the second seat until Pink had to tell him who he was before he could go on with his hen story, which was one of Uncle Pompey's own, and which was rib-aching funny.

Tony and Roxanne did the most interesting real Scout adventure, without words, and the audience sat spellbound while she fainted from heat prostration, and he put around her head a wet bandage made with his and her handkerchief, raised a signal for other Scouts to come and help, and finally took her up on his back and carried her off the platform behind the curtain. The applause was deafening, though Lovelace Peyton didn't like the scene one bit, and he kept feeling Roxanne's head after she came and sat down in front of us in the audience.

Nobody knew that I was going to be or do a thing, for I had begged them not to make me, because of the difficulty I have in managing my feet and elbows on account of their rapid growth right now. But I did! I think I have caught the family pride habit and that is what made me do it. This is how I felt. I looked down at the seats of honor reserved for the Byrdsville distinguished citizens, and saw my father sitting in one of the high places, as it were, between Judge Luttrell and Mr. Chadwell, and his face was just beaming with enjoyment of the way all those other men's sons and daughters were distinguishing themselves with their beauty and talent. And then out in the audience Judge Luttrell had Tony's mother, dressed in lovely black silk and also full of pride, while Mr. Chadwell kept nodding to Pink's mother at everything that Pink did, like there never had been a negro minstrel before. I thought of Father being the

only lonely one up on the platform and with only me to be a credit to him—and me not doing it. I prayed for an immediate plan and as I prayed, as is my custom, I acted. I asked Mr. Douglass Byrd quick, if there was time for me to do an impersonation, and he answered with the most wonderfully encouraging smile:

"Go ahead, Miss Phyllis, and you can heat them all."

Now, the only person in the world I could ever be like is my own self, or Father himself, and as I sat and looked at him the idea came. Last year the governess took me to hear Father make a speech when he presented a library building to the college from which he graduated. It was such a fine one and full of so much humor and pathos, as all speeches should be to hold the attention of an audience, that it was published in all the papers in New York, and I learned it by heart from pride over it. That was what I impersonated—my own father with him looking on!

All the others had had costumes and burnt cork and things to help them; but I had on a pink flowered organdie and pink slippers with a huge pink bow on my head, and my looks were all dead against my success. But I did succeed! I knew I would when I took my stand and looked down into Father's surprised and alarmed face. I shrugged my shoulders in my dress just as he did in his dress coat, dropped my head on one side, and pursed my mouth up on the left corner and let my right eye droop as his does. Then I began—and for that five minutes I *was* Father. The speech just rolled off my eloquent tongue and the people laughed in the right places, just as the people at the college did, and the Colonel blew his nose like a trumpet when I said the short sentences about the memorial table to be put in the hallway to the "fellows who have gone," while the end-up, with its funny little dedication to the immortals bound in leather that would live on the library shelf and the ones hound in serge and corduroy that would sit at the tables in reading-room, brought the storm of applause that sounded like a tornado.

When I stopped being Father and came to my own self I was sitting beside the Idol in the audience and watching Judge Luttrell slap Father on the back and Mr. Chadwell laughing so that he and the Colonel looked like jolly, bald-headed boys. Mr. Chadwell is as disgracefully handsome as Pink, and doesn't look much older. And I never saw my father's face look like it did to-night, and I had never hoped to see him in a position that fitted him like the one on the platform with Byrdsville's distinguished citizens. I ought to be a happy girl, and I am.

Only Tony Luttrell troubles me, he is so quiet for him; and when he walked home with me, he was as gentle and affectionate to me as if I had been sick. Could something be the matter with me and I not know it? I felt like I did when the secret was first stolen two weeks ago, though Roxanne and the Idol seem to have forgotten all about it and nobody else knows.

There is such a lovely moon out over the garden that I can't put out the light and go to bed, though I saw Roxanne put hers out a half-hour ago. I wonder why I ever started a record of myself and my friends like I am doing? But I'm glad I did; for as I turn each leaf of you, leather Louise, things seem to get brighter and happier for me, and as I look at all these clean sheets in the future I wonder what I can find to make them as lovely as the happenings on the others have been. I'm thankful for the air that makes Mother sleep, and for the moral surroundings for Father, and for the loving-kindness of my fellow-men—girls and boys—to me. Yes, I realize that being beloved is a novelty to me, but I know better than to think it will ever wear off—the pleasures of it, I mean. Good-night!

CHAPTER VII

When you live in the city, or various cities, as I have done, you have various things that distract your attention from the miracle that is spreading all over the earth when the spring comes. Do such things happen every spring, or is it just something that has unblinded my eyes? Maybe I have really caught that rosy hue habit from Roxanne; but the apple-trees this week have been almost too much for me. There are great, gnarly, old apple-trees in every spare corner of Byrdsville, where you wouldn't even expect a tree to be; and ever since I have been in this town I have been finding a new one stretching out its crooked old arms to me as if to welcome me or bar my path. There is one that grows half in and half out of Judge Luttrell's yard, so the fence has to consider it a kind of post and stop at it to begin again on the other side, while three of them are trying to completely close up the door of the court-house on the Public Square. All the streets are bordered with them, set along at ragged intervals with the tall old maples, and all the gardens and yards have regiments of them camped about the doors and walks.

Three nights ago I went to sleep in a nice orderly old town, and I awoke the next morning in the middle of a great white and pink and green bouquet, which must smell up at least to the first of the seven heavens, and which is buzzing so with bees that it sounds like an orchestra getting ready to burst out into some kind of a new, great hymn. And everybody in Byrdsville is buzzing around in a chorus with the bees, cleaning house and going visiting and shopping at the stores down on the Square. I am as industriously doing likewise as I can, and have bought things from almost everybody until my brain is feeble from trying to think up things to ask for in the different stores. Oh, the things I could buy if Roxanne would just let me!

One trouble is, there are no really poor people in Byrdsville, and those on the verge of it are taken care of by the different church societies, which look after them so carefully that they come very near stepping on each others' toes. The incident of old Mr. and Mrs. Satterwhite came near being a case in point. Mr. Satterwhite has always been a Presbyterian, and Mrs. Satterwhite disagreed with her husband seriously

enough to be a Methodist. They have no children and have been getting poorer and poorer, though keeping both honest and good, except for their religious differences. When the cold weather came this winter, they had no coal to keep their respective rheumatisms warm and they nearly froze to death arguing about which one of their respective church societies they should ask help from; and when they were both chattering cold they compromised on asking both. Then they got two loads of coal, which was more than they needed, and which offended both societies, so that when they asked for some kindling to light the fire with, both societies said let the other one send it. They had to sit up all night by turn for the rest of the winter to keep the fire, for fear it would go out while they were asleep.

Roxanne and I were terribly distressed that such a hard thing as being night watchman should happen to those old people, but the Idol said it was just as well that one should sleep while the other watched, so that they wouldn't have any mutual time to discuss religion. That was a very practical view for a genius to take of the question and I was surprised at him.

And while the situation looks very bad for churches to get into, it has been fortunate for me. I have been able to buy a lot of things at all the stores for them, because I am an Episcopalian, and just one girl can't be considered a church society. I'm the only one of my kind in town. Roxanne has helped me and we have bought with discretion as well as liberality, I think. After we had bought all the groceries Uncle Pompey could suggest to us, and in quantities as large as would go into all the corners of the kitchen of the Satterwhites' little cottage, we began to make the house as beautiful as we thought those good old people deserved, never having had anything beautiful in all their lives before.

First, we put the most expensive paper on all the walls, because we found that the largest-flowered paper was what we needed, and it happened to be a special kind that the paper man had to order by telegram to be sent by express; for neither we, nor those old people who are approaching the ends of their lives, could afford to wait. It looked lovely when it was all on and it matched the velvet carpets, which also had big flowers, good and gay.

Of course, both Roxanne and I know better than to choose plush furniture, but that was what Mrs. Satterwhite wanted, and they were going to live in the cottage, not us. Father was pleased when I told him what a big bill there would be at the furniture man's and said:

"Good for you, Phil. I didn't think you could do so well as that."

It took nearly two weeks of all our spare time, with Mamie Sue, when she could escape Belle, helping and Tony occasionally, to get the Satterwhites settled in their luxury; and then I decided to ask them both seriously and separately if there was another desire of their hearts left ungratified.

"Well," said Mr. Satterwhite, as he stretched his feet in his new velvet slippers that matched the carpet in that room, "I'd like a nice, new Methody hymn-book to be put on the table for the old lady to read outen on Sunday evenings."

It was a glorious thing to think that Father's money, ill-gotten as it is, could settle the church society quarrel; and I was so delighted that I am afraid I showed excitement when I went into the kitchen to ask Mrs. Satterwhite what she would like best now that the needs were all satisfied.

"Miss Phyllis, child, there is only one thing on earth I can think of to want. I would like to have a year's subscription to the *Presbyterian Observer* to read to Pa on Sunday nights, like I used to when we was young and strong and working enough to afford the two dollars." Remember, leather Louise, he is the Presbyterian and she is the Methodist, so this was permanent reconciliation.

My emotions are such that I can't write further about this incident, but I wish I could picture Father's face when I told him about it, 'though still he wasn't satisfied and said spend some more. How could I in a place where everybody had what they wanted and money is not needed to make them enjoy life?

My trouble was serious and I have had to confess to Roxanne about it.

"I wish I could give all the girls and boys in the class a nice present for some reason I haven't got," I said wistfully. "To Belle especially, for she has been so pleasantly not unpleasant to me for the last two weeks."

"Yes, it is a pity, if you have to spend all that money in getting other people what they want, that you can't get Belle's permanent pleasantness. It is something that would do us all good," answered Roxanne, with the sympathy that I always find in her.

"Friendship that you have to buy would not be very valuable, generally speaking," I answered, as I shook my brain for a plan. "But on the other hand," I continued, "some people can see friendship in the form of a present when they can't feel it from the heart. Belle is that kind, and that is not my fault. What I want to find is a 'tie to bind her'—speaking hymnally."

"Yes, you are right, Phyllis," answered Roxanne thoughtfully, as she and I both began to sew some little hand-made tucks that are to trim the waist of the lovely blue muslin that Roxanne bought herself, to our great joy. "I do wish we could think up something that would make Belle understand how you appreciate her and—"

But just here the Idol came and stood in the door with Lovelace Peyton on his shoulder, whom he let slide down him to the floor. Now, a month ago, I would rather have had anything happen to me than to sit in the presence of Mr. Douglass Byrd, but all that reverential awe has gone—changed, the awe gone and

only reverence left. As we feared, he has bought the new spring clothes, but we see no alarming signs of affection toward Helena Kirby yet developed by them. How magnificent he is in them, is beyond my pen to describe to you, Louise.

"What has Miss Belle done that needs an expression of appreciation on just this particular day of May?" he asked, with that delightful interest he always shows in all of us—Roxanne's friends.

And while it is trying in a way to girls whose dresses are still just at their shoe tops to be called "Miss," we never resent it from him, because it denotes real respect and not teasing like it does from some of our friends and older relations. It is a very thin line that separates ridicule from affectionate interest in girls of our age, but he is always on the right side.

"The reason Phyllis wants to do something nice for Belle is that she has the kind of disposition that requires more to make her a friend than the rest of us. It has to be something that will shock her into seeing how fond of her Phyllis is." Roxanne's explanation was so well expressed that the Idol saw the point and reason immediately.

"You want to throw a kind of bombshell friendship into the camp of her prejudices, Miss Phyllis," he said with his mouth twitching with a laugh, as if he didn't know whether we would like it or not.

"Yes, that is just what I want—an explosion, and I can't think of anything but a gold bracelet or a ring, neither of which is a skyrocket," I answered with the flow of wit that always comes in the presence of the Idol, and which, I am sure, is just a reflection of his genius.

"I know a explode that I can git you, Phyllie," said Lovelace Peyton, looking up from the bottle he was trying to get into his apron pocket, his attention having been caught by the word that interested his scientific mind.

"Not the kind Miss Phyllis wants, bug-doctor," the Idol answered with a laugh, as he filled his bag with tobacco that he keeps in a queer old jar which the Douglass grandfathers brought from England before the Revolution.

"I *kin* git a 'splode that Phyllie wants," answered Lovelace Peyton indignantly. "Phyllie always wants what I git her, even squirms; don't you, Phyllie?"

"Yes, I do," I answered quickly, for I can't even write how precious to me is the way Lovelace Peyton treats me with confidence. He comes to me now just as he goes to Roxanne for things he wants, strings or sympathy, and I keep a supply of both on hand for him. And when he brings dreadful bugs and things I never let my heart quake—that is, so he will notice it. A woolly caterpillar was the last test that I stood for him.

"I think, however," said the Idol as he prepared to go on back to the office, since he had only come up to the court-house on an errand about something, "I think if I were you, Miss Phyllis, I would try a quiet little gold bracelet. Believe me, it will work."

You have to consider the source of advice like you do that of the water you drink, and then act accordingly. If Mr. Douglass Byrd advised me to buy one of my friends a gold bracelet, I ought not to hesitate any longer than it takes to put on a hat and get my pocketbook. Besides, I hadn't got a single thing from Mr. Snider, who keeps the jewelry shop and the cigar stand at the same time in the same shop. He was very cordial and glad to see Roxanne and me, and tried to stretch out the attractiveness of his few jewels in a most surprising way. He had two gold bracelets in stock, one plain and the other with a red set in it that he thought was a ruby, but I knew it to be a garnet. The plain one was really lovely, but I knew the other would suit Belle better.

When Roxanne tried on the plain one, her lovely dark eyes just sparkled, and I could see how she loved it; but I had had my experience with the Byrds' pride and I didn't even offer it to her. My self-denial brought its reward. There were two little beauty pins just alike with small pearls set along the bar. I bought them both. First, I pinned one in the tie of my middy and then, with stern determination, I handed one to Roxanne. She looked at me doubtfully, then blushed and pinned hers in exactly the same spot on the collar of her middy, which had been made to match mine since the temporary easing of their financial strain. If she had defied me, I don't know what I should have done, but I gave her a squeeze that was the most graceful one I have ever accomplished since I have commenced to practise demonstrations. No hero or ambassador ever felt so proud of a decoration on his own chest as I did of that pin on Roxanne's. It is a triumph for one person to be able to make friends despite another's haughtiness and I felt that even the old portrait grandmother would have been glad to have Roxanne make me so happy.

Then I had an addition to my first plan. Ideas have a way of splitting off and multiplying themselves like jellyfish do in the natural history, if they are in favorable environment. I asked Mr. Snider to set all the jewelry trays upon the counter again; and beginning at the first one, I bought a nice token of my regard for all eleven of my class at the Byrd Academy.

"Now, Roxanne," I said as I left the store, "I know that this action of mine looks very vulgarly rich, and if anybody did it to me I would be as mad as Tony and all the rest will be if I offer them this jewelry without an explanation. But Mr. Snider and the seven children he has are enough to excuse any amount of vulgarity. Cigars and jewelry are very little for that large family to thrive on, and that was forty-five dollars I spent. I should think my friends would sympathize with me in having to get rid of this money in a sensible and charitable way, enough to take the tokens without any indignation when I explain it to them.

Don't you think so?

"Oh, Phyllis," said Roxanne, with the affection in her voice that I hope I am never going to get accustomed to, "nobody would refuse to do just like you want them to; and if they thought they could, you would make them see that it would be mean to do it. They will all be delighted with the presents. Can't you see Mamie Sue turning that ring around and around on her finger?"

I had bought a ring with a lovely green set in it for Mamie Sue in memory of the many horsehair ones she has had to wear to piece out her memory, which must be fat and lazy like she is herself. I am going to make my presentation apologies to them all tomorrow while we eat lunch out on the flat rock in the academy yard. Sometimes we take a double lunch and invite the boys to come over and share it with us. Roxanne and I have planned to do this. She is going to let Uncle Pompey make some one of his favorites for us. She is still indulging him in cooking materials, but thinks she will have to begin to starve again on June first. The new invention has got as far as needing some chemicals already. But it is best to climb away from an evil day upon the ever convenient rosy cloud and that is what we did as we walked along toward home.

But a strange thing happened, and funny, too. I'm blushing over my awkwardness even as I write just to you, leather Louise. But isn't it enough to make me blush to think of that scarf-pin, with the moonstone and pearl in it, that I got to give Pink, sticking in the Idol's necktie, if he hasn't already taken it off to go to bed? This is how it happened. As we came along the street, almost as far as to Miss Priscilla's, we met Tony and Mr. Douglass Byrd coming into town. I never saw two people as much excited as they both were, and when they saw us they stopped talking and looked at us like we were a surprise to them. For a minute I was startled, for I thought I heard Mr. Roger's name spoken excitedly by Tony; and I have never got over the uneasiness about him, though the great secret robbery is a thing of two weeks past. I can't help anxiously wondering what they were talking about. They stopped, and so did we, and of course Tony's Scout eyes landed right on those twin pins Roxanne and I were wearing; and before I could stop her Roxanne had told him about the present-luncheon out on the flat rock to-morrow, and Snider and how I *had* to spend money. I thought Tony was going to laugh and joke about it, as his former conduct would have been; but he got red in the face, shook as I put his pin into the lapel of his coat and spoke to me as if I were ill and needed sympathy, like he has been doing for a week. That was upsetting enough; but when the Idol looked at me with real affection beaming from his glorious eyes and said:

"Don't I get a jewel, too, Miss Phyllis?" I almost doubled up into a heap on the pavement, and it was Roxanne who came to my rescue and held all of them out for him to take his choice. He took the one I would rather have him take—a beautiful pearl, like my friendship is for him, shadowed by the moonstone, which is my unworthiness.

I'll go down early in the morning and get another pin for Pink. I wish Father was here so I could tell him about Mr. Snider and how glad he was to get the money. "Tainted money" were the words the magazine used—wouldn't feeding hungry little children take the taint off the money and the people who gave it? I believe so. I wish I had all Father's money to give away and he had to work for all we get, at something like being a lawyer or a doctor. This had been a lovely day, and I'm thankful for my happiness. Good-night!

Oh, why aren't people more careful about what they say before children, who can't always understand all that things mean! I will never forgive myself for bringing this awful thing down on Roxanne and her family as long as I live, though Mr. Douglass Byrd says it was not my fault at all. He was the one that called the present for Belle an explosion, and so put the idea into Lovelace Peyton's mind. Nobody knows yet just exactly what did happen or how bad his eyes are hurt, but the light of all the world is going out for me if Lovelace Peyton is going blind so he never can be the famous doctor he was born to be.

Old Uncle Pompey has been gasping with asthma in the kitchen since morning, and all he can tell is that Lovelace Peyton had taken some kerosene out of the can on the back porch, he thought to just mix with onions and other things he often uses to make medicines. Suddenly he heard an explosion in the back yard and ran out to find Lovelace Peyton's face all burned and him insensible. When Roxanne got to him he just moaned that he was making an explosion for me, and then the doctor gave him something to keep him from suffering with the burn while he dressed it. They can't tell about the eyes as yet.



He just moaned that he was making an explosion

Miss Prissy is with Roxanne, and they won't let me stay all night, so I had to come home. Roxanne just won't believe that he won't get all right, neither will Mr. Douglass Byrd. He was lovelier than ever to me, but with that same kind of flavor in his kindness that he and Tony both had yesterday. What can they be pitying me about?

Father has been away a week and I am so sorry. I have just written to him about the accident, and I know he will be distressed, for he was as fond of Lovelace as of anybody he knew. I believe he'll come right home.

How can I go to sleep and wait until morning to know if those lovely, blue, little-boy eyes will never look up at me again? What can I do to ease this awful anxiety? As if I didn't know what to do when I have heard so often about a Person who watches every sparrow's flight.

CHAPTER VIII

These few days have been the most wonderful I have ever spent in all my life, the saddest and the most deeply happy. When a person's friends are in trouble, it is one time you can let your heart go its own pace no matter where it carries you, and for once I have had my way about pouring out my affection on the Byrds.

Lovelace Peyton is not going to die from his dreadful burns, the doctors say; but as yet they can't tell about his eyes. They don't dare remove the bandages, and whether or not he can see cannot be decided for a week or more. He has to stay in a dark room and be very quiet, and it is like trying to prove that impossible is possible to persuade him into lying in his bed in Roxanne's room, while we exert ourselves to the point of desperation to keep him happy and amused.

Since the accident Roxanne and I have just ignored the Byrd ancestors, and I bring whatever I choose across the garden into the cottage to Lovelace Peyton. In the first place, he wouldn't eat without me, and kept asking for things I had given him to eat; so I had to tell Roxanne about my dishonesty in feeding him like I had been doing, and she was so glad that he was fat and in good condition to stand the strain of his accident that she forgave me with her arms around my neck.

I wish I could put down in black and white between your brown covers, leather Louise, how happy it makes me to sit by that squirming, bandaged little boy, and feed him out of one of his thin ancestral spoons. Not one thing will he eat without me. I believe he knows how happy it makes me, and frets for me just for that special reason. That and the fact that he expects things of me made me think up the idea that has helped us through the awfulness of the days that we had to keep him quiet.

Lovelace Peyton is not like the little boy to whom you can tell stories about bears and Little Red Ridinghood and Goldilocks in ordinary form. He'll listen to it a few minutes, and then when you come to the point where the grandmother is ill for Little Red Ridinghood to go and visit, he stops and wants to know exactly what was the matter with her; and if you say you don't know, he turns over on his pillow and won't listen to the rest of it.

"Why don't folks write in books what diseases other folks have got, Phyllie?" he asked fretfully when I told him about Tiny Tim and the "Christmas Carol." "Do you reckon that little boy had rheumatiz and didn't know any plaster for it?"

I am really reverently thankful for the idea that popped into my sorely troubled head at that moment. Roxanne had gone out to walk in the garden for a little rest, for she has had to talk to him most of the night and describe over and over what the burn on his arm looked like when the doctor dressed it. I was with him by myself for a few minutes when I found the treasure of an idea.

"Lovelace Peyton," I said, with excitement in my voice more than the doctor would have approved of, "would you like me to get a real doctor's book and read you about each disease as it comes in the book and just what the doctors use to cure it with?"

"Phyllie," he said, sitting up in bed and waving the poor bandaged hand with delight shining from under the bandage above his eyes, "you go a running and git that book as fast as you kin. I will promise to lie right still and listen all day and all night forever. Hurry!"

I called Miss Priscilla to come quick as I saw her turning in the gate, and I took my hat and started down-town for the only bookstore in Byrdsville, which is kept in the post-office by the post-master. If I couldn't find a book about diseases there, I was determined to go and beg or borrow or steal one from the doctor himself. But I found the very one I wanted. It was called "First Aid in the Family," and it described more accidents and diseases than it seemed possible for mortal man to have. It was a large book and I was glad it cost five dollars. The post-master said a man had left it there for him to sell six months ago, and that it cost too much for most of the people in Byrdsville to doctor by. He offered to send it as soon as his boy came back, but I was in too much of a hurry to get back to Lovelace Peyton to wait, so I took it in my arms and started home with it.

On the way I met Helena Kirby walking down-town with the Petway boy, and they looked right into my face and passed me without speaking. It might have been because I was carrying the big book, but I didn't know Helena was that proud. It hurts me for people to treat me that way without any reason but just dislike for me and perhaps because they think it wicked about Father's money.

Just a little farther along I met Tony, and he took the book to carry for me, and I told him about Helena and the Petway boy looking at me and not offering to speak to me. Tony got red up to the roots of his hair, being mad, and looked like he would just as soon as not eat them both alive.

"Now, see here, Phyllis," he spluttered, "don't you pay one bit of attention to what a pair of jolly idiots like those two do or say. You are all right and we all know it. No matter what happens, we're for you. See?"

"Thank you, Tony," I said gratefully, but I didn't "see," and I was so puzzled over that "no matter what happens" that I felt weak in my brain.

In a few minutes still worse happened. Belle and Mamie Sue saw us, and Belle forcibly crossed Mamie Sue over and went down the side street just to keep from meeting us—that was as plain as day. Tony got still redder and talked fast about Lovelace Peyton to keep from seeming to notice the way the girls had acted toward us. I held up my head and did likewise.

Something awful has happened to me or about me in this town and I don't know what; but it is my duty to put it all out of my mind now and give my thoughts and cheerfulness to Roxanne and Lovelace Peyton, while they need me so much. I have made up my mind to forget it.

And it was fun to read to the prostrated medicine-man out of that book as I did all afternoon. I began with abscesses and got almost as far as aneurism before the sun began to set. I never saw anybody enjoy anything as much as Lovelace Peyton did each disease as I read about it; and the more bloodcurdling the description of the suffering and more awful the treatment, the more it interested him.

"I bet if I ever get a good sharp knife, I could stick it right in the pain place in Uncle Pompey's heel so it would bleed all the sore away," he said with keen enjoyment, as I read to him about the lancing of carbuncles.

"Oh, Lovey, I almost get the diseases while Phyllis reads about them," said Roxanne with a shudder. "Do you like to hear about such awful things?"

"Yes, I do," answered Lovelace Peyton decidedly. "And I wisht you would get every one of the diseases in that book, Rosy, so I could cure you like Phyllis reads—and Uncle Pompey and Doug, too. Only not Phyllis, 'cause I need her to read the cure to me, while I do it."

While we were all laughing at Lovelace Peyton and talking about the operations he is going to perform on the inhabitants of Byrdsville as soon as he gets grown, and deciding what each one is going to have, the Idol came in and stayed with us until the soft gray twilight began to come in the windows. He was so

lovely and interesting that it was quite dark when I remembered that I must go home. Then he walked over through the garden with me, and out there under the stars he told me what the doctor had told him in the afternoon. Old Dr. Hughes is afraid to experiment with Lovelace Peyton's eyes, and says that a specialist must come from Cincinnati to examine them when they take off the bandages next week. Mr. Douglass has written to the doctor to see what it will cost, and he doesn't want Roxanne to know about it until he hears whether the doctor will come and give him time to pay for it.

"Oh, I don't believe the bug-hunter is going to have any trouble with seeing all right again and we'll get the big doctor down here to see him some way or other. Don't you worry, Miss Phyllis; I just told you because you are the best friend of all concerned, and I couldn't do anything without consulting you. See?" he asked, in the same protecting tone of voice that Tony had used in the afternoon when Belle and Mamie Sue did me that way.

After I was undressed I felt that I just must go into my mother's room for a minute; and I begged so hard that the night nurse who is a very kind lady, let me creep in for just a few seconds. I have got a theory about Mother and myself. I believe she knows when I am in the room, even if she can't show it by moving or even opening her eyes, and it is a comfort to her and me both to have me come and kneel at the foot of her bed well out of sight. I did get comforted to-night, too, and the thought that did it was this. If Father and I don't do as well as other people in the world, and get rich and do things that we ought not to, we have not had her to direct and control and comfort us like she would have done if she could; and no wonder we have strayed. A motherless girl and a wifeless man ought not to be judged in the same way other people are. I feel better now, and I'm leaving it all to God, who understands such situations as mine and Father's. Good-night, leather friend.

Somewhere back on your pages, Louise, I wrote that I was going to be thankful for the happiness and friends that I had, no matter what happened, and I am. It has happened. I am the lonely little child that got a peep through the high, barred gate into the garden where other children were playing in the sunshine, and then was put out into the dark street again. I ought not to say that, though, when I have got Mr. Douglass Byrd for a star in my darkness, as he has made himself by the way he has treated me.

I am glad I stopped by on my way to school this morning to see Roxanne and Lovelace Peyton while I was their light-hearted companion still: now I am a woman of sorrows and disgrace. Also, I am glad, if the blow had to be dealt me, it was Belle who did it, and not Mamie Sue nor one of the two Willises, nor anybody else. I have always had a strange feeling about that bracelet with the red set, anyway, and I am not surprised that she struck me with it.

"Miss Forsythe," she said, as she held it out to me all wrapped up in tissue paper and tied with a blood red string, "I will have to return your present to you, with thanks. I cannot keep a bracelet given me by a girl whose father would go like a chicken thief and rob a neighbor's shed of a valuable thing like an invention. Please excuse me!"

For a minute I stood struck dumb, and watched Belle's pink gingham skirt switch as she walked through the door of the school-room. They had all the lunch spread on the flat rock, and I thought were waiting for me while I put my desk in order just after the bell rang. And even while I watched Belle I was conscious of Mamie Sue's fat expression of distress as she paused with a biscuit spread with jam half-way to her mouth. The Willis girls looked struck even dumber than usual, and as if they didn't know what to do. I didn't give them a chance to decide on anything. I picked up my hat from the ground and walked out the gate with my head as high, as if my honor had not been laid low.

I was walking just as fast as I could past the cottage, hoping that nobody would see me before I got here to my room to realize my agony myself, when Roxanne ran out of the door to catch me at the gate.

"Oh, Phyllis, don't look like that," she exclaimed as she drew me through the gate and behind the big lilac bush that is full of purple blooms. "It doesn't make one bit of difference to me, and I love you just the same. Who told you?"

"Belle," I answered, trying to keep my face and voice steady. "Who found it out, Roxanne?"

"Oh, Tony scouted it all out, though he didn't mean to. It was that awful smelly bottle Lovey gave your father. Tony smelled it talking to Mr. Forsythe at the gate and then again in the shed. He couldn't connect them at first; but after a while he remembered, and then he began to suspect something awful—he oughtn't to have done it, but he did. He followed your father and Mr. Rogers out to the furnaces one night and—saw Mr. Rogers explain it to your father. Then Mr. Forsythe went away the next morning and Douglass began to watch Mr. Rogers, and just three days after that he found him out at the furnace at night with a workman getting some of the ovens ready to try the experiments. He couldn't do a thing, and had to let them take his discovery and do as they wanted to. Oh, truly Phyllis, it doesn't make a bit of difference in our love for you."

"How did Belle find it out, and why should they think Father is dishonest—even if Rogers is?" I asked, still as cold as ice though my head seemed to be on fire.

"That is what is nearly killing Tony," answered Roxanne, with a sob beginning to come in her voice; but she still held on to me tight, as stiff as I was. "He and Douglass have known it for a week, and they never wanted anybody else to know about it on your account. Douglass says he would rather give up ten

fortunes than hurt such a friend as you have been to us, but Tony let the secret get out by accident, and now all the town knows it. Judge Luttrell is getting out an injunction, even if Douglass won't sign it, and the Colonel is getting ready to go on the next train to find your father and—and remonstrate with him, he says."

"Tony didn't tell Belle about it on purpose, did he?" I asked to be sure. "I couldn't have stood that."

"Oh, no, it was Mamie Sue that found out part, and told Belle, without knowing she had done it, just yesterday. Mamie Sue says she wishes she never had any eyes or ears or anything to taste with, then maybe she would never get into trouble. It is all on account of people thinking she is more stupid than she is. Tony told Douglass right before her, on the street while she was giving both of them some of that fudge she had made to bring Lovelace Peyton, that Mr. Rogers had been in the telegraph office and had telegraphed your father that the experiment night before last was a success. Tony is ambitious as a Scout should always be and has learned to read the ticking of the telegraph.

"Anyway, Doug, it's a cinch that you have made one of the greatest practical inventions of the day," Tony said, forgetting Mamie Sue entirely and so did Douglass, as he answered:

"That's true, Raccoon, and if the fortune is another man's by robbery, the brains are mine. I'll get my share yet. Wait until this new idea gets into shape."

And then Roxanne went on to say that Mamie Sue said they hardly remembered her enough to politely thank her for the fudge, as they walked away talking. She went on down to Belle's; and when Belle began to say that Tony was stupid because he couldn't read his Cicero, Friday, she tried to defend him by telling how he can read telegraphy even if he can't read Latin.

Belle was mean enough to get it all from Mamie Sue without Mamie Sue suspecting that she was telling anything that would hurt me; and Belle told Helena and Helena told the ladylike Petway, who told his father, who told Judge Luttrell before night. The Judge sent for the Idol before breakfast this morning and told him that he was an idiot to let such a thing be stolen and he is beginning all kinds of prosecutions and things against Father, though my noble hearted friend won't sign them on account of his esteem for me. And, of course, the whole town knows of it and is excited. It is not astonishing that Byrdsville is wild to find out that it has reared a great inventor, only to have his first fruits stolen. I feel with Byrdsville, even if they feel against me. Some of this Roxanne told me and some of it is my own surmise that came to me as we stood behind that old lilac bush.

"I don't believe it, but if it is true, you won't let your father's having done my brother that way make any difference in the way you love us, Lovey and Douglass and me, will you, Phyllis? We just need you that much more to help us through with the starving and freezing for the new invention that we are going to take better care of." Through all my misery I ask myself if any girl in the whole wide world ever had a friend like Roxanne Byrd?

And as if having Roxanne hold me in both arms and love me beyond my wildest expectations was not enough, what should happen to me? The Idol came around the bush full of blooms where we stood, and did likewise. He put his long arms around Roxanne and me and hugged us both up like we were not any bigger than Lovelace Peyton.

"You two precious kiddies are not to pay any attention to disagreeable things that are not any of your business," he said in his wonderful voice that was as big and booming and comforting as any anthem sung in church where a sinner goes for help. That's what it sounded like to me.

"That's what I tell Phyllis, Douglass—she's more valuable than the loss of any kind of a big fortune, that we really don't need at all to make us happy, while we do need her." Roxanne was laughing and crying and hugging me so that she got herself mixed in her words in a perfectly beautiful and loving way.

I am glad that my affection for these kind friends inspired me so that I could answer them like I wanted to—at least I tried so hard to say how I felt that I almost succeeded.

"You are both the best friends that were ever created for a lonely girl," I answered, drawing out of both pairs of arms, and looking them both square in the face. "But I am my father's daughter and must suffer for his sins, if he has them. If he has done this dreadful thing, which I don't believe, then I don't deserve your friendliness, and I can't take what it is not right for me to have. I'm going home and stay there until he comes, and then if he can't explain and has to pay any penalty I'm going to do it with him."

"Oh, Phyllis, and what will Lovey do without you?" Roxanne begged, using the strongest thing she could have said to me when I thought of the little blind boy that wanted and needed me so badly.

"You will punish him and us for something we can't help," the Idol said to me with reproach in his eyes and voice that nearly killed me.

"You both have had your kind of pride about taking gifts from me ever since I have known you," I answered, looking them full in the eyes, "and you have taught me what the word means. I could take things to eat and wear from you, but my kind of pride won't let me take your friendship when you think my father has treated you like this. Good-by! I can't stay any longer to be tortured." And with that I turned and walked away from them both, forever, I am afraid.

It isn't true, it can't be! But if it is? One thing I have made up my mind to do: I am going to ask Father, if

it is all true, to let me go away from Byrdsville. I can't stay here; it will be too empty a life for me to watch them living with me out of it. I hope he will go and take Mother too. Judge Luttrell may prosecute him so he will have to.

Is this the end of the life that bloomed out in me like the apple blossoms do on the bare trees, only to be shattered? No! I hope I will bear fruit from having had so much happiness, like the apple-trees do from their blooms, and I'm going to try.

Just here I laid down Louise and went to see what I could see going on down at the cottage before dark. And there was old Uncle Pompey hanging over our garden wall smoking his pipe and just crying into his funny red bandanna handkerchief. Something tells me that he is going to miss me very much also. I am thankful for the love of this old negro, which I am sure is just the same quality as if he were white.

I think if I could just steal in for one minute and look at Lovelace Peyton's little bandaged head it would make the pain in my heart easier for having to give him up, but even that I can't do. I've found how strong pride is as well as bitter.

CHAPTER IX

Of course, I know that there are many strange things in life that seem to contradict each other and themselves in a very puzzling manner, but my disgrace has turned out in a way that nobody could have made me believe, if they had told it to me in dictionary words of six syllables. I am being befriended and honored by the whole of Byrdsville, and I don't know what to make of it. My mind refuses to explain it and my heart is just going on rejoicing over it, as I have not been able to think up any reason why it shouldn't.

Everybody now knows about the steel process that their distinguished citizen, Mr. Douglass Byrd, invented; and they all believe that Father has had it stolen and has left Byrdsville for some place where Colonel Stockell can't find him, but they are none of them mad at me about it. Of course, a load of sympathy can be as heavy to bear as one of disgrace; and when you have both the two to stagger under, you may wobble some in your conduct, as I have done these last two days. First, though my reason is convinced about Father, there is something in me that just won't believe it, and that keeps making me hope, and be passive in life, until he comes. I say nothing about it to anybody, because the proof is too great against him, and I suppose it is really more daughterly love than hope. Anyway, it is a precious feeling to me.

But one thing that troubles me is the way one friend's sorrow can throw its shadow over the lives of many others. It troubles me that Tony and Roxanne and the Colonel and some of the others are distressed about me, especially Tony. He came to see me the morning after Belle had told me all about his scouting out the secret; and if it hadn't been such an occasion I would have had to laugh at the collapsed way he looked, like he would fall to pieces if you touched him even very gently. His grin was so entirely gone that his mouth looked only the size of an ordinary human being's, and his eyes were shut down so dolefully that they were funnier than ever.

"Go on, Bubble, and shake me," he said, with a comical sadness that was hard to bear with proper respect. "Play I'm a doormat if you want to, but I cross my heart and body I didn't mean to hurt you by letting my mouth overwork at the wrong time. The Dumpling is just a sponge that sops up any old thing and lets any old body squeeze it out of her. Please say you forgive me."

"Why, Tony," I said with difficult but becoming gravity, "don't you know that I know that you didn't mean to do anything to hurt me?" I couldn't bring myself to mention Father or the shameful circumstances and I hoped he wouldn't, either.

Tony is not a mere boy; he is a kind gentleman, also, and he ignored the subject we were discussing just as carefully as I did.

"Good for you, girliky, and I hope you fully realize that this little old burg of Byrdsville is all for you and anxious to hop rig-lit into your pocket," he said most picturesquely, with relief at my not being hurt at him beginning to pull the corners of his mouth into the grin that he had put away as not suitable for the occasion.

A person who has the smile habit fixed on his face is a very valuable friend, and I was glad to see Tony put on his grin again. There were two or three questions I wanted to ask him when he was in his normal condition, and I was just going to consult him about whether it wouldn't be easier for the other girls and boys for me not to go to school—anyway until they found Father and his innocence, or knew the worst about the prosecution and other punishments that would be given him; but before I could get the words arranged in my mind to say just what I wanted to say, he began on something like the same subject himself.

"See here, Phyllis, Roxy told me that you hadn't been in to jolly the bug-grubber to-day at all, and the poor little bubble is worried about what she thinks is going to be a grouch in your system," he said, looking at me with so much confidence in my good disposition shining in his face, that it was painful to try to make him understand just how the pride disease I had caught from the Byrds was affecting me.

"Indeed you know, Tony, that it is not because I don't love Roxanne and Lovelace Peyton that I haven't been there this morning; but I just don't think it is right for me to be taking their friendship and love when everybody thinks my own father has injured them, as he has not. It is right for me to suffer for what they think he has done, until we know better, and my pride won't let me take any more of their affection when I may not deserve it." I looked away while I was talking to Tony, for I hated to see the shock fade the grin. I also hated to bring up the subject we were ignoring.

"Oh, fudge and fiddlesticks, Phyllis, don't let any old sour idea like that ball up your naturally sweet temper. You and Roxy are just women folks and had better keep out of men's business, like this wrangle between Doug and Mr. Forsythe. Trot along and do your stocking-darning and pie-fixing together as per usual schedule. And as to this mix-up—forget it!"

"I know, Tony, that Roxanne and I are just children—and what is worse, just girls—but I have to do what I think is honorable under these circumstances; and taking friendliness from Roxanne now would be just charity—I can't do it." As I spoke I felt my head straighten itself after the manner of the grandmother portrait, just as if I had been born a Byrd.

"Now, who would have thought that you could 'throw a crank' like that, Phyllis—a girl who could brace another girl as hefty as Roxy upon her shoulder to save the whole town and Dr. Snakes from being dynamited? I'm disappointed in you."

"Why, how did you know about that explosion that Lovelace Peyton almost blew us all into pieces with?" I asked with astonishment.

"Roxy sniffled it all to me this morning when she was pouring out her trouble because you hadn't been over to cheer up the bugger to-day. She told Pink and Sam and Belle and the Sponge and me all about it, and I can tell you we thrilled some. By acclamation we have elected you to lead the Kitten Patrol of the Campfire that we Scouts have been talking about helping you bubbles set up for a month. We have already decided to put you in command of the girls, because we can then expect some real good stand-bying in case of Scout trouble or excitement. We meet in the Crotch to-night to decide all the details." Tony's eyes were shining and flaring and his red hair standing straight up in his friendly excitement.

Honors are mighty apt to shock a person when they come unexpectedly, and I don't believe expected ones bring half the joy that the surprise ones do. I feel humble to think that in less than a year the boys and girls of a place like Byrdsville have found me worthy of the leadership of such a sacred thing as a Girl Scout company will be. For, of course, of all the things that boys ever were in the world, nothing is so wonderful as being Scouts like so many hundreds and hundreds have been made all over the United States in the last three years. And when the Boy Scouts do all the noble things in the noble way they do, what will be expected of the girls, now that they are being let into the organization? The boys have to pledge themselves to be clean and honorable and kind and just and charitable and brave; so, of course, the girls will have to be all that and still more. Could I?

I sat still and thought for a long time, and Tony, with his knowledge of girls, let me do it. Could I? Could a girl with a father that might have done the thing that my father is suspected of having done to a fellow-man, promise to be all or any of those things? How would she know that some little thing in her, like her father, wouldn't come up, just at the time when she was being depended on, to make her fail? This distinction was not for me!

"Tony," I said quietly, and I didn't let the tremble in my heart get into my voice at all, "whatever happens to me in my life I can't ever forget that you offered to make me the leader of the Campfire, but—I can't be it. Please don't make me say any more about it. I can't."

Tony understood. "Not a word more on the subject, Bubble; but I do want to say that you are one fine—"

But just here we were interrupted by Mamie Sue coming lumbering across the wall from the Byrd cottage, for Tony and I had been sitting on a bench out under the blooming peach-tree arbor. She sat pretty close to me and gave me a nice, good, fat-armed hug as she offered me a paper bag.

"Have some fudge, Phyllis," was all she said; but I saw Belle walking down the street with her head in the air and her skirts switching like Helena's and I knew that Mamie Sue had come through a hard fight to be friends with me. I can't say how I appreciated it, and I love Mamie Sue. Maybe she is not very smart, but a person that always has sweetness of disposition and in paper bags to offer a friend in trouble ought to be appreciated. And just as I had got hold of her nice big right arm to return the hug, around the other side of the house came Pink and Sam, with Miss Priscilla in between them.

"Phyllis dear," said Miss Prissy, as all of us got up to give her a seat, though she only took Tony's and part of mine, while the boys sat on the grass, "the boys are telling me about the Girl Scout ideas. I think it is naughty of them to say they are going to name you the Kitten Patrol, especially as your rescue of Lovey Byrd is more than likely to give you a life-saving medal to start with, as soon as the Colonel writes to New York about it."

"A medal—a—a medal like Tony's?" I gasped, as my heart stood still in awe of my own act.

"Why, of course, Bubble, you will get a medal," said Tony, with the delight that some boys might not have shown at the idea of a girl's getting up to the same height of distinction that they had attained. "Now, will you be good and be the leader of the Kittens?"

"Say, Phyllis, when you raised Roxy from the ground, did you use the other muscles of your body or depend a lot on the shoulder lift?" Sam is not so big and strong as the other boys and consequently has the greatest regard for the strength that he hasn't got.

I could only say that I didn't know what I had lifted Roxanne up to catch the bottle with—except prayers.

And while they all sat there in my garden and talked with Miss Priscilla about what she should get the Colonel to write to headquarters about me and about the dynamite and the steel and everything that was indirectly related to my disgrace, I sat quiet and prayed for some sort of strength to tell them that I maybe couldn't be a Scout, and couldn't have a medal and was hoping to move away from them to some other place to live, just as I had learned to like them better than I had dreamed one could like friends.

These boys and girls, including Miss Priscilla, haven't been used to having things happen to them to distress them, and they are so warm-hearted and sympathetic that it makes it hard to say a thing to them that would hurt them. But I couldn't, couldn't go on being a public and distinguished character, if my father were going to be a public character of another kind. If people should say, "How his life must mortify his poor daughter, noble girl, with a medal and friends and things!" that would just put me on the other side of the fence from my own parent, who needs me more than ever, if he is sinful. He isn't, but what right have I to bask in public favor while he is in outer darkness?

Then just as I was going to decline to be a member of the Campfire and beg them all not to mention it to me any more, and try not to worry over me but to just forget about me, something so horrible came over the wall, in the shape of the news that Mr. Douglass Byrd brought, that I and they forgot all about the Scouts and Kittens and medals and all that. The Idol was pale and quiet as he walked up the path to us, after skimming over the wall with one hand on it in a way that made Sam gasp with admiration. He looked past Miss Priscilla and the rest of his old friends of inherited generations in Byrdsville and straight at me, his new—but adoring—one.

"Miss Phyllis," he said, with such sadness in his voice that Mamie Sue gulped over a piece of fudge worse than usual, "Dr. Hughes has just examined Lovey's eyes and it has hurt him very much—also he thinks the sight has gone. The youngster is crying and fretting for you and they don't want him to do that under any circumstances. The only hope for his sight will be for him not to inflame his eyes. Will you come?"

Would I go—would I go across the dead body of my father's honor and my own and anybody's disgraces and any other old thing? I went so quickly that I upset Mamie Sue on the one side and Miss Priscilla almost on the other, and I didn't even wait to answer the Idol in the reverent and respectful manner that is always his due and that I always observe. Down that garden path I flew and over that wall I skimmed, like a bird with wings, or like the Idol himself, and in so little a time that I didn't even realize the journey, I was in Roxanne's room with her in one of my arms and Lovelace Peyton squeezed up in the other.

Roxanne choked her sobs down in my neck and I choked mine down in my heart as the little doctor kicked one fat little knee out from under the cover and began to squeal like a queer kind of pig as one of his arms went around and around.

"That's the way I cried when that old Dr. Hughes hurt my eyes to make 'em well, Phyllie, and you wasn't here to see him do it and tell me how red they looked and if they had got any blue around the edges like a carbuncle. Roxy can't tell disease like you kin, and now you was away from 'em and didn't see the nice ones I have got in both eyes."

The reproach in his voice was so funny and yet so sad that Roxanne and I both choked still more and held on to each other tight. I just simply couldn't say a word, and I was again made ashamed by that unruly lump in my throat that never seems to come unless something is the matter with the Byrds.

"I'm hungry, too, for some of the nice sweet charlock rookster that your cook makes me and I eats in the afternoon, right now. I waked up in the night and wanted it and you, too, Phyllie, and I wouldn't have old Doug or Roxy, neither. Now, it is always night time and Roxy wouldn't go and call you. Won't you stay with me always and read me about smallpox like you promised?"

"Always night now!" Again Roxanne and I hugged and choked, but this time I had to conquer the lump and answer him.

"Indeed, indeed, Lovelace Peyton, I'm never going to leave you any more, only to go and get the things you want. Can't I go and get the charlotte russe for you now?"

"No, Phyllie," he exclaimed, grasping with his strong little fingers my hand that lay on his pillow. "I wants smallpox now worser than I do charlocks. Then Tony can come and let me tie bandages around his leg while you go git the rookster and maybe some nice cake and oranges and candy. No; Dumpie brought me candy. You git more rags to tie up folks with. I want to fix Doug's head good 'fore he goes to bed. But read the smallpoxes right away. Begin where they throws up."

Roxanne got the book while I drew a chair by the bed and sat down to it, with gratitude drying the tears in my heart, for being forced into forgetting my pride and coming back to them again. Roxanne sat by me and held my left hand until we got to the worst part of the smallpox, and then she got pale around the mouth and went out of the room.

"Read the sickest part again, Phyllie, and then turn and read the medicine for it," he had just demanded

when she fled.

And for the rest of the afternoon I sat by him and went through all the different stages of smallpox until, feeling each one acutely as I did, it is a wonder I was not pock-marked. When he fell asleep at last he was holding fast to one of my hands for fear I would get away with the precious book.

When I could slip his fingers from mine, I tried to steal tiptoe through the hall so as not to wake Roxanne, who was lying asleep, I hoped, on the sofa in the hall, but she opened her great, troubled, dark eyes and saw me before I got to the door.

"Oh, Phyllis," she said and held out her arms to me. Somehow it seems to me I have learned very quickly how to take a person I love in my arms without awkwardness—that is for a girl who never had anybody to take before—and I sat down and snuggled Roxanne in a manner comfortable to us both. "Do you think it is possible that Lovey is going to be—be blind?" she asked me in a small voice that could hardly dare utter the horrible words.

"I came in such a hurry when Mr. Douglass Byrd called me that I didn't quite understand what Dr. Hughes said or found," I answered.

"When he took the bandages off, Lovey didn't seem to see at all, but the lids are still so swollen that he is not sure they are closed. I don't believe he knows what to do, Phyllis, and that is what scares me. But is there any great thing a blind man can do except be a musician? Lovey can't sing much."

I verily believe that Roxanne Byrd would have gone on and planned some kind of a career of blind genius for Lovelace Peyton while waiting to see if he was to lose his eyes, if the Idol hadn't come into the hall at that moment.

He moved Roxanne over and sat down between us and began to talk seriously to us, like I was a valued member of the Byrd family.

"I have just had a long talk with Dr. Hughes, and he says that Lovelace Peyton will have to have a specialist examine his eyes and direct the treatment, if the sight is to be saved. We will have to think up a plan to get a great doctor from Cincinnati down to Byrdsville, Tennessee."

"But it will cost so much and where—?" Roxanne stopped quickly for fear of hurting the Idol's feelings and not from my presence. One of the great things about the Byrds is that they can forget riches in such a way as not even to know or realize that they haven't them.

"We'll get it," answered the Idol with his heroic look, the like of which I do not believe a man ever owned before. "Things are going to go straight, now that Miss Phyllis has got the bugger all happy with the medical course again. What would all of us do without her?" He stood up to light his pipe and his fingers trembled.

Anybody else but a great man, born of a great family like the Byrds, would have hurt my feelings by saying apologetic things about the tragedy between us, but the Idol just ignored it and I was made one of them again in their trouble. Suddenly something popped into my mind that I could do to get the money for them to save Lovelace Peyton's eyes and not hurt the family pride. There is no doubt about it, when a girl gets so she can ask God to help her and think at the same time, she can find an inspiration when she needs it. I may be in trouble and disgraced, but I've got Him on my side, and I can yet do things when my friends have such dire needs as a doctor. I am afraid to write it even to you, leather Louise.

Suddenly I stood up beside Mr. Douglass, and looked down at Roxanne, and then up at him.

"Do both of you trust me enough to let me try to help if I do it with my own brains and not—not my father's money?" I asked.

For a moment they both looked at me, and then the Idol took my hand in his and looked me in the eyes just as square as I looked at him.

"Yes," he said in a voice that grows more wonderful the more you love and know him, "you are one of us and you can plan with us all you are able to."

"Yes, Phyllis; you have never offered or asked us to do anything we ought not to, and if you can think with us I know it will help," Roxanne said, looking up at me trustfully.

Again I make record, Louise, that my course with the Byrd family pride has conquered it, even if I did display symptoms of it myself by staying away from the cottage so long. I'm in a very queer position. I have not made everybody understand that I can't be a Girl Scout and I am a dishonored person in Byrdsville, with all sorts of distinctions offered me. But this scheme I have thought up to get the doctor here has made me hold my breath so that I can hardly write, and I can't worry over honors and medals and things. I will do it! I will! Good-night!

CHAPTER X

Some people are so afflicted with energy that their days are twenty-five and a half hours long. Mine are

twenty-six just now. If it were not for the fact that several hours each day I am under the influence of Roxanne's repose, I suspect I would run down like a clock that has exhausted its mainspring. Mamie Sue says that Belle says Roxanne is shiftless, but Belle is unable to distinguish shiftlessness from noble composure under difficulties. I told Mamie Sue that it would be best for her to forget all that Belle has ever said to her; and she is trying.

Still, though I understand it perfectly, it is positively queer to hear Roxanne talk about what the great doctor is going to do for Lovelace Peyton's eyes, and they haven't done one thing about getting him here from Cincinnati. The Idol has gone back to the obscurity of the shed, and I suppose he is making up some plan about the doctor, while he is working with his furnaces and retorts and things, but he hasn't told one yet, and it is two whole days. I do hope and pray that my plan will succeed without his having to bother with a common thing like money.

I have had to go to school these two days and then I have to study medicine with Lovelace Peyton almost all of every afternoon, so I haven't much time; but I think by to-morrow night I will have told about a thousand dollars' worth of things about my father and I can send it all off to Cousin Gilmore Lewis. The time the butler in our North Shore cottage, summer before last, told the newspapers so many things about the way Father and his family lived, he got three hundred dollars for it; so it does seem that if his own daughter told almost a whole small book about Father it would be worth at least a thousand dollars to a big magazine that prints things about everything in the world.

I heard Cousin Gilmore tell Father last spring that it wouldn't be long before he got to him in his magazine, and I have two reasons for wanting to beat the one who is going to write Father up. One is that I need the money for Lovelace Peyton's eyes, and the other is that before all this comes out about Father and the stolen steel patent, I want to write about him like he might be, and ignore what the world may consider him. I want to tell about him like I feel toward him and not like I know people will think he is. If the weekly comes out every week, they ought to print what I say about a week from Saturday, and maybe it will take Judge Luttrell that long to get his prosecution ready. The Judge doesn't work much harder than others in Byrdsville, and I can trust him to be slow. Of course, I couldn't write a thousand dollars' worth of things about just Father himself, but I am telling all about Byrdsville, which is his present home, and how distinguished and beloved he is in it.

A lot I have written I have just copied down from you, Louise—who are a better friend than I knew when I bought you—such as the descriptions of the apple-trees and landscape and Father's charity to Mr. and Mrs. Satterwhite. It filled up two pages just to mention the things he gave them, and it was a page more when I told a few of the grateful things they said to me. I left myself out and had them say the things right to him. What his generosity in the matter of buying jewelry from Mr. Snider did for the seven children—with just three of the names mentioned, because I think Sally Geraldine, Judy Claudia, and Tom Roderick are interesting as names—made more than a page more.

I wrote until nearly twelve o'clock last night about the Byrds and their family history and how wonderful it is for Father to have made such friends as they are. I just described the Idol as he really is and told what a great inventor he is without dwelling on what he invented, because that will be published when Judge Luttrell gets out the injunction.

I mentioned Lovelace Peyton's accident in detail, because some day when he is a world-famous surgeon a good account of it will be valuable. That took up fourteen pages. I am going to send that kodak picture Tony took of Roxanne, with a good description of her to be printed under it.

Nobody could really give a good history of the Byrd cottage without at least a half dozen pages of Uncle Pompey and what he cooks. I am going to get the nutcake recipe and paste it on the margin. All women readers will like that if they try it once.

And just as I was so tired that I was about to fall into the ink-well it occurred to me to describe faithfully the great-grandmother Byrd portrait, especially about her being such a friend of George Washington's wife and about the English earl who fell in love with her, but grandfather Byrd was the victor to carry off the prize. It gave Father credit just to have bought the house they lived in.

I got up early this morning and wrote about what good friends he has made of Judge Luttrell and Mr. Chadwell, and some of the other gentlemen. I told what a great lawyer the Judge is and I here mentioned Tony's Scout medal, too, for if a Scout medal is not distinguished, I don't know what is.

And writing about Tony's medal reminded me that I would have to write something about myself, or seem to be prudish. I left that until to-night, and I have just finished it. I had to get in two pages about Miss Priscilla and the Colonel before I began on myself. I defended her for not marrying him unless she wants to, and I moralized five sentences on a woman's right not to marry.

Then I thought that when it is published all over the United States, Mamie Sue might accidentally see a copy and be hurt that she was not in it, so I put her recipe for fudge in with her name signed to it. I grouped Pink and Sam and the two Willises and some others as prominent citizens who were all Father's friends, with just slight mention of their being his guest on the hay-ride. I left Belle and Helena and the Petway silk-tie-boy out. I thought it was kindness.

Then when I got to myself I hadn't a word to say because I had used all the words in the dictionary several times over about the others, so I just wrote this that I copy down in order to see again how it looks: "Mr. Forsythe has one child, Phyllis. She is a tall, strong girl with tan hair, and she shares his

friendship for Byrdsville enthusiastically." Now, if that isn't the truth, I don't know what is, and what more could I say about myself? That is a very dignified and correct account of me.

I have only to write the note to Cousin Gilmore to tell him that a thousand dollars is the price and not to let it come out later than next Saturday, and tie it up in a box for the express. As I say, I think just lately I have worked more than twenty-four hours a day. Good-night!

I am glad that article for the weekly was finished yesterday, and expressed, for if I hadn't finished it, I might have had to wait some time. I must study hard now, for examinations begin next week, and I am so far behind that it is difficult for me to even understand what they are talking about in class, and I have been able to recite purely by accident. It is one of the strange and unaccountable things that happen in a person's life that hard study or the lack of it has no real influence on the way a girl or boy recites. If I am well prepared on a lesson, the teacher always asks me something that had slipped my most diligent hunt, and if I don't know a thing about the lesson she asks me a question about something I do know about. Such is school life!

And it is a fortunate thing for me that next week is examination, for everybody is too worried and busy to notice me and my affairs, and they don't talk Scouts or parties or anything that I might be embarrassed about on account of my position. Quadratics are embarrassing to everybody. I have to study. Good-night.

I did the Idol a dreadful injustice when I felt that he had gone to work on another of his inventions and had not made a plan for Lovelace Peyton's eyes. I didn't write down that I had felt hard toward him, for that would have seemed disloyal, but I did. He wrote right up to the doctor in Cincinnati and asked him to come on the next train and the heartless man telegraphed that it would cost a thousand dollars for him to come and it would have to be guaranteed. No wonder the Idol was white and still for a whole day. Now he has thought up a plan and it is a sacrifice, but he and Roxanne are going to do it, if I can't get the thousand by telegram, as I asked Cousin Gilmore to send it by Monday morning—which they don't know about yet. I hate to write the sacrifice down—it seems a desecration! They are going to sell one of the foundation stones of the Byrd family pride for this vulgar money they need for the doctor from Cincinnati. I can't bear to think about it, though I have never seen the ancestral stone, and it is only a few musty papers, kept in the vault at the Byrdsville County Bank. They are letters from George Washington and other generals to one of the Byrd ancestors, written during the Revolution about some of the great stratagems they wanted him to execute for them with his regiment, which was a very fine one. They hope that they're worth much more than any thousand dollars, and they are to be the price of Lovelace Peyton's eyes. The Idol has written about them and he hopes to get the money immediately by telegraph, and send for the doctor the first of next week. That is, if God doesn't let me get my telegram before theirs. He is going to, my faith makes me believe.

And Oh! I do want my composition to be printed so the world may know what a good man my father could be, if he would just give up his thirst for money. It may keep other young men from following in his footsteps, instead of doing like Judge Luttrell and other Byrdsville men.

"Of course, Phyllis, it is an awful thing to give up a part of your inheritance like those papers are, but then Lovey's eyes are still more valuable to the Byrd family," Roxanne said, as we were discussing the sacrifice. "He is going to be such a great doctor that he will make history himself and, of course, we will have copies of the originals; and when people are writing Douglass's and Lovey's biographies they can go and see the originals. And after the eye-doctor is paid, we will have a lot left over for this new thing Douglass is inventing. He just told me about it last night, and I can tell you now."

"Don't tell me, Roxanne, don't!" I interrupted her quickly. The blood dyed my face so red that I felt as if I could wipe it off with my handkerchief, if I tried.

And Roxanne, instead of blushing, got pale and put her arm around my neck. Real love always has the right thing to say at the right time.

"Phyllis," she whispered in a tickling fashion right against my ear, "when Douglass told me about it last night he came back in my room to say, 'Don't tell a single soul but Phyllis.'"

If some accident should happen to make me famous, I wish the person that writes my biography could put down how I felt when Roxanne whispered that to me. I choked a little bit and Roxanne hugged the choke and was just beginning to tell me about the experiment when Lovelace Peyton called us to come to him.

He is dreadfully spoiled since he has had to keep so still all the time, but we try to do just as he says. He lies there in bed and thinks up all the impossible things that might be done and then asks us to do them. He longed so for "squirms" that Tony got a wooden box and made little divisions and brings him in a lot of new ones almost every day. They fill Roxanne's days and nights with terror. And it is upsetting to see the fishing-worms in the dirt, while the hop-toad stays out on the bed a good deal of the time; but we have to stand it and smile at it in our voices while talking to him, even if we have terror in our faces. Yesterday Uncle Pompey spent most of his time catching the chickens and bringing them in for him to feel, and Lovelace Peyton has a box of straw on a chair by the bed, with a hen tied in it, setting on a dozen eggs.

But a thing that stops my breath with pain is, that I am afraid that Lovelace Peyton is beginning to think about being blind, and my throat aches while I write what happened when Roxanne left him with me after he had called us.

"Do you want me to read the medicine book, now, Lovelace Peyton? Mumps comes next," I said, as I sat down by the head of the bed, nearer than I liked to the setting hen.

"No, Phyllie," he answered in a queer, unlikelike way. "Please find blind eyes and read all about them to me."

"Oh, they are not interesting," I said, and the lump rose so I could hardly breathe. "Let me read measles, if you don't think you will like mumps. Do you remember that experiment about cutting away a piece of the heart itself that the man tried? Let me read that again." I was pleading with him so that my voice began to tremble.

"Please let me put my hand on your face, Phyllie, so if I kin git you to tell the truth to me, I kin feel if you cry," he said as he reached up and put one little hand that is getting white and weak against my cheek. I forced my eyes to drink up the tears that they had let get as far as my lashes, and put my arm under his head and cuddled him against my shoulder, my shoulder that has had to learn to cuddle since he got hurt.

"Is I going to be blind, Phyllie, and kin they be a blind doctor, if I am?" he asked, with his baby mouth set with the Byrd family expression, the first time I had ever seen it on his face.

"Oh, no, Lovelace Peyton, No!" I exclaimed, hugging him up closer. "A great big doctor is coming on the cars in just a few days to make you well."

"But *kin* a doctor be a blind man, Phyllie," he asked again, with his mouth still set.

"Yes, Lovelace Peyton, if you are the blind man," I answered as positively as I felt. It is true for if he is blind, then there will be a blind doctor in the world and a famous one at that.

"Will you always go with me to tell me how the folks and sores and blood and things look, Phyllie, so I kin give the right medicine?" he asked, curling his fingers around mine in a still tighter grasp.

"Yes, I will, indeed I will," I answered, with words that pushed their way from my heart.

And just then Tony came in with Pink, in such a dejected manner that I hardly knew them. I knew from their looks and my own feelings that it was the quadratics we were going to have on examination Tuesday, and my deepest sympathy went out to them.

"Say, Dr. Snakes," said Tony solemnly, as he sat down almost upon the toad on the bed by Lovey, "I've brought Pink, the Rosebud, to be operated on at my expense entirely. I have been trying to put algebra into his head for a solid hour, and now I want it split open so I can just chuck the book in whole to save my time. Shall I go get the axe?"

And Lovelace Peyton laughed just as much at Tony as the rest of us did, though the hen got frightened and began to squawk so that both Tony and Pink had to work to tie her down tighter. They didn't need me right then, so I slipped out and went home through the garden.

Oh, that doctor must come down here quick to see about those valuable eyes! I don't dare think what I will do if the article about Father fails, but I feel sure it won't. Still my heart beats as if it couldn't get all the blood it needs—and that reminds me that physiology comes on Wednesday. I ought to study, but I can't.

And another thing that is worrying me is, that I didn't go to see what Mrs. Satterwhite wanted when she sent for me, and it might be that I could have spent some money if I had found out what she would like to have. I have been so busy and so scared that I haven't been down to the Public Square this week, and now I will have to go and shop all morning if I am to keep up the amount of the monthly bills.

I wonder if Miss Priscilla would let me express my admiration for her by buying her one of those lovely boxes of paper with gold letters on each piece. I don't know anybody else in Byrdsville that they seem to match, and they cost five dollars, which the postmaster needs badly from the looks of his fringed cuffs and collars. Accepting a present is bestowing affectionate regard on the person that offers it, and I believe Miss Prissy feels that way about me. She must feel in her heart that I do not blame her course of conduct to the Colonel like the rest of Byrdsville does. I am more charitable to faults than others. I have to be. I believe I will risk the box of paper.

But on the other hand, I am very fond of the Colonel and I feel that I would like him to know that I think he is very noble not to desert Miss Priscilla, even if she doesn't want to marry him. He is a faithful friend. I wonder if he would like that lovely long-stemmed pipe that is in the drug store? And I feel like I ought to do it, not to be partial. I won't buy him tobacco, for I feel sure that is a thing that women ought to fear to do for a man.

This is a very lonely night, and I can't write any more because it reminds me to be uneasy about the express package in which I sent the article to Gilmore's Weekly.

I am going down to sit in my mother's room in a dark corner to be comforted. That is my right and hers, too. I wonder if girls that have mothers that can be real mothers, tell them all their troubles and

perplexities and anxieties, or do girls that have mothers not have the other things to tell them?

But one thing before I close the ink-well I must record to my own satisfaction, though it seems mean to write it down. The Idol has no idea of paying any kind of attentions to Helena Kirby and it is all settled that he doesn't like her; or, rather, doesn't know she is living on the earth, which is still better. His lovely new gray suit didn't affect him at all in regard to her. Roxanne told me all about it several days ago.

Of course, everybody in Byrdsville has been very much interested and sorry over Lovelace Peyton's explosion and his eyes, and they have all come and said so, and they hardly ever come empty-handed. Roxanne has got nice and plump eating the things, and so has Uncle Pompey, after their long cornmeal fast during the time of invention number one.

But Belle's mother, Mrs. Kirby, and Helena hadn't come or done a single thing, until this occurred day before yesterday. Helena happened of her own accord to meet the Idol right at the cottage gate when he came home from the furnace, and she was most untastefully beautifully dressed. She had a large pink rose in her hand like a girl in a story-book. She stopped to smile on him with extreme favor and give him the rose, also out of a book. Roxanne saw and heard it all, because she couldn't help it, from the window.

"Thank you, Miss Helena," he said with a grand bow. "I know Lovey will feel complimented at your thinking about him, and the rose will be lovely for him to smell and feel. He is better to-day, we hope—at least not so nervous."

Roxanne says Helena's expression was of one completely surprised, and she went on down the street without any more use of the smile or the red silk and lace dress. If a man is at all interested in a girl, he would be sure to get more pleasure and conversation than that out of a rose, I feel sure. Oh, a genius has to be guarded from so many things!

This is unkindness I've written, but I'm so nervous to-night over the thousand dollars that might not come for the article that I cannot control my pen. Good-night again, Louise.

CHAPTER XI

This is Saturday night, or Sunday morning, I am not sure which, as I have let my clock and watch both run down, for I have not had time to wind them; but however late it is, I am going to write about all this remarkableness, to you, leather Louise, so I will never forget how it all really happened. And writing it may make me believe it is true, though now it all *will* seem a dream.

I got up early on account of the quadratics and had a contest, that lasted until ten o'clock, between them and a very overburdened mind. I conquered, but at what cost!

But still, from the fight, one of the gratifications of my life came to me in the shape of the chance to help Belle. Mamie Sue has given up the study of algebra forever, and is going to take botany instead, but Belle is still having dreadful struggles. Mamie Sue told me about Belle having a wet towel around her head all night and other really tragic things that made me lose all my hurt at her and filled me with extreme sympathy. I was over at Roxanne's on my way to read diphtheria to Lovelace Peyton, and just as Mamie Sue was describing how the poor girl had to put her feet in hot water to take the chill off of them, down the street came Belle looking all that Mamie Sue had said of her. My heart was so wrung that I spoke before I had time to let her manner daunt me.

"Oh, Belle," I said, with hasty enthusiasm, "I worked a lot this morning and I can solve them all now in the easiest way. Let me show you."

"I—I wish you would, Phyllis, and thank you," she answered in a meek voice that was not hers at all. It had a nice, mournful, friendly tone to it that I wish it could keep even when the cause for sorrow is removed, which I succeeded in doing in about another hour of hard manual labor, if you call pounding manual labor. It is!

Roxanne sat down beside us, and we sent Mamie Sue in to keep Lovelace Peyton quiet with her company; only to use the fudge from her pocket in case she couldn't succeed. We found them both later with chocolate smeared on their faces; but Lovelace Peyton likes Mamie Sue, for her easy nature is most lovable.

"Thank you, Phyllis," said Belle, when we had figured the last formula as simply as I had found out how to do it. "I have always thought that you are as smart as anybody in the class, and I now think—"

I wish Belle had had time to finish that sentence, for I don't believe she will be in such a nice temper for a long time; but we were interrupted by Tony and the Colonel and Miss Priscilla coming past my house and into the cottage front gate. The Colonel was dressed up in his white vest and Sunday hat, and Miss Priscilla was flying more ribbons and ruffles than usual, while I never saw Tony's grin quite so broad and his freckles shone out more than ever, as they always do when he is excited.

"Miss Phyllis," said the Colonel, in his grand manner that everybody in Byrdsville tries to copy when there is anything important to be said, especially in public, like the mayor does in his speeches, "I have come to announce to you that this morning's mail has brought a great honor to you, and through you, to

Byrdsville. Allow me to hand you this medal that is given you for the heroic feat of life-saving by the Girl Scouts of America, called, I believe, the Organization of the Campfire. I wrote on to inform the authorities of the deed of the Patrol Leader of the Palefaces, as your Girl Scout band is named, and this letter, with the accompanying medal, is the result. I am informally showing you the medal now, but the letter will be read and the medal presented at the commencement exercises of the Byrd Academy." And with a low bow that crinkled the stiff white vest, the Colonel handed me the medal.



The Colonel handed me the medal

I was paralyzed—real paralysis of both mind and body, especially legs and tongue—and I believe I would have been sitting there on the front steps of the cottage yet, in a dumb and stupid manner, with them all looking at me, if Tony Luttrell who, as I have remarked before, is a very understanding person, though a boy, hadn't flared his eyes and mewed under his breath. Then we all laughed so loud that it brought Mamie Sue to the door though Lovelace Peyton called so loudly that Roxanne had to run to him; and so did Mamie Sue, with the treacherous chocolate smears on her mouth, after having promised not to give it to him unless she just had to.

"Phyllis, if Tony says Kitten Patrol to you one single time more, something will have to be done to him that is serious," said Miss Priscilla, frowning at Tony with a frown that only seemed to bring out the dimple in her left cheek. "Now congratulate her nicely, Tony!"

"Madam," said Tony, straightening up and looking so much like the Colonel that it was funny (but of course Tony has learned impersonation), "accept my heartfelt congratulations for thus achieving a triumph of kittenism. Will that do, Miss Prissy Bubble?" And again we all laughed, the Colonel the most of all, and even Belle a little, too.

"Phyllis, you are one perfectly good brick," Tony said suddenly, dropping the teasing of Miss Priscilla from his voice; and he looked at me with just as affectionate an expression in his squinty eyes as when he looks at Pink Chadwell. It is a great thing for a girl to feel that a fine boy likes her as much as he does his most chosen boy comrade. I felt that keenly.

"Thanks, everybody," I managed to say in an awkward way that mortified me into being unable to patch it up with any kind of brilliant remark following.

One of the things that had struck me so dumb was that I thought I had refused to be the Girl Scout Leader because of my disgrace, and nobody had paid any attention to my refusal. Thus it is, a person cannot escape either fame or disgrace because other people take more interest in both than you do yourself, and do not let you forget.

"And now that the Colonel has made you his speech, Phyllis," said Miss Priscilla, "I want you to come down to the Presbyterian Church parlors with me to a joint meeting of our Relief Society with the Methodist Relief. They want to make you an honorary member of both on account of the way you have dealt with the Satterwhites, who have for years been one of the greatest troubles to all of us. Of course this is not a medal, but it is an expression of hearty esteem, and I hope they will get the meeting over

nicely without any discussion or argument coming up from either side on the charity question."

By that time I was so numb from having shocks that I let her and the Colonel lead me down the street, while Tony went in to keep Lovelace Peyton from fretting for the diphtheria lesson until I could come back.

Mrs. Luttrell made me the Methodist speech and Mrs. Willis the Presbyterian one, and they said so much that I felt sure they were glad that I was only expected to say "Thank you!" and then sit down while they all offered different resolutions about different things that were never exactly decided but voted on, nevertheless.

When we came out of the church, I told Miss Priscilla about the box of paper in such a determined tone of voice that she didn't refuse it at all, and went with me to buy the pipe for the Colonel, which I know will make it very valuable to him when I tell him who helped select it. It is a very interesting thing to be neighbor and friend to a mysterious love affair that is one of the traditions of Byrdsville. I believe I have solved the why of the failure of their marriage to come off, but until I am certain I won't even write it to you, Louise.

On my way home, I am glad to record, I took time to do a little shopping. I bought some buckets we didn't need from one of the littlest shops in town, some more groceries for the Satterwhites, a bolt of gingham to make Sallie Geraldine and Judy Claudia some aprons, then hurried back on the wings of anxiety to the bedside of Lovelace Peyton, to get the diphtheria started. As I ran I could just feel him thrashing around in the bed and persecuting Roxanne and Mamie Sue, if she had not already escaped for her life.

But as fast as I tried to go, I met an interruption on the way up Providence Road, that was agreeable although detaining from duty. Tony and Pink and Sam stopped me and told me that they were just on their way to bring me to the Crotch, and that I would be the first strange person that had ever seen it, since they had fixed it up in the Luttrell barn loft to have Scout meetings in. Mr. Douglass had planned and helped them with it, and they said there never was such a place of interest in Byrdsville. The reason they were going to show me was that I must get the empty room over the garage Father has turned the old family stable of the Byrds into, to make a wigwam for the Paleface Patrol to have meetings and keep things in. They had asked Mamie Sue to go with me because it would take two girls to remember all they saw, and that would be the last time we could come there, though they would come often to the Wigwam if we wanted them to show us how to be as scouty as possible.

Just then Mamie Sue came up, and she either snorted with indignation or choked with candy, I cannot tell which; but because we had to, we accepted their kind invitation with gratitude. We stopped at the house first and told Mrs. Luttrell we were going to the barn with the boys, and she said not to get hurt or fall, and gave us a tea-cake all around. Mamie Sue held the plate and happened to get two, not at all by intention, for they were stuck together.

Tony swung up from the horse trough to the loft by a pole, while Sam and Pink stayed to push us up. I went up just as easily as Tony did, before they had time to push me one inch, but poor Mamie Sue stuck halfway through the trap-door and we thought we would never be able to get her either up or down without calling out the fire-company, as Sam suggested; but she kept astonishingly cool herself and wiggled in just the way Tony told her to, and at last got up. She said she knew that she could fall down all right, when the time came to go, so for us not to worry about that, and we proceeded to enjoy the Crotch.

I never dreamed boys could get together so many remarkable things and make it so interesting to tell about them. The big kettle to boil water and the poles and the sticks and the blankets and tin cups and plates were in one corner and a shelf held the knapsacks with the "first aid" things in the opposite corner. All of Sam's bird-eggs, the collection of which he had seen the error of, and had to give up when he became a Scout, was on a table by the window, and his butterflies were pinned on large pieces of brown paper on the wall and looked like a beautiful decoration.

And while we looked at the things it had taken the boys so long to collect, I rejoiced that I could manage to spend a lot of money to fix up the Wigwam, and told them about each thing that I could buy, as I thought it up, from seeing something that they had.

"Say, Bubble, is the long pole for exercise going to be braced so the Dumpling can go over without danger?" said Tony, in the teasing voice he uses to girls, that doesn't make them mad.

"I think we ought to have every single thing that girls can use to make them as strong as boys," I answered. "When girls are strong enough not to be any burden, the boys will take them everywhere they go and everybody will have just twice as much fun."

"I suppose you would like to make the boys learn to do tatting and sewing to let them in on that sort of kitten gatherings," said Sam, with a laugh that was not so nice as Tony's.

"We would, if it wasn't for the fact that Petway does the knitting act so well that he is a perfect lady. We never could equal him," answered Tony, with jolly good humor to save our feelings from being hurt by Sam.

"Well, I don't believe it will hurt—" I was just going to say, when we heard Uncle Pompey, calling down in the barn for me to please come quick before Lovelace Peyton killed them all dead.

We all slid down, including Mamie Sue, with astonishing grace, and I promised to begin to fix the Wigwam next week. I promised, but a pain hit my heart. Did I know that I would be in Byrdsville next week or ever again? What would Father do when that prosecution found him? For ten days I had not been letting myself think about the future, but it seems that every minute I live in Byrdsville, my heart winds around my friends and theirs around mine. To take me away now would be to tear me—but where was Father, and why didn't I hear what he is going to do and have done to him?

As I once more hurried down the street to the diphtheria lesson, it seemed to me that Byrdsville broke on me all suddenly as a lovely and maybe to-be-lost vision. All the leaves have come out on the trees and vines now, and everybody's yard is in bloom and is full of sweet odors. Doors and windows stand wide open and people sit on their front porches and visit back and forth like every evening was a great big party. And amid it all I have felt like I belonged to something for the first time in my life.

Then suddenly it came true that now I do belong. This is how it happened! Just as I had got to Lovelace Peyton and soothed him by a few lines of the symptoms of fever and nausea and headache that come first in diphtheria, Roxanne stood at the door with a telegram in her hand for me, and my heart stopped beating while it took leaps all over my body, about fifty to the second. I promised Lovelace Peyton a half dozen rolls of antiseptic bandages and a paper of sticking-plaster and a June-bug, if I could find one, to let me into the living-hall to read it. I felt that if it said, "No," about the secret article I couldn't trust myself not to let him know that something was the matter.

It didn't say "No!" Wait, I'll copy it, Louise!

A payment of one thousand dollars for articles from you will be in Byrdsville on Saturday. Letter follows.

COUSIN GILMORE.

My knees shook under me, and my eyes couldn't take in the letters well, but I asked Roxanne, who was standing waiting to hear what the telegram could be about, just as a friend should feel over a telegram, to run out to the shed and get our Idol quick, and I would tell them all about it together. He came in looking perfectly beautiful with his coat off and a big apron on him. His eyes were just as excited as mine felt, now that the mist had cleared, and it seemed to me even in that moment that no other thousand dollars in the world could have brought so much suspense and excitement as this one had.

But I knew that I might have a battle to fight in which I must win, and I steadied my nerves and made myself feel like Father looks when he reads important letters and begins to dictate answers in telegrams.

"Mr. Douglass Byrd," I said, perfectly coolly over my own inward volcano, "you remember you promised me that if I could use my own brains on a plan to get the doctor here for Lovelace Peyton's eyes, you would let me do it?"

"Yes, I said just about that," he answered me, and he looked in my eyes in a depending way that was so like Lovelace Peyton used to do that again the mist came over my eyes. I am getting to have that proper mist now instead of the choke, and I am glad, because it can be hid better than a choke.

"Well, I found the plan and worked it for us, and I will have the thousand dollars by night-time, and we can get the doctor from Cincinnati by to-morrow, and have it all over before the algebra examination on Monday," I answered.

Then, in very many less words than I have used to tell about it to you, Louise, I told him what I had done, with Roxanne standing with her arm across my shoulders, that trembled with excitement. To cap off the climax of the story in proper fashion, as we are taught in the rhetoric to do, I handed him the telegram—and I felt like the Colonel looks when I did it. He stood for what seemed hours, with the telegram in his hand, and something makes me suspect that he was having the same hard time as I was having with a choke, only this was the first time and it came very near resulting in weeping, which I had never done up to that time.

"It is a wonderful thing for you to have done, dear," he said at last, with a look that got down to the core of my inexperienced heart and made it thump uncomfortably. "And if there were no other way to get the doctor for the kiddy's eyes I would accept this loan gladly, but I have heard in the morning mail, that I can sell the Washington letters and I am going immediately to arrange about it that way. You know, though, how great it was of you to do this, and how it makes us all love you. We don't have to tell—"

But here he was interrupted by an avalanche of words that must have been dammed up in me for all the fifteen years of my life for that special occasion, and I delivered them with an eloquence that must have equaled that famous valedictory of Colonel Stockell's at the Byrd Academy, the year he left for the war. I told him just what a lonely life had been broken into by the sunshine of Roxanne's and Lovelace Peyton's and his family affection for me, and now they were just the core of my heart, which he was wounding. I described in detail how I had suffered when Roxanne and Lovelace Peyton had been hungry, and had been brought to the dishonesty of feeding him in private, with never a word of my suffering to hurt that Byrd family pride that they are turning as a weapon on me. I even mentioned the patches on his trousers and the break in Roxanne's shoes that had been patches and rents in my own heart. I tried to make them see how hard it had been when I have been commanded to buy things for people that I didn't care about hardly at all, except as fellow-beings, when I was hungry to give what was needed to my most beloved. By this time I had got to the point of exaltation, and Roxanne had hid her head on my shoulder, while that Idol's eyes were so wide with astonishment that I thought he would never be able to get them to normal

size again. "And after Lovelace Peyton has hurt himself in my cause, as he did from hearing that I wanted an explosion," I still ruthlessly continued, "you want to deny me the happiness of getting his eyes saved by my own unaided efforts. When I was disgraced and humiliated, I put that kind of pride I had aside and came to you when you called me because you needed me, trusting in your friendship for me and love of me, but now that the time has come for you to yield just a little bit of your pride, you won't do it for me."

Here I paused, and a thought of explanation for their cruelty came over me. "Because I am my father's daughter, do you think this money I have made is tainted, too? And is that the reason why you don't want to use it?"

"Oh, Phyllis!" Roxanne gasped under my chin, and the Idol got as white as a sheet and his eyes looked like I had struck him a blow.

"You can't get the money from the telegraph office and give it to me quick enough, kiddie," he said, with the choke coming out clear in his voice. "Forgive me! The youngster's eyes will be twice the value saved in such a way," and he took my hand and held it in both of his against his heart, in a manner to make me feel that never again would I have to struggle with that Byrd pride.

"Please forgive me for fighting you like that," I said with a horrible blush of memory coming over me as I thought of all I had said, about the patches on the trousers especially. "You made me do it and—"

But here we were interrupted as an apparition stood in the door and regarded the sad and joyful tableau we made with its head on one side, right corner of the mouth up, and left eyelid drooped. It was Father, and I had never seen him look so grand or with such a noble expression on his face! And as he stood still and looked at us, I held my breath far longer than it is safe to do. And as Father looked, the Idol drew himself up and his head took on the pose of the feminine Byrd portrait, but he still held my hand in both of his as he looked Father steadily in the face. I was scared and so was Roxanne as we hugged each other as women always do from fright.

Then, without a word, Father walked right up under the portrait and took the Idol by both shoulders and gave him one good shake that tottered us all.

"You young idiot, you! You young idiot!" he said in a tone of such affection that it was unbelievable to my ears. And as I heard it, I knew that all my trials and disgraces and puzzlings were over, and I turned my head upon Roxanne's back hair and wept tears, the first time in my life—and I hope not the last.

CHAPTER XII

"Now, see here, Phil, don't give out on the situation like that," said Father, as he slapped me on the back to still the tears while Roxanne hugged me and the Idol still held my hand.

"Please go on and tell what you did or didn't do to the 'secret,'" I sobbed, but I stood on my own feet again and was using both my natural hands to wipe my eyes.

The Idol had been for minutes standing and looking at Father like a child that has just awakened and doesn't know whether the awful thing that was pursuing him was a dream or a real bear. Roxanne was the first one to speak, and as usual she had seen the rosy side of something, even if it was not the real thing.

"You didn't really steal the secret at all, did you, Mr. Forsythe?" she asked, with her lovely and engaging enthusiasm. "I just knew it, all the time."

"Yes, I did 'steal the secret'—if that is the way you put it—*pro tem*, which means 'for the time being.' You are a nest of very young idiots, and I trusted to that; but you opened your puppy eyes at the time I hadn't counted on, with the help of Luttrell's scouting nose." He paused, as if not right sure that he was going to tell about everything, and as he looked at us we did look like a basket of little silly puppies with mouths and eyes wide open—the Idol most of all.

"And now first, young man," said Father, turning to Mr. Douglass, left eyelid drooping lower than usual, "I just want to say to you what I think of you for leaving not only all the traces of such a valuable discovery unprotected in a shed, but leaving your notebook and drawings, too. Any other man but a Byrd of Byrdsville, would not have trusted the book off his person a half minute, and would have destroyed the traces of each experiment the minute it was done. Those steel shavings were the most idiotic-looking things I ever saw, and when I emptied the box it was with a groan at your foolishness. Just the looks of 'em kept me from trusting you with my intentions. I couldn't afford to run the risk of your carelessness, so I took the whole thing and decamped with it."

"Oh, Father!" I gasped, beginning to get the untrustful feeling again.

"Hush, Phyllis," said the Idol, looking at Father like he was Jack, the Giant-Killer, and just about as much interested as if it was not his own tremendous fortune Father was telling about taking off with him.

"I had been down in the garden to the garage to give the new car a looking over, and I saw Rogers go into that shed and knew, from having been told by Phyllis accidentally of the steel experiments, what was happening. I followed him a little later, and saw your trustful layout, exposed to the world as is the human nature of all Byrdsville. Rogers is an expert and would run through your notebook and get the whole thing

in a few seconds. I knew that he would watch his time, try out the experiments at the furnace, and get the patent while you were deliberating about proceeding in a Chesterfieldian manner with an injunction drawn slowly and literarily by your friend, Judge Luttrell. Rogers was fully equipped by his association with me to do you and—quick. I took no such chances as having you and the Judge's Byrdsvillianism mixed up in the affair. I stole your secret that had been stolen, left for a Pennsylvania furnace the next morning, had experimental furnaces built, tried out the experiments before the company, keeping dust in Rogers's eyes by demanding to be in on his robbery, patented it by push-legislation in Washington, and am back with an offer of fifty thousand dollars down and a royalty to be decided upon in a ten-year contract. I have a great mind to put it in trust for you, idiotic dreamer that you are—and perhaps the most noted man in the field of commercial invention for this year at any rate! How did you come to think out that process of a disturbance of atomic arrangement at that temperature?"

"Why, you see, Mr. Forsythe, in the laboratory at Princeton, just before I left, I had begun some atomic experiments, and out at the furnace it struck me all of a heap, what it would do if we could treat the ore at some ascertained temperature in the way I have found. Now, in another case that I am working on, I may be able even to make the process—"

"Help!" said Father. "Let's get down to business on this proposition before we get to the other one."

And we all laughed, for it was funny to see the Idol with patches on his trousers and hardly a day's living ahead, pass right over the fifty thousand dollars, with more in the contract, and all the sensation it had made, to begin to explain about what was out in the shed now. He looked pained at our interruption and tried to begin again, but Father interrupted him.

"Well, have you told this one to these 'bubbles,' as my young friend Luttrell so appropriately calls them? By the way, the economical Rogers had on the coat that Dr. Byrd had doctored for the cholera, which I had asked him to destroy for me, and the Scout Leader was right in his nose clue. I suppose that was what led him to suspect me and shadow Rogers to the telegraph office. Great boy, that Luttrell! But to return to the girls: If you have told Phyllis, I shall have to keep her in solitary confinement until it is finished. Miss Roxanne, I know, can be trusted at large."

I knew Father was just joking, by the eyelid and the corner of his mouth, but the Idol drew himself up according to the old portrait again before he spoke.

"Mr. Forsythe" he said, "I haven't any secret that Phyllis can't know. If she accidentally gave this one away to Rogers—she can the next, *and* the next." He took my hand again and drew me close to him. To think that that wonderful Idol should feel like that about insignificant me!

And father looked as impressed as he ought to have been, and begged my pardon in the proper manner; only I saw the bat in his eyes that showed how amused he was.

"Well," he said slowly, "Phyllis is a dangerous person to tell secrets to, or even to live an ordinary life before. Her penetration is so keen that she sees a man in his true character—and gets a thousand dollars from him for her estimate of his personality. I am glad to buy the opinion of me that you sent your cousin Gilmore at a thousand dollars, Phyllis,—it is worth more than that to me—from you!" His eyes were very tender to me though then, laughing: "Want to see yourself as she sees you in this thousand-dollar book I'm going to have printed, Byrd?" he asked teasingly.

"Oh, no!" I gasped; "I hoped he would never see that! Don't give him one, if you bought it. Don't even talk about it!" Let's go telegraph the doctor—we have forgotten the eyes too long now."

"That will not be necessary," said Father, with the lovely look that comes into his face when Lovelace Peyton is even mentioned. "When I read your letter to Gilmore, I hunted around immediately and brought the best man in New York with me to see to those eyes. He is over at the house getting rested and ready, and will have to make his examination in less than an hour now, so you two had better hustle to get Dr. Byrd ready for him. Everything must be antiseptic."

Antiseptic, with those fishing worms and the hen and the pet toad and the June bugs in his bed! Roxanne fled, calling Uncle Pompey on her way.

"Then my thousand dollars won't—won't be needed?" I asked with a contemptible feeling of disappointment that the Byrds had got so rich before I had been able to do this one thing for them. I looked up at old Grandmother Byrd over the mantelpiece and said in my heart: "You have won."

But what happened then? The Idol, with the comprehension which is one of the symptoms of all genius, turned to me quickly and put his arm across my shoulder.

"Phyllis," he said, with his most wonderful eyes shining down into mine, "that check is going to the doctor just as soon as your Father gives it to you. I told you that Lovey's eyes would be more valuable if saved by you—and—and I meant it."

I didn't have to say anything, and I couldn't—he understood! I just clung!

"Young idiots, both of you," said Father; but he blew his nose violently, and I knew from experience how the lump in his throat felt. "Now take me in to see Dr. Byrd."

"Howdy," said Lovey, as Father shook hands with him and the toad at the same time. "Did you get any

more cholera? Did the medicine work?"

"Yes, the medicine worked—more ways than one," answered Father with a pleased laugh. And he talked to Lovelace Peyton all the time about a man who got blown up in a mine that he saw in Pennsylvania, so that he made no objections while Uncle Pompey took out all his "live stock."

While the Idol and Roxanne and I did up the room, with his own hands Father bathed Lovelace Peyton and put on his clean, patched little night-clothes; and I saw one big tear, that came from the very bottom of the big man's heart, I know, splash on the biggest patch, as he was guiding the little groping hands into the armhole.

Then while I was buttoning Roxanne into a clean dress and the Idol was carrying out the last mop, the doctor came in the front door. I was so dirty with the cleaning that I retired to the kitchen and helped the Idol into his collar and coat and to get his hands clean so he could hurry on in to help. Uncle Pompey had got his usual violent spell of asthma and I had just lighted his pipe for him when the Idol came back to the door of the kitchen.

"You'll have to come, Phyllis," he said, with a smile that took the anxiety off his face for an instant. "Lovey refuses to let the doctor touch him without you. Come quick! The doctor says the light is beginning to go."

I went, soiled dress and crying eyes and hair all ruffled and mussed with the excitement.

"Phyllie," said Lovelace Peyton, who was sitting up in bed defying them all, "I ain't a-going to let that doctor touch me 'thout you stand right here and tell me how it all looks just as he does it. Don't leave out any bleed that comes, or any blue flesh or nerves or nothing. You know how, 'cause I have teached you. Neither Doug or Roxy ain't no good with symptoms."



"You stand right here and tell me how it all looks"

"I will, Lovelace Peyton, I will," I answered; but I shuddered, for how could I stand to see him tortured, as I felt he was going to be?

But I did—and it makes me weak to think about it now so that I shake all over. As the instruments pried and pulled and injected the aseptic solutions I held his hand tight and talked as hard as I could. At the worst places I told the most awful lies about how horrible it looked and placed all the frightful symptoms of every disease I had read to him, right in his eyes. It sounded dreadful but I knew that it interested him and helped in a way nothing else could.

"Go on, Phyllie, tell more," he would groan as I stopped for breath—and on I would go piling inflammation on suppuration.

Finally, after what seemed an age, the doctor drew a long sigh and looked up at me with a kindly expression that I knew meant "saved." For a minute I reeled, and I do believe I would have learned what fainting meant the same day I learned crying, if those little fingers hadn't held on to me tight while the doctor gave just a whiff of chloroform to ease the twitching nerves. He had been obliged to do the

operation without it, but risked just the whiff.

"Don't the chloroform smell good, Phyllie?" Lovelace Peyton whispered up to me as he floated off and his hands relaxed.

"That was the most remarkable performance I ever participated in," said the doctor out in the hall after he had finished telling us how near the sight of both eyes had come to being destroyed from not being kept drained. "And the two youngsters are the most remarkable I have yet encountered. Miss Phyllis, let me congratulate you on a nerve and a talent for imaginative description the like of which I have never met before. But please somebody explain that boy to me before I catch the train."

I was glad Roxanne was the one to begin on the subject of Lovelace Peyton, for only she had enough rosy words to describe him. She did better than I ever heard her before, and I could see how Father and the doctor both enjoyed it.

"We will take him right away to college where he can learn to read and write for himself, in just a few months, and then to operate in some big hospital before he comes down South to cure hookworm and pellagra and all the other things other doctors haven't found out about. What medical college would you advise, Doctor?" she ended by asking, and her face was so lovely and enthusiastic that it looked almost inspired. There is no telling where Roxanne's dreams will land the family now that they will have the money to start on them.

"Well, Miss Byrd," answered the doctor in a tone of voice, that made me know that he appreciated Roxanne at her true worth, "right now, for about ten years, I would keep the small doctor in Byrdsville, mostly out grubbing for experiments and 'squirms,' as he calls them. Then when the time comes we shall see—we shall see."

"Yes," answered Father, dropping his head with the corner of his mouth screwed up. "Yes, we shall see!"

And as he said it, somehow I felt that the Byrd family would never any more be unlooked after, and that it was good to have such a man as Father for a father and a neighbor. And, Oh, I felt—I can't write it, I am so tired I will have to go to sleep with a "Thank God," as big as can come from a heart the size mine is—which feels bigger to-night than it ever did before. Good-night, Louise of leather!

The quadratics were awful! I got ninety-five by a lot of it being luck that I knew the questions, and Tony got eighty by the same process, he says; but Belle and Pink just squeezed through by the skin of their teeth. Sam didn't pass and neither did the tallest Willis. The other one got seventy and the right to take another examination. Cruelty to children like that kind of examination ought to be stopped by law.

And that is the reason I haven't written in this leather confidante after that Saturday, into which at least four years of my life were crowded. By the calendar I am still just sixteen, but I am twenty by actual count.

First—Father is a Raccoon in full standing, and is going to be Scout Master for a little troop just the minute Lovelace Peyton gets old enough to organize one. And other honors have come to him like—but I must put things down in an orderly fashion for Father as he has bought you on a book, Louise.

Miss Priscilla is going to marry the Colonel. The secret of the why of her not doing it before is out. I have always felt that Miss Priscilla was honorable and not cruel. The Colonel had never asked her before, and it seems that the Stockell pride is very like the Byrd pride. He lost his fortune during the war and she is rich. His honor forbade! But Father has got him to go on a board of directors of the Cumberland Coal and Iron Company. Father says to give tone to directors' meetings, but that reason is not to be mentioned. He gets a salary of fifteen hundred dollars and is willing to marry on that, as Miss Priscilla insists on it. He told me all about it and so did she.

Tony, also, was in the confidence of both for these last few days which was a great comfort, as he is always so full of plans to accomplish things. In fact, it was Tony that made Miss Priscilla send for the Colonel with determination and it was I who got the salary fixed with Father and urged the Colonel to respond to her summons. They are as happy as "Love's young dream continued into maturity." I quote the Colonel exactly, as I think it is a literary gem.

Being the best-man at the wedding is one of the honors that has come to Father. I reminded him that the Colonel is not only a Stockell but he is a Confederate hero. Father said that he appreciated all that and that was what the salary was for.

"Bubble," said Tony, as he sat on the bench in our garden and fanned himself with his hat, "now that you have got the old town geared up and jogging along smoothly with your almost boylike energy, let's forget all about 'em and get ready a really humming Scout-Campfire ceremonial for the second night of commencement. I have got one gruesome idea I will be ready to tell you about to-morrow. We needn't let in Roxy or the Dumpling or the other Kittens until it is all fixed, for they will be frozen with fear at the very idea of what will be a Scout initiation, all right enough. But they'll do as you say when the time comes, for the whole bubble bunch, including Belle, since her algebra get-away, fall at any word you dope out to 'em from now on. Well done for you! You are not only a brick, Phyllis, but a whole wall of them that can be depended upon to line up to the mark."

I wrote that down not to be conceited, but I want to preserve that opinion of me in you, Louise, because it means that I have, in a little way, deserved the happiness that has come to me.

I came to this town a sad and lonely girl, with a great sorrow that had kept me from being like other people and with a great distrust of my father, who had had to be both Father and Mother to me. I have found friends and interests and excitement and adventure and sympathy and encouragement out here under that Old Harpeth Hill and I am always going to keep them. I hope I never will go one step out of Byrdsville as long as I live, though Roxanne has planned trips to every corner of the world for us as soon as the Idol has finished this next invention.

The Byrds have to stay in the cottage until Father can build another house for us to move into. Of course they will go back to Byrd Mansion and reign in it as they have always done. But I smile to myself that one person got ahead of that stiff-necked old portrait—I did, and once she even seemed to smile down on me.

This was the time she seemed to do it. We had all been talking about the plans for the new house down in the orchard, for Father and me, when Roxanne had to fly to Lovelace Peyton and Father tiptoed after her just to peep at him a second. That left the Idol and me alone for a few minutes. How I would have shuddered at the mere thought of such a thing happening to me a few months ago, but now it just seemed agreeable happiness. Through suffering I have grown bold, in my adoration of him.

"Let him build his old house, Phyllis," he said with first a glance up at the old Grandmother Byrd and then one at me that was as bashful as I began all suddenly to feel again, when he took my hand in his. "He won't—won't keep you—that is, not many years—will he?"

"Why,—what do you—" I began to ask him, when Father came back into the room and I don't know to this day what the Idol meant to say, nor do I yet know what he meant by drawing himself up to his full Byrd pride height, while he looked Father straight in the eye, both of them alarmingly serious, until Father's eyes began to smile with what seemed to be warm confidence. At which the Idol let go my hand and began to talk about steel. Oh, I am so glad, glad I am here to help Roxanne to cherish such a genius as he is and that I know now for our whole lives no pride or anything cruel can come between him and me any more! I can keep him perpetually safe on the pedestal of my love and I feel that it will be my right to help feed and patch him—only now he can always buy new trousers.

And for all time I have found Father!

That night when I went in to commune with Mother like I do now more and more, I found him in my chair in the corner but out of her sight, and he drew me down on his knee for the first time in all my life. We sat quiet awhile and then he came into my room with me and we stood at the window and looked out over the Harpeth Valley, where Providence Road lay like a silver ribbon as it wound its way over Providence Knob. He had his arm around me, and as I have learned to do, I put my head down on his shoulder.

"Phil," he said with such sadness in his voice that the new-learned tears started, "this is all we will ever have of Bess. The doctor says she has begun to drift faster now, and it will not be long. What would I have done if I had lost even what she had been to me these sad years—before I found you to help me?"

Then, after the first time I had ever cried on my father's breast, he told me all about himself, and the money and how he came to make it, and how it was all wrong, but it has never been his personal dishonor that was involved. This invention of the Idol gives him more power than ever, and he is going to use it to reorganize things so that everybody will make more for their work and belong in the business. He has appointed Judge Luttrell one of the lawyers and Mr. Chadwell one of the directors—and he is going to try to stay in Byrdsville most of the time and I am to help him arrange about keeping out of the temptation of riches.

"And I'll try not to develop Byrdsville anymore than I can help, Phil," he said as he wiped my eyes on his handkerchief and then his own.

No, I hope Byrdsville will stay just as it is, and I hope that any one who needs friends like I did will find Byrdsville, Tennessee, on the map. Good-night and good-by, leather Louise!

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PHYLLIS ***

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