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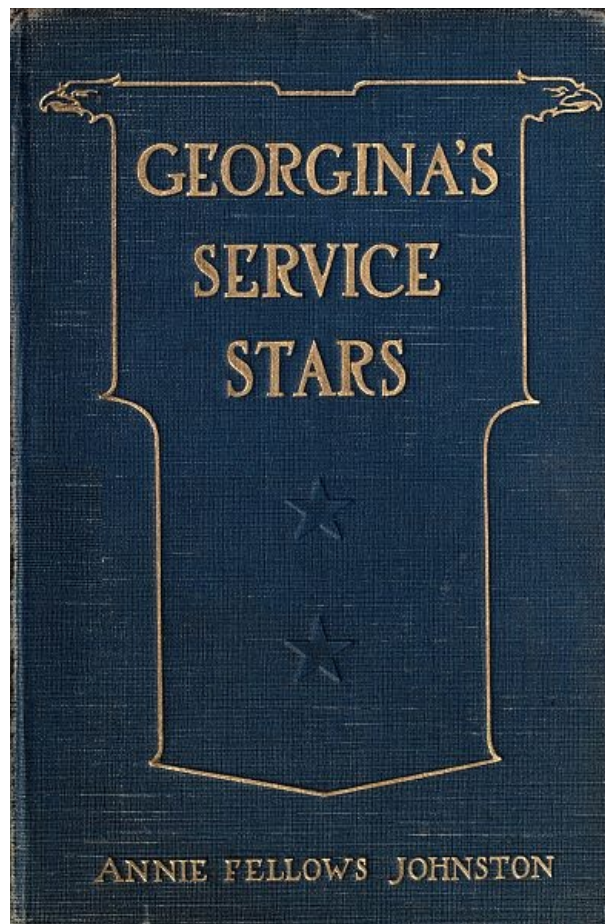
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GEORGINA'S SERVICE STARS

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"If anyone comes along I begin knitting."

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GEORGINA'S SERVICE STARS

By
ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON
*Author of "Georgina of the Rainbows," "Two Little
Knights of Kentucky," "The Giant Scissors,"
"The Desert of Waiting," Etc.*

Illustrations by Thelma Gooch

"For the deed's sake have I done the deed."
—*"Idylls of the King."*

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To
*THOSE BEHIND THE SERVICE
FLAGS*

[6]

whose part in this world-struggle can never be chronicled. Their sacrifices are unnumbered and their wounds are within.

To the silent Heroism which shoulders the double load and faces the loneliness undaunted.

To the Patriotism which, denied the sword, takes up whatever weapon lies at hand and wields it valiantly at home.

To the Love which "beareth all things, endureth all things," that in its "Service Stars" may be written a righteous destiny for the Nations, and the prophecy of a lasting peace.

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BARON: "What guerdon will ye?"
GARETH: "*None*. For the deed's sake have I done
the deed."

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—*Idylls of the King*.

GEORGINA'S SERVICE STARS

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PART I

GEORGINA'S SERVICE STARS

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CHAPTER I

GEORGINA BEGINS HER MEMOIRS

UP the crooked street which curves for three miles around the harbor comes the sound of the Towncrier's bell. It seems strange that he should happen along this morning, just as I've seated myself by this garret window to begin the story of my life, for it was the sound of his bell five years ago which first put it into my head to write it. And yet, it isn't so strange after all, when one remembers the part the dear old man has had in my past. "Uncle Darcy," as I've always called him, has been mixed up with most of its important happenings.

That day, when I first thought of writing my memoirs, was in Spring house-cleaning time, and I had been up here all morning, watching them drag out old heirlooms from the chests and cubby-holes under the rafters. Each one had a history. From one of the gable windows I could look down on the beach at the very spot where the Pilgrims first landed, and away over on the tongue of sand, which ends the Cape, I could see the place where they say the old Norse Viking, Thorwald, was buried nine hundred years ago.

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From this window where I am sitting, I looked down as I do now, on the narrow street with the harbor full of sails on one side and the gardens of the Portuguese fishermen spread out along the other, like blocks in a gay patchwork quilt. I remember as I stood looking out I heard Uncle Darcy's bell far down the street. He was crying a fish auction. And suddenly the queer feeling came over me that I was living in a story-book town, and that I was a part of it all, and some day I must write that story of it and me.

I did not begin it then, being only ten years old at that time and not strong on spelling. It would have kept me continually hunting through the dictionary, or else asking Tippy how to spell things, and that would have led to her knowing all. Her curiosity about my affairs is almost unbelievable.

But there is no reason why I should not begin it now. "The Life and Letters of Georgina Huntingdon" ought to make interesting reading some of these days when I am famous, as I have a right to expect, me being the granddaughter of such a great Kentucky editor as Colonel Clayton Shirley. To write is in my blood, although on the Huntingdon side it's only dry law books.

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I am going to jot down all sorts of innermost things in this blank book which will not be in the printed volume, because I might pass away before it is published, and if any one else had to undertake it he could do it more understandingly if he knew my secret ambitions and my opinion of life and people. But I shall bracket all such private remarks with red ink, and put a warning on the fly-leaf like the one on Shakespeare's tomb: "Cursed be he who moves these bones."

He would have been dug up a thousand times, probably, if it had not been for that, so I shall protect the thoughts buried here between these red brackets in the same way.

"Cursed be he who prints this part
From the inmost sanctum of my heart."

Up to this time there has been little in my life important enough to put into a record, so it is just as well that I waited. But now that this awful war is going on over in Europe, all sorts of thrilling things may begin to happen to us any minute. Father says there's no telling how soon our country may be fighting, too. He thinks it's shameful we haven't been doing our part all along. As he is a naval surgeon and has been in the service so many years, he will be among the first to be drawn into the thick of danger and adventure.

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I am old enough now to understand what that will mean to us all, for I am fifteen years and eleven months, and could easily pass for much older if Barby would only let me put my hair up. Barby is the dearest mother that ever lived, and I wouldn't for worlds appear to be criticizing her, but she *is* a bit old-fashioned in some of her ideas about bringing up children. I believe she and Tippy would like to keep me the rest of my mortal life, "standing with reluctant feet where the brook and river meet," regardless of the fact that I am all ready to wade in and fully able to do so.

I asked Tippy why nobody ever quotes that verse farther along in the poem, which exactly expresses my sentiments:

"Then why pause with indecision,
When bright angels in thy vision
Beckon thee to fields Elysian?"

It stumped her to think of an answer for a moment, and she made an excuse of putting the cat out, in order to give herself more time. But when she came back all she had found to say was that

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I needn't think being grown up was any field Elysian. I was eating my white bread now, and if a girl only knew all that lay ahead of her she'd let well enough alone. She'd wait for trouble to come to her instead of running to meet it.

Somehow I don't believe Tippy ever had any bright angels beckoning her, else she couldn't be so pessimistic about my growing up. I can't think of her as ever being anything but an elderly widow with her hair twisted into a peanut on the back of her head. And yet she had a lover once, and a wedding day, or she couldn't be Mrs. Maria Triplett now. But it's impossible to think of her as being gay fifteen and dancing down the stairs to meet the morning with a song. One feels that she met it with a broom, saying:

"Shall birds and bees and ants be wise
While I my moments waste?
O let me with the morning rise
And to my duties haste."

She's said that to me probably as much as five hundred times. I shall bracket this part about her just as soon as I can get a bottle of red ink. But how I'm going to account to her for having red ink in my possession is more than I know.

That's the worst about being the only child in a family. They're all so fond of you and so interested in your sayings and doings, that they watch every movement of your mind and body. You're like a clock in a glass case with your works open to the gaze of the older people. It's all very well during the first years for them to keep tab on your development, but the trouble is most relatives never seem to know when you're developed, and have reached the point where a little privacy is your *right*. It's maddening to have to give a reason every time you turn around.

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All the lives of noted people which I have read begin with the person's birthplace and who his parents were, and his early acts which showed he gave promise of being a genius. So I'll pause right here for a brief outline of such things.

My name is Georgina Huntingdon. A name to be proud of—so Tippy has always impressed on me—and one hard to live up to. She used to show it to me on the silver christening cup that came down to me from the great-great-aunt for whom I am named. She'd take the tip of my finger in hers and solemnly trace the slim-looped letters around the rim, till I came to feel that it was a silver name, and that I must keep it shining by growing up unusually smart and good. That I owed it to the cup or the great-aunt or the Pilgrim monument or *something*, to act so as to add lustre to the name.

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Tippy is a distant cousin on father's side. She has lived with us ever since Barby brought me up here from Kentucky, where I was born. Father, being a naval surgeon, was off in foreign ports most of the time, and Barby, being such a young and inexperienced mother, needed her companionship. Barby is lots younger than father. It was hard for her at first, coming away with just me, from that jolly big family down South who adored her, to this old Cape Cod homestead that had been boarded up so long.

Lonely and gray, it stands at the end of town, up by the breakwater, facing the very spot on the beach where the Pilgrims landed. One of them was an ancestor of mine, so the big monument overlooking the harbor and the tip of the Cape was put up partly in his honor.

Really, several pages might well be devoted to my ancestors, for one was a minute-man whose name is in the history I studied at school. His powder-horn hangs over the dining-room mantel, and Tippy used to shame me with it when I was afraid of rats or the dark cellarway. If I were asked to name three things which have influenced me most in arousing my ambition to overcome my faults and to do something big and really worth while in the world, I'd name my christening cup, that Pilgrim monument and the old powder-horn.

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With such a heritage it is unthinkable that I should settle down to an ordinary career. Something inside of me tells me that I am destined to make my name an honored household word in many climes. I've considered doing this in several ways.

It might be well to mention here that my earliest passion was for the stage. That will explain why quotations came so trippingly from my tongue at times. I learned yards and yards of poems and Shakespeare's plays for declamation, and I'm always given one of the leading parts in the amateur theatricals at the High School or the Town Hall. My looks may have something to do with that, however. As it might seem conceited for me to describe myself as my mirror shows me, I'll just paste some newspaper clippings on this page describing different plays I've been in. Several of them speak of my dark eyes and glowing complexion, also my "wealth of nut-brown curls," and my graceful dancing.

But in my Sophomore year at High School I began to feel that literature might be my forte, even more than acting. R. B. (which initials will stand for "red brackets" until I get the ink). The reason for that feeling is that my themes in English were always marked so high that the class nicknamed me "Abou ben Ahdem."

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Last summer I began a novel called "Divided," which the girls were crazy about. It was suggested by Jean Ingelow's poem by that name and is awfully sad. Really, it kept me so depressed that I found I wasn't half enjoying my vacation. I simply lived the heroine's part myself.

Now that I am a Senior, it seems to me that Journalism offers a greater field than fiction. We

had a debate last term which convinced me of it. George Woodson had the affirmative, and I didn't mind being beaten because he used grandfather for one of his arguments, and said so many nice things about his editorials being epoch-making and his inspired phrases moulding public opinion, and being caught up as slogans by all parties, leading on to victory. He spoke, too, of them being quoted not only by *Punch* and the London *Times*, but by papers in France and Australia.

R. B. (I am fully determined either to write the leading novel of the century, or to own and edit a newspaper which shall be a world-power.)

The seashore was my first schoolroom. Barby taught me to write in the sand and to spell words with shells and pebbles. I learned Arithmetic by adding and subtracting such things as the sails in the harbor and the gulls feeding at ebb-tide. On stormy days when we were home-bound, I counted the times the fog-bell tolled, or in the early dark counted how often Wood End lighthouse blinked its red eye at me. [22]

But I must get on with my story. If I am to have room in this book for all the big happenings of life, which I feel sure lie ahead of me, I cannot devote too much space to early memories, no matter how cherished. Probably in the final revision all the scenes I have lived through will be crowded into one act or chapter. I may start it in this fashion:

Time

First fifteen years of life just ended.

Place

An ancient fishing town between the sand-dunes and the sea, where artists flock every summer to paint, its chief attraction for them seeming to be its old streets and wharves, the Cape Cod people whom they call "quaint" and the Portuguese fisher-folk.

Principal characters besides myself and family, already described.

DANIEL DARCY

The old Towncrier, whom I call "Uncle Darcy" and love as dearly as if he were really kin to me.

AUNT ELSPETH

His wife. They are my ideal Darby and Joan. [23]

CAPTAIN KIDD

A darling Irish terrier, half mine and half Richard's.

RICHARD MORELAND

Who comes every summer to stay with his cousin, Mr. James Milford, in the bungalow with the Green Stairs. He has been like an own brother to me since the days when we first played pirate together, when he was "Dare-devil Dick, the Dread Destroyer," and I was "Gory George, the Menace of the Main." Barby took him under her wing then because his own mother was dead and they've been devoted to each other ever since.

This summer Richard came alone, because his father, who always spends his vacations with him, did not come back from his Paris studio as usual. He is in the trenches now, fighting with the Allies. His friends shake their heads when they speak of him, and say what a pity such a brilliantly gifted fellow should run the risk of being killed or maimed. It would be such a terrible waste. He could serve his age better with his brush than a bayonet.

But when Richard talks of him his face lights up as if he fairly worships him for being such a hero as to sacrifice his art for the cause and go in just as a private. He has said to me a dozen times, "That is why the Allies will win this war, Georgina, because men like *Dad* are putting it through. They are fighting with their souls as well as their bodies." [24]

That's all Richard talks about now. He's perfectly wild to go himself. Though he's only seventeen and a half, he is six feet tall and so strong he could take a man's place. He says if they'd so much as give him a chance to drive an ambulance he'd be satisfied, but his father won't consent.

He's running his Cousin James' car this summer instead of the regular chauffeur, and keeping it in repair. Mr. Milford pays him a small salary, and (nobody knows it but me) Richard is saving every cent. He says if he can once get across the water he'll find some way to do his part. In the meantime he's digging away at his French, and Uncle Darcy's son Dan is teaching him wireless. He's so busy some days I scarcely see him. It's so different from the way it was last summer when he was at our house from morning till night.

The same jolly crowds are back this summer at the Gray Inn and the Nelson cottage, and Laura Nelson's midshipman cousin from Annapolis is here for a week. I shall not name and describe them now, but simply group them as minor characters. [25]

Laura says, however, that she feels sure that the midshipman is destined to be anything but a minor character in my life. She prophesies he will be leading man in a very short while. That is so silly in Laura, although, of course, she couldn't know just how silly, because I've never explained to her that I am dedicated to a Career.

I have not said positively that I shall never marry, and sometimes I think I might be happier to have a home and about four beautiful and interesting children; that is, if it could be managed

without interfering with my one great ambition in life. But positively, that must come first, *no matter what the cost*. Only thus can I reach the high goal I have set for myself and write mine as "one of the few, the immortal names that were not born to die."



CHAPTER II

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THE MISUNDERSTOOD 'TEENS

"O FOR a lodge in some vast wilderness" where I could write without anybody butting in to ask what I'm doing! I suppose it's the penalty I must pay now for having been such a vain little peacock in the beginning. Because father praised my first letters when I was learning to write, I passed them over to the family for more praise before sealing them. Now they've grown to feel that it is their right to read them, and to expect it as a matter of course.

It is the same way with all my attempts at stories and verses. If I should take to turning the key in the door at this late day, they'd think it queer, and I'm afraid Barby would feel a bit hurt and shut out of my life, because we've always shared everything of that sort.

So I just carry the book around with me in my knitting bag, and scribble a few lines whenever there is an opportunity. Most of this will have to be written down on the beach where I am now. It's too hot up in the garret these days. I sit cross-legged in the sand behind an overturned rowboat, drawn up out of reach of the tide. All that can be seen of me from the house is a big garden hat flopping down over the shoulders of my pink smock. Smocks and flopping hats are as common as clams in this old fishing town, full of artists and summer girls, so when I tuck my "wealth of nut-brown curls" up out of sight, nobody recognizes me at a little distance. If any one comes along I begin knitting on a bright blue muffler that I'm making for a Belgian orphan. It seems dreadfully deceitful, but what else can I do?

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I haven't any place where I can keep the book between times. Tippy is such a thorough-going housekeeper that she knows what is in every drawer and closet in this house, from top to bottom. Neither she nor Barby would dream of reading a diary or even a scrap of writing belonging to any one else but me. But they think of me as a part of themselves, I suppose, or as still such an infant that if they were to come across this they'd smile indulgently and say, "The dear child. Was anything ever so diverting and clever!" And they'd read it with that pleased, proud expression you see on a family's face when they discover the baby's first tooth or find that it can stand alone.

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I'd keep it at Uncle Darcy's, down at Fishburn Court, but I seldom go down there now oftener than once a week, and I want to make a practice of filling a few pages every day.

Fishburn Court would be an ideal place in which to write. It's a cluster of little old houses set around the edge of a sand dune, and hidden away from the heart of the town by some tall buildings. A crooked, sandy lane leads into it from one of the back streets. There's an apple-tree in Uncle Darcy's yard with thick grass under it, and a two-seated wooden swing where an old yellow-nosed cat sleeps all day. You can look up and see billowy white clouds floating in the blue overhead, and smell the salt of the sea, but it's so shut in that although it's only a short distance from the beach you barely hear the chug of the motor boats, and the street cries are so faint, that you feel you're far, far away from the world, like a nun in a cloister.

Sitting there, I've sometimes thought I'd like to be that—a nun in a cloister, to walk with rapt, saint-like face, my hands folded lily-wise over my breast. It must be lovely to feel that one is a pure white saint, a bride of heaven. Sometimes I think I'd rather be that than a world-renowned author.

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I often wonder what great part I'm destined to play in the universe. Really the world is so full of things to do and be, that one needs as many lives as a cat. I'd like one life in which to be a nun, another an actress, another in which to shine as a peerless wit and beauty, the social leader in a brilliant salon like that great French madame—I can't think of her name. Then, of course, there's the life I want for my literary career, and one in which to be just a plain wife and mother.

One thing is certain, if I ever have a daughter I'll try to remember how a girl feels at my age; although I don't see how one who has been one can ever forget. And there are *some* things she shall be allowed to decide for herself. R. B. (As long as I was a mere child Barby seemed to understand me perfectly. But now that I lack only one paltry inch of being as tall as she is, she doesn't seem able to get my point of view at all. She doesn't seem to realize that I've put away childish things, and that when you're in your teens you're done with doll-rags.)

There is nothing so bitter in life as being misunderstood. If you have cruel step-parents who mistreat you out of pure meanness, everybody sympathizes with you. But if you have devoted own

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parents who hurt you through a mistaken idea that they're doing it for your own good, nobody sympathizes with you. I'd rather be beaten or locked in my room on bread and water than have Minnie Waite or Daisy Poole tagging after me forevermore.

I wasn't at home the day Mrs. Saxe came around, organizing the "Busy Bees" to do Red Cross work for the Belgians. But Barby put my name down and paid the fifty cents dues, and said I'd be *glad* to do my part. Well, I am glad, but I'd already been trying to do it ever since the war started "over there." I've rolled bandages every Saturday afternoon and taken part in two plays and waited on the table at all the lawn fetes, and I'm knitting my sixth sweater for French and Belgian orphans.

But I draw the line at being a "Busy Bee," and meeting around with a lot of little girls not one of them over thirteen and most of them younger. And Minnie Waite has a crush on me anyhow, and is harder to get rid of than a plague of sand-fleas. I could have cried when Barby told me what she had let me in for, and I couldn't help sounding cross when I said she might at least have consulted me first. It was too much to have that miserable bunch of kids wished on to me.

But Barby only reminded me that I was using slang, and said cheerfully, "Did it ever occur to you, Baby Mine, that you are three whole years younger than Laura Nelson, and yet you want to be with her every moment? Possibly she may feel that *you* are tagging." [31]

Laura is one of the summer girls, and Barby never has approved of our intimacy, just because she is so much older and has college men coming to see her now instead of High School boys and all that sort of thing. I didn't attempt to explain to Barby that we are as congenial as twins, and that Laura seeks my society quite as much as I do hers. I think Barby hoped that I'd become so interested in the Busy Bees that I wouldn't have any time for Laura, and she said a great deal about them needing a leader, and how much good I could do if I went into it as an enthusiastic president instead of a half-hearted one.

Of course, when she put it that way, the privilege and duty of being an inspiration whenever possible, I had to give in as gracefully as I could. But I'm done now, after yesterday's performance.

I was over at Laura's to lunch. Her midshipman cousin, Mr. Tucker, was off on a fishing trip, but he was to be back early in the afternoon and she wanted me to take him off her hands while she talked to some one else. Her most ardent admirer was coming to call. [32]

So she put my hair up for me the way she wears hers, flat over her ears and a sort of soft, fluffy whirl on top, and loaned me a pair of her green silk stockings and high-heeled white slippers, instead of my "growing girl" pumps that Father insists upon. I have somewhere read that "The consciousness of being well dressed imparts a blissfulness to the human heart that even religion is powerless to give or take away, and its importance can hardly be over-estimated by the feminine mind."

I heartily agree, for just that difference in hair and heels made me feel and act perfectly grown up. I knew that Mr. Tucker thought I was as old as I seemed from the way he called me "Miss Huntingdon." And he had such a complimentary way of looking at me, and was so appreciative of my repartee that I found it easier to talk to him than any one I had ever met before. I found myself discussing the deep questions of life with him with an ease I couldn't have had, if I had been conscious of juvenile curls bobbing over my shoulders.

But right in the middle of our interesting conversation came the most awful racket. A donkey-cart full of girls drove in from the street, past the window where we were sitting. Minnie Waite was standing up, driving, her hair streaming like a wild Amazon. And they all yodelled and catcalled till I went out on the porch. It was the dreadfulest noise you ever heard, for the donkey balks every other step unless he's headed for home, and the only way they can make him travel is to shake a tin can half-full of pebbles behind him. [33]

They asked had I forgotten that the Busy Bees were to have an extra meeting at my house to dress dolls for the Bazaar, and the whole bunch was over there waiting. They couldn't start till I got there, me being president, and my mother said for me to get straight into the cart and go back with them.

I knew perfectly well that Barby had never sent any such sounding message as that, but I also knew the only way to keep them from making matters worse was to get them away as soon as possible. They were talking at the tops of their voices, and nobody knew what they'd say next. The quickest way to stop them was to climb into that babyish donkey-cart and jolt off with them, just like a kid myself.

So I ran back and explained to Laura and made my hurried adieux. Mr. Tucker went down the steps with me to help me in. Of course, those horrid children noticed my green stockings, as I'd never worn that color before, and they made remarks about them and my high heels, when I tripped going down the steps, not being used to them. I would have fallen all over myself if Mr. Tucker hadn't caught me. He didn't seem to hear what they were saying, but Laura's little sister Dodo, who was hanging over the railing of the upstairs porch, listening like the long-eared little pitcher that she is, called down in her high, shrill voice: [34]

"Oh, Georgina! You've forgotten your pumps, and are going off in Laura's. Wait. I'll throw them down to you."

Well, of course the donkey balked just then and wouldn't start till they began rattling the tin can full of stones, and in the midst of the pandemonium there was a whack-bang! on the porch steps, and down came my old flat-heeled Mary-Jane pumps, with my white stockings stuffed inside of them. Mr. Tucker picked them up and put them in the cart. He made some awfully nice, polite speech about Cinderella, but I was so mortified and so mad that I turned perfectly plum-colored I am sure. As we dashed off I wished I could be a *real* busy bee for about a minute. A vicious one.

Now I feel that I never want to lay eyes on Mr. Tucker again after such a humiliating experience. It is a pity, for he is the most congenial man I ever met. Our views on the deeper things of life are exactly the same. [35]

The worst of it is I can't explain all that to Barby. She made light of the affair when I cried, and told her how the girls had mortified and embarrassed me. Said it was foolish to take such a trifle to heart so bitterly; that probably Mr. Tucker would never give it a second thought, or if he did he would laugh over the incident and the little girl, and forget them entirely.

But that was cold comfort. I couldn't tell her that I didn't want to be laughed at, and I didn't want to be forgotten by the first and only really congenial man I had ever met. Yet I might have told her all that if she had approached me differently. I long to confide in her if she would talk to me as one woman to another.

Instead, she referred to a little Rainbow Club that Richard and I started long ago. We pretended that every time we made anyone happy it was the same as making a rainbow in the world. She asked me if I was tired of being her little prism, and to think how happy I could make those girls by interesting myself in their affairs, and a whole lot more like that.

It made me so cross to be soothed in that kind, kindergarten way that while she was talking I burrowed back in my closet as if looking for something and said "*Darn!*" in a hollow whisper, between set teeth. One can't "be a kitten and cry mew" always. [36]



CHAPTER III

IN THE SHADOW OF WAR

LAST Wednesday I spent the day at Fishburn Court. My visits seem to mean so much to Aunt Elspeth, now that her time is divided between her bed and wheeled chair. I improvised a costume and did the song and dance for her that I am going to give in the French Relief entertainment next week. And I made a blueberry pie for dinner, and set the little kitchen in shining order, and put fresh bows on her cap, and straightened out all the bureau drawers. [37]

When everything you do is appreciated and admired and praised until you are fairly basking in approval, it makes you feel so good inside that you want to keep on that way forever. You just *love* to be sweet and considerate. But afterwards it's such a comedown to go back home to those who take it as a matter of course that you should be helpful, and who feel it is their duty to improve your character by telling you what *your* duty is. It rubs you the wrong way, and makes life much harder.

Somehow, going to Fishburn Court is like climbing up into the Pilgrim monument and looking down on the town. Seen from that height, the things that loomed up so big when you were down on their level shrink to nothing. Maybe it is because Uncle Darcy and Aunt Elspeth have lived so very, very long that they can look down on life that way and see it from a great height as God does. I always think of them when I read that verse, "A thousand years in thy sight is but as yesterday." That is why nothing seems to matter to them very much but loving each other and their neighbors as themselves. [38]

I came away from there resolved to turn over a new leaf. I am sorry now that I said what I did the other day in the closet, but I don't feel that I have a right to blot it out of this record. The good and the bad should stand together in one's memoirs. It makes a character seem more human. I never felt that I had anything in common with Washington until I read that he sometimes gave away to violent fits of anger.

I am now resolved to make those Busy Bees the power for good which Barby thinks I can, and quit thinking of my own feelings in the matter, of how disagreeable it is to have them eternally tagging after me. After all, what difference will it make a thousand years from now if they do tag? What difference if one little ant in the universe is happy or unhappy for one atom of time? When you think of yourself that way, as just a tiny ant sitting on the equator of eternity you can put up with almost anything. [39]

A whole week has gone by since I wrote the above sentence, and in that time the most exciting thing has happened, in addition to celebrating my sixteenth birthday. The birthday came first. Barby's gift to me was a darling rowboat, light and graceful as a cockle-shell. Uncle Darcy carved my initials on the oars, and Richard came after dark the night before and dragged it up into the yard, and tied it under the holiday tree. Next morning my presents were all piled in the boat instead of being tied to the branches, for which I was very thankful. It made me feel that I had come to a boundary line which the family recognized, when they discarded the old custom of decorating the holiday-tree. They no longer considered me an infant.

I have been wild for a boat of my own for two years, and was so excited I could scarcely eat my breakfast. I was out in it all day, first with Barby and Richard, and, afterward, with Babe Nolan and Judith Gilfred, who came to lunch. Ordinarily, I would fill pages describing my presents and what we did, but I can't wait to tell the climax. [40]

Late in the afternoon Richard came again and rowed me over to the Lighthouse and back. When we came up the beach on our way home to supper the sun was just setting. It was all so beautiful and I was so happy that I began humming "The End of a Perfect Day." But it wasn't the end, for when we went into the house the exciting thing happened. Who should rise up suddenly in the dusk and put his arms around me but *Father*, home on unexpected shore leave. I hadn't seen him for a year.

Even Barby didn't know he was coming. It seemed too good to be true that he should be in time for the lighting of my birthday candles. As if it wasn't more than enough just to have him back again, safe and sound, he brought me the most adorable little wrist-watch, and from then on till midnight when my eyes weren't on him they were on it. It's so heavenly to have everybody in the world that you love best and everything you want most all together at the same time.

We had to talk fast and crowd as much as possible into the hours. I felt that I had at last stepped into my field Elysian, when nobody said a word about my running along to bed. I think they would have let me sit up though, even if I hadn't been sixteen, the time was so precious. [41]

Up till this time the war had seemed a faraway, unreal thing, just like the tales we used to shudder over, of the heathen babies thrown to the crocodiles. I had been working for the Red Cross and the Belgian orphans in the same spirit that I've worked for the Missionary Society, wanting to help the cause, but not feeling it a personal matter. But when Father talked about it in his grave, quiet way, I began to understand what war really is. It is like a great wild beast, devouring our next-door neighbors and liable to spring at our throats any minute. It is something everybody should rise up and help to throttle.

I understand now why Richard is so crazy on the subject. It isn't just thirst for adventure, as his cousin James says, although "Dare-devil Dick" is a good name for him. He sees the danger as Father sees it, and wants to do his part to rid the world of it. He talked a long time with Father, begging him to use his influence to get him into some kind of service over there. But Father says the same thing that Mr. Moreland did. That he's too young, and the only thing for him to do is to go back to school in the fall and fit himself for bigger service when his country has greater need of him. Richard went off whistling, but I knew he was horribly disappointed from the way his hat was pulled down over his eyes. [42]

The next morning when I went down to breakfast I felt as if the wild beast had already sprung as far as our door-step, if not actually at our throats, for Barby sat pale and anxious-eyed behind the coffee urn, and her lips were trembly when I kissed her good-morning. Father had received his orders to report in Washington in forty-eight hours, and we had hoped to keep him with us at least two weeks. He is called to a consultation about some extensive preparations to be made for marine hospital work. He had already been notified that he was to be put at the head of it, and he may have to go abroad to study conditions, almost immediately.

I knew from the dumb misery in Barby's eyes she was thinking of the same things I was—submarines and sunken mines, etc., but neither of us mentioned them, of course. Instead, we tried to be as jolly as possible, and began to plan the nicest way we could think of to spend our one day together. Suddenly Father said he'd settle it. He'd spend it all with me, any way I chose, while Barby packed her trunk and got ready to go back to Washington with him. He'd probably be there a week or ten days and he wasn't going one step without her.

Then I realized how grown-up one really is at sixteen. A year ago I would have teased to be taken along, and maybe would have gone off in a corner and cried, and felt dreadfully left out over such an arrangement. But I saw the glance that passed between them when he said it, and I understood perfectly. Barby's face was radiant. You may adore your only child, but the love of your life comes first. And it should. I was *glad* they wanted to go off that way on a sort of second honeymoon trip. It would be dreadfully sad to have one's parents cease to be all in all to each other. Babe Nolan's mother and stepfather seem that way, bored to death with each other. [43]

Two things stand out so vividly in that last day that I never can forget them. One is our walk down through the town, when I almost burst with pride, going along beside Father, so tall and distinguished looking in his uniform, and seeing the royal welcome people gave him at every step. They came out of the stores and the houses to shake hands with him, the people who'd known him as a little boy and gone to school with him, and they seemed so really fond of him and so glad to have him back, that I fairly loved them for it, even people I hadn't liked especially before.

The second thing was the talk we had up here in the garret in the gable window-seat, when he came up to look for some things he had packed away in one of the chests, twenty years ago.

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We did lots of other things, of course; went rowing in the new boat to a place on the beach where he used to picnic when he was a boy. We took our lunch along and ate it there. Afterwards we tramped back into the dunes a little way, just to let him feel the Cape Cod sand in his shoes once more, he said. It was high tide when we got back to the boat-house, so we got our bathing suits and went in. He was so surprised and pleased at some of my diving stunts, and taught me a new one. He is a magnificent swimmer himself.

His hair is iron gray at the temples, and I've always been halfway afraid of him before—that is, afraid to say right out whatever I happened to think or feel. But it was different this time. I felt that he understood me better than anybody else in the world, even as well as Barby used to, when I was younger. As we went back home he said the nicest thing. He said it seemed to him that we must have been boys together at some time in our lives. That I was such a jolly good chum.

I can't think about that last evening or the going away yesterday morning without the tears starting. But I'm thankful I didn't break down at the station. I couldn't have kept from it if it hadn't been for Captain Kidd, who frisked along with us. Just at the hardest moment he stood up on his hind legs and saluted. I'd never seen him do it before. It's a trick Richard taught him lately. It was so cunning everybody laughed, and I managed to pull myself together till the train started.

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But I made up for it when I got back home and came up here to the gable window-seat where Father and I had that last precious talk together, with his arm around me and my head on his shoulder. I nearly bawled my eyes out as I recalled each dear thing he said about my being old enough now to understand business matters, and what he wanted me to do in case the United States went to war; how I was to look after Barby if anything happened to him; and what I was to do for Uncle Darcy and Dan's children. That he relied on me just as if I were a son, because I was a true Huntingdon, and no Huntingdon woman had ever flinched from a duty or failed to measure up to what was expected of her.

I keep thinking, what if he should never come back to talk to me again in that near, dear way. But . . . I'll have to stop before any more splashes blot up this page.

CHAPTER IV

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HER IDEAL GIRL STEPS IN

ALL the time Barby was gone I didn't write a line in this record. I couldn't. Things seemed too trivial. Besides, the house had that strange, hushed air that you feel at a funeral when you're waiting for it to begin. I couldn't bear to touch the piano. It didn't seem right to be playing gay tunes while there was such awful sorrow in the world, and in all probability Father and Barby were spending their last days together.

I declined the invitation to Laura Nelson's dance on that account, and after Tippy had gone to bed I put on Barby's only black dress, a chiffon dinner gown that she had left behind in her closet, and sat by the window in the moonlight, listening to the music of piano and drum floating up from the Nelson cottage. I had turned the silver trimming in so as not to show, and looking down on the clinging black folds that trailed around me, I pictured to myself so vividly the way an orphan or a young widow must feel, that the tears splashed down into my lap till I was afraid it would make the chiffon all crinkly. The dance music sounded perfectly heartless to me. I could understand how bitter it might make one feel who was really in mourning.

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When Barby came home and I told her about it, she said that I should have gone to the dance; that our first duty to ourselves and the world is to keep ourselves normal. After I'd spent the morning helping her unpack and hearing everything she had to tell about her week with Father and his departure to some unknown port, she told me she wanted me to stay out of doors all the rest of the day. I must go on the Quest of Cheerful Things, and she hoped that I'd be able to report at least two adventures.

The two things which happened are that I went to a furniture auction and met my ideal girl. While they're not particularly cheerful things, they're important enough to be recorded here.

It began by Babe Nolan bumping into me as I turned a corner, after I'd been out nearly half the afternoon. Babe is a far cry from anybody's ideal girl, that is, as far as looks and manners are concerned, but she has her good points. For one thing she is absolutely sincere, and it's always interesting to hear what new trouble she's been in.

She had her bathing suit bundled carelessly under her arm, and said she couldn't stay because she'd promised to be up at the West End beach by four o'clock, and it was almost that time then. But she'd heard that there was a furniture auction going on in front of the old Holloway house, which has been vacant for years, and she just had to go by and see if there was a white bedstead in the lot, with hollow brass balls on the posts. She was sure that there couldn't be, because she'd been told that the furniture had been brought up from Truro or Wellfleet, or some place down the

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Cape. It belonged to relatives of the Holloway family. Still she felt possessed to look, and she supposed she'd go through life like the Wandering Jew, looking for that bedstead and never finding it.

Then she told me why. Babe is very unfortunate in her family life, having a stepfather which complicates matters. All her brothers and sisters are either steps or halves. She has no whole ones. And they are all socialists in a way, believing in a community of interests, such as wearing each other's clothes without asking, and using each other's things. Right while Babe was talking to me she had on one of her half-brother Jim's outing shirts, turned in V at the neck instead of her own middy blouse, because Viola had walked off with her last clean one.

With everybody free to root through her bureau drawers, and with no locks in the house that work, of course she has absolutely no privacy, and she had several letters that she wouldn't have the family read for worlds. They were too sacred, and she couldn't bear to destroy them, for they breathed devotion in every line, and were her first of the kind. She thought of burying them under the garden hedge, but that would have necessitated digging them up every time she wanted to re-read them, and there was danger of the puppy trailing her and unearthing them if she went too often to that hallowed spot. [49]

One night just before she and Viola went to Yarmouth for a visit, she found, quite by accident, that the brass balls on her bedposts were screwed on and were hollow. So she folded the letters up small and stuffed them into one, with a dried rose and a broken cuff-link that had associations, and screwed it back tight.

What was her horror when she came home two weeks later to find that her mother had had the room done over in their absence as a surprise for her and Viola. She had bought twin beds of bird's-eye maple and given one old bed to a Salvation Army man who was going through town collecting junk, and sent the other to a camp up in the White Mountains where her mother's people go every year. She didn't know which went where. [50]

Now there's no telling how, when or where those letters will next see the light of day. It was bad enough to lose the letters, but Babe says she'll simply die if they fall into her Aunt Mattie's hands. She's the prim, cold kind who makes you feel that anything sentimental should never be mentioned. It's something to be ashamed of. Tippy's that kind.

I have written all this out not because it's important in itself, but because it's a link in a chain. If I hadn't happened to meet Babe and go with her to hunt for that bedstead, I wouldn't have been at the auction when my ideal girl came along, or when Richard drove by and I hailed him to borrow a quarter, and he stopped and saw her. What she said and what he said, and what happened afterward was like a game of "Consequences."

All sorts of stuff lay around on the grass—dishes and bed-slats and odd andirons. There was a beaded mat and a glass case of wax flowers, and a motto, "The Lord is my Shepherd," cross-stitched in pink and gray worsted, sitting right out on the grass. Babe said probably it was the work of hands long dead and gone, and didn't it seem sad that they should come to this end? But the tide was in and she'd have to go. She might have known she'd not find that bedstead. Would I walk up to the beach with her? [51]

But I told her no, I'd just rummage around awhile longer to see what else there was for sale. Maybe I could get some "local color" that way. Babe knows about my writing. She is one of the girls I read my novel to, and she respects my talent. So she left me. I did get some local color by staying, and took out my pencil and pad, which I always carry around in my knitting bag, and made a note of it.

An old-fashioned hoop-skirt was thrown across a rose-bush, and a black silk bonnet lay under it, beside a pair of worn shoes. Both the bonnet and the shoes had what Tippy calls a "genteel" air, and made me think they must have belonged to a prim maiden lady with proud nose and slender feet, probably called "Miss Althea." The name came to me like an inspiration, I could almost see her standing by the rose-bush.

Just then some boys, who were wrestling around, bumping into everything, upset a barrel on the grass, and a great pile of framed photographs came rolling out. Some of them were comical enough for a Sunday supplement, women in tight basques and little saucer hats, and men with whiskers—beards or perfectly ridiculous bushy "burnsides." A crowd of summer people began making joking remarks about them to set each other to laughing. [52]

But there was one in an oval walnut frame that I couldn't bear to have them make fun of, the photograph of a lady with a little boy leaning against her shoulder. She had a strong, kind face, with such steadfast eyes looking straight at you, that you just knew everybody went to her with their troubles. The boy was a dear little fellow, serious as a judge, with his hair brushed in a long roll on the top of his head in one of those old-fashioned coxcomb curls.

One of the girls from the hotel picked it up and began declaiming a verse from "Somebody's Darling," that's in one of our school readers.

"Kiss him once for somebody's sake.

* * * * *

One bright curl from its fair mates take---

They were somebody's pride you know."

It came over me in a great wave how I would feel if it were Barby's picture thrown out that way for strangers to ridicule and step on, or the one I've always loved of Father, when he was a little boy, hugging his white rabbit. I felt that I simply must save it from further desecration. The only way was to buy it. The man said I could have any frame in the barrel, picture thrown in free, for twenty-five cents, without waiting for it to be put up at auction. They were in a hurry to get through. I told him I'd take it, then I discovered I hadn't a penny left in my knitting bag. I'd spent my last one on the way down, treating Babe to a soda water.

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It was right while I was standing there with the frame in my hands, uncertain whether to go to the bakery and borrow a quarter or ask the man if he'd take my note for it till next day, that Judith Gilfred came into the yard with a girl I'd never seen before. I knew at a glance that it must be the cousin she'd been expecting from the South. She's talked about her for a month, and said such gushing things that I was prepared to see quite a pretty girl, but not the most beautiful one I had ever seen in my life. That's what she is, and also my ideal of all that is gracious and lovely and sweet.

She's a blonde with the most exquisite hair, the color of amber or honey, with little gold crinkles in it. And her eyes—well, they make you think of clear blue sapphires. I loved her from the moment Judith introduced us. Loved her smile, the way it lights up her face, and her voice, soft and slow, blurring her r's the way Barby does. From her little white-slippered feet to the jewelled vanity box on a slender chain around her neck, she looks exactly as I'd choose to look if I could make myself over. Her name is Esther Gilfred.

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Judith must have told her as much about me as me about her, for she was so cordial and dear. Judith has been my most intimate friend ever since I started to school. Esther was so interested in the auction. One of her greatest charms I think is her enthusiasm for whatever you happen to be interested in. She made the picture I was carrying around seem doubly desirable, just by saying in that indescribably charming way of hers that antique frames are quite the rage now. There is such a fad for them in her town.

We must have spent more than half an hour poking around among all the queer old things being auctioned off, when I heard the honk of an automobile horn, which I recognized as Richard's. He was signaling me. He had slowed down as he came opposite the place, to see why such a crowd was gathered in there, and, as he did so, caught sight of us.

He stopped when I waved to him, and I ran out and asked him to loan me a quarter. As he fished one out of his pocket, he told me he'd take me home if I was ready to go.

So I ran back to pay for the frame, and ask the girls what time they'd be ready to go rowing next morning. While Judith was answering, Esther laid her hand on my arm in her enthusiastic way and exclaimed in a low tone, "Who is that young Apollo you spoke to? He has the most gorgeous dark eyes I ever saw, and the shoulders of an athlete. He's simply stunning!"

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On the way home I told Richard what Esther said about him. He looked so pleased and conscious, that it was funny to watch his face.

"Which one said it?" he asked. "The little goldilocks in blue, or the one under the red parasol?"

I surely was astonished, for I had no idea that Richard was so observing. Heretofore, he had never seemed to notice how girls looked, or what they wore.



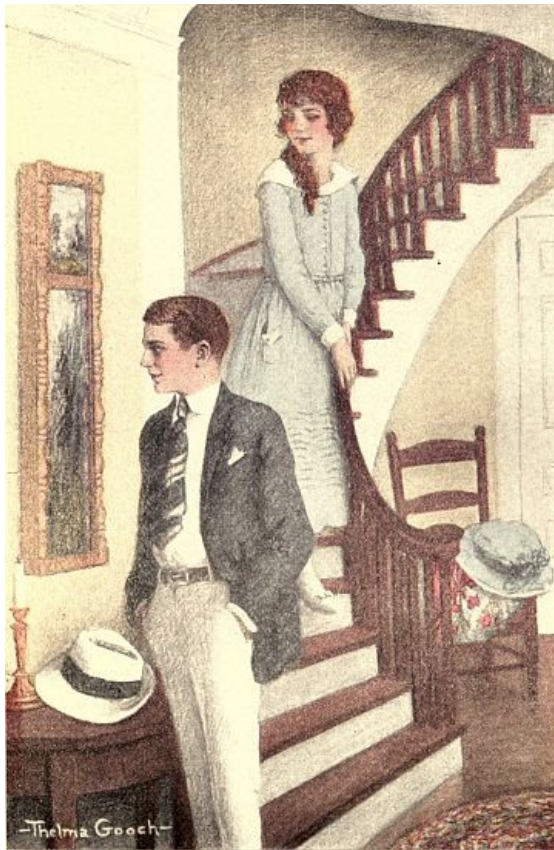
CHAPTER V

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A PHOTOGRAPH AND SOME DAY-DREAMS

I DON'T believe compliments are good for the male mind. They go to their heads. Up to this time

in all the years I've known Richard, I'd never seen him walk up to a mirror and deliberately stare at himself, except when we were having a face-making contest, and trying to see which could look the ugliest.



"I don't think compliments are good for the male mind."

the boat, and they stayed all night with Grandfather Huntingdon in this very house. Tippy was here on a visit at the time, and remembers it perfectly. Several years later the Wynnes had this picture taken to send back to friends in their old parish, and let them see how little John had grown. Miss Susan Triplett at Wellfleet has one.

It seems too strange for words to think that once upon a time they slept in our big downstairs guest chamber in the bed with the bird-o'-paradise valance and the pink silk tester, and that years and years afterward I should find their picture in a barrel at an auction, and bring it home and hang it up in that very room.

That's what I did after supper while Richard was drawing maps on the margin of the *Boston Transcript*, showing Barby where the Allies were entrenched. I washed the glass and drove a nail, and hung it up over a little serving table between the windows. Then I stepped back and held up the lamp to see the effect. It seemed to belong there, and the little fellow's big, serious eyes looked straight out at me, as if they were saying: "Yes, I know you, and I came back on purpose to be put into your story."

He seemed so real to me that as I went out, carrying the lamp, I looked back over my shoulder and whispered, "Good-night, little John Wynne."

Then I went upstairs to get another skein of yarn and wind it on Tippy's swift. All the time I was doing it I kept thinking of the events of the afternoon, and how beautiful Esther Gilfred looked—how adorable she was in every way. Those lines from Wordsworth came to my mind:

"She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight."

Also she suggested that line "Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls!" Suddenly I thought, why not write a poem to her my own self. At that, a whole list of lovely words went slipping through my mind like beads along a string: lily . . . pearl . . . snow-crystal . . . amber . . . blue-of-deep-waters . . . blue-of-sapphire-skies . . . heart of gold. She makes me think of such fair and shining things.

But it was hard to get started. After trying ever so long I concluded to look in the dictionary in the list of Christian names for the meaning of Esther. I thought that might suggest something which would do for a starter.

When I went back downstairs Richard had finished his map drawing. He was lying on the leather couch, as he so often does, his eyes closed, and his hands clasped under his head, listening to Barby play the piano. He certainly did look long, stretched out full length that way, longer than he had ever seemed before. Maybe Esther's calling my attention to him the way she

But the first thing he did after we went into the house was to stop in front of the hall mirror and square back his shoulders. Then he turned and looked at himself, a long, slow glance out of the corner of his eyes, and walked away with such a satisfied air that I was dying to laugh. All the rest of the evening he had a sort of set-up, lordly way about him that he had never had before. I am sure that it was the effect of Esther's compliment.

Barby asked him to stay to supper, and he did, to hear all about her Washington trip. He talked to her sort of over my head, as if I were a little girl who couldn't understand the great war measures which interested him. It amused me immensely, for every one knows that a girl of sixteen is far more mature than a boy of seventeen and a half. But I didn't say anything, just smiled to myself as I sat and knit and listened.

After supper when I brought out the oval frame to show the family what a bargain I got for a quarter, I had the surprise of my life. Tippy recognized the photograph in the frame. She said there were probably a dozen like it hanging up in various parlors in Wellfleet. It was the picture of a minister's wife she had known years ago. "Sister Wynne," everybody called her, whether they went to that church or not, because she was so widely beloved. The little boy's name was John.

When this little John was just a baby, Brother Wynne had a call to a big church out West. On the way there they came up to Provincetown to take

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did made me see him in a new light, for, after staring at him critically a moment, I had to admit that he really was as good-looking as she said he was.

I carried the big dictionary over to the library table and opened it under the reading lamp. Years ago we had looked up the meaning of our names, but I had forgotten what Richard meant until my eye chanced on the word, as I glanced down the page. I didn't want to interrupt the music, but I couldn't resist leaning towards him and saying in an undertone, just to get a rise out of him:

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"Listen to this, 'Apollo,' the name Richard means 'strong like a ruler, or powerful.' That's why you have the 'shoulders of an athlete.'"

But he didn't even open his eyes. Just gave an indulgent sort of smile, in rather a bored, superior way that made me want to slap him. It was as much as to say that I was carrying coals to Newcastle in telling him that.

"Well," I said, in Tippy's own tone, quoting what she always tells me when anybody compliments me in her presence, "'There's nothing lasting you will find but the treasures of the mind.' So you needn't be so uppity, mister."

He ignored the remark so completely that I determined not to speak to him again all evening. But presently I was forced to on account of the interesting fact I found on the next page. It was too interesting not to be shared.

"Beauteous Being," I remarked in a half whisper, "don't trouble to open those gorgeous dark eyes, but listen to this. The name Esther means *A Star*. Isn't that wonderfully appropriate?"

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His eyes flew open quickly enough at that. He turned over on his side and exclaimed in the most interested way:

"Say, I was just thinking what a peach she is, but somehow peach didn't seem the right word. But *Star*—that fits her right down to the ground."

And that from Richard, who never looks at girls! Seeing how interested he was in her I confided in him that I was trying to write a poem to her. That she seemed to be set to music in my thoughts, and that she continually reminded me of lines of poetry like that one of Tennyson's: "Shine out little head, running over with curls, to the flowers, and be their sun."

He asked me what that was in. When I told him "Maude," he turned over on his back again and shut his eyes, with no more to say. But when Barby finished the "Reverie" she was playing and he got up to go home, he walked over to the bookcase and began hunting along the shelves. He always helps himself to whatever he wants. When he slipped a book into his pocket I looked up in time to see that it was one of the little blue and gold volumes of our set of Tennyson. Later I found he had carried off the one with "Maude" in it. I have wondered since if he would have taken the same interest in Esther if I hadn't repeated her compliment—if it was that which started him.

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Tippy lost no time next morning in hunting up the auctioneer and finding whose furniture he was selling, and all about it. What he told her sent her to Wellfleet on the noon train to talk over old times with her cousin Susan Triplett. She came back at supper time with a piece of news wonderfully interesting to me.

Little John Wynne is alive and really is back on the Cape. But he's grown up now, of course. He's a physician. He worked his way through a Western college and then went to Harvard for his medical degree. This summer he is in Yarmouth, taking care of old Doctor Rawlins' practice, while he's off on a long vacation.

I was so thrilled over all that Tippy told, that on my way up to bed I slipped across the hall for another look at the picture which I had rescued. It is a pity that "Sister Wynne" died before she knew how splendidly he turned out. She would have been so proud of him. But she must have known that he'd grow up to be the kind of man that Miss Susan says he is, because they look so much alike—the same steadfast, dependable sort of eyes and mouth.

As I stood there, holding the flickering candle, with the wax melting and running down its side, I thought how wonderful it would be if fate should some time bring our paths in life together. There are so many ways that might be done. He might be called here in consultation any day. Dr. Rawlins often is. Or he might come up here to spend a week-end as hundreds of people do, because the town is quaint and has historic associations. I wondered if I'd recognize him from his likeness to this baby picture or to his mother, if I should happen to meet him suddenly—say going into the post-office or strolling along the wharf. I felt sure something would tell me that it might be he.

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Then I began imagining the most dramatic scene, just as if I were reading it in a novel of which I was the heroine. I would be taking part in an entertainment at the Town Hall, giving the Fire-fly dance maybe, first with the spot-light following me, and then with hall and stage darkened to give that wonderful fire-fly effect, and all the tiny points of electric lights hidden in my costume flashing on and off. And *he* would be watching out there in the darkness, from the front row, watching intently every graceful move.

Then all at once something would go wrong behind the scenes. A cloud of fire and smoke would suddenly sweep across the stage, shutting me off from escape and almost suffocating me.

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There would be a moment of awful silence while the audience gazed transfixed with horror. Then out of the darkness *he* would leap forth, tearing off his coat as he sprang up on the stage to wrap it around my filmy dress, already aflame, and I would fall unconscious in his arms, overcome by the smoke.

Long hours afterward when I opened my eyes, his face would be bending anxiously over me, and I'd smile wanly up at him, and he'd say in a choking whisper, "Thank heaven, she lives!" I would be lying in this downstairs guest chamber instead of my own room, this being handier, and presently he'd see this picture of himself hanging on the wall. Then—well, suffice it to say, it would lead finally to a beautiful and touching scene like the one I saw at the movies Wednesday afternoon, in the last act of "The Harvest Moon."

After I went upstairs that night, I thought of still another way for us to meet, which I shall write down because it would make a good scene in a novel, and I am beginning to think I shall start another one soon instead of "Divided," which now seems amateurish and childish to me. This is the scene.

I would be a beautiful Red Cross nurse, serving with the Allies somewhere in France. Into the ward, where I was keeping vigil some night, would be brought a wounded officer, a member of the medical corps who had risked his life giving aid to the dying in the trenches. He would be too badly hurt for me to recognize him at first, till I found his mother's picture over his heart, and my calling his name would bring him back to consciousness.

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"How did you find me?" he would murmur feebly. "How did you know?" And I'd say, "Because, far away across the seas in my old home on Cape Cod, hangs the picture of 'little John Wynne,' as he used to be. My guardian angel led me hither."

"You . . . are my . . . angel," he would whisper, and relapse into unconsciousness. I could make it awfully effective to have him die, after I'd nursed him tenderly for weeks, but I can't bear to. I'd rather have it end the way I'd want it to end in real life if I should really meet him on a foreign battle-field.

Probably, though, if I ever do meet him, it'll be just my luck to be coming in from blue-berrying the way I was last week with a bee-sting on my lip that swelled it up till I was a sight for the gods.

Oh, if we could only make things happen actually the way we can in our day-dreams, what a thrilling thing Life would be from start to finish!

CHAPTER VI

[66]

THE ONE AND ONLY STAR

"Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky."

THAT'S Esther. She has been here two weeks, and all that time I've been trying to write a poem to her which would do her justice. It is impossible. So, since coming across the above line from Wordsworth, I've simply called her "Star" and given up trying. She likes to have me call her that.

She is so wonderful that it is a privilege just to be in the same town with her. Merely to feel when I wake in the morning that I may see her some time during the day makes life so rich, so full, so beautiful! How I long to be like her in every way! Since that cannot be I try to live each hour in a way that is good for my character, so as to make myself as worthy as possible of her friendship. For instance, I dust the hind legs of the piano and the backs of the picture frames as conscientiously as the parts that show. I work overtime on my music instead of skipping practice hours as I have sometimes done in the past. The most unpleasant tasks I go through gladly, feeling that the rubbing of such, although disagreeable, puts a shine on one's soul in the same way that a buffer polishes the nails.

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At first Richard laughed at what he called my infatuation, and said it didn't pay to take Emerson's advice and "hitch your wagon to a star." You have to jerk along at such a rattling gait to keep up that it soon wears out an ordinary mortal. But before he realized what had happened to him his wagon was hitched as firmly as mine, and to the same star.

Esther loves to motor, so he takes her for a long drive every day when his cousin James doesn't want the machine. As he furnishes his own gasoline for such pleasure trips, he hasn't saved very much of his wages since she's been here, to put in his "Going abroad" fund.

Every time I go to the Gilfred's, Esther passes me a freshly opened box of candy. All the boys send it to her, but twice in the last week I've been sure it was from Richard. The first one had a card lying on top that she turned around for me to read. No name—just a pencilled line—"Queen Rose of the rose-bud garden of girls." But I know Richard's handwriting as well as I know my own. Besides he learned that very quotation from me. The next time the card was printed instead of written, but there was a pansy drawn in the corner, and the sentence was in French.

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Esther asked me to read it. She said she was so rusty in her French she wasn't sure she had

translated it correctly. It said "Pansies are for thought." Then I remembered the pansy bed out by the Gilfreds' side porch. Richard had a big purple one in his button-hole the other day when he came back from there. But that was no proof, of course, because I'd seen George Woodson with one, and also Truman Long. Truman draws almost as well as Richard and is always making marginal sketches on things, but Truman never took any of the languages but dead ones.

But later on when Esther said she and Richard were going to read some fables together to help her brush up her French, I was pretty sure he had sent that second box. I was altogether sure when he came over the second time with that same pansy in his buttonhole, so dry and dead it was all shriveled up. I knew just how he felt about it, that it was too sacred to throw away. I feel the same way about whatever her fingers touch. So just to let him know that I understood and sympathized like a real sister I picked up Barby's guitar and in an off-hand sort of way began to sing an old song of hers that he knows quite as well as I do.

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"Only a pansy blossom, only a withered flower,
Yet to me far dearer than all in earth's fair bower."

I hadn't the faintest intention of teasing him, but he seemed to take it that way. He got as red as fire and shrugged his shoulders impatiently and strode out of the room as if he were provoked. It seems so queer to think of *him* having any sentiment in connection with a girl, when he's always been so indifferent towards them. Still, Esther is so star-like, so high above all other girls that I don't wonder that even he has yielded to her magic influence.

All the boys are crazy about her. George Woodson spends most of his waking hours there. He sits around in the hammock with his ukelele, waiting for her to come out, and if they have an engagement and go off and leave him, he just sits and waits for them to come back. Truman Long has composed a serenade dedicated to her that's really awfully sweet, and when they dance at the Gilfreds' of an evening the boys break in so continually that Esther doesn't get to dance around the room without changing partners. It must be heavenly to be so popular.

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Babe Nolan has a sentence copied in her memory book which she says is a test of whether one is truly in love or not. She thinks it is from Emerson. "When a single tone of one voice can make the heart beat, and the most trivial circumstance associated with one form is put in the amber of memory. When we become all eye when one is present and all memory when one is gone."

She says she was all eye when she used to be with the One who wrote those letters which are now in that bedpost somewhere in the Salvation Army or the White Mountains, and she was all memory when he was gone. And if it happened that it was his voice which answered when she called up the grocery where he clerked, she was all of a flutter, and couldn't remember whether her mother told her to order starch or stove polish. I wonder if I shall ever know that blissful sensation.

According to Babe's test I am sure of the last two items in Richard's case. He certainly is all eye when Esther is present, and the most trifling thing she says or does is cherished in the amber of his memory. I can tell from the way he keeps coming back to them in a round-about way without mentioning her name.

Barby has noticed the difference in him, too. He doesn't come to the house as often as usual for one thing, and he talks about something besides war. He doesn't mention Esther's name to Barby, but he brings up subjects connected with her that he's never been interested in before. Things they've discussed at the Gilfreds', such as the difference between Southern and Northern girls, and what constitutes charm in a woman, and why angels are always painted with golden hair and nobody ever thinks of there being brunette angels with snappy dark eyes.

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When I told Barby he was helping Esther brush up her French, she gave a funny sort of a groan, and said, "Of all the arrows in the little god's quiver that is the deadliest." When I asked what arrow, she said, "Conjugating a familiar verb in a foreign tongue with a—" Then she broke off suddenly and asked what kind of a girl I thought Esther really was. She said if she were the right kind it would do Richard worlds of good to be interested in her, but she couldn't bear to think of the dear boy being disillusioned this early, or having his confidence in woman-kind shaken by a shallow little flirt.

I told her that shallowness and coquetry were not to be mentioned in the same breath with Esther. That while Richard's a nice boy, and feeling towards him as I do, as if he were a real brother, I want him to have the very best things Life can give him, I don't consider him fine enough and noble enough for such an angel as Esther. With her lofty ideals only a Sir Galahad or King Arthur himself is worthy of her.

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Barby has met her several times, but only when there were a lot of others present. She had no chance to talk with her and see what a truly fine and strong character she has. She could see only in a general way that she is lovely and gracious. So, not knowing her as I know her, she reminded me again of that old prism of mine and the way I used to go about with it in front of my eyes, putting rainbows around everything in sight.

She asked if I was sure I wasn't looking at Esther in some such way, putting a halo of perfection around her that was largely of my own making. She said she did that twice when she was in her early teens. Once it was a music teacher she was infatuated with, and once her roommate at boarding school. She looked upon them as perfect, and nearly died of disappointment when she discovered they were only ordinary mortals.

It hurt me dreadfully to have her think my adoration of Esther was nothing but a schoolgirl infatuation. She must have seen how I felt and she must have changed her mind about Esther, for lately she has been perfectly lovely about encouraging our intimacy. She says she'd like for me to invite her to the house often, and that I may have her here for a week after her visit with Judith is over. And she suggested several things we might do for her entertainment, such as a picnic at Highland Light, and a motor-boat trip over to the weirs to see the nets hauled in.

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An age has gone by since I wrote of the above plans. There has been no chance to carry them out, because the very next day Mrs. Gilfred went to Boston and took Judith and Esther with her for a week. Ever since they left I've gone around humming:

"What's this dull town to me?
Robin's not here."

Only I change it to "My Star is not here."

The only thing that makes the loneliness bearable is that Barby has a guest, a Miss Helen Crewes, who is a Red Cross nurse. She is going to Flanders very soon, and she is up here resting. She gives "First Aid" lessons to Barby, Tippy and me in the evenings.

Tuesday when the Busy Bees met here she put on her uniform and went down and talked to the girls. She seemed so wonderful and so set apart, all in white with the Red Cross blazing on her forehead, and she talked so inspiringly that the girls were ready to rise up and follow her to the death. They didn't want to go home when the time came, but hung around begging her to tell some more. And Minnie Waite said that if anybody in town would start a Melting Pot like the one Miss Crewes told about to put your jewels in for the cause, she'd throw in her gold thimble and her locket and her silver friendship bracelet that needs only one more link to complete it.

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Barby hasn't invited any of our friends to meet Miss Crewes yet, because she's just off a hard case that nearly wore her out. She says she must store up every bit of strength she can get from the dunes and the sea, for what lies ahead. So she sits down on the beach hours at a time, and goes on long walks by herself. When I take her out in the boat she scarcely says a word. But in the evenings while she's teaching us first aid bandaging, etc., she talks so thrillingly of her experiences and what her friends are doing over there that I could listen all night.

Barby made several attempts to get Richard to come over and meet her, but he hasn't been near here since Esther went to Boston. He always makes some excuse when Barby telephones. Barby says it would do him good to meet a woman like Miss Crewes. That she'd wake him up out of the trance he is in, and rekindle his old enthusiasms. Miss Crewes is middle-aged, for she's at least thirty-eight, and she's very plain, except when she talks. Then her face lights up till you feel as if a lamp had suddenly been brought into the room.

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I know now what Barby meant by trance. It is the same thing as being "all memory when one is gone." Yesterday Babe Nolan and I were walking along the street together, she eating an apple, when Richard drove by without seeing us. It was up along in one of the narrowest turns, where he had to pass so close to the board walk that the machine nearly grazed it. Yet he went by, perfectly unconscious of us. Never looked to the right nor the left, and never even heard when I called to him. Usually he is on the look-out to wave his hand to anybody he knows. When he had gone by Babe said:

"That boy doesn't know whether he's in the body or out of the body. Somebody ought to tell him about Esther Gilfred. It's a shame to let him go on that way making a goose of himself."

"Tell him *what* about her?" I demanded.

"Oh, that it's all a bluff about her brushing up her French. She doesn't know enough French to brush. All she does is to hold the dictionary while he reads. She can't even find the words by herself half the time. Besides she's years older than he is, although she passes for the same age. And worse yet—*she's engaged*."

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I was so furious that I contradicted her hotly, but she just looked at me over the apple she was biting into, with the calm, unruffled gaze of an old Aztec. Babe can be the most provoking person at times that ever lived. She prides herself on having a mathematical mind, and being exact about facts and figures. The worst of it is she usually is, and will go any length to prove she's right. Although I know in this case she *must* be mistaken, it worries me in spite of myself.

She said that one day at the Gilfreds' they were laughing over some old photographs of Esther and Judith, taken when they were babies. On the back of one was written: "This is our little Esther at the age of six months and six days." It was signed with her father's name and the date. Esther snatched it away and tore it up before anyone else saw it, but, Babe says, counting up from that date to this, Esther is all of three years older than Richard. She is twenty and a half.

And she said that twice while she and Viola were visiting in Yarmouth, their Aunt Rachel took them to a hop in Barnstable. Both times Esther, who was visiting in Barnstable then, was there with the man she's engaged to. He's a doctor. They met at a house-party when he was a medical student at Harvard and she was at a finishing school near Boston. Her aunt told Babe's aunt all about it. They've been engaged nearly a year, but Esther won't have it announced because she

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says it would spoil her good times wherever she goes. She'd never make any more conquests. He's so busy establishing his practice that he can't pay her the attention and give her the things that the other men do.

When Babe told me that I felt as if the solid ground were giving away under my feet. She seemed perfectly sure that what she was telling was the straight, unvarnished truth. And yet, I cannot, I *will* not believe that Esther would stoop to deceit in the smallest matter. She is the soul of honor. She *couldn't* be sacredly betrothed to one man and then go on acting exactly as if she wasn't, with another. Besides, I heard her say one day that she is just Judith's age, which is seventeen, and another time that she was "heart whole and fancy free."

When I triumphantly quoted that last to Babe to prove she was wrong she swallowed another bite of apple and then said, "Well, a coquette might be all that and at the same time engaged. And she *is* engaged, and I can prove it." [78]

All I could trust myself to say was, "Babe Nolan, your remarks are perfectly insulting. I'll thank you to remember you're talking about my very best friend and the very finest and sweetest girl I've ever known in my whole life."

With that I drew myself up in my most freezing manner and walked off and left her. I've wished since that I'd thought in time to hurl that quotation from Shakespeare over my shoulder at her, but I didn't think of it till I was nearly home:

"Be thou chaste as ice, as pure as snow,
Thou shalt not escape calumny."

Those statements of Babe's were nothing but out and out calumny.



CHAPTER VII

[79]

A MODERN SIR GARETH

YESTERDAY morning, just to oblige me, Miss Crewes put on her Red Cross uniform and went out in the garden with me to let me take some snapshots of her. Barby came out to watch us, sitting on the stone bench under the apple tree, with her knitting. I was using my last film, posing Miss Crewes among the hollyhocks by the garden wall, when we heard a machine drive up and stop out in front. The next minute Richard came dashing around the corner of the house, bareheaded, and calling Barby in such a breathless way that I knew he had exciting news from the front.

Then he caught sight of her under the apple-tree, and came striding across the grass to her, his head up and his face fairly shining. As we walked over towards them we caught parts of his sentences, "It's Dad—all banged up and in the hospital. One of the bravest things—so proud of him—it chokes me."

He didn't even see us when we joined them, for he had pulled a handful of letters out of his pocket, and was shuffling them over to find the one that brought the news. A comrade of Mr. Moreland's had written it and his nurse added a postscript. No one thought to introduce Miss Crewes and he never seemed to notice a stranger was present till he finished reading. And then there didn't seem to be any need of an introduction. She just held out her hand with tears in her eyes and that wonderful light in her face which comes when she talks of sacrifice and heroism, and he gripped it as if they were old friends. [80]

That's what they've seemed to be ever since. I think the sight of that red cross blazing on her uniform waked him up to the fact that she is connected in a way with the same cause his father is suffering for now in the hospital, and that she would be in sympathy with his desire to get into the service, and possibly might be able to help him. He couldn't stay then, because his Cousin James was in the machine out in front, waiting for him. But he promised to come back later, said there were a hundred questions he wanted to ask her.

It seems strange that, in the midst of hearing such a big vital piece of news about a real hero, I should notice a trifle like the following. When Richard took the handful of letters from his pocket and began shuffling through them to find the one from France, I saw without being conscious that I was staring at them, that they were all strangely familiar—square and pale blue. In his [81]

excitement he dropped one, and there on the flap of the envelope were the two long slim silver initials that I know so well, "E. G." I had several notes written on that same silver and blue stationery before Esther went to Boston, though none since.

I wasn't conscious of counting them as he passed them from hand to hand, but I must have done so automatically, for I seem to remember as far as five, and that it was the sixth one he dropped. He was so absorbed in the news that he didn't realize he was making a public display of Esther's letters, though of course nobody could recognize them but me. I think maybe for the moment she was so far in the background of his thoughts that she lost her importance for him.

But not so with me. Mingled with a thrill of happiness over Richard's news, was a feeling that my faith in Esther had been vindicated. She *couldn't* have written to him six times in seven days if she had been sacredly pledged to another. Babe Nolan is wrong for once in her life, and I shall have the joy of telling her so before this week is out. I know I am not putting a rainbow around Esther. It is simply that love gives me a clearer vision than the others have—the power to see the halo of charm which encircles her. [82]

This has been such a wonderful day that I can't close my eyes until I have made a record of it. First, *I have seen Doctor John Wynne!* And second, I've found out something about him which makes me honor and admire him more than any man I know except Father.

Miss Crewes told us the story, but she didn't intend to tell us his name, nurses being bound to respect a confidence. It came out quite by accident. She was dreadfully distressed at the slip and made us promise we'd never repeat it to a soul. It happened this way:

Richard had the machine to do as he pleased with today, Mr. Milford being out of town, and he and Barby arranged a little picnic for Miss Crewes. He's taken the greatest fancy to her. We started out soon after breakfast and drove for hours through the perfectly heavenly summer morning, stopping at each little village along the Cape as we came to it, to tack up some posters. They were posters different artists had painted for that French Relief entertainment, which has been postponed so many times. [83]

At lunch time we stopped by the side of the road in the shade of a pine grove, so close to the water that we could see the blue shining through the trees. It was such a fascinating, restful spot that we sat there a long time after we finished our lunch.

Richard stretched out full length on the pine needles with his hat over his eyes, and the rest of us took out our knitting. I knew he was thinking of Esther, for presently he brought up a subject which we have discussed several times at the Gilfreds', which she was particularly interested in. It's whether the days of chivalry are dead or not, and if men were not nobler in the days of King Arthur, when they rode forth to deeds of prowess and to redress wrongs, than they are now when their highest thought is making money or playing golf.

Esther always took the side that nobody nowadays measures up to the knights of the Round Table, and that she wished she could have lived when life was picturesque and romantic instead of in these prosaic times. I think what she said rather rankled in Richard's mind, because I've heard him refer to it several times. Naturally I sided with Esther, for her arguments seemed unanswerable. Today I quoted some of them. [84]

That is what led to Miss Crewes telling one of her experiences. She was red-hot for the other side, and said I might name any deed of chivalry mentioned in the "Idylls of the King," and she could match it by something equally fine, done in this day of the world, by some man she was personally acquainted with.

Instantly I thought of the story of "Gareth and Lynette," for that is one that Esther and George Woodson had the biggest argument over. The part where Gareth saves the baron's life, and when asked what reward he would have—"What *guerdon* will ye?"—answers, "*None! For the deed's sake have I done the deed.*"

Esther once said she thought that was one of the noblest sentences in all literature. As soon as I quoted it Richard raised himself on one elbow and then sat up straight. He could see by Miss Crewes' face that she had a story worth telling.

"For the deed's sake have I done the deed," she repeated to herself as if searching through her memory. Then after a moment she said triumphantly, "Yes, I have a Sir Gareth to more than match yours. He is a young physician just beginning to make good in his practise, and he's had a far harder apprenticeship to win his professional spurs than ever Gareth served, as scullion in the King's kitchen." [85]

Of course, it being a nurse's confidential experience, she had to tell the story in the most impersonal way, like the censored war reports that begin "Somewhere in France." She began it:

"Somewhere in a little seaport where I was resting one summer," and we didn't know till she finished it that it was Yarmouth she was talking about, and that it was this summer it happened, only two weeks ago, and that she was talking about the last case she nursed, the one that exhausted her so. She wouldn't have taken it, as she had given up regular nursing and was taking a vacation before going abroad in the Red Cross service, but the doctor was a good friend of hers

and seemed to think it was a life and death matter to have her help in such a critical case.

The patient was a fine-looking young fellow, not much more than a boy, although they found out later he had a wife and baby down in New Jersey. All they knew about him was that he had been in that neighborhood about three months, as agent for an insurance company, and was taken ill in the house where he was boarding. It was typhoid fever and a desperate case from the beginning. The first night they discovered why. It came out in his delirium, in broken sentences.

He had been using the company's money, holding back the premiums in some way. Of course [86] he always expected to replace the amounts in a short time, but his speculations were unfortunate and he had not succeeded in doing so when he was taken ill. And now he was in an agony of fear, tortured by the thought of exposure and disgrace. His ravings were something pitiful. He kept starting up in bed, thinking the detectives were after him, and begging them not to arrest him—to give him one more chance.

He had a lucid interval next morning when the doctor questioned him and he made a full confession. There was no one he could apply to for help. His own people had nothing, and the thought of his wife finding out his dishonesty almost crazed him. Miss Crewes said it was one of the most harrowing experiences she ever lived through. There was no place for her to go but out on the tiny balcony. She stepped through the window and sat on the railing out of sight of the bed, but she couldn't help hearing. The way she told it made us feel that we were right there with her, watching the doctor's face, and reading in it as she did the struggle going on in his mind. He was turned so he could not see her, but she could see every expression that crossed his face.

This stranger had no claim on him whatsoever. He had gotten into trouble through [87] extravagance and a fast life, while what the doctor had managed to save after putting himself through school had been earned by the hardest work and most frugal living. It would take all his savings to replace the stolen funds, and he had been piling it up, bit by bit, for a cherished purpose of his own. Why should he sacrifice it for this careless young fellow, who by his own confession had never denied himself anything? And yet, to stand back and see him go down that path abhorred of all men to exposure and public disgrace probably would take away his one chance of recovery.

For a long time the doctor sat there, looking past the restless form on the white bed to the skyline of the little town that showed through the open window. It was a hard decision for him to make. Finally he said cheerfully:

"It's all right, old chap. Don't worry about it any more. I'll stand between you and trouble. I'll send my check to the company for you this very day."

Then the boy broke down again, and his relief and gratitude were almost as distressing as his fear had been. Well, he died after all, though they worked to the utmost to save him. There were some complications. And it was all so pitiful, the little wife's coming on with the baby to be with [88] him those last few days, and her frantic imploring of them to save him, when they were already doing everything in human power. And the funeral and everything, and her going back home with his body. The one thing she clung to—the only thing that comforted her—was the thought of his goodness and nobility of character, and that she must live to bring up her little son to be worthy of his father's memory.

She went away never knowing what she had been spared. The doctor didn't have even her gratitude to reward him, because she didn't know what he had done. And nobody will ever know but Miss Crewes how much he gave to wipe out a stranger's dishonor and let him die with his reputation unstained. Not that he ever mentioned the matter to Miss Crewes. All she knew was what she couldn't help overhearing. But, being old friends, he had told her in the beginning of the summer why he was working so hard and living so frugally. He was engaged to the loveliest girl in Christendom, and expected to marry her as soon as his bank account reached the place where he could give her the things she was accustomed to having.

"And so you see," said Miss Crewes in ending the story, "there was no *possible* 'guerdon' for [89] him. It was done solely, purely, for the deed's sake."

"I'd like to know that chap," said Richard thoughtfully. Then for a moment or two there was a deep silence. It was broken by the sound of a noisy little automobile rattling down the road. As it came nearer Miss Crewes recognized it and started to her feet in surprise. "Well, this is the most remarkable coincidence that ever was!" she exclaimed. "There he is this blessed minute!"

If the man had driven on by we wouldn't have known his name, and probably might never have discovered it. But the surprise of seeing him made her forget that she was disclosing the identity of the hero of her story. At sight of her he stopped his car, got out and came over to where we were sitting, to speak to her. After a cordial greeting she introduced him to us. *And he was Doctor John Wynne.*

My heart beat so hard that I was sure everybody must hear it. To meet in this unexpected fashion by the roadside when I had been picturing all sorts of romantic ways! And yet it wasn't a bit strange that he should happen by, for we were only a couple of miles out of Yarmouth, and his calls were liable to bring him along that road almost any hour of the day or night.

He is an older looking man than I imagined him to be. He has that keen X-ray gaze that doctors [90] have when they're asking you your symptoms, and I was afraid that he'd know just by looking at

me how hard my heart was beating, and that I'd made up all those romantic day-dreams about him. My guilty conscience made my face burn like fire. I looked away every time he glanced at me. I'd never really expected to have him appear so unexpectedly. Fortunately he stayed only a few minutes and then was off again in a cloud of dust.

Richard stood and looked after him till he was out of sight and then said slowly, "There's nothing picturesque about a rickety second-hand machine like that, and nothing heroic looking about an ordinary village doctor, but when it comes to a choice between them and one of your old guys in armor, it's me for the modern knight every time."

Not till then did it dawn on Miss Crewes that she had unwittingly betrayed a confidence. Then she felt perfectly awful about it, and said so much that we swore over and over we'd never repeat what she told us, under any circumstance.

But I'm glad she did let it slip. So glad I know that "little John Wynne" grew up to be that kind of a man. I wonder if the "loveliest girl in Christendom" is worthy of him. If she appreciates him as he deserves.

CHAPTER VIII

[91]

DISILLUSIONED

MANY times since making that promise to Miss Crewes I have wished I could take it back. I'd give a fortune to tell just one person in this world what Dr. Wynne did, but Barby says no. Miss Crewes has sailed and I can't reach her for weeks to get her permission, and under the circumstances I'd not be justified in breaking my promise. I must keep my word. But I almost know it would right a great wrong if I could tell, and it almost breaks my heart not to be able to do it. The way of it is this.

The French Relief entertainment took place last Saturday night, after being postponed four times, and I did the Spanish dance in my lovely green and gold costume. Esther got back Saturday morning, just in time for it. I was too busy to go over to see her, but she telephoned that she would be at the entertainment, and that I must look my prettiest. Some of her Yarmouth friends were coming. The posters had attracted people from all over the Cape.

My heart sang for joy all the rest of the day. Everybody says that I am at my best in that Spanish dance and look my best in that costume, and naturally if one is to do any shining one wants one's best beloved there to see it.

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Babe Nolan was behind the scenes with me before the performance began. Jim and Viola were both on the program, and she was there to help them make up and prompt them if they forgot. It was the first chance I had to mention those letters of Esther to her, and I took advantage of it a few minutes before the curtain went up.

Of course I didn't tell her it was Richard whom I saw with the six letters written in the seven days of Esther's absence. I just mentioned the fact that I had seen them and added, "So, of course, she couldn't be engaged to that doctor she danced with in Barnstable."

Babe was standing with one eye glued to a peep-hole in the curtain, trying to see who was in the audience. She never turned her head but just kept on looking with one eye, and said in that flat, cocksure way of hers, "Well, that doesn't prove anything."

It made me so mad I didn't know what to do. It wasn't what she said so much as the way she said it that was so odious. There have been a few times in my life when I've been sorry that I was born a Huntingdon with the family manners to live up to, and this was one of them. Before I could think of an answer she added in that calm, I'll-prove-it-to-you-voice:

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"She's down there with him right now, in the third row, next to the middle aisle, on the left."

Then she stepped aside for me to put my eye to the peep-hole, and for one giddy instant I thought I was going to faint. The shock of the surprise was so great. There sat Esther looking like a dream and the man with her was Doctor John Wynne. So *she* was the "loveliest girl in Christendom" whom he was working and waiting for, and whom he'd have to go on working and waiting for no telling how long, because he had acted the part of a true knight, helping an unfortunate stranger who had no claim on him whatsoever. When Babe talked about the doctor who was attentive to Esther, I took it for granted he was a Barnstable man. It never occurred to me that he had gone from Yarmouth to see her.

My head was in such a whirl that I was thankful the orchestra struck up just then, and we had to scurry to seats in the wing before the curtain went up. My dance didn't come till near the last, so I had plenty of time to think it all over. My first and greatest feeling after the tremendous surprise was one of gladness for both of them. It seemed too good to be true that my ideal girl and my ideal man should have found each other—should belong to each other. It is exactly what I could have wished for each of them. But a little doubt kept raising its head like a tiny snake in a rose-bower. If she were really engaged to him how could she be writing daily to Richard, those

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long fat letters, and carrying on with him in that fascinating, flirtatious, little way of hers that keeps him simply out of his head about her?

My mind went round and round in that same circle of questions like a squirrel in a cage, never getting anywhere, till all of a sudden my name was called. It was my time to go on the stage and I had forgotten my steps—forgotten everything. For a second I was as cold as ice. But at the first notes of the fandango my castanets seemed to click of their own accord, and I glided on to the stage feeling as light as a bubble and as live as a flash of fire. I was dancing for those two down there in the third row, next to the middle aisle. I would do my best, and not a doubt should cloud my belief in my beautiful Star.

After the performance they were among the first to come up and congratulate me. This time I could meet his gaze fearlessly, and I saw his eyes were just like the little boy's in the picture. They hadn't changed a bit, but looked out on the world as if they trusted everybody in it and everybody could trust him. When he put Esther's scarf around her shoulders he did it in such a masterful, taking-care-of-her sort of way, and she looked up at him so understandingly that I realized Babe Nolan was right about their caring for each other. [95]

I could hardly go to sleep that night for thinking about them. I felt as if I had stepped into a real live story where I actually knew and loved both hero and heroine, and was personally interested in everything that happened to them. I didn't think of Richard's part in it.

And now—oh how can I tell what followed, or how it began? I scarcely know how the change came about, or how it started—that

"little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute,
And ever widening, slowly silence all."

Maybe Barby's suggestion that I was seeing Esther through a prism started me to looking at her more critically. And Babe Nolan's statements dropped with such calm precision every time we met, stuck in my memory like barbed arrows with poison on them. I had been mistaken in one thing, why not in others?

At first I made excuses for everything. When Esther counted the pile of photographs given her by the different boys who have rushed her this summer, and said she would have plenty of scalps to show when she went back home, I thought it was just as Judith had said. It wasn't because she was a born flirt that she made each boy think his picture was the only one she cared for. They all did that way back in her home town. She was brought up to think that was part of the game. [96]

But if she were really engaged to Doctor Wynne, as Judith admitted when I asked her, then she had no business to treat Richard as she did. It wasn't fair to him to lead him on so far and to accept so much from him, and it wasn't fair to Dr. Wynne.

But Judith said, "For the land sakes, Esther wasn't ready to settle down to any one person yet. Besides, Richard was too young for her to take him seriously, and John Wynne was too deadly in earnest for a girl like Esther. He was too intense. He couldn't understand a little butterfly like her whose only thought was to have a good time. She'd be utterly miserable tied for life to a man like him, who put duty ahead of her and her pleasure. It would probably end in her marrying one of the men back home that she'd been engaged to off and on ever since she was fifteen.

She said of course it would make things dreadfully uncomfortable when it came to breaking her engagement with John Wynne, because he was so horribly in earnest that he considered her actually his. It was a mistake to let the affair go so far. When I asked how about Richard, Judith just shrugged her shoulders and said it wasn't to be wondered at that Esther should have a little summer affair with him, such a good-looking boy and so entertaining, with that lovely car at his disposal. [97]

Just then Esther came downstairs in a soft white dress, beaded in crystal, looking like such an angel with the lamplight falling on her amber hair and sweet upturned face, that all my old faith in her came back in a rush. "The loveliest girl in Christendom." No wonder he called her that.

It was then that I first thought, oh, if I could only tell her the story that Miss Crewes told us, of that knightly deed her John Wynne did without any hope of guerdon, she wouldn't want to break tryst with him. But I couldn't tell then. I had given my promise.

The next week-end he came up to Provincetown again. He was to stay all night at the hotel and take Esther down to Chatham next day to a house-party. Some old school friends of hers were giving it. But he went back without her. When she found he had come for her in the same shabby little old automobile that he had last Spring when she was in Barnstable, she refused to go with him. Said she'd be ashamed to have the girls know he drove such an old rattletrap, and that he'd promised her last Spring—at least halfway promised her—that he'd get a new one in time for this house-party, so that he could join them sometimes and take them on picnics. [98]

He explained to her that he had fully intended to do so, but that something came up lately which made it impossible. He wouldn't tell her what, although she coaxed and pouted. He just stuck to it doggedly that it was something he couldn't talk about. Somebody needed his help and he felt forced to give it. Then he grew stern and told her that she must believe him when he said the sacrifice was necessary, and forgive him if he couldn't humor her wishes.

It was Judith who told me about it. She said that Esther has always queened it over everybody, and is so used to being considered first in everything that she wouldn't stand for his putting some old charity patient ahead of her wishes and her comfort. She just gave him his ring back and he went home that night.

I wanted to cry out that I knew the reason. That I could tell her something that should make her proud to be seen in that shabby old machine, because of the gallant sacrifice it stood for. But my lips were sealed by my promise. [99]

Only once before in my whole life have I ever had such a gone-to-pieces feeling. That was when our old gardener, Jeremy Clapp sneezed his teeth into the fire. I was so little then I didn't know that teeth could be false, and when I saw all of his fly out of his mouth I thought he was coming apart right before my eyes. The shock was so awful I screamed myself almost into spasms. My faith in everything seemed crumbling. I felt the same way this time.

I had been so sure of Esther, so absolutely sure of her high standards of honor, that the slightest flaw in her was harder to forgive than a crime in a less shining soul. And now to think that she had cruelly hurt and disappointed the man who, to me, was the knightliest of all men, was more than I could bear. I felt I could never take another person on trust as long as I lived. I wished I could have died before I found out that she wasn't all I believed her to be.

Barby had guests when I reached home. I could hear their voices as I paused an instant on the front door-step. I knew that if I tried to slip up the stairs she'd see me and call me to come in, so I tip-toed across the hall into the big downstairs guest chamber, and threw myself on the couch by the open window. I was too miserable to face anybody. Too miserable even for tears. [100]

But the tears came presently when I looked up and caught sight of the picture that I had rescued at the auction, "little John Wynne," leaning against his mother's shoulder, looking out on the world so trustingly from that safe refuge. As I looked at the curl her fingers had brushed so carefully into shape, and the curve of the baby lips that had never known anything but truth, I just couldn't bear to think of him growing up to be deceived and disappointed. I had to admit that Esther wasn't worthy of him, but I recalled the way he looked at her as he put her scarf around her that night, and I felt that if he still wanted her as much as he did then, I wanted him to have her. It didn't seem fair for her not to be told about his Sir Gareth sacrifice. I believe I cried more for his disappointment than for my own, as I pictured his blighted future, although mine seemed empty enough, goodness knows. I wished I was old enough to be a trained nurse and go to Flanders right away.

It was almost dark when the guests left. I had cried myself into a blinding headache. I hadn't intended to tell Barby, but she happened to glance in as she passed the door, and, seeing me face downward on the couch, came in with an exclamation of surprise, and before I knew it the whole miserable story was out. Then I was glad I told, for she was so sweet and comforting as she sat and stroked my forehead with her cool fingers. Some of the ache went away as she talked. It helped a lot to know that she had gone through the same kind of an experience. Everyone does, she said, "in their salad days." One can't expect to be an expert at reading character then. [101]

But she insisted that I mustn't tell Esther about the typhoid fever patient. She said it wouldn't help matters. That John Wynne had been looking through a prism too. He saw her pretty, fascinating, gracious ways and imagined her perfect as I had done. He hadn't seen what a shallow little creature she really is, vain and selfish. It was better for his disillusionment to come now than later.

"But how is one ever to be sure?" I wailed. "There was Richard and Doctor Wynne and me, all three of us mistaken. She was like a star to each of us. I called her 'Star.' It seemed the most beautiful name in the world and I thought it fitted her perfectly."

"Don't be too hard on her," Barby said. "It was your mistake in taking her measure, and giving her a misfit name. Remember how many mistakes the prince made before he found a perfect fit for Cinderella's slipper. But cheer up! You'll find some one worthy of the name some day." [102]

I didn't want to cheer up, so I just closed my eyes, and Barby, seeing that I didn't wish to talk, went on rubbing the headache away in silence. When I opened them again it was twilight, so I must have dozed off for a while. Barby was sitting across the room in the window-seat, her elbow on the sill. Her dress glimmered white. Beyond her, through the open casement, glowed the steady harbor lights and the winking red eye of the Wood End lighthouse. I went over to her and leaned out into the sweet-smelling summer dusk. It made me feel better just to sniff that delightful mingling of sea salt and garden fragrances.

"Look up," said Barby. "Did you ever see the stars so bright? I've been sitting here taking a world of comfort out of them. It's good to feel that no matter what else goes wrong they keep right on, absolutely true to their orbits and their service of shining; so unflinchingly true that the mariner can always steer his course by them. And Georgina—you don't believe it possible now, but I want you to take my word for it—*there are people in the world like that—there are friendships like that—there is love like that—just as dependable as the stars!*" [103]

She said it in a way I can never forget. It brought back the old feeling Tippy used to give me when she traced my name on my silver christening cup, the feeling that it was up to me to keep it shining. I've thought about it quite a lot since, but I am all mixed up as to which is the best way to do it. Maybe after all it would be more star-like of me to renounce my dream of becoming a

famous author, and go in for duty alone, like Miss Crewes.



CHAPTER IX

[104]

SEVEN MONTHS LATER

ONE might think, seeing that I am keeping two diaries now, that I am leading a double life. But such is not the case. When it was decided that I was to go to Washington this year, to the same school that Barby attended when she was my age, she suggested that I keep a journal, as she did while here. She called hers "Chronicles of Harrington Hall." So I am calling mine "The Second Book of Chronicles." Next vacation we are to read them together.

Naturally I want to make mine as interesting as possible, so I've spent considerable time describing life here at school as I see it, and making character sketches of the different girls, teachers, etc. It would have been more satisfactory if I could have put all that in my Memoirs, thus making one continuous story, but it's too great a task to write it all out twice. So I have put a footnote in my Memoirs for the benefit of whoever my biographer may be, saying, "For what happened at Harrington Hall, see my Book of Chronicles." [105]

All during the first term I did not make a single entry in this old blank book, now open before me. It lay out of sight and out of mind in the back of my desk. But this morning I came across it while looking for something, and tonight I have just finished reading it from start to finish. I realize I have left quite a gap in the story by failing to record several things which happened after Esther went home.

As I sit and re-read these last pages, how far away I seem now from that unhappy August afternoon when I came home from the Gilfreds', feeling that I could never take anyone on trust again. It was days before I got over the misery of that experience, and I really believe it was on account of the way I went moping around the house that Barby decided to send me away to school. Father had been urging it for some time, but she wanted to keep me at home with her one more year.

It wasn't the excitement of getting ready to go away and trying on all my new clothes that restored me to my former cheerfulness, although Barby thinks so. It was just two little words that Richard said the last day he was with us, before going back to school. I wouldn't have believed that a mere exclamation could have brought about such an amazing change in my feelings, and I still wonder how it did. Next year I'm going to study psychology just to find out about such queer happenings in our brains. [106]

We were out in the boat, he and Captain Kidd and I, taking a farewell row. He hadn't mentioned Esther's name since the day she left, but Judith told me he never went back to the house after he found out the double game she had been playing. Remembering how infatuated he'd been I knew he must have felt almost as broken up as Babe says John Wynne was. I kept hoping he'd bring up the subject. I thought it would make it easier for him if he would confide in one who had known the same adoration and disappointment. Besides I brooded over it all the time. It was all I thought about.

So on the way back I sat in pensive silence, trailing my hand languidly over the side of the boat through the water. Richard talked now and then, but of trivial things that could not possibly interest one communing with a secret sorrow, so I said nothing in reply. When we were almost at the pier he rested on the oars and let the boat drift, while we sat and listened to the waves tumbling up against the breakwater.

As we paused thus in the gathering dusk, a verse came to me that seemed a fitting expression of the sad twilight time as well as both my mood and his. For his face looked sad as he sat there gazing out to sea, sad and almost stern. So I repeated it softly and so feelingly that the tears sprang to my eyes, and there was a little catch in my voice at the last line: [107]

"Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O sea,
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me."

I had expected some sort of sympathetic response, at least an eloquent silence, for he knew I meant Esther, and it was like a dash of cold water to hear him exclaim in an exasperated sort of way, "*Oh rats!*"

Captain Kidd took the exclamation to himself, and barked till he nearly fell out of the boat. And Richard laughed and rolled him over on the seat and asked him what he meant by making such a

fuss about nothing. That was no way for a good sport to do. Then he began pulling for the landing with all his might.

Considering that I had just bared to him one of the most sacred emotions of my heart, his answer seemed as unfeeling as it was rude and inappropriate, something I could never forgive nor forget. He couldn't help seeing that I was hurt and indignant, for I ran up the beach ahead of him and only answered in monosyllables when he called after me, pretending nothing had happened. [108]

But later when I was upstairs brushing my hair, I heard him down in the dining-room, teasing Tippy and telling her what he wanted for his farewell supper, in that jolly, audacious way of his that makes a joke of everything. I knew perfectly well that he felt blue about going back to school and that he was all broken up over the affair with Esther, but he was too good a sport to show it.

And *that's* what he meant by saying "Oh rats," in such an exasperated way! He had expected me to measure up to his idea of a good sport and I hadn't done it! My brooding over "a day that is dead" till it spoiled our enjoyment of the present one, seemed silly and sentimental to him. As he told the dog, "that was no way to do." From away back in our pirate-playing days the thought that Richard expected a thing of me, always spurred me on to do it, from walking the ridgepole to swinging down the well rope. He expected me to be as game and cheerful a chum as he is, and here I had spoiled our last boat-ride together by relapsing into that moody silence. [109]

It was as if those two words held a mirror before my eyes, in which I saw myself as I looked to him. "But I'll show him I *can* be game," I declared between my teeth, and as soon as I had tied the ribbon on my hair I ran downstairs, determined to make that last evening the jolliest one we had ever had.

I am so thankful that we did have such a gay time, for now that things can never be the same again, he will have it to look back on and remember happily. He went away next morning, but I did not leave until nearly two weeks later. It was the day before I started to Washington that I heard the news which changed things.

I was down in the post-office, sending a money order, when Mr. Bart, the famous portrait painter, came in. Some other artist-looking man followed him in, and I heard him say as he caught up with him:

"Bart, have you heard the news about Moreland? He's reported killed in action. No particulars yet, but, it goes without saying that when he went, he went bravely."

Mr. Bart started as if he had been hit, and said something I didn't quite catch about dear old Dick, the most lovable man he ever knew. All the time the clerk was filling my money-order blank they stood there at the same window, talking about him and the winters they had spent together in Paris, their studios all in the same building, and how they'd never want to go back there now with so many of the old crowd gone. They said all sorts of nice things about Mr. Moreland. But not till one of them asked, "Where's the boy now?" did I realize the awfulness of what I had just heard. It was *Richard's* father they were talking about, *and he was dead*. [110]

But I couldn't really believe that it was true until I got home and found Barby at the telephone. Mr. Milford had just called her up to tell her about it. And she was saying yes, she thought he ought to go to Richard at once by all means. He would feel so utterly desolate and alone in the world, for his father had been everything to him. Now that his Aunt Letty was dead he had no relatives left except Mr. Milford. She'd go herself if she thought she could be any comfort to the dear boy.

Mr. Milford said he'd catch the *Dorothy Bradford* within an hour, and he'd convey her messages. And that's the last I heard for ever so long. I wanted to write to Richard, but I just couldn't. There wasn't any way of telling him how sorry I was. But that night I scribbled a postscript at the end of Barby's letter to him, and signed it, "Your loving sister, Georgina." I wanted him to feel that he still had somebody who thought of him as their really own, and as belonging to the family. [111]

I had been here at school over two weeks before any news came about him. Then Barby wrote that Mr. Milford was back, and had told her that they had a trying interview. Richard was more determined than ever to get into the war. He kept saying, "I've *got* to go, Cousin James. There's a double reason now, don't you see, with *Dad* to be avenged? I'm not asking you to advance any of my money. All I want is your consent as my guardian. They won't let me in without that."

Richard can't get the money his Aunt Letty left him till he is twenty-one. It's in trust. But he'll have a lot then, and there ought to be considerable when his father's affairs are settled. But because Mr. Moreland had said that Richard was too young to go now and must keep on in school, Mr. Milford feels it is his duty to be firm and carry out his cousin's wishes. But he told Barby he came away feeling that with the boy in that frantic frame of mind, school would do him no more good than it would a young lion. A caged and wounded one at that.

The next news of him was that he had disappeared from the school and his Cousin James couldn't find a trace of him. About that time the expressman left a big flat box for Barby with a note inside that said, "Take care of this for me, please. If I shouldn't come back I'd like for you and Georgina to have it. Dad thought it was the best thing he ever did." [112]

In the box was the portrait that Mr. Moreland painted of Richard the first summer he came to

Provincetown, called, "The thoughts of Youth are long, long thoughts." It has been given first place in every art exhibition in which it has been hung, and, besides being a wonderful piece of painting, is the darlinest portrait of Richard as he was at the age of ten that one could imagine.

It was not until after Thanksgiving that I heard directly from him myself. Then I had a note from him, written up in Canada. He said, "I know you won't give me away, Georgina, even to Barby. She might feel it was her duty to tell Cousin James where I am. I couldn't enlist, even up here without his consent, but I've found a way that I can do my bit and make every lick count. I'm at the front, *by proxy*, and *more*. So I am satisfied. I haven't much time to write but that's no reason I wouldn't appreciate all the home news available. If you have any on hand just pass it along to yours truly who will be duly grateful."

I was wild to know what he was doing, and exactly what he meant by being at the front "by proxy and more." But, although I wrote regularly after that and underscored the question each time, he never paid any attention to that part of my letters. I could see he was purposely ignoring it. I would have ignored his questions, just to get even, if they hadn't showed so plainly how hungry he was for news of us all. Remembering that he is all alone in the world now, since he and his Cousin James are at outs, and that I am the only one of his home folks who knows his whereabouts, I make my letters as entertaining as possible. [113]

Sometimes Babe Nolan, who is at this school, rooming just across the hall, hands over her brother Jim's letters. The spelling is awful and his grammar a disgrace, but he certainly has a nose for news. He tells about everybody in town from the Selectmen to the Portuguese fishermen. Babe never wants the letters back, so I send them on to Richard, also the Provincetown *Advocate*, which Tippy mails me every week as soon as she is done reading it.

Hardly had I written the above when my roommate, Lillian Locke, came in. Being a Congressman's daughter, she is allowed to spend a lot of her spare time with her family, who are living at a hotel. She had been out all afternoon with them, consequently had not received her pile of letters which came in the last mail. The elevator boy gave them to her as she came up. One of mine had been put in with hers by mistake. That is why I didn't get it earlier. I was surprised to see that it was from Barby, because I had one from her only this morning. Late as it is I'll have to sit up and add a few more lines to this record, for it's all about Richard and fits right in here. [114]

Mr. Milford finally got track of him in some way and followed him to Canada. He has just returned. He found Richard working in what had once been an automobile factory. It is now turning out aeroplanes for the Canadian government.

One of the first persons Richard met when he reached the town was a workman in this factory who was eager to go to the front, but couldn't for two reasons. He was badly needed in the factory, and he had a family dependent on his wages, two little children and a half-blind mother. His wife is dead. When Richard found he couldn't enlist, big and strong as he is, without swearing falsely as to his age, he went to the man and offered to take his place both in the factory and as a breadwinner for his family.

It was the foreman who told Mr. Milford about it. He said there was no resisting a boy like him. He was in such dead earnest and such a likable sort of a lad. He walked into everybody's good graces from the start. They took him on trial and he went to work as if every blow was aimed at a Hun. When the man saw that he actually meant business and wanted it put down in black and white that he would look after the family left behind, the matter was arranged in short order. [115]

And now Richard feels that not only is there a man on the firing line who wouldn't be there but for him, but every day as he fashions some part of the aircraft, he is doing a man's work in helping to win the war. The foreman said, "He's the kind that won't be satisfied till he knows everything about airships there is to know," and Mr. Milford said he didn't feel that he was justified in opposing him any longer. A job like the one he had undertaken would do him more good than all the colleges in the country.

Down at the bottom of the letter Barby said, "I have written all this to Miss Crewes, that she may have another Sir Gareth to add to her list of knightly souls who do their deed and ask no guerdon."

CHAPTER X

AT HARRINGTON HALL

THE other day Miss Everett, the English teacher, took a book away from Jessica Archibald. She said it wasn't suitable for a girl in her teens. It was too sentimental and romantic. Jess didn't mind it very much, for she is one of the worshippers at Miss Everett's shrine. When a bunch of girls are so devoted to a person that they'll go to her room and take the hairs out of her comb to put in their lockets or their memory books, that is the limit. I don't see how any novel ever written could beat that for being sentimental.

But Babe Nolan doesn't agree with me. She never does. She said, "Look at the old Romans.

Didn't I remember in Anthony over Caesar's dead body:

"Yea, beg a hair of him for memory, and dying, mention it within their wills, bequeathing it as a rich legacy."

But Babe admits that Jessica is disgustingly sentimental. They are room-mates. And Babe says how any grown person can be the blind bat that Jess's mother is, is a mystery to her. Mrs. Archibald told Miss Everett that her little daughter is "an unawakened child as yet, just a shy, budding, white violet," and she wants to keep her so till she's through school. She says Jessica has always been totally indifferent to boys, never gives them a thought, and she doesn't want her to until she is grown and Prince Charming arrives on the scene. She's just fifteen now. [117]

And all the time, Babe says, shy little Jessica is having the worst kind of a case with one of the Military Academy cadets, who started up an acquaintance with her one day on the street-car, behind the chaperone's back. She's slipped off and gone alone to movies several times to meet him, when she was supposed to be taking tea with her aunt. Yet she looks up in such an innocent, wide-eyed way, and seems so shocked when such escapades are mentioned, that you wouldn't suspect her any more than you would a little gray kitten. But it's making her dreadfully deceitful.

Babe came up to our room to talk to Lillian and me about it, for she's really worried over those clandestine meetings. She says the whole trouble is that Jess doesn't know boys as they exist in the flesh. She knows only the demi-gods created by her own imagination. She has been brought up on fairy-tales in which princes often go around disguised as swine-herds, and, not having any brothers which would give her the key to the whole species, she doesn't know a swineherd when she meets him. [118]

Babe told her no real prince would ask anything clandestine, and that this cadet she's mooning around about is only an overgrown schoolboy with a weak chin and a bad complexion, and if she could see him as he really is and as he looks to the rest of us girls, it would cure her of her romantic infatuation. And Babe told her, moreover, that no real prince would pretend to be a poet when he wasn't, and that the verses he sent her were not original as she fondly believed, wearing them around inside her middy blouse. Babe couldn't remember just what poem they were taken from, but said they were as well known to the public as "Casey at the bat." She is so blunt that when she begins handing out plain truths she never stops for anyone's feelings.

Babe says that if she ever marries and is left a widow in poor circumstances, she will support herself by starting a Correspondence School in a branch that will do more good than all the curriculums of all the colleges. It will be a sort of Geography of Life, teaching maps and boundaries of the "*United States*" and general information to fit one for entering it. She said we shouldn't be left to stumble into it, in blindfold ignorance like Jessica's. [119]

Right there I couldn't resist breaking in to say, "Oh, speaking of a *correspondence* course, Babe, did you ever find that brass-balled bedstead you were looking for at the auction?"

Of course the question had no significance for Lillian, but it pointedly reminded Babe of the correspondence she had with the One for whom she was once all eyes when he was present, and all memory when he was gone. She's entirely over that foolishness now, but she turned as red as fire, just the same, and to keep Lillian from noticing, she turned to the bureau and began talking about the first thing she looked at.

It happened to be a photograph of Lillian's brother, Duffield, who is an upper classman at Annapolis. Lillian is awfully proud of him, although from his picture you wouldn't call him anything extraordinary. His nose is sort of snub, but he has a nice face as if he really might be the jolly kind of a big brother that Lillian says he is. She's always quoting him. I've heard so much about what "Duff thinks" and "Duff used to say and do" that I feel that I know him as well as if we'd been brought up in the same house. [120]

So when she began singing his praises again, declaring that Duffield wouldn't ask a girl to meet him clandestinely and he wouldn't have any respect for one who wanted to, I withdrew from the conversation. It was time for me to go on copying the theme which Babe's entrance had interrupted.

She must have been responsive enough to have pleased even Lillian, for when next I was conscious of what they were saying, Lillian was including Babe in the invitation she had given me some time ago, to go along with them next time her mother motored down to Annapolis to see Duff. They're going down to a hop in April, which is only a few days off now, and again in June week, and stay at John Carrol Hall. Mrs. Locke has already written to Barby, inviting me, and Barby has given her permission.

Mrs. Locke is from Kentucky, and knows all the Shirleys. She always introduces me as "the granddaughter of our illustrious editor, you know." In that way I've met a lot of Barby's old friends when I've been invited to take dinner at the hotel with Lillian. That accounts also for my being included in their invitation to an informal musicale at the White House where I met the President and his wife. (See Book of Chronicles for six pages describing that grand occasion.) [121]

Of all the legacies in the world, nothing is more desirable for children to inherit than old friendships. One day when Mrs. Locke took Lillian and me shopping with her, we met a lady in one of the stores whom she introduced as Mrs. Waldon. No sooner had she been told who I am than she held out both hands to me, saying in the dearest way, "Not Barby Shirley's daughter,

and half a head taller than I! Why, my dear, I was at your mother's wedding, and it seems only yesterday. Our families have been neighbors for three generations, so you see we inherited our friendship, and now here you come, walking into the same heritage."

She insisted on taking us home to lunch with her. Mrs. Locke had another engagement, but Lillian and I went. She has the dearest apartment, on the top floor with a stairway running up to a little roof garden. Her husband served in the Civil War and was a general in the Cuban war, and two of her daughters have recently married naval officers. They were living in Annapolis when that happened, so she knows all about the place. Her other daughter, Miss Catherine, has just come back from a visit down there, and she told us so much about the place and the good times she has there that we are simply wild to go. I can hardly wait for the time to come.

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We have just come to our rooms from the Current Events class. If it wasn't for Miss Allen's little lecture every Friday afternoon, reviewing the happenings of the week, we'd hardly know what is going on outside of the school premises. We rarely see the papers, and it is as sweet and peaceful as a cloister, here at the Hall, with its high-hedged park around it. We forget, sometimes, the awful suffering and horrors that have been shocking the world for nearly two years. Our lessons and recreations and friendships fill our days to the brim, and crowd the other things out. While we're digging into our mathematics or playing basketball with all our might, if we think of war at all, it's in the back of our heads, like the memory of a bad dream.

But when Miss Allen tells us of some new horror as she did today, of the torpedoing of the *Sussex*, crowded with passengers and many Americans aboard, then we realize we are living on the edge of a smouldering volcano, which may burst into action any moment. It doesn't seem possible that our country can keep out of it much longer. I know Father thinks so. His letters are few and far between because he's so very busy, but there's always that same note of warning running through them.

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"Make the most of this year at school, Georgina. Nobody knows what is coming. So get all you can out of it in the way of preparation to meet the time of testing that lies ahead for all of us."

After one of those letters I go at my lessons harder than ever, and the little school happenings, its games and rivalries and achievements, seem too trivial for words. I keep measuring them by Father and his work, and what Richard is doing so splendidly up there in Canada, and I wish there was something I could do to make them as proud of me as I am of them. If the family would only consent to my going in for a nurse's training! I'm going to talk Barby into letting me stop school this vacation, and beginning this fall to fit myself for Red Cross service.

When Richard found that Mr. Milford had told us about him being the temporary head of a family, he began mentioning his proteges now and then in a joking way. But two snapshots which he sent of them told more than all his brief descriptions. The one labelled "Granny" shows more than just a patient-faced little woman knitting in the doorway. The glimpse of cottage behind her and the neat door-yard in front shows that he has something to go back to every night that has a real touch of home about it. He boards there, so that he can keep an eye on the boys. One is five, the other seven. He said he had to give the older one, Cuthbert, a fatherly spanking one day, but it didn't seem to make any difference in the kid's feeling towards him.

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They seem to be very fond of each other, judging from the second snapshot, labelled "Uncle Dick and his acrobats." The two boys were climbing up on his shoulders like little monkeys, all three in overalls and all grinning as if they enjoyed it. It seems too queer for words to think of Richard being dignified and settled down enough for anybody to look up to him as authority. But the sights he sees are enough to make him old and grave beyond his years. He has written several times of going to the station to help with a train-load of soldiers returned from the front. They are constantly coming back, crippled and blinded and maimed in all sorts of ways. He says that sights like that make him desperate to get a whack at the ones who did it. He'll soon be in shape to do something worth while, for he's learning to fly, so he can test the machines they are making.

Lillian looked at the acrobat picture rather sniffily when it came. I think she took him for just an ordinary mechanic in his working clothes. But when I told her what a Sir Gareth deed he is doing her indifference changed almost to hero-worship. She's so temperamental. Not long ago he sent another picture of himself, a large one, in the act of seating himself in the plane, ready for flight. She wanted to know if she had anything I'd be willing to trade with her for it. She'd gladly give me one of Duff in place of it.

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It put me in rather an awkward position for I didn't want Duffield's picture, and I most certainly didn't want her to have Richard's.



CHAPTER XI

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THE MIDSHIPMAN HOP

It is all in my Book of Chronicles, written out for Barby to read, how we motored down to Annapolis in the fresh April sunshine, and what we wore and what we did. But it is only in this "inmost sanctum" of these pages that "my tongue can utter the thoughts that arose in me."

Mrs. Waldon was with us, as enthusiastic as a girl over going back to her old home, and she kept us amused most of the way with her reminiscences of different midshipmen, especially the two who married her daughters. But in between times my thoughts kept wandering forward uneasily to the hop, in spite of the reassuring knowledge of a lovely new coral-pink party dress, stowed away in the suitcase under my feet, and I couldn't help feeling a bit nervous over the coming event.

It would be the first dance I had ever gone to among strangers, and I kept thinking, "Suppose I'd be a wall-flower!" Then, too, I was a trifle agitated over the prospect of seeing Mr. Tucker again, the most congenial man I had ever met. Naturally I wanted to meet him again, but I shrank from doing so, certain that the sight of me would recall to his mind that humiliating affair of the borrowed slippers and my old Mary-Jane pumps. I was wild to know if he still remembered me, or if he had forgotten "both the incident and the little girl" as Barby predicted he would. Besides I wanted him to see how mature I had grown since then—how boarding school broadened and developed my views of life.

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I made up several little opening speeches on the way down, but couldn't decide which to use. Whether to assume a rather indifferent air with a tinge of hauteur, or to be frankly and girlishly glad to see him, and ignore the past.

I was still debating the question in my mind when we drove into "little old Crabtown" as Mrs. Waldon calls Annapolis. She asked the chauffeur to drive by the house where she used to live, so she could point out the place where the midshipmen used to swarm in for their favorite "eats" whenever they could get away from the Academy, and where she and her girls and their guests had those funny "guinea-hen teas" that she'd been telling us about.

While we were drawn up by the curb in front of the house, a big, blond boy in midshipman uniform, swinging past at a lively gait, stopped and saluted, the surprise on his face spreading into a vast grin as he recognized Mrs. Waldon. The next instant he was on the running board, shaking hands with her, and they began talking a dialect none of us could understand, about "dragging" and "queens" and "Jimmy-legs." The regular Midshipman "lingo" she explained afterward when she had introduced him to us in ordinary English. He was Mac Gordon, a sort of a cousin of hers from out West.

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The conversation that we couldn't understand was nothing but that she was asking him if he intended taking a girl to the dance, and telling him that we would be there, and asking if the same old guards were at the gates, because she intended to take us over the Academy grounds next day and hoped someone she knew would be detailed to escort us. I could see right then and there that Mac was making up his mind to give Lillian a good time, from the way he kept looking at her, sort of bashfully, through his eyelashes.

Well, I needn't have worried about anything. I had "crossed my bridge before I got to it," as Uncle Darcy often says, when I was fearing I'd be a wall flower. I had the first dance with Duffield, and the moment the band struck up I went into it, feeling as I did that night in the Spanish fandango. After that my card filled up so fast that I had to split dances. Mac Gordon was among the first, and Bailey Burrell, who once spent a summer in Provincetown, so long ago that I'd nearly forgotten him. But he remembered lots of things about me; the first time he ever saw me, for instance, dressed up at a bazaar as "A Little Maid of Long Ago." He even told how I was dressed, with a poke bonnet trimmed in rosebuds over my curls, sitting in a little rocking chair on a table. And he remembered about his sister Peggy breaking my prism. She's cured of her

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lameness now, and is grown up to be a very pretty girl, Bailey said. He promised to bring her picture around to the hotel next day.

He and Duffield were so entertaining, that as I talked and danced with them, suddenly Mr. Tucker and his opinions ceased to interest me any more. When he came hurrying up to speak to me and to ask for a dance, it was the strangest thing—his personality seemed to have changed since last summer. I looked up to him then as being quite intellectual and fascinating, but, seeing him now with Duffield and Bailey and Bob Mayfield, he seemed really rather insignificant. They called him "Watty," and that expresses him exactly.

But Babe seemed to find him very entertaining, and they danced together a lot. Good old Babe, so homely and so plain. Her nose was shiney and her hair straggling and her dress all sagging crooked before she'd been at it an hour. But she was having a beautiful time, and there's not a bit of jealousy in her nature. She came up to me once to ask for a pin and whispered, "Georgina, you're perfectly wonderful tonight—all sparkle and glow."

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It made me very happy, for Babe's compliments are few and far between. She is more apt to speak of your bad points than your good ones, and to be moved to say anything like *that* meant a lot from her. When I took her over to Mrs. Waldon to get some pins out of her "chaperone bag," because I didn't have any and she needed nearly a dozen, I heard Mrs. Waldon and Mrs. Locke saying nice things about me in an undertone, that made me think of that little line in "The Battle of Waterloo," about "cheeks that blushed with praise of their own loveliness."

It seemed to me that if the band would only keep on playing I could float on and on forever to the music. Oh, it's so wonderful to be a-tingle to the very finger-tips with the joy of just being alive—*radiantly* alive! To have all eyes following you admiringly as if you were a flower swaying on its stem! Oh I know this sounds conceited, written out in black and white in plain daylight, but that night as they played the strains of "Poor Butterfly" again and again, I felt to the fullest the joy of being a social success, such as Esther was. I felt all wings and as if I really were—at least inwardly—"all sparkle and glow." I wished that the night need never, never end, and the music and the heavenly floating motion need never stop. I wonder if a time can ever come when I'll be so old and stiff and feeble like Aunt Elspeth, that the strains of "Poor Butterfly" will not give me wings again. How does one ever become reconciled to being old?

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Next morning when we went over to the Naval Academy none of the boys could get off to accompany us, but the "Jimmy-legs" detailed to escort us was an old acquaintance of Mrs. Waldon's, and she has seen the sights so many times that she is as good as a guide-book. Nothing escaped us. I could have spent a week in the building where the trophy flags are, especially in the room that is lined with them, ceiling and all. By the time we had seen them, from Commodore Perry's "Don't give up the ship" down to the Chinese flag captured from the Boxers, we were worked up to such a pitch of patriotic pride that we wanted to go right off and do something ourselves to add a guidon or an ensign to that "long honor roll of heroic victories on the high seas."

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We stayed so long looking at the flags that we didn't have time to go through the chapel before lunch, but we did take time to watch the boys a few moments as the signal sounded for formation and they came marching in every direction to form in front of Bancroft Hall. We sat down on some benches under the trees to watch them, and they did look so fine, marching along with their precise military swing that we girls were wildly enthusiastic about them. I couldn't understand why Mrs. Locke's eyes filled with tears, till Mrs. Waldon said reminiscently:

"It seems only yesterday that my girls and I sat here, watching Oliver and Roy in that same line, and now one is on a submarine and the other on a destroyer."

And then I remembered that out from this peaceful spot where the April flowers were springing up everywhere and robins hopping across the green grass, these boys might have to go right off after "June week" into a storm of shot and shell. A storm far worse than any that ever rained around those tattered old flags we had just been looking at, because now there is the added frightfulness of mines and U-boats, and aircraft overhead, dropping death from the very skies. And yet (it's shocking to confess) last night, while we were dancing in the very place where the boys are being made strong and fit for such fighting, I actually forgot that war is going on.

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I forgot it again when the boys came over after lunch to take us back to the Academy to finish our sight-seeing. There were five of them, one apiece on the way over. But after we got inside the grounds Mrs. Locke said she was too tired to climb any more stairs, and she'd seen everything several times before, anyhow. So she and Mrs. Waldon found a bench under the trees facing the water, where a boat drill was going on, and took out their knitting. We strolled off in the direction of the boathouse.

Presently I noticed that no matter how we shifted positions as we went up steps or paused to look out of windows, three of the boys always came drifting back to me: Duff and Bob Mayfield and Bailey. And I wasn't doing a single thing to keep them with me, only laughing at their bright remarks and trying to be agreeable in a general way, for naturally I wanted them all to like me.

But all of a sudden I realized that I was having the same effect on them that Esther had on the boys at home. They were falling all over themselves to make me like *them*. It was the queerest sensation, that feeling of power that came over me. And, although I didn't care for one a bit more than for the others, I was curious to see what would happen if I were to exert that mysterious influence that I seemed to have over each of them. I began to feel that maybe I had not been fair

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to Esther in judging her so harshly. Maybe she had felt that same way, and drifted into those different affairs without thinking of consequences.

Pretty soon I could see that Duffield was maneuvering to get the other boys out of the way, and finally he succeeded after talking in an aside with his sister a moment. She immediately developed a great interest in an old wooden Indian which sits out on the campus on a pedestal. It was once a figurehead on the prow of a ship, and is supposed to be a likeness of the old war-chief Tecumpseh. The boys count it as their mascot. They decorate it with their colors before a football game and run around it for luck before exams, and all that sort of thing.

Before I realized how it happened, Duff and I were walking off towards the chapel alone, and all the others were going down to watch Babe and Lillian run around old Tecumpseh for luck. It was nearly an hour before they joined us. We strolled around inside the chapel and read the tablets put up in memory of the heroes who had once been merely boyish midshipmen like the one beside me. One had lost his life in some Asiatic expedition among savages. It was awfully interesting to me, seeing it for the first time, but Duffield kept interrupting my thrills to talk about personal matters. [135]

By this time I felt as if I had known him all my life, for Lillian's daily reminiscences of him had done more to make me acquainted with him than years of occasional meetings could have done. So it didn't seem as startling as it would have been otherwise when he suddenly became very personal. We were sitting in one of the seats back under the gallery. The few tourists wandering about were up near the chancel, whispering together and looking up at the memorial windows. We talked almost in whispers, too, of course, being in this shrine of heroes as well as a place of worship, and that in itself gave a more intimate tone to our conversation.

Duffield told me that he liked me better than any girl he ever met in his life. That he felt he had known me for years, for Lillian quoted me so often both in her letters and visits. And he wanted me to promise to correspond with him, and to give him my picture to put in the back of his watch, so's he'll have it with him when he goes off on his long cruise this summer. Of course I wouldn't promise. I told him I didn't know him well enough, but he wouldn't give up, and we kept on arguing about it for a long time, in a half-joking, half-serious way, till I was almost tempted to say I would, just to see what would happen. [136]

Then the others came in, and we all went down in the crypt to see the tomb of John Paul Jones. And even down there in that solemn place where a guard keeps vigil all the time, and the massive bronze wreaths and the flags and the silence make it so impressive, he edged in between Bailey and me and stooped down to whisper laughingly, "I won't give up the ship. You might as well promise."

But just at that moment Bailey called my attention to the ceiling above the tomb. A map of the heavens is painted on it, with all the constellations that the mariners steer their ships by. Looking up at those stars set above the last resting place of the old Admiral, Barby's words came back to me as if she were right at my elbow:

"There are people like that—there are friendships like that—there is love like that—as *dependable as the stars*." If Esther had been the "Star" I thought her she never would have drifted into those affairs with Richard and John Wynne and all the others. I think if it hadn't been for that I might have let myself drift a bit, for it certainly was a temptation to see how much Duffield might grow to care for me, although I was sure I could never feel any deep and lasting sentiment for him—the real Uncle-Darcy-and-Aunt-Elspeth kind. [137]

While I stood looking up at that map of the heavens, with these thoughts chasing through my mind, Babe came up and nudged me and told me for mercy's sake to quit star-gazing in a cellar. They were all ready and waiting to go. Babe has a lot of curiosity. As we started towards the stairs she gave me a puzzled look which said as plainly as words, "Now what did you do *that* for?"

I had stopped to lay my hand on a banner bearing the name of the old Admiral's flag-ship. It was a blue one with the name of the ship in white—*Bonhomme Richard*. I could not have told her why I did it, had she asked in words, instead of with her eyes. Even to myself I could not explain the impulse, save that the name brought a thought of Richard Moreland, and the feeling that what he had done made him, in his boyish way, as worthy of bronze wreaths and blue banners as any of those whose tablets shone in the chapel above. Seeing those tablets and the tomb and that map of stars, made my old dreams come back, my old longing to do something and be something in the world really worth while. I simply couldn't stand it to go through life and not write my name on the world's memory as it was written in the silver of my christening cup. Then I wondered what Richard would think of Duffield. [138]

That evening the same five boys who had been with us in the afternoon were lucky enough to get off again and come down to the hotel. Duffield and Mrs. Waldon's cousin were allowed to come earlier, in time for dinner. Afterwards we danced in the parlors and had just as an entrancing a time as we had the night before,

"Where Youth and Pleasure meet
To chase the glowing hours with flying feet."

Duffield was all that Lillian had bragged he was. The more I saw him the better I liked him. He was so sweet to her and so dear to his mother and so lovely to me, that I began to have a real pang at the thought of him going off on that long cruise and our never meeting again perhaps, as

long as we lived.

I found myself liking him so much better as the evening wore on, and discovering so many attractive things about him, that I was halfway frightened. I was afraid that I was doing what Barby said—"putting a rainbow around him." That the charm I saw about him was maybe partly of my own imagining. It worried me dreadfully. How is one to know? As we floated through the last dance together I began to think that if we were thrown together often I might find that he was the one person in the world I would care for above all others. And yet, John Wynne had thought that about Esther and so had Richard. I wished I had some absolutely sure test, some magic charm, by which I could *know* the gold of real love from the imitation that glitters like it.

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I lost the rhinestone buckle off one of my slippers and my coral dress caught on a jagged hoop of one of the tubs that the palms were in, and tore such a long slit in it that I can never wear it again. But it has served its purpose in the world. I've had two perfectly heavenly evenings in it. I've saved a handsbreadth of its pink loveliness to put away and keep in memory of that happy time.

The boys wouldn't go home until Mrs. Locke promised to bring us down again for June week. She promised, but I'm almost sure Barby won't let me go. The last thing Duffield did was to ask me again for that picture. "Please," he said in an undertone when he stooped to pick up my handkerchief. And he said it again in a meaning half-whisper as we shook hands all around in the general chorus of "Goodbye till June week."

CHAPTER XII

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"SHOD GOES SURE"

JUNE week has come and gone, but I was not there when the midshipmen went marching by in their white uniforms across the green mall, and the band played and parasols and summer dresses fluttered their gay colors from the Armory to the training ship.

Father wrote that he was coming, and would take me home with him if I didn't mind missing commencement. I did mind, terribly, but it was nothing when weighed in the balance with travelling back to the Cape with him and being with him a whole week.

So Babe and Lillian went without me, but it was some comfort afterward to hear that the boys all seemed disappointed because I wasn't there. They sent ever so many nice messages. Duffield sent me a *Lucky Bag*, the midshipmen's Annual, full of jokes about each other and some very attractive pictures both of the men and the buildings. There was a splendid one of him, and he drew a little sketch of Commodore Perry's flag on the margin, changing the motto to the words, "*Won't* give up the ship."

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Babe brought back a *Lucky Bag*, too; Watson gave it to her. She also had a postal card of that old Indian figurehead, Tecumpseh. I believe Babe must have made some wish while running around it which came true, or else Watson gave her the postal. It surely must have some association for her, for she brought it back to Provincetown and has it now, framed in a carved ivory frame, the handsomest one in the house, and wholly unsuitable for an old wooden Indian. She keeps it on her side of the bureau, and Viola simply loathes it.

Father and I had a delightfully cosy visit on the way home. We stayed all night in Boston and came over on the boat. He has been under a frightful strain and shows it; looks so worn and tired and has ever so many more gray hairs than he had a year ago. He came right from the war zone, and twice has been on ships that had to go to the rescue of torpedoed vessels and pick up passengers adrift in life-boats.

I couldn't get him to talk much about such things. He said he was trying to put them out of his mind as much as possible, and was hungry to get back to the sand dunes and just peaceful women folks. His eyes followed Barby's every movement. At times they had a grave, wistful expression which gave me dreadful forebodings.

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Coming over on the boat he questioned me about the course of study at Harrington Hall—how far I'd gone in mathematics and everything. Then he asked what I thought about learning typewriting this summer, and taking a short practical business course in Mr. Carver's office. I was so astonished I couldn't speak for a moment. All I could think of was Chicken-Little's cry—"The sky's a-falling. I was sitting under a rose-bush and a piece fell on *me*."

Finally, instead of answering his question, I blurted out the one I was fixing to ask him later on, after I'd paved the way for it and led up to it diplomatically, about my stopping school and taking the training for a Red Cross nurse. The moment it was out I knew I had bungled it by being so abrupt. He simply waved it aside as impossible. He said I didn't understand the conditions at the front at all. They needed women there, not immature girls unfitted both physically and mentally to cope with its horrors. They would be nervous wrecks in a short time. He said he was speaking from a physician's standpoint. He recognized the Joan of Arc spirit in the school-girls who offered themselves. It was one of the most beautiful and touching things the war had called forth, but they needed something more than youthful enthusiasm and a passion

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for sacrifice. When I was through school if I still wanted to take the training he wouldn't say a word, but now——

The shake of his head and the gesture of his hand as he said that one word dismissed the subject so utterly that I simply couldn't insist. I couldn't offer a single one of the arguments which I had stored up to answer him with in case he objected, as I knew he would.

Then he said he'd always hoped to give me some practical business training, just as if I'd been a boy, and now the war was making it even more necessary that I should have it. If I'd been a boy he would have wanted me to go into the Cold Storage Plant here that we have an interest in, long enough for me to learn how it is carried on and what its success depends upon. Mr. Samuel Carver II is at the head of it, and Titcomb Carver and Sammy III will take it up when they're through college. But they'll be the first to enlist when the call comes. They're that kind. And if they never come back the business will be eventually turned over to strangers. He wants me to know enough about it to safeguard our interests.

I was perfectly aghast at the idea. Me, not seventeen till next month, spending all my vacation shut up in an office, banging on a typewriter, with the whole free sparkling harbor outside calling to me. I'd planned such good times for this summer, a regular "under-the-rose-bush" kind, no lessons, no rules. Now not only was the sky a-falling over my particular bush, it was hitting me hard. [144]

The boat had just rounded the point when Father finished unfolding his plan, and we were leaning over the railing of the upper deck watching for the old town to come in view. For the first time it failed to look beautiful to me. The straight, ugly lines of the huge Storage plant loomed up till it seemed the biggest thing alongshore except the Pilgrim monument. That, of course, stretched up grim and stern above everything else, and looked across at me as if it knew the hard thing Father had just asked me to do. I felt that it heard the rebellious answer I was making to myself.

"I can't."

"You must," it answered back, as it had done all my life. "It's your duty. The idea of a descendant of the Pilgrim Fathers and the Minute Men shirking her duty!"

It always gets back at me that way. It knows that the stern and rockbound Huntingdon part of me could make only one answer when Father put the matter to me the way he did. It was a sacrifice, for I had hoped to begin my new novel this summer. But I had a sort of righteous, uplifted feeling after I had consented, such as I think the martyrs must have had, which is the reward of sacrifice. It's queer what a satisfaction one can get out of that martyr feeling at times. [145]

But I was ashamed of it next morning. I was going through the hall to join Barby and Father on the porch when I heard them talking about me.

"No, Judson, she's only a child. I can't bear to have her go out into the rough business world this early. There'll be time enough for that if some actual need should arise."

"But, Barbara, to let her grow up unprepared for what is almost sure to happen, would be like sending her out on a stony road in her little bare feet. 'Shod goes sure,' Uncle Darcy used to say. If she's properly shod she'll be spared much pain and weariness. If you could only realize what lies ahead of us—if you could only see what I have seen——"

I walked out on the porch just then and he put out his hand to draw me to a seat beside him. Then he began to tell us of what he has just seen in France and England, the splendid way the women and girls over there are rising up and shouldering their burdens. Of their work in the munitions factories and on farms and in railroad yards. From peeresses to peasants they stop at nothing which needs doing, from oiling a locomotive to cleaning out a stable. Personal affairs are no longer regarded. Personal comfort no longer counts. Safety doesn't count. Life itself doesn't count. The only thing that does count is winning the war, and they are giving themselves magnificently, body and soul, "as one who does a deed for love nor counts it sacrifice." [146]

It's like listening to one of the old Crusaders when Father talks that way. It's a holy war to him. When I compared the selfish, easy existence I had planned for myself this vacation with what the girls over there are doing, and remembered how noble I had considered myself for giving it up, I felt ashamed of having called *it* a sacrifice. I made up my mind then and there that I'll make good in the way Father wants me to if it kills me. He shall never have cause to regret my being just a girl. I'm sure he has envied Mr. Carver his sons many a time, but I'll show him I can answer my Country's call when it comes, fully as well as Titcomb or Sammy III. In the meantime, I'll put in my best licks at getting shod for whatever road that lies ahead.

Of course I didn't start till Father's visit was over, but he took me down to the office one morning and made all the arrangements. It is the old Mr. Carver, Grandfather Huntingdon's friend, who is to take me in hand. Sammy Senior, everybody calls him. He doesn't do much now but sign checks and attend to some of the correspondence, so he'll have plenty of time to attend to me, and seems glad to do it. [147]

It was a solemn sort of morning, for we went into Mr. Sammy Senior's office, and Father took his private box out of the safe and looked over the papers in it. He made a lot of changes and told both of us what he told me up in the garret last time he was home, and a lot more besides. There are certain bonds he wants turned over to Uncle Darcy's grandchildren, Elspeth and little Judson,

when they are old enough to go to college. Judson is Father's namesake. He explained to Mr. Sammy Senior that their father, Dan Darcy, saved his life once over in China, nursing him, that time he caught the strange disease which was attacking the sailors. Father had gone over there to study it for the government.

Dan married Tippy's niece, Belle Triplett, after he came home and is working now in the wireless station over at Highland Light, but the government wants him for more important work in the Navy, and Father wants to make sure those children are provided for in case anything happens to Dan. Naturally that led to our going over the whole story. How Dan disappeared from town under a cloud years ago, everybody thinking he was the thief, instead of his friend Emmet Potter. (Dan just went away, like a scapegoat into the wilderness to shield him.) And how a year later Emmet was drowned, trying to save some people from a wreck on Peaked Hill bars, and the town put up a monument in his memory. And then a long time after that Richard and I found his confession in an old musket that we were cleaning up to play pirate with. [148]

It was as dramatic as a real play, the finding of that confession, and I enjoyed telling it again to such an appreciative audience. How Richard and I were sitting in the swing in front of Uncle Darcy's door, polishing the brass plate on the stock, when we found it, and I went screaming into the house that Danny was innocent. How Belle, who happened to be there by the strangest coincidence, read the confession over Uncle Darcy's shoulder, and cried out "Emmet a thief! God in heaven, it will kill me!" and how she carried on like a crazy woman till she made Uncle Darcy promise he'd never tell till she gave him permission, although he would have given his life to wipe the stain from Danny's name. She was engaged to Emmett when he died, and had been worshipping him as a hero up to this time. She didn't know till later that one of the reasons that Dan took Emmet's disgrace on himself was to shield her, because he had cared for her all along as much as Emmet did. [149]

Then Father took up the story again, and told how my letter reached him over there in China and led to the discovery that the silent young American who had saved his life was no other than Dan, who didn't know till then that Emmet had confessed and that exile was no longer necessary. "And so," said Father in conclusion, "he came back and married Belle, and, thanks to the little pirates, they lived happily ever after."

"That would make a rattling good movie," Mr. Carver said. "That ship-wreck scene, and finding the confession, and you children burying that pouch of gold-pieces in the sand, for the storm to cover up forever. If the little pirate can write it as well as she can tell it there's the material all right."

All the way home I kept thinking of his suggestion. I had never used material from real life before. I had always made up my characters. But now I began to see some of the familiar town people in a new light. Plain, quiet Dan, doing his deed regardless of the disgrace it brought upon him, was a real Sir Gareth. And dear old Uncle Darcy, vowed to silence so long, what a heroic part he had played! [150]

"I'll try it some day on the typewriter," I resolved. Then I thought Father was right when he said "shod goes sure." Knowing how to use the typewriter will be a help in my literary career. It begins to look as if every road I happen to take leads into the one of my great ambition.



CHAPTER XIII

A WORK-A-DAY VACATION

It was late in the afternoon when we crossed the sandy court and went through the picket gate into Uncle Darcy's grassy dooryard. As usual the old yellow-nosed cat was curled up in one of the seats in the wooden swing, and the place was so quiet and cool after the glare of the sun and sand we had tramped through, that Father took off his hat with a sigh of relief.

Belle and Dan live next door now in the cottage where Mrs. Saggs used to live. We could see [151]

little Elspeth's flaxen head bobbing up and down as she played in the sandpile on the other side of the fence. I was just thinking that I was no bigger than she is now when I first began coming down to Fishburn Court, when Father startled me by saying the same thing. *He* was just Elspeth's size when he began tagging after Uncle Darcy all day long.

Aunt Elspeth sat dozing in her wheeled chair inside the screen door. When we went in she didn't recognize Father. Had to be told who he was. But when she got it through her head that it was "Judson, grown up and come back from sea," she was fairly childish in her welcome of him. She wanted him to hide as he used to do when he was a boy and let "Dan'l" guess who was there when he came home. And Father humored her, and we went out into the kitchen when we heard Uncle Darcy click the gate-latch. Then in her childish delight at his home-coming she forgot everything else. She even forgot we were in the house, so, of course, couldn't ask him to guess who was there. [152]

He came in breathing hard, for the length of the town is a long walk when one is "eighty odd." He had been crying a church supper, and was so tired his feet could scarcely drag him along. But he didn't sit down—just put the big bell on the mantel and went over to Aunt Elspeth. And then, somehow, the tenderness of a lifetime seemed expressed in the way he bent down and laid his weatherbeaten old cheek against her wrinkled one for a moment, and took her helpless old hands in his, feeling them anxiously and trying to warm them between his rough palms.

There was something so touching in his unspoken devotion and the way she clung to him, as if the brief separation of a few hours had been one of days, that I felt a lump in my throat and glanced up to see that the little scene seemed to affect Father in the same way. [153]

Then Uncle Darcy fumbled in his pocket and brought out a paper bag and laid it in her lap, watching her with a pleased twinkle in his dim eyes, while she eagerly untwisted the neck and peered in to find a big, sugary cinnamon bun.

"You're so good to me, Dan'l," she said quaveringly. "Always so good. You're the best man the Lord ever made."

And he patted her shoulder and pulled the cushions up behind her, saying, "Tut, lass! You'll spoil me, talking that way."

Then Father cleared his throat and went into the room, and Uncle Darcy's delight at seeing him was worth going far to see. You'd have thought it was his own son come home again. But even in the midst of all they had to say to each other it was plain that his mind was on Aunt Elspeth's comfort. Twice he got up to slap at a fly which had found its way in through the screens to her annoyance, and another time to change the position of her chair when the shifting sunlight reached her face.

On the way home I asked, "Did you ever see such devotion?" I was so sure that Father would answer that he never had, that I was surprised and somewhat taken aback by his emphatic yes. His face looked so stern and sad that I couldn't understand it. We walked nearly a block before he added, [154]

"It was an old, old couple, just like Uncle Darcy and Aunt Elspeth. I kept thinking of them all the time I was at Fishburn Court. Their home was just as peaceful, their devotion to each other as absolute. It was in Belgium. The Huns came and tore them apart. Bayoneted *her* right before the old man's agonized eyes, and drove him off with the other villagers like frightened, helpless sheep, to die in the open. When he wandered back weeks afterward, dazed and half-starved, he found every home in the village in ruins. His was burned to the ground. Only the well was left, but when he drank of it he nearly died. It had been poisoned. He's in an asylum now, near Paris. Fortunately, his memory is gone."

When I cried out at the hideousness of it, Father put his arm across my shoulder a moment saying, "Forgive me, dear. I wish I might keep the knowledge of such horrors from you, but we are at a place now where even the youngest must be made to realize that the only thing in the world worth while is the winning of this war. Sometimes I feel that I must stop every one I meet and tell them of the horrors I have seen, till they feel and see as I do." [155]

I understood what was in his mind when a little farther along we met two young Portuguese fishermen. They were Joseph and Manuel Fayal. He had known them ever since the days when they used to go past our place dragging their puppy in a rusty tin pan tied to a string, and using such shocking language that I was forbidden to play with them. They are big, handsome men now, with black mustaches and such a flashing of white teeth and black eyes when they smile that the sudden illumination of their faces makes me think of a lightning-bug.

They flashed that kind of a smile at Father, when he stopped to shake hands with them, plainly flattered at his remembering their names. I could see them eyeing his uniform admiringly, and they seemed much impressed when he said, "We need you in the navy, boys," and went on in his grave way to put the situation before them in a few forceful sentences.

He was that way all the time he was at home. It made no difference where we went or what we were doing, he couldn't shake off the horror of things he had seen, and the knowledge that they were still going on. Several times he said he felt he oughtn't to be taking even a week's rest. It was like taking a vacation from fighting mad dogs. Every moment should be spent in beating them off. [156]

It worried Barby dreadfully to see him in such a state. She's afraid he'll break down under the strain. He's promised her that when the war is over he'll ask for a year's leave.

Father has been gone two weeks. It was hard to see him go this time, so much harder than usual, that I am glad to have my days filled up with work as well as play. Down at the office I'm so busy there isn't time to remember things that hurt. This arrangement isn't half as bad as it sounded at first. In fact, it isn't at all bad, and there's lots about it that I enjoy immensely.

For one thing I go only in the mornings. The stenographer is a nice Boston girl who gives me lessons in shorthand in between times when she isn't busy, and I'm getting a lot by myself, just out of a text book. I can already run the typewriter, and I certainly bless Tippy these days for giving me such a thorough training in spelling. Old Mr. Carver is a darling. He likes taking me around inside the business and showing me how the wheels go round. It may sound disrespectful, to say it gives him a chance to show off, but I don't mean it that way.

I'm learning all about the weirs and the fisheries connected with the Plant, and where our markets are, and what makes the prices go up and down, and where we buy chemicals to freeze with and what companies we're insured with and all that sort of thing. It's amazing to discover how many things one has to know—banking and payrolls and shipping and important clauses in contracts. I never before realized how pitifully ignorant I am and what a world full of things there is to learn outside of the school room. [157]

One of his ways of testing how much I have learned about shipments and prices and things, is to hand me a letter to answer, just for practice, not to send away. I've always been told that I write such good letters that I was awfully mortified over the way that he smiled at my first attempt. I had prided myself on its being quite a literary production. But I caught on right away what he meant, when he told me in his whimsical fashion that "frills are out of place in a business letter. They must be severely plain and tailor-made." Then he gave me a sample and after that it was easy enough. I've answered three "according to my lights," as he puts it, that were satisfactory enough to send, without any dictation from him.

Often he drifts into little anecdotes about grandfather, and lots of things I never heard before about the Huntingdon family and the older town people. Usually the mornings fly by so fast that I'm surprised when the noon whistle blows and it's time to go home. At first I brought my knitting along to pick up at odd moments, such as the times when he gets to reminiscing. Then I got so interested in practising shorthand, that I began taking down his conversations, as much as I could get of them. That old saying of Uncle Darcy's, "All's fish that comes to my net," seems to be a true one. For everything that comes my way seems to help along towards the goal of my ambition. These very tales I am taking down in shorthand, once I am proficient enough to catch more than one word in a sentence, may prove to be very valuable material for future stories. [158]

It isn't turning out to be a very gay summer after all. Babe and Viola are up in the White Mountains, and Judith is tied at home so closely, keeping house and nursing her mother who has been ill all vacation, that I never see her except when I go to the house. George Woodson is a reporter on a Boston paper, and comes home only on Sunday now and then, and Richard seems to have dropped entirely out of my life. He says he is so busy these days that there's never any time to write, except when he's so dead tired he can't spell his own name. [159]

There's so little going on here of interest to him that my letters to him are few and far between. It's strange how absence makes people drift apart. When he was home he was one of the biggest things in my landscape. If he were here now I'd find plenty of time to boat and ride and talk with him, but now it's hard to find a moment for even a short note; that is, when I'm in a mood for writing one. I surely do miss him, though. We've spent so many summers together.

For the few things that happened between my seventeenth birthday and this last day of August, see my "Book of Second Chronicles." Barby was so interested in reading my Harrington Hall record, and so very complimentary, that I have been writing in it this summer, to the neglect of this old blank book. But I'm going to put it in the bottom of my trunk and take it back to school with me.

Babe is back home. She had a chance to investigate the brass balls of that bedstead in the White Mountains. She did it in fear and trembling, for it was in her Aunt Mattie's room, and she was afraid she'd walk in any minute and ask what she was doing. The balls were empty. So she's still wondering where in the Salvation Army those letters can be. We are going back to Washington together next week. To think of our being Seniors! Father is going to be pleased when he gets Mr. Carver's report of me. I never had a vacation fly by so fast. [160]



PART II

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"True to One's Orbit and the Service of Shining."

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CHAPTER XIV

[163]

THE CALL TO ARMS

It has come at last—the call to arms—the biggest thing that may ever be my lot to record in all my life, or the life of my country. So I have hunted up this old book of Memoirs that I have not written in for months, in order that I may put down the date.

April 6, 1917. On this day the United States declared war against Germany!

Far down the street a band is playing, and in every direction flags are flying in the warm April breeze. All Washington is a-flutter with banners. The girls are so excited that they can't talk of anything else. Some of them have been in tears ever since the announcement came. Many of them have brothers in Yale or Princeton or Harvard who've only been waiting for this to break away and enlist. Not that the girls don't glory in the fact that they've got some one to go, just as I glory in the thought that Father is in the service. But we've been on a fearful nervous strain ever since the last of January, when Germany declared she'd sink at sight all vessels found in certain zones, and those zones are the very waters where our ships are obliged to go.

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Lillian Locke's Uncle Charlie went down in one of the merchant ships they sank last month. He was her favorite uncle, and most of us girls knew him. He came to the school twice last year, and whenever he sent Lillian "eats" he sent enough for her to treat the entire class. Then there is Duffield, and Bailey Burrell and Watson Tucker all off on the high seas somewhere. Sometimes at vespers when we sing:

"O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea,"

the thought of Father and of all those boys who danced with us just a year ago, and who went marching so gaily across the green mall, chokes me so that I can't sing another note. Sometimes all over the chapel voices waver and stop till only the organ is left to finish it alone.

We Seniors have voted to cut out all frills in our Commencement exercises, and give the money to the Red Cross. We're going to wear simple white shirt-waist suits. It'll make it such a plain affair it won't be worth while for our families to come on to see us get our diplomas.

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Barby is coming anyhow, and I know she'll be disappointed. She has all the old-time ideas about flowers and fluffy ruffles for the "sweet girl graduates." She had them herself, with so many presents and congratulations that her graduation was almost as grand an occasion as her wedding. Her Aunt Barbara's pearl necklace which she inherited was handed over to her then, and I think she has visions of my wearing it on the same stage, on the occasion of my Commencement. There are only a few strands in the necklace and the pearls are quite small, though exquisitely beautiful, but, of course, I couldn't wear it with just a plain shirt-waist.

Easter has come and gone, and nothing of importance has happened here at school, but a letter from Barby brings news of happenings at home which have a place in this record, so I am copying it.

"What a cold and snowy Spring this has been! All week we have had to pile on the wood as we do in midwinter. I am glad that you are away from this bleak tongue of sand, far enough inland and far enough South to escape these cold winds from the Atlantic, and to have Spring buds and Spring bird-calls in the school garden. [166]

"Yesterday, just before supper, while I sat knitting in the firelight, the front doorbell rang. Not hearing Tippy go out into the hall, I started to answer it. You know how she opens a door by degrees, one cautious inch and then another— well, I was just in time to see a big man in a fur cap and burly overcoat shoulder his way in and throw his arms around her in a hearty embrace. I couldn't see his face in the dusk, nor did I recognize the deep voice that cried out—'Ah, Tippy! But you look good to me!'

"The next instant I was caught up in a great bear hug by those same strong arms. It was Richard, home again after two long years, and so glad to be back that it was a joy to see his delight. He had come home to enlist.

"You can easily picture for yourself the scene at the table a little while later. He teased and flattered Tippy till she was almost beside herself. She kept getting up to open some new jar of pickle or preserves, or to bring on something else from the pantry which she remembered he had an especial liking for. Afterwards he insisted on tying one of her aprons around him and wiping the dishes for her. He kept her quivering with concern as usual for the safety of the cups and saucers, when he tried his old juggling tricks of keeping several in the air at the same time. [167]

"But later, when we were alone, he dropped all his gay foolery and sat down on the hearthrug at my feet, as he used to do when he was a little lad, and, leaning his head against my knee, looked into the fire.

"'You're all I've got now, Barby,' he said, and took my knitting away that my hand might be free to stray over his forehead as it used to do when he came to me for sympathy and comfort. After a moment he began talking about his father. It was the first time I had seen him, you know, since Mr. Moreland was killed.

"Then he told me how circumstances had made it possible for him to come back to the States to enlist, as soon as war was declared. He is no longer bound by his promise to the Canadian whose family he was caring for. The man was sent back home two months ago, dismissed from a hospital in France. He was wounded twice so badly that one leg had to be amputated. But though he came home on crutches he came back with something which he values more than his leg—the Victoria Cross. He won it in an awful battle, one in which nearly his whole regiment was wiped out.

"Richard sprang up from the rug and paced the floor as he talked about it. His face glowed so that I couldn't help asking, 'But how did you feel when you saw him with the cross that might have been yours had you gone in his stead!' [168]

"He stood a moment with one elbow resting on the mantel, looking down into the fire. Then he said slowly, 'Well, it would have been ripping, of course, to have had it one's self—worth dying for in fact; but after all, you know, little Mother, it isn't the "guerdon" any of us are after in this war. It's just that the deed gets done. I believe that is the spirit in which all America is going into it. Not for any gain—not for any glory—she's simply saying to herself and to the world, "*For the deed's sake* will I do this.'"

"As he said that, he looked so like his father in one of his inspired moods, that I realized the two years in which he has been away has made a man of him. It was only that he was so boyishly glad to be at home again that I hadn't noticed before how earnest and mature he had grown to be.

"Within a month after the Canadian's return, he was able to take a place in the factory. His artificial limb made it possible. Richard went at once to an aviation field to complete his training. He intended to go from there to join a flying squadron in France, for his Cousin James is ready now to do anything for him he asks. But just as he was about to start, the United States declared war, and he hurried home to enlist under his own flag. He has been promised a commission and an opportunity to go soon in some special capacity, for he passed all the tests in expert flying. He will probably be kept at Newport News while he is waiting for some bit of red tape to be untied. [169]

"He did not stay late, for there were some business matters he had to discuss with Mr. Milford, and he left town early this morning. Several times while here, he glanced around saying, 'Somehow I keep expecting Georgina to pop in every time the door opens. It doesn't seem like home without her here to keep things stirred up.'

"He asked many questions about you and said that he hopes mightily to see you before he sails. I told him that was highly improbable as Commencement is to be so late this year owing to the enforced vacation in January when over half the school was in quarantine on account of mumps and measles. That was the first he had heard of it, and he said to congratulate you for him on your lucky escape."

I am glad that Barby wrote in detail as she did, for I have not had a line from Richard in three

months. Evidently he did not get my last letter, for in that I told him all about that quarantine, and the fun we girls had who escaped the contagion, but who were kept in durance vile on account of the others.

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I wish I had been at home when he surprised them. I wish I were a boy and could do what he is doing. It would be simply glorious to go winging one's way into battle as he will do. It's one thing to give your life for your country in one exalted moment of renunciation, and quite another to give it in little dribs of insignificant sacrifices and petty duties, the way we stay-at-home girls have to do. It is maddening to have the soul of an "Ace" who would dare any flight or of a "Sammie" who would endure any trench, and then have nothing but a pair of knitting needles handed out to you.

Another letter from Barby this week. Of course I knew the war would come close home in many ways, but I hadn't expected it would get that little mother-o'-mine first thing. This is what she writes:

"It is quite possible that I may be in Washington by the last of May. Mrs. Waldon has written, begging me to come and stay with her while Catherine goes back to Kentucky for a visit. She writes that she is 'up to her ears' in the Army and Navy League work, and that is where I belong. She says I should be there getting inspiration for all this end of the state, and lending a hand in the grand drive they are planning for. Her letter is such a veritable call to arms that I feel that I'll be shirking my duty if I don't go. Tippy says there is no reason why I shouldn't go. She can get Miss Susan Triplett to come up from Wellfleet to stay with her till you come home.

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"Her patriotic old soul is fired with joy at no longer being under the ban of a 'neutral' silence. When it comes to her powers of speech, Tippy on the war-path is a wonder. I wish the Kaiser could hear her when she is once thoroughly warmed up on the subject. She'd be in the first soup-kitchen outfit that leaves for the front if it wasn't for her rheumatism. As it is, she is making the best self-appointed recruiting officer on the whole Cape.

"I have written to your father, asking him if he can find me a place where I can be useful on one of the hospital ships; I can't nurse, but there ought to be many things I can do if it's nothing more than scrubbing the operating rooms and sterilizing instruments. And maybe in that way I could see him occasionally. Of course it isn't as if he were stationed on one particular ship. I believe he could manage it then, but being needed in many places and constantly moving he may not want me to go. In that case I shall join Mrs. Waldon. She says she can put me into a place where every hour's work will count for something worth while."

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It made the tears come to my eyes when I read that. Little Barby, out in the world doing things for her country! Since I have grown to be half a head taller than she, and especially since my office training last summer and Father's leaving her in my care, I've been thinking of her as *little* Barby. She's never done anything in public but read her graduating essay. The tables are turned now. It is *she* who is going out on a stony road in her little bare feet, and she's never been shod for such going. But she's got the spirit of the old Virginia Cavaliers, even if she didn't inherit a Pilgrim-father backbone as the Huntingdons did. She'll never stop for the stones, and she'll get to any place she starts out to reach. I'm as proud of her as I am of Father. I've simply *got* to do something myself, as soon as school is out.



CHAPTER XV

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"THE GATES AJAR"

COMMENCEMENT is over, the good-byes are said and most of the girls have departed for home. Babe and I leave this morning at ten 'clock when Mrs. Waldon's machine is to come for us and take us to her apartment for a week's visit. Babe is included in the invitation because she can't go home till I do. Her family won't let her travel alone, although she's nineteen, a year and a month older than I.

Father wasn't willing for Barby to leave this country, so she went into the Army and Navy League work with Mrs. Waldon, the first month she was here. But now she's at the head of one of the departments in the Red Cross and will be in Washington all summer, and longer if necessary. I've finished my Book of Second Chronicles and shall leave it for her to read whenever she can find an opportunity. But I'm keeping my Memoirs out of my trunk till the last moment, because there's something I want to write in it about Babe.

It was agreed that nobody was to wear flowers at Commencement, and we asked our families not to send any, so it was generally understood that there was to be no display of any kind. But yesterday an enormous florist box arrived for Babe Nolan. If she hadn't been so mysterious about it we wouldn't have thought anything of it. Any one of us would have opened it right then and there in the hall, and passed it around to be sniffed and admired. But she got as red as fire and, grabbing the box, hurried into her room with it and shut the door. That's the last anybody saw of it. A little later when I had occasion to go to her room there wasn't a sign of a flower to be seen, not even the box or a piece of string. The girls all thought it was queer they should disappear so absolutely, and wondered why she didn't put them in the dining-room or the chapel if she didn't want them in her own room, and they teased her a good deal about her mysterious suitor.

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But last night, after Lillian and Jessica had started to the train, she called me to her room and threw open the wardrobe door with a tragic gesture, and asked me what on earth she was to do with *that*. Her trunk wouldn't hold another thing, and she supposed she'd have to go all the way to the Cape with it in her two hands, and it smelled so loud of tuberose and such things she was afraid people would think she was taking it to a funeral.

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There on the wardrobe flood stood a floral design fully three feet high, that looked exactly as if intended for a funeral, for it was one of those pieces called "Gates Ajar." I didn't dare laugh because Babe stood there looking so worried and so deeply in earnest that I knew she'd be offended if I did. I suggested simply leaving it behind, or taking out the flowers and chucking the wire frame into the ash can. Then I saw my advice was unacceptable. Evidently she hadn't told me all, and didn't intend to for fear I'd laugh at the person who sent such a design.

But when I said in a real sympathetic and understanding way that it was *so* appropriate for a Commencement offering because everybody thinks of Commencement Day as being a gate ajar, through which a school girl steps into the wider life beyond, she gave me a sharp glance and then took me into her confidence. She had on one of those new sport skirts with two enormous side pockets, the most stylish thing I ever saw Babe wear. She drew a card out of one of the pockets. On it was engraved, "Lieutenant Watson Tucker."

I nearly dropped with surprise, for two reasons. First, I didn't think he was the sort of a man to send such a queer thing. It would have been more like him to have sent a bunch of sweet peas. And second, I didn't know he had kept up with Babe enough to know the date of her graduation.

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She said yes, they correspond occasionally, and in his last letter he said he was expecting to have a two-weeks' shore leave soon. She wouldn't be surprised any day to hear that the ship was in. Although she said it airily, I know Babe. She couldn't fool me. She over-acted her indifference, and when she said she supposed she might as well box up the flowers and take them along when the machine came, I knew positively that she cared far more for Watty Tucker than she'd have me know.

Babe says it's like visiting in the Hall of Fame to be here at Mrs. Waldon's. Every way we turn are autographed pictures on the walls of celebrities who have helped to make history. Every time the door bell rings it is a call from somebody who is helping to make it now. And they're not Admirals and Generals and diplomats and their wives to Mrs. Waldon. They're just Joe and Ned and Nancy who took "pot luck" with her in the old army days on the frontier before they got to be famous or else somebody who knew her intimately in the Philippines.

It is so thrilling to meet them and so interesting to hear intimate bits of their family history afterward. People she hasn't heard of in years are constantly turning up, brought to Washington by the war. Only this morning, a Major whom she thought was out among the "head-hunters" dropped in and stayed to lunch.

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We have spent the greater part of every day sight-seeing. Not the usual places like Mount Vernon and the Smithsonian, etc. We've been doing them for the last two years in school excursions with the teachers. But places that have taken on unusual interest because of these stirring war times. We went over to Fort Meyer in time for "Retreat" one afternoon, and again to see the trench-digging and the dummies being put up for bayonet practice. And we spent hours at the Wadsworth House, a palace of a home which has been turned over to relief work. There is where Barby spends most of her time. I was so thrilled when I found her there at a desk, directing things in her department, and looking so lovely in her uniform, white with a band around her sleeve, and a blue veil floating over her shoulders, bound on the forehead by a white band and a red cross.

Two retired Admirals in their shirt sleeves were filling huge packing boxes in one of the side rooms. They give their services, working like Trojans all day long. Upstairs in the great dismantled ballroom, and the apartments adjoining, were long tables surrounded by the women working on surgical dressings and hospital garments and comfort kits. Downstairs, near the entrance, was the desk of the Motor Service Corps. A pretty society girl in a stunning uniform came in while we stood there, saluted her superior officer, received her orders and started out to drive her machine on some Red Cross errand, with all the neatness and dispatch of a regular enlisted soldier. That's what I'd love to do, if I only had a machine of my own. She looked too adorable for words in that uniform.

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One afternoon we went out to see the President receive the Sanitary Corps of a thousand men trained to carry litters. A temporary platform gay with bunting and flags was erected on the edge of the green where the President and his guests of honor sat. Barby was one of them in her floating blue veil, on account of the position she holds now. We parked the machine and sat down tailor-fashion on the grass in the front row of the crowd, which pressed against the rope that barred our entrance to the mall.

After awhile there was a sound of music down the street, and the marine band came marching across the great field towards us, at the head of the litter-bearers. It was a sunny afternoon, and the band played a gay marching tune as they advanced. I was feeling so uplifted over Barby's being on the grandstand among the honor guests, looking her prettiest, that I didn't realize the significance of the scene at first. Then the thought stabbed me like a knife, that on every one of those litters somebody's best beloved might some day be stretched, desperately wounded maybe, dead or dying. I couldn't help thinking "suppose I should see Father brought in that way, or Richard." When I glanced across at Babe the tears were running down her cheeks, so it evidently affected her the same way. [179]

I'd have been willing to wager she was seeing Watson on one of those stretchers. When we got back to our room, which is a large one with twin beds in it, she dived under hers and pulled out the big florist's box and carried it to the bathroom to sprinkle the flowers. It's wonderful how fresh the thing has kept. She's had it nearly a week. She treats it like a mother would an idiot child, keeps it out of sight of the public, but hangs over it when alone with a tenderness that is positively touching.

Babe's the funniest thing! Every time the hall door opens she is out and up the little stairway to the roof, like a cat. It is a nice place to go, for there is a magnificent view of the city from there, and at night it's entrancing, with the Monument illuminated, and the great dome showing up when the searchlights play. But I don't believe it's the view Babe is after. She wants to be alone. Twice when I went up after her to tell her it was time to start somewhere, I found her sitting staring at a rubber plant in front of her, as if she didn't see even that. And once she was leaning against the iron railing which surrounds the roof, oblivious to the fact that that section of it was rusty. It simply ruined her best evening dress, a delicate blue veiling made over white silk. When we got downstairs to the light there were great streaks of iron rust across the whole front, where the bars had pressed against it. [180]

Saturday night Mrs. Waldon had a long-distance call from her cousin, Mac Gordon. His ship was in from the long cruise, and the boys were scattering to their homes for a short visit before being sent to join the fleet abroad. He wanted to know if he could stop by next day to see her, on his way home. She told him to come and welcome, and bring any of the other boys who cared to come. That Babe and I were with her.

Well, Sunday afternoon when Mac walked in there was a whole string of boys behind him; Bob Mayfield and Billy Burrell and Watty Tucker. Only four in all by actual count, but added to the six already in the room, the little apartment seemed brim full and running over. Two of her old army cronies were there besides Barby. [181]

I wondered what Mrs. Waldon was going to do about feeding them all, because the cook is always away on Sunday night. But when the time came she simply announced they'd serve supper in the time-honored Crabtown fashion. At that the men all got up and crowded out into the little kitchenette to see what she had on her "emergency shelf" and to announce what part each one would be responsible for on the menu.

When we were ready to sit down to the table we noticed that Babe and Watson were missing, and when I tried to recall when I had seen them last, I was sure they had slipped away during the general exodus to the kitchen. And I am sure that when I ran up the steps to the roof garden with the announcement, "The rarebit is ready," neither one of them was a bit grateful to me.

I was sorry Duffield Locke wasn't with the boys. His family met him in New York and they went on to New York together. Bob Mayfield tried to tease me about him. He said Duff had my picture in the back of his watch. When I hotly denied it, and vowed I had never given him one, except a little snapshot taken with Lillian of just our heads, he said, "Well, Duff had a pair of scissors." [182]

After we went to our room that night, late as it was, Babe re-packed her trunk and deliberately squeezed all her hats into one compartment, thereby ruining two of them for life, to make room in the tray for that florist box. The flowers were badly shriveled up by that time. Seeing from my face that an explanation was necessary, she said she couldn't carry it back on the train as she had intended, because Watson was going up to Provincetown the same time we were, to visit his cousins, the Nelsons, and she didn't want him to see it.

"But the Nelsons aren't in Provincetown this summer," I answered. "And he knows it, because I told him what Laura said in her last letter. Besides, why shouldn't he see his own floral offering? He'd be complimented to think you cared enough for it to lug it all the way home."

She seemed a bit confused at my answer, but I couldn't tell at which part of it. Then she said that he didn't pick it out. He thinks he sent roses, and he'd have a fit if he knew it was that awful Gates Ajar. He sent his card to some old relative in Georgetown with a check and asked him to order something appropriate for the occasion.

I asked Babe then, why, if the design wasn't Watty's choice, and she thought it was so dreadful, [183]

why did she cling to it so fondly, and take it back to the Cape at the risk of all her hats and the sure ruin of two of them. But she paid no attention to my remark, just went on with her packing. I know she's relieved to find out it wasn't Watty's taste. If they are not actually engaged, they have almost reached the gate, and it *is* ajar.



CHAPTER XVI

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HOME-COMINGS

I MIGHT as well have traveled alone, for all the company Babe and Watson proved to be. They were so absorbed in their conversation with each other that they never once glanced out of the window, even when we were going along the Cape where one is apt to see a familiar face every time the train stops.

I was so glad to get back to familiar scenes like cranberry bogs and dunes and marshes, with the pools of water shining in them like mirrors, that I kept exclaiming, "Oh, look!" I said it several times before I realized that the landscape had no attractions for them. Neither had the stuffy car any discomforts, although the hot July sunshine streamed in across the red velvet upholstery.

With their chairs swung facing each other, they sat and talked like two Robinson Crusoes who had just found each other after aeons of solitude on separate islands. For a while I watched them over the top of my magazine; Watson mopping his shiny red face with his handkerchief, and Babe with her hat tilted crooked over one eye and a little wisp of hair straggling over her neck, and her collar all rumped up behind. I kept wondering what on earth was the attraction that each had for the other. One can understand it when the heroine is beautiful and the hero fascinating, but how two such plain, average people as Babe Nolan and Watson Tucker can inspire the grand passion is a puzzle.

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I couldn't help smiling to myself when I looked back on the time when I had once imagined Watson to be the most congenial man I ever met. I was heartily glad that our acquaintance had been interrupted at that point, until I grew older and wiser. Suppose I had gone on looking at him through the prism of my ideals until I actually believed that the halo which my imagination put around him was a real one! What a little fool a girl of fifteen can be! It seems to me I have aged more in this last year at school, than in all the years that went before it put together. Only a few more days until I can count myself actually grown up—till I have reached that magic milestone, my eighteenth birthday!

Growing up is like the dawning of Spring. For a long time there are just a few twitters, a hint of buds in the hedgerows. Then, suddenly as an April shower, a mist of green drops down over the bare branches like a delicate veil, and one awakens to a world of bloom and birdsong and romance.

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(That's a good paragraph to start a story with. I'll put an asterisk on the margin to mark it.)

I had expected to awaken to my Springtime and romance this very summer—to find it perhaps, in Kentucky. Barby and I have planned for years that my eighteenth birthday should be spent there. The very word, Kentucky, suggests romance to me. But now that the war has upset everyone's plans, I'll have to give it up. And Romance is not likely to come riding by to such a gray old fishing port as Provincetown.

This is what I told myself as we went along between the cranberry bogs and the dunes. But suddenly we made a turn that showed us the entire end of the Cape. There, with the sunset light upon it, was the town, curving around the harbor like a golden dream city, rising above a "sea of glass mingled with fire." Spires and towers and chimney tops, with the great shaft of the Pilgrims

high above them all, stood transfigured in that wonderful shining. I took it as an omen—a good omen of all sorts of delightful and unexpected happenings that might come to me.

When we reached the station, I had two completely separate and distinct impulses, which made me afraid that I still lack considerable of being grown up. The first fishy smell of the harbor which greeted me, with its tang of brine and tar, gave me the impulse to send my suitcase up to the house by the baggage man, and run all the way home. I wanted to go skipping along the streets as I used to when my skirts were knee high and my curls bobbing over my shoulders. I wanted to speak to everyone I met and have everyone call back at me, "Hello, Georgina," in friendly village fashion. I wanted to smell what was cooking for supper in every house I passed, and maybe if the baker's cart came along with its inviting step in the rear, "hang on behind" for a block or two.

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The second impulse was to powder my nose a trifle, put on a little face veil and a pair of perfectly fitting gloves, and then when the panel mirror between the car windows showed a modish and tailor-made young lady, correct in every detail, step into the bus and drive home to make an impression on Tippy.

The latter impulse dominated, and I am glad it did, for Judith and George Woodson and several others of the old crowd were at the station to meet us. Babe hadn't even set her hat straight, but she didn't know it. Neither did Watson. They just went along, smiling vacuously (I guess that's as good a word as any, though I'm not exactly sure of it) on everything and everybody.

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It seemed so strange to come home to a house with no Barby in it, but it was such a satisfaction to feel that my arrival put Tippy into her little company flutter. It was the face veil which did it, I am sure, and the urban air which I acquired in Washington. I am taller than she, now, and I had to stoop a little to kiss her. Instead of her saying, as I expected, for me to run along and take my things off, because supper was getting cold, she led the way upstairs to my room, just as if I'd been the visiting missionary's wife, or relatives from out of the state. And she went around setting things straighter, which were already straight, and asking if there was anything I'd have to make me comfortable, till I hardly knew myself, her making such company out of me.

Miss Susan Triplett has been here ever since Barby went to Washington, but she's going home soon, now that I have come back. Between them I got all the news of the town during supper. Aunt Elspeth is very, very ill. They're afraid she can't last long at this rate. They have a trained nurse for her and Belle has to spend so much of her time over there that Tippy has been taking care of little Elspeth and Judson in the daytime.

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Titcomb Carver and Sammy III have both enlisted, and the two Fayal boys, Manuel and Joseph, are in the Navy. Nearly everyone I asked about was in some kind of government service. Tippy says the Portuguese boys have responded splendidly, and she keeps tab on the whole town. But she said it is a tragedy about George Woodson. He's tried four times to enlist, but he can't pass the physical examination. His sight is imperfect and the old trouble with his knee that he got from a football accident in his Junior year bars him out. Tippy never liked George. He was impudent to her one time, years ago. Ran his tongue out at her when she told him to quit doing something that she thought he had no business to do, and she never forgave him. But now she respects him so much for the desperate way he has tried to get into the service, and is so sorry for his disappointment, that she can't say nice enough things about him.

It was late when the expressman brought my trunk. Miss Susan had already gone upstairs and was putting up her front hair in crimping pins. But Tippy never made any objections when I started to unpack. I simply can't get used to being treated with so much deference. It's worth growing up just to have her listen so respectfully to my opinions and to know that she feels that my advice is worth asking for.

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I only unpacked the top tray to get some things Barby and I had bought for her in the Washington shops, and to take out something she was even more interested in than her gifts. It was a little silk service flag to hang up in honor of Father. She took it in her hands as if it were sacred. I never saw her so moved to admiration over anything, as she was over that little blue star in its field of white with the red border around it.

Her voice didn't sound natural, because there was a queer sort of choke in it when she said: "I never before wanted to be a man. But I do now, just for the chance to be what that star stands for."

I had intended to wait till morning before hanging it in the front window, but she had a hammer and a push-pin out of a box in the hall closet before I knew what she was looking for, and carried the lamp ahead of me down the stairs. "Liberty enlightening the World," I called it, as she stood holding the lamp up for me to see, while I drove the push-pin into the window sash.

But she didn't laugh with me. It was a solemn thing to her, this placing of the symbol which showed the world that a patriot had gone out from the house in defence of his country. Although she's a thin, gaunt figure with her hair twisted into a hard little knot on the back of her head, and there's nothing statuesque about a black silk dress gathered full at the waist, and a ruffled white apron, her waiting attitude seemed to dignify the occasion and make a ceremony of it. I started to say something, jokingly, about firing a salute with our ancestral musket, or singing "America," but the expression on her face stopped me. The spirit of some old Revolutionary forbear seemed shining in her eyes. I hadn't dreamed that Patriotism meant *that* to Tippy; something exalted

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enough to transform her homely old features with a kind of inner shining.

Something wakened me very early next morning, soon after daybreak. Sitting up to look out of the window nearest my bed, I saw somebody hoeing in the garden. A Portuguese woman I supposed, who was taking the place of the regular gardener. Ever since old Jeremy Clapp reached his nineties, we've had his nephew, young Jeremy. But they told me the night before, that he's gone to be a surfman in the U. S. Coast patrol. It was especially hard to give him up as the war garden he had just put in was twice the size we usually have.

Then I recognized the flapping old sport hat which the woman wore. It was one which I discarded last year. Underneath it, her skirts tucked up to her shoe-tops to avoid the heavy dew, was Tippy, hoeing weeds as if she were making a personal attack on the Hindenburg line and intended demolishing it before breakfast. [192]

Funny as she looked in her scare-crow working outfit, there was something in the sight that made me want to stand and salute. It gave me the kind of thrill one has when the troops march by, and everyone cheers as the colors pass. I can't put it into words, but it was the feeling that brusque, rheumatic old Tippy with her hoe, stood for as fine a kind of patriotism as there is in the world. She's just as eager to do some splendid, big, thrilling thing for her country as any man in khaki, yet all she can do is to whack weeds. I wish I were artist enough to make a companion piece for the poster I brought home in my trunk—a goddess of liberty unfurling a star-spangled banner across the world. I'd make a homely work-roughened old woman in her kitchen apron, her face shining like Tippy's did last night, when she looked at the star and wished she could be the hero it stood for.

I made up my mind to say something like that to her, something to show her how fine I think it is for a woman of her age to put in such valiant licks in a vegetable garden when greater things are denied her. But when I went downstairs and found she had changed from her garden clothes into her immaculate gingham house dress, and was stepping around in the brisk, capable way that used to make me afraid of taking any liberties with her, I couldn't have made such a speech to her any more than I could have made it to the refrigerator. My first glance showed me she had lost her company flutter. I saw she would soon have me back in my old place of doing as I was bid and not questioning her authority, if I did not assert myself at once. [193]

The chance came while we were at breakfast. A man came with a great lot of blueberries that she had ordered last week. Not expecting them so soon she had promised Belle to spend most of the day in Fishburn Court, because the nurse wanted to get off for a while. She was dreadfully put out about the berries, afraid they wouldn't keep. She was starting to carry them down cellar when I rose and took the pails away from her, and announced that *I'd* can the whole lot of them, myself.

Goodness knows I didn't want to. I was simply aching to get down to the beach and go for a long row, and look in on the neighbors long enough to say howdy to everybody. But having once said I'd do it and been flatly refused, I simply had to carry my point. I grabbed her by the elbows in a laughing sort of scuffle and sat her down hard in a chair, and told her to stay put. To my astonishment, she gave right up, but for a reason that completely took the wind out of my sails. [194]

"Well," she said thoughtfully, "I suppose you do want to do your bit for Uncle Sam. It's about all a young thing like you *can* do, so I oughtn't to stand in your way if you feel that way about it."

Then I found out she has been canning and preserving everything she can get her hands on, as a patriotic measure, and she supposed that was my motive. It gave me a jolt to think that while I was saying: "Poor old thing, there's so little she can do," she was feeling the same pity for my youth and inefficiency.

Many a time I've helped put up fruit, but this was the first time I'd ever been allowed the whole responsibility. The minute she took herself off I began. Miss Susan was upstairs, starting to pack her trunk, so I had the kitchen all to myself. It is an attractive old kitchen, every tin silver-bright, and all in such perfect order that I could go to any nail or shelf in the dark, absolutely sure of finding on it the utensil it is expected to hold.

Just outside the screen door, on the back step, Captain Kidd lay with his head on his paws, watching every movement through his shaggy bangs. I think he is happy to have me at home again, but the house has been so quiet during my long absence, that my singing disconcerts him. He sleeps a lot now that he is such an old dog, and he couldn't take his usual nap while I was canning those berries. At Harrington Hall I never could let my voice out as I wanted to for fear of disturbing the public peace. Now with the whole downstairs to myself, I sang and sang, all the time I stirred and sweetened and weighed and screwed the tops on the long rows of waiting glass jars. [195]

I was pretty hot by the time I came to the last kettleful. My hands were stained, and I had burned my wrist and spilled juice all down the front of my bungalow apron. But the end was in sight, and I swung into the tune of "Tipperary" as the soldiers sometimes do on the last lap of a long march. All of a sudden, Captain Kidd, who had been drowsing for awhile, lifted his head with such an alert air that I stopped singing to listen, too. He seldom shows excitement now. Then with an eager little yelp that was half bark, half whine, he bounded off the step and tore around the house like a crazy thing.

That cry meant but one thing. It had never meant anything else since he was a puppy. *Richard* [196]

was coming.

He always heralded him that way. If I had had any doubt of that first little cry of announcement there could be none about the fury of barking which followed. That ecstasy of greeting was reserved for one person alone. It couldn't be any one but Richard.

A figure in khaki strode past the window, the dog leaping up on him and almost turning somersaults in his efforts to lick his face. Then splash went the ladle into the kettle (I had been holding it suspended in my surprise), and the juice splashed all over the stove. The next instant Richard was in the kitchen, both hands outstretched to grasp mine, and we were looking questioningly into each others eyes. It was a long gaze, for we were each frankly curious to see if the other had changed.

Barby was right. The two years had, made a man of him. He was larger in every way, and in his lieutenant's uniform looked every inch a soldier. He spoke first, smiling broadly.

"The same old girl, only taller than Barby now!"

"The same old Dare-devil Dick!" I retorted, "only——" I started to add "so tremendously good-looking in that uniform," but instead just laughed, as I drew my hands away. [197]

"Only what?" he persisted in his old teasing fashion. But I wouldn't tell, and there we were, right back again on our old squabbling grounds, just where we left off two years ago.



CHAPTER XVII

[198]

BACK WITH THE OLD CROWD

RICHARD couldn't stay a minute, he said. It wasn't treating his Cousin James decently to throw his bag in at the door and rush off up here before he'd barely spoken to him. But he never felt that he'd really reached home till he'd been up here, and he couldn't wait to tell Barby about his good luck.

He was dreadfully disappointed to find that she wasn't at home. He wouldn't sit down at first, just perched on the edge of the table, regardless of what the spattered blueberry juice might do to his new uniform, and hastily outlined his plans. He was so happy over the prospect of getting into active service that will count for a lot, that he couldn't talk fast enough. We both had so much to say, not having seen each other for two years, that first thing we knew the telephone rang, and it was his Cousin James saying that dinner was ready, and would he please come on. And here we'd been talking an hour and ten minutes by the clock, when all the time he "didn't have a minute to stay," and was in such a rush to be off that he couldn't sit down except on the edge of the table. He couldn't help laughing at himself, it was so absurd. [199]

Thinking about it after he'd gone, I was sure from the keen way he kept glancing at me that he did find me changed, after all. His recollection of me didn't fit the real me, any more than my last season's dresses do. He had to keep letting out seams and making allowance for my mental growth, as I had to for his. That's why neither of us noticed how time flew. We were so busy sort of exploring each other. That's why I found myself looking forward with such interest to his coming back after supper. It's like going back to a house you've known all your life, whose every nook and corner is familiar, and finding it done over and enlarged. You enjoy exploring it, to find what's left unchanged and what's been added.

Miss Susan and I had a cold lunch together. Then it took me half the afternoon to put the kitchen back into its original order and get the blueberry stains off my fingernails. Tippy was pleased with the way she found things when she came back, though she wouldn't have complimented my achievement for worlds. But I know her silences now, which ones are approving and which displeased. I know I went up several pegs in her respect. I heard her intimating as much to Miss Susan. [200]

I wasn't out on the front porch with them when Richard came back after supper. A few minutes

before he came I suddenly decided to change my dress—to put on a new one that Barby bought me the last day I was in Washington. It's a little love of a gown, white and rose-color. I'd never worn it before, so it took some time to locate all the hooks and snappers and get them fastened properly. Richard came before I was half through. I could hear quite plainly what he was saying to Tippy and Miss Susan, down on the front porch.

After I was all ready to go down, I went to the mirror for one more look. There was no doubt about it. It was the most becoming dress I ever owned, so pretty and unusual, in fact, that I dreaded to face Tippy in it. She'd wonder why I put it on just to sit at home all evening, when the one I changed from was perfectly fresh. Too often she does her wondering aloud, and it's embarrassing. I was thankful they were sitting out on the porch. The rose vines darkened it, although the world outside was flooded with brilliant moonlight. She wouldn't be so apt to notice out there.

Just as I put out the lamp and started towards the stairs, I heard Tippy say something about moving into the house because the night air was bad for her rheumatism. I didn't want to meet her in the full glare of the hall chandelier, so I waited on the upper landing long enough to give them time to go in. But Richard was slow about following them, and when I was half way down the stair he was only as far as the newel post. Glancing up, he saw me and stopped. I knew without his saying a word that he liked my dress. His eyes said it. He has wonderfully expressive eyes. [201]

It was nice to feel that I was making what theatrical people call an effective stage entrance. Quoting from a play we had been in together a long time ago, I held my head high in the haughty-princess manner and said airily, "Hath waited long, my lord?"

He remembered the spirit of the reply if not the right words, and made up an answer that would have done credit to Sir Walter Raleigh for courtliness. We swept into the room, carrying on in a ridiculous stagey fashion for a moment or two, not giving Tippy a chance to comment on my dress. I saw her looking at it hard, but before she could get in a word edgeways, Richard asked me to go over to the Gilfreds' with him. He met Judith on the way up here and she asked him to bring me over. She said some others of the old crowd would be there. [202]

George Woodson was already there, sitting in the hammock as usual, but with Judith's guitar on his knees, instead of the ukelele that he used to tinkle. We could hear him tuning it as we went up the path. After we had been there a few minutes Babe and Watson strolled in. Evidently they had had some sort of a quarrel. The effect was to make Watson unmistakably grouchy and Babe sarcastic. It was so noticeable that George said to me in an aside, "Babe is singing in sharps tonight, and Watty's gone completely off the key."

We'd been away so long that naturally our first wish was to find out where everybody was and what they were doing. The conversation was such for awhile that Watson was decidedly out of it. He doesn't know many Provincetown people, having been here only a few times on visits to the Nelsons, and now they're gone he is staying at the Gifford House, where everybody's strange. So he sat in one end of the porch swing, smoking. Sat in the kind of a silence that makes itself felt for the radius of half a mile.

Nearly everybody brought up for discussion was away at some training camp or flying school, or getting ready for naval service. Naturally that cast a gloom on George's spirits, as he is always cursing his lot whenever he sees any one in khaki, because he feels left out of the game. I was feeling a bit gloomy myself because of the damper they cast, when in the midst of the questions about other people, Richard suddenly turned to Judith to ask about Esther. [203]

"By the way, Judith, where is that fascinating little flirt of a cousin of yours?"

It was the first time I had heard him speak her name since she left, two years ago. For him to be able to refer to her as naturally as that, just as he would to any other human being, certainly took a load off my mind. Whenever I thought of these two in connection with each other, I've been afraid that the jolt she gave him had shaken his faith in some things. But evidently the old wound had healed without a scar. There was nothing but plain, ordinary curiosity in the questions he asked, when Judith answered that Esther was married last winter. She married Claude Millins, the man she's been engaged to off and on ever since she was a kid.

Judith went down to the wedding. She said it was a brilliant affair. They started out with a rosy future ahead of them, but it was like that old missionary hymn, "Every prospect pleases, and only man is vile." They've been having a perfectly heathenish time ever since the war threw a bomb into their domestic relations. Claude is crazy about Esther, but he isn't crazy about enlisting. He is a pacifist. She had forty-one relatives in the Civil War on the Confederate side. Over half of them were killed in the battle of Chicamaugua, and she's ashamed of having a husband who's a slacker. She wants him to be a hero. He said wasn't it "better to be a live dog than a dead lion?" and she said in that honey-sweet way of hers, "a yellow dog?" [204]

"Gee!" said Watson suddenly, for the first time breaking into the conversation. "Did they quarrel that way *before* they were married?"

Judith said, "Evidently. She always spoke of it as an off and on engagement."

"Well," said Richard reminiscently, "she certainly had *me* going some, but after all, I don't know which she hit the hardest, old George here, or myself."

"Or John Wynne," spoke up Babe, who was in the other end of the swing. "What's become of that good-looking doctor?"

Richard was the only one who could answer that question. By the queerest coincidence they had met in a hotel lobby in Boston, and had lunched together afterward. The doctor will soon be in France. He's to take the place of a Harvard classmate of his, who was killed recently when the Ambulance Corps he was serving with was nearly wiped out. [205]

Babe said she wondered that he hadn't gone over long before. She expected him to right after Esther broke up his life the way she did. She imagined he'd be like Francesco, in the story of Ginevra—"Francesco, weary of his life, flew to Venice, and embarking, threw it away in battle with the Turks."

"He isn't that kind of a man, Babe," said Richard. "You haven't got his right measure. He's too big and too fine to fling his life away for a little personal grievance. It's not morbid sentiment but a matter of principle that's taking him over. He asked for the place he's getting, because he thinks it's unattached men like himself who ought to fill them. Neither he nor I have any next of kin left now, who are near enough to worry over us or to mourn very long if we don't get back."

It did me a world of good to hear Richard speak of that affair as "a little personal grievance." Evidently it didn't hurt him in the least to recall Esther and the incidents of that summer. Under cover of some anecdote that George began telling, Richard said in an aside to me, "You remember that story Miss Crewes told us about him, Georgina—his doing the deed for the deed's sake. He's just like that all the way through, keeping himself so modestly in the background that he never gets the appreciation that is his rightful due." [206]

It seems so nice to have a little secret like that Sir Gareth story with Richard. I can't explain just what it is, but I love the way he turns to me when he puts an intimate little parenthesis like that into the general conversation, just for me.

Presently Judith mentioned Miss Crewes, and then Richard remembered to tell us what Doctor Wynne told him about her. He had news of her death recently. Two years of nursing at the front was too much for her. She died from exposure and overwork, and it was no wonder she went to pieces as she did, witnessing so much German frightfulness. She was in one of the hospitals that they bombed.

Judith shivered and put her hands over her ears an instant. "Somehow we keep getting back to those awful subjects no matter what we talk about," she said. "And George has been strumming nothing but minors on that guitar ever since he picked it up. For goodness' sake, strike up something to make us forget such horrors—something more befitting such a glorious night."

It was a glorious night. The Gilfred place runs right down to the water. By this time the moon was high overhead, flooding the porch steps with such a bright light one could almost see to read by it. [207]

We did read by it presently, when Lowry Gilfred came spinning up on his bicycle. He always goes downtown the minute he hears the night train whistling for the bridge, and brings up the Boston and New York papers. He held one up. The headlines were so big and black we could read them easily several feet away.

"More atrocities by the Huns. Inhuman U-boat commander fires on life-boats escaping from torpedoed vessel."

"Well, Moreland," said Watson, "that's what we'll be coming up against in a week or two." His face was turned towards Richard as he spoke, but I saw him glance at Babe out of the corner of his eye to see how she took his remark.

Richard answered cheerfully that he looked on the prospect the same way that old "Horatius at the bridge" did. "To every man upon this earth, death cometh soon or late," and as long as he had to die some time, he'd rather go in a good cause than linger to a doddering old age, or be killed inch at a time by the germs that get you even when you do watch out.

He was sitting on the porch railing with his back against one of the white pillars, and the moon shone full on his upturned face. Remarking something about the way he used to spout Horatius on Friday afternoons, when he was a kid at school, he went on repeating from it. The expression on his face must have been the one Barby spoke of when she said he reminded her of his father in his inspired moments. He said it in a low, intense voice, as if he were speaking to himself, and thrilled with the deep meaning of it: [208]

*"And how can men die better than facing fearful odds
For the ashes of their fathers and the temples of their gods?"*

Babe said afterwards it made the cold chills go down her back to hear him say it in such an impressive way, as if he'd really count it joy to die, "facing fearful odds." She was afraid maybe it was a sign he was going to. And she said that his saying what he did, as he did, suddenly made her see things in a different light, herself. That's why she got up soon after, and said that they must be going. She wanted a chance to tell Watson she'd changed her mind, and that he was right in whatever matter it was they'd been arguing about.

But before they went, George Woodson started a new song that's lately come to town. They say [209]

all the soldiers are singing it. It has a catchy sort of tune you can't resist, and in a few minutes we were all chiming in with him. It sounded awfully sweet, for George sings a lovely tenor and Richard a good bass, so we had a full quartette. It was just like old times.

"There's a long, long trail a-winding
Into the land of my dreams,
Where the nightingales are singing
And a white moon beams.
There's a long, long night of waiting
Until my dreams all come true,
Till the day—when I'll be—going down
That long, long trail with you."

We sang it over till we had learned the words, and then we couldn't get rid of it. It has such a haunting sweetness that Richard and I hummed scraps of it all the way home. After we said good night and I went up to my room, I could hear him whistling it. I leaned out of my window to listen. He whistled it all the way down the street, until he reached the Green Stairs. It sounded so happy. I wished Babe hadn't said what she did about his facing fearful odds.

CHAPTER XVIII

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A WAR WEDDING

TALK about a clap of thunder out of a clear sky—that's nothing to the surprise Babe gave us the very next night. About nine o'clock she called me by telephone to say:

"Listen, Georgina. Is Richard still there? Is it too late for you to come down for a few minutes? *Watson and I are to be married tomorrow afternoon.* We've just decided. Everything's in a dreadful tangle. We want you to help straighten us out."

I was so surprised I could hardly speak. Tippy thought someone must be dead from the horrified way I gasped out, "Oh, you don't mean it!" The suddenness of it did horrify me in a way. It seems so dreadful to be snatched through the most beautiful and sacred occasion of one's life so fast that there's no chance to do any of the time-honored things that make it beautiful and impressive. For all Babe seems so matter of fact she's full of sentiment, and has always looked forward to doing those romantic things that brides do, such as filling a "hope chest" with

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Stitches set in long white seams
To the silent music of tender dreams.

Hurrying up a wedding in one day in such a combination family as the Nolan-Dorseys would be like scrambling eggs. Of course, we went right down.

We had had an awfully nice day together, exploring the town to see how much it had changed, and calling on Uncle Darcy and dropping into the studios where we have been welcomed on Mr. Moreland's account since the first summer he joined the Artist's colony. We'd been in every store on Commercial street to speak to the clerks, and out to the end of Railroad Wharf to see how many of our old fishermen friends we could find. Down on the beach an art class pitched their easels and went on painting their favorite model, a Portuguese girl under a green parasol, quite as usual, and we sat on the sand in the shadow of a boathouse and watched them lazily, as if there weren't any Huns and their horrors in the universe.

It had been a peaceful day up to the time we reached Babe's house. The tangle she spoke of was the usual kind in her family. Her stepfather, Mr. Dorsey, is a traveling man. He couldn't get home in time to give her away, and Babe's mother thought they ought to wait for him. It wasn't showing him proper respect not to; besides Jim wasn't old enough to do it. Jim didn't want to do it, but he objected to being thought too young, and Watson couldn't wait because he'd received his orders. That's why they were hurrying things up.

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He wants to be married in the Church of the Pilgrims because his people are the kind that'd feel better if it was done there. Circumstances were such that none of them could be present, so he wanted to do that much to please them. And Babe couldn't be married at the church unless Viola would loan her her new white dress that Miss Doan had just sent home after keeping her waiting three weeks for it. Her own white ones were out of commission and she wouldn't feel like a bride if she were married in anything but white. But Viola wanted to wear her own dress her own self, and be a bridesmaid. She always gets her own way when she cries, so she was beginning to sob on her mother's shoulder when we went in. And Mrs. Dorsey was saying she didn't see why they couldn't be married right there in the parlor, either in the bay window or under the chandelier with a wedding bell hung from it. Babe's shirt-waist suit that she graduated in was good enough for a home affair and could be laundered in a hurry.

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Babe wouldn't hear to that because Watson had expressed his preference for the church and had such a good reason, and Watson was provoked because Viola wouldn't give in to Babe. It was her wedding, he said, and ought to be run to suit her.

Poor old Babe. Among them they worked her up into such a nervous, excited state that she was half crying, and when her mother said in an exasperated tone—"Oh, these war weddings! Why don't you wait till it's all over and he comes back in peace times?" Babe threw herself down on the library couch and wept.

"How do I know he'll ever come back?" she wailed. "It's you who are making a war wedding out of it with all your disagreeing and arguing."

Then Mrs. Dorsey explained all over again to me the way she thought things ought to be settled, and Viola explained her way and Babe sobbed out hers, and Jim made a few remarks till it made me think of the old nursery tale: "Fire won't burn stick, stick won't beat pig, pig won't get over the stile, and I sha'n't get home tonight."

It was awfully embarrassing for Watson and uncomfortable for Richard. Presently they disappeared—went out on the front steps for a smoke. When I suggested the different dressmakers who might be persuaded to rush something through, there was a reason why each one on the list was unavailable. Miss Doan and the two next best had left town on a vacation. [214]

Then I happened to think of that evening dress Babe ruined up on Mrs. Waldon's roof, leaning against the rusty railing. It had a white silk under-dress, and in a flash an inspiration came to me. With that silk slip for a foundation I would attempt to make that wedding gown myself, although there was less than a day in which to do it. I'd seen a lovely piece of tulle that morning, when we stopped in the Emporium.

It didn't occur to me at first what a daring thing I was offering to do, or what a mess I'd make of everything if I failed. I was sure of the needlework part, for Tippy began my sewing-lessons so far back I can't remember the first one, and what passed muster with her was good enough for any bride or anybody. And I'd made simple wash dresses under Barby's direction.

Babe accepted my offer with the sublime confidence and joy that Cinderella showed in her godmother's ability to get a ball gown out of a pumpkin, and then I began to have an awful panic. But there was no chance to back out. She rapturously called Watson in to tell him that everybody could be happy now, for I'd found the end of the string that would untangle the whole skein. [215]

From then on "stick began to beat pig, pig began to get over the stile, and the little old woman got home that night." During the next ten minutes two people were routed out of bed by telephone, but neither one minded it when they found it was for something as romantic as a war wedding. Miss Clara, chief clerk at the Emporium, promised to get the store keys early in the morning, cut off the goods with her own hands, and have it delivered to me by seven o'clock.

The other was Mrs. Doan, mother of the dressmaker who had just left town. "Yes, indeed, we could have Sallie's dress form," she said cordially. "Send Jim right over for it."

The dress form was collapsible, so Jim brought it over in a box, but it was a very startling and human-like figure that Richard had to carry up the street for me over his shoulder. There being no time for Babe to stand for fittings herself, we blew up the dummy like a balloon, till it was adjusted to fit the silk slip. Richard kept calling it Sallie Jane, and making such ridiculous remarks to it, that we were nearly hysterical from laughing when we finally started home with it. It was bright moonlight, but so late that we passed only a few people on the street. These few stared in open-mouthed wonder at the stiff lady in white thrown over Richard's shoulder, and one man turned and followed us half a block to satisfy his curiosity. [216]

Tippy would have helped next morning, but she had to bring Belle's children up to spend the day. Aunt Elspeth was very much worse. I took the downstairs guest chamber for my workshop. By five minutes past seven the tulle was spread out on the big four poster, and my scissors were slashing into it. From then on until noon I worked in nightmarish haste. Of course I couldn't have finished it if it had been satin goods or something like that, but the tulle was easy to handle, and I pinned and patted it into shape on patient Sallie Jane till it began to look like the picture I had in mind.

Richard came up about the middle of the morning. I heard him go striding through the hall. Then his laugh rang out from the kitchen where Tippy was letting the children help her make oatmeal cookies.

Then I heard him coming back, and looked up to see him in the doorway. He only saluted and did not venture in, as I was down on my knees before Sallie Jane, making the bridal skirts hang evenly. He could see it was a critical moment. He said he merely dropped in to report that everything was going smoothly at the Nolan-Dorseys. The license and the ring were ready, the auto engaged to take the happy couple to Chatham. They would proceed from there to Boston by rail next day. Judith was at the house now, helping the family keep their head between their ears, and the only trouble was the telephoning. The list of people who would be slighted if not notified was so long that Jim suggested sending out the town crier, and being done with it. [217]

"Poor Uncle Darcy," I said. "He won't be able to see the wedding. Aunt Elspeth is so much worse. He's always been mixed up in the important happenings of my life, and he would have taken such pride in seeing us march up the aisle, you as best man and me as maid of honor—"

Then I broke off short and whirled Sallie Jane around on her pivot as if I had found something the matter which absorbed my attention. But in reality I had just remembered that it was my eighteenth birthday, and came very near reminding

him of the fact. To think of having forgotten it myself till the morning was half gone! I had come to my "Field Elysian," and it was a lonely place, for nobody else remembered. The surest sign that I had reached it was that I did not frankly proclaim the fact, frankly expectant of birthday offerings. I didn't want anything if people had to be reminded of the date. I took the corner of a paper of pins between my teeth and stood up to pin the sleeves in place.

Richard looked on approvingly. "That really begins to look like something," he said. "Looks like a white cloud. Even on old Sallie Jane you'd know it was a bridal outfit. You're a trump, Georgina, for rushing things through this way. Babe ought to be everlastingly grateful. But while it's 'Very nice for Mary Ann, it's rather hard on Abraham.' Do you realize I've only four more days left to spend in this old town? This wedding is knocking a whole quarter of it out of my calculations."

Something made me glance up. He was looking down at me so intently it flustered me. I found myself trying to pin the left sleeve into the right arm.

"I don't believe in these war weddings," he said almost fiercely. "Watt hadn't any right to ask her to marry him now and take such chances. Suppose he'd be killed?"

"She'd feel that he was hers, at any rate," I said between my teeth, still holding on to the paper of pins. "She'd have the memory of this wedding, and the few happy days to follow, and she'd have the proud feeling that she was the wife of a man who'd given his life bravely. She'd be giving something to the cause herself, a continuing sacrifice, for it would keep on all the rest of her life."

"But suppose he wasn't killed outright. Suppose he'd come back to her crippled or blinded or frightfully disfigured. He oughtn't to want to tie her for life to just a part of a man."

Then I took up for Babe so emphatically that I dropped the pins. "Then she'd be eyes to him and feet to him and hands to him—and everything else. And she'd *glory* in it. I would if I loved a man as Babe does Watson Tucker, though I don't see what she sees in him to care for."

"I believe you would," he answered slowly. Then after a long pause he added, "It certainly must make a difference to a man over there to know he's got somebody back home, caring for him like *that!*"

He left in a few moments, and I had to work harder than ever for I had slowed up a bit while we talked. The wedding was at four. I am sure I was the happiest one in the crowd, for not only was the dress done in time, it was pronounced a real "creation." Babe never looked so well in her life. Judith had worked some sort of miracle on her hair, and in that simple fluff of white tulle she was almost pretty.

Never did a Maid of Honor have less time for her own arraying. I hurriedly slipped into the same dress of rose-color and white that I wore the night of Richard's arrival, and put on the little pearl necklace that had been Barby's. When he came for me in his Cousin James' machine he brought a big armful of roses for me to carry. It made me awfully happy to have him say, "Many happy returns of the day" when he gave them to me, even when he laughingly confessed that he hadn't remembered the date himself. It was Judith who reminded them that the wedding day and my birthday were the same. Even so, it was nice to have the event marked by his lovely roses.

Despite all Judith's precautions we had a wild scramble to get all the little Dorseys corralled for a final dress review. Each one of them came up with some important article missing, which had to be hunted for. Then a sudden calm descended. We found ourselves at the door of the Church of the Pilgrims. We were going slowly, very slowly up the aisle to the solemn organ music, conscious of a white blur of faces on each side. The church was packed.

There had been no time for a rehearsal, but, for once, luck was with the Nolan-Dorseys. Nobody stumbled, nobody dropped anything, nobody responded in the wrong place. As Jim remarked afterward, "We did real well for a bunch of amateurs. We flocked all right though not even birds of a feather; one man in naval uniform, one in aviator's, and one in civilian's."

Jim gave the bride away. I was strung up to such a nervous tension for fear it wouldn't go off all right that I never took a full breath till Jim was through his part, the ring on Babe's finger and her bouquet safely back in her hands again. It was only at the very last when the old minister who was perfectly devoted to Babe began to falter through a prayer, that I realized I hadn't really heard the ceremony. It had gone in one ear and out the other, leaving no impression of its sacred



Richard salutes "Sallie Jane."

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meaning.

But if I missed the impressiveness of it Babe and Watson did not. He was as pale as a ghost, and her hands trembled so they could hardly hold her flowers. It was a solemn time for them. Then it grew solemn for me, as a sentence of the last prayer caught my attention.

"And take now, into Thy especial care and keeping, those who go forth from this altar to defend us, both upon the high seas and in the boundless battle plains of the air."

He was praying for Richard too. I glanced across at him and found that he was looking intently at me. I had never seen such an expression in his eyes before—a sort of goodbye, as if he were looking at me for the last time, and was sorry. It was the dearest look. Our eyes met gravely for an instant, then just the shadow of a smile crept into his, and mine dropped. I couldn't understand why that little half-smile should make me so sort of happy and confused. Then the "Amen!" sounded and the organ pealed out the wedding march, and with my hand on his arm we followed the bridal couple down the aisle, and out through the door to the automobile, waiting to take them to Chatham. [222]

Once out of the door Babe wasn't a bit dignified. In her hurry to get away before the crowd could follow and hold a curbstone reception, she chased down the long board walk leading from the church to the street so fast that Watson could hardly keep up. They didn't pretend to keep step. She had a long coat and a hat waiting for her in the machine. She had kissed her family all around before leaving the house, so she just piled in as she was, and began pulling off her veil while the chauffeur cranked up.

"I'll change at Chatham," she called back to us.

"No, Mrs. Tucker," Richard remarked as the machine dashed off, "you'll never change. You'll always be just like that." [223]

"The whole affair has been more like a whirlwind than a wedding," said Judith as she joined us. "I'm limp."



CHAPTER XIX

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THE VIGIL IN THE SWING

WHEN I look back on that hot July day it seems a week long; so much was crowded into it. After the ceremony we took Tippy up home in the machine with the children, and then went for a drive. I hadn't realized how tired I was till I sank back into the comfortable seat beside Richard. Nothing could have rested me more than that rapid spin toward Wellfleet with the salt breeze in my face. As we started out of town Richard glanced at his watch.

"Only sixty-three hours more for this old burg," he announced. "I've got it figured down to a fine point now. Even to the minutes."

"So anxious to get away?" I asked.

"Oh, it isn't that. I'm keen enough to get busy over there, but——" He did not finish but presently nodded toward the water where a great fleet of fishing boats was putting into port. They filled the harbor with a flashing of sails in the late afternoon sunshine, like a flock of white-winged birds. "I'm wondering how long it will be before I see *that* again." [225]

I answered with a line from "Kathleen Mavourneen," humming it airily: "It may be for years and it may be forever."

"Don't you care?" he demanded almost crossly, with his eyes intent on the triple curve just ahead.

"Of course I care," I answered. "If you were a truly own brother I couldn't feel any worse about your going off into all that danger, and I couldn't be any prouder of you. And I think that under the circumstances we might be allowed to put another star on our service flag, one for you as

well as for Father. You belong to us more than anyone else now."

"Will you do that?" he asked quickly, and with such eagerness that I saw he was both touched and pleased. "It makes a tremendous difference to a fellow to feel that he's got some sort of family ties—that he isn't just floating around in space like a stray balloon. It's a mighty lonesome feeling to think that there's nobody left to miss you or care what becomes of you."

"Oh, we'll care all right," I promised him. "We'll be a really truly family to you, and we'll miss you and write to you and *knit* for you."

He was in the midst of the triple curve now, with a machine honking somewhere ahead, but he turned to flash a pleased smile at me and we came very near to a collision. He had to veer to one side so suddenly that we were nearly thrown out. For two years he has been so eager to go overseas that I hadn't an idea he would have any homesick qualms when the time came, but to find that he was hanging on to each hour as something precious made me twice as sorry to see him go as I would have been otherwise. [226]

As we came back into town he glanced at his watch again but said nothing until I leaned over to look too.

"How many hours now?" I asked. "Only sixty-one and a half," he answered, "and they'll whiz by like a streak of lightning." From then on I began counting them too.

There was a birthday letter from Barby waiting for me when I got home, such a dear one that I took it off to my room to read by myself. The package she mentioned sending was evidently delayed. As I sat in front of my mirror, brushing my hair before going down to supper, I thought what a very, very different birthday this was from the one we had planned for my eighteenth anniversary. Still it had been a happy day. I felt repaid for my wild rush every time I recalled Babe's face when she saw herself for the first time in her wedding gown. Her delight was pathetic, and her gratitude will be something to remember always, that and the fact that I was a bridesmaid for the first time—and a Maid of Honor at that. [227]

Suddenly I came to myself with a start to find myself with my hair down over my shoulders and my brush held in mid air, while I gazed at something in the depths of the mirror. Something that wasn't there. The altar and the bridal party before it, and the Best Man looking across at me with that grave, wistful expression that was like a leave-taking. And then his smile as our eyes met. It seems strange that just recalling a little thing like that should make me glowingly happy, yet in some unaccountable way it did.

Judith and George Woodson came up after supper. I was almost sorry they did, for Richard had asked me to play the "Reverie" that he always asks Barby for. He was stretched out on the leather couch with his hands clasped under his head, looking so comfortable and contented it seemed a pity to disturb him. He'll think of that old couch and the times he's lain on it listening to Barby play, many a time when he's off there in range of the enemy's guns.

They stayed till after ten o'clock, talking aeroplanes mostly, for George got Richard started to describing nose dives and spirals and all the wonderful somersault stunts they do above the clouds. He knows so much about machines, having helped build them, that he could sketch the different parts of them while he was talking, and he knows the record of all the famous pilots, just as a baseball fan knows all about the popular players. While he was up in Canada he met two of the most daring aces who ever flew, one from the French Escadrille, and one an Englishman of the Royal Flying Corps. It was his acquaintance with the Englishman which led to Richard's being assigned to the Royal Naval Air Service. He's to learn the British methods of handling sea-planes, and he's hoping with all his heart that he won't be brought home as an instructor when he has learned it. He wants to stay right there patrolling the Channel and making daring raids now and then over the enemy's lines. [228]

It must have been torture for George to listen to his enthusiastic description of duels above the clouds and how it feels to whiz through space at a hundred and twenty-five miles an hour, because it was the dream of his life to get into that branch of the service. His disappointment makes him awfully bitter. Still he persisted in talking about it, because he's so interested he can't keep off the subject. It's a thousand times more thrilling than any of the old tales of knight errantry, and I'm glad George kept on asking questions. Otherwise I'd never have found out what an amazing lot Richard knows that I never even suspected. [229]

During the last few minutes of their visit I heard Tippy out in the hall, answering the telephone. She came in just as they were all leaving, to tell us it was a message from Belle. Aunt Elspeth was sinking rapidly. The end was very near now. Uncle Darcy had asked for Barby, forgetting she was away, and Belle thought it would be a comfort to him to feel that some of the family were in the house, keeping the vigil with him.

Tippy had intended to go down herself as soon as the children were asleep, but little Judson kept waking up and crying at finding himself in a strange bed. He seemed a bit feverish and she was afraid to leave him. So Richard and I went. When Judith and George left we walked with them part of the way.

I've seen many a moonlight night on the harbor before, when the water was turned to a glory of rippling silver, but never have I seen it such a sea of splendor as it was that night we strolled along beside it. It was entrancingly beautiful—that luminous path through the water, and the

boats lifting up their white sails in the shining silence were like pearl-white moths spreading motionless wings.

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None of us felt like talking, the beauty was so unearthly, so we went along with scarcely a word, until we reached the business part of the town. There the buildings on the beach side of the street hid the view of the water. Both picture-shows were just out, and the gay summer crowds surging up and down the narrow board walk and overflowing into the middle of the street were as noisy as a flock of jaybirds. George and Judith left us at the drug-store corner, going in for ice-cream soda.

When we turned into Fishburn Court, there on the edge of the dunes, we seemed entering a different world. It was so still, shut in by the high warehouses between it and town. We opened the gate noiselessly and went up the path past the old wooden swing. The full moon shining high overhead made the little doorway almost as bright as day, except for the circle of shadow under the apple tree. Even there the light filtered through in patches. All the doors and windows stood open. A candle flickered on the high black mantel in the sitting-room. In the bedroom beyond the lamp on the bureau was turned low.

Belle met us at the door, motioning us toward the bedroom. Coming in from the white radiance outside the light seemed dim at first, but it was enough to show the big four-posted bed with Aunt Elspeth lying motionless on it. Such a frail little body she was, but her delicate, flower-like sort of beauty had lasted even into her silver-haired old age. She did not seem to be breathing, but Uncle Darcy, sitting beside her holding her hand, was leaning over talking to her as if she could still hear. Just bits of sentences, but with a cadence of such infinite tenderness in the broken words that it hurt one to hear them.

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"Dan'l's right here, lass. . . . He won't leave you. . . . No, no, my dear."

I drew back, but Belle's motioning hand insisted. "Just let him see that you're here to keep watch with him," she whispered. "It'll be a comfort to him."

So we went in. When I laid my hand on his shoulder he looked up with a dazed expression till he saw who it was and who was with me. Then he smiled at us both, and after that one welcoming glance turned back to the bed.

We went back to the sitting room and stood there a moment, uncertainly. Then Richard opened the screen door, beckoning me to follow. He led the way to the swing, and we stepped in and sat down, facing each other. It stood so close to the cottage that to sit there opposite the open window was almost like being in the room. The glow from the lamp streamed out across the grass towards us, dimly yellow. We could see every movement, hear every rustle. Belle and the nurse tiptoed back and forth. Danny went out and came in again. Then they settled back into the shadowy corners.

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Somewhere away up in the town, a phonograph began playing "The Long, Long Trail." The notes came to us faintly a few moments, then stopped, and the silence grew deeper and deeper. Nothing broke it except a cricket's chirp in the grass, and now and then a half-whispered word of soothing from Uncle Darcy. He crooned as he would to a sleepy child.

"There's naught to fear, lass. . . . All's well. . . . Dan'l's holding you."

Already she was beyond the comfort of his voice, but he kept on murmuring reassuringly, as if the protecting care that had never failed her in a long half-century of devotion was great enough now in this extreme hour to push aside even Death. He would go with her down into the very Valley of the Shadow.

As I sat there listening, dozens of little scenes came crowding up out of the past like mute witnesses to their beautiful love for each other. There was the day Mrs. Saggs found a nightgown of Aunt Elspeth's in the work-basket with a bungling patch half-stitched on by Uncle Darcy's stiff old fingers, and what she said about those old hands making a botch of patches, but never any botch in being kind. And the day Father and I, waiting in the kitchen, saw her cling to him and tell him quaveringly, "You're always so good to me, Dan'l. You're the best man the Lord ever made."

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I do not know how long we sat there, but there was time to review all the many happy days I had spent with them in the little cottage. Then some very new and startling thoughts came crowding up in the overwhelming way they do when one is drowning. It seems to me I grew years older in that time of waiting. I had always been afraid of Death before, but suddenly the fear left me. It was no longer to be dreaded as the strongest thing in the world, if Love could thrust it aside like that and walk on past it, immortal and unafraid.

I didn't know I was crying till two tears splashed down on my hands, which were pressed tightly together in my lap. A little shiver ran over me. Richard leaned forward and took my white sweater from the back of the seat where I had thrown it, motioning for me to put it on. I shook my head but he kept on holding it out for me to slip my arms into, in that insistent, masterful way of his, till finally I did so. I hadn't known I was cold till I felt the warmth of it around me. Then I noticed that a breeze had sprung up and was stirring the boughs of the apple tree, and my hands were like ice from the long nervous strain.

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But even more comforting than the wrap which enveloped me was the inward warmth that came from the sense of being watched over and taken care of.

The long vigil went on. Suddenly the nurse leaned over and said something. And then—Belle pulled down the shade.

After a few moments Uncle Darcy came stumblingly out to the doorway and sat down on the step, burying his face in his hands. Richard and I looked at each other, uncertain what to do or to say, hesitating as the two children had done so long ago, when the old rifle gave up its secret. But this time we did not run away.

This time we went up to him, each with a silent handclasp. Then putting my arm around the bent old shoulders I held him close for a moment. He leaned against me and reaching up with his stiff, crooked fingers gently patted my hand.

"Aye," he said brokenly. "She's gone . . . but—*her love abides!* Death couldn't take *that* from me!"

CHAPTER XX

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THE HIGHWAY OF THE ANGELS

It was so late when we started home that the streets were deserted. The only noise was the hollow sound our own footsteps made on the board walk. Even that ceased the last half of the way, for we crossed over and went along the beach, walking close to the curling edges of the tide. Several times we paused to stand and look at the path the moon made on the water—wide miles of rippling silver, like a highway for the feet of passing angels.

I kept thinking of Aunt Elspeth as I looked. It took away my sadness to feel that she must have passed up that radiant road. And everything—the white night itself—seemed throbbing with the words, "But Love abides! Death cannot take that."

I think Richard heard them too, for once as we stood looking back he said, "Somehow that belief of Uncle Darcy's changes one's conception of death, just as that moon changes the night and the sea. It takes all the blackness out. It gives . . . Dad . . . back to me again. It makes me feel differently about saying goodbye to you all."

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"I wish you didn't have to say goodbye," I exclaimed impetuously. "I wish that this awful war were over and you could stay right on here."

"Without my having done my part to win it?" he asked in a reproachful sort of tone.

"You've done your part," I told him. "And a big one. And I want you to know before you go away what we think about it. Barby wrote to Miss Crewes all about what you did up in Canada, and said, 'I am telling you this in order that you may have another Sir Gareth to add to your list of knightly souls who do their deed and ask no guerdon.' Ever since then we've thought of *you*, as Sir Gareth."

Even in the moonlight I could see that he was embarrassed. He protested that we were giving him more credit than he deserved. Then to make light of the affair he went on about how he hadn't begun to do his part. He couldn't feel it was done till he'd bombed at least one Hun. "A hundred Huns" was his slogan, and the number he'd set for himself to get.

We started to walk on again. I was making some teasing remark about his being a bloodthirsty creature, when I stepped on the end of a broken oar. It turned with me and almost tripped me up. He put out a steadying hand, then slipped my arm through his to help me along.

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"I know you're tired," he said as we walked on. "You had to rush through all that sewing this morning, and there was the excitement of the wedding and tonight—the waiting. It's been a hard day for you."

His voice sounded almost as sympathetic and comforting as Uncle Darcy's. Away out across the dunes some belated home-goer began whistling. Clear and sweet the notes came dropping through the still night, as if blown from a far-off silver flute:

"Till the day when I'll be going down
That long, long trail with you."

Instinctively we both turned to look at that shining path on the water, as if that were the trail, and stood listening till the last whistled note died away. Then suddenly Richard put his hand over mine as it lay on his arm, and held it close. After that there didn't seem to be any need of words. Somehow his very silence seemed to be saying something to me. I could feel it thrilling through me as one violin string thrills to the vibration of another.

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I know now, after the experience of that night, that I shall never be able to write the leading novel of the century, as I have long hoped to do. I shall never attempt one of any kind now, even a little mediocre one. And the reason is this:

The greatest thing in the story of any life is that moment of miracle when love enters in and transfigures it. It is impossible to describe the coming of Dawn on a mountain-top so that another

really feels the glory of it. If he has witnessed it himself anything one could say seems inadequate and commonplace. If he has never experienced such a revelation, all the words in the dictionary couldn't help him to see it.

If I were to put down here the few words Richard said as he was leaving me at the door, they might seem incoherent and ordinary to anyone else, but uttered with his arms around me, the touch of his lips on mine—how *could* one put into any story the sacredness of such an experience? The wonder of it, the rapture of it? And even if you did partially succeed, there would always be people like Tippy, for instance, to purse up their lips at the attempt, as if to say, "Sentimental!" So I shall never try.

When Tippy, in her bathrobe and with a candle, came down the dark hall to fumble at the door and let me in, I didn't say a word. I couldn't. I just walked past her, so awed by the throbbing happiness that filled me that I couldn't think of anything else, and not for worlds would I have had her know. If it had been Barby I would have thrown my arms around her and whispered, "Oh, Barby! I'm so happy!" and she would have held me close and understood. But I felt that Tippy would say, "Tut, you're too young to be thinking of such things yet." She has shamed me that way, making me feel that she considered me a sentimental silly young thing, several times in the past.

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"Well?" she said questioningly, when I did not speak. Her waiting attitude reminded me that she was expecting me to tell her something. Then I remembered—about Aunt Elspeth—and I was conscience-smitten to think I had forgotten her entirely. It seemed ages since we had left Fishburn Court, with the sadness of her death the uppermost thing in our mind, but in reality it hadn't been more than a half an hour. But it had been long enough for the beginning of "a new heaven and a new earth" for me.

My voice trembled so that I could hardly speak the words—"She's gone." Then I saw that Tippy attributed my agitation to grief. She questioned me for details, but there was little to tell. When we left no arrangements had been made for the funeral.

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"How did Uncle Darcy take it?" she asked as we reached the top of the stairs. I told her, repeating his own words. My voice shook again, but this time it was because I was remembering the stricken old figure on the doorstep, pathetic loneliness in every line of it, despite the brave words with which he tried to comfort himself. A tear started to roll down Tippy's cheek. She made a dab at it with the sleeve of her bathrobe.

"Poor old soul!" she exclaimed. "Their devotion to each other was beautiful. Over sixty years they've been all in all to each other. Pity they both couldn't have been taken at the same time."

A wonder came over me which I have often felt before. Why is it that people like Tippy, who show such tenderness for a love-story when it is flowing to its end in old age, are so unsympathetic with it at its beginning. What is there about it at the source that Youth cannot understand or should not talk about?

At my door she waited till I struck a match and lighted my lamp. I wondered why she held up her candle and gave me such a keen glance as she said goodnight. When she closed the door behind her and I walked over to the dressing-table, I was suddenly confronted by the reason. The face that looked out at me from the mirror was not the face of one who has just looked on a great sorrow. I was startled by my own reflection. It had a sort of shining, exalted look. I wondered what she could have thought.

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I hurried with my undressing so that I could put out the lamp and swing open the casement window that looks down on the sea. The air came cool and salt against my hot cheeks. The silver radiance that flooded the harbor streamed in across me as I knelt down with my elbows on the sill and my hands folded to pray.

Presently I realized with a guilty start that I wasn't following my usual petitions. I had prayed only for Richard, and then, gazing down on the beach where we stood such a short time ago, I relived that moment and the ones that followed. The memory was as sacred as any prayer. It was not for its intrusion that my conscience smote me, but it seemed wickedly selfish to be forgetting those whom I had knelt purposely to remember: Father and Barby, all those in peril on the sea, all the victims of war and the brave souls everywhere, fighting for the peace of the world. And dear old Uncle Darcy—in the very first hour of his terrible loneliness—how could I forget to ask comfort for *him*?

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Stretching out my arms to that shining space above the water I whispered, "Dear God, is it *right* for me to be so happy with such awful heartache in the world?"

But no answer came to me out of that wonderful glory. All I seemed to hear was Uncle Darcy's quavering words—"But love abides! Death cannot take that!"

And presently as I kept on kneeling there I knew *that* was the answer: "Love that beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" is God-given. Heartache and Death may touch every life for a time, but Love abides through the ages.



CHAPTER XXI

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"PIRATE GOLD"

IF this were a novel instead of my memoirs, I'd skip now to Richard's part of it, and tell his thoughts and feelings as he lay awake for hours, trying to adjust himself to his new outlook on the future. But I didn't know about that till afterward. It only came out bits at a time in the few hours we had together before he went away. We had so little time by ourselves.

The thing that worried him was the discovery that he no longer wanted to hurry off to the front. He was still as eager as ever to do his part. It wasn't that. It was *me*. He told me down at Uncle Darcy's next morning. I was staying there until time for the funeral, doing the little things that Barby would have done had she been here. Belle had gone home, worn out, and Tippy was over there with her, getting dinner for some of the out-of-town relatives who were expected on the noon train. It seemed as if everybody on the Cape must have sent flowers. The little house overflowed with them. Richard helped me find places for them and carry out the empty boxes.

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Uncle Darcy was so wonderful. He went about just as usual, talking in cautious half-whispers as he always did when Aunt Elspeth was asleep, tiptoeing into the darkened room now and then, to lean over and look at her. Sometimes he touched her hair caressingly, and sometimes smoothed down the long, soft folds of her white robe. Once when I took in a great basket full of ferns and roses to put on the table beside her he looked up with a smile.

"That's right," he said. "Fix it all nice and pretty for her, Georgina. Mother likes to have things pretty."

He was so calm, and seemingly so oblivious to the fact that she was no longer conscious of his presence, that we were awed by his wonderful composure. So when we were out by the pump, giving some of the floral designs a fresh sprinkling, it did not seem out of place for Richard to ask me if I had told Uncle Darcy—about us. It might have seemed strange at any other house of mourning for us to put our own affairs in the foreground, but not here.

I said no, I couldn't tell anybody until Barby knew. She must be the very first. He said all right, if I felt that way, but we'd have to send a telegram, because he couldn't go away till he'd claimed me before the footlights as well as behind the scenes. I didn't see how we could put such a thing in a telegram, but he was so determined that finally I consented to try. Together we composed one that we thought would enlighten Barby, and at the same time mystify the telegraph operator, who happened to be one of the old High School boys.

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When the noon whistle blew Uncle Darcy's composure suddenly left him. He looked around, startled by the familiar sound as if its shrill summons pierced him with a realization of the truth. It was the signal for him to wheel Aunt Elspeth to the table; to uncover the tray Belle always sent in, to urge her appetite with the same old joke that never lost its flavor to her. It seemed to come over him in a terrifying wave of realization that all that was ended. He could never do it again, could never do anything for her. He looked at the clock and then turned stricken eyes on me, asking when they would take her away. When I told him his distress was pitiful. It is awful to hear an old man sob.

It sent me hurrying from the room, fumbling for my handkerchief. Richard followed me and put his arms about me. The cheek pressed against mine was wet too.

"Dearest," he whispered, "that's the way I care for *you*. That's what I want to do—stay with you to the end—be to you all he's been to her. I *can't* go and leave you with so many chances of never getting back to you. I'm clinging to the few hours still left to us as desperately as he is."

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At the funeral that afternoon, as we stood together on the old burying-ground on the hill, listening to the brief service at the grave, such a comforting thought came to me. It was about the mantle of Elijah falling on Elisha as the chariot of fire bore him heavenward. He dropped it in token that a double portion of his spirit should rest on the younger prophet. I felt that Richard

and I, in keeping vigil as the soul of Aunt Elspeth took its flight, had witnessed the earthly ending of the most beautiful devotion we had ever known. And its mantle had fallen on us. We would go down to old age as they had done. And we surely needed a double portion of their spirit, for we faced a long, uncertain separation, beset by danger and death. *They* had gone all the way hand in hand.

After it was all over and the crowd straggled away we stayed behind with Uncle Darcy for a while, telling Dan and Belle we would take him home in the machine when he was ready to go. We left him sitting beside the flower-covered mound under a scraggly old pine, and strolled off to the top of the hill. Richard asked me if I remembered that the very first day we ever saw each other he brought me out to this old burying-ground. He dared me to slip in through the picket fence and touch ten tombstones to test my courage. And after I'd touched them I went tearing down the hill with eyes as big as saucers, to tell him there was a whole row of pirates' graves up there, with a skull and cross bones on each headstone, and how disappointed we were when we found out that they were only early settlers.

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And I asked him if he remembered that the first compliment he ever paid me was that same day on our way home. I was so stuck up over it I never forgot it. It was, "You're a partner worth having. You've got a *head*."

He said yes our partnership dated from that very first day. It certainly was a deep-rooted affair. Then I told him the lovely thought that had come to me about the mantle of those two old lovers falling on our shoulders, and he reached out and took my hand in the gentlest way, and said that all that they had been to one another *we'd* be to each other, and more. And then we sat there on the hillside talking in low tones and watching the wind from the harbor blowing through the long sedge grass, till it was time to take Uncle Darcy home.

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He was ready to go when we went down to him. On the way home he talked about Aunt Elspeth in the most wonderful way, as if he'd been up in some high place where he could look down on life as God does and see how short the earth part of it is. He said "'Twould be a sin to fret for her." That she was safe in port now and he'd soon follow. He was so glad that she wasn't the one to be left behind. She'd have been so helpless without him.

On the way home to supper we noticed an unusual number of boats putting into the harbor. The sky was overcast and the wind was rising. It was a disappointment because we'd planned for a moonlight row. We could see at a glance there wasn't going to be any moonlight. When we reached the house we found that Miss Susan Triplett was there. She had come back to town for the funeral and was going to stay all night with us.

My heart sank when I thought of one of our last precious evenings being interrupted by her. She always takes the centre of the stage wherever she is. But to my unbounded surprise Tippy took Miss Susan upstairs with her after supper, to help her spread the batting in a quilt that she was getting ready to put in the quilting frames. It took them till bedtime.

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Richard vowed Tippy took her off purposely, out of pure goodness of heart, knowing that we wanted to be alone. I was positive that if she had thought that, or even suspected it, she wouldn't have budged an inch. She wouldn't approve of my being engaged. But Richard insisted that she was chuck full of sentiment herself, in spite of her apparent scorn of it, and that she not only suspected which way the wind was blowing, but knew it positively.

We didn't have any difference of opinion about what Barby would say, however. So I did not feel that I had to wait for an answer to our telegram before I let him slip the ring on my finger which he brought for me. It's a beautiful *solitaire* in a quaint Florentine setting.

"It's the one Dad gave mother," he said, "but if you'd rather have it in a modern setting——"

I love the tone of his voice when he says "Dad" that way, and I wouldn't have the setting changed if it had been as ugly as sin, instead of what it is, the most artistic one I ever saw.

It was blowing hard when he left the house. The waves were lashing angrily against the breakwater. We knew the fishermen must be expecting a storm. The night was so black we couldn't see the fleets they had brought in, but the harbor was full of lights, hundreds of them gleaming from the close-reefed boats lying at anchor.

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It was not until late in the night that the storm struck. Then a terrific wind swept the Cape. Shutters banged and windows rattled. The house itself shook at times, and now and then sand struck the window panes even of the second story, as if thrown against them in giant handfuls. Once there was a crash, and a big limb of the old willow went down. It has been years since we have had such a storm. Part of the willow went down that time.

Lying there unable to sleep I recalled that other storm. I could remember distinctly old Jeremy's coming in next morning to report the damage, and saying it was so wild it was a wonder the dunes hadn't all blown into the sea. Some of them had. Captain Ames' cranberry bog was buried so deep in sand you couldn't see a leaf of it, and there was sand drifted over everything, as if a cyclone had swirled through the dunes, lifting them bodily and scattering them over the face of the earth.

I had cause to remember that storm. It buried still deeper the little pouch of "pirate gold" which Richard and I had buried temporarily, and we had never been able to find it since. For days we dug with a hoe and the brass-handled fire shovel, trying to unearth it, but even the

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markers we had set above it never came to light.

Lying there in the dark I could remember exactly how Richard looked then, in his little grass-stained white suit with a hole in the knee of his stocking. What a dear little dare-devil he was in those days, always coming to grief with his clothes, because of his thirst for adventure. All through the storm I lay thinking about him. I am so glad that I have those memories of him as a boy to add to my knowledge of him as a man. If I knew him only as I have known him since his return, a handsome young officer in his immaculate uniform and with his fascinating ways, I'd be afraid I was being attracted by his outward charm, and might be disillusioned some day as I was about Esther.

But in all the years we've been growing up together I've had time to learn every one of his faults and short-comings. Though I've frankly told him of them in times past for his own good, I realize now that he never had as many as most boys, and he has outgrown the few he did have. I wouldn't have him changed now in any way whatever.

An attachment like ours that blossoms out of such a long and intimate acquaintance must have deeper roots than one like Babe's and Watson's. Theirs hasn't any background, any past tense. Babe married him without having seen a single member of his family nearer than cousins, which is an awful risk, I think. Suppose one of his next of kin were a miser or a fanatic, and the same traits would crop out in him later in life. Knowing Richard's father as I did makes me feel that I know Richard in the future tense. They are so much alike. He'll always keep that sense of humor which was one of Mr. Moreland's charms, and the same feeling for things with old happy associations, like my ring.

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When I thought of that adorable ring I just couldn't wait till morning to see it again. Reaching for the little pocket flashlight which I keep on the stand beside my bed, I sat up and flashed it on the stone, turning it in every possible direction to see it sparkle. It was much more dazzling under the electric light than it had been under the lamp. I wondered if it made Richard's mother as happy when she wore it as it makes me. I wondered if she ever sat up in the dark to admire it as I was doing, and what she would think if she could see me press it to my lips in the consciousness that it is the precious link which binds me to Richard. I don't believe she would think it silly. She would be glad that I care so much—so very much.

Next morning Richard was over early to take me out with him to see how much damage the storm had done. The beach was strewn with wreckage, trees were uprooted on every street, and roofs and chimneys had suffered all over town. But the strangest thing was that we found our little pouch of pirate gold. It was like the sea giving up its dead for the dunes to give up the treasure we'd buried in it so long ago. We hadn't the faintest expectation of such a thing when we started out; merely thought we'd go over for a look at the place where it was buried.

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When we ploughed through the sand to the fringe of bayberry bushes and wild beach plums that was our landmark, we found that the last storm had undone the work of that first one. It had scooped out the sand and left a hollow as it used to be years ago. Even then we hadn't any thought of really finding the money, but Captain Kidd was along, and just to give him some excitement Richard called "Rats!"

That started him to digging frantically, and the first thing that flew out from under his paws was one of the pieces of broken crock which we had used as a marker. Then we tried him in other places, poking around ourselves with sticks, and presently he gave a short bark and stopped digging, to nose something else he had unearthed. It actually was the old baking-powder can. It was almost eaten up with rust, and the names and date we had scratched on it were almost illegible. But everything inside was intact.

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I watched Richard's face as he unrolled layer after layer of tin foil that was wrapped around the pouch, and thought again how nice it was that I shared his memories. I could understand the smile that curved his lips, for I knew the scenes that tin foil brought back to him. He had been weeks saving it.

"Off Dad's tobacco," was all he said. But more than once I had climbed the Green Stairs up the cliff to the bungalow in time to see the laughing scuffle which invariably took place before it was handed over to him. They had been rare play-fellows, he and his father.

In the pouch was the letter, the black rubber ring, the handful of change. "We'll pass all that over to Dan," I said, "but the gold we'll divide and gloat over."

But Richard insisted that it shouldn't be divided. He wanted to take it down to the Arts and Crafts shop and have it made into a ring for me. Just a little circle, that I could wear as a guard for the other one. I wanted half of it made into some token for him "to have and to hold" but we couldn't think of anything suitable. He wouldn't wear a ring himself, and there wasn't time to make a locket. There's so little that a soldier going abroad can carry with him.

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It was the artist who does the lovely jewel work at the Shop who settled the question. We had to take her partly into our confidence in order to show her how necessary it was to have the keepsake done before Richard's departure. She was dear about it, and so thrilled with the romance of the affair that she said she'd sit up all night if necessary to finish it. Yes, she understood perfectly, she said. She would melt the two gold pieces together, and out of part would fashion the ring, just a little twist of a lover's knot, and out of the rest—well, why not an identification tag? The gentleman would have to wear one anyhow, and, being an officer could

have it of gold if he wished.

Richard liked the idea immensely, but it gave me a gruesome feeling at first. There would be no need of identification tags, were it not that possible death and wounds and capture face every man who wears one. Besides it seemed such a cold-blooded sort of token to give to one's best beloved, just starting off to the Field of Honor. About as romantic as a trunk check.

But suddenly I thought of something which made me agree instantly. There was a name which I could have engraved upon the reverse side, which would make the little tag seem almost like a decoration, in commemoration of a noble deed. I managed to write it down and slip it to the artist without Richard's seeing it. [256]

Now whenever he looks at it he will remember it is the name I call him in my heart of hearts. He will know that I think of him as my true knight, as worthy of a royal accolade as any of those who fared forth in Arthur's time to redress the wrongs of the world. He is my "*Sir Gareth*."



CHAPTER XXII

"THE MAID WHO BINDS HER WARRIOR'S SASH"

I COULDN'T tell Tippy. The way we did I just handed her Barby's night letter without a word and Richard gave her his. She read them with no more change of expression than if they'd been weather reports. Then she said that she'd known it all along. A wooden Indian couldn't have been less demonstrative, but later I found that nothing could have pleased her more.

Richard says she can't help being born a Plymouth Rock. She's like an ice-bound brook that can't show the depth and force underlying the surface coldness. But her tenderness leaked out for us both afterwards, in all sorts of ways, and I began to understand her for the first time in my life.

She watched me take down the service flag in the window and replace it with one bearing two stars, and I'm sure she read my thoughts. She's always had an uncanny way of doing that. I was thinking how much harder it was to put up that second star than the first one, because I hadn't really given Father to the service. He was in it before I was born. But the second star was the symbol of a real sacrifice that I was laying on the altar of my country. There was no laughing this time, or joking suggestion to make a ceremony of it. I felt to the bottom of my heart what I was doing, and did it in reverent silence. [258]

Soon after she followed me to my room and laid a couple of books on the table, open at the places marked for me to read. I smiled after she went out when I saw that one was an antiquated volume of poems. All my life she has tried to teach me morals and manners by the aid of such verse as "The boy stood on the burning deck" and "Fie! What a naughty child to pout." So I picked up the books wondering what lesson she thought I needed now. The poem she marked was "The Maid who binds her Warrior's sash." As I read I understood. Dear old Tippy! It was *courage* she would teach me.

Richard was right. She couldn't say these things to me, so she brought me the words of another to help me, knowing the lesson would soon be sorely needed. The other book was a new one she had just drawn from the library, the adventures of a young gunner in the Navy. He had won the Croix de Guerre for distinguished service and escaped the horrors of a German prison camp, so he knew what he was talking about when he wrote the words she left for me to read. [259]

"When you say goodbye to your son or your husband or your sweetheart, take it from me that what he will like to remember the best of all is your face *with a smile on it*. It will be hard work; you will feel more like crying and so will he, maybe. That smile is your bit. I will back a smile against the weeps in a race to Berlin any time. So I am telling you, and I can't make it strong enough—*send him away with a smile*."

This is the verse:

"The maid, who binds her warrior's sash
With smile, which well the pain dissembles,
The while, beneath the drooping lash,
One starry tear-drop hangs and trembles,
Though heaven alone record the tear
And fame shall never know her story,
Her heart has shed a drop as dear

I didn't realize then how hard it was going to be to live up to those quotations, but Tippy, with so much of her life behind her full of its hard lessons—Tippy knew and took this mute way of warning me.

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The storm did us a good turn in more ways than unearthing our buried treasure. It brought such cold weather in its wake that when we came in glowing from a tramp along shore just before supper, we found a jolly big fire waiting for us in the living-room. Such a one, Richard said, as would warm him many a time, thinking of it, nights when he was miles up in the air, numb as the North Pole.

We had such a long cosy evening afterward, there in the firelight.

"We'll have it just like this in our own little home when I get back," Richard kept saying. We planned the dearest house. We decided to make his Cousin James sell us his bungalow studio, not only because the Green Stairs running up the cliff to it is the place where we first saw each other when we were infants, but because it's such an artistic place, and has such a wonderful view of the sea. It's a place far too delightful to be wasted on a single person, even such a nice old bachelor as his Cousin James.

We even planned what we'd have for our first breakfast when we started to housekeeping, with Aunt Georgina's coffee urn shining at one end of the table and an old beaten-silver chop dish, that is one of Richard's memories of their studio days in Paris, at the other.

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"If I could only see that picture in reality before I go!" Richard exclaimed—"if I could only sit down at that table once with you across from me, and know that it was my home and my little wife—"

Then he confessed that he wanted to take back everything he'd said about Watson and war weddings. He believed in 'em now and *couldn't* I, *wouldn't* I—? But without waiting to finish the question he hurried on to answer it himself. No, he mustn't ask it. He wouldn't. It wouldn't be fair to me, young as I was, with Barby gone, nor to her. But if he could only feel that I really belonged to him—

I told him I didn't see how rushing through a whirlwind ceremony as Babe did could make us feel we belonged to each other any more than we already did, and I *couldn't* do it without Barby, but we could say the betrothal part to each other, and that would make him feel that we were almost married. So we hunted it up in the prayer book and each repeated the part that says, "I take thee . . . from this day forward . . . to love and to cherish . . . and thereto I plight thee my troth."

But after we said it I couldn't see that it made the thought of parting any easier. Really it seemed even harder after we'd solemnly promised ourselves to each other that way.

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After a while he said there were several things he wanted to speak of before he went away. One was that his Cousin James has all his belongings in charge. Among them is a beautiful old Venetian jewel casket with his mother's rings and necklaces and things in it. His Cousin James understands that everything in it is to be mine and he hoped that I'd wear them sometimes—even if—in any event— He didn't go on to say even if *what*, but the unfinished sentence filled me with its unspoken dread, more than if he'd really said it.

After a long silence he said lightly that there was some satisfaction in the thought that I'd always be comfortably provided for no matter what happened, and that I could have the bungalow and the motor-boat and all the other things we'd planned. He'd made his will the day before and his Cousin James had promised to see it was carried out in every detail.

At the thought of what his speech implied and the mere idea of me having or doing any of those lovely things without *him*, I couldn't stand it any longer. I simply hid my face in the sofa cushions and let the dykes wash out to sea. It must have broken him up somewhat himself, to see the way I took it, for his voice was shaky when he tried to comfort me. But it was so dear and tender, just like Uncle Darcy's that time he kept saying, "There's naught to fear lass, Dan'll's holding you." Every word only made me cry that much harder.

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Presently he cleared his throat and asked if I supposed there was any powder left in the old powder horn over the mantel, and did I remember the time we fed some to Captain Kidd to make him game. He'd confess now, after all these years, he ate some himself that day when I wasn't looking, but its effect was about worn off by this time, and if I kept on that way much longer he'd have to have another nip at that old horn or go to pieces himself.

I sat up then and laughed, despite the big, gully sobs that nearly choked me. For I had to tell him that I'd eaten some of that powder myself that same time. I licked it out of the palm of my hand when his back was turned. And if the powder had lost its effect on me the horn itself hadn't. The mere mention of it made me stiffen. Hereafter I'd be just as brave as that old Revolutionary grandmother of mine who snatched it from the wall with the musket, and hustled her Minute Man off with the one grim word, "Hurry!" I promised him that hereafter he shouldn't see me shed another drop. And he didn't.

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Mr. Milford came up for me early next morning to take me down to the station to see Richard off. Maybe it was because I had had that spell of wild weeps the night before, that I felt like the-

morning-after-a-storm, all cleared up and shiny. At any rate I sent him off laughing. He looked so fit and so fine, starting off on his great adventure like some knight of old, that I told him I pined to go along; that under the circumstances I'd gladly change places with him. I'd much rather be Richard Moreland than G. Huntingdon.

But he said right before his Cousin James that he'd much rather I'd be *Mrs.* Richard Moreland. It was my blushing so furiously at hearing that name applied to me for the first time which made him laugh. Then there was only time to be caught up in a good-bye embrace before the train pulled out. He swung himself up on the rear platform just as it started. He did look so handsome and so dear and I was so proud of him in his khaki that there was nothing forced in the last smile I gave him. It was the real spangled-bannery kind; such as shines in your eyes when the band plays martial music and the troops march by. Your heart beats awfully fast and you hold your breath, but you have the feeling that in your soul you are one of the color bearers yourself. You are keeping step with your head held high.

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Afterwards when Mr. Milford helped me into the machine he said, "Georgina, you're a trump. You wear your service stars in your eyes."

When I looked at him questioningly, wondering what he meant, he said, "Oh, I know they're brown, not blue, but you showed my boy the star of 'true blue' courage in them, and I was horribly afraid for a few minutes there that maybe you wouldn't."

He talked about service flags all the way home, for we kept coming across them in the windows in every street. Over two hundred men have gone out from this little fishing town. When I told him how I felt that way, about "keeping step," he said he wished I could make some other people he knew feel the same way.

"There's poor Mrs. Carver, for instance, crying her eyes out over Titcomb and Sammy III, and talking as if she's the only mother in the world who's sacrificing anything. If you could suggest that those boys would be a bit prouder of her if she could keep step with the rest of the mothers, make her sacrifice with her head up, it would do her a world of good. She mustn't fly service stars in her window unless she can back them on the inside with the same true blue courage they stand for on the outside—the kind that sends the men to the front."

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CHAPTER XXIII

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MARKED ON THE CALENDAR

It's queer what a way Doctor Wynne has of stepping abruptly into my life and out again. It's been so ever since I found his picture in the barrel. A few days after Richard left he unexpectedly opened the front gate and came up to the porch where Tippy and I sat knitting. I did not recognize him at first in his captain's uniform, and no one could have been further from my thoughts. I supposed he had already sailed for France.

Some business with old Mr. Carver, who is giving an ambulance to the Red Cross, brought him to Provincetown, and, happening to hear that Miss Susan Triplett was at our house, he came up to say goodbye to her before starting to join the unit to which he's been assigned. He was disappointed when he found that Miss Susan had gone back to Wellfleet. He said she was one of the few people left who had known his family intimately, and who remembered him as a child. It gave him a sense of kinship to have her call him "Johnny" in a world where everyone else said "Doctor."

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That was enough for Tippy. In her opinion any man in khaki is entitled to all the "sugar and spice and everything nice" the world can give. When she found that he has no home ties now, she adopted him on the spot. He didn't know he was being adopted, but I did, just from the positive tone of her voice. She told him her claim on him was about as old as Susan's. She'd known him when he was a bald-headed baby—held him in her arms in this very house, and sat under his father's preaching many a time in Wellfleet. And indeed he'd stay to supper. He needn't think she'd let a son of Sister Wynne's leave the house without breaking bread with her, especially

when he was starting off to a far country where he was liable to get nothing but husks.

If what Tippy wanted was to give him a little slice of home to pack up and take away in his "old kit bag," she certainly succeeded. It will be many a moon before he can forget the table she spread for him, the advice she gave him and the sock she hurried to "toe off" in order that there might be a full half dozen in the package she thrust upon him at parting. An own aunt could not have been more solicitous for his comfort, and she did all but call him Johnny.

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It's the first time I ever had any conversation with him more than a sentence or two. Now as he "reminisced" with Tippy, and told experiences of his boyhood on a Western farm and of his medical student days, I saw that the real John Wynne was not the person I imagined him to be.

What a sentimental little goose I must have been at sixteen; truly "green in judgment" to have woven such a fabric of dreams around him. Miss Crewes' story started it, putting him on a sort of pedestal, and the affair with Esther added to it, till I imagined him a romantic and knightly figure, "wrapped in the solitude" of a sad and patient melancholy. The real John Wynne is a busy, matter-of-fact physician, absorbingly interested in the war and keen to be into it, also ready to talk about anything from "cabbages to kings." Yet I suppose if anyone had told me then that I was mistaken in that early estimate of him I would have resented it. I *wanted* him to fit the role I assigned him. It made him more interesting to my callow mind to imagine him like that king in the poem when,—*"The barque which held the prince went down he never smiled again."*

He was so warmly interested in my account of finding his picture at that auction and keeping it all these years, that I took him across the hall to look at it. The thought came to me that maybe he'd like to have it, but when I offered it to him he said no, he had a more recent one of his mother, one more like her as he remembered her. He stood looking at it a long while and finally said it seemed so much at home there on the wall that he hoped I'd keep it there. It would sort of anchor him to the old Cape to look back and know that it was hanging in the very room where they had once been together. Then he added almost wistfully:

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"If *she* were here to wish me Godspeed, I could go away better equipped, perhaps, for what lies ahead."

Some sudden impulse prompted me to open the table drawer and take out the little service flag with the one star which I had thrust in there when I put up the new one. As I hung it under the picture I was surprised to hear myself saying, "See! She *does* wish you Godspeed."

It was exactly as if someone else put the words into my mouth, for I had never thought of them before, and I'm sure I never quoted Scripture that way before, outside of Sunday school. It gave me the queerest sensation to be doing it as if some force outside of myself were impelling me to speak.

"Don't you suppose," I said slowly, "that if God so loved the world that He could give His only son to die for it, that he must know how *human* fathers and mothers feel when they do the same thing? Don't you believe that He'd let a mother, even up in heaven, have some way to comfort and help a son who was offering *his* life to save the world? The men in the trenches can't see the stars we hang out for them here at home, but they feel our spirit of helpfulness flowing out to them. How do we know that the windows of heaven are not hung with stars that mean the same thing? How do we know but what those who watch and wait for us up there are not aiding us in ways greater than we dream possible? Helping us as Israel was helped, by the invisible hosts and chariots of fire, in the mountain round about Elisha?"

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The tenderest smile lit up his face. "It's strange you should have hit upon that particular story," he said. "It was one of my mother's favorites. She began telling it to me when I was no bigger than that little chap there, leaning against her shoulder."

Then he turned and held out his hand, saying, "You've given me more than you can ever know, Miss Huntingdon. Thank you for hanging that little service star there. She does say Godspeed, and its help will go with me overseas."

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A little while later he went away, and I've wondered a dozen times since what made me say that to him.

The month of July in my 1917 calendar is a motley page, the first half of it being marked with a perfect jumble of red rings and black crosses. They stand for all that happened between my home-coming after Commencement and Richard's goodbye. When you consider that into one day alone was crowded my birthday anniversary, Babe's wedding, Aunt Elspeth's death, and the greatest experience of my life, it's no wonder that in looking back over it all July seems almost as long and eventful as all the years which went before it.

There is a triple ring around the twenty-seventh. I couldn't make it red enough, for that is the joyful day that Richard's cablegram came, saying that he was safe in England. It was also the day that Babe came home from her honeymoon, alone, of course. Watson joined his ship two days after they left here, and she visited his people the rest of the time. I've not marked that event but I'll not forget it soon, because she was so provoking when I ran in to tell her my news. Not that she wasn't interested in hearing of Richard's safety, or that she wasn't enthusiastic about my engagement and my *solitaire*, but she had such a superior married air, as if the mere fact of her

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being Mrs. Watson Tucker made all she said and felt important.

She gave me to understand that while it was natural that she should worry about Watson, and almost die of anxiety when the mails were late, I oughtn't to feel the separation as keenly as she, because I was merely engaged.

"My *dear*, you can't realize the difference until you've had the experience," she said patronizingly. I told her Richard had been a part of my life ever since I was a child, and it stood to reason that he filled a larger place in it than Watson could in hers, having only come into it recently.

It's no use arguing with Babe. You never get anywhere. So I just looked down on my little ring of pirate gold and felt sorry for her. She has no link like that to remind her of such buried treasure as Richard and I share—the memory of all those years when we were growing up together.

Early in August I had the joy of putting a big red capital L on my calendar, to mark the day that Richard's first letter came. He was well, he had had a comfortable crossing, he had passed all his tests and begun his special training for the coast patrol. It is almost worth the separation to have a letter like that. Not only did he tell me right out in the dearest way how much he cares for me, regardless of the censor's possible embarrassment, but every line showed his buoyant spirits over the chance that has come to him at last. He has wanted it so desperately, tried for it so gallantly and worked and waited so patiently that I would be a selfish pig not to be glad too, and I *am* glad.

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Judith asked how I had the heart to go into the tableaux that Mrs. Tupman is getting up for the Yarn fund. She was sure she couldn't if she were in my place. She'd be thinking all the time of the danger he is in. She wondered if I realized that the elements themselves conspire against an aviator—fire, earth and even water, if he's in the naval force, to say nothing of the risk of the enemy's guns.

She couldn't understand it when I said I wasn't going to make myself miserable thinking of such things. And I'm not. He's having his heart's desire at last, and I'm so happy for him that I won't let myself be sorry for me.

His next letter was written five thousand feet up in the air. He went to twenty thousand feet that trip, but couldn't write at such a height, because his hand got so cold he had to put his glove on. Of course it was only a short scribbled note, but it thrilled me to the core to have one written under such circumstances.

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In the postscript, added after landing, he said, "I never go up without wishing you could share with me the amazing sensations of such a flight. You would love the diving and twirling and swooping. You were always such a good little sport I don't like to have you left out of the game. Never mind, we'll have a flier of our own when I come back, and we'll go up every day. We had an exciting chase after some enemy planes the other day. We sent down one raiding Boche and came near getting winged ourselves. I wish I might tell you the important particulars, but the things which would interest you most are the very ones we are not at liberty to write about. All I can say is that life over here now is one perpetual thrill, and it's a source of constant thanksgiving to me that Fate landed me in this branch of the service instead of the one I was headed for when I skipped off to Canada."

Even Richard's reference to the enemy planes which came near winging them did not fill me with uneasiness, because all his life he's gone through accidents unscathed. Once when he was only half-grown he brought his sailboat safely into port through a squall which crippled it, and old Captain Ames declared if it had been any other boy alongshore he'd have been drowned. That for level head and steady nerve he'd never seen his beat. Even back in the days when his crazy stunts in bicycle riding made the town's hair stand on end, he never had a bad fall. So I didn't worry when two weeks went by without bringing further word from him. But when three passed and then a whole month, I began to get anxious. Now that it's beginning on the second month, I'm awfully worried.

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BRAVE LITTLE CARRIER PIGEON!

WE have had another storm. It wrecked so many vessels and sent so many fishermen to their death that the dreadful tenth of August will go down in the annals of Provincetown as a day of dole for the whole Cape. So many families suffered from it. Most of them are Portuguese, and many of them are totally unprovided for, now that their breadwinners are taken.

At first it seemed to me that I just couldn't go down to the Fayals', but Tippy, who had been several times, said I ought to, because Mrs. Fayal has always been so good about coming in for an extra day's cleaning and has done our washing so many years, and I used to play with Rosalie. I didn't know what to say or do that could be of any possible comfort. But Rosalie clung to me so the night that her father was brought home, that I sat with them till morning.

There wasn't a stronger, sturdier fisherman along the coast than Joe Fayal. I've seen him go clumping past our house a thousand times in his high boots and yellow oilskins, and the flash of his white teeth and black eyes always gave the impression of his being more alive than most people. When I saw the white drowned thing they brought home in place of him I began to be afraid—afraid of the "peril of the sea." If it can do *that* to one strong man it can do it to another. [278]

All night Mrs. Fayal sat in a corner behind the stove. Sometimes she wrung her hands without a word, and sometimes she kept up a sort of moaning whimper—"The War took both my boys and now the Sea's taken my man!" I can hear her yet.

The days that followed were too full for me to worry as much as I would have done otherwise over Richard's long silence. The poverty of all those desolate families came uppermost. A fund was started for the widows and orphans, and all parts of New England came to the rescue. Artists, actors, the summer people, the home folks—everybody responded. A series of benefits and tag days began. I was asked to serve on so many committees and to help in so many enterprises that I raced through the days as if I were a fast express train, trying to make connections. I didn't have time to think during the day, but at night when I lay counting up the time since I'd had a letter, the waves booming up against the breakwater took to repeating that wail of Mrs. Fayal's, and the fog bell tolled it: "*The Sea's taken my man.*" And I'd be so afraid I'd pull the covers over my ears to shut out the sound. [279]

Then seven letters came in a bunch. The long silence had not been Richard's fault, nor was anything the matter. There had simply been delays in the mail service. I vowed I'd let that be a lesson to me, not to worry next time.

Barby came home late in the summer, and the very day of her arrival I had to go to Brewster on a "war-bread" campaign. I had promised to be demonstrator any time they called for me. It was tough luck to have the call hit that first day. I hadn't had her to myself for ages, and after the wild scramble of the summer I longed for a quiet day in a rocking chair at home, where we could talk over all the things that had happened since the last time we were together—principally Richard.

If there were no war now, I suppose that's about all we'd be doing these days, spending long, placid hours together, embroidering dainty lingerie and putting my initials on table linen and such things. But there'll be no "hope chest" for me while there's a soldier left in a hospital to need pajamas and bandages, or one in the trenches who needs socks. The wild beast is not only on our door-steps now, he has us by the very throats. [280]

Barby came with the intention of taking me back with her, and Tippy, too, if she could persuade her to go. Although we're not the very important hub of a very important wheel as she is in Washington, we are the hubs of a good many little wheels which we have started, and which would stop if we left. I was wild to go, but Tippy has no patience with people who put their hands to the plow and then look back. She kept reminding me of the various things that I have gotten into good running order, such as the Junior Red Cross, and a new Busy Bees Circle which Minnie Waite is running, under my direction and prodding. They are doing wonderfully well as long as the prodding never lets up.

While we were debating the question it was settled for us in a most unexpected way. Old Mr. Carver telephoned that he needed me dreadfully in the office. Could I come and help him hold the fort for awhile? His son was very ill and had been taken to Boston for an operation. The draft had called so many men that practically the whole office force was new, and his stenographer had just left to take a government position.

Much as Barby wanted me with her, she said that that settled it. Nothing a girl of my age could find to do in Washington was as important as that. Fish is a big item in the Nation's food supply and anything I could do to help carry on that business helped carry on the war. Also some of our income depended on the success of the Plant, and if old Mr. Sammy broke down under the responsibility, strangers would have to step in. Besides, Father would be gratified to have me called on in the emergency, just as Titcomb and Sammy III would have been if they were not in training camp. [281]

It was wonderful the way that old man rose up and took the reins again, after having been little

more than a figurehead in the business for some years. He seemed to be in a dozen places at once, and he found many places to use me besides at the typewriter; sending me to bank, and helping the new bookkeeper fill out checks for the pay-roll, etc. I had the surprise of my life when I found my own name on the pay-roll. I had gone in to help out in the emergency, just as I would have gone to a neighbor's house in time of sickness. Also it was partly for our own interests, and I was being more than compensated by the feeling that I was doing something worth while filling in in place of drafted employees. I had no thought of being paid for it, nor of being wanted more than a few weeks.

But Mr. Carver said I was worth more to him than an ordinary stenographer, even if I had forgotten a lot and lost my speed. I could answer many of the letters without dictation, and I knew so much of the inside workings of the business, he could trust me with confidential matters, and he could blow off steam to me when things went wrong. In other words, I could keep up his morale. Poor old fellow, he needed to have somebody keep it up, as time proved. His son had a relapse and there were weeks when he was desperately worried over his condition. He blew off steam principally about his daughter-in-law, whom he held responsible for the relapse.

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"Always a-crying and a-fretting about those boys," he would fume. "Min's a good woman and a good mother, but she's a selfish slacker with Sammy. Doesn't seem to think that a father *has* any feelings. Doesn't realize that those boys are the apple of his eye. All her goings on about them, and how it's killing her, knowing they will surely be killed, when he's as weak as he is—it's a downright shame. She's only one of many, why can't she do like a million other mothers, keep her own hurt out of sight, at least till his life's out of danger."

Well, when I found I was to be paid for my work, that he really thought I was worth the salary the other girl got, and that he wanted to keep me permanently, I was the happiest creature that ever banged the keys of a typewriter. For while I banged them I was counting up all the Liberty Bonds I could buy in the course of a year, and how much I'd have for the Red Cross, and how much for all the other things I wanted to do. Of course, I've always had my allowance, but it's nothing to the bliss of earning money with your own fingers, to do exactly as you please with. *There is no other sensation in the whole universe so gratifying, so satisfying and so beatifying!*

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When the noon whistle blew I ran down the wharf and all the way home to tell Barby, then I put a big red ring round the date on the calendar. Before nightfall I put another ring around that one, for the postman brought me a long letter from Richard, a letter that made me so happy I felt like putting a red ring around the whole world.

It was somewhat of a shock to find that it was written in a hospital, although he assured me in the very first paragraph that he was perfectly well, and over all the ill effects, before he went on to say ill effects of *what*. This is part of it:

"Lieutenant Robbins and I went out for an observation flight over the enemy ports last Monday. Coming back something went wrong with the engine and we were compelled to drop at once to the sea. It was unusually rough and the waves so high there was danger of our light seaplane being beaten to pieces before we could be rescued. There was one chance in a thousand that some cruising patrol vessel might happen along near enough to sight us, but there were all sorts of chances a submarine might get us first. The wireless apparatus wouldn't work. We had been flying so high to get out of the bumps of air currents, and had been up so long that we were not in any shape to stand a long strain. Our chief hope of rescue was in the little carrier pigeon we had with us. We always take one, but this one had never made a trial trip as long as the one it would have to take now, and we didn't know whether it would fail us or not.

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Imagine us tossing about in that frail bit of wood and canvas, the waves washing over us at intervals, and land nowhere to be seen, watching that white speck wing its way out of sight. There was a while there when I'd have been willing to change places with old Noah, even if I had to crowd in with the whole Zoo. Well, we tossed around there for ages, it seemed to me, wet to the skin and chilled to the bone. All that night, all next day, and till dark again, we hung on desperately before a searchlight swept across us, and we saw a cruiser coming to our rescue. It had been hunting us all that time, for the bird went straight as an arrow with our S. O. S. call.

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"The other man was past talking when they found us, and I could barely chatter. We were both so exhausted we had to be hauled aboard like a couple of water-soaked logs. But a while in the hospital has put us back to normal again, and here we are as good as new and ready to go up again. We report for duty in the morning.

"It bowled me over when I heard what happened to our brave little pigeon. Some fool took a shot at it, somewhere near the station probably, for it managed to keep going till it got home. Then, just as it reached the floor of its loft, it fell dead. A bell always rings as a carrier alights on the balanced platform. When the attendant answered the summons he found the pigeon lying there, one foot shot away, and blood on its little white breast. It had managed to fly the last part of its way, mortally wounded. Lucky for us it wasn't the leg with the message that was hit. I tell you it makes me feel mighty serious to think that but for those little wings, faithful to the last beat, I wouldn't be writing this letter at this present moment of A. D. 1917.

"Two things kept coming into my mind, while numb and exhausted. I clung to that busted plane, expecting every minute it would give way under us. I saw that old wooden figurehead of "Hope" that sits up on the roof of the Tupman's portico at home. Probably I was going a bit nutty, for I could see it as plain as day. It opened its mouth and called to me over and over, that saying

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of Uncle Darcy's that you are always throwing at people. 'As long as a man keeps hope at the prow he keeps afloat.' It kept holding its old green, wooden wreath out at me as if it were a life preserver, and I'll give you my word it shouted loud enough for me to hear across the noise of the wind, 'as long as a man'—'as long as a man,' until I began to try to concentrate my mind on what it was saying. I actually believe the illusion or whatever it was helped me to hold on, for I began to obey orders. I hoped that the bird would reach home and hoped it so hard and long that it kept my wits awake. I was just at the point of letting go from sheer exhaustion and dropping into the sea, when it loomed up on the horizon.

"Then a star came out in the sky, and I thought in a hazy way of the one in your service flag that stands for me, and I felt that if I didn't manage to hang on and get back to you in some way, you'd think I wasn't 'true blue.' Then as I kept on staring at it, gradually I began to confuse it with you. But that's not to be wondered at. Ever since I've known you I've unconsciously steered my course by you. You're so dependable. That's one of your finest traits. No matter what happens you'll just go around in the circle of your days, true to your ideals and your sense of duty.

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"And though everything was getting sort of confused to me out there in the black water, staring death in the face, there was an underlying comfort in the belief that even if I didn't get back you wouldn't go into a cloud of mourning for the rest of your days. You'd live out your life as it was intended, just like that star. I saw it again last night from the hospital window. It rises here before daylight has entirely faded. The astronomers may call it Hesperus if they want to, but I'll never see it again without calling it *you*."

I have read that letter till I know it by heart. It is getting worn in the creases. But last night when the tolling of the fog-bell awakened me, I groped for it under my pillow and read it once more by the glow of my little flashlight. I wanted to see the words again in his own handwriting. I cannot read often enough the part that calls me "Star." That has always been the most beautiful of names to me, even when I gave it to one who wasn't worthy of it. I wonder if it would be possible to live up to it, though, if Richard should never come back to me. How could I endure the ordinary orbit of my days? Yet how could I disappoint him?

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Next day a package came which should have reached me with the letter. It was the little link of aluminum they took from the leg of the dead pigeon. Fastened to it was the cartridge that held the message. Brave little bird! It gave its life in the cause of liberty just as truly as any man in the trenches. I wish its deed could be immortalized in some way. It makes me shudder to think on what a frail thing Richard's life depended, just those little white wings, speeding through trackless space on their mission of rescue.



CHAPTER XXV

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"MISSING"

JANUARY 1, 1918.—I came up to my room tonight, thinking I'd start the New Year by bringing this record up to date; but when I look back on the long five months to be filled in, the task seems hopeless. It was Thanksgiving before Mr. Sammy was able to come back to work. Since then I've had shorter hours at the office, because they don't have so much work for a stenographer in the winter, but the extra time outside has been taken up by one breathless chase after another. When it isn't selling Liberty Bonds it is distributing leaflets about food conservation and the crime of wasting. Or it's a drive for a million more Red Cross members or a hurry call for surgical dressings. Then every minute in between it's knit, knit, knit everlastingly.

Barby did not come home Christmas, and we did not keep the day for ourselves. We had our hands full doing for the families of the fishermen who were drowned last summer, and for the boys at the front and in the camps at home. I hope Richard got his box all right, and that Doctor John Wynne enjoyed the one Tippy packed for him, and the round-robin letter that Miss Susan and some of the Wellfleet people sent him. They started on their way before Thanksgiving.

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I saw "Cousin James" a few minutes to-day. He came down to take a look at his premises. The bungalow has been boarded up ever since last fall, when he joined the class of "a dollar a year" men, working for the government. We had such a good time talking about Richard. He's so optimistic about the war ending soon, that he left me feeling more light-hearted than I've been for months. It will, indeed, be a happy New Year if it brings us peace.

WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY. Shades of Valley Forge! What a winter this is! It will go down in history with its wheatless and meatless days, and now that the fuel shortage is pinching all classes of people alike, the ant as well as the grasshopper, the heatless days make the situation almost hopeless.

Tippy and I are living mostly in the kitchen now, because we are nearly at the end of our coal supply, and the railroads are not able to bring in any more. The open wood fires make little impression on the general iciness of the house. I am sitting up in my room to-night with furs and arctics on, and a big lamp burning to supplement the efforts of a little coal-oil heater. With all that it's so cold that I can see my breath. My fingers are so numb that I can scarcely manage my pen, but I must make a note of the news which came to-day. It's about Doctor Wynne.

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In January Tippy had a letter from him, a charmingly written account of Christmas in the trenches, and a grateful acknowledgment of the box and the letter. This morning a small package came to me, addressed in a strange hand. An English nurse sent it. Inside she wrote:

"Captain John Wynne asked me to send you the enclosed. He was in this hospital three weeks, and died last night from the effect of injuries received in doing one of the bravest things the war has yet called forth. He faced what seemed to be instant and inevitable death to avert an explosion that would have killed his Major and many men with him. In the attempt he was so badly wounded that it was thought he could not live to reach the hospital. But maimed and shattered as he was, he lived until last night.

"He was one of the most efficient surgeons we had at the front, and one of the best beloved. His fortitude through his time of intense suffering was a marvel to the whole hospital staff, accustomed as we are to nurse brave men. It really seemed as if he were sustained by some power other than mere human endurance, some strength of the spirit few mortals attain.

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"It was a source of regret to all who knew of his case that the decoration awarded him did not arrive until after he lapsed into unconsciousness. But he knew he was to receive it. His Colonel told him he was to have the highest award for valor that your country bestows. He had already told me what disposition to make of his effects, and when I asked him in regard to the expected decoration he gave me your address whispering, 'She will know.'"

I *did* know. It is hanging now where he knew I would put it. This afternoon when I came home I brought with me a little gold star to take the place of the blue one on the service flag under his mother's picture. And over it I hung the medal—that other star, bronze and laurel-wreathed, with its one word "Valor," surmounted by its eagle and its bit of ribbon.

Tippy, watching me, suddenly buried her face in her apron and went out of the room, crying as I have never seen her cry before. I knew it wasn't the thought that he was gone which hurt her so keenly. It was the fact that the little token of his country's appreciation reached him too late. He missed the comfort of it himself, and there was no one of his own left to know the honor done him and to take pride in it.

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I had been feeling the hurt of it myself, ever since the news came. But it left me as I stood there, looking at the pictures in the little antique frame. The winter sunset, streaming red across the icicles outside the western window, touched everything in the room with a tinge of rose. It lighted up both faces, and, as I looked at his, I whispered through tears:

"What does a little guerdon matter to a soul like yours, John Wynne? The deed was all you cared for." And when I looked into his mother's face and recalled what the nurse had written, I dried my eyes and smiled into her eyes, that were looking so steadfastly out at me. I *knew* she had helped him at the last. In some way her comfort had been with him, as the hosts "were round about Elisha in the mountain."

ST. PATRICK'S DAY. March came in like a lion, but we're comfortable now, thank goodness, in spite of the fact that the winds are still keen and there is much ice in the harbor. The coal cars reached town at last, and the big base-burner in the hall sends waves of delicious warmth all through the house. This past winter has been a nightmare of discomfort for nearly everybody.

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Babe says her experiences since 1918 set in would make the angels weep. She's been doing the housekeeping since New Year, because her mother simply cannot adjust herself to war conditions. Mrs. Dorsey announced that she was born extravagant and it wasn't her nature to save, but if Babe thought it was her duty and was willing to undertake it, she'd put up with the results no matter how harrowing. They get along pretty well when Mr. Dorsey is off on his trips, but I imagine harrowing is the right word for it when he's at home. He simply won't eat cornbread, and he swears at the mere sight of meat substitutes, such as mock turkey made of beans and peanut butter and things.

Babe, having married into the Navy, feels that she is under special obligation to Hooverize to the limit. She wants to end the war as soon as possible on Watson's account. In fact, she makes such a personal matter of it that she's getting herself disliked in some parts of town, and some people seem to think she is in a way responsible for the whole thing. A Portuguese woman asked

Tippy the other day how long she supposed that "Mrs. Tucker's war" was going to last. She said Babe is down in their back yards every few days, looking into their slop-pails and scolding something fierce if she finds the potato parings thicker than she says they can be. Poor Babe! Between the demands of her patriotism and the demands of her difficult parents she is almost distracted at times.

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I wish I could write down in these pages all the funny things that happen. Never a day goes by, either at the office or the Red Cross work-rooms, that something amusing doesn't come up. But by the time I've told it in one letter for Barby to pass on to Father, and in another to make Richard laugh, I haven't the patience to write it all out again here. The consequence is I'm afraid I've given the wrong impression of these last few months. One would think there have been no good times, no good cheer. That it's been all work and grim duty. But such is not the case. My letters will testify to that, and it's only because so much time and energy have gone into them that things have to be crowded into a few brief paragraphs in this book.

Despite all the gruesomeness of war and my separation from my family, I am so busy that I'm really and truly happy from morning till night. I enjoy my work at the office and my work at home and all the kinds of war-work that come my way. It's a satisfaction merely to turn out clean, well-typed pages, but it's bliss unalloyed to know that the money I'm getting for doing it is going to buy bread and bullets to bring about the downfall of the Kaiser.

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Sometimes when old Mr. Sammy is feeling especially hopeful and there's nobody in the office but me, he begins to hum an old camp-meeting tune that they sing at his church:

"Coming bye and bye, coming bye and bye!
A better day is dawning, the morning draweth nigh."

I join in with a convincing alto, and afterwards we say what a glorious old world this will be when that day really gets here. "When Johnny comes marching home again, hurrah," the war won and the world made a safe place for everybody. How lovely it will be just to draw a full breath and settle down and *live*.

At such times it seems such a grand privilege to have even the smallest share in bringing that victory about, that he's all but shouting when we get through talking, and I've accumulated enough enthusiasm to send me through the next week with a whoop. Sometimes if there isn't anything to do right then in the office, I turn from the desk and look out of the window, with eyes that see far beyond the harbor to the happy dawning we've been singing about.

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"Lieutenant Richard Moreland Missing"

I see Richard . . . climbing the Green Stairs . . . coming into the little home we furnished together in fancy . . . the little Dream-home where I've spent so many happy hours since. I can see the smile in his dear eyes as he holds his arms out to me . . . having earned the right to make all our dreams come true . . . having fought the good fight . . . and kept the faith . . . that all homes may be safe and sacred everywhere the wide world over. . . .

When one can dream dreams like that, one can put up with "the long, long night of waiting," knowing it will have such a heavenly ending.

APRIL 6, 1918. One year ago to-day the United States declared—

I had written only that far last Saturday night when I looked up to see Tippy standing in the door holding out the evening paper. I felt as I heard her coming along the hall that something was the matter. She walked so hesitatingly. Something in her face seemed to make my heart stand still, and stopped the question I started to ask. She didn't seem to be able to speak, just spread the paper on the table in front of me and pointed to something. Her finger was shaking. The four black words she pointed to seemed to leap up into my face as I read them:

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"*Lieutenant Richard Moreland, Missing.*"

Those four black words have been in front of my eyes ever since. They were in the official announcement that "Cousin James" brought down next day. He had been notified as next of kin.

At first they seemed more bearable than if they'd said killed or seriously wounded. I didn't quite grasp the full meaning of "missing." But I do now. I heard "Cousin James" say in a low tone to Tippy, out in the hall, something about death being more merciful than falling alive into the hands of the Germans. He told her some of the things they do. I know he's afraid that Richard has been taken prisoner.

He keeps telling me that we mustn't be down-hearted. That we must go on hoping as hard as we can that everything will turn out all right. The War Department is doing its best to trace him, and if he's a prisoner we'll spare no expense and effort to get food through to him. They always treat aviators with more consideration than other soldiers, and I mustn't worry. But he doesn't look one bit the way he talks. His face is so haggard that I know he's frightened sick.

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Barby is, too, or she wouldn't have come all the way home to tell me the very same things that he did. She wants to take me back to Washington with her till we have farther news. She's cabled to Father. I know they all think it's strange that I take it so quietly, but I've felt numb and dazed ever since those four black words leaped up at me from the paper. I wish they wouldn't be so tender with me and so solicitous for my comfort. It's exactly the way they'd act if Richard were dead. I'm glad "Cousin James" went right back. He looked at me the way Tippy does, as if she pities me so that it breaks her heart. She doesn't know what her face shows. None of them realize that their very efforts to be cheerful and comforting show that their hopefulness is only make-believe.



CHAPTER XXVI

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"THE SERVICE OF SHINING"

AWAY down the crooked street sounds a faint clang of the Towncrier's bell. Uncle Darcy is out again with it, after his long, shut-in winter. But he is coming very, very slowly. Even the warm sunshine of this wonderful May afternoon cannot quicken his rheumatic old feet so that they do more than crawl along. It will be at least half an hour before he reaches the Green Stairs. He will sit down to rest a bit on the bottom step, as he always does now, and I'll run down and meet him there.

He helps me more than anyone else, because, more than anyone else, he understands what I am enduring. He remembers what he endured all those anxious years when Danny was missing. It's a comfort to have him tell me over and over how his "line to live by" kept him afloat and brought him into port with all flags flying, and that it will do the same for me if I only hold to it fast and hard enough. So I set my teeth together and repeat grimly as he used to do:

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"I will not bate a jot
Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer
Right onward."

But my imagination won't let me say it in a way to do much good. It keeps showing me dreadful pictures of Richard; of what might have happened to him. I keep seeing his body in some God-forsaken field, lying shattered and marred past recognition by the enemy's guns, his dead face turned up to the sky. Or I see him falling headlong to earth in a blazing plane, or, worst of all, in the filth of a German prison camp, weak, wounded, famishing for food and water and tortured in a thousand ways that only the minds of those demons can invent. All the things I've read as happening to other men I imagine happening to him. I see those things over and over and over till I nearly go mad.

When I fold the gauze into bandages and sew the long seams in the hospital garments, with every movement and every stitch I wonder if he needs such comforts, and if needing them, they are given or denied him. I know it doesn't do any good to say that I am hoping as long as I persist in such imaginings, but I don't want to think about anything but Richard. My hands go on working in a normal way, but when I'm not torturing myself as to his whereabouts, I am re-living the past, or picturing the empty years ahead if he should never come back to me. I can't help it.

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Because in one of his letters he mentioned that old figurehead on the roof of the Tupman's portico, I have taken to walking past the house every day. Everything even remotely connected with him seems sacred now, even the things he used to laugh at. Because the memory of the figurehead helped him to hang on to the wrecked plane till rescue came, I feel as grateful to it as if it were a human being. Every time I pass it I tell myself I won't stop hoping for a single minute. I won't let myself believe anything else but that he'll come back to me some day. Then with the next breath comes that awful vision of him lying dead in some lonely spot where he can never be found, and it seems to me I simply can't go on living.

"Cousin James" still writes encouragingly, but as the weeks go by and no trace of him can be found in any of the hospitals and no news of him comes through any of the foreign offices, the suspense is getting to be unbearable. I can't admit to anyone how horribly afraid I am, but it is a relief to confess it here. Now that I've done so, I'll run down and talk to Uncle Darcy awhile. He is the living embodiment of hope and faith. The confident, happy way with which he looks forward to joining Aunt Elspeth soon makes me feel better every time I am with him. It brings back what

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Richard said the day she was buried: "All that they were to each other we will be to one another, and *more*." If I could only be sure that after this terrible waiting will come such long, placid years as they had! Years of growing nearer and dearer, in a union that old age only strengthens, and death cannot sever.

Mid-June, and still no word! Now that no new letters ever come, I read the old ones over and over. The one I take out oftenest is the one which says, "No matter what happens, you'll go around in the circle of your days, true to your ideals and your sense of duty. You won't go into a cloud of mourning. . . . You will live out your life as it was intended, just like that star."

Always, until to-night, that letter has been a comfort, because it tells of his wonderful rescue, and gives me the feeling that if he could escape so marvelously one time he can another. But re-reading that paragraph a while ago, I suddenly saw something in it that I'd never discovered before. It shows he must have had a presentiment that he'd never get back to me. He knew what was going to happen, else why should he have said "you won't go into a cloud of mourning . . . you'll live out your life as it was intended!" The discovery of that premonition takes away the last little straw that I've been clinging to. He felt what was going to happen. It has happened. It must be so, for it is over two months now since he was first reported missing.

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One goes on because one must. We're made that way on purpose, I suppose. When sight fails we still have touch. We can feel our way through the dark with groping fingers.

All the glad incentive for living is gone, but when I look at the star in the little service flag which stands for Richard, every atom of me lifts itself like a drawn sword to pledge itself to greater effort. *His sacrifice shall not be in vain!*

And when I look at the star that stands for Father, I make the same vow. He is sacrificing himself just as surely as Richard did, though he's giving his life by inches. His health is going, and his strength. Twenty-four hours at a stretch at the operating table is too much for any man, and that's what he's had to endure a number of times recently after the big enemy offensives. Always he's on a strain. One of Mr. Carver's friends who saw him not long ago, wrote home that he has aged terribly. He looks fifteen years older than when we saw him. Tippy says I'm burning the candle at both ends, but I don't care if I can only keep burning till we've put an end to this mad carnage.

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The other day when I passed the Figurehead House, Mrs. Tupman called me in and asked me if I'd be willing to tell the story of Richard's rescue and the little Carrier Pigeon's part in it, at the Town Hall this week. There's to be a big rally for selling Thrift Stamps. She wanted me to show the children the tiny aluminum bracelet and cartridge which held the S. O. S. call. She was sure that if they could hear how one little pigeon saved the lives of two officers, they would be impressed with the importance of small things. They would be more interested in saving their pennies if they could think of their stamps as little wings, speeding across the seas to save the lives of our armies.

But I told her I couldn't. I'd do anything impersonal that she might ask, but I couldn't get up before a crowd and speak of anything so intimately connected with Richard. I could have done it gladly when he was alive, but now that little link of aluminum has associations too sacred for me to hold up for the curious public to gape at.

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But after supper, out in the row-boat, I saw things differently. I was paddling around near shore, watching the wonderful afterglow reflected in the water, pink and mother-of-pearl and faintest lavender. It was all unspeakably beautiful, as it has been countless times when Richard was out with me. Because of the conviction that we'd never again see it together, the very beauty of it gave me a lonely, hopeless sort of heart-ache. It is one of the most desolate sensations in the world, and it is a poignant pain to remember that "tender grace of a day that is dead," which "can never come back to me."

As those words floated dreamily through my memory, with them came the recollection of the time I had repeated them in this very boat, and Richard's unexpected answer which set Captain Kidd to barking. I could hear again his hearty laugh and the teasing way he said, "That's no way for a good sport to do." It brought him back so plainly that I could almost see him sitting there opposite me in the boat, so big and cheerful and *alive*. The sense of nearness to him was almost as comforting as if he had really spoken.

And then, knowing him as well as I do, knowing exactly how he always responded, in such a common-sense, matter-of-fact way, I could imagine the answer he would make were I to tell him of Mrs. Tupman's request.

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"Why, sure!" he'd say. "*Tell* the story of the little pigeon, and make it such a ripping good one there won't be a dry eye in the house. It'll give the little fellow the chance for another flight. Every stamp they sell will be in answer to an S.O.S. call of some kind, and if it's the bird that makes them buy, it'll be just the same as if his own little wings had carried the message."

The thought cheered me up so much that I went straight home and telephoned to Mrs. Tupman that I'd reconsidered, and I'd gladly do what she asked me to.

Since then I've taken to going out in the boat whenever my courage is at low ebb. Out there on the water, in the peace of the vast twilight dropping down on the sea, I can conjure up that sense of his nearness as nowhere else. It has the same effect on my feverish spirit as if his big firm hand closed gently over mine. It quiets my forebodings. It steadies me. It makes me know past all doubting that no matter what has happened, he is still mine. His love abides. Death cannot take *that*.

Oh, what does a person do who is so glad—so *crazy* glad that he must find vent for his joy, when there are no words made great enough to express it? *We've had news of Richard!* He's safe! He escaped from a German prison camp. That's all we know now, but it is all of heaven to know that much.

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The news of his safety came as suddenly as the word that he was missing. Tippy called me to come down to the telephone. Long distance wanted me. It was "Cousin James." He had a cablegram from that Canadian friend of Richard's. We had an expensive little jubilee for a while there. You don't think of how much it's costing a minute when you're talking about the dead coming to life. It was as wonderful as that.

"Cousin James" said undoubtedly we would have letters soon. The fact that Richard had not cabled for himself, made him afraid that he was laid up for repairs. He was probably half-starved and weak to the point of exhaustion from all he'd gone through in making his escape. So we must have patience if we didn't hear right away. We could wait for details now that we had the greatest news of all, and so forth and so on.

The moment he rang off I started down to Uncle Darcy's, telling Tippy all there was to tell, as I clapped on my hat and hurried through the hall. I started down the back street half running. The baker's cart gave me a lift down Bradford Street. I was almost breathless when I reached the gate.

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Uncle Darcy was dozing in his arm-chair set out in the dooryard. There flashed into my mind that day long ago, when *his* hopes found happy fulfillment and Dan came home. That day Father came back from China and we all went out to meet the ship and came ashore in the motor boat. And now I called out to him what I had called to him then, through the dashing spray and the noise of the wind and waves and motor:

"It *pays* to keep hope at the prow, Uncle Darcy!"

And he, rousing up with a start at the familiar call, smiled a welcome and answered as he did when I was a child, the same affectionate light in his patient old eyes.

"Aye, lass, it does *that!*"

"And we're coming into port with all flags flying!"

Then he knew. The trembling joy in my voice told him.

"You've heard from Richard!" he exclaimed quaveringly, "and you've come to tell the old man first of all. I knew you would."

And then for a little while we sat and rejoiced together as only two old mariners might, who had each known shipwreck and storm and who had each known the joy of finding happy anchorage in his desired haven.

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On the way home I stopped to tell Babe. Good old Babe. She was so glad that the tears streamed down her face.

"Now I can help with *your* wedding," was her first remark. "Of course, he'll have to be invalided home, for I don't suppose he's more than skin and bone if he's been in the hands of the Germans all this time. But, under the circumstances, you won't mind marrying a living skeleton. I know *I* wouldn't if I were in your place. He'll be coming right back, of course."

Everybody I met seemed to think the same thing. They took it for granted that he'd done all that could be expected of a man. That three months in a German prison was equal to several dyings. After I got home I told Captain Kidd. He was lying on the rug inside the hall door with his nose between his paws, seemingly asleep. "Richard's coming," was all I said to him, but up he scrambled with that little yap of joy and ran to the screen door scratching and whining to be let out. It was so human of him that I just grabbed his shaggy old head in my arms and hugged him tight. "He's coming some day," I explained to him, "but we'll have to wait a while, old fellow, maybe a long, long while. But we won't mind that now, after all we've been through. Just now it's enough to know that he's alive and safe."

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MY NINETEENTH BIRTHDAY. It's wonderful that Richard's letter should happen to get here on this particular day. The sight of his familiar handwriting gave me such a thrill that it brought the tears. It was almost as if he had called my name, seeing it written out in his big, bold hand.

He says he can't tell me the details of his experiences now. They are too fierce for him to attempt to put on paper till he is stronger. Babe was right. He's almost the shadow of his former self. But he says he is beginning to pick up famously. He is in Switzerland, staying with a family who were old friends of his father's. They are taking royal care of him, and he's coming around all right. The wound in his arm (he doesn't say how he got it) is healing rapidly.

Oh, it's a dear letter—all the parts in between about wanting to see me, and my being doubly dear to him now—but he doesn't say a word about coming home. Not one word!

A WEEK LATER. He has written again, and he is not coming home until the war is over. He'll be able to go back into the service in a couple of months, maybe sooner, if he stays on quietly there. It isn't that he does not want to come. He has been behind the lines and seen the awfulness. It must be stopped. Those prison camps must be wiped out! We must win as soon as possible! He feels, as never before, the necessity for quick action, and he makes me feel it too.

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"Dad's sacrifice must not be in vain," he writes. "Nor Belgium's, nor the hordes of brave men who have fallen since. And we must not go on sacrificing other lives. *This thing has got to be stopped!*

"I know you feel the same way about it, Georgina. I'm sure that you want me to stay on here without asking for a furlough, since by staying I can be up and at it again sooner. Say that you do, dearest, so that I may feel your courage back of me to the last ditch."

I have said it. The answer is already on its way. How could I be selfish enough to think of anything but the great need? I am only one of many. In millions of windows hang stars that tell of anxious hearts, just as anxious as mine, and of men at the front just as dear to those who love them as mine. I can wait!

And waiting—

I see Richard . . . climbing the Green Stairs . . . coming into the little Home of our Dreams! I see the smile in his dear eyes as he holds out his arms to me . . . having earned the right to make all those dreams come true . . . having fought the good fight . . . and kept the faith . . . that all homes may be safe and sacred everywhere, the wide world over. . . .

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And seeing thus, I can put up with my "long, long night of waiting," thinking only of that heavenly ending!



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Transcriber's Notes:

Author spells shiny both as "shiny" and "shiney." Varied hyphenation was retained.

Corrections made are listed below and also indicated by dotted lines under the corrections. Scroll the mouse over the word and the original text will appear.

Page 119, "State" changed to "States" (of the "*United States*")

Page 193, "celler" changed to "cellar" (them down cellar)

Page 247, "worthing" changed to "worth" (worth having)

Page 249, "soltaire" changed to "solitaire" (a beautiful solitaire)

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