A novel - "Memoirs of Maryanne"

Drapkin, Ida Sarah

Boston University

http://hdl.handle.net/2144/14823

Boston University
A Novel

THE MEMOIRS OF MARYANNE

by

Ida Drapkin

(A.B., Boston University, 1931)

submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

1945
Approved by
First Reader  [Signature]  Professor of English
Second Reader  [Signature]  Professor of English
Chapter 1

I was born, a beautiful baby girl weighing 8 1/2 pounds and having an abundance of wavy hair, on May 10, 1910. I was not too young even then to protest the doctor's rather free handling of me, and when I saw him raise his hand to spank me, I screamed. "Here's a lively tumor," he said, for so he had first diagnosed me. It was a happy day for my parents, who had given up all hope of having a child of their own.

My Aunt Charlotte said I was too beautiful to live, and out of jealousy - for she had two dark and ugly daughters - did all she could to hurry me out of this world I had been so late coming to. One day she tripped my high chair and I would have fallen with it had not father lifted me out just in time. On another occasion, when she and my mother were going for a walk, and mother had to run back for another blanket, finding it cooler than she expected, my aunt released the brake of my carriage, and only a miracle kept it from flying down Chestnut Hill; my aunt was about to help it with a push when Mrs. Bracey, who lived across the street, came out to get her mail and looking at my aunt suspiciously, received a curt "good morning," and I was saved again.

These evidences of a supernatural hand in my life, which I gathered from the early stories of my dear and devoted mother, and other escapes from common accidents and illnesses of childhood, made me realize I led a charmed life, and could move freely in it and without fear, knowing that I was set apart for something higher
than an ordinary lot, which I could not then see but must prepare for earnestly and humbly.

Besides my aunt, who continued to inflict her company on us, for she was very aggressive and pretended a sweetness which her words and conduct instantly belied, so that I was never misled by her wicked purpose, my mother had another close friend, the same Mrs. Bracey whose timely intervention rescued me from a carriage accident.

Mrs. Bracey was a newcomer to Suttonsville. Her husband worked in the Bridewell mill but had a hundred complaints about the way it was managed. He was sure he could do it better. His arrogance, based on a groundless conviction of his own superiority, did not, fortunately, affect the sweet good nature of his wife. Though she was considerably younger than my mother, the two women became firm friends through the common experience of carrying babies at the same time, and when Mrs. Bracey gave birth to a boy, and my mother to a girl, they felt that our destinies would in some way be linked. My first years were filled with nothing but Donny.

We had been taught to kiss, leaning out of our mothers' arms, and though Donny sometimes slobbered, not being quite as smart for his age as I was, I never protested his kissing. Sometimes I thought our mothers might have had more finesse than give orders for it in the middle of Samoset Street, which is our main street, but as for the kissing itself, it was to me only another thing my mother told me to do, like blowing into a handkerchief or standing still while I was being dressed. I always obeyed my mother. I had no special
feeling for Donny unless it was contempt, for I considered him quite stupid. His name was a more familiar and recurring sound than that of "mummy" and "daddy," and I am sure he heard mine as much if not more often than I heard his. We learned to walk holding hands, and in the street, when our mothers' friends stopped to admire our curls and exclaim over our progress, the gentle, loving command was their inevitable reply to the compliment. "Donny, kiss Maryanne." "Maryanne, kiss Donny." We kissed, and then I looked around, letting my mind be absorbed by the more interesting things of the world about me until I heard the order repeated. When we stumbled down the church aisle together - for since Donny's birth Mrs. Bracey had come to our church though her husband said church was nothing but a money-making proposition and he would not set foot in it - I heard the same honey pour from the pews - "The darling children!" "The dears!" "How devoted! Something will come of it" - and people leaned out and whispered some foolish question, which I ignored. It was about that time I began to hate Donny, I don't know why.

At last our mothers took us to school, and the teacher did a strange thing. She sat Donny in one part of the room, and me in another. We could not hold hands any more. It was a relief to have free dry hands again, but then it occurred to me the teacher must have been talking to my aunt and doubtless had schemed with her to do me some harm of which this was only the beginning. As I studied her, I thought her smile was just as sweet as my aunt's and just as deadly, and was sorry that my mother had already gone, for I was sure she would take me out of school instantly if she knew.
Meanwhile, to show the teacher I was not in the habit of being pushed into corners like an old shoe, I went up to the girl who sat by Donny and told her she had my seat. The girl was a silly sort of thing and would have given it up at once, but the teacher, who seemed to have eyes round her head, came up at once and told me in a sweet voice, that did not deceive me a moment, to return to my seat. I refused, and she became firmer. It was not long before she showed her true colors and handled me roughly, forcing me back to the other side of the room or into my own place whenever I interrupted the games to go to Donny's side and claim his hand. I was only taking what was my right but she made it seem a shameful offense, and thought so little of my feelings and dignity as to reprimand me before them all, even sending home a note to my mother. I had no thought of destroying the note, though I knew it was about me. My mother had great distress on reading it, and went at once to my father, who was in his office writing at the time, though almost supper. They discussed it while I stood in the door, for they concealed nothing from me, and from their manner I could tell they believed that the teacher was a rude, unfeeling person who had not been well brought up.

"But she is the teacher, and you must do as she says," decided my mother.

"You can see Donny enough after school," added my father, as if to make it easier for me.

Though I loved them, I thought my parents very unkind to make me yield in this, for I was only maintaining my rights to what belonged to me. Donny was mine, just as Linda was our cat and did
not prowl around anybody else's house; just as our house was our own, and no other family moved their belongings into it. I did not like school at all.

One day when we were coloring houses, I happened to think of Donny and I turned around. He had leaned over, and was kissing the girl in the next seat. No one had told him to kiss her, he simply did it, and I saw a different look come into his face from the one he had when he kissed me. He looked pleased and wondering, and as if he would do it again. Just as he started, the teacher came up and put long fingers on his shoulder. How I loved her then! And in fact, I have always had a warm place in my heart for her because of what she did that day, though I cannot remember her name. Donny continued to be stupidly obedient, never asserting himself or showing any signs of spirit, though a pretty, likable sort of boy, while I forged ahead with a precocity that astonished all who heard of it in detail from my mother.

We lived not far from the Willow Street grade school, in sight of the Suttonsville hills, of course, and the spanking blue waters of the bay. Our town was considered one of the loveliest in the state of Maine; in fact, one of the loveliest on the whole New England coast, and we had a large summer population. However, they contributed little to the life of the town, which was supplied by those who had lived there many generations, my own family being one, having a hill named after them, and as I walked through the streets and saw hill after hill fade into the horizon, or caught the noble beauty of the water, I felt that my own life was bound up in some way with that of the town, and I would do something great for it,
beyond what my ancestors had done, and no other living person now could do.

By spring of that first year in kindergarten, our mothers had left off taking us to school, or calling for us, for we had gone over the route too many times to get lost, and they felt we were safe together. We did not hurry home, and as walking came easier after the snows had melted and the streets dried, we lingered and looked about us, I more than Donny, for nature meant nothing to him. He was happy and at-ease only when with someone he could jabber to - I had discovered it did not matter who - and as his conversation had little in it to interest me, and I was bright, only the slightest attention to what he was saying served to make him think my mind was on him all the time.

One day when the sky was polished as an agate and the sea rocked in endless small steps to meet it, we walked hand in hand down a new street that I had seen behind the school and resolved to know more about. The street was pebbly and unfinished, and dropped, sheer as wire from a bedroom window, into a grassy field. We stumbled on the sharp pebbles, and almost pitched into hidden cavities our shoes opened in the soft shoulders. I was as pleased as Columbus with my discovery, and excited to get such a clear wide view of the hills and sea. But Donny looked tremulously back toward the other street, the one we always walked on, and though we could not see through the thickness of leaves, we heard the voices of children, like us and older, as they went home from school. The gulls honked, and the world was very high and blue.
"Why do we walk here?" asked Donny, the only clouds to be seen that day in his eyes. "It isn't even a street."

"But don't you want to see where it leads to?"

His long lashes flickered away from me.

"Maybe it will take us somewhere, maybe we won't get home tonight!" He kicked some pebbles angrily, but his mouth trembled.

"Are you afraid?"

The street, or path, ended suddenly in a field, where an old house stood, or rather sagged like a fallen cake. Instead of windows it had holes we might look through, and I saw strange shadows inside, that I explained to Donny. He watched my mouth, forming with his own the words I made. But the shadows meant nothing to him, for he had no imagination.

Donny said, "Look this old log," and he kicked it, exposing the rich life that was beneath it, life swarming away, ants and what not, and life that clung to the wood as if dead, but we knew it was not, in the way it clung and played dead like those nameless, scummy things in our own back yard. Donny, crying and pleading, but not too much, forgot he was in a strange path and might not get home that night. Because he was bigger, and had the power, he gave up first, and I was proud of the generosity he showed. Having so little to be proud of him, perhaps I stretched a point, but of course he could have, as we had so often done before, stepped on the things or kicked them and put an end to their pretending.

In the field was blue grass, and I knelt and hugged it, for one of the miracles of nature to me was grass blossoming blue. I loved
blue, and it grieved me that Donny's eyes were so clearly, deeply blue while my own were of that uncertain shade that needed a blue dress to bring out whatever blue was in them. Something zoomed past my ear, nearly knocking me into the blue grass, and stopped not far from where I was, on a blade of grass, rocking it lightly until the grass adjusted itself to its weight. Donny and I looked. It was a grasshopper stopping on his way somewhere, and he rubbed his hind legs that hinged higher than his head as he looked mischievously at us out of the side of his head. The way he rubbed his legs made me think of Uncle Orrin, my wicked Aunt Charlotte's husband, rubbing his thumbs after Sunday dinner. But Uncle Orrin rubbed because he was full to the brim of his round belly, and had nothing to do the rest of the day, but the grasshopper rubbed as if debating his next jump. I burst out laughing. Donny frowned and said, "Sh!" with a quick, hissing sound, which made me angry. Cautiously he stepped through the grass and up to the grasshopper, and quick as cutting closed his palm over it. I gasped. What was he going to do with it? "Let him go, Donny! He's little. You'll hurt him. Let him go." A smile danced in Donny's eye as he looked at me, and he held out his fist. "Eat him."

The field vanished, the blue grass was as if it never had been, and the house was no more. Just Donny and I were in the world, and the grasshopper in his closed palm. I felt as if I had just stopped rolling down hill, and my stomach was still rolling, though I had stopped. The world wheeled by. To eat a grasshopper! Whoever had heard of such a thing? Why, he was like somebody I already knew,
for hadn't I watched him swinging on the blade, and rubbing his funny hinged legs the way Uncle Orrin did his thumbs, and looking at me out of the side of his head with a bright friendly look that all but spoke my name! It was like eating Linda the cat, that you had known as long as you had your own mother, or the chocolate Easter bunny that was only to sit on the shelf. How could Donny be so unfeeling?

"Are you scared?" asked Donny in the same mocking tone I had used a little while before.

I felt the color press hard into my cheeks. Our palms touched. I pressed mine to my mouth, closed my eyes, and gulped. When I opened them again, Donny was staring into my face, looking pleased with himself and disagreeably interested in me.

"Is he gone?"

I was too angry with him to speak. Here I had done an unmannerly thing, against my judgment, just to prove I was not afraid; and now he demanded that I further debase myself by giving proof of it, when he should have known, knowing me, that if I pledged myself, I would go through with it! Hadn't I swallowed the animal in plain sight? What more did he want? I could not expect him to have any sympathy for the unfortunate friendly being a whim of his had brought an end to. At least, he had no right to doubt me!

"Let me see!" he insisted, and tried to pry my mouth open so he could look in.

I slapped him smartly on the wrist and he stood back, puzzled and hurt, his big blue eyes asking what he had done.
"We'd better get home now," I said, and yanked his hand into mine.

At once, his face lit up again, and he looked at me with the dazzling radiant look the water has when the sun shines on it.

"It's gone!" he breathed, his eyes pleased and with gentle apology on my mouth, which I opened clearly and plainly to form the words. "You swallowed 'um." (Though he was my age, he could not speak as well as I.)

"What did you think?" I demanded, hurt all over again, giving his arm a pull that all but took it out.

I was not sorry to part company with him that day, and running into the house, I called my mother, just to make sure she was there, though upstairs taking a rest, and kissed my father, whose office was in the room beside the parlor. Then I went to the kitchen and had my glass of milk.
Chapter 2

About this time my father increased his property management and holdings, and bought up the whole west side of Lake Winachee for development, so it can be said my coming brought them prosperity, though their joy in this was small compared to what they had in me, which is perfectly understandable. Having always been moderately well-off, they made no change in their way of living, except that my father took an office in Samoset Street. It was in the center of town, on the second floor of one of the office buildings there, and at the back gave on the Samoset River as it came plunging down, discolored with dyes from the mill, to the sea. When I looked out of the window and saw the trees bending over the river, and the river itself, it did not seem I was in the heart of Samoset Street at all, in the heart of the town, but in some woodland place where birds sang and I learned their language and was alone with them.

Across the street, my Uncle Orrin had his dental office, and my mother went there from time to time. It was a more common office, looking out on the street, his machine smack in the window, and dust always blowing in. I urged mother to take her dental business elsewhere, as I believed we should cut down our relations with my Aunt Charlotte and all connected with her, for the very justifiable reasons I have already given, but mother had no fault to find with Uncle Orrin's work; she was so used to him, she would have felt uncomfortable and embarrassed to go anywhere else. "And besides," she said, "I don't know why you are so down on your Aunt Charlotte, dear. She has always thought as much of you as of
her own daughters." I loved my mother for these very weaknesses which my age did not prevent my noticing. She always gave people the benefit of the doubt even after all doubt had been removed. I have always felt that giving a person the benefit of the doubt indicates uncertainty in one's own mind as to what is right. Even in those early years I was not molded by my parents' ways or opinions but listened and watched and weighed, and stood on my own.

When we got down into the street, it was like a fairyland, though here everything was real and we knew all the people. They smiled at us behind store windows and stopped to chat coming out of doors. "What a lovely little girl! Takes after you, Mrs. Hudson. No, just then she smiled exactly like your husband. What color eyes do you have, my sweet?" And mother would say how sometimes my eyes looked blue and sometimes green - it depended on what I wore. "Well, whatever their color, they're big and lovely and will break a few hearts, I think. And is her hair naturally curly?" Mother said it was. "Well, you certainly won't have to worry about her."

The stores were filled with all kinds of things that sparkled in the sun, and there were many stores. The wind was fresh and light, and paths led down to the water. When the stores ended at last, mother took me down one of those paths, which was nearly overgrown with grass, and we sat in front of the library, on a stone bench, and looked out at the water and the boats, and the way the land on the other side of town from where we lived curved round and followed the bay out of sight. "Mama, where is Morley's Cove?" I asked. For we had picnics there. "You can't see it from here.
It's in that direction." And she pointed toward the sky. I fairly jumped in my seat. "Mama, this is the prettiest place in the world and I never want to go away from it."

"I hope you'll always feel that way, dear."

"It's prettier than Albemarle even." Albemarle was in one of the stories that was read to me. I don't know now if it was a town or a castle or a man's name. It just came to me then. "It's prettier than that, isn't it, mama?"

My mother agreed and was pleased with me, as she had a right to be, for her people had been among the first settlers of the town, like my father's, though settled outside town limits when it was incorporated, and she dreaded that new ideas and a rebellious new generation might break the line of loyalty and service and love that they had started.

Summer in Suttonsville continued lovely. As we had no school, Donny and I played all day, often eating our meals in the back yard under the apple tree, which we pretended was our house. Father said as soon as things got started at the lake, he would build a cottage for us and we could spend the whole summer there, but mother said why should she camp out at the lake when I had plenty of sunshine and a big yard right here, and she had her lovely house and everything to do with?

The lake was ten miles away and seemed very far from home, though we often took a ride toward it in the buggy father hired on Sunday. Before we came to Thachenville road, where we turned around, the horse's tail brushing and curving into my face, father pointed
with the whip. "There it is. Do you see it?" I looked, and mother did, but we said we could not, even on a clear day, for the little speck of blue he pointed to might have been sky. But he insisted it was Lake Winachee. Hadn't he been there often enough?

One day Aunt Charlotte, who was one of those people who never know when they are not wanted, suggested a week-day picnic at Morley's Cove. "Without the men?" asked mother, in doubt, for she always felt safer when near the water with me, to have father with us. "Of course. It will be an extra treat for the children." Mother thought a while and (as she said afterward Aunt Charlotte asked so few things of her) finally consented "... if Mrs. Bracey goes." I understood why she made this condition. Since I liked my cousins no better than my aunt, she wanted Donny for me.

We started after dinner, dressed lightly for it was a warm day. The three women carried blankets and baskets of food. We walked slowly, for there was nothing to hurry for.

My cousins were both girls, and older than Donny and I. Esther was twelve, thin and tall, and tried to be like a teacher, keeping us all together, but I quickly made it plain I would not be bossed by anyone, least of all by her, and so she let Donny and me walk on ahead, and we stopped whenever there were flowers or anything else that interested me. I would look up at her, and though I knew she wanted to say, "Why do you stop? We'll never get there. Do you want to take all day?" when she met my eyes, she bit her lip and looked away. Gwendolyn was eight, a short chubby thing like her father, who giggled a lot and acted very silly. Her mother had started a name for her - "Cherry," which she said was French for
"dear." Now everybody used it, that is, everybody but me. I did not think her a dear and called her Gwendolyn just to show my indifference.

At last we reached the cove, that curved like a halved pear from the water. While the grown-ups laid down the blankets and got the food ready, we took off our shoes and stockings and ran to wade. The sand was coarse here, and filled with bits of broken glass, pebbles, and twigs. "Be careful, children," called our mothers after us. "Be careful of the rocks." "Don't go too far in." They trusted Esther would look after us all, for she was the oldest.

But I did not need anyone to look after me. I took Donny's hand and we walked away from my cousins, to our own place in the water. There was enough of it for everybody. The day stood hot and firm on its axis. It seemed to have stopped for us, to see what we would do. The sky was lofty and stern, and its shell was hard and deep. Did my paint box have such a blue? Shells were scattered all over the cove. Between the earth and sky the air was filled with the echoes of voices, shrill and soft, and the silence itself made a great ringing noise in my ears.

Donny and I went in to our knees, and I looked up and saw the light wriggling to the sky like a thousand snakes. I could hardly keep my eyes open. The endless rocking of the water made me sick to my stomach. We splashed each other a while. Then I remembered a Sunday School lesson where Christ had walked on the water. Couldn't I? "Donny, walk! Walk on the water!" I cried, and stepped on it, but firm as the waves looked, and firmly as they rocked and held
together, my foot went through. The same thing happened to Donny. But, I thought, it's foolish to try stand. If we run, we won't be so heavy and will stay on top.

"Let's play tag. You're it. Now run. I'll give you a head start. Run for dear life!" It was not much fun playing tag with Donny, for I could catch him too easily when he was "it" and he could never catch me when I was. But I could think of nothing else to play in the water. He floundered, falling and getting himself wet all over, his mouth full, and I moved toward him slowly, giving him a chance to pick himself up and get on with the game. "No, not that way!" I called to him. I was up under my arms now, and when the waves came, they washed into my mouth and against my curls. "Be light. Make yourself light, and you'll stay on top." Once or twice I felt myself carried along and rejoiced that I was getting the knack of it. As soon as I could stay up all the time, I determined to call them all to the side of the water to look. How they would admire my cleverness! How annoyed Aunt Charlotte would be! For it would never occur to Esther to try walking on the water, and Gwendolyn was so fat she would sink to the bottom at once.

Just then, my mother called me to come eat. Her voice sounded very faint. "Come along, Donny," I said and turned around, forgetting all about walking on the water then; taking long strong steps to get back to shore and not keep my mother waiting. I could barely see her in the deep shadow of the cove. I had to push my way through, for the water seemed not to want to let me go, and I acted out a story, shouting and striking the waves, for I
was a prince, and the waves were witches, but they would not hold me back! When I reached the shore, I looked back, thinking Donny was right behind me. But I could not see him. Was he hiding? Did he think he was going to scare me when the waves had not? I called. "If you want anything to eat, come now. We won't wait." But there was no answer, only the lapping of the sea.

Esther and Gwendolyn were already on the blankets. But several times I looked back. Where had Donny gone to? Perhaps he had run around and got on shore before I did and was hiding behind the bushes. I looked at the bushes. "Donny! are you coming?"

The day started to swing on its axis. It had finished with us. It ground and made a shrill noise in my ears. Or was it the silence? I could hardly keep my eyes open to the writhing, blinding light that climbed to the sky.

"Mama, I can't find Donny."

Mother stood up, and Mrs. Bracey tried to. Her face went white. Mother started forward with me.

"Wasn't he with you?"

"Yes, he was right behind me. But when I got out of the water, he wasn't there. I think he's hiding."

"Thank God," said my mother, looking relieved, as she went back to Mrs. Bracey and helped her walk along. "Maryanne thinks he's hiding." And she laughed.

"There he is, there!" I cried, relieved more for them than for myself, for they were both acting very queer; and I pointed to a retreating figure on the bluff.
"That's only Hilary Stone," scoffed Gwendolyn. "He lives in the old Chinaman's shack up there." And both my cousins stood away from me. Their watchful look was like a whisper against me.

"Why is he hiding? Where? He always comes when I call him," stammered Mrs. Bracey. She tried to call out then, but was so frightened her voice failed her.

Mother and I called "Donny, Donny!" as loud as we could. But no one answered. By this time we were at the water, but only at the place where we had left Gwendolyn and Esther. "Did you go in deep?" asked my mother. "Where was Esther? Oh, I never should have let you go!" Just then Mrs. Bracey started to go into the water, her shoes and stockings on. "He's in there, I know he is. He's drowned!" Her voice made a terrible shriek over the water. My mother held her back with all her strength. Aunt Charlotte had to come help, and Gwendolyn and Esther ran as fast as they could to the street.

The queerer the women acted, the farther removed I seemed from them. I could not understand.

Soon my cousins came racing back with some people, and more and more people gathered. I had never seen so many people at the cove even on Sunday. Weekdays seldom anyone went there. I heard the fire truck, and then I understood. I looked to the woods, but could not see any smoke. Mother took me before some men and made me tell them where Donny and I had gone in, and I did. I left out about walking on the water. "We were wading there," (pointing) "and I was chasing Donny when mama called me." The men went out to where I had pointed. They cut the water with their arms, and I saw that
the only way you could walk on water was to lie on it. Then they went in under, but they came up again at another place. Some people got tired waiting, and mother, who was acting scared and wild and foolish as Mrs. Bracey, went up to one of them and asked if she was going by my father's office building and would she leave me there? So I did not see where they found Donny, but they did find him because that night mother told me they had, and she cried.

The next day I asked why Donny didn't come over to play? Mother shook her head and began to cry again. I had never seen her cry so easily. "Donny won't ever come again, dear." "But why? Has he someone he likes better to play with?" and I thought angrily of the girl who sat beside him in school. "Donny's dead." I tried to think what dead was, but could not, or in what way it affected Donny's playing with me. "He's gone, he won't come back." I could understand that. But I was puzzled. "Mrs. Bracey's here!"

How solemn their house looked though Mrs. Bracey tried to make it gay with a ribbon bow. For many years after, when I saw these bows pinned to doors, I thought it was a public declaration that their child had left home. They were putting on a brave face. I was close, perhaps - as close as a child can get to death and its finality until the final reunion. My mother said not a word in my presence about the funeral, but sent me with my father to his office the day it took place. A short time after the picnic the Braceys moved away, and I knew then for certain that if Donny ever came back to them, I would still never see him again. And I was glad, for he had made me eat the grasshopper.
Chapter 3

My people were Congregationalists, and I approved of their choice. At ten a girl knows what a good church is. But our pastor did not. All summer he had split the church in his fight for candles, a vested choir, two pulpits, and kneeling at the communion rail. "Might as well close up and move into the Episcopal," said my father. "I don't know how those younger people will keep the church up," said my mother. A man from the State Council had been sent to investigate, and one Sunday morning, in passing, we had seen him, big and lonesome in a pew by himself, but for a long time after that, nothing was done. A few others besides young couples still attended. "I like a progressive spirit in a church," said my Aunt Charlotte, her eyes flashing as she tossed her head, sorry for us and for all she thought did not. "It's good for a church to have a battle on its hands once in a while." Yes, Aunt Charlotte would like a battle. But we knew too well, without boasting of our knowledge, that changing a conservative church to a ritualistic one was not progressive or truly Christian, and we longed to have the fight over and to go back to our own church.

For though mother had sat with the Congregational ladies at their food sale at Madison's, contributing two cakes for which I had made the frosting, and some other things, she, like other people of our opinion, refused to set foot inside the church, and Sundays we went to others, where we were cordially received and made much of, in the hope, I suppose, that we would take our letter out of the misguided church and put it in their own. But though we appreciated their
sympathy and kindness, we had no such intention.

For four Sundays we had gone to the Methodist, bare as the inside of a shoe box, and I was really shocked to hear some people interrupt the minister with an "amen" and "yeah, Lord" as if they were at a revival meeting. Another month we visited the Episcopal, and it was all I had imagined of a Catholic church. How did they dare? Were they not afraid of bringing down the wrath of God? For the altar lace and tall candles and stations, the wooden Christ hanging between the rector and his people, the extravagance of flowers, the cushioned kneelers all were part of the wicked pomp of Papacy, that good Protestants had spilled their blood to break with! Though we still had the Baptist church to see, I knew that nothing could be like our own, and longed to get back to its simple elegance, with its rich aisle carpets and soft purple curtains at the window, only a few of which were stained, and the noblest organ in town.

One Sunday morning toward the end of summer, we dressed and started in good season to get anywhere in town, for my mother was like that. I knew we were going to the Baptist, which is a white church with a steeple clock that everybody sets his watch by and you can hear striking the hour if you wake up at night. It was close to the Village Green, and not far from our house, so we walked leisurely.

The Sunday morning stillness of the street is like no other morning. The air has a different freshness, the light a brighter ring like a new coin. A flurry of bells set the holiday key all over town, and groups of three and four emerged from houses and
gradually filled the street before us. The water in the bay looked lively and blue, the clean white craft bobbed up and down. The mountain rolled softly toward it, still the rich leafy green of summer. And you would think it summer, too, the way the sun shone, dazzling on the white houses and the water, and the women in their light dresses. Oh, it was beautiful as a bright big painting, all color and motion, stretching as far as I could see. And I filled my eyes and mind with it, while my heart fluttered like the bells that shook their gentle, happy summons over the town, subdued and gay at once, and I was happy to be alive.

In Samoset Street, near the post office, we saw coming toward us a tall man with bright blue eyes, a pointed beard, and a sharper-pointed Adam's apple. Father tipped his hat to him as politely as if he were someone you tipped your hat to when you were with ladies.

He was Hilary Stone, a horrid creature, who had run away with somebody's wife after carrying on with many others, and he had jumped off the Boston boat stark naked and had been taken to the insane asylum in Bangor. His face was deeply pitted and filled with powder. He lived on the town, for the clams he dug in season few people would buy, he was so dirty. His shack stood beyond Morley's Cove, our town's only Chinaman had died in it, and he carried himself and spoke like an actor because in private schools, where he had been educated, he had shown a talent for the theater.

I thought it nice of father to tip his hat to Hilary Stone.

We turned in at the Baptist walk, still nodding to people we knew, for many were out this morning. A smallish woman came puffing up behind us, dragging her son, while her husband strolled
nonchalantly along some distance behind them. She was Mrs. Whitman, who lived in our street. Her work was never done, her hems were always ripped and dragging at some place, and when she spoke she never seemed to have enough strength to finish what she was saying. Yet she had only a small house, and just the one son and her husband to look after. Mr. Whitman, who rented one of father's stores, provided for his family well, for he had the biggest hardware and sporting goods store in town, and I was sorry for him though I noticed he still had a twinkle in his eye in spite of everything. He did not seem to me a man of sensitive nature. There was something disgusting about a woman arriving at church, perspiring and puffing and wiping.

Chet Whitman was in my grade at school, a doltish fellow whom everyone thought a bully and a tartar because he chased after such good-for-nothings as Ansell Jones and Hilary Stone and trampled feeble-minded Quentin Fielding's hat in the dirt when bigger fellows weren't around to trample his. I always thought he looked meek enough and everybody knew he was tied to his mother's slovenly apron strings.

In the anteroom mother whispered that I was to sit down front. "Mr. Kirby preaches to the children first. When he finishes, you go downstairs to the Sunday school, while we stay for the sermon."

This arrangement did not please me at all, for I was used to sitting with my parents and listening to the regular sermon as any bright youngster would. Perhaps I have not mentioned that my teachers all wanted to put me ahead a grade, but mother and father thought it better for my development to take each grade as it came,
and to think of myself simply as a normal, healthy girl, which I have to this day.

As I went down the aisle, I was conscious of people looking at me, and admiring me. Some whispered welcome to my parents. They had never known a reform-mad minister but could appreciate the pain that such a man can inflict on Christian people who never missed a church service in their life. It was something to come into such a friendly church and to be singled out as a martyr, but in our own church we were just as much appreciated, so I had no wish to change.

A great many very small children were squirming in the front pews and I did not like to sit by them, for I expected their restless feet first thing on my dress. However, I was sufficiently above my environment not to protest it. My companions looked at me with interest and curiosity but I did not encourage any familiarity and, picking up a hymn book, looked through it to see if they were the same as ours.

We started with my favorite, "Glorious Things." I sang out proudly, catching Chet Whitman's watery blue eyes.

Glorious things of thee are spoken
Zi-on city of our God;
Why didn't he sing up? Why didn't he show some spirit?

He whose word cannot be broken
Formed thee for his own abode.
Of course some people had no voice, or could not hold the tune. I could hear myself singing above the rest, and I was happy singing.
I wondered if Mr. Kirby had heard somewhere I liked this hymn and it was his way of saying how glad he was to see us in his church. I asked mother later if this might be so, but she was inclined to think it a coincidence, since our minister was no more friendly with other ministers than he was with us, and Mr. Kirby would have no way of knowing our preference in hymns. However, I went on believing as I did because mother always hesitated to say what in her heart she believed - a hesitation that I, fortunately never had.

Some glasses lay on the pulpit. I could not remember that Mr. Kirby wore glasses, but then I had seen him only in the street. They might be for reading. When we finished singing and sat down, he started to polish the glasses and he must have taken all of fifteen minutes polishing and blowing and holding them up to the light. I turned around to mother. Had he forgotten his sermon? Was it a game? Nobody had ever kept us waiting so long. When he had sufficiently puzzled us all, and the little children I was sitting so uncomfortably by had got their feet all over my dress, he started off, leaning over the pulpit and addressing the squirmers. This was the poem he had them repeat as long as he had polished his glasses:

If you keep your glasses bright
Everything will look just right.

I had never heard anything more ridiculous. If he thought to please me with his sermon as he had with the hymn, he had certainly misjudged me. Why, even the children must think it foolish, for since they wore no glasses, what would they have to look through?
The meaning was no doubt completely lost on them. I stopped listening. While Chet Whitman made darts of the church calendar, the hymn started up in my head. It was as if a thousand people were singing it to our own Congo organ, the best in town.

Glorious things of thee are spoken
Zi-on city of our God;

What was Zion? Zion was our church, still far from our reach because it stood so far from our way of thinking, which was the right way. How soon before it would be set right again, and we could go back? A dread came over me, and I thought perhaps this mad minister would have his way, would change it to his liking, and we would never go back, it would never be the same again! Then the hymn came back, and I was re-assured. I led the thousand voices, mine rang out before all the rest:

On the rock of ages founded,
What can shake thy sure repose!
Chapter 4

Our new minister's name was Thaxon. The light caught his glasses as he turned his head from one side to the other. He was very tall and had a deep voice and he never smiled. Mother thought he looked almost too young to lead a big church like ours, but I thought he needed a wife to cook his meals for him.

He came in the spring, two months before my eleventh birthday. I was in the sixth grade. One day when I was coming back from my piano lesson, and taking my time, I ploughed through the gutters that ran full with the snow melting from the hills. I had just reached North Samoset Street when Mr. Thaxon came out of the parsonage. It was a lonely looking place. He studied me a moment and tried to smile. It was like the struggle the sun makes to get through on a cloudy day. "Hello," he said, with a friendly look. I was surprised that, though he recognized me, he could not remember my name though he had already been in the parish two Sundays, and we had spoken to him after the service both times and at his welcoming party.

North Samoset Street started to climb. The water rushed as brown and frothing as the mill-stained falls I saw from my father's office window. I thought the minister stupid and did not answer. "Aren't you going to get your feet wet?" he asked, trying to make a joke of it. But I thought it a poor one. Why else was I walking there, and in rubber boots? "You're one of my girls, aren't you?" He looked at me hopeful and embarrassed.

I decided to help him out. "I'm Maryanne Hughsen." It seemed to me that was enough. It should not only place me, but my mother
and father as well. I could not be sure, though, at first, that it did. But his look was encouraging. Then he spoke, and I knew.

"I remember you very well. I remember how bright your face looks Sunday morning. You seem to take in every word and not only that — to think it over with yourself." He paused, little knowing he stood now as high in my opinion as the street above me. "I wonder what my sermons say to you?" And he looked at me in an abstracted but kindly and interested way.

I bounded up to the street beside him, and even then, I had to tip my head back, he was so tall.

"I can tell you that in a few words," I said, directly and truthfully. "They don't say very much — yet."

He looked as if he had been struck. Then he not only smiled; he burst out laughing.

"I appreciate your honesty," he said, becoming grave again, though his mouth kept pulling at the corners. "And at least you give me some hope with that little word 'yet.' You must be patient with me, Maryanne Hughes. You see, I've not been very long out of theological school."

"That's what we thought." Nothing remained to be said on this subject, and I changed it. "Is the leak in the kitchen roof tight now? They have fixed it twice already. It's a shame how little pride these workmen have in their work."

"I am sure," he said, looking down at me respectfully, "that whatever you put your hand to, you will do well."

"Of course. I don't approve of half-measures."
"What are you planning to do, Maryanne? Have you decided?"

"Not yet. But I expect it will be some great service to our town. My father's people have lived here since it was incorporated, and my mother's people before that even, but their farm was outside the town limits - you might call it Thachersville, though of course there was no Thachersville in those days. We were among the first to come to Maine. I hope you are not one of those who look down on our state?"

"On the contrary. I was born in it - though farther south, in Portland. I have been away the greater part of my life, but I have always admired the good qualities of Maine people and feel very much at home here."

I did not feel that he said much, for one may admire the good qualities of people of any state without giving them precedence, but I was pleased to hear that he had at least been born here.

He hesitated at one of the cross streets, and I was relieved to understand by it that his way took him there, while mine went straight ahead, and I would be able to get back in the gully again. He did not seem, however, to know how to break off, so I gave him my hand, formally.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Thaxon."

He sighed with what I easily saw was regret.

"Good afternoon, Maryanne. I hope when I call on your mother to have the pleasure of finding you there."

I thought it a nicely-worded compliment, like the gallant things a man says to a girl in a book, and I gave him my best smile in
return. Then I put one foot forward to step down into the water and stopped. It rushed past dark and deep in the gutter, carrying debris of twigs and dead leaves. How fast it was driving them! They had to go the way the water forced them, down hill, swiftly and surely, dead leaves from last fall, from far away places in the hills. They had no say about where they were going or what was happening to them. They would never be in the hills again. Nothing mattered except that they were on their way.

I stood on the shoulder of the street, looking into the gutter. The rubber of my shoes still held the cold and my legs sang with the delight of it. I will not be carried along like dead leaves, I thought, or old twigs. I will be master and make the current work for me! My will shall be greater than its will. I have things to do that no one else can.

The water swirled about my leg, and still I looked down. A leaf was pushed up to the top of the boot and clung there. I picked it off and looking at it, suddenly felt sick to my stomach. It was a pitiful small leaf and made me think of Morley's Cove. I had not been there since the day of the picnic. Donny! He had gone like the leaves the way the water wanted. People didn't have to! People weren't leaves. But Donny had been small and stupid and didn't know. If I had not taken this leaf up in my hand, it would be lost with the others. I should have taken Donny up, too, because I was stronger. I should not have left him to get back to shore himself. What had I been thinking of? Only getting back to mama because she called. Had I wanted Donny to die? I tried to remember, but I did not know what dying was then, how could I have had the
thought? No, there had been nothing in my mind except to get a sandwich and piece of cake because one always eats sandwiches and cake at a picnic.

But I should have looked back sooner! I should have held his hand, wasn't I always holding his hand?

I wiped the leaf and put it in my pocket. I turned my face from the sea, and kept it away from the flowing gutters, closing my eyes when I had to cross. At home I kicked off my rubber boots. I never wanted to wear them again. That night I was sick over the toilet because I had eaten a grasshopper five years before.
Chapter 5

My father had a first-cousin, Miss Alden, who taught Latin at the high school. She was a tall, strongly built but slender woman who had never been married. Her hair was completely white—though prematurely so, my mother said, for she was only in her forties (an advanced age, it seemed to me then) and her eyes were the most wonderful blue eyes I have ever seen.

Have you ever wondered at all the blue eyes there are? I have a fondness for blue eyes. My own are of an uncertain color. I hate uncertainty. Eyes, like everything else, should be one thing or another. But mine change with the clothes I wear. If I wear blue, they look blue; and green brings out the green in them. They are hazel—the true sea color, my mother says. But I would have them true-blue like my father's first-cousin's. The color of my eyes is, fortunately, the only uncertain thing about me.

Blue eyes run in my family. My mother's are a tender blue. Her age has taken most of the color out of them. They are like an apron that has been washed to whiteness. But there is no mistaking what they once were, and no willinilliness about them now (like Chet Whitman's eyes, for example, that show a decided weakness of character, pale and watery, that cannot hold your look but drift away). My father's eyes are a slatey blue. They have a good deal of gray in them. They are small and firm, shrewd and kind. They have something of the strength of houses in them, with depth, but are small in range. They are not beautiful eyes, but they are good eyes.
Miss Alden's eyes are beautiful. They are queenly eyes, calm and made to command. They are large and quiet and seem to remember a long way back. Her father, who was a sea-captain, is buried on Mort Island, under a two-masted schooner in full sail, jib up. She seems to remember that. And she seems to remember other ships and other times and places that she herself could not have lived in or seen. She has a St. Bernard, a heavy creature though only seven months old. One of her friends sent him to her. Casey has white hair patched with silky brown, and dark spots on his nose. His eyes are a warm brown. I would like the dog if he did not have an Irish name.

One day some girls and I were playing on our side lawn, and they saw Miss Alden go into my house. They stopped and looked at me. "Miss Alden! from the high school! Do you know her?" I looked at them, surprised at their surprise. "Of course. She is my father's first-cousin." "Miss Alden! from the high school!"

I thought them very silly. I would know people even greater than Miss Alden some day. But to them, she was great. They wanted to know if I had been in her house and I said of course, though we did not call there often, Miss Alden liking to be by herself and her mother not well at all. She lived in Howard Street in a big yellow house with fans over the two doors and third story attic window, and a flagpole that never had a flag. The windows on the first floor were tall as doors, but no one ever used them for doors, and they were hung with russet damask. The Aldens came from Mort Island, which they own. It is half-an-hour's ride across the bay and has
a few summer homes, a schoolhouse in the church, and a permanent population of about one hundred and fifty. When her father and mother got old and needed a doctor's regular care, they moved over to the mainland, where they bought a house that, like their own, looked out on the sea. I remembered her father, who had no teeth, and dipped big flat crackers into a chipped mug of tea (though there were lovely cups with handles dainty as twigs, like our best ones, in the china closet), and he told me of nor'easters and shipwrecks and monsoons, niggers and tars and hardtack, white marble cities shining like a new Jerusalem on blue horizons, and worms long as a clothesline in the old salt box. The tea trickled down and filled the dent in his chin, and his mouth was messy and wet. But he was old, and though the boys laughed at him - for he went about the streets and talked to whoever would listen, loving people around him - in whatever he did, salivating or urinating where he stood, he always remained an Alden and knew his place. He wore soft shoes all day.

Miss Alden lived with a housekeeper and her mother. The housekeeper came from Thachersville and every Sunday walked all the way there and back to attend church service. She was a good woman, I suppose, but too forward in her worship, for she went to evangelical meetings. There is something irritating and disquieting about a too-eager Christian. They put themselves on such a familiar footing with God and are so misled by their Brother Freds and Brother Johns as to think God has stepped down into their kitchen and filled the sugar canister when it is only that they have had sense enough to put it on their market list. One time when we were calling on the
Aldens and I went to rouse Mrs. Parsons (she was a grass widow) to Mrs. Alden's bell, I found her working on a Bible lesson, and she showed me in Genesis the clues to the redemption, one of which was God's acceptance of Abel's offering of the firstlings of his flock - a blood sacrifice, she explained, foreshadowing Christ's giving his own blood to save mankind. I thought this very crude, inasmuch as offering flocks in sacrifice was a barbarous practice and had nothing to do with our religion. But it was no more than could be expected from the evangelists, who were a rough and boisterous crowd, Mrs. Parsons herself having admitted that at a revival meeting Brother Fred had shinned up the ridge pole and said he was going to heaven! But though misled in religion, she was an excellent housekeeper, neat and saving, and never threatened to leave when Mrs. Alden made things hard for her, though we sometimes wished she would so she could come with us.

For Mrs. Alden had had her own way, she had been waited on hand and foot so long, she was bearable only to those who had to bear her. I never saw a woman who, even at ninety, thought so well of herself and her accomplishments. "Miss Alden has wonderful patience," I remarked, when I heard my parents discuss the state of her mother's health and disposition. "But you would have, too, dear, if I lay in bed dying." I ran to my mother and buried my head in her shoulder. "Don't talk of it, don't think of it, mother! You'd never be like Mrs. Alden. You must never die!"

Mrs. Alden had the big room at the head of the stairs, bright with sunlight and freshly hung with a paper of large red roses on a white ground. She sat sulky against pillows, a long deep wrinkle
pulling her mouth down, and both head and mouth moving as if in extreme dissatisfaction with the universe and everyone in it, particularly those who stood in her room. At the time I am writing of, when I was twelve, she still had her vision and hearing, but pleased herself as to the times she used them, so that she often surprised us by hearing things we thought she had not, though of course we never said anything unfitting. She wore a nightdress buttoned to her chin, and over it a knitted bedjacket tied with a blue ribbon. All around her, on the floor and table and at the foot of the bed were magazines and parts of newspapers she had irritably pushed from her. The room was neat, but crowded with furniture and all sorts of odds and ends she had collected, that had not the beauty or artistry of the things in the cabinets downstairs but rather some sily personal sentiment for her - bud vases with paper flowers, paper weights that did not hold anything down, an imitation cactus eaten by moths, a dish such as my grandmother had had, with a candle and matches inside for sealing letters, and the ugly camel which was an inkstand from Jerusalem.

The really beautiful things she had worked, such as patchwork quilts and bedjackets and chair cloths, right up to the time she had taken to her bed, were kept locked away in the highboy and bureau, and only rarely did she permit their being taken out.

The day of our latest visit I stooped to pick up some of the papers around the bed, for I did not like disorder in a room.

"What fell?" she demanded tartly, and Miss Alden explained it was I. She knew well enough.
"And look at the lovely apple jelly Mrs. Hughson brought. It will make such good tarts."

Mrs. Alden's blurred blue eyes rested a moment on the jar, which her daughter placed on the table beside her bed. She looked complacently at it, even the crease in her chin softened, for it was a gift and she liked gifts. Then it seemed to come to her that it was only apple jelly. She struggled and mumbled, making sounds that at last shrilled out in words.

"Apple jelly - apple jelly - she always brings me apple jelly!"

I went at once to my mother and put my arm around her. I knew how hurt she was, and for an act of kindness. Age could not excuse Mrs. Alden for her rudeness. I looked at the big stone brooch under the blue ribbon bow of her bedjacket and the rings that flashed on her bony and twisted fingers. My mother had no such rings. Mrs. Alden was spoiled. Someone should have corrected her long ago. Every time we came, we left with a sick, shaken feeling in our hearts. No one, sick or healthy, had a right to do that to us!

And then she began to ramble on about Canada, how much money the shopkeepers trick Americans out of, and the newlyweds on the Saguenay boat who had to wait until the next day with all their finery for the fog to lift, and the faithful climbing the steps of St. Anne de Beaupré, saying a prayer on each one. "I suppose it made them feel good. I don't know."

When we came downstairs again Miss Alden said, pouring tea, "This is one of mother's good days. She recognized you all, and I've not heard her mention Canada in a long time." She seemed quite
pleased and smiled affectionately at Casey, who lay at her feet.

I took my cup and said nothing. Of course I understood that, as part of the family, greater understanding and forbearance could be expected from us than from strangers. But I was glad Miss Alden's correspondence and school and club work, and her liking for privacy, kept us from visiting her more often than we did, for I did not welcome further insults from her mother who appeared to be going to live forever.

But when I saw Miss Alden leave our house that day, I hoped the little paper bag she carried did not hold a jar of apple jelly.

She walked like a queen, her head back and a little to one side, her bosom out. I was proud of the way she turned to us and said hello, showing no more interest in me than the others - treating us all alike, looking at us but seeming to look beyond us with a kind, level, far-away look in her eyes.

Ethel Ames pouted as Miss Alden turned into the street.

"When you get to high school," she said, "I suppose you'll get all A's!"

Her stupidity revolted me. That brief and telling look of Miss Alden's had been completely lost on her, and it was clear she had no understanding of my high intelligence.

"I shall get them because I shall deserve them," I returned with great self-control, and never played with Ethel Ames again.
Chapter 6

The moment I set foot in the high school, I felt that my life would be bound up with it in a deeper way than I could then foresee. For the present, I had much to do in preparation. All the rich life of the school, the studies, the teams, the club activities came back to me from newspaper accounts and conversation, and I was thrilled to think of the opportunities that lay before me and what I would do with them.

The high school was a three-story wooden building at the top of Giddings Street, not ten minutes walk from my house. We walked, not marched, to classes; and we talked between bells. Our teachers addressed us as "Miss" and "Mr." We were grown up. And there were two men teachers - one the principal, neither of whom I had the first year. Now for the first time I realized what a prison the grades had been under the severe and unimaginative rule of elderly ladies who had taught there all their lives. How differently I would do it, I thought, my eyes opened by the fresh, adult experience of first year high school. And that others saw I was to be no ordinary student was evidenced in my being chosen secretary of the class the first week I was there. After that, other honors followed - freshman reporter on the school magazine, The Mountain View, freshman representative on the committee on special assemblies, class basketball team, honor student - I won't enumerate them all. They are in the commencement issue of The Mountain View for 1927, the year I graduated, where the abbreviated résumé of my four years' activity takes up more space.
than five prominent others', leaving room for only the briefest personality notice - "To be or not to be was never her question."

The first year closed almost as quickly as I reached the fourth in the above paragraph. Before the full invasion of our town by summer people, I walked in Samoset Street, that sank lazily downhill under a warm sun. A few people strolled along, glancing into store windows. The shops were dim and most of them deserted. I loved the slow going down, I had to keep looking higher at the sky, and it was a wonderful blue sky without a cloud. Did people inland have such skies? It did not seem likely. Why else did so many come from so far off each year? I was sorry for people inland who could not look ahead as I could now and see crisp blue water spanning the harbor craft or follow it to where it merged and faded with the sky and never be quite sure where it became sky. Beyond the post office the street leveled out. The Baptist clock said half-past ten.

Down Holt's Alley a coal team trundled by, drawn by a shambling horse. The way he walked made me think of Chet Whitman. They called him "Shambles" too. He did not seem to be made of bones and muscles like other people, but from his shoulders down was a mass of tissue that shook and shuffled as he propelled himself along. Nor did he seem to have the equipment to hold his head upright. My Aunt Charlotte said it came of not having physical training in the high school and all would be different when she was elected to the school board. As physical training had been cut out to save expense, I thought she showed very little community spirit and less judgment in wanting to restore it. No one like that could be elected to
the school board. It seemed to me people might have enough interest in their own well-being and good appearance to improve their posture, and if Chet's mother wasn't such a sloven, she would have long ago taught him to hold his head up and shoulders back.

I went up to see my father but he was busy. I gave him a kiss and went out again. The library path brought back many walks there with my mother, when we had stopped to rest on one of the benches and looked proudly out on our bay. I went along to the end of it and stepped into Clem Whiteley's dim little workshop. Clem was one of my father's tenants and worked around the boats. With his round red cheeks and snub nose, he looked like a summer Santa Claus in dungarees.

"Hello, Maryanne," he said, grinning at me as he mopped his face. "You look kind of lonely. Where's all your girl friends? Seems like I see you travel around a lot alone."

"Oh," I replied, not showing the least offense, "there's enough would like to travel with me."

"Boys maybe." He chuckled. "Girls don't like their chums too pretty. That's the story, isn't it?"

I smiled at him. He meant well, and was a simple, likable sort. My father thought the world of Clem.

"I'm goin' to put a boat overboard tomorrow." He motioned me to the door and putting his hand on my shoulder, pointed to a semicircle of boats that rocked like a handful of peanut shells on the bay. "Do you see that gray beauty - the Clara Todd? That's the one. That's the baby. Do you like boats?"
"I've just been on the island ferry."

"If you come around tomorrow mornin', with your rubbers, I'll show you what twenty-five miles on the water is like. The island ferry can't do that. Ansell Jones is goin'."

"Then I certainly won't."

He looked at me in surprise.

"I never knew no harm of Ansell Jones."

"Just skips school every chance he can get. He told me he doesn't mean to go a day after he's sixteen. I've seen him come out of Sloan's back room, too."

"Oh," said Clem easily. "Boys." But that was no argument to me. Ansell Jones would do well if he did not end up on the town. He lacked the sense of responsibility, the pride in achievement, the self-respect that made the kind of citizens we wanted in our town. His look was one of arrogant satisfaction with himself, and he had said twice in my hearing, "There ain't no flies on me." Such a point of view, expressed in such language, was more than merely distasteful to me. It is one of the most harmful man can take, for without continual self-question and efforts toward self-improvement, we are incomplete and imperfect vessels. I knew it then as I know it now. I wondered if I could do something for Ansell Jones.

That night the bell rang and Mr. Thaxon came in. He had been in the neighborhood, he said. He was thinner and seemed to have grown taller since coming to Suttonsville; and as he was still unmarried, had to be minister and wife to the parish. He sat in the Martha Washington chair, his knees high and sharp in front of him, and
every now and then during the conversation he would look at me with a puzzled, asking look that turned friendly and kind when I caught him at it.

I had a book in my lap, but his rich baritone, never failing to surprise even those who had heard it many times, so unexpected issuing from that slight, undernourished frame, followed me and I saw again the swirling, leaf-tossed waters that poured down from the hills. I remembered the leaf that had stuck to my rubber boot. It was somewhere in my room, between the pages of a book. And I knew then that some day I would have to go back to Morley's Cove. I would have to face it, and free myself of these deep-seated feelings of guilt I had without reason.

"A penny for your thoughts, Maryanne."

His ironic expression did not even irritate me, I was so glad to be drawn away from visions of leaves and water.

"I was remembering a day not long after you came, Mr. Thaxon. You asked me what your sermons said to me."

A slow smile spread across his face. I suppose he was pleased that I recalled the incident, though it did not flatter him.

"And do you remember what you answered?"

My mother was looking from me to Mr. Thaxon and back again, with pride and curiosity. My father chuckled.

"Maryanne doesn't mince words," he said.

"My dear," trembled my mother, anxious at the tardiness of the explanation, "I hope you thought well before you spoke?"

"It was such a long time ago," said Mr. Thaxon, good-naturedly
defending me as he made a cage of his fingers and disguised a smile by pouting thoughtfully over it.

I did not need to be defended.

"When I speak, my mind is completely made up."

Mr. Thaxon shaped a new cage with his hands and looked at me over it.

"Do you find any improvement in my sermons since that day?"

My mother gasped.

"Maryanne - you didn't -" She could not finish.

"My daughter can help you all right!" said father proudly. "She has a knack at writing. She'll go far with it if people don't turn her head."

As if I would be moved by what people said. I was the best judge of my gift, and knew it already great for my age.

Mr. Thaxon glanced at me as he did every Sunday from the pulpit - the same brief, questioning, slightly fearful glance, while the sermon hung suspended. Then assured I was there, he went on as if he had not interrupted himself. Suddenly understanding came to me. I knew why he looked at me _that way_ tonight, every Sunday. I knew why he was here, furtive, hopeful, questioning. He was in love with me.

Poor Mr. Thaxon! Probably struggling now with words to tell father, to beg me to wait for him! Poor fellow, it was quite useless. I had so many things to do before I could think of marriage. I could see his hurt yet hopeful eyes, I could hear him pleading.

"Maryanne, consider it - take all the time you want - take years! I'll be patient. Only promise me -" But I would shake my head. I would be firm. I could not live in a house that had a leaky roof.
Chapter 7

Mr. Thaxon preached his last July sermon and left immediately for a month's vacation. "When he comes back, he'll be a changed man," said mother to father on the way home. "He's seemed so peaked lately. He really needs someone to look after him." "Yes," said father. "I'm glad to hear he's getting married."

"Married!" I cried, unbelieving. "But he asked me to --"

Mother and father looked at me in alarm.

"He asked you, Maryanne?"

"Well, not exactly asked. But his looks, his manner -- didn't you notice it the night he came to call?

"I never noticed that he paid more attention to you than he would any unusual youngster in his church." Mother continued to regard me with troubled perplexity.

"Maryanne," said my father severely, "are you holding back? Tell us -- don't spare him. If he's been up to something, we had better know him for a scoundrel before things go any farther."

"Daddy, he needs this job. I wouldn't do anything to harm him. Besides, he knew I wouldn't marry him if he waited seven years like Jacob for Rachel. And seven more on top of that."

Both of them remained thoughtful and for many days this conversation was the subject of their "visits." At night when they lay in bed before sleep, and the first thing in the morning when they woke up, they visited a while, talking over the day's concerns. I fell asleep to the sound of their low voices in the next room, and woke to it in the morning. I couldn't imagine a day without
their visits, it would start off or end completely off key without them, and I was partly consoled for Mr. Thaxon's unexpected and foolish marriage, which I supposed he had rushed into out of a well-grounded fear of my refusal, to think visiting with him would be out of the question. I therefore felt relieved to be rid of him.

When I saw Mrs. Thaxon at our party for her, I found, as I knew I would, not a beautiful or an intelligent person, but a dumpy little woman with her hair not even bobbed. She stood smiling her hardest beside Mr. Thaxon, and as she took my hand I said, "How nice! We didn't expect Mr. Thaxon's mother, too." "Maryanne," he corrected me, and for the first time in our acquaintance he looked angry (I suppose the comparison was painful to him), "this is my wife."

Shortly after school opened for my second year, I was doing an errand in Samoset Street for mother, and I met Ansell Jones. He acted older than the other boys in my class, and though his clothes were not good and his chin and neck broken out, I found something attractive about him — not only his eyes, which were a hard clean blue, but the independence of his spirit, perhaps, which being turned in a direction promising no good, I thought I might improve to his advantage. He had no reason to carry himself so proudly, for he came of drunkards and paupers, and even now his mother and many brothers and sisters were living in a shanty no better than Hilary Stone's, and would probably ask the town for coal again this winter. Ansell was waiting to be sixteen, so he could leave school. He went little enough as it was. His desire to get out of school had nothing to do with getting a job and helping his family. In fact,
Mr. Madison had offered him a clerking job after school, for he was tall and made a good appearance behind the counter; but he worked only two days. Ansell was no companion for an easily influenced person like Chet Whitman. But I could see no harm to me from him: my motives were good, and my character firm.

He was smoking a cigarette when I met him, and he walked along with me, looking at me now and then with amused, mischievous eyes, but I suppose their expression was a kind of defense against the opinion of the town, which was not well disposed toward him, for I never saw any other. He told me he was going up to Aroostook to pick potatoes. They paid ten cents a barrel, and he expected to pick a hundred barrels a day.

"Are you sixteen?" I asked, and could not help the disappointment that crept into my voice, for now I would not have a chance to help him.

"Almost."

"How will you get way up there?" For I knew he had no money.

"Bum. The way everybody does."

"Do they give you rides?"

"Sure. All kinds. A man don't have to work at all if he don't want to. You can live nice without a cent in your pocket if you know how."

"You mean," I said, shocked, "like the tramps that go through this town?"

"Sure," he returned airily, snapping his cigarette into the road.

"Wayne gives 'em a meal ticket. They can sleep in the lock-up. What
more does a guy want? Long as he keeps on the move?"

He was in a worse way than I thought, and my heart raced with fear and compassion to think that anyone I knew and might save would willingly choose an existence so far from respectability and security, when he still might make a place for himself in our town.

But he did not seem to regard his future with any concern. He took a corncob out of his pocket and sucked at it reflectively, arching a look at me out of the corner of his eyes.

"I guess you don't think much of my way of livin'."

"To beg food and sleep in a lock-up when you're strong and able to provide for yourself like other people? I should say not!"

He scoffed, "Who wants to be like other people?"

"Eating and sleeping and working, that's how you want to be like other people. And if you have special talents, you owe it to the community to do more than that."

He said, "You know, you're kind of pretty."

"What has that to do with what we were talking about?" I demanded, relenting a little, though to be sure he had actually understated the fact.

"Plenty," he answered. "When I get back from Aroostook, maybe I could drop around and tell you about it."

I caught myself from accepting too hastily.

"You'll be welcome," I told him, "if you're clean."

A truck pulled up at the curb and he swung on to it, giving me an impertinent salute from the running board, by way of goodbye. I thought about Ansell a lot. I remembered his eyes, and his airy ways. No boy I knew seemed so interesting to me. At least he had
courage. Would Chet Whitman, for example, venture the hundreds of miles to Aroostook on the strength of meal-tickets, lock-ups, and lifts? I liked a daring spirit in a man, and I told mother we might expect a visit from him and why I hoped she would approve. Mother was cutting out the weekly high school notes from the paper, which, as always, had at least one mention of my name. These she pasted in a lovely leather-bound album, a birthday present, stamped "Suttonsville High School - 1923-1927 - Maryanne Hudson," and she had put away a second one, as yet unlettered, for college.

"We must help him all we can," she agreed. "I am glad that you recognize worth of character, and do not value a man only for the appearance he makes."

I hoped Ansell would come to say goodbye, though he had not promised to. It would be a sign he did not think ill of my efforts to develop the good that was in him. But he did not come, and soon I had other things to think of, knowing that I would see him when he got back.

Early in the year I was made one of the assistant editors of our school paper, a Quarterly. In October the staff took charge of special assemblies for subscriptions, and we conducted a rousing campaign. Soon nearly everybody was wearing a ticket printed in bright red letters "I've subscribed to the Mountain View" on one side, and on the other "Have you?" I have already mentioned my gift with words, which was noticed early in the grades, and now I began to write seriously for the paper and for a wider field. Even with my studies and activities at the school, the one-session left me plenty of time to express myself creatively. In spite of the
praise I had from the pieces that had already appeared in The Mountain View, and the prize I had won in a W.C.T.U. contest, to which juniors and seniors had also contributed essays on the subject, "Why the Eighteenth Amendment must be enforced and retained," in five hundred words, I still regarded literature as an avocation and felt that, while I continued to perfect myself in it, and would doubtless give pleasure to a great many, my true work lay outside it, in the smaller but more direct field of our town.

I came to this decision before the poetry I sent out to the magazines started coming back, for the reason, I suppose, that I was unknown.

Twice a week we had basketball practice in the town hall, as there was no gym in the high school. In my sophomore year I made the squad but did not take any trips. My cousin Gwendolyn, who was a senior, had made the all-state girls' team the year before, as forward, but I knew it was for her acting on the floor rather than for the unusual number of baskets she made, which showed how men judges may be fooled. She was a boisterous sort of girl. I never had anything to do with her. She had made the team when only a freshman, through influence, of course, and while on a trip had met a boy at the dance afterward whose class ring she still wore on a ribbon around her neck. She had not grown much since the day we went to Morley's Cove — was runted, fat, and conceited. They still called her "Cherry," which she ought to have put a stop to, for she knew as well as I, from our French classes, that "Cherry" was a distortion and not a French word at all. But even the Sentinel, our town paper, used her nickname and gave her special puffs in the
write-up, for which, no doubt, Mr. Dixon, the owner of the paper, received free dental care.

My other cousin Esther was finishing at the University and already had a teaching job in view.

The night of the first big game of the season - for the opening game with the Alumni did not count - I sat down on the floor, flushed and happy from passing, and looked up at the crowded balcony, where my parents, friends, and others had gathered to see me play. Esther had come down for the week-end, plainer-looking than ever and just as smug. And Mr. and Mrs. Whitman were there. How had she managed it before the bell? She looked rather sweet tonight, in a blue dress with a fresh white collar that I was sure her husband must have ironed for her, for she never had the time. Her hair hung down. Chet had made the team, it was one of those miracles. He could hardly get around the floor but he was wonderful at shooting baskets. He shot no matter where he happened to be, and he scored. But he never had the same luck from the foul line. All the attention suddenly focused on him, the quiet, the suspense rattled him completely, and one could easily predict the outcome.

Our opponents were Colport, which, being only nine miles away, was represented by a good-sized cheering section. The boys' and girls' games alternated by halves. My cousin Gwendolyn made her usual dizzying show, leaping for the ball like a ballet dancer, overguarding, overdoing, overshooting before she scored a single basket. Yet in a few minutes the whole Colport side was calling her "Cherry," and even Chet Whitman, who was scared of girls, looked at her with a
sheepish, furtive interest.

In the boys' game, he was not put in until the last quarter, when the Colport team was so far ahead only a run-away streak of scoring could take the game from them. The boys seemed logy and unable to work up speed or enthusiasm. Chet did not help much: he stumbled over his feet, and his hands might have been soaped, the way the ball skidded out of them. "Come on, Shufflebones!" called a voice from the Colport side. He shot for a basket and missed. They laughed. We groaned. "Come on, Lightning!" shrielled his mother from the balcony. Everybody who knew the Whitmans looked at her in good-natured astonishment. I had never seen her so completely worked up. Chet shot from the opposite end of the court. It went in. "Nice going, Shufflebones." His mother screamed and clapped. I thought she was overdoing it, and I could see that Chet was embarrassed to death. No wonder he was making such a poor showing. He did not score again.

When the games were over, the victories split between the two schools, the musicians came in and started setting up while we washed and changed. The girls all crowded round Gwendolyn and told her what a grand job she had done. I don't know what they hoped to get from her, she was a nobody at school. Besides, the game had been won by the whole team, not a single player. They did not seem to understand that, though they had played, too.

One of the girls washing beside me looked at me as if she saw me for the first time that evening.

"Coach didn't put you in, did she?" This girl was a friend of
Gwendolyn's, so I was not deceived by her solicitous tone.

"She wants to give you upperclassmen a chance to win your letters."

She turned from me without another word.

I told my mother about this incident later, and she thought the girl had only been trying to be sympathetic. But she added that all people who give of themselves must expect a certain amount of criticism from those who do not understand the purity of their motives. I was glad I had talked to her, for it gave me new confidence in myself.

When I returned to the gym, the dancing had already started. Chet Whitman leaned against the door and watched. One of the girls from the visiting school came up to him. She wore a bright red sweater with a "C" on it and red ankle socks. In build she reminded me of my cousin Gwendolyn, and she was as bold as the brass buttons down her skirt. "How about a dance, Shufflebones?" "Don't know how," he muttered in his characteristically oafish way. "You're bashful." She began to pull his arm. "Let me teach you. Are you mad because I called you Shufflebones? They call you Shambles around here. One of the boys told me. I came pretty close, didn't I?" I listened to all this in utter amazement, and was pleased with Chet, crude as he was, when he barked, pulling his arm away, "Gwan home."

Just then someone asked me to dance, and I danced all evening, though not twice with the same person, and all of my partners were from out of town. Mother and father in the balcony looked down with pleasure to see me so much sought after and having such a good time. Whenever I looked at the auditorium door, there lounged Chet, and
I could tell, from the self-conscious way he acted, that he had been watching me. He would not ask to walk home with me, though. It was unfortunate his mother had kept him so close, and as their church disapproved of dancing, he had not received the advantage of poise and ease with the opposite sex that dancing school gives. At midnight, mother and father came down the stairs and waited while I got my coat, for the dance was over. I gave Chet a cool little look as I passed. He seemed to struggle with himself, as if wanting to ask me but dreading a refusal. Going out of the front door, I turned to look back, and he was still there, but for the first time not watching me. I suppose by that time he had given up hope and was, as the French say, "désolé."
Chapter 8

Ansell kept his promise. He did come. But it was quite a few
days after he was seen around town, renewing his friendships in the
streets and in Sloan's back room. I suppose he was diffident about
calling on me because his friends might think he was reaching too
high. It was a pity they did not understand that, for my part at
least, no romance was attached. I was too young, and I certainly
had no intention of falling in love with Ansell Jones.

It was a night in early spring when Ansell rang the bell.
Mother went to the door.

"Is Maryanne home?" I heard him ask. I was in father's old
office, now my study, writing.

"Yes. Who shall I tell her is here?"

"Ansell."

She called me, and I came. Ansell had grown very tall, and his
face was clear except for a bit of red near his ears. His hair showed
all the fine lines of the comb, was still wet, and looked dark and
clean. His winter away had done a lot for him. He was handsomer
than any boy at school, and carried himself like a man.

I introduced him to mother and father, who were in the sewing
room, and then I invited him to the study, thinking that a glimpse
of my work might help direct him to more serious thoughts and arouse
in him the desire to make something of himself, as I was doing.
He paused and looked around before sitting down. Our house is
fairly large, having on the first floor pantry and kitchen, dining
room, off that the sewing room, and on the other side the living room
and study, so we were fairly private there. I was glad of that, for Ansell's grammar had not improved in Aroostook, and his pronunciation was more slovenly than I remembered it.

"Who's this?" he asked, stopping at a picture that hung on the wall. And with his usual mockery, "Columbus' mother?"

"No," I returned sharply. "Mine." It had always been a favorite picture — mother dressed in coat and hat, the sweetness of her expression more suggested than seen, for her chin was swathed in a great feather boa and a long plume dipped from her wide-brimmed hat.

"Jesus! I didn't know they wore clothes like them since 1492."

"That was taken when she was eighteen."

"I guess they were just as shy tellin' their ages then as they are now." He sat down on the sofa and looked at me. "You won't look like that when you're eighteen, I bet."

"Styles change," I reminded him, "but people don't."

"Now don't be mad," he returned in a conciliatory tone. But he did not seem to be much worried. His eyes danced in amusement at my shortness, and seemed to challenge me at the same time. "How's the world been treatin' you?"

"Very well. But then, I've worked."

He nodded and said as if in great surprise,

"Oh, you worked, did you? Fancy that! Well, believe it or not, so did I. I worked damn hard, potatoes first, loggin' camp afterward. Maybe you heard of them. It ain't no picnic I can tell you. If you don't believe me, look at my hands."

"Of course I believe you!"
And then he looked at me with the look that laughed.

"What have you been workin' at? Let me see what you call work."

"Well," I said, thinking what might best bring him to regret the opportunities he had flung away, "there was school, of course. The Mountain View took third place for secondary school publications in the state contest; I'm on the staff, you know. And we made a wonderful showing in basketball - went right into the finals in the four-county league. Our debating team won two debates. We went to Augusta to get material at the state library. You never saw such a library! We rode around the city, and I guess we'll know Augusta when we see it again. We have been reading Idylls of the King in English. I think you would like it. And last week they had try-outs for prize speaking."

"Of course you made it."

"That's only to be expected. After all, I've had a good deal of practice addressing the public."

"Yes, I remember. You were always up there assemblies, yappin' about somethin'." He saw I was displeased with his choice of words and said again, "You ain't mad, are you, honey?" But he seemed pleased with himself and did not apologize. He looked at the desk. "Is that work, too?"

I told him it was - poetry, and he laughed.

"Read me some like a good girl."

Knowing Ansell's indifference to literature, from freshman English, I was unprepared for this display of interest that stemmed from no urging or example on my part. It was a good sign. I picked
up a poem I had completed and intended to send to Good Housekeeping magazine.

IN THE NURSERY

I go from room to room.
The rain has made a snare
Of cold about the house, and left
No comfort anywhere.

Upstairs in the nursery
Chilled by the storm,
I touch my sleeping child.
His hand is warm.

When I finished, I looked at him and waited for his comment. I had read it well, I thought; and the contrast, the unfriendliness and cold of the storm, then the warm hand of the child, came back to me with all the emphasis of freshness— for Ansell's visit had interrupted my re-reading it to myself — and all the beauty of a little gem. His silence could only mean that he was astonished at the maturity I showed.

"What do you know about kids?" he asked at last. "You never had none."

"Does that prevent me from using my imagination?" I demanded. "I've seen them, you know."

"Where?" His mocking eyes held mine. "In this house that no kid ever pulled a chair apart in — or got mud on the floor — or screamed bloody murder for his supper? You know, it's like a tomb
here. There ain't nothin' ever goin' on. Nobody speaks above a whisper. Nobody does nothin' but read. Don't it drive you bats? Now if you kind of imagined a kid in bed there, like you wanted one, that would be different, see? But writin' my child when I know you ain't got none and never sawr a baby brother or sister in bed! Imagination ain't no good that way, see? My mother could tell you plenty about kids. She could tell you durin' the day they make such a racket she could beat their brains out. And at night, she wouldn't go snivelin' round feelin' their hands. She'd be mighty happy they're quiet at last, and she can enjoy the ache in her bones because she knows they won't bother her no more till mornin'."

"My mother had a different attitude."

"You ask your mother. I'll bet lots of nights she was mighty tired of it all. Every mother is, I know of."

"But if I had been a stranger, and you didn't know I was unmarried, you'll like the poem. You wouldn't be able to tear it apart the way you did."

"Look, honey, I been around. There ain't no flies on me. I wouldn't be readin' poetry, I admit that. I don't go for that stuff. Sure. But I'd know when a thing was genu-ine and when it wasn't." And then, more kindly, for he realized he had been brutal and his criticism, coming from one who had not even passed freshman English, could not be rated very highly, "Go on. Read me some more of that stuff. I like to hear you."

The reading voice was important, but only secondary to what was read. I could see he had no real interest in my poetry. Though I had written no more about babies, he would find some foolish
argument against anything else I chose. All he had to oppose to our way of life was the crude experience of potato-picking and logging camps. He knew his disadvantage and tried to overcome it by laughing at us. But in his heart, in moments of inquiry and reflection, he must realize what chaff he had reaped. He must know the bitterness of being an outsider to all that was good and useful and fine. I should not hold it against him that he had humiliated me but remember who he was and do what I could to help him.

I therefore ran quickly over the titles for a poem that would be simple enough for his understanding, though I could not remember to have written as simply as that. Here was a good one. I read.

I remember summer above the Polar Circle
The calm of the bay curving --

"Where was that you said?" he interrupted, his eyes dancing with surprise and amusement.


"Say, that's a whopper. Who do you think you are kiddin'?"

"People who read the poem aren't going to know whether I was there or not. They are going to admire the beauty of the simile in the next line, which you didn't let me finish."

"I don't know nothin' about no similes. Maybe you can fool people who read poems. You can't fool the other kind, baby."

"I guess you don't want to hear the rest of it."

"Sure I do. Read me the simile. Go ahead."

Why did I bother to read my poems to him? He had already shown
he had no faculty for enjoying them. What did his approval matter to me? Yet somehow I wanted it. I started the line again and mother and father came in to say goodnight. As soon as they went upstairs, Ansell seemed to lose all interest in poetry.

"Come over here," he said, patting the place beside him on the sofa.

"I can read better to you from here."

"You been fussin' with them papers enough tonight. Come on over. What's the matter, are you scared of me?"

I was astonished that he should think anything of the sort. But I could see no reason for sitting beside him.

"Maryanne!"

I looked up.

"Come over here, I said."

No one had ever spoken to me in command before. I was more puzzled than indignant. Did he have something to say to me that he wanted to be sure no one would hear? — perhaps ask some advice for his own rehabilitation, or confess some horrible event like a murder he had engaged in at the logging camp?

I sat down beside him.

"That's better." And not taking his eyes off my face, he went on, "You know, you're pretty. You're the prettiest girl I ever seen."

I waited, pleased but a little impatient, for mother had made me see long ago that my beauty, like my gifts, was God-given, to be put to good service for others, and I was not proud.

He touched my arm and he kissed me.

I looked at him in surprise, I could not speak, it had all happened
so fast, and he kissed me again. I wanted him to. It was so sweet. I could not believe kissing was like this. His arms went around me, and he kissed me all over my face, and then my mouth again. His mouth on mine was warm and confiding, alive, incredibly sweet. I felt sick with wanting it to go on forever. I felt grown-up. I could write anything now, and he would believe it. He had taught me with his kisses, I would never need to use imagination again.

But suddenly I broke from his lips and fought free of his arms.

"Please keep your tongue out of my mouth."

"What's the matter?" he asked, unperturbed. "Them are French kisses. Don't you like them?" And he reached out his arms to hold me again. But I would not let him. "Now don't spoil it, Maryanne!" (pouting) "when we were gettin' on so good. Come on. You're my girl, aren't you? Nothin' wrong with it, when you're my girl."

"I'm not your girl, or anybody's. Please understand that. You were fresh, Ansell, and I'll have to ask you to leave."

He stood up, his face white and sickly with anger, his pupils spreading black with it, until there was no familiar blue left.

"It's all right, long as you have it your own way. You think you're pretty nice, don't you? You're gonna run people the way your father runs his houses and all your relatives run this town! Well, you got a lot to learn, sister! Take it from me! Nobody ever called me fresh before, and you won't have a chance to again!"

He marched out of the house and slammed the door.

I could not get to sleep right away. I kept thinking of Ansell. How disgusting he had been! French kisses! And then to resent it
because I had called him fresh. Of course I did not want everything my way. I only wanted it the right way. I was a fool to think a fellow of his background, and with his known likes, would turn gentleman while he sat in the room with me. I was glad to be rid of him. If people saw him coming again and again to the house, they would say, "She's coming down in the world, isn't she?" not knowing, of course, I had other reasons for inviting him. He would expect me to take him to Sophomore Hop, a dance the sophomores gave every year in honor of the seniors. And how the girls would talk! For they knew what high standards I had in everything and they, too, would not understand I was trying to make something of him for his own sake. People were very difficult. And Miss Alden... what would she say? The man who had sent her Casey and who waited for her all these years was a mill executive or something big like that. Ansell would never be a mill executive. He couldn't even talk properly. Worked damn hard... ain't no picnic... gettin' on good. And the slipshod way he made his words. And yet, his dark hair with the lines of comb and water through it. His forehead so white against it. His bright mocking eyes! He had spirit, there was no doubt of it. What other boy I knew would have done what he did, or spoken up to me the way he had? He was clean but how common. Just to look at him, even before he spoke, you could tell he was poor white.

But the way he kissed me! I put my hand to my mouth and pressed both to the pillow. I was ashamed to want him again, but I did. And he would never come back. I had lost him. He had not been so fresh, really. It was only that I had never been kissed before and did not know about such things. I was not too proud to admit there
were things I still had to learn. But he was quick-tempered — another bad trait. I must not want him, I must not! But I did.

In the morning I told my mother that Ansell tried to kiss me and we had had a quarrel. I did not go into the kissing in more detail for it would only distress her to know that Ansell had learned such abandoned ways in the north, ways that were as unknown to her as they had been to me, though I was young and better able to bear them. The tactful way I reported the visit left her tolerant and calm.

"You must not expect too much from him at first," she said. "Though he should not have tried to kiss you." And she added, with a worried look, "Is Mr. Thaxon still --" I cut her off more quickly than usual, for she had my full love and confidence, "No more than usual." In visits I heard her and father mention his name again.

Every day the following week I had occasion to be in Samoset Street. How my heart raced as I went by Sloan's. But I did not catch so much as a glimpse of Ansell anywhere. By Friday I was reconciled that I had lost him. But I was going to Colport the next day to pick out a dress for the hop, and I did not care any more.

The dress needed not a thing done to it — my first evening dress, of white organdie, and how lovely I looked in it! I hardly knew myself as I turned in the big mirrors of Holt's Department Store, and saw other women looking at me and doubtless wishing their own daughters were such a vision of loveliness.

"It was made for her," said the saleswoman to my mother. "It fits her like a model. I never saw anything like it."

"We'll take it."
But I did not want to take it off. I wanted to walk up and down in it. I felt like some new radiant creature. I wanted everybody to see it, and be as happy as I was.

"I should like to wear it home."

My mother laughed.

"Then what will you wear to the dance? You don't want everybody to see it before!"

But I kept turning and walking up and down, and people looked and smiled, and even the buyer came over and said she thought I would break a few hearts at the dance.

That night I tried the dress on for my father, and I whirled about and acted very silly, but mother and father knew it did not come from a frivolous nature, but was only the expression of high, happy spirits, and they were glad of the part they had had in giving me this white dress. I was still showing it off when the bell rang, and without a notion of who it could be (hoping it was my Aunt Charlotte, so she could see how ugly Gwendolyn would look beside me), I swept down the hall and opened the door.

Ansell stood there, without hat or coat as last time, his hair freshly combed, his look miserable and penitent.

"Why, hello, Ansell."

He saw my dress.

"Are you going out?" and he looked more miserable than ever.

"This is for the hop. I was trying it on for my father." I could hardly believe it. Ansell come back! After his long fine speech about not giving me another chance to insult him! So this was what men did! And he would probably apologize, too. I could
do anything with him now, and I would make it hard for him to kiss me, though I would let him of course, in the end, and my heart raced to think of it. "Won't you come in?"

He sat with my people while I went to my room and changed. And when I came downstairs again, we kept on sitting in the sewing room. Twice he asked (the second time with a wink) if I had any more poetry to read to him. I told him I did not. It was curious he had so little to say of his experiences. My father tried to draw him out, and my mother made the kindest inquiries about his family, but he mumbled and seemed ill-at-ease. I was worried that he might ask who I was taking to the hop. I had several young men in mind, from Colport High, for I would not think of going with anyone from my own. One was a debater and I was not even sure he danced. But I had written to him. He made a nice appearance, as as I was on the dance committee, it was important to stand with someone I was proud of in the receiving line.

Ansell left early that night - my people were still up - and I went to the door with him. I knew for him it had been a dull evening, and I was pleased because he deserved to be punished for the way he had treated me. I was in no hurry to be alone with him because, as I knew now he would come back, I could suit myself as to when I would be good to him.

I did not know then Ansell had ideas about this himself. As I put my hand to the door to open it for him, he suddenly swept me in his arms and kissed me in a long long kiss. Then he let me go and he grinned and opened the door himself. That was how we made up.
Chapter 9

After that, I saw Ansell often. He would appear wherever I happened to be—except, of course, in school. I came out of the library one day, where I had gathered material for the life of Archytus, which I was to give at the Math Club meeting, and suddenly he was walking along beside me. "Where did you come from?" "Ask your mother." "You're fresh." His eyes flashed warning. "Careful now." But I was sure of him, and said what I thought.

I could not always, though. Mother asked him over for supper one night. It was sweet of her. I made a cake, but somehow wasn't happy. If only, well, if only he was Ansell somebody else and not Ansell Jones! I did not like people seeing me with him in the street. I wouldn't let him hold my hand there. He wasn't right for me, somehow. I shouldn't have made up that day. Yet nothing could have astonished and pleased me more than to see him standing there, and to have him see me in my new white dress.

Ansell was as ill-at-ease at table as he had been making conversation with my parents. But the food seemed to give him more assurance, and he went at it as if he had not eaten in a long time. It made me sick to see him sop his plate clean with a piece of bread, then wipe his mouth on the back of his hand. He caught my look at this and blushed, but almost at once his eyes looked banteringly back at me. This showed me more than anything else how hopeless it was to expect to change him, and I was sorry I had encouraged him to come to the house at all. I considered telling him that we must break off our friendship, my parents did not approve, I had too much school work, the piano recital was taking place next month and I had to practice. But when I tried, later,
I got nowhere. I would not say I was his "girl" - vulgar expression! - but I could not break off, could not of my own accord end these visits, the little meetings we had (that he must have spent half the day waiting to bring about), the kisses. I could not give up those.

How nice it was to have him to myself, when I was not worried about his manners, or the impression he made on other people. How easy we were together. I could even imagine us man and wife if we never had to talk - just sit like this, his arm around me.

By way of innovation, Miss Merchant, my piano teacher, had suggested a two-piano piece for the recital, and because of my perfect timing and control, offered me the first piano and Marguerite Maddey, who had taken lessons longer than I but was not as advanced, the second. The piece was Engelmann's Valse Caprice, a difficult thing as anyone acquainted with piano literature will recognize. We practiced our parts at home, and then met each week at Miss Merchant's to put the parts together. At first I was well satisfied to be the first to play a two-piano piece on the program, but in a few weeks Marguerite and I were no longer on speaking terms, and the rehearsals became a drudgery. (Marguerite, hearing I had bought a new dress for Hop, had asked was I buying Ansell a new suit, too - since he had but one. I did not even trouble to tell her whom I had invited.)

What made matters worse, I had not heard from any of the boys I had written to. It was not possible they had forgotten me. They were boys I had met after basketball games, and one at the debate.
I thought they owed me at least the courtesy of a reply. I was to be in the receiving line and had to know definitely soon. I had to have a partner! What a pity there was no one at school I cared to go with! It did not please me, on rehearsal days, to find Ansell waiting for me outside Miss Merchant's. Margaret smirked so when she passed by.

Only two weeks remained before the recital, and one to Hop. I had written again to the boys and received an answer from one. He had to work and could not come. I pinned my hope on the debater, for I was sure, being a debater and a minister's son, he had more stability than the others and might ask me down to some of the Colport dances. Toward the last day I phoned him. I had never phoned any boy before, especially out of town. But I had made up my mind to his coming, and the only thing to do now was to talk to him. He was not at home. I told his mother about the invitation, which she apparently heard about for the first time. I added where I had met him and felt I knew him much longer than I did, since we were both Congregationalists. Did she know Mr. Thaxon, our minister? Her husband must. I told her of my prominence at school, and being on the Hop committee. She seemed interested and impressed and we had a wonderful conversation. At the end, she graciously repeated her assurance that Henry would come. I was glad I had phoned. My mind was relieved, and I wrote to Henry, corroborating his mother's acceptance of the invitation and telling him we should be pleased to have him come to supper that night.

I do not know how it happened, I could hardly believe it myself, but Ansell Jones was at the hop with one of the senior girls. I
secretly rejoiced that my dance program was all made out. But never once, the many times I looked at him (dreading to be noticed or asked to dance, though it could not be arranged, of course) did I catch his eye.

It made small difference to me that Henry looked so well in the receiving line, or that I was so much envied. It did not matter that he spoke good English. We hardly said a word to each other the times we danced together. I felt Henry did not like me so well as when we had that long talk after the debate (and I was chosen best speaker). I knew I did not like him at all and was relieved now and then to dance with someone else.

When I stood near the refreshment table, Ansell brushed right by me. He didn't see me, he didn't speak. What a fool I was! That was just the way I wanted him to behave: he knew his place, and here, least of all, would I have it admitted that we were more than casual acquaintances. But at the same time, I wanted to stamp my foot and cry.

Ansell and his partner soon disappeared. I kept watching for their return. Every moment was an agony because I knew what they were doing. Others had gone out at the same time, to drink from flasks they carried with them, to ride out toward the lake and pet in parked cars. They thought of themselves as "flaming youth," though they were only senior girls I had known all my life. Those I am thinking of in particular had invited some college boys, and it was disgraceful the way they laughed at our punch and the orchestra, as if they were summer people, sophisticated in city ways,
and proud to have lost all sense of right and good. Toward midnight
Ansell and Mill Davis returned. His eyes were bloodshot. They
danced close. I hated him.

I did not see Ansell again until the next rehearsal. He swung
along beside me, one shoulder lifted, and the same bantering look
in his blue eyes, always such an excitement and a challenge to me.
"So I wasn't good enough to go to the dance with you."
"It wasn't that."
"What was it?"
"I'd practically asked Henry at the debate, and that was before
I knew you."
"You knew me a long time before you were debating."
"Not the way I have lately."
He laughed.
"Do you still love me?"
I caught my breath - or maybe it was my heart. I don't know. We
looked at each other.
"Yes."

It was a mighty admission, but something said it for me. I could
not have said it. But I was glad it had been said.
Still he was not satisfied.
"How much?"
I could not answer. I did not know.
"I thought so," he said. "You know what, my darling? You're
like an eskimo pie - all sweet outside, ice inside. That's how
much you love me." And he looked hurt.
"But Ansell, we're so young, and there's so much to be done yet -"
"The hell with it." We were walking past the library now. "I want a girl and I see you're not her. Every time I try to kiss you, it's no - no. It's the struggle of my life to touch you."

"That isn't so, Ansell! Sometimes I'm ashamed of the way I've acted."

He turned to me with one of his frank, discomfiting looks.

"You like it, don't you?"

I could say nothing to that.

"Well, then." That settled it. "You goin' up to see your daddy today?"

"No."

"Come in here," he said peremptorily, and pulled me into the hall of my father's building. We walked to the end of it. The office doors of the first floor were all closed. It was quiet, fearfully quiet there. "Now my eskimo pie, my sweet eskimo pie," he said. And I knew why he had asked about my father.

After a while we came out. My head hurt, for I had had to hold it way back when he kissed me, he was so much taller than I. The sudden light of the street was blinding, I could hardly see at first. I resented the brightness, the cheerfulness of the street and the throngs of people, for I felt that somehow, soon, all these happy moments I had had with Ansell would end.

And I felt a change in him. A hundred thoughts went through my mind. He looked at my mouth, and then he looked at me. "So long, baby," he said. Then he headed up the street for Sloan's.

When I came in sight of home, I saw the curtains of the living room move every now and then. My mother was at the door long before
I got there. She pulled me into the kitchen and looked anxiously into my face and threw her arms around me.

"Mama the music!" For she had not let me put it down. "What's happened? Are you all right?"

"Thank God you're safe, thank God!" she breathed.

And then she let me go and in her sewing room she told me what the whole town by this time knew: that Ansell Jones had got a girl in trouble and had not denied it but he refused to marry her (here she colored and looked away) because there had been others.

"When I think of you - alone with him!" She clasped her hands and put them on her breast.

"But I'm different," I said, hoping she would not hear the thumping of my heart. (How different? Why, even today, in the dark of the hall, kissing, kissing - what if someone saw you, what would they think of you? What did they already think of you for walking in the streets with Ansell Jones?) "He knows that." (But hadn't he tried - those horrid kisses - calling me cold as an eskimo pie? His whole attitude was one of contempt for the good, the conventional. He didn't care what people thought of him. He had one suit and it was enough for him. And all the time he said I was his girl!) "Who was she, mother?"

"No one you know. She worked for the Wileys - their second girl, I think. Her mother says she figured out he's the one, and he's got to marry her."

"Then she admits there were others?"

My mother could not speak. I put my arms around her and we
nestled together, both shocked at moral levity as marked in mother as in daughter, whose plight was the more to be pitied for the guidance she had had. How little I had thought when I sat so contentedly encircled by his arm, he was drawing me toward an intimacy such as he had lured this unnamed girl into! And though I did not doubt my firmness to withstand it, I could not deny that the beginnings of desire had been there, and that was wrong. I could not be sorry for it. So I was to be free of him at last! And not through my own doing. But to see him married to another: "So long, baby." A feeling of hope surged through me. He was going away! She would not have him! He had said goodbye to me, to me!

"I suppose it was a mistake," said my mother, gently releasing herself, to let you two get friends. You're both older than your years. But all young people nowadays are older than their years. It frightens me when I see them speeding by the house in their own cars. Even your cousin Cherry! I thought when she wore that ring around her neck, the boy meant something to her, but she says she stopped seeing him long ago. She wears it only to make others jealous. Her mother's proud of all those others and says it's all right if she kisses them. All girls do! What a world we live in. You aren't like that, are you, dear?" Her anxious eyes searched my face.

"I let Ansell kiss me."

"But you're not promiscuous. He was the only one, wasn't he, dear?"

I was glad that I could answer truthfully that he was, but it hurt to put it in the past tense. Did it have to be that way?
Mightn't something happen to change it? I remembered how Ansell had looked at me in the doorway of the office building and knew that it would not.

"He did you no harm, dear...?" she persisted. "Nothing worse than that...? You won't be hurt if he marries this other girl?"

"No, of course not..." I put my arms around her again, my head to her shoulder. "She must be horrid."

"We don't know what happened. If he prevailed upon her to sin with him, he must bear the responsibility of it as much as she. We know that she is not well spoken of. He must have known it, too, when he went to her. These are decisions one makes for himself, and when made, must abide by. After all, it is not," she added pointedly, "as if the doors to more respectable houses were closed to him."

I helped her get supper, and so relieved and even happy did I feel (for I would not have to worry about Ansell's English any more), I danced about the kitchen and about her. But when I sat down, I could not eat. I could not study. I could not sleep. I explained it was the piano recital.

The next day I heard he had left town, and the day after someone reported seeing him get on a freight car in the Colport yards. So he had run away! I was glad. He was much too good for a second girl. What would he have had, marrying her, but a repetition of the squalor and poverty and the innumerable children of his own home? Ansell was cut out for something else. I might have helped him to that something else, but instead, he had made me the pupil. Some day he would come back, just as he had come back to me from Aroostook, just
as he came back after our quarrel. His last look promised it. He would not forget me. How sweet, how indescribably sweet were his kisses! He would come back rich, with a big wardrobe and a cultured speaking voice. Yet I remembered all the time he had listened to good English, his own had never improved for it; and he was as unaware of his table manners as if our own had been no different. Ansell, come back! Meanwhile, I was free. I could go back to my writing. I had worried about having to see a lot of Ansell that summer. I did not have to now. There was a novel I wanted to write - a novel about marriage, a great, a profound thing. Ansell would not be able to say it was out of my experience! I had wisely avoided the pitfalls of young writers, and instead of choosing as my leading characters people of great wealth and social position (though I knew some - the Wileys and the Newberts and the Bridewells, who acted like year-round summer people and lived above the life of our town), my leading characters were a boy and girl of moderately well-off and respectable parents like my own. When it was published, Ansell might stumble on it, wherever he was, and he would not be able to say of it what he had said of my poems. I felt mature and competent. Why wait for summer?

I made beginning after beginning, but felt low in spirits, and tore all my attempts up. Mother said I had too much on my mind and suggested waiting until vacation. I still had the piano recital, and my piece for prize speaking to learn, the big commencement issue of The Mountain View to help put together, and final examinations. But my head and hands were heavy. I worried that I might never
have the enthusiasm of creation that I had given my poetry. What had happened to me? I only wanted to sit and think.

"Young players reveal promise at annual Merchant recital," read the Sentinel and gave each an individual comment - "spirited rendition" - "mastery of technique" - "a beautiful offering" but coupled Marguerite and me as if we were identical twins. "The two noble instruments in the parish house of the Elm Street Episcopal church resounded with the brilliant harmony of a two-piano number, the offering of two talented high school students, Miss Marguerite Maddey" (why her name first?) and Miss Maryanne Hughson, who showed strong promise in their interpretation and rendered the difficult work in a spirited and sure manner. This brought the program to a delightful close."

"Mother," I said, not too well pleased with the write-up but thinking of it then from an English point of view: "shouldn't it have been 'delightful program' instead of 'delightful close'?"

My mother and father laughed at this.

"Well, I must admit, Maryanne, by the time you played," said my father, "I was beginning to think it would be a delightful close, and since the writer evidently had no daughter to sit through the evening for, he probably felt the same way."

Mother said that the writer must have meant he had a delightful feeling at the close of the program, which indicated enjoyment of the whole. She bought an extra copy of the Sentinel to send away, and the one we subscribed to was cut up for my scrapbook.
Chapter 10

One of father's carpenters built a little cabin for me in the thicket behind the house, and mother and I furnished it with cretonne curtains and furniture painted dark red. There was even a cot, covered with the same cretonne, where I might lie down when I wanted to rest or think. I moved some of my books into my retreat, and had a chest of drawers for paper and supplies. And here all summer I worked on my novel about married life.

Ever since I had read my poems to Ansell, and received such a short-sighted criticism on them, I had hesitated to discuss my literary projects with anybody else, even my mother. She knew simply that I was writing, and I decided to let it go at that. When the book was published, she could read it in the finished form and, in the authority and depth with which I wrote, could never then doubt that imagination and intuition might take the place of actual experience.

For it was intuition I depended on mainly for the thesis of my novel. My parents and the people I knew were as happily married as any two people could be. But through the town this was not the normal state of affairs. I heard of too many secret meetings, there were too many divorces. The lake was a beehive of night activity. What was the matter with marriage? At fifteen I sat down in my retreat to enlighten the world with the answer I had reached. No one would guess that such a powerful work came from the pen of a girl.

Nor was my young heroine to be childless like the sophisticated, dissipated matrons of the town. I sent away for leaflets on the care of a baby, and learned from them what foods a baby eats at a certain time, when he cuts his first tooth, when he begins to walk.
I could not use what I remembered of my own childhood for this, as I intended Hilda's baby to be just an ordinary one, brought into the story because Hilda was the sort of girl who would want and have one, though she secretly loved the red-haired doctor.

One of the chapters was to cover the death of Hilda's baby, whom this very doctor attended. I considered asking our family doctor to give me a few medical words for this part, to make it sound as if I knew medicine as well as other things, but as he might be curious about the rest of the book and even want to collaborate, I decided to dispense with his advice.

The name of my novel was to be simply "Marriage" and it looked very good on the covers I imagined rolling night and day from the press. I had never had much time for reading, though I received books often for presents, my own creative urge being too strong to have interest or patience for the fictions of others. But I did read a few technical books, when necessary; for the death of the baby I found just the data I needed in a fine home book of medicine mother had bought years ago from a teacher who sold them door to door in summer to increase her income. I am sure the scene equals anything in Dickens, where people die too easily anyway.

When school began again, my first novel was nearly done, and I went on writing in my retreat until the weather became too cold without a fire.

At Hallowe'en, our Latin Club gave a party. We played Latin games and a sibyl told our fortunes, which she gave to us in writing, so that we might have it for our scrapbooks. Mine read,
A friend of yours has crossed the sea
For love and riches, too;
By one or both you'll benefit
A great surprise for you."

I do not believe in the occult, but sometimes coincidence alone, and not any particular touch with the spiritual world, brings words spoken in prophecy to pass. "A friend of yours" - that could only be Ansell. He had crossed the sea. "For love and riches" - that meant he would come back, well-to-do and poised from foreign countries, to make me his wife. What a future I had! What a fortunate girl!

Miss Alden had mimeographed two sheets of familiar songs translated into Latin - "America," "Home Sweet Home," "Yes, We Have no Bananas," "Barney Google, "The Star-Spangled Banner," and others. I played the piano and joined in the singing.

Sic, non vēndimus porra,
Non vēndimus porr (a) hodie,
Caules et malvas,
Et bulbos et scillas,
Et fructus omnis hærce,
Habemus Albāna fraga,
Et Picena mala
Sed sic, non vēndimus porra
Non vēndimus porr(a) hodie.

How we laughed! When we drank our cider and apples, we started up again, without piano:

Sic, non vēndimus porra!
and walking through the crisp starlit street,

Non vendimus porr(a) hodie!
Caules et malvas,
Et bulbos et scillas...

not caring that people were trying to sleep. We were wide awake, and as drunk with youth and fun as if we had unscrewed a hip flask, but feeling much better in the head and stomach, I can assure you.

Et fructus omnis hercle

I was still humming that crazy song when I went upstairs. Mother was in bed, but still awake and waiting for me. I repeated the events of the evening in a whisper, though father was a good sleeper, and she whispered back, "I heard you all the way down the street, I don't know what the neighbors will think." She laughed as she kissed me in the dark, and I left her, thinking as I did almost every moment of the day, I had the most wonderful mother in the world.

The short editorial and stories I wrote for The Mountain View, and my poetry for The Mountain View and other magazines were typed for me by Miss Eldon, who worked in my father's office. But I could not trust my novel to her, as she made errors in copying which showed she knew very little about grammar and punctuation, for otherwise she would have caught them in re-reading. I therefore took typewriting as an elective subject, and at Christmas father and mother gave me a portable, on which I practiced every day, so that before very long I had mastered this purely mechanical skill and could type faster than any of the girls who took it as a regular subject.

I had been so busy I had no time to look over my novel for the minor corrections it still needed - I am not one of those who are
satisfied with a first draft. During Christmas vacation I worked on it and in the second week began its typing. When school began again, I continued to type it, not neglecting all my other work, and the days went by so fast, I hardly thought any more of Ansell, or getting a letter from him, though at first I had looked for one.

In the spring our house was shingled and painted. The workmen were very careless, and left shingles lying untidily about. One morning when I left the house for school, I stepped on one. The nail went through my shoe. I pulled it out and thought no more of it. That night, when I undressed, the stocking clung to my foot, and I saw there was dried blood on it. My foot was a little tender. I took my bath and went to bed, thinking of my talk at the next assembly, which was on the subject of "The Joys of Spring." In the morning I jumped out of bed as usual. My foot throbbed and was painful to step on. Then I remembered the nail. It couldn't be serious! I had no time to be sick. I could not be bothered or handicapped with it. It was a scratch and would be better by night. That night my head throbbed. Perhaps I had strained my eyes. My foot was more than ever painful to walk on. What a nuisance a little scratch could be! I felt sick over my supper but ate it as best I could, to give mother no worry.

"Maryanne," she said, looking worried just the same, "are you getting enough exercise these days?"

"I get plenty of exercise playing basketball, mother."

"I meant air and relaxation. Aren't you trying to do a little too much?"
"But I like it, dear.' There isn't a thing I could think of giving up."

"You look flushed tonight. What do you think, Edward?

"She looks fine and healthy and beautiful the way she always does," said my father, and I gave him a kiss for it.

My mother looked doubtful.

I had been favoring my foot in her presence, so she would not ask me why I limped. But it was almost impossible to favor it any more. I could hardly step on it without wincing. And a little later, when they heard me running upstairs from the study to the bathroom, where I was sick, mother came up and got the whole story of the shingle with the rusty nail. I felt much better after ridding myself of my supper, but father telephoned at once for the doctor.

Our family doctor was not the model for tall, impudent-eyed, red-haired Dr. MacLeod of my book, "Marriage." Dr. Pennell was a little man as chubby as his Boston bag, who had to clear his throat constantly when he talked, and sat with his head nestled in his breast like an owl, and with the same calculating but absent expression, that quickly turned to frank drowsiness. His very skin carried the mixed smell of tobacco and antiseptic.

We waited for him in the sewing room. I took off my shoe and stocking and he lifted my foot into his lap. "When did this happen?" he asked. I told him, while mother brought up a floor lamp and tipped it for better light.

"I won't have to stay in bed, will I, Dr. Pennell?"
He looked at me as if he saw me, and yet did not, and he was a long time answering. The skin made pointed little cups under his eyes. He looked shabby and tired, and as if the glow had gone out of life for him long ago. If people lose it, I thought, it is their own fault. Yet was his plight to be wondered at? He had no understanding. My question seemed a trifle to him, for by now his expression had changed to sleepiness. I had to ask him again. His small round eyes flickered open and he stared at me a moment, and he sighed.

"Think the school can manage a few days without you?" And without smiling, as if he had all he could do to keep himself awake in our pleasantly warm room, where we still kept the heat for mother's arthritis, though it was spring, he asked mother for hot water and me if I could make it to the kitchen.

There he sterilized his instruments and cauterized the wound. It hurt the first moment, that was all. Then he put some soothing ointment on and bandaged it. I was sure I could go to school the next day.

"I'll be in in a few days unless you call me," he told my mother. "She'd better stay off it a week or so."

A week or so! Except for a slight dizziness, which I was sure had been caused by whatever he put on my foot, I felt perfectly all right. I would not stay in bed a week and I told him so.


No, Dr. Pennell was not the model for handsome Dr. MacLeod of my book, "Marriage"! If I ever used Dr. Pennell in a book (changing
the color of his hair so that he would not be recognized by the people who read my book, it would be as a villain! I hated him as I hated no other person before! Who would give my talk on "Joys of Spring"? How could I miss the game with Colport Friday night? - the last game of the season? How could I miss the hike up the mountain, and making a plea for more material for the spring issue of The Mountain View?

But the next morning, these things did not matter very much. I suspected the doctor had drugged my foot, for my head felt heavy and I could hardly keep my eyes open. I stayed in bed all day, and the birds' cries sounded from a great distance. Mother took my temperature and called the doctor. He came in the afternoon. "Yes, she has a slight fever." I knew what caused it, and I turned my face from him. The next day I felt better.

Mother washed and bandaged my foot, which healed without any further complications. Toward the end of the week I sat at my bedroom window, my foot propped up in a chair in front of me. The trees beginning to leaf, the white clothes dazzling on the line, the fragrance of grass fires, the fragrance of the wind made a new world it was near. that only I was part of, and What need to travel and seek in far places what could never be anything but a transient experience? Life is only where your roots are. There its meaning has eternal value, and the heart is there, like faith, to give it conviction. Mother's friends had visited me. They brought me cookies and other things to eat, and were as anxious about me as if I were their own daughter. Miss Alden stopped in after school. "I wonder that
none of the young folks come," my mother said, when she had left.
"There's no one I want to see." I was beginning to enjoy my
convalescence and did not hold it so hard against Dr. Pennell that
he had made an invalid of me, though I could never like him after
that.

During that week at home I glanced through mother's "Golden
Treasury," where I found Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," over-
emotional, I thought, as I read, yet stirring. When I had finished
it, I went back to the beginning, for something was there I wanted.

O thou

Who chariostest to their dark wintry bed

The wingéd seeds...

There was the title for my next novel! "West Wind Chariot!":
A man of parts who nevertheless let himself be guided by others -
swept along by forces outside him - disappointing all - swept to
ignominious death like leaves borne along by the west wind - that
was it, that was it!

I saw my name in future books of English literature, my novels
spoken of in the order they appeared, "Marriage," "West Wind
Chariot,"-what would be the third, the fourth?

I sat outside and watched the massy clouds driven through the
sky and appearing again; it was the work of the wind, and though
not a west wind, had a new meaning, a new power for me because it
recalled the chariot of my second book. In my lap lay a Bible I
now and then glanced through for new titles to have in reserve.

In Ecclesiastes I read: "He that observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap."

I closed the book laughing. I was the exception who could do both.
Chapter 11

Before I went back to school, father asked if I would like to take a trip that summer and see how the mountains of the south compared with our own. Mother had already heard of it, and approved. My pleasure was marred by one thought: my book would be that much delayed. Yet it was not shaping itself very quickly in my mind, and a little more reflection might do it good. Meanwhile, I had sent my first novel to Harper's, a publishing company whose name appeared on many of the books we owned, and decided a vacation might bring me new material. Father went to Colport to arrange the trip with a travel agent there.

We started as soon as school closed. We had never been so far from home, and it was hard to see father lock the door and look back at the shuttered windows and know we would not be sleeping there that night. It was such a friendly house, and the roses were all in bloom around it. Through the trees I could see my retreat and it never looked so dear as that moment when I was leaving it. How much I had accomplished there! And how much remained to be done! In my purse I carried a notebook for ideas, already half full. It seemed foolish to be blundering into a strange country, seeking for ideas when I had had so many right here in Suttonsville, and my character and point of view were already firm as Maine granite, than which there is no finer. Yet travel was widely recommended for writers. I would see what it had to say to me.

We went by train to Boston, and there were met by John Colbourne, Miss Alden's friend, who drove us through the city to his house in Newton, where he lived with some friends. It was a handsome house,
and all the houses around were handsome like it. Inside were rooms shelved with books, fireplaces, heavy draperies, and exquisite furniture. I had seen pictures of similar rooms in magazines. It was clear John Colbourne, or his friends, or his interior decorator had had plenty of money to spend, good taste, and ideas of comfort. But it remained a picture house. It was not like ours, where every room, every board, even the flowers in the faded sewing room carpet were bound up with the days of our life. Nor did it have the gloomy grandeur of the Alden house in Howard Street, that faced the sea.

John Colbourne had been so long away from Suttonsville, he seemed not one of us any more. He looked younger than Miss Alden, though I did not think he was, and his suits looked as if they had never been sat in. I asked him, at dinner, since Boston was on the sea, and we had not come far inland, and besides, were on a hill, why was there no glimpse of the sea even from the bedroom windows? He told me something of how Boston had been filled in, and very few Bostonians had even seen the sea, much less smelled it; and he told me a few other things. Although I was gay and brilliant that night, John Colbourne showed a coldness toward me which did not appear in his manner to my parents, for whose comfort he had the most courteous concern. I suppose he was afraid of falling in love with me, and it might get back to Miss Alden. However, I talked to him as if I noticed nothing, and he and his friends and even his servants must have had to correct their notions of the small-town girl, or at least to have realized that I was far from what she is usually represented.

The next day we went through his factory, and he drove us into
Boston, where we saw the Common and the State House and Paul Revere's home. We went up to the Customs House tower, and there I saw the city all around me, the market and the business section, and the sea. It was a wonderful sight, one I shall always remember of Boston. "But no more beautiful," I declared, "than the view we get from Mt. Giddings."

John Colbourne walked ahead with mother down the stairs to the elevator, and though I was some distance behind with father, I distinctly heard him say, "She's very much like Mrs. Alden, isn't she?" Mother gave him an embarrassed smile. "Not when you get to know her better, John." We entered the elevator, and John Colbourne went down in my esteem as far as that elevator to the first floor, and as quickly. I prayed Mrs. Alden would live to be a hundred twenty-five so he wouldn't be able to marry Miss Alden (and my prayer looks as if it will be answered, for she is living this day I write).

We took the night boat for New York, and I got up early the next morning to see us enter the harbor. It was a clear crisp morning, and very smooth sailing. A red-haired boy with glasses asked me if we were nearing the Statue of Liberty.

"We do not pass it," I told him.

He pointed to a bridge.

"Is that the Brooklyn Bridge?" he asked, in great excitement, twisting and climbing up the rail.

"No," I replied coldly, hoping people would not think this monkey my brother.
"Gee," he murmured, his eyes big behind his glasses, "you know everything about New York! Do you live there?"

"No," I said, and walked to another place. He would not have understood if I told him I had an instinct for places, though in this instance helped by a few things John Colbourne had told us.

But what was this bridge? The Brooklyn had been famous long before it could have been built. What a lovely, airy thing it was in mist, recalling Gareth's first glimpse of Camelot. In fact, all New York that I could see looked dreamy and mysterious in the early morning light. The sun started coming out. It would be a warm day.

We went down to breakfast. Mother had not enjoyed her dinner the previous night, perhaps because a woman who had been seated at our table complained that the water was very rough and she was already sick. Mother went to bed early, and she felt much better this morning.

The woman was at our table again, and she looked no better. My heart sank. Yet, I thought, she can't still be sick. It must be the effect on the way she always is. I was worried for mother.

I took mother's arm as if to protect her, but we separated to sit down. Fortunately, the woman had started early and was almost through. When the waiter came to take our order, she asked him to pour her "that much water" - indicating the amount with an unsteady thumb and forefinger - then asked us if the smell of oil of peppermint bothered us? I looked with concern at mother, but she shook her head in gentle sympathy and said she was sorry not to find her recovered. "If I ever get on a boat again," said the woman, turning very yellow as she poured a few drops in, "I hope
somebody shoots me." Then she added, looking at me to show it was not her fault: "It was trying to swell up."

At another table were four nuns. Three were old and wrinkled and had an evil look as one would expect from such people, and the fourth was young and lovely. I had heard that priests from the great churches kidnapped small children passing by and forced them to become Catholics and join their orders. Of course nothing like that could happen in Suttonsville. Their church was small and what Catholics we had were too closely watched. But I was sure this girl had not been born a Catholic. The porthole sun shone through her pleated coif and made soft shadows on her face. She ate with an almost affected niceness. The others watched her closely, like perched eagles, and I am sure they were afraid she would cry help when we landed, and would be restored to her own people.

"Those poor, misguided women," said my mother with a shudder, as she buttered her toast.

"I am glad we never let them get strong in our town," said my father. "Imagine those four walking down Samoset Street!"

"I can't imagine it," I said.

The waiter told us the boat would be an hour late.

On deck a lame man with a scar across his face said, "Bothered me a little last night till we got to the Canal - didn't eat much." What weaklings people were! I had eaten a hearty dinner.

We spent several days in New York. In the train to Philadelphia I suddenly thought of home and wanted more than anything in the world to be there. Father laughed. "You forget your writing a
"little while." In New Jersey the earth turned red. It looked funny through the grass, it didn't look right. Earth should be brown. We saw more nuns.

Philadelphia had many brick houses and negroes. They sat in the street fanning themselves beside white-clothed tables that held pitchers of lemonade. People could not have been satisfied living in Philadelphia: I saw many "For Sale" signs. The stores looked gaudy. The Schuylkill was muddy. I had no pleasure looking at it, for water should be blue. But Fairmount was lovely and the Botanical Gardens cool and enjoyable. We made our trip around the city in a touring car. The lecturer, who had a queer-shaped head and almost no teeth in front, slept between sights. The driver looked like a cutthroat on parole. I had never seen people like this at home. They made me shudder. We saw the Liberty Bell and went into the Art Museum.

Another day we went to Valley Forge. On the way we passed by pleasant little towns with odd names - Bala, Cynwyd, Ardmore, Bryn Mawr. Valley Forge is a reservation of 1500 acres, and I do believe, when we stepped out of the limousine, not an inch of that 1500 acres was free of people. And such people! Women with hard looks, red fox fur pieces around their necks, puckered arms, smoking outdoors like men! (One had a pink and white powdered look, like Zuloaga's women we had seen in the museum, terribly pasty.) Children jingled cheap bracelets on both wrists. They screamed, ran, ate. One wore a straw hat trimmed with white rabbit fur - in summer!

We do not have such people at home.

At Washington's headquarters we looked beyond the ropes into his reception room. There were his hat, cloak and sword as if he were
to come by and put them on. Upstairs a cloak and hat lay on a chair. In Martha's room, her bonnet, and a hat box on the highboy. Was she here that dreadful winter? In the guest room spectacles on the drum table and on the bureau. Take your pick, welcome guest.

A man with tattoo on both arms rattled a paper bag of food he carried for the little boy and girl with him, stuffing bananas.

We also saw the Valley Forge chapel, where our guide told us nineteen weddings had taken place in one day. A woman told mother she had been in many chapels but this one had the most beautiful stained glass windows. I did not care for the stained glass windows. Our guide said the name of the valley came from two forges that were there, which the British destroyed. We came back by way of King of Prussia and Gurth Mills. The corn was tall, the earth still red. People spoke carelessly; they did not talk like our people at home.

At Williamsburg we had lovely rooms at the Lodge. Mine was paneled in light wood and done in Chinese blue. It had soft lamps, and a bird etching on the wall. In the dining room I never saw so many white-haired women in my life. Some carried notebooks when they went on the tours. When the limousine called to take us to Jamestown, we left mother on what she called a "rocking-chair tour" with other ladies in the Lodge verandah. Jamestown, like Valley Forge, is a park, and has a monument to Captain John Smith, old foundations, and a church. The James River was muddy and ugly. But in the park there was so much of what had been, suffering and death, hope and reconciliation, I no longer thought
of the river. It was so full of the past, carried on the wind, it seemed a sacrilege to enter it, to pay your fare at the gate window, and buy postcards and souvenirs. We have inherited what they built after such suffering as we may never know of, I thought; and it is all here still. "Foundations," scoffed a boy; "nothin' but foundations." And he ran along the river wall. "Sh," cautioned his mother sheepishly, pretending to be horrified, but I knew very well she thought the same way: "It's history." It's much more than that! I protested. It's all the lives that lie there dead and yet are not dead, and all the living that was done there, the fighting and planting and marrying. And if you listen you can hear the cries of the wild life still, and the cries of women frightened in the night, and by a tree a man lonely for England. Yes, you can hear all that in this quiet park with the trees and the old church where a negro recites and a souvenir house and the old foundations. Children ran over the tombstones after reading the sign that asked them not to. And on the other side, colored people strolled with picnic baskets, five or six women in dresses of the same transparent pink voile. I found a bridge that said "Ferry to Scotland," and called father. A friend of yours has crossed the sea! Was Ansell in such a Scotland in America? If I could only see him again! Just once! What would he do if he stood at the other end of that bridge? Would he mind if other people were around? (I did not think so.) Did he think of me, and love me just as much? I remember nothing of Yorktown except a few sleepy old houses.
We spent a week in Williamsburg. Some of the time it rained. The Duke of Gloucester Street was filled with people who did not belong there. They carried maps and guide books. The stores had bay windows. In the Capitol, ladies in eighteenth century dresses and wigs, some with a beauty spot on cheek or chin, showed us the treasures. At the gaol, men were dressed up. I thought they must feel like fools. They looked like them. Back in the Duke of Gloucester Street, I patted a dog and he cheerfully trotted after me. He was not a pretty dog, but he pretended to be no more than he was. We stepped into the barber and wig maker's shop. A man, dressed in knee breeches, and wig with bow, was making a wig of yak.

"Where did you learn to do this?" asked my mother, with the gentle interest that always draws people to her.

"They sent me away to school, ma'am."

"You enjoy it, of course?"

"Waal," he drawled, "it isn't as hot as havin' or diggin' in the sun, and I've done both."

It took about three days to make a wig, he said. He was making this one for one of the guides.

I listened to the conversation with increasing indignation, and looked at him with contempt.

"Can you really be satisfied," I asked him, "to make this your life work?"

At the Travis House we had dinner, and mother was really glad to rest. I had baked Virginia ham, Sally Lunn bread, and green gage plum ice cream, because these were things I had always associated with the South (when I thought of the South) and could not have at
home (though I must say we bake our hams better at home). We used three-tined forks.

Williamsburg was all pretense. I left it with relief, admiring foundations.

In Richmond, mother met a woman who also had trouble with rheumatism, and they had long conversations while father and I went around the town. This woman, who lived at the hotel, had the blood of a Confederate general in her veins, but she was friendly to mother and did not have any prejudice against us because we came from the North. Her name was Clayton. Mother told her how surprised we were to see the signs "White" and "Colored" wherever we went. The only negroes we ever saw in Suttonsville were servants of the summer people, and they were not so black and shiny as those we had seen in Philadelphia and saw everywhere here. Mrs. Clayton told her the segregation laws were very strict in Virginia. "But it is only in the North there is prejudice. Here, the colored folk have a place. They understand their place, and as long as they keep it, everything is all right."

Coming back from the Capitol, father and I walked past all the East streets - Grace and Broad and Marshall, and we wondered what they would be when the "east" gave out. The day was hot and we were thirsty. We went into a drug store where there were no seats, and we asked for milk. While we were drinking it, a colored girl - she was coffee brown and rather pretty - came in and asked for some water for her little boy, who was outside. She seemed greatly distressed about him. The man looked embarrassed because we were
there, and turned away, pretending not to hear her. She asked again. The man still remained turned from her, and he fussed with the lid of an ice cream can.

"I'm busy right now."

I slammed my glass of milk on the counter to get his attention.

"Give her some," I said.

The man turned around, I saw his face red, he kept his eyes averted and spoke in a low, reluctant voice.

"It'll have to be in a paper cup."

The woman did not wait. She bent her head and hurried out of the store.

"Finish your milk, Maryanne."

I would not touch it.

"I hate Richmond, father," I said, looking straight at the man behind the counter.

"You know what Mrs. Clayton said about the laws here," my father reminded me gently.

"That's right, Miss," said the man, almost too eagerly. "Your father's right. They're strict here. I have to protect myself. You're not from around this way. But if you were, you'd see it different. They're a bad lot."

I refused to finish the milk and hurried my father out of the store.

"Is that what we fought the Civil War for?" I demanded, outraged.
"Now dear, don't be so hard on the fellow. He was only doing what is asked of him. When you are in business, you can't jeopardize your future. He is probably a family man. I felt sorry for him. He was really quite decent to us. He could have told us to mind our own business!" And father's eyes twinkled at my fury, which continued.

We liked Asheville, though it rained almost all the time we were there. From the window of our hotel room we could see the pink-tiled roof of the city hall. A sign on our door warned us not to play cards with strangers. One of our drivers in the mountains said he was one-sixteenth Indian. He was a young man with blue eyes and only one tooth. He did not in the least look Indian, and I refused to believe him, though mother and father did.

Clouds are lazy. They don't bother climb mountains - they don't have to. They just drift straight across.

I saw an odd looking old woman leaning against a tree trunk. "Who is that?" I asked the driver. "She's a queer," he said. "One day you see her in Gatlinburg, another day in Asheville." Papa said laughing, as I opened my bag to take out my memorandum book, "Are you going to write a novel about her?"

We stayed at several different inns in the mountains, but the one we liked best was at Frymont. Mother said, "Try to move me out of here, just try!" and we could see she was tired. We had been riding and riding through the mountains and still there seemed no end to them. It was like the maze in Williamsburg, though on a much greater scale. "I'm sure I won't mind staying
here," I said, "though perhaps we'd better ask if they grease their string beans instead of butter them." The inn was full, and mother was soon happily taking a verandah tour, glad to forget autos and trains for a while. Mother enjoyed talking to all people. I never did. In the lobby one night they showed us colored movies of mountain laurel and rhododendron in bloom, and a crowd of us from the inn went to a square dance in the town, which was held to raise money for fire equipment. I never had so much fun in my life.

One day I was walking and met an artist who had set up his easel and was drawing a view of hills. "It isn't North Carolina unless it has corn," I told him. He did not seem grateful for my suggestion, and I knew he was not a real artist, for he wore a bonnet. On walks I discovered lovely little falls deep in the woods, unexpected footbridges across brooks, and I looked with contempt on the tourists, who rushed down the paths and back to their cars and no doubt went home and said they had seen all there was to see! I liked our leisurely way of traveling. The mountains made me think of the hills at home, although ours are fewer and lower, and have no resorts. Ours belong rather to the people who live around them; they may not climb them, but all their life have an understanding of high things because of them, and stand firm as hills for their opinions.

Two ladies from Louisville stayed at the inn. They were sisters, and they held hands. "We have a big house and garden. You must come to see us when you are there." They told us that
grass in Kentucky isn't really blue - it just looks that way when in blossom and the wind blows.

It seemed deceitful to me that a state should base its claim to the title "Blue Grass" on an illusion.

Our blue grass blossoms blue, I told them.

But I did not like too much to hear of blue grass, for it grows in the field where Donny and I used to play.

Some people arrived at the hotel from Massachusetts. They had been in the South a shorter time than we, but when they heard mother speak, they came right up to us and joined us. "It's good to hear a New England accent again!"

Returning, we stopped in Washington and made an extensive tour of the city, went down to Mt. Vernon on the boat, and another day to Annapolis. Then we took a Merchant and Miner's boat to Boston.

I think the nearest thing to heaven on earth is a clear night on a smooth sea, the moon shining and you sitting by yourself in a shaded corner, the other passengers shadows apart, their voices muffled in the night and calm. There is nothing to look at, really; the lights of a passing boat, a beam thrown from a lighthouse, land very far away. The sea itself is for all its moods even at night much the same. But there is nothing like the quiet and peace of sitting there, the motor throbbing deep in the heart of the ship very quietly, too. And you are as close to the real pulse of nature as you ever will be.

Two things I brought back - the remembrance of mountains, which I already knew, and night on the sea, which I also had. No sooner
was I home, than my whole visit dropped away and was as if it never had been. There lay "West Wind Chariot" - the title page and nothing more. What a lot of time I had wasted! And yet, had it all been waste? What of that queer woman leaning against the tree? Why was she sometimes in Asheville, sometimes in Gatlinburg? What had happened, what had driven her to this life?

"Back at work so soon?" asked my mother as I started for the study the night after our return. We had spent the day unpacking.

"I've just been on a vacation, haven't I?" And I went back and dropped a kiss on her forehead.

"We can all use a little rest," said father. "I'm tuckered out. But it was a great trip. Think you'll write a book about it, Maryanne?"

"Not about that. It will have to wait a while. I've something else in mind, but I just can't seem to get hold of it."

"Keep it a while. Maybe that's what it needs. Don't drive yourself. We've been a long way - for country folk."

"Nobody mistook us for bumpkins." I sat down on the arm of mother's chair.

"I must say," admitted mother, "there were times I was at an utter loss. I've never been in so many hotels in my life. So many people to tip, that stood by to get it. And others you never saw, but had to leave a tip for, like the extra food we used to leave on our plate as children, for the good fairy."

My novel "Marriage" had not as yet been returned. It was a good sign, for it had been gone all the time we were -- two months.
There still remained time enough before school for me to make a good start on "West Wind Chariot." I woke early the next morning, had my breakfast, picked up my writing materials, and took the key to my retreat from the tumbler on the kitchen shelf, that held other odds and ends.

I should have known that something had happened to the retreat in my absence. Now that I remember it, not the place itself, but the air around it seemed changed. All was tense, the leaves, the trees, even a squirrel stood waiting on a branch as if he had already looked in the window, and darted to safety; and safe, watched to see what I would do. But I suspected nothing. My mind struggled with a story that would not come through and my long visit had neither matured nor rested me for. Like a new food, it had only changed the taste in my mouth for the time. And now all was the same again.

I put the key in the lock, it turned hard. I pushed, but the door was firm. The door had already been open! Yet I remembered distinctly locking it before we went away. I tried again, and this time it opened. I stepped in, my heart lifting as I thought of the work I was to do there, and I stumbled over a dead body on the floor!

A tramp in dirty, run-over saddlebacks, a suit with holes, a fuzz of beard... I looked and saw it was Chet Whitman!

Chet Whitman, the boy who lived a few houses down!

And then it came to me. The whole story of "West Wind Chariot" lay before my eyes.
I had gone a thousand miles and back, yet had always known - even before I sat thinking it through during my illness - we find at home what the far places can at best only contribute to. Others can learn that truth only through travel. I knew that all I needed was here. But to find it so near! Even I had not expected that much.
Chapter 12

Chet was not dead, only very sick. His father said he had been gone a week, his mother three, and all he had had to eat in that time was four cans of sardines which he had taken from the house. ("What do people do with so many sardines?" asked my mother, who seldom used canned foods, except what she put up herself.) He had been seen in Colport, and at the lake, and somebody said he had worked in an A&P store in Corinth for a few days. It was all mystifying and confusing. Chet himself would say nothing, but we remembered all the wayward traits he had shown as a boy and were not surprised that he had run away from home.

Not that Chet Whitman had actually run. He had shuffled. It was a wonder more people hadn't seen him. And only a week! And provisioned! Ansell had been gone the whole winter, and had come back looking handsomer than ever. But Chet had always been his mother's baby. Throwing darts in church, skipping school occasionally, lounging about Sloan's or seeking out Hilary - this was the extent of his dereliction. And what did his yearnings to be a tramp amount to? One did not take them seriously, any more than snow in April. Yet what had driven him to leave the comfort and security of his home, the care and devotion of his parents - both as good and respectable people as you could find in our town, though his mother was a sloven whose work was never done? He had good marks in school, and though he was clumsy and foolish in his behavior, he was at heart kind. When people dropped into his father's store during hunting season to show their catch,
I have seen him cringe, as if blood and fresh dead things turned his stomach. He did not even own an air rifle, but would go along with the other fellows, breaking brush with his moccasins, eating around a campfire, sleeping under the sky. Nobody thought it funny he wouldn't take a shot at a partridge: it was his way. And though he had been going to Sloan's a long time, and was on easy terms with the men in the back room, he had never taken up smoking, which was perhaps the least of their vices.

What was that force in life, like the west wind, like the rushing waters of spring, that carried the weaker nature to its destruction? And what was the nature, the anatomy of weakness in man that permitted himself to be carried there?

These were the questions I planned to answer dramatically in my second novel, "West Wind Chariot," which concerned a boy of excellent family, who had all the advantages a boy could have, and was very bright, and gave promise of an unusual future; yet little by little lost ground and finally gave way to the hobo life, which had long been a lure, in choice of books and friends, in early adventures and imagination, though he did not realize it at first. In other words, the gradual disintegration of character - one of the most profound and difficult studies an author can make.

I would begin with his birth, where all books should begin, and carry him right through to his surrender to the evil forces. But I found my mind running ahead of the plan. Scenes sprang up, full-blown, and I must seize them before they faded. I could not wait to get to that point in my narrative: for the time, I set them down as they came.
While he was foraging among the garbage pails in a town out of Asheville, a gaunt old woman carrying a black bag came along. She slapped what he was eating out of his hands. "Come along with me," she ordered. She jerked his shoulder almost out of joint and then she picked up the conversation she was having with herself and did not notice him any more. But he was glad enough to follow someone who seemed to have a place to go.

The woman was a good six feet tall but she carried herself like a queen (or at least that's the way he thought a queen would carry herself). Her high-laced shoes without heels or soles were stuffed with rags and paper, her coat was thin and ragged-edged, but she wore fine kid gloves, and a delicate veil embroidered with some kind of butterflies breezed from her hat. They walked a couple of miles toward a certain mountain and then a long way up that mountain. All the way she muttered to herself, turning her head now and then in indignation at some fool person she thought was with her. But she did not notice Chet again till they got to the shack; then she opened the door and pushed him in ahead of her.

How many times he would dream of her! How often would she blow across his memory like the dark clouds of the mountain, smoking past, taking shape, bearing down on him!
He had run away. The dark clouds brought her vengeance, yet under clearer skies she stood next to his mother in his mind. Sometimes he thought she stood ahead of his mother because she never asked about himself, even with her eyes.

She never slept, but in odd moments through the day or night dozed in her chair by the fire. She had pulled the cot up before the fire, and the cot was for him. Every morning she went to the town with her black bag empty, and around noon she came back with it full. At night she left him for some vigil she kept on the mountain. The snow was never deep enough, the wind never fierce enough to keep her from her accustomed ways. Her eyes were terrible if you looked into them. She had taken him unsmiling to her, talking all the time in a low, vindictive voice. In spite of her preoccupation with the past, she boiled roots and berries to soothe his stomach, held his head when he was sick, and watched the fire far into the morning. When he was better she brought him books to read; and when he finished she made a fire of them. They were library books. Not a day passed but she showed in many ways that her thought was to him, and it was of kindness. But all that raging winter high in the mountains they never talked with each other as two people do. She was like a kind of mother-god who saw that he lacked nothing, and who let him be.
"Stupid fool... I told you... twelve around the top and twelve around the bottom... half an inch band... that is twice I have told you, twice... I shall go to Tiffany's... These diamonds are full of flaws -- look at this! I shall have to close my account. I shall go to Tiffany's if I have to tell you again -- twenty-four in all, the finest!"

On the third finger of her left hand she wore a wire twisted into a knot, and once in a while, when she held his head, she scratched him with it, accidentally.

When the snow melted from the mountain and they heard the birds in the valley, she brought him shoes that were almost new. She picked up her black bag.

"Come with me."

He followed her into the stores and saw how she had got the food that took them through the winter. Then one day she pushed him toward a store, and he knew what he was to do.

He went in and stopped at a table in the middle of the store. Canned goods were piled up on it, everything you could imagine. His heart began to thud because a stocky man with a white apron tied over a sprawling belly stood back to the wall and watched him, just watched him, nothing more.

Now when you are on the bum you beg and maybe you steal, but you don't steal like this.
Chet walked around the table and he frowned as if he were having a hard time to decide. His heart was thudding sickly. Why didn't someone come in? That would make it easier. How slick she did it. Why hadn't she thought to give him the black bag?

He made another turn round the table. The man was wise to him by this time. You had to be quick. A bum had to be quick every way, and he wasn't. His clothes began to itch and his forehead was hot. What would she say if — she could surely put a fellow's shoulder out of joint with one squeeze of those bony fingers.

The grocer cleared his throat. Maybe it seemed a lot longer time than it really was because still no one came in.

"I saw you with the Countess, boy."

So that was what they called her. Countess. It was a good name. And maybe once she had ordered a wedding ring with twenty-four diamonds in it.

Chet colored and looked down.

"The Countess 's been makin' the rounds for years. What she's lifted would add up to taxes, but we ain't sayin' nothin'. Kinda hurts though she takes us for dumb clucks, bein' so slick, but then she ain't right in the head." He came out from behind the counter and laid his hand on Chet's shoulder. "You-all got a mother, boy, somewhere?" The way he said it, the tears
burst into Chet's eyes. "Well, go back. You're young. Start over again. Ain't nothin' so bad you can't start over again and make good."

Chet could not say anything, could not meet the man's eyes. The big hot tears splashed on his coat, he despised himself that he'd given in a whole winter, gone soft. The man went behind the counter and started unpacking some cheese. He looked at what he was doing, patiently and methodically. It wasn't too late for Chet to make a grab and run; but not now. The man cut off a solid block of cheese and wrapped it in paper; then he put it with some rolls and a small cake in a paper bag.

He laid his hand on Chet's shoulder again, didn't squeeze it out of joint, just laid it there.

"Maybe you can work your way home, boy." He passed him the bag. "There's always work on the road in spring."

With all he knew, Chet did not need to work. But he did not go back to the Countess, either. He wondered, as he watched the passing country from a freight, if she noticed his going or if he had been to her like a lazy white cloud that seems to have put itself down for good on the mountainside and one day you think to take a look and it is gone.
The name Chet had come naturally, but I would have to change it. I would also change the color of his hair, if I had occasion to mention it. I read the incident over and thought it well done. I took a fresh sheet and started another chapter. As I sat at my table in the retreat, already filled with the spirit of Chet Whitman through his having been there, it was like taking words from dictation. At noon my father came home to lunch and he handed me a package. I saw at once it was my first novel, "Marriage," which I had expressed to the publishing house the day before we left on our southern trip. I held it to me and looked at him with bewildered, questioning eyes.

"We weren't home. Joe left it with Miss Eldon a while back," he explained gently. And after a while, "Don't take it so hard, baby."

I never thought it would come back! I went on staring at him. My heart was beating a tom-tom of disappointment and humiliation. Nothing like this had ever happened to me. Why had they returned it, why? Had they found out my age? What difference should that make, when it was good? Perhaps they had not even taken the trouble to read it, since I was unknown!

That was it - I was unknown!

"I read somewhere," said my mother, putting lunch on the table, "that some big writer, I forget her name, sent a story to eighty-seven different magazines before they took it."

She was only trying to cheer me up, and I resented it.

"Eighty-seven magazines!" I protested. "There aren't that many!"
Mother disappeared in the kitchen and returned.

"Well, maybe she wrote it eighty-seven times. But it proves that one has to be persistent."

"They may have all the books they can publish," suggested my father. "They may not need any more right now. I suppose there's a season for those things, like any other business."

"They publish enough inferior books!" I said.

He put his arm around me and gently guided me to the table.

"You're still young. You have plenty of time. Try another place, but don't worry about it. Maybe there's a knack, a way of going about it you don't know. They'll tell you at college. Plenty of time to write books after college. You finish school and be patient. Why, you're only a baby yet!"

I was grateful to them both for their kindness. My novel was good. It had been rejected because I was an unknown, or, as father said, they had filled their quota, or I did not know who to approach. No doubt it helped to have influence there, as in other things. My time would come, and solely through my own merits. I felt much better then and ate with good appetite. In the afternoon I made a list of publishing houses from books in the library. There weren't eighty-seven, but I found a great many, and throughout the winter kept sending out my book with the same results as it had met the first time. At first, when it came back, I felt gloomy and hated writing. But after a while I received the package from the expressman, or saw it lying, newly returned, on my study desk and thought only that I would have to
type a new sticker for it. My faith was unshaken; my will to work continued strong. I would never give up. In rejecting me, the publishers were only delaying their own glory.

That winter I subscribed to a writer's magazine and learned that stories could be turned out like shoes: they did not need to have quality, they wanted only appeal to popular taste to be salable. I could never stoop to such mechanical and deliberate deception of myself or the public. I would be a first-rank writer. I was made for it. It was only a question of time.

Armored with faith in myself, and the conviction of a distinguished future, I put aside my writing that winter, except for smaller things. As a senior, holding highest positions in all our activities, and the highest scholastic honors in the class, I was more than ever occupied with school. My entrance to Giles College was already arranged, and examinations were unnecessary because of my standing in the class. Contests at school and away, basketball trips, The Mountain View, clubs, assemblies, dances, homework kept me busy far into the night. It was only on the insistence of my parents that I at last consented to give up my music lessons and did not play in the recital that year. Column after column in the Sentinel concerning me kept my mother busy cutting and pasting. When in June my voice rang with the valedictory before a packed town hall ("Friends, the Class of 1927 now goes out to take its place with the vast numbers of young men and women who are leaving high schools all over the country at this season of the year...") I could see in the rapt attention and tears of all present that
they knew, as I did, no ordinary person stood before them. Even those of my classmates who had falsely interpreted my desire to be of service as self-seeking, and girls who would not change dances with me out of fear of losing their partners and, to protect themselves, remained unfriendly all year round, knew when I prayed that our class would live up to the school's most cherished ideals and set even higher standards for the classes to follow, that I would be the one to do it, as I had done it all along.
Chapter 13

I shall always look back at Giles as the first place, and I might say the only place, where my true worth was recognized. Giles was a small conservative college with good enough connections to Suttonsville so that I might come home every week-end, and I often did, bringing a friend or two, and a mass of work. My guests always made the same exclamations about Suttonsville, as we stood at our front door and saw clouds flying from the mountain top and returning; caught flashes of rich green that poured down to the sea; or from the yacht club saw whitecaps rolling toward the islands on the horizon, and the islands, like the mountains, undulating one behind the other until they were no more than mist in the sky.

"It's beautiful! they murmured breathlessly. "It's like an enchanted place:"

I only smiled.

"What did you expect?" I asked.

"A native's exaggeration, naturally."

"I never exaggerate. When you know me better, you'll know that."

Giles had no sororities, but I soon found the girls who would be my friends after we left it. What a difference from our Suttonsville girls! There were superficial girls at Giles, too, I have no doubt; some who were working their way through; and some who spent their time probing the mysteries of philosophy and life - with none of these had I anything in common. My friends were bright practical women who would definitely amount to something.
Even their names had power - Audrey Warren; Katherine Ebright; Vi Timmins; Julia Sexton; Ginny Shumwell.

They were not what you would call pretty girls. I was still the best looking, and in many ways the most promising, but we recognized each other's individuality and parts, and it was a proud and stimulating sextet that we formed early in our college life, and except for Julia, Vi, Ginny, and Audrey, our correspondence continues to this day.

Julia made sitting in a chair a gesture of importance. Her people came over with Winthrop and have been in Massachusetts since, though in recent generations hard-pressed by the Irish there. Ginny was a science major. Her teeth were bad and her legs thin as chair spindles. She wore suits practically the year round and was the first of us to become engaged. Her diamond was lovely, it bloomed like a rose on her hand. She was also the first who became unpleasant. Her conversation became unbearable to us, and this example will explain why:

"What is thought?" she asked one day we got into a philosophical discussion (Words, words, words, as Hamlet said - I never cared much for that sort of thing). "Electrical energy in motion. Color? Vibrations of varying frequencies. Sound? The same - but of much higher frequencies. These are absolute. This is knowledge, science. The philosopher should ground himself in the sciences. The first philosophers were physicists, mathematicians. Einstein is a great philosopher.

"This table"(and she struck it in her cold, decisive way) - "break it down to its components as a chemist would. It is made
up of electrons, protons, neutrons, all in motion. It differs from steel in the number of electrons. When you say the ultimate cause, this is what comes to my mind. This is reality."

How positive she was! How clipped and sure! She recognized no other side. Ancient truths as good as never existed for her. Science! Darwin! Monkeys! Some people were easily convinced.

The possibilities of the will stirred Vi, who quoted Glanvill with half-closed eyes. The lamplight fell on her long, gold-tipped lashes. She made her voice so soft, we had to keep our eyes on her lips to follow it. That was what she wanted. I am surprised I did not see through Vi Timmins sooner than I did. She wrote poetry which she read in the same frail, affected voice.

"And the will therein lieth, which dieth not," she quoted. "Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor? For God is but a great will, pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will."

"No Nietzsche tonight?" asked Audrey as tenderly as a mother talks to a child. They treated Vi as an elfin creature, a beyond-this-world type, and if she so much as coughed, they had her in bed with hot water bottles and doctors and midnight vigils. They called her another Millay but profounder, profound as Robinson! I wonder what they think now? She has published a few small volumes, I have seen her name in reviews, but what does it amount to? Poetry is for adolescents. I had long since ceased to write it. Something solid and big - that was my choice.
Like Virginia Shumwell, Audrey was made of straight lines. When she wore her suit with the small silver stripe running lengthwise through it, gunmetal stockings, long narrow shoes, and close black hat, she looked like a single black pencil line. Her chin went in deep and gave her a long-necked look. She too became engaged early. I think she married a business man; I have not cared to keep in touch with her.

Katherine always came closest to what was right, but even she was only in the sphere of it, never at dead center, where I stood; and she moved away with a swiftness and sureness that alarmed me.

"My family has always followed the groundwork of faith closely," she offered as her contribution. "They're not much given to speculation. But I'm a student. I like people. I like to find the good in them I know is there. And wink at what's left. God - philosophy - all the different church denominations we've got tangled up in - I'm not going to try untangle them. The relation of man to man is still the most important thing in life. We can do without the spiritual, but the ethical is the very rock of our existence. It's decent. Maybe that's all good is - a sense of decency. I'm not like Vi. I don't lose my breath over beauty. I'm too tough-minded for love. When I see it coming, it makes me want to laugh. And what good is truth if you find it? I'll settle for decency as the highest value. It satisfies."

Audrey looked round at me and cried out, in pretended terror, laughing all the time,

"Look out, ladies! You've lit the fuse, and Maryanne's going to blow her top!"
"And I have reason!" I exploded. "Here you've been settling the problems of the universe your own way - talking the same jargon those sophomore girls do that we see every day over at Commons, and never knowing their five-letter words and solemn faces add up to precisely nothing. All of you have been raised Christians, and only Kay has mentioned the church and then only in a derogatory way! I can quote, too. Dostoevsky said, 'If anyone could prove to me that Christ is outside the truth, and if the truth really did exclude Christ, I should prefer to stay with Christ, and not with the truth.' If you can believe in the spirit-world, you can believe in the virgin birth because it is founded on the same basis. And as for the ultimate cause, no one has disproved God. Why have people come back again and again to Christianity? Why do even those who approach it critically, leave off their criticism and come back to it, in one form or other? Oppression didn't break the back of the church in the early days; the corruption within the Roman church, the Inquisition, the idolatry didn't destroy the idea itself. That is eternal. There is only one way, and that is the way Christ showed us."

"My dear Hughson," interrupted Ginny in the insolent, cocksure way she had, "your outburst is like all outbursts. It won't stand close examination."

Ginny went on to speak of the Bible as "literature." She said in retranslating the manuscripts for the present "revised edition," scholars discovered that about 36,000 errors had been made in the King James translation. "But it's still beautiful writing."
"I don't claim to be an authority on the Scriptures," I rejoined, cuttingly. "But I've not come to college to put science or philosophy in place of my religion. I shall put them in their own place. I'm not ashamed to say that my family has followed the groundwork of faith closely, and that I have, too. It is so much a part of my life, I never think of it. I use it like my arms, or mind, that God also gave me. It's only when someone tries to take my arm, or head, and break them in two, I realize what they're trying to do and cry out! Yes, I blow my top. No matter how many college degrees I get, I shall never be too smart or proud for the church."

Was that not a spirited and Christian reply? Remember, it was impromptu. I may have added a few words more than I said that day, but not many; and my feeling remains unchanged.

"You're not a fundamentalist?" persisted Ginny.

"No, indeed." I recalled with horror Mrs. Parsons poring over a Bible lesson in the Alden kitchen.

"My people were."

Ginny annoyed me with science. Vi annoyed me with her foolish insistence that suffering was necessary to an artist. Comfort and well-being, she believed, made for shallowness.

"Look at Mendelssohn," she said.

"What's wrong with Mendelssohn?" I demanded.

"He always had a roof over his head. He always knew where the next meal was coming from."

"All the better for him. He could compose in peace."

"Death and peace are the same things."
"You have a strange notion of death."

"I hope," persisted Vi in her soft voice, "I hope I am never at peace - with my life, with myself. I want to feel - to tremble with every nerve in my body. I want to experience every emotion. O World, I cannot hold thee close enough!"

I looked at her, and let my look do for comment. I don't know how Vi got into our group. She was as much a pagan as Ginny Shumwell.

Giles was co-educational, but I have not much to say for the men. We talked about them, however, and tolerated them on dates. And we talked about the other men at Giles - the professors.

"Did you hear Spoff mention coming home from Germany with his wife?" drawled Ginny. Spoff was our German professor. "I wanted to ask, which wife?"

"It's confusing when there are three," murmured Vi from the depths of her chair. "I never saw the other two. I wonder if he chose them all different, or all the same?"

"There's no doubt about the way he feels toward the present Mrs. Spoff," offered Kay. "Remember the time we went to the movies, and the usher flashed his light on a couple holding hands, and they looked up and smiled at us?"

Vi narrowed her eyes. Her voice seemed to come from far off. It was what Audrey called her creative mood. I knew enough about authorship to be impatient with such posing. Inspiration does not creep up on you like that. Creation is as natural to those who are creative as walking or breathing. One does not take on any new
postures with it. And this is what she chanted:

"If you can sit with a man for hours without speaking, is it the real thing or is it boredom? That's what I want to know."

"You darling!" said Audrey, sliding on to the arm of her chair. I could not see that what she had said was in the least clever or original. They praised and laughed, but did not answer her. It all seemed very foolish to me, so I answered her.

"If it's Reg Cullis, it's boredom."

I might just as well not have spoken, for all the attention they gave me. Would anyone have believed it - they, the leaders at Giles?

One afternoon I was working in the quarterly office on some copy for the next issue, and this same Reg Cullis, who was also on the staff, sauntered in. He was in my class, a junior at the time, stocky and of medium height, with short chin, full thick lips, and dimples. He insisted on reading me a new poem he had written after the Saturday night dance, and when he finished, he beamed at me as if I had read one of mine.

"I think the old ballad makers would be surprised at what I've done with that, Maryanne. Pretty strong stuff, wouldn't you call it? I can imagine the frail flower of Foss Hall" (he meant Vi) "swooning with delight. Why didn't you bring her along? Thought you two were friends. So much in common and all that. Say, I had a funny dream last night. I'm always punning in my sleep. Remember that one - maybe it was somebody else I told - all the gold you can Ophir? Offer - Ophir, see? Well, last night I dreamed I called a doctor for my sick intellect. I traced it back to something old
Burge said in a lecture. 'The seeking intellect.' Remember?

Funny, the turn those things take in your sleep. I saw Burge at the dance and wonder to behold, he was dancing with his wife. She dances a lot better with other men. You haven't anything special to do, have you? Come catch some air with me."

"I'm getting plenty of it now."

He swooped down over the table where I sat.

"Honest," he said in an admiring tone, "you can say the darndest things with the straightest face! You got a line, all right."

"If you mean that I say what I think, it's not a line. Go out for your walk. Get somebody else. Get the frail flower. Your conceit bothers me."

He made a gesture of tearing his hair.

"She calls me conceited! She calls me conceited." Then he pulled the pencil out of my hand. "Come on, twin."

"I'll be through in an hour."

He pulled a chair out in the middle of the floor and sat against the back of it, facing me. Every now and then he would interrupt me. "You're beautiful! It's amazing. That hair - those eyes - that nose! Beauty out of Suttonsville! Who would believe it!"

Finally I looked up.

"And why should that be amazing?"

"I get the same feeling when I walk in the cemetery and see a flower growing there that no one brought - just blew in once and looks so pretty blossoming there. But you - can you really be content? You run home every week-end. Aren't summers enough?"
Are you tied down by your parents? Do you have a boy friend there? What's the story? Doesn't it stifle you? Don't you want to beat your brains out in the stillness of the evening? Don't you feel death everywhere around you?"

"I feel that I die a little when I leave it."

He sighed, his face a paean of devotion.

"Beautiful! Amazing! Beautiful!"

He bored me. I could not believe that his chatter was a true expression of his mind or opinion. It was artificial and tiresome. But I walked with him.

It was a good day in early autumn. The sun still warmed. Now and then a wind shook the leaves like dice, and they scuttled down the road ahead of us. I thought of Chat. I had written a draft of "West Wind Chariot" the first summer after I entered college, but did not like it and put it away. The next summer I wrote "Some Root of Knighthood," the story of an artist of great parts, whose ruthless ambition led him to the sin of adultery and even the contemplation of murder, from which he was saved by the chance meeting with a young girl, with whom he fell in love. To her influence he owed the noble works of his last period.

... never yet

Could all of true and noble in knight and man
Twine round one sin.....

.....................but apart there grew
Some root of knighthood and pure nobleness."
It was a short novel, but one of great drama and power, and though I treated my hero well, and made him famous and happy in the end, I did not let him off easily for his sin of adultery, as you may imagine. Now Chet had moved into my mind, and every day there was a note for my memorandum book - a line of dialogue, a place name, a bit of description. Yes, he was growing. And "Some Root of Knighthood" was making the rounds "Marriage" had made just before it.

I put my cardigan over my shoulders and we headed for the meadow beyond the athletic field. It was shrilly quiet and brought an uneasy memory of an afternoon by the sea, fortunately dispelled by the absence of water. The clouds were briskly blowing. We sat down and Reg read a poem of Thomas Hardy's on the fall of nations. The sun was hot, the wind had fallen off, the meadow was sweet. It might have been spring. A few brown-eyed susans still blossomed here and there.

"I like it here!" I said, and spreading out my arms, lay back and looked at the sky. "It makes me think of home."

"It makes me think of a Saxony hilltop where I ate hot wienerwursts." (He had gone over steerage one summer.) Leaning on an elbow, he looked down at me. "You've got skin like those German women, Maryanne. Pink and white. Have I ever told you that you are beautiful?"

"It's a doubtful compliment, Reg," I returned honestly, "since I have to share it with so many others."

"How can you keep such a straight face?" he marveled.
"Because I'm not kidding."

"I'm not either now. I'm going to kiss you."

I sat up at once.

"No you're not."

"Aw, Maryanne." He pouted, and went on asking with his small, silly eyes.

"If you're going to behave like this, we'd better be starting back."

"No, we'd better be starting."

"Don't be ridiculous." I meant it. Let him kiss me! Nothing was farther from possibility than my enjoyment of it.

"You don't know how nice it can be. Let me show you." He had put off his usual conceit and now had the look and whine of a begging dog. I hated it. "You don't have to tell that guy back home," he added, by way of inducement. "He's probably cheating, himself."

I said nothing but got up and brushed the stiff grass from my skirt. He walked back with me, chattering so anxiously I realized he was trying to apologize in a way obscure enough to save his pride; but still I made no comment and turned into Foss as if he had not seen me to the door.

Perhaps through him it became the general notion of the school that I had a friend "somewhere." Though I wore no ring, because some of my friends were engaged, and I held myself aloof, I was regarded as engaged to a fellow back home, or at one of the big universities - someone rather special, for naturally, I would not
be won by a small man. I denied the rumor at first, but did not make too strong an objection, and when it continued, I let it go. Of course that meant fewer dates, no serious approaches of the men at Giles, but I was not disturbed. As I have already indicated, there was not much to be said for the men at Giles.

Meanwhile, my cousin Gwendolyn married. Mother told me the news Thanksgiving recess. "But who in the world would have her? Such a flighty thing." "It was an elopement - not one of the boys she's been seeing at all." "Will she finish school?" For Gwendolyn had dawdled about several years after graduation, and had finally decided to attend a dramatic school in Boston, where this had developed. "Your Aunt Charlotte says he's quite a bit older - someone John Colbourne introduced her to. And very rich." "You'd expect an older man to look for character, steadiness." "Gwendolyn was always gay, but she has a serious side. I'm sorry the girls were older than you, dear. I hoped you'd know them better." "Their age wasn't the barrier." Mother continued, "I would like a young man like Esther's young man for you."

"Arthur wouldn't do for me at all, mother," I said, almost severely. "He has no personality. He is just like a hundred other men."

"I was only thinking," she went on, with a troubled look and sigh, "he worships her, and is so considerate and even-tempered, and comes of a good family. A girl can't ask for much more than that. He will make her a fine husband."

"Well, I'm not worried about a husband right now. I have too
many things to do first. If I wanted a ring to flash around, don't you think it would be the easiest thing in the world for me? - all my chances?"

"I'm sure of it," murmured my mother, but her tone did not impress me, and she looked away and sighed again.

If mother knew about Reg Cullis, she would want me to ask him down for Christmas. "I'm going to kiss you." As if I would let him! What sort of kissing would he do?

I was not so foolish as to still be in love with Ansell. I could never marry him. What would Aunt Charlotte say? Imagine presenting him to Julia! How her clear eyes would look right through him, and know him before he even spoke a word! And yet, were Aunt Charlotte, Julia Sexton, the other girls important to this feeling I had just to remember the touch of his mouth, the touch of his hand! Could anything compare to that emptiness of the week after our first quarrel, the loneliness of the long weeks after he had left Suttonsville and I waited to hear from him, or perhaps see him, and did not! It must have taken me almost a year to get used to his not being there, and even now I could not quite believe that it was all over. Some day I would marry a more suitable person. I remained aloof now only because no one suitable had appeared. Some day I would have to let another man kiss me. I supposed I would get used to it. Certainly the man would not be stupid, conceited Reg Cullis who, if be thought of anybody outside himself, fixed on the frail flower of Foss Hall - and a good match it was! Mother's anxiety on my account surprised me. Could it be that she was
Jealous of my cousins, worried for me? They were older than I. Surely she did not want me to rush into anything as final as marriage without thought or affection - as Gwendolyn had no doubt done. Surely she did not doubt that I could marry anyone I pleased.

Chet Whitman had tried the state university a year and flunked out. He worked in his father's store a while, and another college took him on probation. He did better there, I suppose he applied himself, but remained only a year and was back home again. His conduct gave me thorough satisfaction. Although he was only remotely the pattern for Chet of "West Wind Chariot," and was in every way inferior to him, yet the fact that he, too, had not the backbone to resist the degrading principle in life, but was gradually going down as a leaf carried along by the wind, made me realize how artistically true were the materials and thesis that I had chosen for my third novel, and I could have predicted his end as easily as I saw the last page of my book.

One of the girls I knew, who lived in Foss, a likable enough person though I was not particularly friendly with her, seeing little of her as she worked in the alumni office for her tuition, was a sociology major. One night, going into her room - for she sold candy bars, too - I found her reading a report on our wandering population, which had a section on the status and social aspects of hoboism. I was interested and asked to read it. She also told me of some books on this subject in the library, and the next day I put my name down for them. One of them had a glossary in the back, giving terms used by hobos, such as jungle and wolf.
and raising the blinds. After I finished these books, I felt that I had all I needed now to complete my novel, and from the way the very thought of it stirred me, I felt it would be the best of the three.

One Sunday in winter I heard the girls starting off for the pond, the clink of their skates and the lilt of their voices blending to make a music that would not leave my ears. Their steps lightened on the stairs. They vanished ahead of their voices that returned to plague me as I wrote. I went to the window. The campus was deep in snow. The trees were bare, and I could see all the buildings clearly. As I stood there, a great loneliness came over me, so great I wanted to cry. What was I doing here, with strangers all around me, making no more impression upon their life, or the life of the school, than as if I had not spent three years here at all? - filling my head with Latin and history and principles of composition when I might have put the years to better advantage composing in my own way? I longed to be at home, with my mother. She knew me truly, deeply, and she loved me. Why had I let the snow keep me here today? A room of my own was not working out so well. Why do they make single rooms so small? I thought. It is like a cell. I went down to the living room, where a girl was playing Liszt's Second Hungarian Rhapsody in fox trot time, while a few others hung over the piano, their shoulders moving to the rhythm. Some others were exchanging worries that, with things as they were, jobs would not be plentiful this June. I went back to my floor and walked down the hall to see if Gertrude were home. The door was
open, but no one was there. On the shelf sat a few boxes of assorted candy bars. You took what you wanted and left the money. How humiliating, I thought; I would never come to college if I had to do that! She worked more hours than she put into school, yet she never complained, but always went about with an open, cheerful expression, though sometimes she looked very tired. She was elected to many more things than she had time for, and was generous and interested in them all. What a pity she was only an average type, really no one you would expect to do much after college, but she had a motherly, competent way and it was nice to have her on the floor.

As I have said, my abilities were recognized at college, particularly in English, in which, if I have not already mentioned it, you must have guessed I was majoring. In my course in Narrative Writing, we were allowed to write in any form in which we were interested, and naturally, having a genius that could not submit to the cramping brevity and rules of the briefer forms, I submitted chapters from my novels. Samples of the writing done by the class were read by the instructor at every meeting, and an open discussion followed.

We had been together so long, we knew the type of work each did. Names did not need to be given: we recognized the style at once. Moreover, we were adults and could take criticism as well as give it. I looked forward to criticism because, unlike Reg Cullis, I believed I had hardly begun to tap the full strength of my powers.
Yet I consistently received nothing but praise. "This is beautiful writing... You have a genuine feeling for words... You are subtle..." The worst I had heard was that my incidents were too even, I was reserved, I did not carry my scenes to a dramatic climax. Such comments as these I paid little attention to, for they were of no value.

As soon as the instructor began, "After his clothes got ragged..." the class at once recognized the further adventures of Chet Lowden (I had decided to keep his first name) and the author. They leaned forward on their desks in rapt attention. Not a stir, not a cough all the time he read. They were like a group that had had a spell put on them, and now lay dreaming under it. The afternoon sunlight slanted across the room, and when his voice ceased, the ray had crossed completely to the wall.

After his clothes got ragged he left the highway. For a time the remembrance of his strange good luck day after day, the beauty of an intimate summer, the utter freedom and confident insecurity of his new life cast a spell over him. But autumn came early, and the glow of the remembered soon proved poor substitute for an overcoat. Nature that had worked for him all summer turned traitor, cut off all her resources, intercepted his luck, and drove him mercilessly into dying quarries of leaves. He was hungry, cold, lonely beyond measure for someone to talk to. But he would not go back.
He fell in with a crowd of boys most of them younger than he; they were going South. He watched a train being made up in the yard; his hands were numb and he was scared he wouldn't make it. He was not used to trains as there was no depot in Minotville, the line ended at Goodport. Once he had watched a circus unloading down there, and another time a carnival. But this was a different kind of watching. "Look out for the bulls," somebody whispered. "As soon as it starts, jump on quick."

The cars jolted and jerked and finally the freight pulled out. They made themselves comfortable in an empty box car; there was some hay, and one of them pulled out a deck of cards. They looked like awful kids to be playing cards, but he soon saw they were a match for any of the men in Joe's. Only one older guy had piled on with them; he had an evil, battered face, and he immediately stretched himself out in a corner and went to sleep. Chet went to the door and looked out. The earth was red and the river muddy. It seemed all wrong and yet it was only more ways that things were different in his new life. His stomach rolled for he hadn't eaten all day.

"What's your racket, buddy?" asked one of the kibitzers, coming over. They called him Sandy. As he was only a kid, Chet decided to put on a front, too.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Just traveling."
The boy had a mean fox face on a long body, his Adam's apple was sharp as his nose, and his lids were granulated.

"Where'd you come from?" He tapped a tin of tobacco to cigarette paper.

"Oh, up North," swaggered Chet.

Sandy looked impressed and offered him a cigarette. He picked up the butts wherever he found them, he explained, and saved the tobacco in a tin. "I'm no dead beat. When I light up, I want it to be a weed and not my kisser."

Chet shook his head. "Thanks."

Sandy cried out, "Look, fellers, a pledge boy!"

And busy as they were with their cards and smokes, they all stopped on the spot and stared at him.

"Come over here," called one, his cigarette flapping as he talked. One eye narrowed to the smoke gave him a mean look.

Chet was not used to being ordered round.

"I can hear what you have to say here." But he was good and scared. His stomach hit his backbone, and he turned as if he would be sick in the hay.

The group in the corner went rigid with astonishment. The leader eyed him with one steady eye clear and one through smoke. Chet straightened up and met those eyes; the old boozers snored; the wheels rattled and creaked under them.

"Say that again, Jack. I don't hear so well."
But Chet said nothing, just looked, and this fellow, who sat a lot taller than he was, stood up and started coming toward him.

"I don't like that grin," he said.

Chet didn't know he was grinning. It was certainly no time to be grinning. He was scared stiff, he couldn't fight. The fellow stopped right in front of him, and the others drew around. Suddenly they piled on, pummeled and swore. He flung about helplessly, but there were too many of them and he didn't know how to fight. They beat him up and threw him out on the bank of the muddy river. He cried and thought it was tears on his mouth; but when he wiped them away with his hand, he saw it was blood. Every bone in his body felt broken. It was maybe noon and bitter cold.

He tried to get up and could not. So he lay a few minutes in the cold, wondering what was going to happen to him. He looked up at the brilliant blue sky and thought how distant and hard it was. He remembered Ladygold, the butterfly, that had died in the first frosts. Was he going to die? He never thought that it could happen to him.

"Can you walk?" The old boozzer from the box car leaned over. His breath stank but his hands were clumsy gentle. "Here, let me help you."

Chet sickened at the nearness of the evil, battered face, the stinking breath, but in the small brown eyes he
saw kindness, and he needed kindness now. He leaned heavily as the man led him to a clump of bushes that cut off the wind. His friend sat close to keep him warm and shared some bread and sausage he had. "Are you better now?" Chet nodded vaguely. His head felt like a window pane frosted over tight. He couldn't make much out, but he did feel better. "The next town we hit," promised his friend, "I'll get you a coat. You haven't been on the road long, have you?" Chet said no. The least he could do was give him a straight answer; and besides, this fellow was an old hand and knew when a kid was lying. He touched Chet's groin. "I thought so. Nice to see you still got some flesh on you." Chet was surprised, but said nothing. "You'll be stiff where they kicked and mailed you. Them sons of aitches." He started this funny business with his hands. "Let me massage you. I'm good at it, dear. You'll feel a hundred per cent --" His stubby fingers pulled at Chet's clothes.

Had the old bozo gone crazy? Or had he? Chet stiffened but he didn't want to seem ungrateful.

"Now, look, I --"

"Let me put my coat over you. That's it. You'll forget the cold. Please, dear..." He said something more with his hands.

Chet's head went crystal clear. Strength he didn't know he had inundated him. He pummeled the old boozzer hard as he had been pummeled. Then aching and dazed again,
with an overpowering sensation of sadness he staggered away, his hands curling around the club he would pick up if he had to. He began to bleed again, and spit on the move. A farmhouse appeared in a clearing and he started toward it, but a dog came barking and snapping and he had the devil of a time kicking him off. Sadness swept down again like a wind from the hills at home; the stirring of the dry leaves made his heart ache. What was to become of him? Where would he go? Already the sun looked small and red and hard, and it was not far above the horizon.

And all this time he was walking away from the tracks and the river. He came to a creek that was not so muddy as the river. Seeing it, he had an overpowering desire to wash himself and his clothes. God, he had to wash himself clean again! He tore off his clothes and jumped in.

"What the hell do you think you're doin'?"

A boy about his size stood hands on hips on the bank. He was wiry and sure of himself, and his brown eyes were keen and friendly.

"What does it look like?" Chet called back easily, chattering and spitting. Boy, he felt great!

"Come out of there. Do you want to get pneumonia?"

Chet dried himself with his underwear, which he intended to wash. Harry peeled off a suit of his own underwear that he had on him -- one of the three suits
he wore. "I got overcoats checked in two missions," he said laughing, "but I like to carry small parcels with me. Never know when I'll hit those towns again. Besides, a couple of thin layers keep you a lot warmer than one thick one."

He had, he said, been working a few days on a farm in the neighborhood but he'd had a run-in with the farmer. He was fed up with the place anyway. The longest he'd ever worked was a winter on a Wyoming cattle ranch, and what-a winter it was! He'd headed for California a couple of winters and something always happened; but he'd make it some day.

"Why don't you come along South with me," asked Chet, trying not to sound too anxious. But he'd taken a liking to Harry at once. Harry was just the fellow he could pal up with, he didn't look the sort who'd throw you out of a box car. Besides, he knew the ropes.

Harry shook his head emphatically. "Not me. I been down that way. Spent all my time duckin' cops and chain gangs. The South's been tough since the Civil War."

"What's on your mind right now?" Chet was disappointed at the report on the South and hoped desperately Harry would ask him to be buddies.

"I don't know. I kind of figured I'd get a job somewhere around here, a good steady job. Times are hard now, and I want to eat."
"How long you been on the road?"

Harry met his eyes.

"Off and on about ten years."

Harry was older than he looked -- he was twenty-two. Chet regarded him in many ways his superior. He was over twenty, for one thing, and he knew his way around. He built a fire and shared with Chet food he had taken as his only wages from the farmer. It tasted marvelous to Chet, and he was not cold any more. He told Harry all that had happened to him, even his meeting with the old man. Harry understood.

"You'll run into a lot of wolves," he said.

He and Harry traveled around together a month. They were real buddies. They went halves on what they panhandled and talked philosophy on cold steel jail floors. Harry showed him how to get on a moving freight and how to eat with one arm cocked around his mission stew so no one would sneak it out from under and how to protect your clothes from jackrollers in the night. Harry taught him how to ride the blinds so they would be warm and in what cities you could get three free meals a day. And it was Harry who changed his attitude about begging and stealing. When you were on the road you had a right to everything you could get short of killing a man for it or taking from someone as hard up as you.
That was one of the big lessons he learned from Harry and he never forgot it.

Harry picked up his overcoat at a mission and gave it to Chet. "It ain't doin' nobody any good, hoardin'. I got another one down the line. Besides, I won't need it. I'm headin' for California." Chet didn't like to hear Harry talk of going to California. It seemed such a long way from home, and he wasn't ready for it. "We're doing all right around here," he said. Didn't Harry say he wanted a job? Harry looked at him. "You got to be honest about this, Chet. Are you or aren't you? Like the preacher said—sure, I listen to the preacher when I get a free flop for it and an extra bowl of soup; he said, He that is not with us is against us. I ain't sure about you, Chet. You're holdin' out. You gotta decide whether it's this life for you or some other. You gotta decide." Chet said, "I never thought much about it. I just came along." He was hurt that Harry found him wanting. What else could a fellow be than what he was? And didn't they get along fine together?

Harry was a great one to mooch food. He could read a woman the minute he laid eyes on her, tell how much she was good for, and get it. But somehow everybody tightened up with the season, times were tough and people weren't shelling out as much as you'd expect toward the holidays. Their luck went behind a cloud, and Harry kept talking
California. They got to Pittsburgh on a day that was raining. They slopped through the snow to Sunshine Mission. It was a mean rain, and the mission was crowded. Filthy lot, though Chet as they waited to register. They whistled the cold out of their fingers and stamped the mud and snow off their swollen feet in gunnysack stuffed shoes. The sight of them, the smell of their soggy clothes turned his stomach. Wolves, he thought, and he despised them. But at the same time he remembered they had been on the road a long time, and had maintained themselves, and he wondered if he would be able to do as well. So far he was a wash-out.

"No beds," said the man at the desk crisply.

"That's OK with us," Harry told him. "We can bunk on our ears."

They had bean soup, watered coffee, and a doughnut that had to be dunked before you could make a dent in it. He dozed through the first part of the sermon, which was pointless and rambling; then he felt he was going to be sick and made for the toilet. It might have been the bean soup, or the sausage they'd had from a butcher earlier in the day. He was sick all night, turning and groaning in a half sleep; the men stretched out around him kicked and cursed him for creaking the springs. The vague mission smell of stew and grease and holiness, the body and old clothes smell of the sprawling, snoring, muttering men, the toilet at the end of the hall, his own smell crowded
and convulsed him. He could not get his breath, he wanted to go out into the rain that had turned to snow again; what if he did carry the banner all night? — he was going crazy for a breath of clean fresh air, just one breath — that was all he wanted. But Harry held him back. "Do you want to be a stiff in the mornin'?" Now they swore at Harry, muttered, cursed, stank. Chet thrashed around, and at last the dark and stench lifted, and it was day.

They waited at the foot of a grade for a train. It was stinging cold. Harry held on to him, and Chet was glad for it; otherwise he thought he would lift and spin on the dazzling cold.

The train came along, slowly enough, and Harry swung on. "Come on," he yelled, and reached a hand down. Chet threw out his hand for an iron; feeling the way he did, he thought he could make it easy. Lift and float, that's the sensation he had. But he didn't grab iron; just that icy, stiff air. He ran along panting, and his legs got heavier, his breath shorter. He blinked red and black confetti. He skidded on the bank. The last he saw of Harry was a flapping paper figure against the sky. Then the confetti got too big to see him clearly; Chet saw just big chunks of red, then black.

It seemed to storm a lot after Harry left. The snow was deep, and the wind strong. He huddled in the corner straw of a box car and cried. His tears were strangely familiar, bitter and unsatisfying as mission soup. He was always hungry. He did not care where he was going, he did
not talk to anybody. He wiped his face with sandpaper hands. Harry! Why had he left him? Where had he gone? They were buddies. How well they had got along together. They needed each other. All the joy and meaning of this way of life, its freedom, and the skill needed to maintain yourself in it - these things Harry knew and could teach him. The old way he could never go back to, or be content in now. He had found himself. He would not let go as he had the iron. He would not give up till he found Harry again! Harry was the star he hitched his wagon to. When would he see him? What a reunion it would be! And how much they would have to say to each other.

The spell snapped. They shifted positions, cleared throats, smiled at each other. It was obvious that here was writing such as they had never heard before. I could sit back well content, knowing that all they could say again was "beautiful," "fine," "absorbing."

One girl asked to have that sentence read again about Chet's tears. "His tears were strangely familiar, bitter and unsatisfying as mission soup." She did not know just what it meant, but thought it confused, and the mention that he was always hungry placed so close to this comparison of tears with mission soup led her to think he was not merely tasting them, accidentally the way people do, but trying to get nourishment from them - a conclusion that left her with a very unpleasant sensation. The class laughed. On this
comment, so stupid and trivial in proportion to the strength and imaginativeness and beauty of the chapter, the bell rang.

At the next meeting the comments were resumed. Someone thought I was cold, detached. Another thought it very well written. Other things were said, to which I paid little attention, considering their sources.

"I chose the best chapter of those submitted," said the instructor at last, "and I agree, it is very well done - far above the average student writing. Miss Hughson has consistently shown a feeling for words and a searching beneath surfaces that makes anything she writes worth reading. And yet, there's something that's not been touched upon by any of you, perhaps because I stand alone in this, and you and Miss Hughson have right on your side. Someone mentioned a coldness, detachment. I think that comes from the fact that this is not written out of direct personal experience. I for one feel that the best and most convincing work can come only out of direct personal experience. I know that Miss Hughson has never been on the road. I have my doubts - and I may be wrong about this - that she ever knew personally, and well, anyone who has. This attitude on my part makes it difficult for me to fully appreciate the merits that this work undoubtedly has. The illusion of reality may be great enough so that others won't have the same difficulty. But for me, it is not."

This began a heated discussion which recalled Ansell's criticism of my poetry, though in better language. I was pleased enough that many in the class felt as I did, that one must supplement
his own experience with imagination and books, for it is impossible to be everywhere and do everything. How foolish to place such a limitation on oneself as he suggested! Many of the great books would never have been written, even Shakespeare borrowed right and left, and what of the historical novel?

But he was firm in his stand and had an answer for everything.

"How many of you are familiar with Mrs. Wharton's 'Ethan Frome'?" It is one of the small masterpieces of our time, and yet, as a New Englander, I have never been quite comfortable with it. I cannot get away from the feeling that Mrs. Wharton is an outsider. Everything about the story indicates it. She is an outsider looking in on us, passing by. Her story is extremely effective, skilfully written. You can have that kind of thing if you want it. I admit that our literature has been enriched by just such contributions. But my point is that nothing can take the place of first-hand experience, and the closer to our roots, the earlier, the more convincing."

I was not surprised at this outburst. He had expressed himself to me before in this way, in office conferences as well as class. But he did not change me. Was he not an outsider, too? As far I knew, he had never written anything. Why should I change the whole scheme of my literary life to satisfy a whim he held? He only made me understand what sort of people worked in publishers' offices, who rejected my novels. I determined to keep on writing in the only way I could write. Time would prove I had not erred.

The mills at home shortened their work-week, rents were hard to collect. All that year and the next we heard talk of hard times
through the country. Yet our way of life was not changed. My contract came in May. I believe I was the first member of my class to get a teaching job.

"Your aunt was pretty nice to you after all," said Kay when I told her.

"My aunt is only on the school board. It is the superintendent who makes the decision." (I had had an interview with him during spring vacation.)

"And is the superintendent a relative or a tenant?"

"He's a tenant." I did not like the steely, suggestive lights in her eyes. Kay was getting married, too, right after commencement.

"I'm sure, with my marks and record, I would have no trouble getting a job anywhere. But I want to be at home."

"Other people have marks and a record like yours, and they've no job yet."

"I think it is an evidence of weakness to blame outside factors, the times, one's luck, one's superiors. If I don't do as well as I think I should, I always look to myself for the fault."

"The only trouble with that, my dear, is you never think you don't do well." It was her way to look at life lightly, and I could afford to be liberal. "We mustn't lose touch with each other," she added. "I want to know how you get along."

I think of all my classmates Gertrude, the girl who sold candy bars down the hall, congratulated me most warmly. She too had signed for a teaching job in an academy upstate and was staying on for summer school and more education courses. "I should like to
compare experiences with you," she said, "but I know how busy you always are." She beamed when I told her I would answer, if she wrote, but I knew that I never would, and never expected to see her again.
Chapter 14

It was seven o'clock, and mist blotted Mt. Giddings from sight. Mist filled the air and my mouth like absinthe. I drank it in. It kept moving, and now and then the sun shone clear. "Are you sure you don't want a coat?" asked mother from the door. "No, dear; this sweater will be too warm by the time I come home." "Are you sure you don't want a lunch?" she asked again. "It's a long morning." "The cookies will do, if I'm hungry at recess. Don't worry." I threw her a kiss and at Fowler Street, where I turned, she was still watching me. I waved, but she could not see me that far away.

Fowler Street was deserted. It had the enchanted look that mist always gives, whether in the morning or at night, and my eyes were dazzled with its coming and going in the increasing light of day. I had started for school early, to have plenty of time to look through the rooms, get acquainted with my schedule, and find the books I would need for my classes. The intense quiet gave me a sense of possession. Only mother at the far end, hands folded on her apron over a housedress and her eyes sweet and wishing me well this morning; and I on this end - only we two were alive in this world we loved. Through the trees I caught a glimpse of the high school, painted a horrid pink by the janitor, who earned extra money this way.

At Giddings Street I turned again, and came in full view of the high school, standing solitary in the big grassy field, its bright pink paint arousing in me a feeling of pity, like the ghastly
efforts of aging women to make themselves what they were not, and succeeding no better than this. And what a surprise I had in the schoolhouse! It had seemed tremendous when I went there as a student, and of very adequate size when I passed by since. But how small and still now in the morning air it looked as I approached the first day I was to teach there! The wonderful evergreens that used to grow on one side looked stunted and gray.

We had had a meeting the night before, in the Baptist parish house, which was conveniently located in the center of the town. But not all the teachers had come. Several were new to me, including the principal. Miss Alden was cordially distant, as always, and offered any help she could give. I thanked her, but knew that I would not need it.

The front door was locked, but I had a key to the side door and let myself in. The floors creaked, the windows rattled. No one was on the first floor, and it was not at all changed.

The stairs creaked like the floors. I stood for a moment on the threshold of the auditorium, where I had addressed so many assemblies. It also served as a study hall, and had an electric clock with a lever that rang the bells for classes. How often I had seen teachers rise and pull the lever! Now I would be doing the same. The room had a piano, a Webster's unabridged dictionary, the cover long gone and many leaves missing, and an incomplete set of encyclopedias. My heart sank. When I had been a student here, I had never noticed the pitiful lack of facilities. But since that time I had been to Giles, my experience was wider; I had worked in a beautiful and well-stocked library, and I could not imagine anyone getting through
high school with less. Well, we would see.

I passed the typewriting room, the science lab. Like the first floor, nothing here was changed. Mr. Floyd, the principal, sat at his desk in the office at the end of the hall, opposite the auditorium, and was bent over some work. His office was a long, shallow room, three windows making up the side that faced the front of the building, overlooking the flagpole, bare now, and grass turning brown. If you raised your head, you could see Mt. Giddings. On the wall behind him were three shelves of complimentary textbooks and college catalogs, and a closet where he kept school supplies and his coat. A Ditto machine stood beside his desk and pushed against the single visitor's chair. Over his desk were small black-framed pictures of Washington and Lincoln.

The office was familiar to me, for I had dittoed many programs and announcements there, and had consulted with the principal on school matters, and taken care of the office many times during his absence. Mr. Floyd had come when I was in college. He was a striking person - tall and broad-shouldered, but the impression was at once spoiled by his apologetic way of speaking, and the timidity of his eyes.

He looked up as I paused outside his door, and he could not have looked more startled had I been a ghost. Then he smiled a rather shaky smile and stood up awkwardly.

"Miss Hudson! I heard someone outside - thought it was the janitor - it's rather early - won't you come in?"

"I won't disturb you. I'm just getting my bearings again."
"Oh yes, you went to school here."

"I graduated four years ago."

"You'll not find it much changed. A wonderful group - teachers, pupils -" His voice faded uncertainly away.

"Can you tell me where I'll find the English books, Mr. Floyd?"

"In the closets on the first floor - outside rooms 4 and 6, I believe. Other books have been put in there, too. I hope Mr. Clough will find enough money in his budget to get us some new ones, but with times the way they are... Still, books have a way of disappearing, getting old, tearing in spite of times." He laughed as if he had been witty, and looked for me to join him. But I did not. "Shall I go down with you?"

"No, don't trouble." I was anxious to get away. "It's still early. I'm going to finish my tour."

"That's it, go right ahead, go right ahead."

What a nervous, ineffective personality, I thought, as he gave me a plan and a record book.

The third floor was cut off at the sides, being the attic, and was very stuffy, even in winter. The big room had a fringe of folding chairs, an upright piano, and a platform. Here we had practiced debates and prize speaking. In the back were the domestic science rooms. The first had a bed, and I smiled to see Mehitabel, the six-foot female dummy we used for practice bandaging, still lying in it, bandaged and blissfully vacant. Next, the kitchen with small electric plates (there was no gas in Suttonsville), a big cookstove, and thick dishes shining on a shelf. The sewing room was small and cosy with sunlight; an ironing board stood in the corner, the machine
was open. There I had sewed my cooking apron, and had cut it out and basted it at that table. I sat first at the table, for I was always at the head of the class. How close even those grammar school days were, when I had come here. All the years between seemed the brief changing confused incidents of a single dream.

The school began to fill with life. I could hear people running up and down the stairs, shrieking and calling to each other, laughing noisily. What loud voices they had, was there any need to make so much noise? I could not remember that we had been so disorderly. I went down to the first floor.

While I was browsing over the dog-eared volumes of the corridor closet outside room 4, I heard, above a commotion that the Bridewell mill running full force could not match, a man's voice.

"Young lady, students are not allowed --"

I turned quickly and saw the round, rosy face of my former math teacher, which, for the occasion, wore a severe and disapproving expression. He had not been at the meeting the night before.

I smiled.

"Have I changed so much, Mr. Fletcher?"

He recognized me at once, and we shook hands.

"You haven't changed enough, Maryanne, that's the trouble. I mistook you for a student. It's nice to have someone young here for a change. Are you getting along all right?"

"These books are a disgrace."

"You ought to see mine."

"Why hasn't anything been done?"
He shrugged his shoulders. "No money."

"There's never any money for the high school! Have they put physical training back in? Mr. Floyd said something about hard times. Times weren't hard when I went to school here, and we still used torn books!" In those days, I had taken them for granted, but the situation was entirely changed now that I looked at it from the teacher's point of view. Many things came back to me now that had had no meaning for me as a student: the high school was definitely not favored, was made to get along as best it could with out-of-date equipment and books, and nobody cared, nobody fought for it.

"I don't mean to sit back," I continued, tossing an old volume back on the pile. "I shall take it up with Mr. Clough. I can't teach out of such antiquated books. They are depressing to me and the students!"

Mr. Fletcher looked at me with pleasure and astonishment, and beamed so vigorously that his rosy face became moist.

"Good for you! I said we needed someone young." He walked away, wagging his head, as he pulled out his handkerchief to wipe his face.

A bell rang, and some degree of quiet followed, but not much. The sophomores and juniors were bunched in the auditorium, or study hall, which served as their home room, under Mr. Floyd. I had no home room, and at my desk in empty room 4 examined and discarded books which I had only to take back, for what else was there to use? At five minutes past eight, the bell rang for assembly, and the school was again plunged into such a commotion as I thought would bring it down on my head. One of the things that had pleased me on coming to high school, and given me a sense of the responsibilities
of maturity, was the privilege of entering and leaving the school by walking, instead of marching as we had done in the grades. But what I heard that morning was not walking, and I stationed myself at the door, fixing a disapproving eye at the convulsed throng that filled the corridor with an uproar. A look of question, a look of amusement were all I received for my pains; the rest were no more aware of me than the wall itself. I followed them upstairs, my ears ringing with their unrestrained voices, my mind a tumult of plan and indignation. Things had come to a bad way indeed! But they need not continue so.

The students doubled up in seats made for one -- sitting like Siamese twins, back to back, their legs filling the aisles. Perhaps I was being hard on them. There was certainly not enough room here for them all, and no wonder the steady buzz went on even after the bell had been pulled for the beginning of assembly. Did the school board realize that the enrollment had increased out of all proportion to the facilities provided? It had begun to swell in my day. How could they be so blind or money-cautious as to permit conditions such as these to develop? There was always money for the roads. Wasn't education more important than roads? I took a station at the window and divided my eyes between the group around me and the principal. The freshmen looked at the giant figure on the platform with awe and expectation, and a scattered few here and there gave the appearance of respectful attention; but the others looked bored or sheepish or indifferent, as if all this were old stuff, and continued to talk in an undertone that was clearly audible but
difficult to trace.

The principal straightened himself up and almost immediately sank into his round-shouldered, hopeless attitude again.

"This is your school," he said kindly, but without much conviction, "to run but not to overrun. This isn't like the grades. You are on your honor here. We teachers are here to guide you. We shall not hold over your heads rods or switches. You are young adults, and we ask you to conduct yourself accordingly." He went on in the same way, pleading the law but not laying it down.

He then described the courses and requirements, and asked them to make up their schedule from the master plan that had been put on the board. If there were any questions, he and the teachers would be glad to help them. At once a general exodus started in the direction of the board, accompanied by much squinting and grimacing in an effort to see. Hands went up, friend consulted with friend. Some fell or were pushed into the aisles, and almost no one had a pencil. Again I was overcome with astonishment, and looked around at the other teachers, whose faces were cold or merely indifferent. Miss Alden held her bosom high and her white head proud. Nobody seemed to be thinking, as I was then, that this was decidedly not the proper way to conduct school.

At last Mr. Floyd pressed the lever on the side of the clock. The bell rang, the pupils shot out of their seats and bolted down the halls. Were they impatient to begin class or begin mischief? At least this preliminary demonstration had been of use in putting me on my guard.
Room 4 had forty seats and all were taken. Four or five others lounged against the blackboard. This was my first period freshman English class. It was useless to ask how many would shift over to the third period: I might have as many then. All I could do was pass out books and give them an assignment. Tomorrow I could make such class adjustments as I thought necessary. I asked a boy to help me bring in the books. While I was at the closet, a few more students strolled inquiringly in and took their place along the wall. An eraser exploded chalk dust on the window; they talked and laughed, and from down front came a sound like furniture being moved.

My blood boiled. I would settle that in short order!

I went down front. I stood at my desk and faced them, and the room filled with a hushed quiet that surprised me, in spite of my resolution, for I had not expected they were capable of it.

"This room will be as orderly when I am out of it as when I am in it. Is that understood?"

I asked for help in distributing the books, passed out slips of paper for their number and the student's name, briefly outlined the plan of the course and gave an assignment (which met with a groan that a look from me cut short), finishing just before the bell, for classes on the first day were cut short.

In addition to my two freshman English classes, I had two in sophomore English, two in history, ancient and modern, and one of supervision in the study hall, when I might do such of my own work as policing allowed. All the classes, except the two in history, were oversize, but what could be done? I would have to make the
best of them. Miss Adley, who was the senior English teacher, had a small group of freshmen whose program, under the college preparatory course, eliminated them from my groups. But I had them in ancient history and saw for the first time what bright pupils can mean to a teacher. I had some promising sophomores, too, but I determined that, as far as it was in my power, the rest would not lose for being less well endowed. A teacher's meeting closed the brief first day of school, after which I went down to my room and made seating plans for my pupils and entered their names in my record book.

First the janitor looked in, then Mr. Floyd.

"Starting so soon?" he asked. His manner was kind but completely lacked self-assurance. I was annoyed when he sat down in one of the seats in front of my desk.

"Mother's not expecting me for lunch until the regular close of school," I explained coldly. "I thought I would stay a while."

"There's plenty to do, I guess."

"What are we going to do about the overflow?" I asked. "It is impossible to get results with such large classes."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose it is the times. There are more people at school because there's no work outside. What can we do?"

"Enlarge the school, for one thing. Enlarge the faculty."

("As I understand it from Mr. Clough, he cannot get an increase")
in his budget."

"They built a new grade school not very long ago."

"I think there is still a feeling here that high school is a luxury. People look to their children to work as soon as they reach the legal age. But of course now there is no work."

How many times was I to hear that? It would not have been so annoying, had I felt it a good excuse. I could not forget the tumult in the corridors between classes.

"Have you found your honor system effective?" I asked.

His eyes flickered under my direct gaze. He smiled and said sheepishly, but with some attempt at force,

"I was in the war, Miss Hudson. I'm acquainted with military discipline. I've seen what it does to men. They go A.W.O.L. on account of it, they go wild, their natural impulses are repressed, disordered. I resolved if ever I was in a position of responsibility, I would never lay down any rules, but would appeal to the person's better nature. If you trust in people, they don't fail you. If you respect them as free human beings, they are not so likely to get into mischief as if you forbid them, for when you do, like Adam, they won't need much temptation to reach for the forbidden fruit."

"Some people have a sense of responsibility either naturally, or from a good home environment, or both. You can depend on them. They are serious and high-minded." (I was thinking of myself.)

"But they are individuals. Groups can't be treated as individuals. Freedom in a group is anarchy. They need and ask strong leadership. They are willing to be oppressed to get it. I don't want to be
oppressed, but if I were part of the corridor riots I saw this morning, I should value any freedom lightly that put me in the way of being killed while I was going from one room to another."

His laugh was a mixture of embarrassment and approbation.

"To me they are all individuals. I will tell you more about it some day." And he added, "You remind me of my wife, Miss Hughson."

I could not see that this was pertinent, especially since I did not know his wife.

"You are strong in your convictions and cannot be shaken from them." He did not appear to be hurt by the severity of my comments or moved to change his ways because of them. He looked at me with a pleased kind of reminiscence. "My wife is very young, too. She's a good deal younger than I. Do you think that is a barrier, Miss Hughson?"

I looked at him in astonishment and distaste. I had met him only the night before, what sort of question was this to ask? To be sure, he had quickly recognized I was no ordinary person. I could, if I chose, take it as a compliment to my discretion and judgment that he proposed to discuss his personal affairs with me on such short acquaintance. Yet I was not convinced, from what I had so far observed, of his own judgment and discretion. Out of respect to his wife, and to myself as a woman, I could not encourage such a subject of conversation. Accordingly, I looked at my watch.

"One o'clock! Mother will be starting to put things on the table." I stood up and put my books together.

"You live at home?" he asked, and I was surprised at the plaintiveness of his voice.
I looked at him, and his look was like his voice.

"Don't you?" I asked, for surely he and his wife must have some sort of establishment which would be home, though of course not quite the same as the one wherever they came from.

He sighed and shook his head and looked at me with a look that asked my sympathy.

"I have two rooms in Florence Street. That's her name. Isn't it strange there should be a Florence Street here, and a house in it with two rooms I could rent?" And after a pause, he added, "We've been divorced four years."

From his manner, the sag of his shoulders, the despair of his eyes, the plaintive, self-pitying voice, one would have thought it had happened today. Had age been the barrier, as he suggested? He had been in the war, he said; if it had not been for that, I would have placed him in his twenties; he looked very young. And she was my age. Could ten or twelve years make a difference to happiness, compatibility? Not necessarily, I thought; but then, I was exceptional. He did not have much spirit; gentleness was all right in its place, but if I had any such theory as his, I would insure its success with a few preliminary and unforgettable knock-down battles to show I was in earnest. He had the build for it, why couldn't he have his way? He was not a bad sort, but imagine having him around all the time! Four years! If she was coming back, she would have come back before this. Why was he still brooding over her? And yet, I thought, walking briskly along the
mist-cleared heat of early afternoon, you don't count in years. You don't forget any more than I have forgotten Anself.
Chapter 15

Mists opened and ended the days. The mist had a life of its own, like the trees and the ocean. It had a shape, and color and time. It had fight in it, and the wet bracing smell of the sea. In the morning when you awoke, there was no mountain; only mist, and mist filled the roads like a winter breath. It moved from the mountain, hesitated, returned as if for some unfinished business. The sun worked hotly through it. The east wind blew. The taste of mist was everywhere in the air, the wild salt taste of the sea. About mid-morning the mountain was clear. The roads were clear. The wind blew clean and cold, the sun shone hot and strong. In the streets leaves lay with crisp edges, cinnamon colored, cranberry red, orange. The trees were getting bare, the grass had lost its sheen and energy, and seemed ready to call its season done. At night the mist moved in again, mute and silver, shrouding the roads and folding in the houses, blowing about the mountain until it possessed the top and all the trees.

But I was hardly aware of autumn coming on. It might have been spring or summer for all the notice I took of it. My mind was completely absorbed in the school — mornings there, two afternoons a week for make-up, and every day lessons, papers, activities. I worked well into the night. At twelve mother would whisper over the banisters, seeing the study light still on, "Maryanne... Are you still working? You have to get up early tomorrow you know." Neither of us had realized there was so much to schoolteaching. Next year, perhaps, when I was familiar with the textbooks, I
would have less to do with them; and I would be able to make a practical, workable plan at once, for I would then know how much ground I could cover. Now it was all new to me, and it was exciting, too. I wanted to give my best to my pupils. I didn't want it said that a relative here and there in town offices was keeping me on the job — it would be said, anyway, but I wanted a weapon of achievement to fight back for me. I wanted my boys and girls to remember school with the same glow I did, and to remember me.

When a principal is weak, a teacher must depend on herself to maintain order. I had not taken much work in education at school, and had had no practice teaching. I thought teaching was simply that. It did not occur to me that discipline would be a factor at all. Yet I soon found that, before I could teach, I must fight for my right to — a situation that astonished and infuriated me, so that I resolved in the first week to settle the mischief-makers for all time, and to put an end to all inclination to a like conduct. It was useless to send anyone to Mr. Floyd. He only talked, and what good did talking do? Miss Adley returned her problem pupils to afternoon sessions, when they copied pages out of the dictionary until their arms went numb. But she did not have many; hers were the older pupils whose misconduct consisted of whispering, passing notes, laughing at her clothes (wherein I did not blame them — I often wondered myself where she had got them). My pupils knew that this was my first year, and they wanted to try me out. The books they had to study from were dingy, out-of-date, and unsuited to their
level of intelligence. The classes were too large, too varied in mentality to pay strict attention the full forty-five minutes. I took all these things into account, and my decision was the same: they would be orderly. I would not spare anyone.

One morning I was discussing a new assignment with my sophomores, and when I looked down at the book, I heard the rat-tat-tat of beebee shot on the window. Luckily my eye sees farther than the page, and I had a distinct view of the culprit when he thought my eyes were completely averted. I looked directly at him. "We will have no more of that, Folsom." My quickness in detecting him, as if I were gifted with second sight, so impressed the class that I had no more trouble from beebee shot. Folsom looked sheepish, but no longer a hero or with the hope of being one, he leaned back in the seat too small for him, stretched his legs out in the aisle, and gave me the appearance of attention and sometimes the attention itself.

I also had two comedians in my sophomore class. They had provided fun all through the grades and had a reputation for being able to move in perfect unison, and to improvise witty dialogue. They had been in some school shows and had even had an act in the Lions' Club annual revue. One morning after everyone was seated, they swayed in, one hand on the back of their head, the other on their hip, making their eyes big and arching a shoulder at the boys as they passed. One was slightly taller and thinner than the other, and the effect was that of figure and shadow. With an affected flourish, they stopped in front of my desk and waited for what I would say.
On my desk lay a copy of "The Ancient Mariner," which I planned to read with the freshmen, and was already familiar to this class. I opened it and read,

Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?

For a moment there was complete silence. Then the class began to shriek with laughter. Their laugh delighted me. It was just what I wanted from them, and made the boys sneak foolishly to their seats. Miss Adley looked in. I knew why, and resented the implication of her coming. "We've just laid a couple of ghosts," I explained, well pleased with myself, and she retreated, puzzled. Afterward, in the halls, the greeting, "Is that a Death? and are there two?" became very common for the comedians, and I acquired the reputation of wit that the boys had once held. When I told mother this incident she thought I had been rather hard on them. "They're young and have high spirits," she said. "They don't mean any harm by it." "It's all very well for you to talk like that," I replied. "You don't have to teach them. They can keep their spirits for outside class. I'm as friendly then as they can ask for. But in class I want it quiet, and I shall have it so."
What is a sentence? Write one on the board. Why is that a sentence? What is the verb in that sentence? The subject? What is meant by a comma blunder? Write an example on the board. Correct it. Step by step, I pulled them along with endless talk and multiple examples, drill and review and more examples. Miss Alden said, seeing my hordes pour out of room 4, "I wouldn't teach English for any money." I thought of her small, select Latin classes and for the first time had contempt for her. "It's a lot of work," I agreed, "but I like work."

There were compensations besides money. I was not working merely for my salary, which I knew I earned many times over. I had fascinated my ancient history group with Egyptian civilization. They had all read of the opening of Tut-ankh-amun's tomb. I read them the inscription on the king's alabaster wishing cup:

"Mayst thou spend millions of years, thou lover of Thebes, sitting with thy face to the north wind, and thy eyes beholding felicity."

I had picked that up somewhere, made a note of it, and it came back to me just as it had in the beginning — the purest poetry. "These cartouches are so provocative," I added, passing library books with illustrations around the class. "Do you feel that way, too, that you'd like to know what all the little birds and hooks and wavy lines mean...?"

Some time after, Ralph Gordon, thirteen, six foot four, with bright brown eyes like pinheads focused through thick lenses, towered eagerly over me at the desk.
"I can tell you what they mean, Miss Hughes," he said, his voice thick with excitement. I looked my surprise at him. What in the world was he talking about? "I can tell you what all those little birds and hooks mean," and he opened a scholarly work on Egyptian philology which he had received from the state library.

That was the kind of response I liked. I wanted to see them waken to my words, start thinking for themselves, select trails of their own to follow. I had done something for Ralph Gordon, and he had done something for himself. A sense of achievement made me feel almost as giddy as he did when his trembling fingers turned the pages of the borrowed book. That whole class was an inspiration to me. It moved, it lived, it was like a game where the ball was passed from one to another, and never allowed to drop. This was the way a class should be: its own buoyancy carried it along. And yet I was sorry that they asked so little of me; I did less for them than for any of the others, and yet they did more.

Even after I had turned out the light and got into bed, the questions continued. What is a sentence? Why can't you tell me still? Why Won't you stop putting commas where a period should go? Don't you care? Doesn't it seem important to you that you should know these things?

They did not care. They could read and write; what did a comma matter here or there? They had been saying "you was" all their life, and their parents before them. Why should they put on airs now and say "you were"? They would get along.
What are you interested in, I wondered in my thoughts. What is important to you -- besides the bell? You only want to get out of class, out of school.

You're young. You don't realize. I will help you. There are so many things to do. First of all, you must learn to study. I never had to learn, never knew there were rules for study any more than there were rules for spelling. But I'll learn all the rules, and I'll teach you.

In addition to school work, October brought a number of meetings which I had to attend. The County Teachers' Association held their annual convention in Colport the early part of the month. It was only a one-day convention. At the general session in the afternoon a young man, assistant principal of a small high school, spoke on secondary education. He was good-looking, not tall, but with a firm body and broad shoulders that gave the impression of height. His glossy black eyebrows grew straight across the bridge of his nose and, like an index to the activity of his brain, were eloquent and somehow disturbing. His voice was deep and sure. "We are beginning to recognize the need of new education. We are building million dollar schools, using the most scientific designs. But our teachers still think in terms of the one-room schoolhouse."

He went on to say that college professors were the most narrow of all teachers, kindergarten teachers the least. (This brought a flutter of applause and a pleased exchange of looks from the kindergarten teachers present.)
"I once heard a pupil say, 'The trouble with history is that we can't do anything about it.' We teachers should read more about the present."

His name was Converse. His point seemed to be that the high school curriculum needed revision, and modern-minded teachers to carry it through (surely not kindergarten teachers!). I could have told him a few things from my experience, which he would have found enlightening. But evidently these men speak to pass the time. There was no forum, no discussion. The convention ended in a social evening, and at the dinner I made a number of new acquaintances.

The following week, the first Parent-Teacher meeting of the year was held in the parish house of the Baptist church, whose central location made it popular for meetings of this kind. The Parent-Teacher Association met monthly. Teachers were expected to attend but did not look forward with any great enthusiasm. A week before the meetings took place, a notice was given in the Sentinel, and all parents were further urged to attend in dittoed letters distributed to the students (littered streets giving evidence that many had not reached their destination).

Mother and I went to the meeting together. After a selection by the school orchestra, the notes of the last meeting, the previous May, were read by the secretary, who ended with a gay "Any additions or corrections — if you can remember that far back?" Nobody laughed or offered additions, and Mr. Clough arose, welcomed the teachers and what parents there were, and
talked vaguely about the aims of secondary education and the part parents played in it. He had a dry, monotonous voice, and as he spoke he fixed his eye on a far corner of the room where nobody was sitting. The room was hot and the folding chairs uncomfortable.

"People think teachers are getting paid too much. They get through at 1:20 or 3:30 and have the rest of the day to themselves. But that's not so. It's like a banker's work. A banker closes his window at 3, but do you think that's all there is to it? He goes on working behind closed doors, he does work you never see. That's the way it is with teachers." ("How true," whispered mother.) "They go home or they stay at school, and they work. They say a woman's work is never done. Perhaps that is why so many women are to teaching. A teacher's work is never done."

At the end of his talk, the superintendent urged the parents to meet the teachers and talk over with them any problems they had. Several high school girls passed refreshments of home-made fudge. I took a piece and bit into it. It was sweet and sandy; in short, poisonous. While I debated where to put the rest of it, Mr. Floyd came up and I presented him to mother.

"I've seen you in the stores," said mother cordially, "so I already feel I know you."

"And I remember you very well, Mrs. Hughson. How was the cauliflower you bought the other day? I think you got the best head - the others all looked spotted."

I could not listen to any more talk like this and left them, looking for a flower pot or a wastebasket in which to put the fudge. Behind me I heard stage whispers. "Is that your teacher?
Is that Miss Hudson? She's pretty!" "Yes, and she knows it." I recognized the voice and smiled. It belonged to the beebee shooter. I turned around and greeted him. "Can you dispose of this for me, John?" I asked, graciously. "I find it gets into a tooth that needs filling. Is this your mother?" The little woman in the shabby coat stared at me with admiration and embarrassment and could not utter a word. "It's very nice, meeting you here tonight, Mrs. Folsom. We have quite a few parents here, it's good to see them. I suppose you'd like to hear a good word about John. We get along all right now, don't we, John?" And seeing a way to rescue my own mother and impress the shabby little woman further, I bowed slightly and took her arm. "My mother is here tonight, and I should very much like to have you meet her."

While mother was trying to draw her out — for I had already lost my interest and turned away, another woman nervously closing a shabby coat over a shabbier dress and smiling apologetically sidled up to me. All but two of her front teeth were gone, and these two were fang-like and yellow with decay. I felt sick to my stomach.

"You're Miss Adley, ain't you? I been intendin' to visit, but you know how it is — all the children. They grow up and leave me, and new ones come." She rattled on in a sing-song voice and would not let me interrupt her. "I can't do a thing with my Fernald. He's his brother Ansell all over again."

"Ansell!" I caught my breath. "Are you his mother?"

She smiled her horrible, fulsome smile into my face.

"You've had all my boys, Miss Adley. You had him, too. Of
course he wasn't crazy about school but."

"You've made a mistake, Mrs. Jones. There's Miss Adley with the
gold cord around her hat."

Now she was as profuse with her apologies as she had been with
her smiles. "Oh, I'm so sorry, I should of known, you're not old
evenough, but this is my first time... I'm so sorry, I hope it's been
no trouble."

"No trouble at all."

Mother was happily talking to a group of acquaintances. I brought
her coat and hat and told her that we were going home. "So early,
dear?" she asked in disappointment. I could not stay another
moment. The room was stifling. Outside, I stood still under the
stars and breathed deep of the sharp sea air. The dipper poured
its incessant libation on the blunt mountain. Oh, to snatch it by
the handle and fill it full of stars, to have light and calm by you
always!

Mother chattered pleasantly at my side. She had had a lovely
evening but she thought I looked tired all of a sudden. I was
working too hard. Mr. Clough had said right: a teacher's work is
never done. But how was it she saw so many of them downtown in the
afternoon? And on their way to the movies evenings? In a year or
two it would be easier for me, she hoped. How charming Mr. Floyd
was! No wonder everybody loved and respected him. The pupils
would do anything for him, anything. Didn't he have the friendliest,
teasing little smile? And such a nice sense of humor! She was
delighted with him.
"I never thought he had a sense of humor."

"He thinks the world of you, Maryanne. I could tell by the way he spoke of you. I asked him to Sunday dinner and he promised to come after the state convention — if he could help me cook it."

"Oh mother, why did you do that? He will only talk of his wife!"

"With you there?" she asked with delicious simplicity. "It isn't likely he'd talk about a woman who treated him so badly. I don't even like to think about it. She was horrid. She didn't wait any time to marry the man that ruined his life."

The sky widened as we slowly walked uphill. Here the houses were farther apart, the sky was closer. If life could be simple as late evening under the stars! But how shabby those women were, not just one or two, all of them; mill people and the mills weren't running full time. Why? What was happening? Taxes were coming in slowly, father said. Times were hard. And she looking shabbier than any of them. It was not the times there. How beautiful night was, how clear, but it did not make life beautiful or clear.
Chapter 16

My salary was a thousand dollars a year. It was paid in ten monthly checks, the first of which started a few weeks after school began. When Mr. Clough, the superintendent, brought up the October batch, he came to my English class about fifteen minutes before recess and sat down in a rear seat. His potbelly pressed hard against the desk; it could not quite fit in, and I saw him making notes on the back of an envelope. What was he writing about me? Couldn't he recognize at once the splendid job I had done against obstacles that would have made most inexperienced teachers despair? I burned through their lethargy like the sun burns through the morning mist; they roused themselves, they answered once, they answered again; they were astonished themselves that they had it in them, and I could see, for the first time perhaps, the bell came on them unexpectedly. After they were dismissed, Mr. Clough came down to the seat that Mr. Floyd usually chose, and settled himself in it, with no greater comfort than he had found in the other one. He was a short, thick-set man whose black tortoise-rimmed glasses gave him a goggle-eyed look. His manner was friendly, and he appeared to want to talk on an easy footing with me, but he had some trouble getting started. He cleared his throat, consulted his notes.

"You know," he drawled at last, "we hesitated at first to give you the contract. Not that you weren't qualified. It was just that some folks thought a girl would find discipline difficult to keep in her own home town."

"Discipline under the leadership we have in this school," I retorted, "would be difficult to keep in any town."
He looked at me guiltily and cleared his throat again.

"I was just going to say you seem to have no trouble. You have done remarkably well."

"That is because I don't believe in half-measures."

He struggled out of the seat. I believe I had got the better of him in the whole conversation, and so had had my revenge for the notes on the envelope, whatever they were.

"Have you accommodations for the convention?" he asked, turning to leave.

"Yes, Miss Adley and I have a room with bath at the Graymore."

He lifted his brows.

"Good for you!"

I did not look forward to sharing a room, hard as it was to get for the state teachers' convention, with Miss Adley. Her personality was trying to me. She had no poise, her speech was extremely provincial, and she marked everything she owned - handkerchiefs, blouses, books, in purple ink, "Miss Grace P. Adley, South Vienna, Maine." She had had the stamp made up for her at a printing office and carried it everywhere in her bag. Her car she polished every day with a care that I thought would have been better spent on herself. She spoke in a clipped, decisive way. Every week-end she drove home. School teaching was just a job to her and she was always at leisure, after hours. I had never met anyone who displeased me so much on first sight, but when she offered me the other twin bed in her room, I could not offend her by refusing, inasmuch as I had already written to every first-class hotel in the city and had been unable to find one for myself.
The state convention took place at the end of October. We arrived Thursday noon, registered, and as there were no English meetings that afternoon, Miss Adley left me for shopping while I went to attend some lectures in the history department, rejoicing to be rid of her. At this meeting I met Gertrude Hatch, the girl who had sold candy bars at Giles, and she looked so attractive and intelligent to me, after the morning trip and lunch with Miss Adley and two ancient grade teachers who worried about drafts all the time I was with them, we greeted each other enthusiastically. She was still dressed as poorly as ever but looked less worn than she had at Giles. I had not written to her, and we had so much to say, she begged me to come to her room, which she shared with another teacher and was in a private house. "And will you have dinner with us? And come to the general meeting tonight?" she asked. "That is, if it's all right - if you're not with anybody." I told her I was not; I could not see that sharing a room in a convention-crowded city put me under obligation to the one I shared it with, and we left the church (the meeting had been held in the vestry) together. It was a raw day and we stopped for tea and English muffins. In the pretty little lunch room, paneled with pine, Harry Floyd sat at a table with a number of other men and when he saw me, he excused himself and came directly over.

I presented him to Gertrude and invited him to join us. He regretted he could not, but would we have dinner with him? "I have already promised Gertrude to have dinner with her and her friends."

"But I won't hold you to it," said Gertrude, anxiously, and I could
tell she sensed a romance. "We shall make it up some other time. Please don't feel that you must come." I was therefore free to accept his invitation to dinner, but promised to meet her for the general session at eight o'clock that evening.

When I reached the hotel, Grace was still dressed in the same clothes she had worn all day.

"Oh, did you just get back?" I asked, beginning to undress.

"Get back!" she flashed. "I'm ready to go out again. Louise and Charlotte" (the grade teachers) "are waitin' for us. We're meetin' them for dinner, and I promised we'd be there early so we could get waited on. There'll be an awful mob. They won't know what's happened to us."

I smiled to think what I had escaped.

"I won't be ready for half an hour anyway," I said, hanging up my dress, "so it's a good thing I won't be with your party. I have a dinner engagement."

She looked at me in surprise. I suppose it did not please her that I had so easily slipped out of her neatly contrived noose.

"Will we see you at the meetin'?" she asked, after a pause.

"I don't know when I'll get there," I called from the bathroom, where I started the water running in the tub. As far as I was concerned, our conversation was finished. But when I went to the closet to pick out my dress for that night, she was still standing at the door looking at me.

It was such a relief to get away from her, I did not mind Harry's talking about his wife, and when we reached the auditorium at 8:25, he was as happy as if he had recovered her.
trio was playing; we had missed nothing by our late arrival except the people who had expected to meet us there. "Your friend seems very nice," said Harry. "I hope she doesn't hate me for taking you away." We took seats in the balcony, and he helped me off with my coat, fitting it against the back of the chair so it would not be in my way. "No, Gertrude won't mind. She's a good sort. I wonder where she is?" I had no sooner spoken than I saw Grace, Louise, and Charlotte sitting directly opposite us, and now three pairs of eyes were fastened on me with the same mildly ruminative stare of Grace's in the hotel room that evening. Suddenly it struck me so funny, I burst out laughing. He laughed with me. I said, "Have you any idea what you're laughing at?" He shook his head and leaned toward me. "You look so pretty tonight. Is that a new dress? I like to see you laughing. My wife used to break out, all of a sudden, just like that. Women are like children, they laugh because they feel good, I suppose. Don't stop because the music has."

But I had stopped for another reason. What sort of man was he? I should have gone to dinner with Gertrude, what a lot of notes we would have to exchange on teaching school! And it would have been fun to meet her friends; new faces were always interesting for a little while. I had disposed of Grace only to find myself encumbered with another bore. What a convention it was proving to be!

When I returned to the hotel, Grace was reading in bed. She made no mention of having seen me, or even asked if I had enjoyed the speaker. I got in bed and she asked if the light bothered me?
I said it did not. The next morning she politely asked if I minded her walking over to the English meeting with me? I said of course not, since we were both going there. In moments when she did not think I noticed, her eyes rested on me with a suspicious, jealous, ruminative look. But as we walked, her vulgarity and glibness gradually returned, and by the time we got to the high school assembly hall, her arm was through mine and she was on the friendliest terms imaginable.

"I saw you last night," she chuckled, pulling my arm as if she had come upon a great secret and rolling her eyes in playful accusation at me for having kept it from her. "I knew somethin' was up. He's always hangin' round you at school. And you can't put anythin' over on the kids, either, you know. Down in the boys' basement they have your name and his chalked in a heart."

I released my arm.

"Have they?" I asked coldly. "I never go down to the boys' basement, myself. I always use the girls."

In the afternoon we went to another English meeting, and in the evening the convention closed with a concert program. I planned to return home the next day by train, as Grace was leaving for her usual week-end visit to South Vienna. "That music just about finished me," she said when we went to bed Friday night. "They're just kids, they think they have to play loud as they can. Don't wake me till noon." I thought, get up when you please; and I rose the usual time, for I had shopping to do.

She woke up as I was combing my hair.

"Don't tell me it's noon!" she wailed. "I've not been in bed an hour!"
It's eight o'clock," I told her. "I'm going shopping."

"Go on!" she protested. "You got more clothes than a movie actress. What shopping would you have to do? The stores aren't even open. You're meetin' him for breakfast. Isn't that romantic!" She yawned and laughed.

As it happened, I did meet Harry unexpectedly that morning, as I was coming out of a store. "Isn't Grace going to South Vienna this week-end? How are you getting home?" he asked. His joy at seeing me struck me as bold, and his eagerness was only distasteful to me. To ride home with him and listen to talk of his wife was a pleasure I could not look forward to. "I've already made arrangements," I told him. He looked disappointed. "Can't they be changed?" and in a lower, coyer voice, "Gertrude wouldn't object." "My arrangements are not with Gertrude today." "Well," he said, looking more cheerful, "can I come along with you now? Can I carry these packages? What's next on the program?" I said reluctantly, "Shoes," and to forestall any comparison of my foot with his wife's, added, "I have a very narrow foot. It's hard to fit. I usually get my shoes in Boston, but they may have a pair here that will serve me till I get down there." "Oh," he assured me agreeably, "I always went shopping with my wife - shoes, dresses, I got a big kick out of it. Don't you need a hat today? My wife always said I had wonderful taste in hats."

I accepted his invitation to lunch, and he asked how I found my first convention.

"Very stimulating."
He gave me what mother called his friendly, teasing little smile.

"Really! Well, it's your first. I find that more and more they seem to think of high school students in terms of robots whose production is to be increased until they turn out stereotyped recitations and papers like so many nuts and bolts a day."

I looked at him coldly. Who was he to criticize methods in secondary education when his own were so much open to question?

"What else is there?" I asked.

He went on smiling.

"I'll tell you, when I come to dinner."
Chapter 17

Mother was busy again, cutting, pasting. She had started my third album with the announcement of the opening of school. I thought they might have done better with the write-up. "There is only one change at the high school this year. Miss Maryanne Hughson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Hughson of Chestnut Street, and recent graduate of Giles College, joins the faculty. Miss Hughson will assist in the English and History Departments." No word of my record at Giles, my qualifications, my special interests. I was to be merely an assistant, depending on the older teachers for instructions and guidance. Well, I had proved that I was a teacher in my own right. I depended on no one. And if it would not have hurt mother's feelings, and made the record incomplete, I should have torn the clipping up instead of allowed it the prominent first page of my scrapbook.

"This picture they put in of Mr. Floyd isn't at all a good likeness," said mother. "He looks very severe."

"If he only were."

"Every time I see him he looks as if he wanted me to ask him to supper."

"That's the way he looks at me. But the dinner was enough." I was writing up my examinations at the dining room table, opposite mother. The room was warm and cosy, just the two of us in it, and I was happy to glance at her now and then and see her, so intent, so loving on her little work.

"Why are you so hard on Mr. Floyd, Maryanne?" Mother questioned me with a wondering, tender look. "He's kind and good. And he thinks so much of you."
"I've no respect for a man who is so eager to be kicked. You ought to go by his study hall. A buzz all the time. And when he's with me, he talks only about his wife. I don't find it very flattering."

"He remembers only the good things about her, and sees them in you."

"There are no good things about an evil woman, mother, and I don't like to be compared with one."

I made her promise not to invite him to the house again, and she reluctantly did.

The work piled up like the snow. Winter came on. Father and mother had given me a raccoon one Christmas I was still at Giles, and even a fur coat over a suit was poor protection against air as keen as steel. My hands were like ice, my face was rigid. By the time I reached the schoolhouse my eyes were so blinded with the cold, only red spots danced before them and I had to wait to get hold of myself before I walked down the corridor to my room.

I could not remember a winter so cold.

On one of these mornings Harry Floyd ran down the stairs to me.

"Are you all right, Maryanne? It's bitter out, isn't it? Don't take off your coat. Bartlett hasn't been able to get the fire up yet." He walked down the hall with me, and looked at the thermometer in my room, which read 45. "It's 30 in mine," he said.

No classes were held until quarter-to-ten. We sat around in coats and overshoes and talked, blowing on our hands and trying the radiators every so often to see if the heat was coming up. I so rarely permitted any informality between me and my pupils, it was
a pleasant discovery to find them interesting and likable in spite of their very ordinary mentalities, and I was pleased with the impression I made on them, for their eyes never left my face. Harry called Mr. Clough and they decided to have ten-minute periods and dismiss the school. By that time, the building was fairly warm. We had a teachers' meeting until one o'clock. A shipment of books had come from the state library, and I returned in the afternoon to help the debaters gather material. The subject was compulsory unemployment insurance. I had the affirmative team, Grace the negative. Yet here is how it appeared in the Sentinel:

"The high school has again entered the Giles Debating League. This year the question is, 'Resolved, that compulsory unemployment insurance should be adopted.' There has been an excellent turn-out" (not four good speakers in the lot) "and teams will soon be chosen. Debating is under the direction of Miss Grace P. Adley, instructor in English, and Miss Hughson, her assistant. Preliminary debates will be held in February, and our opponents will be Rock Hill and Colport. A good deal of hard work is going into these debates, and there is every indication our teams will come through to the finals."

I walked home in the early twilight, that hour of winter when the white snow has a faintly sapphire gleam, eerie, elusive, and the houses stand as in a spell, quiet, containing all their life yet giving no sign of it, even the smoke from their chimneys standing in air as if painted against it. The town, to save money, had cleared only the roads. Now and then a car passed by. The streets were left for the spring thaw. It seemed a long way to spring. I was tired, for I had worked all through Christmas vacation. There was
no time or thought for writing now. Once in a while a scene, some lines of dialogue, a title interrupted me as I sat correcting papers or stood writing examples of sentences on the board, but often I did not even have time to note them in my memorandum book. What was I accomplishing at school? How could you measure achievement in a medium as intangible as that? Suddenly the street lights gleamed. The dark had come down before I reached home. The stars were out. I longed for spring.

On February fourteenth, St. Valentine's Day, we had a thaw. "It always happens this time of year," said mother. Through the night the level of snow, in some places reaching second story windows, magically lowered, and everywhere in strict proportion, so that when you looked out, the mounds were of just the same roundness, the drifts of the same undulations, and the roads still packed flat. But the line of snow had dropped inches. You saw more of houses, the horizon was longer, the sky freer. The air was mild and fresh.

That day brought me a valentine, bordered with lace and filled with bluebirds touching beaks and cupids shooting arrows and a miniature man and woman ogling each other. Inside was a closely packed poem of sentiment and gush, and as if that were not enough, tall oblique words, "I love you." The height of the letters did not obscure the hand that made them, normally small, in the same oblique way. I crushed the valentine and threw it in the wastebasket. "Mother," I said, marching into the kitchen, "remember your promise. You're not to ask Mr. Floyd to supper, no matter how he looks at you."

In the debates, the negative team won, but Ralph Gordon, on my
team, was chosen best speaker. According to the rules of the league, both teams had to win in the preliminaries. We were therefore out of the competition, but the debating club continued its rather lethargic life to the end of the year, holding weekly meetings and presenting two interclass debates at the Baptist parish house, to which the public was invited.

In February I worked on a special school assembly, to commemorate Washington's and Lincoln's birthday. To vary the program, I suggested the introduction of Martha Custis and Nancy Hanks, who could tell their influence on the two great men. With my customary imagination and resourcefulness, I suggested much of the material to go into the speeches and coached the four speakers. The Sentinel reported:

"The student body greatly enjoyed a program the last day of school before the winter recess, under the supervision of Miss Grace P. Adley, instructor in English, and Miss Hughson, assistant. It pertained to the notable men and women whose birthdays come in February. Those taking part..."

"Of all the stupidity!" I exclaimed to mother when I read this. "Martha Custis and Nancy Hanks born in February! They missed the whole point of the program."

"Were they born in February, too?" asked mother.

"I don't know. I don't care. I'm going to see Mr. Dixon and put an end to these foolish mistakes."

A woman, whom I will not honor with the name of reporter, collected the personals and wrote up the high school notes. Mr. Dixon thanked me for my information, and promised I would never appear as "assistant" again.
The week of mid-winter vacation I went to Boston to do some shopping and select four or five plays from which Grace and I would make the final choice for senior play. When I returned, snow had fallen again, and there was as much of it as there had been in January. But it was not so cold. The second meeting of the new Teachers' Club was scheduled for Friday night. It was to be an informal party for Mr. Clough, who was having a birthday that day. I wrote words for a song and sent them to the chairman of the program, but did not attend. The games and singing and conversation at the first meeting had been so trivial, I thought it a waste of time. I had been invited to join the local College Club by our new pastor's wife, and I promised that I would the following year, when I expected to have more time. The club had literary and musical programs of really professional standards, and I looked to find it more satisfying to my taste and intelligence than the Teachers' Club.

Mr. Thaxon had left our church. Mother never forgot how he had treated me, and father had made known his suspicions to a few close friends, whom he could trust. They did the rest. Besides, we all agreed that Mr. Thaxon was tiresome and pedantic in the pulpit. Mother said he was teaching in a seminary somewhere. The new minister, Mr. Claybell, was an older man with iron-gray hair and fine posture. He had a powerful way in the pulpit. His sermons were simple and honest and practical. Sunday mornings were pleasant again. His wife was much younger than he, and she had a beautiful singing voice and some talent for writing, though of course nothing like my own. Though her three small children kept us from establishing
a close friendship, I always enjoyed talking to her after the service, or when I met her downtown.

"Mother!" I said, one Sunday morning in March, as I pulled on my gloves and looked at myself again in the mirror to enjoy another glimpse of myself in my pert new straw hat. "I have been meaning to ask you. What is Chet Whitman doing now? I sometimes see him go by with a dinner pail."

"Oh, didn't I tell you? He has been working at the Bridewell quite a while now. After he decided to let college alone, he went back and took a postgraduate course at the high school -- took up shorthand and typewriting and got a clerk's job. His mother told me he is now secretary to one of the heads there, who doesn't like women working around him. Chet's doing real well, and I guess he'll get married this summer."

We waited in the street while father locked the door.

"Married! Who in the world to?"

"Why, Margaret Bone."

"The girl whose mother has all that hair on her face?"

"Yes." We started to walk along. "But Margaret's a real pretty."

"She's rather young to be getting married, isn't she? Why, she's still at school."

"She's a very serious girl, always has been. They're Baptists. She's had a Sunday School class ever since I can remember."

"Imagine Chet getting into a family like that!"

"Oh, Chet's a very good boy. I don't know what got into him that
time he ran away. He never did again, though."

My father laughed.

"Probably didn't like sardines."

We walked leisurely as always because there was plenty of time. The snow was beginning to melt from the hills, and the streets were inches deep with puddles. Walking was hard. And then, mother was not well. The doctor told me in confidence it was her age. To me, my mother still looked as she did in the picture in my study, her face smooth and gentle still, and lovelier for not being obscured by plumes and feather boas. But of course if I looked at her honestly, I could see what the doctor saw, and though the lines seemed only to intensify for me her loving kindness to me and all the world, they did say too that she was aging, and that she was aging with pain. She limped a little when she walked, and some days she did not get up at all. Mrs. Peebles came in to help with the housework, and I got some of the meals.

So father and I walked on either side of her, holding her arm, favoring her every way that we could. And it was really for mother's sake that father bought me a car that spring, though people maliciously said I was making a huge salary while others were starving — look at my car, my coats, my airs! When, if they had thought about it at all, they would have realized a thousand dollars a year (and I earned every penny of it) would not go very far.

The bells rang all over town and I remember another walk to church, but because of the trouble, we had passed by our own that morning. How gay everything had looked that day — the people in the streets, the boats in the water, the water, the sky. How happy everybody
had seemed! I could not remember what month it was, but I had felt very happy, too. No one had ever heard of sluggish taxes then.

What had happened? Why did things have to change? Why couldn't life go on like a beautiful Sunday morning, church bells sounding in the sunshine? Why did people have to get sick and old -- people that you loved? And yet there remained, I thought, much for me. I had not forgotten the work I was to do for our town; it made my books only secondary, though they, perhaps, would in the end be what I was remembered for. My books! Only two, and Chet -- I was not satisfied with him, I must rewrite "West Wind Chariot" this summer. How much my time had been taken up this year — not a page of Chet, not a thought for a new novel!

We bowed to friends as we took our usual place in one of the front pews. The door was open, and the clear sweet air of spring came in. We did not remove our coat or gloves but sat enjoying spring, while people behind me admired my new hat. The last bell sounded, and then the last note of the opening hymn. I leaned back in the pew. Mr. Claybell began to speak but I heard another voice.

You lie stiff and cold on the floor of an open box car, and the sun comes in, begins to warm you up. There's something different about the sun. The stiffness goes out of you. Your muscles begin to flow warm and velvety as a lake. You get up and go to the door. You can stand up a lot quicker for the sun than for Jesus. Men are working in the wet fields. Their movements have a slow grace.
Fields climb the mountains, and the mountains are filling up with young leaves. God, what a pretty sight! Spring! The season a dame wearing a flowered hat will shell out a dollar and smile at you. Spring! Never mind baking your clothes in the next jungle; burn 'em, and hit the cottages in the suburbs where there's a play yard on the front lawn and maybe a baby in it and the mother running back and forth, with an apron on. She'll give you armful of clothes, out of closets, sweaters from the garage; she'll give you a meal on top of all that because the leaves are coming out, she's happy, it's spring! Spring is the life, out in the open where God meant you to be. God is the sun that bakes the vermin on your back, the willow where you hang your clean clothes to dry, the brook where you wash, the mossy rock where you sleep. God is tangy air and horizons. God is the moment. God is spring.
Chapter 18

Spring came in a torrent. It poured down the hills from the mountain. It flooded Samoset Street in its wild, joyous rush to the sea. Spring was water, spring was the melting snow. Spring reached under the crags of snow in the night and jerked and pulled them away from the houses, and cleared the lawns, ran and made running brooks everywhere. On Giddings Street Haley Dodd, one of my boys, is painting screens for the Simpsons, he has already painted their shutters. Curtains blow in the open windows. Dogs are barking. Somewhere a sawing machine is whirring, a rug is being beaten, children are calling in games. Their voices are clear and free. Spring has released them as it has released the snows. The trees are gray and dry, no life stirs in them yet. The sun is warm, the wind is cold, blowing with a high relentless clean directness from the sea.

It is town meeting day, and school has closed at noon. Samoset Street looks like summer. So many people have passed over it on their way to town hall that it is clear of snow and in many places dry under the warm sun. Store clerks stand in open doors, and around the town hall a group of business men are all talking at once. It is like a holiday, and a good day for one.

But the sun is deceiving. The wind is more honest and does not let you forget it is still March and cold, very cold! I wore an in-between coat of soft tweed, with a lynx collar that fluffed softly about my face. Someone said as I passed, "Another coat." How vicious people are.

I sat with Miss Alden, who followed town affairs closely and
had the town manager's report before her. There had been talk of a demonstration, and I was worried for father, who was moderator. He pounded the gavel and brought order to the teeming room. Then he began to read the articles in a gentle voice that carried into every corner. Without any effort he received full attention and respect, even from the rough-looking group that idled with suspicious intent at the auditorium door. "To see what sum of money the town will vote --" "To see if the town will vote to repair -- what sum of money -- how the same shall be raised." After each item father gave the recommendation of "your committee," made the proper motion; somewhere in the audience it was seconded. "Those in favor." "Those opposed." "It is a vote." -- all three almost in the same breath. And on to the next item. The group at the door did not stir. The meeting progressed smoothly.

Miss Alden had pencilled last year's appropriations against this. The appropriations for roads and the poor had increased; for the schools decreased. "We shall have to take a cut in our salaries," she whispered. "They will use it on the roads to make more work."

"Why the roads? They are in good condition. School is more important than roads!"

"But if men don't get work somewhere, they won't be able to buy shoes to send their children to school."

But still I thought it was a luxury to pamper the roads in these times.

No one brought issues to a debate on the floor. It had all been a rumor, fortunately. After the meeting, people stood about in clusters, talking as cheerfully as if they had been to the movies.
All the special written and speech work which came at the end of the year fell to the English department. This consisted of prize speaking, the senior class play, the commencement issue of *The Mountain View*, and commencement itself. The pupils came to me for help in selecting prize pieces, and I was astonished at the dearth of suitable material. When I had time, I resolved to write some myself. After the contestants were chosen, Grace and I alternated attendance at the rehearsals, or came together. We followed this same plan for the senior play, which was also in rehearsal. Had I anticipated a tenth of the difficulties we encountered with this arrangement, I would never have consented to it. Our ideas clashed all the time, and it was not surprising, for she came of the old school, and though she had directed the ten or eleven senior plays that preceded "Uncle Polly's Predicament" (her choice), I could see at once she knew nothing of stage technic and refused to read the manuals I offered to lend her. It was a trying time for me. The play was twice postponed, the first time because it was too bad to be presented, the second for the failure of Uncle Polly's wig to arrive. But at last everything was ready, and the townspeople turned out as they always did, filling the big auditorium of the town hall, and more than enough money was made to cover the expenses of senior week. My visit to Mr. Dixon of the *Sentinel* had brought results, for all notices about the play reported it as being coached by "Miss Grace P. Adley and Miss Maryanne Hughes son of the high school faculty." It was no great honor to be coupled in this way with Miss Grace P. Adley, but it was better than being subordinated to
her as "assistant." I was quite satisfied with the write-up of the play, too, except that the reviewer, possibly thinking himself (or was it that woman?) humorous, reported the stage "beautifully decorated with flowers on the tables and in huge baskets on the floor — like the floral displays seen at the opening of a new shop. But the young actors must have practiced with them, for they wove their way on and off stage without accident and with much poise, delivering their lines without a trace of nervousness, which spoke much credit for their coaches, Miss Grace P. Adley and Miss Mary Jane Hughson of the high school faculty, who received handsome bouquets of roses during the second intermission."

"How odd," said mother, "they should have misspelled your name after putting it in the paper so many times."

"It's the same stupidity that made them exaggerate the flowers," I said, for the flowers had been my idea.

"Don't you mind, dear," consoled my mother. "The stage looked lovely, perfectly lovely."

In May Mr. Clough brought up the contracts, with a hundred dollar raise for me.

"That's the best we could do this year, Maryanne," he said. "You know they're cutting everywhere else." I could see he was much impressed with me and knew the talk around town of my being a wonderful teacher was not exaggerated.

"They start higher everywhere else," I reminded him, unsmiling.

He looked rather embarrassed and cleared his throat.

"I don't want this to get around," he said in a stage whisper, leaning toward me confidentially, "but we have a new principal coming."
I smiled, and did not say a word. There was no need to say anything. We understood each other.

Then came senior week: baccalaureate Sunday night, seniors marching in, wearing their hired caps and gowns awkwardly and importantly; prize speaking Monday night; senior banquet Wednesday; reception and junior prom Thursday; and Friday, commencement. How much it brought back to me!

Though we must bid goodbye to you
Goodbye to dear S.H.S.!
The parting is so sad
Yet memories of school days will always stay
Onward we go our way.

My way brought me back here. Where will yours take you? What will the new year bring for all of us? I knew my destiny was not to be merely a watcher, a coach, a shadow behind scenes; and it had more in it, too, than standing before a class and hammering, persistent as a woodpecker on a tree, at the elements of a sentence, which it seemed impossible to make them understand. I had done well. They had given me a raise. Not much of a raise, but the gesture meant something. It meant that they liked my work. Next year, I would be freer to make improvements in my teaching, to get closer to my pupils and understand their problems. I must be patient for the big things. They would come. There was no question about them, any more than my books.

The Teachers' Club held its final meeting in the form of a picnic, and I could not excuse myself. Our honor guest was our
principal, who was leaving us. We went in our cars to the grounds, where tables and benches under a log roof and two grates were free for our use, and isolated enough to give us a degree of privacy. Near a copper-colored brook was a spring, and I went to get water, Harry carrying the pail for me. Under the bridge were wonderfully large spiders, black and white and some copper-colored like the water.

"What are you looking at?" asked Harry, as farther up the bank he dipped the pail dejectedly into the spring.

"Spiders."

He said nothing. For a wonder they did not bring to his mind an incident involving his wife. And when he joined me, setting down the pail,

"Will I see you again, Maryanne?"

I went on looking at the spiders.

"We're leaving on our trip soon." (Father, mother, and I were taking a leisurely cruise on a fruit boat out of Boston.) "I doubt it."

He hesitated a moment, then lifted the brimming pail.

"I shall think of you often, Maryanne."

I felt sorry for him. We had steak and coffee, homemade rolls and pie, eating on paper plates. There was a good deal of everything, including mosquitoes. After we had finished, and while all the leavings turned cold and depressing before us, Mr. Clough presented Harry with a traveling bag. I felt so sorry for him then, tears came into my eyes. He saw them, and looked happy for the first time that day, but it was a burdened and thoughtful kind of happiness.
What could one do for him? He had failed as a husband, a teacher. I had no concern with failures, though I might be moved by the sight of one, in passing.
Chapter 19

George Converse had not come to Suttonsville with an idea that it was an advancement over his first school, though the pay was better. He came, he told Mr. Clough, because it was a challenge. He had heard of the school. That did not speak too well for it. Yet it was only in recent years that it had come to its present difficulties, which were connected in some way with the times, for in the years I was a student I could not remember that any such trouble existed. More than a competent administration was necessary.

We needed money to enlarge the school, to buy books and equipment, to increase the faculty. Why couldn't the town understand this? But much could be done with strong leadership. Was George Converse the man? I remembered hearing him at the county conference the previous year. He had said something about kindergarten teachers being intelligent! The men we had to pick our principals from! Yet he had given an impression of force and self-confidence. I could still remember the movement and intensity of his glossy black brows as he spoke. He had a master's degree in history, and in the two years since he had been out of college had written a book on the problems of American democracy and some papers on secondary education. Though these had all been published, I had not read them and so had no idea of their merit. He lived in Colport, and drove to school and back, picking up Mr. Fletcher, the math teacher, on the way. As he was not married, his coming was looked forward to with interest by all the teachers, and age was no barrier to hope and conjecture. I overheard Grace P. say very early in the school year (pulling out a handkerchief marked "Grace P. Adley, South Vienna, Maine," — did she mark her underwear the same way?), "Watch her, she'll get this
one, too." It amused me, not that I would put myself out to get George, as she so crudely put it, but that George very early started to take an interest in me just as his predecessor had done, but having more character than his predecessor, he was not snubbed. We had our battles, and as far as I knew, no hearts were chalked anywhere the first year. But the second...

Well, I am getting ahead of my story.

The first morning of school, at assembly, George stood in front of the pupils, and he was intense, important, determined. He spoke first to the freshmen, explained they would find more freedom in high school than in the grades, but freedom did not mean license. They were young men and women now. He expected of them what he expected of those who had already had a year or more here: a sense of responsibility, fair play, serious application to school and sports. It was not his policy to lay down the law or the strap; but if need be, he could do both. He explained the difficulties that existed because of lack of money, and asked the cooperation of the students until better means for their schooling could be obtained. Taxed as our equipment was, good students could still be produced. It was a matter of making the most of one's opportunities, and the teachers were more than willing to do their part. He saw no reason why the very fact we all had to work under difficulties should not strengthen our characters and enhance results.

In all these things, he said no more than Harry Floyd had said, yet they listened with awe. He had boxed in college. But he was not a six-footer like Harry Floyd. What made the difference? He stood straight and sure, his broad chest thrust forward, his voice
firm and direct. He seemed to speak to each one individually, and he spoke straight from the shoulder. He was not afraid of his pupils and he did not want them to be afraid of him. But they had their place. I thought, at last we have someone we can depend on! And I foresaw the most favorable reputation for the school. It would be a delight to teach here now.

I found my second year much easier. I no longer had lessons to do every night, to keep ahead of my pupils: I was acquainted with the textbooks and needed only to glance over my plan book to recall the matters I would discuss with them. But papers and book reports and examinations never ceased — as I believe they never do in the English department. We were all required to come back two afternoons a week for make-up work. On other afternoons I corrected papers and entered marks. Most evenings and some afternoons were now free for my own interests. I joined the College Club and immediately was elected to the program committee. I took mother for rides to the lake or Colport, or for a brief visit to Mrs. Alden. Except for this, she did not get out at all, and the outings did her much good. I know that people talked about our leisured teachers and their cars, but people will always talk. They had their business, and I minded mine.

The fall brought a repetition of county and state conventions, parent-teacher meetings, and meetings of the Teachers' Club. I went to all except the last. Attendance was not required and the meetings neither benefited nor amused me. I knew that Mr. Clough, whose idea the club had been, was displeased with my absence, but it was not from snobbishness as they supposed. I had better use
for my time, and felt that one should have a certain measure of choice in social matters.

One afternoon in early November I stayed to average my marks and did not lift my head when Mr. Bartlett, the janitor, rattled his broom against the door. He tried several times to start a conversation, and waited hopefully; I could see him out of the corner of my eye. He was a gossipy old man who painted the building bright pink every other summer, and I could not forgive him. Besides, I hated gossip. Finally he saw that I intended to go on with what I was doing, and he swept the room and went away.

About five o'clock, George came in.

I was not yet calling him George. He was still Mr. Converse and except for some talk on school matters after our teachers' meetings, I had said little to him, and thought less about him.

"What's this minimum-maximum lesson business the kids are talking about?" he asked in his direct way, looking at me with a tolerant interest that implied — to my annoyance — it can't be much since it didn't come from me, but let's hear it anyway.

"It's a scheme of mine to cover differences in ability," I replied coldly. "I assign a minimum lesson, which everyone must do. Then, I suggest a maximum lesson which anyone who wishes may do if he is interested."

"That's all right, that's fine. On the project plan idea. We'll see how it works out. Just got me curious, that's all. Working on your marks?"

"Yes."

"Many A's?"
"Twelve in ancient history," and I smiled. It was still my favorite class. "Last year I had fifteen."

George stared.

"Twelve. How many in your class, Miss --" and in his concern, he could not remember my name.

"Miss Hudson," I supplied, and answered, "Twenty-two."

"That's over half your class. That can't be!"

"And why not?"

His black eyes probed mine; his brows twitched until I thought they must ache.

"But the curve, Miss Hudson. Have you plotted a curve? And struck off the averages on it? Your grades will balance every time, they're bound to."

"I give my A's where they are earned, and not where they fall on a graph."

He looked at me as if he could not figure me out.

"You've not been teaching long, have you?" he said at last, rather kindly, though his brows still twitched from the alarm I had given him. I hated him for asking. Was experience indicated by use of mechanical means? He was a good disciplinarian but dogmatic, biased. There was no such thing as an ideal principal, I must give up expecting one. Suddenly he leaned over, seized my pen, and pulling out a sheet of paper, drew a rough curve, which he slashed authoritatively on both ends. "There are your A's," he said, indicating the first division. "And there are your failures." He pointed to the last division, and looked into my eyes to see if I understood.
"And in between on the misty flats --?"

He may not have remembered the poem. He looked at me quizzically, looked deeper into my eyes than the graph examination required, and Grace stood in the door. "Telephone, Mr. Converse." He stood up, dropped the pen on the desk, and kept on looking at me. "That's all there is to it." His eyes challenged my opposition and I accepted the challenge. I gave the twelve A's.

A maximum assignment on "Lancelot and Elaine" brought me a character sketch from an unexpected quarter -- Rita Berry, who was barely passing on the minimum requirements. I read the paper with interest.

A Character Sketch of Lancelot

Lancelot's conscious was that of a guilty man, and it made markins on his face. He sometimes was similar to that of a ferd, and hunted for quietness and peace. Launcelot greatest of all knights was very courteous and brave and won many a battle for the king. His voice was mellow like sweet music, which made Elaine love him even before she gazed on his sad face.

Elaine loved him very much. She tried every way to see if he loved her. She killed herself on account of him not caring for her. Lancelot felt very badly about it but still he could not help it because he loved the Queene.

I was sitting with mother and father in the sewing room, correcting papers on my lap. It was a quiet evening. Father read
the newspaper and mother had some sewing but she was not working on it. I noticed she kept putting it down more often than she worked on it. "How are the new glasses, mother?" I asked.

"They're fine. I can see wonderful with them." And she picked up her work again too eagerly to be convincing.

"Mother, who is this Rita Berry? I think she lives on the mill road. She brought me some lady's slipper last year. A small dark girl who looks much brighter than she really is."

"That would be John's girl, wouldn't you say, Ned?" It was amazing how much of the genealogies and personal histories of our town my mother was acquainted with, for she hardly got around now, and new families moved in occasionally. She never needed support in her information, yet she always appealed to my father, out of respect to his knowledge which, like her own, was considerable. "I used to know John, years ago. He drank a lot, still does, I guess. He was a house painter. When Rita was small, he fell thirty feet of a staging and broke his hip in five places, and his arm. He was in bed nine months. A blood clot entered his lung, the doctor thought he would die. I went up there once, brought him some apple jelly. He couldn't see me, he said the darkness fell and lifted like the fog. Then he got a coughing jag and coughed till we thought he'd go out of his mind. Nobody expected him to live. People said it was punishment for drinking and mistreating his wife. But she was loyal. She said he hadn't been drunk that time. A plank in the staging wasn't nailed in right. She's been through a lot with him and the children. She and John have come to a good understanding, now;
they're happy, but the children are wild. One had a baby not long ago, she wasn't married. I don't know so much about Rita. She's one of the youngest. As I remember, she has her father's eyes."

I said before that I didn't like gossip. Discussing my pupils, or other people I met, with my parents was conversation that often gave me a new slant. As I reflected on Rita Berry's paper, I remembered with more sympathy than I had listened to it an observation Harry Floyd had made to me one day. "I don't think of them as pupils," he said. "I think of them as individuals. They are, you know. Each one is different. I look at them and wonder what are their thoughts? What experience have they had with love, joy, disappointment? What will life do to them? Where are they headed?" From her character sketch, Rita gave evidence of an emotional maturity that surprised me for her age and level of intelligence. The spelling did not concern me then. There might be something to what Harry said; there was more to these youngsters, perhaps, than one guessed, standing before them in class. But if a teacher burdened herself with study of her pupils, she might find little below the surface to reward her for her pains. I felt that my job was to get a ready and fairly uniform response. When I looked at my class, I did not care what they had been, what they were now, what their experience would be later. I had no speculation about them at all, unless it was to wonder when Haley Dodd would darn that hole in the elbow of his only sweater and if Christina Phipps was going to get any fatter.

The title of my second novel, "Some Root of Knighthood," had been
taken from this poem we were now reading in my sophomore classes. The novel had made the rounds and was put away with the first. How contaminated I felt with the brutal scenes of adultery I had had to write! — conduct so contrary to my principles! I still shuddered to think of them. I remembered the criticism that had been made of my writing, that I went outside my own experience for material. It was true all I knew of passion was from hearsay and Somerset Maugham. But I had not had direct experience with marriage, with having babies, with the hobo life, and yet, a re-reading of my first and third novels left me only with the conviction of their merit. My second novel was a weaker one. Writers cannot turn out uniformly good work. Therefore, I decided, the reason that the scenes of passion in "Some Root of Knighthood" disturbed me was not for their inaccuracy but for their vividness. I need not trouble myself any further with doubts on that score. As soon as "West Wind Chariot" was accepted — it was at the publishers now — they would be clamoring for my other novels. How fortunate that I would have two all ready!

During our next school vacation, I planned to write some prize speaking pieces. After novels, their writing would be as simple as playing with blocks. I could not bear to hear another year the familiar quavering, "It has come at last, old comrade, it has come at last — the time when you and I must say good-by." Let Bill Sykes stay horribly dead and the Bishop's candlesticks stolen. I had had enough of them all. In the summer I vaguely thought of summer school. But as for my next novel, the astonishing thing
was that my mind was completely empty. Would I ever write again? I remembered how I was swept by incidents, words, conversations; how my pencil had flown to note all that tossed and blew in my mind -- not dead but living leaves, leaves of creation rushing ahead of the west wind. Because of these memories, I looked back on "West Wind Chariot" as my masterpiece. It was my favorite of the three, and I thought it would always be my favorite. I even sent Chet Whitman a wedding present, and it must have surprised him and Margaret, but I felt a gratitude and a strange kind of affection for the boy who had chosen my retreat to collapse in after his one big adventure. I would always feel a closeness to Chet, not because he had once looked longingly at me while I danced but because he had suggested Chet Lowden to me.

West Wind Chariot... would it ever drive me again?
Chapter 20

I don't know just when I changed from Mr. Converse to George. It is extraordinary how little I remember of what George said, or the way he looked. He seemed to address me as he did the school, in full sure voice, confident, almost pompous, his eyes flashing but never twinkling, like my father's. And yet he could not have always looked at me so.

In late spring of that year we went up the mountain. How it came about, I do not know. I only remember that George drove up to the house one Saturday morning, and mother gave him our lunch, and she watched us at the door until we were out of sight. We must have talked on the way to the trail. I don't remember what we said. Our feet sounded softly on the pine floor. Here and there it was wet in places, and the trail was soggy underfoot, but all the snow had melted away. Some of the ledges were steep and smooth, gleaming where stray sunlight caught a flake of mica; others were broken into convenient steps. For a while the trail seemed lost on these ledges, then we picked it up again where it ran, like a brown snake, in and out the grass. The trees thinned out, the path was dry, and we looked down through the sunlight on the neat white and yellow houses and slender church spires of the town. It was only the first landing, not more than a thousand feet up.

"I haven't been here for years, and I don't know why. It's lovely, isn't it?"

"Yes," he said. It was his first time, though he had lived nine miles of Mt. Giddings all his life.

Bushes with hard green berries brushed my skirt. Some pale
wildflowers blew in the wind. I had probably known their names once; I did not remember them then. Through the trees we saw the ocean, dark-streaked where the wind breathed on it. On one ledge I skinned a knuckle. "Are you all right?" asked George anxiously. I held out my hand and he looked at it without touching it. "It's nothing," I said. It left a bruise like a berry stain. We climbed again.

Near the top we entered a grassy lane, where dandelions blossomed in abundance. Beyond, taller hills ranged themselves as if to ask their turn. But we would go no farther than this today.

I was glad we had not met anyone on the trail. And yet, it was impossible that no one had seen us heading for it, George carrying lunch. We found the throne chairs — green and white lichenized rocks that nature had accidentally tumbled into shape for sitting, and in the best place possible, looking over sea and town on the highest point on Mt. Giddings. The wind blew hard past my ear. What was the wind saying? What news, what ocean secrets had it brought from a distance, to tell me in passing though I could not understand? I remembered the wind in Jamestown Park.

George asked how high the mountain was.

"Three thousand feet."

I drifted with the small cloud over my head. It was like dandelion fluff. I could see the sky through it, blue and firm.

The wind blew with a cold clean unrelenting directness. It had something to say to me, surely; it would not leave off. Was it about George? I tried but could not make out the buzz against my
ears. The sky was nearer than it had ever been, delicate and hard.

"Are you cold?" asked George.

I told him I was not cold. He told me about a book he was planning, on the modern curriculum for high schools, but as he was going to summer school he would probably not get started on it as soon as he would like. Not to be outdone, but hesitating to confide in one whose literary tastes I was as yet unacquainted with, I nevertheless told him that I, too, wrote.

"On teaching?"

"No, novels."

He was less interested, yet he questioned me about them.

"What are they about?"

To outline a plot sounded silly. Only reading could do them full justice. I was not sure I wanted George to read them, he was so matter-of-fact. But I wanted to talk about them.

"Have you ever heard people ask of a man, what brought him to the state he is in now, when he had every advantage to make him a success in life? The novel I have at the publishers answers that question. It is about a college graduate who became a tramp."

"Do you know such a man?" he asked courteously, and as if he were thinking very hard about it.

I had to admit I did not.

"I know of only one tramp who came into my father's store — my father is a druggist — and asked for something to relieve a — a condition he was suffering from. I never saw anything so pitiful except when I visited a state hospital in connection with a
sociology course I was taking. However, he was not a college graduate."

"I've no doubt there are some who sink so low. They cannot help themselves. It is a force that works on a certain weakness in their natures."

"And do you know the life such men lead? — how they get food, how they travel from one place to another, their talk?" His questions implied his wonder that I did know such things — for had I not written about them? — and I warmed toward George and resolved I might let him read a chapter or two when it came back (catching myself then, for it would not come back this time!) — let him read, I corrected myself in thought, a chapter or two of one of my other novels.

"I've read a good deal about those subjects," I told him. "I really feel that I know the life. I've talked to men who have lived it." (remembering an early conversation with Ansell) "A good writer can create the illusion without any trouble. It's all in being carried away by your subject, in living with it until it becomes part of you. Creative experience is of a higher order than first-hand experience because it adds depth and vision to the work. Half our great books would never have been written had their authors waited to live the incidents of their books. I believe my work is too subtle for the general public. I don't expect a flaming success but the slow steady sure one that comes with permanent recognition of merit."

"You speak with authority," he said respectfully, "and I am sure there's a great deal of truth in what you say. But," he added,
smiling a little to soften the effect of his words -- a caution he did not trouble with later, when we got to know each other better; "you seem to be a little on the defensive."

We came down by the back trail. A brook fell under the shadow of the wooded cliff. In the gullies lay drab piles of leaves, wet and crushed. How many springs had they lain there, sheltered in death? Now and then a bird called. Trees hid the sun. Everything was silver as night. The world seemed remote from us, though lately so near; and we were remote from each other, our thoughts only on the going down. Some cobwebs clung to my mouth. I brushed them away but they still tickled. George went ahead and parted the branches for me. How close the sky had been that afternoon, how near the little puffs of cloud! Now only the dense roof of dry dark twigs, the spear-like rocks, the cleft where once a brook ran.

At last we stood by the wishing pile, and I broke the spell.
I wish that "West Wind Chariot" is accepted, I thought, casting my stone in the midst of the others. To my astonishment, it skipped off the top and dropped outside the pile.

George's stone landed squarely.

"They say," he remarked when we were in the road several miles above Suttonsville, "a girl's first wish on one of those things is for a husband. Is that right?"

"It may be, for most girls. I happened to be thinking of something else."

"It's too bad your stone didn't stay." He gave me a sidewise
glance of great importance and mischief, and I saw the color starting low in his brown face. "But mine did. So don't worry. If that pile of stones has any magic, you'll come out all right. I wished that your wish would come true."
Chapter 21

That summer George went to summer school, and mother, father, and I went to Quebec. I drove. We stopped overnight at hotels along the way. It was a pleasure trip and we were in no hurry. The neatly laid-out fields of the province impressed us, but when we drove through the mean little villages, and saw the houses of the poor clustered around magnificent cathedrals, we could not express our indignation enough and resolved to make this trip north our last one. The hills of Quebec itself were more than mother cared to try, though father and I did a little shopping and I spoke French, seeing in the salesgirls' face their surprise at an accent so good. We also did a little exploring. In Sous-le-Cap Street some urchins followed us, singing and begging money. Father reached into his pocket but I protested. "The authorities don't want you to." His eyes twinkled at me. "They won't need to know." I turned to the children severely. "C'est défendu." But they would not be shaken. They had seen father's gesture. "Monnaie, monsieur! monnaie!" they clamored. "Pas d'argent," I reprimanded them, more correctly. "Pas d'argent. Father, let's get back to the hotel."

Beyond the city, farmhouses flew the French flag, and I wondered what they knew of France, what had France done for them who have lived in British America so many generations? We went to the Island of Orleans, where we stayed two weeks, and it was like living abroad. The aquiline noses, the mustaches, the excited gestures, and the lively talk astonished me. "How like France it is!" I told one of the ladies I had met, whose red-haired children might have come out
of Renoir. "Oh, you have been in France, Miss Hudson?" she asked with interest. "I have read a good deal about it, and studied French many years." But I felt she did not fully appreciate the vividness of my experience, since it was only second-hand. When I ventured a few words in French, she replied in English. After that, I spoke English to her all the time, when I spoke to her.

Katherine Ebright, my college friend, now Mrs. Roget, and I corresponded about six times a year. Her husband was teaching at Annapolis. I described the prosperous looking family groups at the different tables; one fellow in a bright blue blazer who looked like Chopin on a holiday; the chicken and rice; the peace of the little island. "What an ideal place for a honeymoon."

Just then mother, who had been looking at the water, turned to me and said,

"George would like it here, I think."

She had begun to call him George, too. I knew what was in her mind. Would I marry George? Was he the one? Of course it was too early to tell. All my friends were married, and I had no doubt I would be, too. I tried to remember George, but all I could see was his lively brows; I was conscious of his intense, important manner. Of my work I had showed him only a few prize speaking pieces, which I had offered the contestants under a pen name. I did not want my own put to such small work, and my name in the author's column of a program would only make more talk, for people would insist it was out of conceit and not necessity that my pieces were given. They were not acquainted, as I was, with contest literature.'
George had sent me a card on his safe arrival in Cambridge, and later he had inclosed a program of a dinner and reception he had attended. No letter accompanied this, and I read the menu in astonishment that anyone could have considered it interesting enough to forward. In August he came back.

That month and the next we drove to the lake and spent evenings with some of his friends, who had a cottage there. Usually quite a crowd gathered, mostly teachers and their wives or husbands. The more there were, the happier George looked, for he loved talk, and he loved to talk. The men talked school and schoolmen. "I wonder how he'll make out? Sloppy to be around youngsters." "He's a backfield man and Sloane's a linesman. Good combination. Though Sloane's not a fellow you can like." "He's up in Aroostook now. Salary's fair but it depends on the potatoes. If they're good, you get paid; if not, you don't get a nickel." "He's had the damndest luck. Walked into the best job in the state and got a nervous breakdown." "What's he doing now? "Runs a chicken farm somewhere. He's done for all right." "Heard his girl had erisypelas, they say she'll have to have her arm removed. Wonder if he'll marry her?"

It was amazing how much gossip George had to contribute about people I never dreamed he knew, or had a way of knowing. Here as everywhere he stood out. His authoritative voice, his working brows compelled attention. ("I remember how surprised I was when I first saw him," Grace told me before school closed. "All the men teachers I ever knew were such duds.") I looked at George and found him dull.

"Did the squirrels come down the chimney this year?" asked one
of the women of Mrs. Bolton, whose camp it was.

"Yes," she said, laughing. "We had to replace a chair. It collapsed under us. But then, I told Jack it mightn't have been the squirrels. We're both getting too heavy to sit in the same chair."

Everybody thought this was so funny, and made so much noise laughing, the men demanded to be let in on the joke. Then they laughed as hard as the women had. The talk split up again, and the women discussed a recent death.

"Is it true that Steve Slocums' children told Mr. Taylor they wouldn't spend more than one hundred and fifty dollars for his funeral?"

"They bickered with Mr. Taylor, shopped for coffins here and in Colport, wanted a woman's coffin -- imagine, for that six-foot corpse! 'The town'll bury him for seventy-five,' Mr. Taylor told them. They managed to do it for one hundred forty-five."

"A cord of wood will go as far as a ton of coal," boomed George among the men, speaking, as he listened, with great animation. "And there's seven dollars' difference. But wood won't do for cold nights."

The women discussed some of the townspeople, a grandfather having an affair with a beauty parlor operator separated from her husband; another man living with a woman and waiting for his wife to die of cancer; a girl at the movies with a married man; Squeak Rudge who never married the mother of his five children.

"They thought we were a wild generation," said Mrs. Bolton. "But we're Victorian compared to the youngsters coming along today."
They discussed the youngsters coming along today. Examples were offered from the high school. "Mrs. Potter even put it in the papers that her daughter was ill with pneumonia. She had three or four boys up to the house, they all denied putting Millie in trouble." (Where was Ansell now?)

"The men were discussing town papers.

"Take that Walter Corcoran, costs the town seven hundred a year. Last year it was more on account of doctors' bills. But he can't prove he's unable to take care of himself, so no institution will take him."

"What about Pete Watson's sister. Pete's as smart a man as you'll find in this town, respectable and hard working. She's absolutely incompetent. The town has to give her a maid. They're always in the papers. 'Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Bunker motored over to Colport to visit friends.' Did you ever see the car they motor in? 'Little Jackie Bunker, son of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Bunker, is confined to his home with a severe cold.'"

Now the woman took up the subject.

"She ought to be sterilized," "She motored over to school one recess. After she finished swearing at everybody connected with the school, she landed on me. 'Why can't you learn them two kids of mine anythin'? One of them has tried the grade three years. He catches a word and repeats it: left-right, left-right, or he'll say my name over and over, Miss-Weed, Miss Weed. It's pitiful. I tried to explain to her. 'I learn 'em things,' she says. 'How?' I asked. 'I'm anxious to know.' 'I whale 'em;' she says. They don't know how to begin to spell dog, they can't even read a first grade primer."
I looked out at the snow-white mackerel sky, the moon breaking through, stars sailing swiftly down the open blue channel. How their talk tired me! Far from the other end of the lake came the chug-chug of an outboard. The water lapped against the shore, and against ghostly launches, one roofed and shuttered. It brought an echo of heartache, I could not tell what it was but I had heard it sometimes on the Isle of Orleans when I sat beside my mother and looked out on the sun-gilt water. Now at night, by the lake, it had a plaintive sound. Donny — the leaf — Mr. Thaxon. What was it? What did it mean? If I studied to make it out, and made it out, would I be reminded any more of this hurt I carried inside me? Or was it just that I was tired of these people, tired to death of their talk!

"You're very quiet tonight, Maryanne."

One Sunday not long after school started, George and I, and Jack and Flora Bolton went on a picnic at Beecham's Point, some fifteen miles up the shore road. We turned off the main road and were nearly tossed out of the car by the roughness of the path that led to the point. And though I could not remember having been there before, the moment I stepped out and saw the sea so close, some memory returned to me of another time, and I could not rest in the shelter of the umbrella oak but must go out to the very tip of land alone, without the others.

Something beckoned me. I walked over the black slabs of rock, crusted with copper scales. The dark mustard-colored sand blinked through the water. Black sprigs of seaweed, rancid smelling, lay among the rocks, but in the wind and water bright green living weed
quivered like glowworms. In the early summer there would be black flies here to torment one. But at this time of year the air was clear. I touched the warm sand, it was like putting my hand on my mother's silk dress when she had been sitting at the window in the sun. No cloud was in the sky. No bird called. The sea rolled brightly away to where a white shaft of sail bisected a distant island.

What was I doing here? What had I come for? What voice had called?

No movement of the sail — no movement — yet slowly — slowly it disappeared.

I went back to the others.
Chapter 22

That year, my third year teaching school, we had to take a ten per cent cut. There was talk of teachers getting paid with scrip in Aroostook, but Aroostook was far away, and scrip was a new word we did not think we would have to learn the meaning of.

In my freshman English class was a boy, Carol Capin, who for two weeks had neither recited nor passed in any written work. He rode in from Mars Cove in the school bus. He could not make his words well, but as he had hardly spoken two or three to me all the time he had been in class, I could not judge if a speech defect were present. It was his look that kept me from calling him to account sooner. I had to make sure.

One morning while dictating some sentences for study, I walked around to Carol's desk and glanced over his shoulder. He looked up at me with a joyous confiding look; his face was really very ugly, but strangely, I was not repelled. I spoke, and he swiftly made strokes with a good pen. When I had finished, I asked the class to rewrite the sentences correctly, and I bent over Carol's desk.

I could not read what he had written.

"What does it say?" I asked kindly, wondering if he could.

He looked up, and the shy hope in his eyes, asking forgiveness for not being able to tell me, brought back with a pang Quentin Fielding, the boy that Chet had so liked to lord it over when bigger fellows weren't around, whose mother had taken his name out of a book and probably hoped he would write one. Quentin had not been able to read, either, and we had laughed at him. What had
become of him? (I must ask mother.) How frightened he had been of Ansell! Yet Ansell never touched him (I was sure). Standing over Carol's desk, my hand so close to his shoulder, I was filled with an unaccountable sensation that the best things of my life were behind me.

"What have we just been talking about?"

Carol looked down.

"Write your name, Carol. Write 'Carol Capin.'"

He made more wavy lines, then looked up at me with his shy hopeful smile.

I patted him on the shoulder and walked away. That afternoon I told George about him.

"I've a boy in my freshman class. He can't read. He can't even write his name. It's a scrawl."

"Who is it?"

"Carol Capin."

"Oh yes. Mars Cove. Country school."

"The others from up there are doing all right."

"The boys subnormal." George said it as easily as he would say, "It's windy."

"I could teach him to read."

"You've got your hands full now."

"I could teach him afternoons."

George shook his head firmly.

"Can't keep the whole bisload hanging around just for one." And then, seeing my annoyance, he added kindly, "it isn't as if you could help him."
"George, sometimes you make me so mad!"

George leaned against a front desk and went on in a glib, practical voice.

"The trouble with you, Maryanne, you've no conception of the average. They're all so precious to you, it breaks your heart to force a standard method on them. You want self-fulfillment, self-expression." (What was he talking about? What did he know of why I wanted to teach Carol Capin to read? I hardly understood it myself. But I wanted to, it was as if I had to.) "Remember how you acted about plotting a curve? Well, it won't do. You might as well face it, you've got to sometime. In public school you've got to be realistic. We haven't enough teachers, we haven't enough room, we haven't enough equipment. We've got to adapt ourselves to conditions, make the best of them! In crowded schools, the subnormal and the superior get left out. But that's all right. There's always someone to look after the subnormal, get them work on a farm or something; and the superior ones look after themselves. The best part of it all is, neither group is a disciplinary problem. We concern ourselves with the majority, the big average, and that's the way it should be. It's the average who make up society. We can't change things."

Little god speaking, little smug, self-assured, positive god! How I would clip him if he were in my class. What arrogance! He was thoroughly spoiled.

He leaned over my desk.

"Just the same, Maryanne, you're a damn good teacher. Where'll
we go to the movies tonight -- Colport again?"

It made less talk, though we ran into our pupils there, too. They came down in the bus for a change from our own theater. But curiously, they took us quite for granted. As the two youngest and newest members of the faculty we might be expected to have a good deal in common; or perhaps they thought us too well matched to be made fun of. At any rate, after the first few times they saw us together outside school, they looked at us as if we were still in school. It was only Grace who made a fuss.

In November we had a snowfall, but it did not last, and as I looked out of the window toward the end of the afternoon, I saw no trace of it. The leaves outside were brown and crumpled. I watched one fall, then another, quietly breaking off, turning in the air, and lost below the window sill. I had no work this afternoon, only some chronic tardiness being made up, and a few lexicographers at work, returned by Grace P. for some offense or other. The hall clock ticked away the minutes to four. I did not stay but went down to the parish house, to get mother, whom I had left there to hear a medical missionary tell the ladies about his work in Ningpo.

"You remember Mrs. Bean was stationed there for a while," she told me in the car, on our way home. "He said thousands had got sick and lost the salts in their bodies and they had to keep putting them back. What wonderful work it is, Maryanne. What a sense of accomplishment it must give you. I would like to be young again."

"And go to China and marry someone else and not have me? I won't allow it, mother!"
She laughed.

"I wouldn't have had it different for all the world, Maryanne. Not a bit different."

"Mother," I said, "you know what I've been thinking? That things are meant to be. If you hadn't married father when you did, he'd have popped up in your life some other time, some other place. You couldn't escape him, and I had to be."

"That is only another way of saying it is God's will," mother pointed out, in her mild, gentle way.

"And a very good will it is!" I declared, driving up close to the door and helping her out.

George and I went to all the basketball games and his car was parked so often at our house that our engagement became a daily expectation. I could see it gave mother a good deal of satisfaction to report to me that my Aunt Charlotte was well pleased with George and asked every time she called when the wedding was to be.

George and I had the same background, the same type of education, many of the same tastes. He was good-looking and manly in appearance and though now only a small high school principal, he would in time have a bigger school and between his books and mine we should stand very high. Though he did not particularly stir me, except now and then to annoyance at some pigheaded idea (the latest being the merits of the true-false examination, which I abhorred), I had come to regard him as the man I would marry. We saw each other often, and were seen everywhere together, but he never talked of marriage. He would.
George published another paper. It was a long one, a kind of preparation for his book, on the subject of a modern program for secondary schools, and brought him many letters of commendation and the personal compliments of the state agent on his next visit to us. George brought him down to my class, and my children astonished me with their lively responses. We all had a sense of achievement when the bell rang, and I was just as pleased with them and myself as George and Mr. Twynning, who liked my method of assigning a new lesson by discussing it fully with the class, showing them how much they already knew about it and stimulating their interest to pursue it further.

I might say here, in connection with "The Ancient Mariner," which we were reading in our freshman classes, it seems a pity to rouse the class to such a pitch of interest and then discover all that trouble was caused merely by the shooting of a bird! Here in a part of the country where shooting is a sport and a legitimate and sometimes necessary means of getting food, it is absurd, in the light of their experience, to expect them to take stock in the dire calamity that followed. I pointed out it was an unnecessary killing—the bird had been a friend in those distant waters, but I felt as they did that the weakness of the story reduced the pleasure to be had from the beauty of the lines and I did not blame them for feeling cheated. In the same way, I thought our sophomore novel, "The Vicar of Wakefield," an absurd story, so that I wondered if it was not time to re-examine our classics, like our curriculum, and revise our opinions on them.
I don't recall just when I met George's people. It might have been earlier than this, or around this time. But I remember that the day George drove me down, a fine rain was steadily falling, lacquering the passive leaves and binding the grass with threads like spun sugar. I suppose it was spring; or perhaps the February thaw. Every field was a lake. George said something about the cement plant just outside Colport, its warning signs posted all around indistinct in mist. "What horrible little houses," I said. "That's where the workmen live. They're bright and clean. You should go inside." "What business would I have there?" He grinned. "Get yourself some fresh ideas. You're always talking about your destiny and all you're going to do for the town. Well, that's one way to start." "Colport isn't my town."

He told me that an out-of-state corporation ran the plant. At first there was a big fuss when they started building. But the people saw it now as a godsend, since many of the quarries had been shut down. "Limestone quarrying will be a dead industry in Colport soon, like shipbuilding is right now in Suttonsville." I shuddered. "Don't talk of dying, George. I hate to think anything in our town ever dies."

"Sometimes it's a good thing. Wakes people up. How long do you think Suttonsville will last, the rate it is going now? I'll bet half the houses won't open this summer, either. People have lost money, Maryanne. Do you think it's the same with everybody as with you? But in a way these ups and downs are good for us. They remind us that progress has to be worked at. You can't sit back and expect it to go along of its own momentum. The trouble with you and people
like you is that you're too complacent. You say you want to do something for the town. Yet you live aloof from it. How much relief work have you done? Do you know some people didn't have any coal all winter? that there are children without shoes? What do you care about it? If you weren't teaching school, you'd probably never know there were other people besides yourself and your folks at all."

George loved to talk. His ideas swept him away and I let him talk, without taking issue, as I easily might have, for George as usual, when it came to me, was wrong, very wrong. Yet didn't his "you" mean the general public? It could not mean me. I was too much a part of our town to have such criticisms directed at me. But I was too curious then about Alyce Brindsley Converse to find out, or fight it out.

Mrs. Converse had been a Brindsley, and the Brindsleys were the best people in Golport. Like the Aldens, they had engaged in the China trade and had acquired through it furniture and fortune. No wonder Mrs. Converse felt she had married beneath her. Her husband had started as a clerk in a drug store when he had to give up medical school to support his family, and now he merely owned the drug store. I had seen his name in the paper a number of times, in connection with the Chamber of Commerce and the Lion's Club, but his activities did not nearly compare with those of my father.

Mrs. Converse had had her hair done that day. It was thin graying hair which showed her pink scalp and was set in hard little waves. Her skin was putty-colored, soft and lightly powdered. Her face was expressionless, but her small shrewd eyes lost nothing
in their first glance. I felt I could be polite, but never friendly with her. She was very cold.

"Hello, mother." George stooped to kiss her on the cheek. "Look what I found in Main Street. Calls herself by the name of Maryanne. Think we can find some grub for her and fatten her up?" George acted as if he had said something very witty.

She put out her hand, and looked no farther than her hand, for she had already looked at me. Her impression I knew was as unfavorable as my own, though on her part arose from prejudice, for what mother can bear to have her son interested in another woman?

"I'm very glad to meet you, Maryanne."

A hostile-faced servant looked in from the kitchen door and disappeared. Her sharp brown eyes gave me a creepy feeling. In fact, the whole house did. It was too big, pretentious; the chairs too far apart, the fireplace scrubbed too clean, its tiles too shining, as if no smoke had ever darkened them, or any fire burned there.

Mr. Converse came in. He was a tall man with sharp chin and prominent Adam's apple. His expression was at once friendly and humble. Even if he did own a drug store, I found myself liking him more and more. He made me think of my own father. His eyes were kind.

The housekeeper moved among us like a wraith, tight-lipped and resentful. What was the matter with her, I wondered. Now and then Mrs. Converse interrupted her conversation with George to give the woman an order. She and George were discussing a college friend of his, who had married some girl against his parents' wishes,
and they were living in two rooms over Milford's dry goods store.

"And she's running around already. Clara told me she saw her with that Rawson man, I don't know how he runs his car — he's been out of work a month or more. Maude, will you put some more rolls on? These are cold. And he has a wife and children besides."

George listened with the greatest interest, blinking his eyes in wonder and disapproval at his friend's poor judgment and fallen fortunes. At the same time, he looked complacently sure that nothing like this would ever happen to him. I turned to his father, who had likewise been left out of the conversation. "Don't take any stock in it," he whispered, in a low voice, and he looked amused. "It's someone different every day, and Clara's always just as far off." I accepted his advice coldly. What were Clara and Rawson and all those others to me? Mrs. Converse was deliberately keeping George's attention from me. I thought it rudeness in the extreme. I did not like her at all.

Another person they talked about — but one from within their own sphere — was Judy, "George's friend," Mrs. Converse explained. I quickly saw why she had been introduced. Judy was finishing her medical studies in Vienna. "Imagine a woman dragging a Boston bag in and out of her car, delivering babies, examining you. Have you ever been to a woman doctor, Miss Hughes?" I said I hadn't. "I've no faith in them," continued Mrs. Converse. I wouldn't let one come near me. Judy! Why, I knew her when she was in diapers. And to think, she's an M.D. now. Well, I suppose she will practice at home to be near George."
"I don't think she will, mother. Her field is psychiatry. She'll tie up with some hospital."

Mrs. Converse said teasingly,

"She's still a woman, George."

I hated Mrs. Converse.

After supper, she asked if I played the piano? A grand, draped in brocade, stood in the parlor. I told her I had been an advanced student when I took lessons, and though I didn't find much time for the piano now, I did not think it had left me. "Judy played very well." I went over, in my mind, such pieces as I could remember, and was quite satisfied that I could perform as well as anybody, certainly as well as Judy, even after these years without practice, but Mrs. Converse did not invite me to play. "Would you like to see some pictures of George?" He brought her several albums, and she showed me pictures of George from the time he was an infant. Judy appeared in many of them, for they were about the same age. "I had a friend I grew up with too — his name was Donny." The name caught on my heart like a pin. It was a wretched evening.

In the car, driving home, George pointed out a filling station where he said Hank worked. "Hank?" I asked puzzled. "My fraternity brother — the fellow we were talking about tonight." "How can you think I am interested? I never heard of him before. I don't know him." George said in a clipped voice, "You heard of him tonight."

"He means nothing more to me for it." We did not speak all the rest of the way home, but when George parked the car, he stayed a little while longer and we made up.

In spring George and I took long drives in the country. There was
one particular farm on the way to Mars Cove that I liked — it was a weathered gray house with barn attached. A swing rocked empty under the elm tree, and nearby was a chair, but I had never seen anyone sit in it. Upstairs in the house a curtain billowed softly in an open window. Fertilizer smelled in the field, and silence sang like crickets over the bright country afternoon. The house breathed a living quiet, as if inside a spell had been cast on its people and they dreamed in the postures they had sat in, glistening with webs, among the dust. One time I told George my fancy. I wondered who the people were and what had cast a spell on them.

"Why, don't you know whose house that is?" asked George. "There's no spell — they're probably in the back fields, all of them, working like niggers. It's a big farm. I thought you knew. It's the Capin homestead." He fixed his bright black eyes on me. "Your little friend Carol, remember?"

"But that's not the name on the box."

"She married again."

George always had a way of spoiling things. No wonder I talked so little to him. Yet when he stayed away, I missed him. I resented his papers and school work when they kept him from me.

George also took me to meet his aunt, Mrs. Dexter, a diabetic, who lived in Colport and spent most of her time in bed. Like George, she loved to talk. She had a lively face and a terrace of soft, peach-blossom chins, which danced to the vibrations of her laughter. Her voice was a contralto, and very pleasant to listen to, but could not make up for the triviality of her conversation. She had lately
broken her hip and was watched day and night by alternating nurses, who treated her shamefully. "There might have been some sense to their watching me before I broke my hip," she complained cheerfully. "In those days I could sneak down to the kitchen and have a snack. I knew the doctor wouldn't have the elevator taken out of the stairwell after all the expense and trouble we went to, putting it in. But now I can't get out of bed without help. And they watch me!"

"This hip, I hate this hip!" she sang on. "Fractured femur, they call it. I have to learn to walk all over again — at my age! And on crutches, spindly, creaky things! Mac — he's the doctor; you remember Mac, George? Dr. MacClintock — he's very fussy. Not all old maids are women, Maryanne. Not like that, he says. Like this. And out pops his chest and back pop his shoulders; suddenly he's a muscle ad in the magazines. Poor me, it would take an expedition to find my muscles. Don't think I got fat on gluten bread and aerated water! I hunch over the crutches, I'm as graceful as an elephant. But we have great times together, Mac and I. He gives me plenty of time and why shouldn't he?" She laughed, her chins danced, she was perfectly happy — "I'm his best patient."

She paused, and looked proudly at George.

"You are keeping yourself well, George. Hasn't he what you'd call a splendid physique, Maryanne? But then, George always took good care of himself. I like fresh air, too; but you can't eat it. And exercise is so boring! Besides, I had this heart condition. Mac is arranging for them to bring the electrocardiograph over again from the hospital. It records the action of your heart. I have a test every once in a while. Don't ever get one thing wrong with you, Maryanne;
for these doctors will see that you get them all! How is your mother these days, George? She hasn't been over to see me since Wednesday; I'm angry with her. Tell her to give up a club or two; it was club work that wore me out and made me an easy mark for my first trouble — I don't remember what it was. But committees and clubs will do it, tell her to be careful, George. And remember it yourself; there's such a thing as doing too much."

When we left the house, George was beaming with pride and affection. "What do you think of my aunt?" he asked.

"I don't believe she wants to get well. It's disgraceful the pleasure she gets out of talking about her illnesses. I never heard of anyone enjoying being sick like that:"

George's brows worked with irritation at this perfectly honest remark, showing how little able he was to receive a candid opinion, of the sort he was so free to give of others.

"Could you get out of bed with a broken hip?" he demanded.

"I would walk with a broken hip and two broken legs," I returned, angry that he should be so little aware, after the months of our acquaintance, of the strength and determination of my will. "In our family we consider it a sin to be idle."

He said rather sheepishly, having to yield the point,

"I hope you never have to try it."

I met other of his mother's people, but found them all painfully self-centered and did not hesitate to tell him so.

"I never saw people who think so well of themselves," I told him after a visit to another sister who was Alyce Brindsley Converse all over again.
I had expected George to take offense. He generally did, and we had a stimulating little word battle that both of us felt good to get out of our system, and ended in a closer understanding of each other. We were in the car that night; he was taking me home. It was toward the close of school, and a lovely time of year.

George said nothing till he parked the car.

"So you think we think well of ourselves?" he asked, and he laughed, as he took me in his arms. "Don't you know, my pet, that is what they've been saying about you almost from the day you were born?"
My fourth year of teaching began, and father and I had some serious talks about mother in his office. Her sight was failing, and sometimes her mind wandered and she said strange things. "I don't like to leave her so much alone, Maryanne. If you think it's all right, I'd like to ask Mrs. Peebles to come live with us."

Mrs. Peebles was the woman who came in three days a week to clean and wash, and do other work around the house. She was small and quick, but in speech very slow; she had wiry hands and a raspy voice, and straight hair she brushed up in a peak, so that she looked like somebody from another century. But she always had showed the greatest respect for me, and was scrupulously neat. I liked her ironing, and could not find a thing against her except one. "I don't think she'll forget her place," I told father by way of giving him my approval. "But you must tell her she can't bring that dog. I shouldn't like to find the furniture all upset, or wake up to barking, or have him jump all over me." Father smiled. "I thought he was a pretty old boy for those tricks. He was her son's, and she thinks a lot of him. But just as you say." "But oh daddy, I don't like to think of strangers in the house — I want to take care of mother myself!" He shook his head gently. "No, Maryanne. We're not going to let you tie yourself down in any way. One of these days you and George —" his eyes twinkled at me and he didn't finish the sentence. "We've got to get used to it, you know. And we neither of us intend to be a Mrs. Alden to you. You stay with your mother when you can and as long as you can. But we want you
to consider yourself as free as if she were young and well. Is that understood?"

Mother had found Mrs. Peebles good company on the days she came in, and now that she lived at the house the two women spent the long afternoons in leisurely talk about children — their own and other people's. Many of these were older than I, they were not children any more except to them. The little ones just coming into the world excited their curiosity and they lived each one’s life for it. Carriages that passed by were hailed from the window by Mrs. Peebles and brought to the door for mother to see as best she could, to take the little hand and kiss it. Yes, it proved a comfort to father and me that someone was with mother in our absence, though I could have wished for a higher type of person for her companion. Mother still stirred up a cake once in a while, and dictated shopping lists, but more and more the work of the house slipped away from her. She began to think of it retrospectively, like her early married days and my childhood. A faraway look came into her pale eyes, and her conversation was sometimes touched with dreams and fancy. One day she said when I came home from school, "It’s Maryanne. How nice to have a daughter. She’s come. The boys have all gone away." What was she thinking of then? — of the sons she had so desired and never had? of Mrs. Peebles' sons? I clung to her and in those days when she seemed more and more to be slipping away from us, how good it was to feel her living body in my arms.

It was 1934. Our cuts had not been restored. On the tenth of October King Alexander of Jugoslavia was assassinated on a friendly mission to France. "It's piling up," said father, who was the
official paper-reader of the family, and for mother's sake and mine, he recalled the troubled reports that had been coming out of Germany since the early part of the year, the rise of a man named Hitler, the decline of Hindenburg, and in July the assassination of Premier Dolfuss, who was allowed to bleed to death without the aid of a doctor or the rites of last sacrament. Even to our non-Catholic-sympathizing hearts, the denial of the last comforts of a man's chosen church was a shocking thing. Civil War in Austria resulted; Italy mobilized to keep Germany out of Austria; Jugoslavia mobilized to keep Italy out of Austria. Czechoslovakia was ready to help Italy preserve Austrian independence. France drew toward Italy. Hindenburg was dying. Germany was frightened of the future, of Hitler. Would he be president and chancellor, too? "It's piling up," said father.

All the leaders were exiled, imprisoned, killed. Hitler became dictator, chancellor, everything. The plebiscite August 19; people cowered, bewildered we were sure, voting "yes" for the one candidate. And now this new outburst in Europe, making the schemes of the new administration and the strikes seem small before the threat of another European war. In the news reels George and I saw the assassinated king before his death, dressed in the uniform of a Jugoslavian ambassador. He had a fine, distinguished face and did not in the least look like what you would expect of a Jugoslavian.

As the year went on, trouble continued to sound from the Balkans. Italy looked to Abyssinia for conquest, and we looked to 1936 for recovery from our depression. Just before Christmas state stores were opened in various large cities for the sale of liquor, which was again legal, but as we had never cultivated a taste for it, the
repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment did not bring any cheers from us. As far as I could see, those who had wanted drink, had managed to get it, in some form or another, all through the period of repeal.

And did I mention that we lost nothing in the closing of the banks? Father's money had been, fortunately, invested only in strong ones. But real estate declined, his taxes were heavy, and rentals were slow coming in. But he was not discouraged. Times would become normal again, of that he was confident -- and apart from the bungling and extravagance of the administration, which was painful to witness. For Christmas, George gave me a book that was very popular then -- James Hilton's "Goodbye, Mr. Chips." I did not read it, though it was short.

I had in my sophomore class a girl with the ridiculous name of Ardeth. She was taking the college course, and her mother taught in the grades. Ardeth was a willing sort of girl but not bright, and at the end of the first quarter I felt I was doing her a kindness to give her a B minus. At the next Parent-Teacher meeting her mother asked me, in a most ungracious tone of voice, to justify the mark, which I did to my thorough satisfaction. The next day I found Mrs. Hopkins in my English class. She had come up during her lunch hour -- for the grades had two sessions -- and she proposed to see what I wanted in my class and help her daughter get it. For a week she attended class regularly, sitting in the back of the room, her eyes never leaving my face. I was never so annoyed or humiliated. At the end of the next quarter I could not see that her coming had in any way improved Ardeth's work, and I gave her B minus again.
Mrs. Hopkins stayed away but she carried on a vicious campaign against me outside. She even took Ardeth's papers to Mr. Clough and demanded his opinion as to whether they deserved the marks I had put on them. (What would he know about English papers?)

Soon others began to complain that I marked too hard and showed toward the college preparatory students never liked her favoritism. This was not true, as Ardeth was one, and I had because her heels were always run over. George said unsympathetically, "I told you to use the graph." I said, "I told you I wouldn't!"

It hailed and it snowed and was cold like any winter. Spring came, another town meeting, another senior play. It was my turn to coach this year, for, profiting by experience, Grace and I alternated now. We had a good play, a good cast. One night, well along in rehearsals, when the parts were learned and the stage business was beginning to look natural, we were working on the final act, which called for an embrace when the hero discovered the girl had not been disposed of by the magician, as everyone feared. Jerry Burkitt, a good-looking but bashful youngster, played the leading role and had so far managed to play this scene without the necessary action. It had not seemed important to me, as yet, to insist on it. But tonight I thought I had humored him long enough. He would have to play the scene eventually, why not get used to it? When he began to rattle through his lines of surprise and joy to see her restored to him, I stopped him, told him to begin again and speak as if he meant it, and embrace the girl on her entrance. These scenes are always difficult for high school students, particularly when they remember their audience will be composed of parents, friends, and classmates;
why do writers insist on putting them in? Jerry hung his head, prodded the stage with his foot, and acted so foolish while the others whispered and giggled and waited, I lost patience with him and called from the floor,

"For heaven's sake, Jerry, don't you know how to put your arms around a girl?"

For a moment he was silent. Then he looked at me over the lights.

"No, ma'am," he said solemnly. "My name isn't George."

For a tense questioning moment, all eyes were turned on me. Then such a laughter followed, and such commotion, I could not make myself heard above the noise. But when I did, I demanded an apology. He refused to give it.

"Very well. Turn your book in. This role is open. We will cast for it to morrow."

Again a silence, and after what seemed an interminable time, Jerry slouched off the stage, tossed the book into a corner as he passed me, and said sulkily, "OK, if that's the way you feel about it." His mouth trembled.

We went on with the rehearsal but might as well have stopped there, for all we accomplished. The next morning I called the runner-up into my room for the leading role and told him the part was his. How his eyes shone! His hands trembled as he took the book. Here was a boy who had full appreciation of the privilege I had given him. I could see no trouble from this source.

At recess, two senior girls — one who had the leading role — came in and put their books on my desk.
"I feel I'm just as much to blame for what happened last night as Jerry, Miss Hughson," said Eleanor Beals. "I didn't help him, I just stood there, and I was supposed to — to embrace him, too."

"I'm just as much to blame, too," said May Berry. "I laughed at them."

I was wholly unprepared for these acts of secession and clearly showed my displeasure at the liberty they had taken.

"You cannot withdraw from the play now," I said. "If you have any complaints, take them up with Mr. Converse. I cannot release you."

At the close of school George called me into his office and closed the door.

"What the devil have you done to that play cast, Maryanne? Half of 'em want to quit."

"What have I done?" I demanded in astonishment. " Didn't you ask them what they did?"

"As far as I can make it out, Jerry was kind of slow getting into a love scene. I can't see that's so bad. All kids are awkward about those things, especially when they're going to make a public demonstration. But he's willing to apologize and try it again."

"That's very sweet of him. But I'm afraid he's a little too slow for that, too. I've given the part to someone else."

George looked at me fiercely, and his brows throbbed with excitement and protest.

"You can't do that. You've got to give that boy another chance. He's one of our best students — a three-letter man — a class officer. He's been announced for the part. His family, his people
expect him to be in it. His record is excellent all round, but if you take him out, they'll think he did something god-awful. What the devil did he say to you, anyway?"

"He implied before them all that we've been necking."

Astonishment leaped out of George's eyes, and for a tense moment his brows were still.

"Well dammit, Maryanne, haven't we?"

I refused to take Jerry back on the grounds it would undermine my authority at rehearsals, and even though I did not have seniors in class, the word would go around that I was easy and I would not have the proper respect from my own students. George ordered the dissenters back into the play, and the next night we had a rehearsal with the new boy, but both Eleanor and May were absent "with colds."

That was Friday night. The next morning I received a phone call from Mr. Clough, our superintendent, whose office was in the town hall. "If you are going to be down this way today, Maryanne," he said, "drop in."

"I can drive down right now if you want to see me."

"Any time. Any time."

I could not believe that George had gone to him about the play. George settled his own problems. Had Jerry gone? My blood boiled to think of such impertinence. Eleanor and May were in it; I had half a mind to dismiss them, too. Weren't they making a mountain out of a molehill, dragging George and even Mr. Clough into it, over my authority? Too bad they hadn't been in last year's fiasco, with Grace their coach; they would appreciate the difference! I walked
in sure of myself, knowing I had been just and fair and more than that. Whatever Clough said would not change me.

He put his fat little hands in front of him and cleared his throat.

"I had a delegation in here yesterday, Maryanne — a delegation of seniors. It speaks well for loyalties up at the high school."

And looking down, he drew from among his papers one that appeared to be a list of names, but I did not try to read them. His eyes through the little round glasses, heavily rimmed, had a serious, earnest, but self-conscious expression. "You know, Maryanne, how much senior play means to those boys and girls, and to the school. I don't have to tell you — you've been through three of them." (And he smiled a little, shyly.) "It's an honor for those selected, the class is helped financially by the proceeds, and the whole school and in fact the whole town has a good evening's entertainment. It's a pretty big time." (Why tell me — why not tell the offenders?)

"Now along comes a boy that's had a fine record all through school, and is well liked, and his family is well liked, and he says something thoughtless that any boy might say — I might say it myself even now. Those things slip out. You can't help it. I don't think for a moment he meant to be rude. He isn't that kind of boy. I've known him all my life. He might have looked for a little laugh, but Maryanne, in your position, you've got to expect some kidding, you've got to take it. We don't like those friendships up at the school, but they happen, and we can't help them. And we've got to stretch out a little all around and see the other fellow's point of view. Now this boy realized soon enough that maybe he'd better have
kept still, but he didn't, and he's willing to apologize, and I know that you'll make them all a lot happier, and make yourself some good friends, if you give him a chance to."

I was unmoved by this simple and drawn-out speech.

"What I said was final, Mr. Clough. I've no intention of going back on it, or minimizing my authority by appearing to change my mind every time the wind blows."

He raised his eyebrows slightly over his glasses and looked at me as if he had not quite understood. But then, a look at me told him that he had, and he thoughtfully twisted his lips over the list of names before him.

"Why was this boy put out of the play? His friends, his family have a right to know it was not as heinous an offense as silence would make it appear. Yet silence it must be for your sake. If the exact words were known, I don't think people would find them so terrible."

"He was disrespectful."

Mr. Clough went on as if he had not been interrupted.

"I think they might consider you've been just a little bit rough on the boy. Hasn't it seemed so to you, as you've thought it over, Maryanne?"

"I won't be intimidated, Mr. Clough."

Suddenly he drew himself together, and his voice was firm. He spoke faster now, the red climbed in his jaws; he was being ugly -- losing his temper.

"As your superintendent, I order you to put him back in the play."
I order you to carry on as if nothing had happened. Do you understand?" His little eyes snapped.

Something came to me then from a distant conversation. I don't know just where I had heard it, I had not thought of it until now, but it was an argument that could not be refuted.

"That boy is Jewish," I said.

The color drained from his jaws. He looked at me as if to make sure he had heard right, and the look said he had. His voice was low and calm, and his manner more disrespectful with contempt than any I had ever faced in my life. If my father only knew!

"And what has this to do with the school play?" he demanded, as if it were not the most obvious thing in the world.

"Simply that he has acted in the known Jewish character — passing over George's head — stirring up his friends to come with him to you — slandering me — I don't know what they told you."

The color started into his cheeks again and lay there like fingers red against a light.

"Those youngsters came of their own accord, without Jerry's knowledge or consent. And, my dear, I can assure you that they were much kinder in what they said of you than what you have told me of yourself this morning. There are no Jews in Suttonsville, Maryanne. There are only people who live here, and do it ill or good according to their natures and not their nationalities."

"That does not seem to be the universal opinion."

"Now that we are on the subject, how much do you know of Jews —
beyond this one family we have here in Suttonsville that have been Baptist since before you were born! Have you met them, talked with them, lived with them? Do you know them well? Can you speak of them with authority?"

"I know Shylock, and Mordecai in 'The Absentee' and Fagin! I have the authority of Shakespeare and Dickens, and Maria Edgeworth, one of the greatest women novelists!"

"To hell with your women novelists! Nobody of pride or common sense today entertains such medieval notions. I am astonished to hear them from one of my own teachers, whom I have considered among the most intelligent of the group. I would say freshen your authorities, bring them up to date, up to truth!" He pushed back his chair and stood up. "That boy goes back in."

'I stood up and faced him.

"I have already filled the part."

"I want him put back in, Maryanne."

"I'm the coach, and when I was given the play, I was given the right to conduct it as I saw fit. I will not be intimidated." I turned and started walking out of the office.

"Have it your own way," he muttered as I closed the door.

I had won as I knew I would. I had my own way. "Magic Manor" progressed rapidly with its original cast save one, and I could not see that the play suffered for his loss. The players were businesslike and gave me no trouble whatever; in fact, I felt an extreme of politeness that had not been there before. Nobody came up to me during the breaks to talk, and if questions were asked,
they had to do strictly with technic or properties. No one admired my new dress, or asked how my mother was. But the fickle camaraderie of young people was already known to me, and I did not grieve over this change in them. I was above such pettiness. The play was given to the usual full house, and it was greatly enjoyed and well reviewed the following day in the Sentinel. Mrs. Peebles, pasting the clipping into my book for mother, was as excited about the roses as if they had been presented to her, and Jerry tipped his hat politely when he met me with father downtown. George and Mr. Clough had really behaved absurdly -- had made much ado about nothing. I could take pleasure in knowing that my way had been right, as I knew it was from the start.
Chapter 24

All that spring, even before the trouble with the play, I had been restless. I looked out of the window and wanted to be free of school. I was worried about my mother, in the care of stupid Mrs. Peebles, who had such an irritating voice. And I was thinking, too, of myself, my writing, my hopes in life. I had not really arrived. You could not call this work an outstanding service to the town. Anyone can be a teacher. And the townspeople were disagreeable enough to feel that, since my father was well off, I should not work for a salary that another girl might need more than I. What was I doing here then? Giving the best years of my life to school, and how little it was appreciated! While I still had full possession of my powers, why not devote full time to what they were meant for? Up to now I had shared my writing with other activities — enough activities to require the full energies and abilities of an average girl. I was one of the few who could carry such a heavy program of work and avocation. Yet had I given myself a chance? I thought of giving up teaching for a year or two; I could easily go back again when I was ready, and in the meantime I would be able, for the first time, to put my fresh morning energies to work that I was meant for. The more I thought of it, the wiser it seemed a course for me to follow. But I did not say anything to father until the night of the play, when, successful as it was, I knew, standing behind scenes with the prompt book, that it would be the last play I would ever direct. He listened sympathetically as we walked home in the bright clear moonlight of May — I had not taken the car — and he said he had expected it.
"You have been a busy girl all your life, Maryanne —" he drew my arm tighter through his — "and I am not surprised now that you are feeling the effects of accumulated fatigue. I'm sure your mother would like to have you at home for the little while before you and George —"

"I will still be occupied," I interrupted him. "There is work to do to make 'mother' comfortable, and I have the College Club, and I want particularly to do some writing — some real writing, daddy — perhaps the best I've ever done. I think I owe myself this leisure for it. As you say, it will be the first leisure I've had in my life."

I hoped he would say nothing more about George. Everybody expected George and me to get married, and I suppose there was reason enough for it. George and I had been what is called "going steady" practically since he came to Suttonsville. His mother had spoken of Judy and I had thought of her as a rival, but from George's conversation I could see she was just a childhood friend and meant nothing to him. Yet how much did I mean? He had talked enough about his future — he was ambitious and would probably one of these days have the biggest school in the state. But of our future he did not say a word. I had no intention of asking him. He thought too well of himself as it was. And with all my chances — why should I let him think I was concerned?

The play was given the end of May. I talked the matter of resignation over with my mother, and she seemed much distressed at first.
"With all your training, Maryanne - all the work you have put in... are you sure you want to do it? Are you sure it's right?"

"But wouldn't you like to have me home again, mummy - with you all the time?"

"Of course, dear. But you mustn't worry about me. I'm all right. Your father said you were tired. And if you are, dear, and want this rest, I want you to have it more than anything else in the world. But I wouldn't hear of your giving up all your training and work for me. Mrs. Peebles and Dr. Pennell are taking fine care of me."

"I can do things for you that they never could," I insisted, and putting my arm around her, tried not to show the annoyance I felt that she not only had to depend on strangers, but also seemed to enjoy and value their efforts. She would notice and appreciate the difference after I had been home a while.

I kept my letter of resignation a few days longer in my desk. But the school year was drawing to a close, and I felt, in justice to Mr. Clough, that I ought to give him time enough to be looking for my successor. How shocked he would be! I imagined him pleading with me to remain, offering as an inducement the restoration of my full salary, and bringing in his long friendship with my father and Miss Alden and Aunt Charlotte and Uncle Orrin as additional arguments. "I have thought rather of my duty to the school," I planned to tell him. "It isn't that I feel my duty less, Mr. Clough. But in these years of work when I have never spared myself, I have accumulated a fatigue that makes prolonged rest necessary. Believe me, it is as hard for me to take this step as for you to see me do it!" But in the end, I promised to come back after a year, and I thought I might.
One afternoon following a rehearsal for commencement early in June, I complacently went around from the town hall auditorium to Mr. Clough's office. On my way down the corridor, it occurred to me that contracts were always given out in May. Had they been delayed this year? This seemed likely, since I had not received mine. And yet I remembered going into Grace's room some weeks ago and she was signing something. Of course it might not have been her contract, but it looked like one. An increasing suspicion as I neared the door of his office made me furious with indignation. Only let me discover evidence of anything underhand, and I would make it hard for him. I could!

I therefore entered in a different mood from the one I had started out with, and I think he understood it the moment I came in. He looked as if he expected me. I went straight to his desk.

"Have the contracts been given out?" I demanded.

He nodded.

"Where is mine?"

"There isn't any for you this year, Maryanne."

For a moment I could say nothing. I stared at him, unbelieving. Then my tongue sputtered for me,

"Do you mean to say — after four years of service — my minimum-maximum assignments and other innovations — my success in outside activities — my prestige and experience — don't these things count? What possible reason have you unless it's jealousy, fear I'll take over your job, wanting to put in someone less qualified, a relative, a friend — your own daughter perhaps?" I threw my
letter on the desk, and went on with greater dignity now, seeing him cowed. "I have been keeping this because I felt I could not be easily replaced. I take it as a personal obligation that the high standards of the school be continued. I have lain awake nights debating this action, and some weeks ago made my decision. It is still unchanged."

He took the letter.

"We will put this in your file," he said, "if you like."

"I know my Aunt Charlotte is at the bottom of this," (for she was still on the school board).

"My dear, your Aunt Charlotte is one of your staunchest supporters."

His imperturbability fired me still further, and I gave him my opinion of himself, the school, and the ingratitude of the whole town. He could not speak. He only listened in amazement to a command of words, an eloquence, and a fire he could never equal. When I finished, I felt exhilarated and proud of myself. I flung out of the office, not as a beaten woman, but with the triumph and joy of knowing myself in the right, and I resolved never to waste my years and powers on a town office. Let them come to me, they probably would before long! and then I would agree to accept — on condition of his resignation!
Chapter 25

The summer people started opening their houses again, and Samoset Street was gay with color, crowded with parked limousines. More boats filled the bay than in many years past. The regatta was resumed. Yet people continued to talk about the depression. The summer passed idly for me. I saw George often, and did no work. When I complained to father I was not accomplishing my purpose in leaving the school, he did not seem worried. "Lie fallow a while. This is vacation. Time enough to think of work again when fall comes."

But in fall I was no more disposed to write. College Club started again and I devoted myself to it with new energy. I was chairman of the program committee and for the first time since I had joined did not feel I had to rush through the arrangements or the meeting to work that waited. It was becoming increasingly embarrassing to bring my manuscripts down to the local express office. At first they may have thought, every time I came, I brought a new one, and there was some expectation of seeing them in book form in the stores. I could tell by the way Jeff handled the package, the way he looked and the questions he asked, that he was very much impressed. But now he scribbled the receipt without comment, and I thought sometimes I detected a twinkle in his eye when he asked how much I wanted it insured for. Once I thought he winked to his assistant as he tossed the package on the pile. It might have been a cabbage the way he handled it. If there was only some other way of sending or receiving a manuscript than through this office.
Several times I sent it through the express office in Colport and called for it on receiving their notice, but I felt foolish among these people I did not know and soon gave it up.

I wrote to Kay, suggesting a meeting in New York, but she replied she had had a new baby and was very busy. It seemed to me Kay always had an excuse that kept her from meeting me or inviting me down. I went to New York myself. Either it was too early, or the plays were starting bad. I was relieved to get back home, and go to the movies with George.

Leaves were falling. Father cleaned the garden tools and oiled the lawn mower and dried the watering cans. He put everything away in the cellar, keeping out only the rake for dead leaves. In his sixties, father kept his lithe, youthful figure, and all his hair. He was that unusual type of man who loses no force by being gentle. Everyone respected him and had confidence in his authority and integrity. No wonder he was chosen moderator every year. It was a pity he had not gone into politics. Lesser men than he have become governors of our state.

One day I had some errands in Samoset Street and stopped in father's office, for it was nearly time for him to leave. I was annoyed to find Mr. Smith there. I knew that father helped Mr. Smith as he did Hilary Stone (though he denied all knowledge of it). He was as open-handed with our poor as he would have been with the beggar boys of Sous-le-Cap Street had I not stopped him; and I have often wondered if an unexplained absence had not taken him back there to give them the money they so outrageously demanded.
Two years before, Madison's had let Mr. Smith go for a younger man. Now he shoveled snow and cut grass for cigarettes and socks, but the town had to pay his board. Mr. Smith painted in oils for avocation. He was constantly moving with his canvases because the landladies claimed they attracted mice. Today he had something that looked like a picture wrapped in newspapers, and at sight of me he put it behind him, a coy look in his watery eyes. With a single gesture he brushed his cap off his head into his pocket. His face was yellow.

"Want to see somethin'?" And, by way of explanation, he added, "I already showed it to your dad." From his manner I could tell that "dad" had not only approved, but rewarded him for it.

I watched him unwrap the picture with hands already chapped to bleeding, though it was only fall. He cleared a place on one of the tables and set the picture on it, against the wall.

"I been paintin' a lot since I ain't had no steady work," he explained. "I guess I got pretty near four hundred pictures I copied out of books. I add more on though. This one's the best of all." He admired it for some time, then stepped back. "What do you think of it?"

Father gave me a look that had as much warning in it as twinkle. I held my tongue but my eyes could not, for politeness, disguise their astonishment to see George Washington shaking hands across the buttocks of his big white horse with Town Manager Wilbur in front of the new post office. out of respect to my father.

"What do you plan to do with it?" I asked, withholding my comment.

He beamed at what he took to be a tacit recognition of its worth.
"I expect the government will buy it. The government needs historical paintings for all them buildin's it's puttin' up. But if they are cuttin' down on art work, I aim to give it to you, Miss Hughason, as a weddin' present."

As we were walking home, arm in arm, I said to father,

"He ought to be made to stop painting. Materials are expensive."

"Why, Maryanne," said my father in surprise; "I should have expected you would be the last one to urge against the creative impulse."

"Father! you don't mean to see you think there's a comparison between us!"

"No, my dear. I wasn't thinking of quality at all. I only meant, he is happy painting."

"Does it seem to you there are a lot of queer people in our town?"

"People you know, Maryanne," he said gently, "aren't queer."

We passed the garage and I saw a huge colored man working on a car.

"Did you see that, father?" I demanded in alarm. "Is he working for Fred Roberts?"

"I imagine he drives for one of the summer people, don't you?"

"But most of them have gone."

"Not all of them."

"Well, I certainly hope he isn't going to settle down here."

Father looked at me in surprise.

"When we were in the South you seemed sympathetic to the colored people, Maryanne."

"The South is their home. I thought they were treated harshly
there, but they have no place up here. They are not our problem. This is the North. We can't have them overrunning our town."

You could see a long way down Chestnut Street now. You could see the water clearly. The clouds had taken on fall colors — purple and slate and hard rose. Rain fell, blowing like smoke down the long hill. The days grew cold.

I took a roll of dough out of the refrigerator and began to cut slices off. They were pecan rolls, made with potato water, from a recipe Mrs. Claybell had given me. George came to supper. He talked about a book he was planning — an expansion of the paper he had written on the new four-year high school curriculum (the paper that Mr. Twyning had so much admired). We discussed what constituted a functional program, a modern outlook, the liberal high school, and debated the value of Latin and ancient history. Though I had given up school teaching, I kept in touch with it through George and had not lost my interest in its problems.

Mrs. Peebles who, on nights we had company, did not sit down with us, nevertheless made what comments she felt inclined to as she served the meal. "Lord," she declared in her raspy voice when, crumbing the table for dessert, she heard us still arguing (for I was on the side of tradition, I approved of Latin and ancient history, while George insisted it was unscientific and outmoded to think they should be continued) "are you two still at it? I thought all there was to teaching was standin' behind a desk and teachin'." Father laughed and admitted that was what he had always thought, too; but I looked at Mrs. Peebles in a way to make her keep to herself any further opinions she might have, on this or
any other subject.

After supper George and I went for a walk. It was very brisk out. "The tip of your nose looks like a partridgeberry." George expressly admired my nose. He always said it had such a flair for independence; and again, it was so beautifully chiseled. I wondered he did not remark on my other features, which were just as perfect. We went to the movies in Suttonsville, and giggled at the typewritten notices which appeared on the screen between news and picture. "Will Lem Folsom call at Hooper's Garage on his way home?" "Place your orders for winter coal with Al Burkitt. First come, first served." Then a card I had a personal interest in — "Program of the Ladies' Aid, Cong. Church — Full Evening's Entertainment for Young and Old — 35¢ admission." I was in charge of the variety acts and had collected a good bit of talent in the town, but with my customary reticence had not wanted my name to be advertised in the theater, though it doubtless would have given prestige to the announcement.

The last time we had been to the movies, the story was about two men and a girl; tonight it was again about two men and a girl. Movies would always be the same if it weren't for different faces kissing. As often as George had kissed me in the years we had been going together, I had never really enjoyed it. George did not make me feel the way Ansell had. When I heard my parents visiting in bed, particularly in the early morning hours when they first woke up, it did not seem George and I would be so comfortable; nevertheless, I had no doubt we would be there. I knew I would marry George. Who else was so suitable?
But when? Why didn't he ever speak of it? If something was holding him back, if he was waiting for a bigger school, he should take me into his confidence. The lights went up and he helped me on with my coat. Pupils passed by and looked solemn or snickered at us. Some giggled sheepishly, and a few boys, who accompanied girls and wore hats, tipped their hats. Out of reach of their small minds, I felt secure and proud. We walked slowly up the hill without saying much. The ground was hard under a high moon; shadows alternated neatly with light. George came in and I made hot chocolate for him. I suppose we talked. One always talks and yet I cannot remember what we said. Mother stirred and called me. I went up to kiss her and tell her I was all right and had had a lovely time. Then George and I sat in the dimly lit sewing room and I suppose we talked some more, and after a while he rubbed his face clean of any lipstick that might have gotten on it, and ran the comb through his hair, and went home.
George got his bigger school, and he said goodbye pretty much the same way the night before he left for summer school — we went to the movies, and afterward he came to the house. Of course he would write — from Cambridge and from Windermere — both places too far for him to visit me with any regularity. I knew he would come, though, when time allowed; but why didn't he say anything still about us? My father and mother were too kind and deferent to press me on this subject, but Aunt Charlotte came to see mother often, and she was neither kind nor deferent. She was a grandmother now, and my mother listened to stories of the children with as much rapture as if they had been her own. I tired of this talk and went, early in her visits, to the study.

One day when she was there mother said, with sweet patience and assurance, "One of these days Maryanne will be married and bring her children to me. Maryanne will make a lovely mother, she's so devoted and good." "Devoted to you, perhaps," said my aunt significantly; "but I always thought Maryanne cold. I know more than one person she has passed in Samoset Street without speaking to." "If she didn't speak," mother defended me quietly, "she didn't see the person. Maryanne has a lot on her mind." "I wish she liked dogs better," whined Mrs. Peebles. So she had a grudge against me, too! Perhaps she would like to look around for a new job! We had made it too easy for her, she felt altogether too sure of us!

I read in all her looks a plaintive dissatisfaction with the
arrangement I had insisted on. But when I told father, he would not hear of dismissing her. "We asked her not to bring her dog. She was good enough to give him away. We can't pack her off because she sometimes thinks of the old fellow, can we, Maryanne? She's been good to your mother, I've no fault to find with her."

"But she doesn't think well of me, father. Who knows what she tells her friends about me, when she visits them — if she could say that in my hearing?"

"It's precisely what she says in your hearing that makes me trust in what she says out of it. I am sure you are exaggerating her criticism of you. She thinks the world of you — always has. Let's not worry any more about it, shall we?" He was so dear and kind, I could not insist on my way in this, and let it go, knowing that when Mrs. Peebles gave me more cause for complaint, her dismissal would be assured.

That Christmas — yes, I'm sure it was that Christmas because George wrote he would be down to give me all the details about his work he had no time for in a letter — that Christmas Mrs. Claybell, our pastor's wife, with whom I had become very friendly through the club, asked me if I wouldn't like to help with the Christmas baskets? Whether the administration or the natural return of normal times was responsible for the better look of things, my father couldn't judge. The new administration was certainly spending a lot of money. However, our mills were running full time now and the roads were never without workmen, a tar sprayer, and a strip of broken gravel that all but took your life to pass over it. But in good times and bad, the poor were always with us, and they
were the ones the ladies of our church concerned themselves with at Christmas. "Now that you have the time," said Mrs. Claybell, "you ought to do some social work. There's so much to be done among the children and grown-ups, too. And I think you'd be ideal for it, with your background, and your love of the town, and your interest in people." I agreed with her, and as George had also told me I should identify myself more closely with the problems and life of the town, I thought I could scarcely make a better beginning than by helping with the baskets, and have something to tell George of my own activities.

Two days before Christmas a number of us gathered in the parish house to pack the baskets. Being an early riser, I was among the first to arrive, and my car was loaded with donations from our kitchen. All morning there was a steady come and go — people bringing food for the baskets or offering their services to help pack them. Mr. Madison, who was a member of our church, sent his truck with the turkeys. We hummed working, and smiled at each other, and nothing was too difficult to be done, no one too tired to help one another. The room was undecorated, yet the spirit of Christmas filled it, and I felt myself so lifted in good-will and friendship for all the world, it was inconceivable to me that so many Christmases had passed without my spending them just this way.

Still in our aprons, we had a lunch of sandwiches and coffee, after which I started on my rounds. My car was a four-door sedan, and we piled the rear seat high. "Can you manage all right,
Maryanne," asked Mrs. Claybell anxiously. I was eager to show what I could do on my own. "Positive." "Remember -- the big one is for Mrs. Tompkins. You'll see why."

I already knew why. The Tompkins family were notorious in our town. They never ceased reproducing. For four generations their children, as numerous as Mother Hubbard's, had overrun the old schoolhouse on the mill road. I could hardly remember a year when a Tompkins child was not born to at least one member of the family, and my mother could say the same for her day. Tompkinses never worked, and yet they were never idle. They grew up and married; some remained home, others moved away. Some left town, others returned to town. And new Tompkinses forever appeared to replace those gone. Those people are a great expense to the town, I thought; we're too easy or we should have made them self-respecting long ago. I shall look in on them, ask some questions, get to the bottom of it. This visit will be more than delivering a basket. The town will thank me yet. Who knows, it may prove to be the beginning of my true life work!

In a radiant mood, I drove up to the unbroken path to the old schoolhouse, and stopped the car. Two barelegged boys scuttled out of an apple green model-T Ford. The rubber horn on the running board fell on the snow. Three pairs of eyes appeared at a front window, and two faces in a broken pane upstairs. The house took on life and excitement as I opened the car door and stepped out.

"You!" I called to the two barelegged boys. "Help me with this basket." But they had vanished. I was wearing only rubbers over
my shoes; my ankles were exposed. I looked with dismay at the path to the house, which had not been cleared. Here and there were small footprints. I followed them as well as I could and reached the door, which was partly opened. Odors of neglect and stale food tainted the clear winter air. I scraped my feet on the stoop, my ankles were covered. Before I could rap, I heard the sound of running feet, and three children stopped short in the hall, their curious, frightened eyes gleaming like woods creatures' in the dark. I remembered the boy, who often solicited me downtown for pennies to go to the pictures with. One of the girls was wearing a woman's dress of dark beaded georgette over a peach slip, the hems of both unevenly cut short; and though she was not more than twelve or thirteen, she had on high-heeled slippers.

I gently pushed the door open so I could talk to them.

"I have something for your mother. Do you want to help me with it?"

Nobody stirred. I pushed the door farther open and stepped in. The children turned and scattered like marbles down the hall. I started a breath and stopped it short. How can they live, I marveled, in such a stench? The air stood at the door and would not mix with it. The cold preserved the smell. In the front room a clothesline hung between the empty curtain rods, unwashed clothes bunched over the middle. I walked down the hall after the children.

In a room at the end of it, Mrs. Tompkins filled a small chair in which she slowly rocked while a baby lay against her open breast.
The milk oozed out of the side of its mouth. Two long hairs curled like wire above the nipple. She wore a short print wrapper, only a sash around it to keep it in place. Her feet were spread comfortably apart, the calves of her legs curved like the sides of a lyre.

I introduced myself and told her I had brought a basket for the church.

"Will you send two of your boys for it?" I asked politely, wondering what I was going to do for breathing until I got outside.

While I was talking, a patter of feet sounded in the hall and the two longlegged boys without shoes, whom I had seen retreating behind the house, trundled the heavy basket in and set it on the sewing machine.

Mrs. Tompkins looked at me with a steady, stolid look, drawing her wrapper together above the knees; but when it slipped apart she did not bother with it any more. She had nothing on underneath it. The child stirred at her breast and she slapped its bottom. "You're a new one," she said, not taking her eyes off me. "Who did you say you was?" By this time the children from all parts of the house had converged on the basket, and the room was filled with so much noise of contention, conjecture, and unwrapping, that it was impossible to make myself heard. Paper bags flew into the corners, the fruit cake fell to the floor, raisins scattered, fingers and cheeks were stained. I looked at the mother in astonishment and displeasure.

"Aren't you going to say anything to them, Mrs. Tompkins? Aren't they going to wait till Christmas?"
A boy turned away in disgust.

"Aw, too many cans."

"That's under the bird?" They danced up and down, prodding and licking their fingers. The sewing machine (which I doubted had ever been used) was too high for most of them, and suddenly the box tumbled off it, scattering its contents in every direction. The dancing children shrieked as cans and potatoes rolled by. One was hit in the foot and leaped about on one leg, making wild cries. Another plunged for a frosted cup cake that had come to rest near her mother's little toe that pushed out of the hole in her satin boudoir slipper; the child tripped and fell, her hands still sprawled in a grasping position. Her mother kicked the cake out of reach. "That stuff ud only spoil your supper, Lansdale," and she met my eye in cool challenge as if to say, "Well, what are you goin' to do about it?"

"You have the wishes of the Ladies' Aid, Mrs. Tompkins, for a very happy Christmas," I told her with what civility I could, and wanted to make a biting little remark about not having heard any thanks for our trouble, but decided against it. Never in my life had I felt so unnecessary in a room as I did there, and my departure was equally a matter of indifference to them. I slammed the door to let them know how I felt about it. I took a deep breath and plunged down the path, not thinking of my ankles. How good the air felt!

I opened the car door and slipped under the wheel with a feeling of relief that was almost rhapsodic. Were people mad, I thought, driving away, to imagine they could make over human beings and
human nature and human hearts with a basket of food? What good was a basket of food, it was like dropping a pebble into the river and expecting to change the river's course. The town could keep them alive but it could not give them those qualities which would make them self-respecting, useful citizens. The town provided a place to live, coal, groceries; the church brought baskets. But what these people needed was character. They were born without it and they would never acquire it.

Snow started to fall. It came softly, steadily, moving up and down, over and across, like a pattern. I looked into the rear-view mirror and saw the back seat piled high. Just this time, I resolved; I'll finish what I started. But never again — never spoil my Christmas this way!
Chapter 27

When I stopped in the stores, people asked about George. How was he getting along? Did he like Windermere? He would be heard from outside our state someday. I do not know why they thought I was a reservoir of information on George's activities. His letters were not frequent, nor were they models of communicativeness or style. "I did not realize so long a time had passed since your last letter... but I have been very busy." "I cannot go into detail today as I am very busy, but can say that I like the set-up here very much." "Have just finished a long letter to mother. Why don't you drop around and see her? You will learn more in detail what I am up against, and what I propose to do. May get home for the week-end but shall probably have such a short stay there, will not be able to get up to see you."

Meanwhile, Europe moved toward war. Father saw it, and night after night pieced the evidence together for mother from the papers. Father, like George, felt that people should not only be a vital part of their town (they had never visited the Tompkinses), but also be active in their own times. The only way he and mother could take part in the larger issues was by interest and conjecture. "There is so much to be done," said father. "If people would only wake out of their lethargy! Indifference is an evil, unawareness is a sin. Wars have not ended. If Europe fights another one — as she surely will — we shall be in it. We cannot escape, nor would we want to. We must fight again, to begin to talk about peace again. Perhaps this time we shall be more earnest about it. This time we may talk and do something to insure it. I don't think
we understood what we had to do for peace in 1918."

I sat in the study and heard him against my will. What were these things to me? I had no concern with events that changed with every new issue of a paper. I was a creator, I lived in a world of permanent values and permanent peace — the world of the great artists and writers and philosophers. Small people, dear as some were to me, might flounder about with the impermanent, the transient, the trifles. How much did they remember of last week's events, last year's that had seemed then so important as today's? Today is brief and like a folly is better forgotten. I lived in a larger world — my days were thoughts, my years centuries of time, and mother might murmur, "What has happened to your friends, Maryanne? Why don't your friends come to see you?" My friends were the great of the ages. I needed no one else.

One winter — I think it was the second that George had been away, I was troubled with headaches, but the optician told me my vision was excellent. "If you read a lot, I could give you some glasses that you would find restful. Would you care to be fitted for some?" His hovering and solicitous uncertainty annoyed me. It was his business to tell me, not to ask. "If I don't need glasses, I don't see any reason why I should wear them." He agreed, apologetically. "In your case, it is just a matter of choice."

It would be foolish to say I missed school. I had been bored to death with it and was now adjusted to my new life. I had a greater destiny in my books. Looking back on those days of endless talking, and afternoons of drudgery with papers and records, I felt
I had been rescued from a kind of living death. Yet when I sat down at the desk and looked at the paper rolled into the typewriter and did not have anything to put on that paper, I wanted to scream. I came to hate going to bed because in the morning I would only have to get up and face that empty paper again. Surely it was only a passing mood! How could I hate my destiny? I took another trip, I bought new clothes, I took long walks, but nothing came to me. The mailman rang so seldom now and when he did brought so little, I let Mrs. Peebles go to the door.

Summer came again and I had a lost feeling. Did I miss school? Yet why should I miss school in summer when there was no school, and I had been through with it three or so years? I scarcely knew what to do with myself. No novel came. Something goaded my mind, I could get no rest from it. The hot days of July repeated themselves, bright, hard, oppressive, week after week, without relief. One day I drove to Morley's Cove and I stopped.

I walked down to the shore and stood almost where Donny and I had stood the day of the picnic. And the day was hot and inflexible as that day, sealed in the bright stem dome of sky. There was no escape, even in its loftiness and silence, from the oppression of memory. The sea endlessly rocking made me sick at my stomach. I could not turn away but stood staring, wanting to cry and throw up at the same time. Had it been my fault? Only the universe had witnessed it. But I knew I had turned my back to Donny and let him die. The bright stem sky was written all over with it — and the earth knew that held him, and the sea endlessly rocking where he had gone down.
What was in his mind when he saw the shore so far away? Had he called, cried out? I had not heard him. The day was full of voices — people's, silence, gulls', my own as loud as any other making up stories. Stories! I hated those stories! I would never write another story again!

I went up on the rocks of the bluff, overlooking the cove, and I sat down. I was not afraid any more. The lapping sea, the thrashing sea, the voice of the wind over the sea could bring me what message they would of that day. I had acknowledged my fault and was clear of guilt. Donny died because I had to go on ahead without him.

I remembered the meadow behind the old school, the delight of blue grass, the old house with its empty eyes; I remembered how he had held the grasshopper out to me. "Eat him." And I had eaten. Stupid Donny with his great blue eyes! I was glad I had to go on without him!

The twigs broke and crackled behind me, and I turned and saw the scarecrow figure of Hilary Stone loping toward me. I had known of Hilary Stone all my life, and I saw him, when he wasn't confined in the state hospital in Bangor, in the street and in my father's office. But I had never spoken to him. He approached me as if it were no chance meeting, but with a full intention to speak, and I waited where I sat, wondering what he would have to say. The years had only made him younger, almost toothless as he was; his peaked face annoyingly — since the thought was sacrilege — recalled Christ's in the stained glass window (Christ walking on the waters) that Mr. Thorndike had given our church in memory of his son.
His eyes, when I met them, made me dizzy with their light. It was like trying to outstare the light on the water. One never could.

"You came," he said, and I remembered the tall retreating shadow that I had thought was Donny, hiding.

"Why shouldn't I come here, if I like?"

"I wondered when you would. I've seen you drive by. We always come back. These things pull us back. But you haven't changed. You'd do it again."

"Do what again?"

"Turn your back."

I was angry, though aware the man before me had been several times deranged and his judgment was therefore not to be trusted. Before I could reply, he went on.

"Yes, turn your back. In fact, you've never faced about since that day."

Would it be worth my while to argue with a man of his type, in whom fixed ideas, so characteristic of his illness, would remain fixed regardless of reason? I marveled that gratitude to my father, whose secret help surely kept this man alive, counted so little with him that he took such liberties of address with me.

The light tightened in Hilary's eyes, and he sat down more like an animal than a man, falling first on his hands as if they were forepaws and curling his long legs under him. And all this time he did not take his eyes from my face.

"One John 3:21," he announced as if from a pulpit. "If our heart condemn us not—we can keep things hidden in our heart and
no one will know, but God is greater than the heart, and knows everything. But if our heart condemn us not, then we may be assured of God, which is the ultimate perfection, because it is the moral order, which is the ultimate means of living together in harmony, and the ethical order, which is love, and those two, regardless of the values of ascetic life, which is anti-social and therefore not to be considered, are the goal of man. — how to live together in groups, successfully."

What was he talking about? I did not try to figure it out, for no one would expect wisdom from a man of unstable mind. His long solemn face and dancing eyes recalled the ancient mariner, waylaying the wedding guest, and I wanted to laugh in his face, but out of respect to his condition, refrained and listened with a tolerance that I by no means felt.

"You are moral," he went on, "but are you honest, good? Can you attain that inner peace that is part of the assurance of God? When I saw you come here today, I thought, She has come through at last! I was mistaken about her! But now that I look at you I see you are as cold and unfeeling for others as this stone you sit on."

"You forget," I interrupted him, thinking he had gone far enough, "I love my parents. Haven't I been good to them?"

"You love yourself, Maryanne. Your back's still turned. I'm sorry for you. I wish I could help you!"

"Spare yourself that hope, Mr. Stone," I said with some contempt, for I would not have him think that I had taken offense at the freedom of his language, inexcusable even in a madman with moments of clarity, yet wishing to show my displeasure, and I patted the
stone. "You see it is very warm."

"It has been these days in the sun, but its nature is not changed. It is still hard, it is still cold, it is still stone!" He leaned toward me. "When you can say, Heart condemn me not! let us meet again." He started to rise, hands serving as forepaws as before. "Let us meet again when the stone has changed its nature!"

I stood up faster than he. My eyes flashed.

"You have no right to talk to me like that!"

He wagged his head and walked away, plaintively chanting, Heart condemn me not! Heart condemn me not! his face toward heaven. The fool! What had my heart to condemn me for? Donny's death was an accident. It could have happened to anyone. Look, I could face the sea, I could brave the sky, on this day or any day. My conscience was clear. It or Hilary Stone would never trouble me again, if it could be said they had ever troubled me.

Not long after that I took my car (it was a new one) to the garage to have it washed, and as I was walking away, I heard one of the mechanics ask Mr. Roberts who I was.

"Oh, that's Hughson's girl. Used to teach up to the high school."

"I saw her talking to Hilary Stone."

"Oh," said Roberts easily, "she's a writer. Them writers talk to everybody."

I couldn't help smiling. Here in the garage, and in our town, everybody recognized that I was a writer. I had the bearing, the traits of a writer. I was different, endowed. Only the publishers stubbornly refused to give me my due. But they could not refuse forever.
"I wonder what kept George away all summer," mother asked as September came again — the third, I think, that George had been gone.

There are times when the closeness of family life, the common knowledge of private matters, is very oppressive. Dear as mother was to me, and sincere as were her intentions, I could not help being annoyed by her interest.

"He probably went to summer school."

"Seems like he'd want a rest from school."

Mrs. Peebles said hotly,

"Don't you mind, Maryanne. You're better off this way. When he come here courtin', and talked all them big words, and argued, I said to myself, That ain't courtin'. It'll all come to nothin'..'"

I stared at her. So she had had notions like these all along! And probably talked over my affairs with her friends behind my back! She was getting entirely too familiar.

"No one asked your opinion." I marched out of the sewing room.

How I felt that day you can imagine. My life seemed to have plunged off the high place I was riding and lay like a battered thing in the valley. Yet had I known what the next day would bring, I could have spared myself this distress. For almost at once I became my old self again — alive, interested, refreshed. People stirred and spoke in my head, incidents took shape and life, I was happy, the book was coming! — the book which was to be my fourth novel, "Glorious Haven." Its title was taken from some lines in Dante, that I had read in an English translation of the Divine
Comedy, then found, with the help of my Latin, in the original for the front page:

Se tu segui tua stella
Non puoi fallire a glorioso porto.
(If thou but follow thy star, Thou needs must reach a glorious haven.)

How foolish did all my worrying seem then — that I would never write again. For write I did as I had never written before. In this book I had a biting portrait of George, pompous, pigheaded, conceited, who married a young pianist, already known on the concert stage, whom he oppressed until he drove her mad. He had no understanding of her sensitive nature. He did not sympathize with her practicing. He was too busy with his New Four Year Plan for High Schools. Every night he emptied his pockets of small change and snapped them into a coin bank which, at longer intervals than his check, he took to the bank. Every morning he read the thermometer outside the kitchen window and recorded the temperature and weather in his five-year Diary. His conversation was made up of problems of secondary school education and comparisons of the weather today and five years ago. Marriage with him became increasingly intolerable, and as I have said, Thalia went mad. After years in various institutions, which I describe in detail (what a pity I did not know how some of these were run — I might have exposed some serious corruptions) she is restored by the long and brilliant efforts of the woman psychiatrist, Judy. She divorces George and marries a lifelong friend, an artist, who is fat.
In my retreat by day, in the study at night, I wrote with the speed and fire of a burning house. How the pages flew! How my thoughts sparkled and flamed. I followed the mother's career on the concert stage, and Thalia's beginnings there; her marriage with George (I gave him another last name), George's pigheadedness, the stillbirth baby, her meeting with Tollmann, the great teacher, her madness, years in various private institutions where she was neglected; at last coming under the care of Judy, having an affair with a married colleague (a concession to the reading tastes of the public, which inclined toward such irregularities), and at last her cure. It was to be a tremendous book, as discursive as Mann and with better reason. By page 249 I had hardly begun. By page 480 I was just beginning. Below, in the valley of the town, were shops, people doing business, and in the harbor boats, and on all the countless islands in the bay the routine of work and living, too. But I, disengaged from all pettiness, moved forward in the only life there was — the creative life, to which I had so much to give. By page 774 Thalia was in her first hospital, a mean little institution in the suburbs of Boston.

1.

One day she opened her eyes. The room was dim, she did not know this room. The bed was white iron, she had never slept in a white iron bed before. She was wrapped tightly in blankets. Who was she?

She closed her eyes against the light leaking in at the sides of the curtain. She turned and made a little moan,
turning. She wondered about her feet, what they were, but only a moment. She was tired and other things pressed forward for attention — the long tunnel, the crumbling walls echoing the noisy jangle of the train, a boat rolling on the water, buoys ringing like signals at a railroad crossing, and she alone, moving farther and farther away from the land. Was she still in a boat? Alone, in a room without light? How quiet it was. Of course. She started to scream and throw herself about. The bed rocked beneath her. A woman came. She had great shoulders and her face and hands were red.

"Aren't you ashamed?" she demanded, briskly unrolling her. "Aren't you ashamed to start it up again? It's a fine lookin' face you give Mis' B. You can't expect to stay here if you're gonna cut up like that. Aren't you ashamed, at your age now!"

She began to cry. Who Mis' B. was or what she had done she had no idea. She could not think, she felt limp and wet. She lay in a swoon on the bed, free of the blankets but not free of the pains that tormented her body. What need had she of a body? Sick body, that was why they had put her on the boat, away from people. Sick body that ached and was filled with a terrible disease. That was why they had given the boat a shove and sent it out to sea.

Miss Mok watched her suspiciously. She was up to some mischief, you couldn't trust 'em when they lay still like that, their eyes shiftin' like water. All crazy people
couldn't be trusted, give 'em a chance and they'd cut your throat.

"Don't you want your breakfast? Come, sit up now so I can wash you." But she would not touch her. She waited, muscles flexed, for the attack.

Sick body, sick body, sick body, sick body, sick body, sick body, sick body, sick body, sick body, sick body, sick body...

"Here's your breakfast gettin' cold. How do you expect to have any strength if you don't eat nothin'? Come on, now, get up. Do you know you haven't eaten a scrap for two days? We'll feed you through a tube, tie you down and feed you through a tube, that's what we'll do. You don't like the tube, do you? Well, that's what you'll get if you don't behave." She looked at the door cautiously. You never could tell who might be coming. Dr. Whitehead was lazy as sin and Mis' B. was easy going, but they were both after all the money they could get, and they treated their patients with kid gloves to impress the relatives and keep the loons as long as they could. New fangled ways, nonsense! She saw right through 'em, and if she wanted to shoot off her mouth — but jobs weren't any too plentiful and they treated her well enough. She wouldn't talk. But she'd get after those loons the right way as long as nobody was around.
"Now you," she began again, jerking the girl to sitting position, "you stop your cryin'. I'm gonna wash your face and you'll get a good smash if you try anythin' funny."

She slapped the cloth over Thalia's face, cursing her in a low voice. Once she paused to look at her, surprised at the utter absence of resistance. Tuckered out, that's what she was, and no wonder, what with all the fightin' and screamin' she'd done all winter. Didn't know what she was fightin' or screamin' about, but that's the way they all were. Talked about boats — had she ever been in one? Lord, the notions they got! They strapped her down, that kept her quiet all right. And now she didn't have an ounce to fight with, or a voice to complain with. None of her folks came to visit, but Mis' B. wasn't sorry. Though Mis' B. didn't worry herself about what the girl would say if they came, she was so mixed up nobody'd believe they hadn't taken good care of her. Delusions, they'd call her stories. Tuckered out, but you never could be sure about that...

"Now there's your breakfast. I'm gonna see that you eat every bit." She waited. "Will you eat or do you want me to get a tube?"

Where had the other voices come from? As if the boat had been blown toward port and she had caught the voices of people on the wind and seen dark forms disappearing down waterfront alley, and then the boat was blown out to sea and the ghosts of the murmuring vanished people floated faintly silver along the walls of her cabin.
Miss Mok gripped her head with one strong arm and with the other forced food into her mouth. It was cold and tasted like soap parings. They were trying to poison her. She spat it out.

"You will, will you? Eat that, eat that, I say!"

She began to beat against the nurse, scratched her face and pulled off her cap. Miss Mok dropped the spoon; they struggled, tipping over the tray. Another nurse came and held her while Miss Mok tied her down.

'Like a wild Injan, Fitzie,' she gasped, her face swollen and red. "I knew the minute I come in here she was up to somethin', the dirty little bitch." She wiped her face with her sleeve. "When Mis' B. hired me she said they didn't take no violent cases. They'd take anythin' if they was money in it."

"You'd better be careful, old girl. There may be a few things you don't know."

"I know this," declared Miss Mok, somewhat nettled, "Mis' B. couldn't do without me. This arm, it's saved her life more than once."

The nurse called Fitzie tossed her head.

"You're a big bully, Mok. You'd better be careful just the same."

In passing she put her hand over Thalia's forehead, just for a moment. Tears burst into the girl's eyes.
She lay in a heat, not knowing who she was or where she was. There were four walls and a window over which a curtain was drawn. Outside the rain fell, the wind rattled the panes. Shadows opened the door and looked at her, put a pebble in her mouth and touched a cool glass of water to her lips. They wanted to kill her, but she did not care. The pebble was for her sickness, but they were only pretending. Hundreds of pebbles in all. She had cried so much, now she could not cry any more. Io non piangevi, I sobbed not, si dentro impietrai, so within I grew to stone. Sometimes these shadows talked among themselves and she talked, too, but they did not listen. Sometimes she fought the shadows, a new vigor came into her tired arms, her nails dug deep, her hands came back sticky and wet. But that was long ago. Now the shadows came; they fed her pebbles or put a thick liquid down her nose. She did not care any more, she did not care. The boat had crashed somewhere, she lay on the sea, hot and wet and not caring. She floated on the water and over her head was her own image, silver and sprawled and not caring.

No, I thought proudly, as if in answer to my college critics and others; this did not come from direct experience. This and what follows came out of a book or two, but how improved! The vision and sympathy of genius carried me through experiences not
my own with the power and perception of the first-hand. This book would surely sell!

Someone brushed my elbow and I turned quickly around to see Mrs. Peebles, a broom in her hand.

"Will I disturb you, Maryanne?" she asked. It was winter again, and I wrote indoors. "I just wanted to get at those corners."

It seemed to me she could get at the corners when I was not in the room. Her presence annoyed me. I waited for her to finish.

But we had treated her too well. She regarded herself as a member of the family. She took her time, and she took liberties. After a moment or two of indifferent sweeping, she stopped at my elbow again.

"Are you writin' a book?" she asked in her high-pitched, irritating voice.

I shuddered to hear it. How could my mother endure her? She was interrupting my train of thought. I looked at her coldly and found her smiling into my face with such an anxiety of cheerfulness and interest, I was confirmed in my growing suspicions that she was as vicious and ill-intentioned as my Aunt Charlotte.

"Why do you ask?" She would probably, when I was not there, steal the papers and either pass them off as her own work or destroy them. These people have to be watched. Did she not feel a hostility toward me because of that wretched mongrel of hers she still pined for? And remember the opinions she had had of my friendship with George. It would amount to nothing! It could have, if I had not chosen to give myself wholly to my writing.
And indeed, at my question, I surprised an alarm in her eyes which could come only from guilt, though I suppose she hoped I would read it as hurt.

"I only thought," she faltered, turning away, "how nice it was — to be so smart — to write a book."

Her voice was smothered in her feelings, but she did not deceive me. I knew that was not why she had asked at all.

In the days that followed, my suspicions increased still more, and with good reason. She questioned mother about dishes I particularly liked, and made and served me big portions and was anxious to know if they suited me. She was solicitous about the papers in the study, explaining she did not want to disturb anything in cleaning. (But I guessed her secret purpose and locked everything in the Governor Winthrop when I left the room.) She watched mycomings and goings and looked uncomfortable, questioning, and distressed. "Maryanne is such a lovely girl," she told mother. "Why doesn't she like me?" Sometimes I heard her crying in her room, she probably wanted her mongrel of a dog. I resolved to be firm with father should he approach me.

In a writer's magazine to which I subscribed (for professional contact, though its strongly commercial slant could have slight interest for one of my bent), I found the name of a literary agent who advertised herself as "handling distinctive manuscripts which authors may have had trouble in placing. Five dollars service charge for each book-length novel submitted." My first three novels were resting on my closet shelf. Why not let her handle them for me? As an unknown, I had little chance with the publishers.
She would know directly where to take them, and probably the one trip would be sufficient. Her experience and influence were certainly worth five dollars. I wrote to her and gave her a brief summary of my work. She replied she would be glad to see the books and would I submit a list of the publishers to whom I had sent them in the past? I could not see that this mattered at all, but I sent her the list, which was a long one, and having finished "Glorious Haven," to avoid a repetition of my former experiences, sent it to her with the other three.

Soon a letter came. My agent thanked me for the check for twenty dollars and expressed her enthusiasm about the books. "I stayed up all night; I could not stop reading." They were already in the hands of publishers, and I would hear from her shortly.

I waited days, weeks, a month. What was the matter? What was causing the delay? It seemed to me a woman in her business, located in New York where she had easy access to the publishers, could have results to report by this time! Why, the books had been returned to me when submitted direct sooner than that! Then I thought, perhaps she has had to take them to more than one place. It did not seem possible. And yet, she might be encountering the same obstacle that I had — she represented an unknown. What other reason could there be? To be sure, unknowns were writing best sellers, unknowns were publishing first novels and taking prizes. I read of them now and then, and was scornful. Popular stuff, or perhaps an influence behind the scenes. How much did an outsider know of such things? My day would come. It
had to come! What else was there for me?

My headaches started again, and I went to see Dr. Pannell. Not wanting to alarm mother, I did not consult him when he made his regular visit to the house. He listened sympathetically to my symptoms and the history of my visit to the optician. He listened and looked at me; his eyelids dropped as if with fatigue, and when he spoke he seemed to be musing out loud.

"He's right, Maryanne. Those beautiful eyes don't need glasses. What they need is someone to sparkle for. What happened to George? He seemed an up-and-coming chap. I suppose you had a fight. Don't tell me — it's none of my business. Find someone else. Have you enough to keep you busy?"

"Of course!" I snapped, annoyed to have George brought up again. "I've just finished a novel. And I'm looking after mother."

"Does Mrs. Peebles leave you much to do? But you're worried about your mother. You needn't be. Her age, of course... but you will have your mother with you a long time, Maryanne. You have a constriction across the forehead? Tired in the morning, don't sleep well at night?" He reflected. "I could give you vitamins but it would be like the glasses, Maryanne. It's all a matter of mind. I was wondering if maybe you shouldn't go back to school teaching? Youngsters are the devil sometimes, but they're stimulating, too. I think a regular employment of the kind you are trained for is an excellent thing. And with Mrs. Peebles at the house, taking such good care of your mother," (the same thing, over and over: Mrs. Peebles so good, so kind, when she had the most irritating voice and manner in the world!) "you needn't
hesitate even to going out of town. You might try it, Maryanne, a while."

"I have no intention of leaving home, Dr. Pennell," I replied to this stupid advice. "I don't intend to go back to school teaching again. My place is here. I am expecting a letter from my publishers any day now. Four novels are in their hands and will probably be issued at once."

He received this notable confidence without the slightest display of emotion.

"And what then, Maryanne?" he asked quietly. "What then?"

I stared at him. This foolish question, his old creaking chair, his hands smelling of antiseptic and tobacco, his ineffective personality — here was the lethargy this father spoke about! No wonder he had remained a small town doctor — his sleepy, stupid eyes!

"Why, write another, of course!"

he said, waking with spirit to my presence.

"Listen to me, Maryanne," I have known you a long time. I took you from your mother. I've watched you grow up. You've been my patient all these years. I feel I can talk frankly to you. If you were my daughter, I would talk to you the same way. Only to her I would have said it sooner. You are a writer. I don't know anything about your work — I don't get much time for reading new books, but I understand you've shipped quite a few of them out of here. They're probably good. They should be. You're as smart as any girl in this town. But what are you drawing from, up there on the hill away from life and living, by yourself all the time? It looks to me like an empty well."

"I did not come here to be insulted, or to hear your views on literature!"
"Sit down, Maryanne. I haven't finished. I'm going to charge you for this visit, so you might as well get all of it. You know, he said meditatively, settling back in his chair as if I had not interrupted him, "sometimes we come to a place in our lives that's like a field, overgrown on all sides. We can't see our way out. Sometimes a change, a new slant, new people — I don't mean just a few days away, I mean taking an active part in something fresh and new. For there's a path in every field. You have the means. You're not risking anything financially. You have the time and ability. There are many things you can do. Think it over. There's no reason why it should take you long to find your path in the field."

I left his office determined never to consult another doctor and tried to compose myself on the way home, for mother was sensitive to my moods and I did not want to vex her with a bad one. When I came in she said she had recognized me as I passed the Whitmans' and had watched me all the rest of the way. "You have your pretty blue coat on." Such improvement in her sight occurred intermittently, and I felt cheerful as I took my blue coat off. "And am I still as beautiful as when Aunt Charlotte tried to make my carriage roll down hill?" I asked, clambering into her lap the way I used to when I was a little girl.

"Yes, darling, but you must not say such wicked things of her, for as I have told you often, I released the brake myself, then went into the house and in my hurry forgot to... oh, when I think if she had not been there! And you had slipped away — out of my life!"
"But mother, what about the time she nearly tripped me out of the high chair?"

"Oh my dear no! You were so active, you were always like you are now! As I remember, you were reaching for something and your Aunt Charlotte, who was staying to supper that night, caught you just in time and your father on the other side. I have often thought since, if I had another child I would never put him in a high chair. They are selling low ones now; that is very wise."

Mrs. Peebles came in.

"There now, look at that," she said, smiling her broadest smile, her hands tolerantly on her hips. "Aren't you gettin' to be kind of a big girl for your mother's lap, now? But then," she reflected, and the plaintiveness came back into her voice as it always did when she was on this subject, "my Rex, he was a lumberin' big feller, too, and nothin' would do but he must be all over my lap, like when he was a little puppy! This is what I used to do to him," and chuckling, well-satisfied with herself, she leaned over the chair where mother and I were sitting together, and tapped me playfully on the bottom.

I turned round quick as a whip. To be compared to a lumbering, ancient dog, that moreover drooled when he looked at you, was bad enough, but to be struck by a servant in the thought that she was being funny was unpardonable!

"Mrs. Peebles," I said, getting to my feet, "remember your place!"

She caught her breath as if the whip had come down on her, and
stood with trembling lips, while tears filled her eyes. She seemed to stand endless minutes there, crying silently before me. Then she went upstairs to her room and closed the door.

"You shouldn't have been so short with her, Maryanne," mother chided me gently. "She is so anxious to be friends."

"I am particular about my friends."

"She's been very good to me."

"And why not? Isn't this the best home she ever had in her life? Haven't we treated her as one of us? We have spoiled her, mother. We've been too good to her. It does no harm to remind her once in a while that she's only a hired servant."

Mrs. Peebles came down to get supper, and her eyes were red-rimmed. I did not look at her again, but mother was concerned with her silence and troubled by what she supposed was the occasion for it. The table cleared and the dishes washed, Mrs. Peebles went straight to her room. I thought I heard her crying there. How she was taking on! Doubtless she expected me to apologize, this might be a scheme of hers to ask for a raise! Father would be a fool to let her intimidate him. There were enough people for hire, we needed a change. I couldn't bear her in the house any more and hoped she would leave.

But I never thought she would. She had been with us too long, did women like her leave a sinecure? She cried in her room, and she kept to it, and all the time she deceived us — she was packing. When she gave father her notice (her mouth trembling so she could hardly speak and her red eyes turning away from his)
she would not tell him why she was leaving, nor could all his arguments and expressions of appreciation and friendship prevail with her. "Never mind, daddy," I consoled him. "We can easily get someone to come in days. I will take care of mother. Things will be the way they were before."
Chapter 29

War came to Europe, as father foresaw, and then to us. But it did not seem very close to us. Boys left Suttonsville, but boys were always leaving Suttonsville. Only now, the postman's bag was filled with little brown open-faced envelopes of V-mail, and the Sentinel carried familiar names of wounded and dead in Europe and in the Pacific. Good bond paper went up to five dollars a ream. Boys in uniform appeared in the streets, but not many. The years went on with us as they always had, without great changes.

One Sunday in 1943 I was returning from a late tea with Miss Alden. I had walked for the exercise and was passing through Samoset Street, when I saw two soldiers talking to two girls on the other side. The men had their back to me. But the sight of the tall one, the easy droop of his shoulders, his careless way of standing, his dark hair, made my heart race with memory and surprise and joy, and without looking to see if cars were coming either way, I stepped across the road and spoke his name.

He turned quickly round to me, a puzzled then pleased look in his eyes. The memory and joy faded, leaving a loneliness like the sudden going-down of the sun. He was not Ansell.

"I'm sorry," I said, starting to walk. "I made a mistake."

He detached himself from the group and walked along beside me.

"What name did you give me, ma'am?" He had the biggest drawl of anybody I'd ever heard, and his eyes had lights in them that reminded me of Ansell's. He couldn't have been more than twenty. "Maybe I know the guy. Is he in the army?" It was obvious he only wanted to make conversation.

And why shouldn't I?
"He was my first beau," I said, feeling gay and giddy for no reason that I could think of. "But he's been gone a long time."

The boy appeared very much surprised.

"And left you?" He wagged his head as if it were beyond understanding. "Now I wouldn't do a thing like that."

"I imagine that's what he tells the girls, too."

The boy looked at me with a hurt, solemn look, but it was all pretense of course. Sometimes it seemed as if he were laughing at me the way Ansell used to do; other times it seemed a delightful kind of boyishness.

"I never tell girls nothin' but what's the truth."

"Are you visiting in town?" I asked him as we neared the turn for Chestnut Street. I would have to say goodbye to him there, and was almost sorry for it.

"No, ma'am. I come up here from Colport with that there PFC you saw me with. I'm visitin' his folks durin' my furlough. My home's in Mississippi. It's a right purty little town you have here. Been lookin' at the wattah."

"And right purty wattah," I said, laughing. "Were they sisters?"

"I wa'n't talkin' to them long enough to find out," he drawled.

"You'd better be getting back then. They might go looking at the water without you."

He said as if it were a sudden thought, "How 'bout you showin' me the sights around here? You're the prettiest wattah I've seen so far."

We were at Chestnut Street. Why not? What had I to go home for? Father was there, they didn't need me. All this banter and
foolishness, I wanted it; I was in the mood for it — it was fun!

Of course he was a pick-up, but what harm in that? I knew what I was doing. Suppose someone saw me? Hadn't I a right to show our town off to a visiting soldier? Other girls did. This was what the doctor meant, someone new, different, to give me sparkle. I hadn't talked to anyone new, different so long. And he was so much like Ansell, so much!

"I've no engagement for tonight," I said. "But I wouldn't be as much fun as your younger friends." I was thinking of the little groups one ran into everywhere, kids in the shadows, necking, carrying on. "How old are you anyway?"

He wouldn't tell me.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"Older than you are."

He shook his head. "I was just thinking you weren't old enough for me."

It was a warm night in May, twilight just beginning. We turned away from Chestnut Street and strolled up Elm. Our talk was light and foolish and yet it was gay. I laughed a lot. I laughed every time he said "Aw shucks." He couldn't have been more than twenty. Yet sometimes, as he said, he seemed older than I. And sometimes he didn't. Church bells rang, and I met people going to meeting. I seldom went, Sunday nights.

"What will your friend the PFC think?"

"He'll think I'm a lucky devil."

"But those two girls."

"He'll take care of them. He isn't like me. He's used to girls."
"You're not what I would call scared of them."

His hand touched mine, and he took it. He smiled as he looked down sidewise at me.

"I sorta took a shine to you."

I withdrew my hand. We walked a long way up Elm Hill. the land widened between the houses, and through the trees we saw the lovely curve of the bay, and the water, brilliantly lighted by the moon, stretching to the smooth dark palisades of the horizon. A riding light bobbed like a star on a string. A bird called.

"Is that the wattah?" he asked, stopping at a clearing to look.
"Let's sit down somewhere. Let's find us some rocks. I'm tired walkin', aren't you?"

I hesitated. 
"That's Morley's Cove," I said.

He looked at me.

"What's the matter with Morley's Cove? Is it haunted?"

Yes. Hilary lived there. "Let us meet again when the stone has changed its nature." How cruel — how wrong — some day his own condemning heart would drive him, mad as he was, to ask my forgiveness!

"Let's go farther up," I suggested. "It's prettier farther up."

We left the town behind us, and we walked holding hands. I did not try to take my hand away the second time he took it. It is easier to walk on a rocky road that way — then you don't bump so much. At last we came to a path that led through a small thicket to great rocks overhanging the sea. It was part of a private estate, but the house was not yet open. We wandered about the
grounds first, then through an arbor, and down some rocks arranged like steps to the larger rocks tossed high along the shore. Here we sat down. The moon was big and the water calm. I looked at it and found it only beautiful. No memory came back to plague and torment me of a day I should have long forgotten and now probably had. The dark water rocked endlessly with peace, and touched our eyes with a drowsy content.

"You picked a right nice place," he said. "Cigarette?" I shook my head. He lit one for himself. "What do you call this?" he asked again, picking up my purse. "That's a drawstring bag." "I bet you got a book inside, with a lot of addresses in it." "One or two, maybe." He played with the strings, opening and closing the bag, and I looked away to the sea. Then he put it aside, and snapped the cigarette away. It seemed quite right that he should take me in his arms and hold me to him a long time, while we watched the sea together. And later to kiss me many times, almost the way Ansell had kissed me.

"This fellow you mistook me for — he was a dope."

"Why?"

"To leave you."

"Maybe he thought I was like this stone... cold."

"Go on. I don't think you are."

"I thought you were scared of girls?"

"Ain't scared of those I take a shine to."

He grinned, and I liked his grin. He wasn't Ansell, but he was a lot like him. I felt happy. I thought how strange it was,
sometimes you can go years without finding anybody you can be easy with, like this.  

"Your hair's so soft. You're like a pussy cat I got back home."  

"I have a pussy cat, too. Her name is Linda the third. All our cats are Linda."

"Is she a good ratter?"

"Mother says so — has whiskers a mile long."

"My cat's name is Sol."

"Saul? Why should you call him Saul?"

"Can't call him Solomon. But he's wise. Didn't you ever hear a cat named Sol?"

"We don't name our cats like that around here."

"Maybe you don't have cats like that around here."

We giggled, and did not talk again for a while. When we did, he told me he was to be in Colport until Thursday and would I give him my name and address so he could see me again? I shook my head.  

"No, Mississippi. Tonight is right, tonight is beautiful. But tomorrow wouldn't be at all."

"What makes you so sure?" he asked with peevish skepticism, looking at me closely. "Because I'm always right." The moonlight turned the scoffing to merriment in his eyes. "Just like a woman!" he declared. "My father was always sayin' you can't make 'en out." "Then don't try. At least, don't try tonight. Just take things the way they must be."

But a little later I wondered if I shouldn't see him again. What harm would there be in it? It would be a change for me. And then the folly of the evening swept through me with sickening force. I, who was to marry so well, to do so much, at thirty-three
sitting on the rocks with a soldier I had picked up in the street like any high school girl — a boy all of ten years younger than I! And yet there was this difference: I wasn't a high school girl. This was a matter of choice, and who could question my judgment?

It was getting late, and I spoke of it, but still we lingered. This night would not come again.

When the next day, opening my drawstring bag in a store to pay a bill, I found only change in it, I remembered his interest and examination and knew that he must have taken the bills. I was not angry. I only felt calm and happy in the remembrance of past things.
Chapter 30

Shortly after, my Aunt Charlotte died sitting in her chair reading a letter from one of her daughters. They say she had a happy expression on her face when they found her. I thought this a fabrication of my Uncle Orrin's, and saw in her death a judgment for her having told my mother — and everyone in town, I guess — that "Maryanne had spent half the night on the rocks with a soldier." How could she possibly understand the feelings and expressions of a creative temperament? Her unexpected death, coming without the warning of illness or advanced age, was a shock to my mother, who failed rapidly after the funeral. She could not find her way upstairs any more, and once there, was as terrified as if in a strange and hostile place. Her afternoons were spent by the sewing room window, where she looked out but could not see, and now and then she slipped into a ramble of a monologue about days and events long gone by, and dreams that had never come true.

She talked again of her sons gone away; she talked quite often of them, and she regarded me as a visitor.

"Oh, it's you, Maryanne. How nice you could come today. But you never forget me. You were always the dearest, the closest of them all. Boys are different. They have their own life. Has George finished at summer school yet? There is so much to know than I thought there was. Is he finicky about his food? I never seem to remember. You must bring the children next time. I long to hold them. How much has the baby gained? And are you well, my dear? Your father was saying only last night... I don't
remember the words exactly... oh, this mind of mine! How it clouds up! Your father was saying..."

How my heart ached for her! She was so sweet. She and father were all I had. I wanted to keep them with me forever.

If I got up, she heard it with distress.

"Must you go so soon, Maryanne? Don't be a stranger, will you? And bring the children next time. I shall have something for them. And you'll all be here for Sunday dinner, of course."

But I had only got up to go to her and cuddle in her chair as I used to when I was a child.

"Mother darling, there aren't any children. Don't you remember? George and I broke up years ago. I'm not married. I'll never leave you. Don't you worry, dear. I'll not go away."

"Not married?" she asked plaintively, her cloudy eyes perplexed.

"Not..."

"I've had chances, any number of them," (and you can see, I have) "but I had work to do, a bigger job than marriage. It had to be this way. And there's much still left to do. Oh don't worry, mother. Don't feel sorry. This was my choice! It isn't as if it couldn't have been different, you know."

Her lips twitched and her eyes pleaded with me. She was as simple and anxious, as hopeful in her disappointment, as a child who has just been told there is no Santa Claus.

"But Maryanne dear, the children, the children!"

She began to cry.

I got up and went to the study. The children were still in the
the brown paper package my agent had returned them in, and lay as they had come long ago, neatly tied, on the desk. The letter, which she had sent separately, I had opened, and now read again.

"Dear Maryanne Hughson,

"Here is the sad news on the four children! I am inclosing some of the comments of the readers, which may be of interest to you.

"I am willing to try them further for you, but will have to charge you another $5 for each one, which will cover five markets. This is really just the messenger fees.

"Better luck next time.

"Cordially..."

Were there any more markets, I wondered, unwrapping the big package. I turned the pages. They were perfect, flawless. Not a word to be changed anywhere, and the only wonder I had as I read was that I had written so well, for all time. Even in my teens my writing had showed strength and direction and poetry. What did those readers know of fine writing? They were probably recruits from the office help -- typists, clerks. How glibly, how blindly they passed judgment! "Weak in incident... rather repetitious... drawn-out... not in line with out present needs... the autobiographical novel dull..." That was a reader for you! "Glorious Haven" an autobiography! Why, I had never been a concert pianist, I had never been crazy!
Then a thought came to me, with all the suddenness and validity of true inspiration. When these very novels, so often rejected, were known at last for the masterpieces they were, and their writer's name a beacon light in literature, would not some genuine autobiographical material be wanted for the literary histories? This is how these memoirs came to be written, from which can be seen the qualities that make a writer great, and in particular the modesty and self-effacement of this one.

Now the memoirs are done, and the years pass. The sky is just as blue, the water just as brisk. The sky and sea are just as they always were. But I don't notice them any more. The days slip by like snow past the window. Nothing changes. I only notice that spring is later every year.