Erma at the Perkins Institution and the Massachusetts School for the blind.

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ERMA AT THE PERKINS INSTITUTION
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CHAPTER I

The Little New Girl

Sometimes the most vital moment of life slips by, unnoticed until long afterward. But as my sister and I stood at the door of the kindergarten building, and I heard the bell echoing through the mysterious spaces beyond, I felt very sure that something new and different was about to begin at once -- something that was not going to end for a very long time. Indeed, the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts School for the Blind was enough to frighten any child of nine; especially one who had never been away from home before, and more especially one who had never seen more than half of what had happened at home.

The door was opened by a maid who asked my name and led us down a long, wide hall into a very queer room. It was long and narrow, the door filling one short end and the window the other. Along the entire right wall extended a chest of twelve or sixteen drawers surmounted by rows and rows of pigeon holes about a foot square. On the left was a very long table with a chair at each end, and in front of the window in a low rocker a lady sat sewing. In the middle of the room stood a large gray haired woman who put out a hand to welcome us, saying:

"Well, Ruth, well; we are glad to have you with us!"

She put her very large hand under my chin, hoisted me up to the very edge of my tip-toes, and stared at me long enough to count every one of my freckles -- but what did freckles matter, anyway, in a school for the blind? Then she presented
me to Miss Loring, a quiet, gentle woman, who was the assistant matron and had most of the care of us when we were not in the school-room.

Mrs. Hill, the matron, then slipped her hand under my chin again and asked if I would like to go to the kindergarten room and join the other little girls. She was tilting my head so far back that I could not possibly answer. But she did not expect an answer (with her a question was a polite form of command) and she ushered us into the big room, presented us to Miss Humbert, and left us.

Such a spacious, pleasant room! A bay-window filled with plants, a semi-circle of tiny chairs, open floor space for games, with a piano, a cabinet, and two low tables, at which some children were working. With a few pleasant words Miss Humbert placed my sister's chair by the door and led me to a seat at one table. They were queer little tables, all marked off in one-inch squares: they accommodated about six children each, and were placed parallel and separated just enough for the teacher to pass between them. From my place I could see through the glass doors of the cabinet, stuffed birds, a squirrel and other small animals, and the model of a cow, a fox, and many things I could not recognize.

From one of the drawers under this case Miss Humbert brought me a gray card and a needle threaded with yellow worsted. The card was pricked with holes making the outline of a pear. Pleased to have something I could do, I went to work at once,
waiting only to look at two little girls across from me who had large white cloths thrown loosely over their heads. I supposed that the light made their eyes ache and that the cloths were to keep the light away.

I finished my pear just as the bell rang, and when class was excused I turned to go to my sister, but she was not there. I was about to cry when Miss Humbert explained very gently that "Sister had to go to get her train." This meant that she had slipped out when it was convenient to avoid an unhappy parting. But no child could be unhappy with Miss Humbert, and I felt that everything was all right when she added kindly that Nettie would take me upstairs. Whereupon Nettie took me by the hand and we went into the rather dark corridor and started to climb the wide stairs together.

"Put your hand on the banister, Ruth," said Nettie, speaking as one with authority.

"I won't!" said I, promptly. "I can see enough to walk upstairs."

"But all the little girls put their hands on the banister here," coaxed Nettie more gently; and I did so -- taking pains to make a noise about it so that Nettie might hear.

On reaching the nursery I was surrounded by a crowd of little folk who clamored to know my name and age and history in detail up to date. After a few minutes, however, the girls began to go away to play together about the room, and I soon found myself sitting alone at one end of a very long settee.
The room was stuffy, the children were noisy, my head ached and I wanted to cry. I leaned against the arm of the settee to think of home. But the nursery was no place for such thoughts. Just inside the door a child was walking round and round all alone and singing: "Barber, barber, shave a pig!" In front of the window several little girls were playing school, and in a corner two sturdy youngsters of four or five were making thunder-bolts of their blocks. This freedom was enjoyed for about ten minutes, then a bell rang and all the children stopped their play and went out of the room.

"That's the singing bell!" exclaimed two little girls, taking me by the hand and hurrying after the others. "What does that mean?" I asked, and one said, "Why, we have to go to singing now."

I thought "singing" was a very long way off, for we went down a long corridor and up one flight of stairs, through another corridor and up another flight of stairs and then stopped before six or eight rows of chairs at one end of a great hall. I was given a seat at the end of the third row and sat quietly through the whole lesson while the children sang their pretty little songs. It seemed a long time before the bell rang again, but when it did we went down stairs and, instead of returning to the nursery, each little girl found her way quietly to her own room.

"Where's Ruth?" asked one, as we reached the lower corridor, to which I responded promptly,
"Here I am. Who wants me?"

"My name is Helen," said the other little girl, taking me by the hand and starting down the hall. As we went she added cordially, "You're going to be my room-mate."

Helen was only seven but she led me into our room with all the importance and hospitality of an experienced hostess.

"That's your chair," she said, backing me up to a low chair at the head of a little bed. Then she went to the opposite corner and sitting down on a twin chair beside a twin bed, began to play with her doll.

"My doll's down stairs," I suggested. "Mrs. Hill said to leave her with my hat and coat."

"You may take mine until supper," said Helen, offering a substantial rag affair with one leg. "I'll play with my dog. Have you many toys?"

"Yes, but they're in my trunk, except Hope -- I brought her in my arms all the way on the train. What's your doll's name?"

"Betty. Let's play house."

"All right."

So we children played house with a doll and a dog between us until the bell rang for supper. We then joined the other children in the hall and in an orderly file marched to the dining-room on the first floor. Each child knew her place and went to it very quietly. I was given a place at Miss Loring's table. We stood by our chairs until everyone was in her place and then all sat down together. Next Mrs. Hill tinkled a grace-
bell and all was quiet. Suddenly a child called out,

"My feet's caught! My feet's caught!"

There was a feeble kicking sound and a smothered murmur of childish amusement, then silence until the little bell tinkled again. We were provided with very large napkins and as we tucked them under our chins, Miss Loring asked gently, "What is the trouble, Harriett?"

"My feet's caught in the chair and the table-leg, Miss Loring."

"Well, Margaret will fix it for you. But, Harriett, you must remember not to speak in grace again. Will you?"

"Yes, Miss Loring." So the maid released the offending foot, and the meal of buttered bread, applesauce, cookies and milk was finished without more ado.

When we were excused we went to the nursery, but very soon the "bed-bell" rang. Some of the "older girls" (ten or twelve years, perhaps) who slept on the upper floor, came down to help the little ones undress, and soon Miss Loring came around to each room to see that all were tucked in and quiet.

It was still quite light -- half past six by the clock -- and I was by no means used to retiring so early! Ever since I could remember, the light of a beautiful sunny day had been torture to my eyes, and therefore the twilight was my joy. At home, the bed which I had occupied was a folding one. All day it stood up tall like a big book-case, with dainty curtains around it; and when it was let down at night, these curtains hung by the sides
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at the head, but could be pulled all across just in front of the pillows. Behind these draperies was my fairyland. Late into the comfortable dark night I would enjoy my myths. And now, in this great, strange school I was honestly homesick -- homesick for my own little bed. But the hall was perfectly quiet, no other little girl was making any fuss, so I pulled the pillow half under the blankets, clasped my arms around the middle of it (as one might hug a friend) and cried myself to sleep.

At six-thirty the next morning the rising bell rang. My room-mate and I jumped out of bed and dressed, all but our dresses. Then we took our places in the line just outside the bathroom door, and waited our turn to wash.

The bathroom was large and equipped with two of everything, including two rows of hooks along one wall. Each girl had one hook for her very own. Each hook had two prongs, we hung our face-cloths on the under one and our towel on the upper one. And, although most of the children were totally blind, we counted carefully and never used the wrong towels. Miss Loring was there, busy and cheerful, tending to the little ones and seeing that the others did full justice to face and hands, teeth and hair. After putting on our dresses we stripped our beds, opened the window and went to the nursery, and about that time the breakfast-bell rang.

After breakfast the entire household assembled in the kindergarten room and Mrs. Hill read:

"I will sing of loving kindness, O Lord; unto Thee will I
sing praises --". Then we stood and repeated the Lord's prayer, and then sang:

"Father, we thank Thee for the night,
And for the pleasant morning light,
For rest, and food, and loving care,
And all that makes this world so fair."

When these devotional exercises were over Miss Lane took the bigger girls into the other school-room. I stayed with Miss Humbert in the pleasantest school-room I have ever seen anywhere. The sun streaming in through the bay-window was softened by the rows of flourishing plants, each chair in the semi-circle held a neat and happy little girl, and Miss Humbert had a quiet and cheerful enthusiasm for the familiar songs and simple games that encouraged us to learn them then, and endeared them to us for life. We sang "Good Morning Merry Sunshine" and "Thumbs and Fingers Say Good Morning" and, (as it was in the autumn) "O where has the summer gone!" and "Come, little leaves, said the wind, one day."

About ten o'clock we went out for recess and then into another building which had a gym down stairs and an assembly hall upstairs. There may have been ten or twelve of us. We went upstairs and gathered in one corner of the big hall to have a knitting lesson. My sister had taught me to knit, so I had no difficulty with the coarse twine with which each new girl knit a bag in which to keep her rubbers. These bags, when they were finished, we hung on our appointed hooks in the coat-room -- next to Miss Loring's sewing-room -- and woe to the child who
did not keep her rubbers in her bag and her bag on the right hook!

In the afternoon, when we returned to the kindergarten room, the mystery of the white cloths was solved. This time my task was to weave silvery strips of paper into a green paper mat. I was making rapid progress when Miss Humbert said gently, "My dear, you must not use your eyes, you know. That is why you come here to school. If you look at your work I shall have to put a cloth over your head."

Ah, well! It takes a stock of moral courage to fumble about with unskilled fingers when a little peek would make it so much easier, and a child cannot realize that he must train the fingers to feel the big things which he could see in order that his fingers may feel the little things which he cannot see. So the big white cloth and I soon became daily companions! But it was all right -- it certainly helped in the finger-training, and probably helped to conserve a little sight, which (no matter how very little it may be) is infinitely valuable.

The rest of the day passed much like the day before, except that bed-time seemed welcome even at six-thirty, and, though I took my doll to bed, there were no fairy tales, and scarcely any tears.

For a few days I was favored by the attention of everyone while I learned the rules and customs of that well-regulated household. But one day I found my place in the large and happy family and slipped into it quite easily when the arrival of a
"little new girl" was announced.

The little new girl was Erma Thistleton, and when I asked her for her memories of that first day, she said, "Squash! All I remember about that day is that we had squash for dinner and Miss Brown made me eat every speck that was on my plate — she had no sympathy for my newness nor for my homesickness either!"

Miss Brown was the knitting teacher. She also had charge of one of the tables, and in this mild cruelty she did but do her duty — for it was a fundamental law that every child should eat every scrap that was on her plate at every meal. There were four tables large enough to accommodate two teachers and six girls. Although talking was not forbidden, it was not encouraged at the table. Without the use of sight, the problem of eating probably required all our childish attention. The bread was buttered, the meat was cut, and, in general, all food was served ready to eat. Table manners were taught pleasantly and by good example. If we couldn't finish the first course we had no dessert, but that was reasonable and there were very few protests.

To the catechising in the nursery, Erma replied that she was eight years old, that she had lost most of her sight from measles, (but could see a little still) and that her beautiful long curls were dark brown. Alas for those lovely curls! Short hair was the requirement and the next day the school barber despoiled the rebellious Erma of her great glory. There were tears, shrieks and it was said a kick or two, but the curls were
sacrificed to the cause of independence and cleanliness. Erma returned to the nursery with a face as long as a fiddle, and a becoming boyish-bob that any little eight-year-old could comb without help.

The next day was Saturday and we had school in the morning as on other days. In the afternoon we were turned loose on the playground, a whole acre of grass and trees with a wide gravel walk around the edge, and in the center, a circular mound about ten feet high and perhaps fifty feet in circumference. There was a large tree in the center of the mound and a circle of trees around its base. Then there were no more trees except at the very edge where the grass joined the gravel path. With this arrangement we could play in the shade or run in the open without fear of bumps or falling. A pleasanter place could hardly be imagined. Among the trees were horse-chestnut with their sticky buds, maple with their winged seeds, and cherry trees with their fruit and their happy robins. It was autumn when Erma and I found that delightful playground, and we raced through the fallen leaves and forgot all about home and squash and curls -- we even forgot that we couldn't see very well and we played "Puss in the Corner" and "Blindman's Buff" (the children that could see helping those that couldn't) the lively ones in one group, the tame in another, just like normal healthy children everywhere. When the jolly afternoon was over, we were quite ready for our beans and brown-bread and milk, and even our little beds and our pleasant dreams.
On Sunday the teachers took turns being on duty, two each week. In the morning one teacher took the older girls to church, while the other conducted a Sunday School session for the little girls in the kindergarten room. Here we learned by hear "The Lord's Prayer", "The Twenty-third Psalm", "The Beatitudes" and so many verses and hymns that were dear to us then and are growing dearer year by year. Often in the afternoon we went to walk with one of the teachers -- two by two in our Sunday best. We wore our Sunday manners too, keeping closely in line and talking quietly to our own partners. These walks were not on our own grounds but out on the streets of the town and we were proud to behave like little ladies as we were instructed to do. Usually we went to Jamaica Plain Park which was near the school. It was a delightful holiday place! There was a pond with ducks in it; there were wide gravel paths strewn thick in the fall with drifts of rustling leaves through which we were often allowed to scuffle and thus increase the noise and the smell of Autumn. There were shrubs and trees in such profusion that free play was out of the question and this made us feel sedate and dignified as visitors should be. There were squirrels for whom we were occasionally allowed to take a small crust of bread; and sometimes there were nuts and berries, not to eat, but to serve as object lessons in nature and even in arithmetic. For these lessons we would sit on the grass in the warm October sunshine and hear how seeds became buds, buds blossoms, and blossoms fruit. Did we think that fruit meant only apples and bananas --
such things as could be eaten for dessert? Now we learned that horse-chestnuts, thorn-apples, rose-hips and the like, were also fruit -- and the harmony and proportion of things were preserved because the birds and squirrels ate these fruits and thought them good.

When the nature lesson was over we played "Odd or Even" with the acorns. The very youngest children learning to count, the older ones improving on the game by using the times table instead of primary digits. On Sundays our walk hour was from two until three-thirty. After we got back to school we were read to -- always pleasant little stories of high moral tone. Our Sunday night supper was always crackers and milk and frosted cake. On Sunday, as on other nights, kind, quiet, Miss Loring came to tuck us in bed and see that we were well and happy. If there was a toothache or a nail in the shoe or any other annoyance, Miss Loring was wise and willing to relieve it.

Although the parents often grieved about sending their little afflicted children away from home, the children themselves were happy and were always under the kindest and wisest care. Thus I, with some twenty odd other little girls began my education at Perkins.
CHAPTER II
The Bradlee Drama

In spirit the Perkins Kindergarten is a living memorial to the glorious personality of its founder, Michael Anagnos.

Michael Anagnostopoulos was born on November 7, 1837, in the little Greek village of Papingo which nestles among the mountains of Epirus. His education was begun at the village school and was rounded to commencement at the National University at Athens. Those were the stormy days of the Greek struggle for independence from Turkey. This young student of political science became an editor and entered with enthusiasm into the affairs of public concern. Thus he grew familiar with the name and activity of Dr. Howe, an American physician who was conducting relief work in Athens, and in 1867 he accepted a place as Dr. Howe's interpreter and assistant. When Dr. Howe offered to pay for these services, Mr. Anagnos refused to accept any money, but expressed the wish that Dr. Howe would take him to America that he might work there for the cause of Greek relief. This request was eagerly granted, as a mutual regard had sprung up between these two men, and when they came to this country, Dr. Howe welcomed the young man into his own home, where he speedily made a place for himself by tutoring Dr. Howe's three daughters.

At this time Perkins was a well established school and some of the pupils being ready to study Classic Languages, quite naturally the scholarly Greek was invited to assume their instruction. At the suggestion of friends he shortened his name
to Anagnos and with shy, cheerful devotion took up his new life at the school where he was very much beloved. In 1870 he was married to Miss Julia Howe and six years later (owing to the failing health of the doctor) he was appointed Director of Perkins. The annual report of his first year's administration says that "under his guidance every department flourished."

This was the setting for his finest achievement, when, sitting with his wife one pleasant summer evening, he suddenly sprang to his feet and exclaimed, "I'll do it! I'll start a school for the little blind children!" Thereafter he labored with patient energy gathering money and friends to support this high resolve. From Helen Curtis Bradley, Joseph Potter and Joseph B. Glover he received prompt and continued assistance in the way of financial aid, social influence and shrewd business advice, and when cottages were added to the kindergarten unit they were named in compliment for these three benefactors.

To increase the kindergarten fund, the girls of the school held a fair on February 22, selling articles of their own handiwork, and raised the gratifying sum of $2050.35. This was the beginning of regular exercises, open to the public, which are still held on Washington's Birthday.

The beautiful grounds at Jamaica Plain were purchased for $30,000; the first kindergarten, the "Anagnos Building" was completed in 1887 and opened with ten pupils. Mr. Anagnos was a very learned man, though "he wore his learning lightly, like a flower". He was shy and gentle, but for any purpose that won
his enthusiasm, he had a powerful energy, a tenacity and persuasiveness that inspired everyone, even the fates, to give him victory. All this inspiration and energy was now bent upon adapting for the use of the handicapped, the methods of instruction developed by Friedric Froeble, of whom Mr. Anagnos was an ardent disciple. It was found, with great joy on the part of Mr. Anagnos and his pioneer teachers, that the "gifts and occupations" of Froeble's technique, were most valuable aids to the teaching of the blind, and that his philosophy of living and playing and growing with the children, was the highest possible means of helping afflicted children to become as nearly normal as their limitations would permit.

There were so many "little blind children" that in 1893 a second kindergarten was erected and the girls left the boys in possession of "Anagnos" and went to occupy the "Helen Curtis Bradley Building". Within another fifteen years these two departments had grown sufficiently to require expansion; and in 1903, the primary girls were transferred to the Glover Building, and a year or two later, the primary boys were established in Potter Building.

These four buildings were arranged upon one plan. A central corridor extended from the back door to the front; on the right was an ample kitchen, a large dining-room and a small parlor; on the left there was a very spacious school-room at each end, with a sewing-room and cloak-room between them. The sleeping rooms on the second and third floors opened from central corridors.
There were six grown-ups and each had a corner room; the fourth corner room on each floor was reserved for a nursery or children's playroom. The fourth story was a sort of assembly hall, for informal occasions and for play on stormy days. In this hall were four large dormer windows facing each point of the compass; and between the windows (at the corners where the roof slanted) were closets where our trunks and other goods were stored. The doors of those closets were paneled like the rest of the walls so that in all our childish explorations we were never able to find our way into the forbidden places.

The open space which we were free to enjoy, was shaped like a huge cross; the arms leading to the windows forming delightful alcoves rich in the great variety of possibilities they afforded to the imaginative mind. In the Bradley Building, allowing free play for arms and legs as well as for imagination, three of these alcoves were empty; the fourth held a good sized and very beautiful dollhouse. It was an exceptional dollhouse and was not there just to be played with. It was designed, furnished and equipped as a typical American home. A little blind child may not know what a chimney looks like or where the ridgepole is or how the plate-rail runs around the room. Some children talk of andirons, art squares and chandeliers, while other children have never heard of these things. But there they were in the dollhouse -- object lessons for our inquiring need.

On the day of my arrival, as you may remember, we went up to this big hall for our singing lesson; it was the last hour
of the daily school program. But I remember well the first day we went to the hall for another purpose. It was raining and we were having our morning games up there with Miss Humbert. We stood in a circle in the middle of the open space and sang:

"Now take what I give you and handle with care; Find out if it's round or if it is square. Then tell us its name as you stand in the ring, And if you are right we will clap as we sing."

Thus we learned to recognize by touch a thimble, or buttonhook, or ring -- any little thing that could be identified by shape or texture.

While we were playing games two little sisters arrived who had been at school before but were returning late that year. I remember their coming because they had on bright turkey red dresses with white dots as big as quarters. Their home was in a far corner of New England where railroad fares were high and I suspect that the turkey red dresses were a give-away that these little girls had spent the summer vacation in a state institution where in those days, turkey red was used for state wards because it was cheap and could be easily followed when they ran away. This may not be true, but I speak of it here because it is one of the vivid memories of my first days at school and because many people think that Perkins is an asylum for the blind. It is not. It is a school, and both pupils and teachers are required to go elsewhere during the vacations.

When the games were over and we started downstairs, Erma happened to be at the end of the line. Demurely she walked down
the first two flights but at the third she was seized by temptation. She waited at the top until the last girl had reached the floor below, then with a fearlessness born of much practice, she threw one leg over the low rail and came flying down behind us. Sliding off she skipped after the others but found her path blocked by Mrs. Hill, who slipped the big hand under Erma's chin and said reproachfully, "Why, Erma! I'm surprised! You're a naughty, naughty girl!"

Erma told us about it in knitting class and said that Mrs. Hill was tipping her head so far back that the words seemed to bounce up at her from the floor. Erma was a jolly, active child; from that time on she was frequently in the local limelight for one reason or another, and usually the reason was not wholly to her credit.

Of my first years at Perkins it is our pranks and adventures that I chiefly remember, rather than the routine school work which of course filled most of our time. Morning prayers is the one clear recollection of our daily school life. It used to give our childish hearts a thrill to hear the commanding voice of Mrs. Hill, reading:

"Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness ---" and it taught us obedience -- since even the Almighty must needs answer when Mrs. Hill spoke. As far as I can judge now, respect and obedience were the only lessons we learned from Mrs. Hill. She was a large woman whose personage seemed awesome to little children and owing to her position she never played with us or
read us stories, so that our association with her was always official. She corrected us on points of personal appearance and conduct about the building. Semi-occasionally she administered castor oil (with a peppermint drop to take out the taste), and she discussed matters of health and behavior with our parents which made her seem very grown up and made us seem very small indeed. But she was just and took very good care of us. Although she seemed somewhat austere, I have not heard any girl speak of remembering her unkindly.

Of Miss Lane the story is different, and perhaps a personal description will explain her better than my attempt at character analysis. She was tall and thin and flat chested, with bright red hair and long athletic arms and legs and tongue. She was the primary teacher but her disciplinary ability made us acquainted long before I was eligible to her classes. Our introduction came while I was still such a little girl as to be scheduled to retire at six-thirty, and therefore, expected to go directly to my room after supper and not to stop at the nursery on the way.

One evening as I left the dining-room, Mrs. Hill asked me if I would find Kathlene and send her down to the sewing-room. Thinking she might be in the nursery, I went to the door and inquired, "Who's in here?"

"I'm in here," said Miss Lane in a frosty voice, "what do you want?"

I explained and Kathlene was sent downstairs. As I turned
to go Miss Lane said, "You wouldn't have come to the nursery if you had known I was here, would you, Ruth?" To this I answered, "Yes, Miss Lane." I thought my reason a sufficiently good one, but it must have seemed to her like a lack of respect for her authority. Without further provocation she flew into a fury, hustled me to my room, placed me on my bed, and (removing the intervening garments) spanked me with the back of my own hairbrush. After every two or three whacks she would ask "Would you?" and with stupid persistence I would answer, "Yes, Miss Lane." Then the performance was repeated.

It was not any fine love of the truth that prompted my replies, it was just childish obstinacy and unwillingness to be conquered by one I disliked. But at length intelligence came to my rescue. I said, "No, Miss Lane" in the proper place, whereupon she put away the brush and left the room. I got myself into bed and wept tears of righteous indignation because I had been whipped into telling a lie, because there was no justice in grown-ups, because I was away from home, because I couldn't see, because my mother was dead --. I wept and wept for all the evils I could think of (as is the way with some children until all the sufferings of the past and all the dread of the future makes them unutterably miserable) and then I fell asleep.

You must understand that it was mere stubbornness that made me hold out against Miss Lane so long, but as soon as the experience was over, then it was as a champion of truth that I took up the cudgel against her. My "high moral standards" which
had no part in the first episode, were thereafter consciously set aside in my dealings with Miss Lane. I lied to her freely and felt proud when I was clever enough to deceive her successfully.

It was not so very long before I had a fine chance to match my wits against hers. The very next day I was going merrily down the hall sucking a small piece of a broken comb when Miss Lane passed, then turned back and asked what I had in my mouth. I wedged the fragment of celluloid into a back corner and said promptly, "Nothing, Miss Lane." She bade me open my mouth and she looked so far down my windpipe that she missed the nook where my wisdom teeth were going to be. She asked what I was sucking when she spoke to me, and I said "My tongue". Well! It passed at that. She didn't believe me but she couldn't prove her suspicions.

Kind Miss Humbert knew nothing of all this evil I was learning, for she was laboring to fill our minds with good thoughts and our little hands with gifts. Christmas was approaching and school had taken on a tone of excitement and importance. We were making the most beautiful things; little paper mats to hold calendars, reed mats for flowerpots, paper chains for decorations. Every child was doing something which she and Miss Humbert thought very useful. I was making a stiff paper box to hold trinkets. It was white and triangular, with three holly berries and one leaf in each corner. I was so proud of it and took such pains to do it well'.
Miss Fairbanks was teaching us Christmas carols — not any little song she could find, but the best known and most beloved carols that live on through the ages. Herein lies the necessity of having the very best teachers for the children who are most backward or most handicapped. The poor teacher with makeshift lessons, will fill up the time from one pay day to the next, but the good teacher will choose (for those whose capacity is limited) such lessons as are of vital and enduring worth. When a blind girl wants to join the church choir or the community chorus there if often the objection "Yes, but you cannot read the printed words" Ah 'what a joy it is then to know by heart those song favorites that others are just learning. Then if we respond, "Oh, we sang that in kindergarten", it is not from conceit but from belated gratitude to our faithful teachers.

A few days before Christmas, school closed for a two weeks vacation. In the morning we had public exercises at which we sang our carols and recited our poems and two or three of the older children played piano "pieces". The youngsters from the boys' kindergarten were assembed with us in a body on the opposite side of the stage. Through the cooperation of our teachers we sang some of the carols in unison, keeping together, doing our best, thoroughly delighting in this joyful mode of self-expression. Our hearts beat high with the excitement of performance and with the knowledge that someone in the audience had come to take us home for the holidays.

Upon returning to school I was told by Mrs. Hill that I had
been promoted to the first grade and to a room on the upper floor with the "older girls". I was to room with Kathlene and was allowed to stay up until seven o'clock and Mrs. Hill hoped I would remember to brush my teeth and strip my bed every morning and not to talk during study hour or after we went to bed at night.

The girls on the upper floor were first to third graders and were almost strangers to me, except Erma, who like myself, had just been sent up. When I arrived I found Erma sitting in the lap of a bigger girl who was totally blind and who had a queer habit of rolling her eyes back until only the white part showed. Erma said what a pity it was she couldn't see and tell us what went on in the back of our heads and what our brains looked like. Then Erma introduced me to Mary and Mabel and Alice and Anastasia, and as the others returned we met many more -- twelve or fifteen in all.

On the following morning I found, when prayers were over, that it was now my misfortune to go with Miss Lane into the back schoolroom and struggle with the three "r's". No more games and songs with cheery Miss Humbert! Just those three short months of the kindergarten "gifts and occupations" that have been an influence and a resource in my life ever since.

Being in the northeast corner, the back schoolroom was not as cheerful and sunny as one could wish. Instead of gay plants were books and maps which gave the room a solemn, rather gloomy aspect; a wide roofed-in back veranda made it more gloomy, and Miss Lane made it gloomier still. The new class was not a very uniform
group. Sophie and Elsina could see a great deal. Catherine had been as far as the third grade in public school when she lost her sight suddenly from brain fever. Jessie was older but not very bright, and I presume Kathlene was with us for the same reasons. With us also were Gladys, who also could see a little and had a soft, sweet voice, and Loretta who lived near and went home often and dressed very well. Elsina left to go to public school and Jessie dropped out. After that we were seven.

At this time we began learning to read with our fingers a system known as "line type" or "raised print" which more accurately describes it. The arithmetic slate which we used was a most ingenious contrivance full of little square holes into which we fitted type to represent the ten primary digits. More recently a type-slate having braille numbers has been invented, and although they are rather cumbersome, these slates are the best means we have yet of setting down problems in the same general position as one writes them. Arithmetic cannot be done on a braille slate, and not at all easily on a braille writer — chiefly because in arithmetic, much of the figuring is from right to left, whereas the writers work from left to right.

The reading and arithmetic lessons consumed the first period of the morning, then, after recess we went to the gymnasium for our physical training. The gymnasium occupied the first floor of the assembly building and was very well equipped. As little girls we did not use the apparatus very much, but we took a lively interest in the floor work and the games, and always rushed over
to dinner with hearty appetites -- especially when our side won.

We began the afternoon with a play period out of doors, followed by the regular session with Miss Lane, in which we learned writing and language, correlated with geography and history and nature study. Our pencil writing was done on a pasteboard sheet, grooved somewhat like a washboard. We formed the letters in the grooves, following the pencil closely and guiding it with the fore-finger of the left hand. Beginners are taught the "square hand" because it is easier to direct and more uniform in result; those who have had sight long enough to learn script are allowed to develop an individual penmanship -- legibility being the only requirement. To make plain the geography lesson, we had a huge globe with the continents raised slightly above the oceans. For aid in speaking good English we had always the excellent example of our teachers. For our nature lessons we had sometimes the specimens from Miss Humbert's case, and more often the big playground or Jamaica Plain Park.

But it was in the middle of winter that Erma and I came into Miss Lane's class and our first nature lesson was in the form of a glorious sleighride! Some good ladies in the community provided transportation for each building -- big barges with four horses and two drivers each. Mrs. Hill announced the invitation at the breakfast table, and about half-past nine we were helped into our warmest wraps, with rubbers and scarfs and mittens. We went down the big front steps just as if we were going home! The barges had cushioned seats and robes for our knees, straw for our
feet and plenty of sleighbells. The teachers also were there to look after our comfort and good behavior. Believe me, we didn't shriek and torment each other, or carry on the way seeing children usually do. We sat quietly enjoying our smooth race over the snow, we sang "Jingle Bells" and other appropriate songs, and we told each other of our previous adventures in winter sports, and — had just a wonderful time. The ride must have lasted nearly three hours for it seems as if we were back just in time for dinner (or possibly our understanding matron gave us dinner as soon as we got back.) Every year we were given this great treat by the kind ladies of Boston, and it is one of the jolliest memories of our kindergarten days.

The next day after my first sleighride something occurred that was as exciting but of a very unhappy nature. As usual, we left the front school room after prayers, and were taking our seats for the reading lesson, when Miss Lane came up to one little girl, jerked her out of her chair and pushed her under the grand piano, saying:

"You're not fit to be with the rest of the girls! Get under there!" As the child slunk into the only space available, Miss Lane kicked at her -- but did not really touch her-- and added: "You're no better than a common curr!"

Poor, wretched child! She had stolen the toys out of the doll's house and given them to her playmates as personal presents! But I was not one of her friends. I did not know what the commotion was all about, could not understand why she was like a
common cur; and, to this day I remember the embarrassed discomfort we endured while she was huddled under the piano pitied by all except the only one who could have helped her. I do not know what happened when class was dismissed, whether she was further punished or sent home for a while I cannot recall. Throughout our school career she continued in our class. Twice there was a slight recurrence of the weakness -- so slight that I think less publicity and more kindness on the first occasion would have prevented them. She developed an aloof, rather sullen attitude which grew more marked as she grew older, until in our senior year she was very unpopular, and since graduation very little has been heard of her.

Although I was stirred with sympathy for a few hours over that girl's troubles, I soon forgot her, having worries of my own. In pre-school days, cats had played an important part in my existence. I was very fond of them and so was Kathlene; and when the matron's gray kitten strayed into our room, just before singing class, it was welcomed with delight. After singing would come a dull study period. "Let's keep the cat to play with then!"

In each sleeping room there was one bureau, each girl had two drawers, mine were the two top ones, one was full of clothes and the other was nearly empty. Into this drawer I put a doll's blanket and a rather large workbag, folded for mistress pussy's comfort. When the singing bell rang, we put the kitten in, closed the drawer all but a small crack, and went up to the big hall. During the lesson we sat on pins and needles, as the saying is.
First I feared lest we had shut the drawer too tight and would find our pet smothered on our return. Then I thought maybe we had left the drawer open too much and someone might discover our secret. How terrible is suspense! I thought of everything except what really happened. When at last we raced down to the room, our ears were greeted with howls and our nostrils with a most obnoxious odor. That ungrateful cat had done everything she shouldn't in my bureau drawer.

With an ounce perfume bottle (which we had to empty into the drawer first) we brought water from the bathroom, and with scraps of tissue paper we labored in feverish haste to dissipate the evil evidence of our imprudence. In spite of the perfume the air was pregnant with distressing smells, and suddenly we heard Miss Lane coming down the hall.

Well, I put the doll's blanket on my bed and shut tight the half-cleaned drawer. Of course the lady came in, following her nose which was trembling with displeasure. I showed her the doll's blanket, explaining that I had left it on my bed, and added innocently that it smelled as if the cat had been lying on it. The blanket and all the bed clothes were sent to the laundry; I had to sleep in the guest room that night, and the next day my mattress was hung over the window-sill to air in the sunshine. Kathlene and I kept our secret well and no one ever knew the truth of the matter.

The next excitement was created by Erma and Catherine who were playing house during study hour. Catherine was the child,
Erma the mother. Catherine had misbehaved and Erma was spanking her with her rubber -- sitting on the footboard of the low bed with Catherine across her knees. What with the spanks and the squeals, neither of them heard Miss Lane until she appeared in the doorway. Catherine sprang to her feet and Erma slipped the rubber between the mattress and the footboard. For the rest of the week Erma had to spend the study hour down in the schoolroom "away from all the other little girls". Under this, she became so restless that a big hole began to appear in the seat of her blue serge sailor suit, and kind Miss Loring cut a length out of the front, replaced it with a strip of sateen, and filled up the gaps behind. As we wore tiers or long-sleeved aprons over our woolen dresses, Erma felt quite as respectable as the rest of us for her sateen stripe didn't show. Besides, spring was coming and we would soon go home for our Easter vacation and come back with new cotton dresses having forgotten all about our patches and Miss Loring's thrift.

In the early days of the kindergarten it was Mr. Anagnos' custom to hold a reception or exhibition on or near Froebbel's birthday in April. The principle purpose of these receptions was to interest the public in the school and to increase the kindergarten endowment fund. Those were the days when Boston and vicinity were honored by the citizenship of such people as Phillips Brooks, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Christopher P. Cranch, Edward Everett Hale, Dean Howells, Maud Howe Elliott and Margaret Deland. In those days Perkins
also had its famous characters. In 1892, Edith Thomas, Elizabeth Robin, Helen Keller and Tommy Stringer were at the spring reception. These four children were both deaf and blind and, in the face of the accepted notion that such afflictions are insurmountable, the demonstration of their small accomplishments must have seemed really marvelous. Boston's leading citizens talked about these exhibitions; literary men gave readings, musicians gave concerts -- sometimes at the school, sometimes in their homes -- to draw out public interest. Richard Mansfield gave a special performance of "Beau Brummell"; Oliver Wendell Homes and James Russell Lowell devoted an evening to reading and reciting their poems.

By the time I arrived at Perkins, conditions were not so spectacular, but we had our "closing exercises" at the end of the winter term and went home in high glee for nearly two weeks.

The spring term was delightful! To go down from the back veranda onto the freshening grass; to watch (with our sensitive fingers) the leaf buds swelling on the maple trees; to hear the birds singing -- every few weeks a new note as the season advanced -- to skip and race and sing; these were our joys! Somehow, but quite incidentally so far as we were concerned, we learned to read and write and to cipher a little. I know we did learn something, because each year we went into the next grade, but our minds were on the daisies and the dandelion chains, the grass-hoppers and the cherry blossoms. Ant that was quite right! How bare and gloomy and sad would be the life of a little blind
child, without a love of nature. Years of gymnastic training could never give us the grace and freedom of movement that a child gets from playing out of doors. There is no silk or lace as delicate as the first petals of spring. There is no music so passionate, so subtle, so rich in emotion as the songs of the birds. We loved nature because it filled our lives with things that were otherwise shut out, and because we were persistently and earnestly taught to love it by those who knew the resource it held for joy and beauty in our later lives. Our praise and gratitude are due to Mr. Anagnos and Mr. Allen that they understood so well this phase of our great need. Not a word of praise or gratitude escaped our lips in those young days. But thanksgiving was in our hearts as we romped with the March and April winds or dressed our dolls in the warm sunshine of May and June.

Two years I stayed at the Bradlee Building. They were twin years beginning with homesick September, advancing to Merry Christmas, and continuing through the joyous springtime to the long summer vacation.
CHAPTER III

At Glover

In the spring of our second year the air was filled with noise, dust and excitement: a new building was going up. It was to be ready in the fall and, on the basis of age or grade, fifteen of us were "going over". It was to be "The Joseph B. Glover Building" for primary girls. Mr. Glover was born in Dorchester in 1815. As a trustee of the school he gave freely of his money and his shrewd financial advice. He died in 1902 and was buried in Mount Auburn. Shortly afterward the building dedicated to his memory was added to the kindergarten unit.

How well I remember my return to school that year! The dread of a new place and strange teachers made me doubly homesick -- I even had a morbid affection for the train that had been in Providence and was going back there -- and I began to cry when we reached the South Station. So my good sister (who was heartsick at having to leave me) bought me a set of tin dishes in the station; and, a little happier, we went up to the platform and waited for the elevated train. Just as it came -- in the stress of the crowd -- the string broke and all the little tin dishes went scattering over the platform! My sister was forgetting on the car and avoiding more embarrassment, but I set up such a howling that the fatherly conductor and the tolerant public waited until I was comforted by the recovery of my treasures.

The new matron, Miss Barrett, was tall and dark and much
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younger than Mrs. Hill. She had a pleasant voice and a manner that made her very likeable. The close resemblance between the Bradlee and Glover buildings made us feel at home right away and helped us to find our way about very readily. From force of habit we still called our playroom "the nursery" and upon reaching it I found several of my pals already there. After cordial greetings, we exchanged bits of news about the summer vacation and practised saying the names of our new teachers and speculated as to what they would be like. Erma's brother was going to college with a boy named Church, whose sister was to be one of our teachers. This was interesting; but whether Miss Church was going to teach music, sewing or arithmetic was still a mystery. Mabel, when she arrived, had met Miss Dyer, who was going to teach fifth grade; and Mabel liked her and was glad she was a fifth grade girl. Mary wasn't so glad about it, and said she'd die if Miss Dyer was a cross teacher. Mary, Anna, Alice, Mabel and Irena made up the fifth grade group. In the fourth grade were Loretta, Sophie, Gladys, Catherine, Erma and myself. There were six younger girls who made up the third grade, among whom were my first little guide, Nettie, and my new room-mate, Margaret. This brought the number of pupils up to seventeen, and, as there were seven grown-ups, we were a family of twenty-four when we gathered for supper in the large dining-room which was gay with plants and lighted by the setting sun. It must have been an exciting moment when our places were assigned and we found where we were going to sit for the whole
of the school year. Miss Barrett had the older girls at her table. There were three other tables and two teachers at each. The children who needed most help sat beside the teachers and the more independent girls occupied the end seats. As is customary in the "lower school" the bread was served buttered, the food cut, and all the children fed themselves, for the most part, quite capably. Before we sat to our meal, silent grace was asked by those who knew how, and those who did not were later taught to say:

"God is great, God is good,  
And we thank Him for this food."

to which the older ones added:

"By Thy grace we must be fed:  
Give us, Lord, our daily bread."

On the following morning, after Miss Barrett had presided over the morning exercises, the fifth grade stayed in the front schoolroom with Miss Dyer; the fourth grade went into the back schoolroom with Miss Church; and the third grade went down to a fine basement workroom, where Miss Wiik (pronounced Veek) taught knitting, sewing and woodsloyd. This workroom was the prime wonder of our new building and its greatest attraction was six well-equipped benches for woodwork, mind you! No toys or models for the little blind children, but real tools -- knives and files and two saws, a bit-stock and two kinds of planes. What an outfit for the indulgence of self-expression! Oh! the joy of using a sharp knife properly. What a chance to show the world that we wouldn't cut off our heads, just because we couldn't see.
So far as I have been able to find out, in the girls' manual training department there has never been an accident serious enough to call for the care of a doctor -- a fine tribute to the wisdom of our teachers. During my three years at Glover, I had woodsloyd one school period each day. We first made a block for sandpapering, a breadboard and a seat for a ropeswing, with notches in each end to hold it in place. Later we made a twine-holder, with a spindle for the ball to turn on, and small trays, for pencils and racks for letters. The last things I made were coat-hangers and an elaborate stand for a flowerpot. This last was a round plaque with a design bored into it with a center bit, the making of which was so great an accomplishment that, after a quarter century, I still remember the patience and care I lavished on the task.

During the same lapse of time I have remembered the utter drudgery of the reading lesson and the hopeless struggle with spelling. I remember once, out of school hours, when I tried to write a letter to my sister. I sat alone in the big school-room even until it was quite dark, struggling to put on paper the simple idea "had to". I suppose it is not analogous to Jacob's wrestling with the angel, yet it was the first time, without coercion, that I thought, meditated or studied with conscious intent and effort. "Hafta, hadto, hatta and hatto" were my guesses -- but which? It was then for the first time that I understood the sense of going to school -- that there was a stock of information in the world that one could get
possession of, and that one must have in order to do the commonest things -- even to write a letter to one's sister. Ah well! "The thoughts of youth are long, deep thoughts." And do you remember, my dear classmates, the amazing endurance of that apple pie we divided into fractions day after day?

To make clear the geography lesson we had splendid, large wooden maps that came apart like jig-saw puzzles; the jigging was done on the boundary lines between states and countries. There were grooves for rivers, strips of putty for mountains and brass tacks for capital cities. The maps were in the back schoolroom, which, though it had the same location, did not seem nearly so gloomy as the one occupied by Miss Lane, and perhaps the difference arose from the happy circumstance that Miss Church was in love. She was a young, quiet, pleasant person, and of course she didn't tell us her soul's secret, but we had not been long at school before we discovered that she went to the corner every morning before breakfast to mail a letter, and within a few weeks she began to allow Margaret and me to go and mail it for her. It was a very great privilege to be allowed to go off the school grounds all by ourselves! Then, too, we used to tell the other girls if the letter was "fat" or "thin", and then we would speculate about what was in it, each one contributing her infantile notion of what a love letter should contain.

Margaret was my new room-mate, a dear, good girl with whom I can look back upon twenty odd years of staunch friendship.
Nothing could describe her so truly as the line: "Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly," for she was ever of a serious nature. Yet the quotation has a deeper meaning. Faithful child! At our every leisure moment she strove diligently to teach me, by rote, every one of the Psalms in their Biblical order. Had she known enough pedagogy to present them in an easier sequence, I verily believe she would have succeeded. As it is, what knowledge I now possess I owe very largely to her childish patience and persistence. I do not mean you to suppose that she knew all the Psalms herself in those early years. Oh, no; she was learning them too. She could see a great deal, and although it was thought necessary for her to conserve her sight, she was allowed to read large, clear print -- and she greatly enjoyed the beautiful "Book of Psalms" that had been her mother's parting gift when she came away to school.

Now, whether it was the inevitable association of the sublime with the ridiculous, or whether, as the psychologists would say, we needed one extreme to balance the other -- whatever the explanation, the fact is this -- that Margaret and I quarrelled every time we met! Always we went into our room as friends and came out "mad". Our parting words usually were: "I'm never going to speak to you again," and "I hope you don't". However, the first time I entered the lists was not against Margaret, but in her defense.

The Saturday after school opened was a beautiful, warm day and we spent it out on the playground. In the morning Erma
(romping as usual) tumbled over Margaret who was sitting nearly hidden in the second crop of timothy. Here may I digress to explain that a semi-sighted person is apt to be much more irritable and impatient of the affliction than a totally blind person is. Those with a little sight never know how much they can see and how much they are missing. What the semi-sighted person can see is always incomplete and very often incorrect. Of course as children we did not think of these things. Erma did not realize that she exasperated at her own limitation, so she vented her annoyance on the innocent Margaret. "Pink eyes!" she said viciously, and raced down the wind, leaving the rest of us to offer what consolation we might.

Later in the day I was sitting peacefully knitting when Erma came and sat down beside me. "I think you were horrid to call Margaret pink eyes," I said, reproachfully, "she can't help being an albino, and she didn't make you fall on purpose." Then I went on preaching to Erma about her hasty anger and heedless words. Erma didn't say anything at first, but all at once she sprang at me in a burst of temper. She broke my knitting needles to fragments, she tore the sleeves nearly out of my dress, and she scratched my face and arms till they bled; then she walked away. From her first move I had sat motionless, dumbfounded. Erma walked rapidly around the large playground twice. When she was approaching for the third time I rose and stood at the edge of the grass, and as she passed I gave her a mighty slap in the face. Just at that moment Miss Barrett stepped onto the back
veranda. She saw the swinging blow I lavished on the seemingly unoffending Erma. Thereupon Miss Barrett christened me the black sheep of the flock and made me wear my torn dress, without mending, all the next week -- a punishment which I felt the more keenly because Erma bore no share of it. What a miserable week that was! The ragged sleeves were an invitation to trouble, and Erma did get some of it.

First, Miss Wiik was cross because I had broken a pair of long rubber needles, and sent me out to stand in the entry-way while the stitches were being picked up. There was a little window, between the workroom and the entry, at which I stood and made such faces and gestures at Erma that she laughed and Miss Wiik wold her to go to bed right after supper -- which meant missing the evening reading.

That afternoon, for the first time since school had opened, I got a hundred in spelling, whereupon Erma, who always got a hundred, clapped her hands in mock delight at my achievement. But Miss Church was displeased and said she would not have such demonstrations in class and sent Erma up to bed right then and there. Erma withdrew feeling rather ill-treated, but consoling herself that both teachers had chosen the same time for her enforced lullaby. "It's like killing two birds with one stone," said Erma to me when I took her the piece of gingerbread I had smuggled from supper. Just as I slipped out of the room, Miss Church went in to tell Erma how naughty she had been, and a few minutes later, in came Miss Wiik bent on the same errand. Alas!
The teachers did not approve of the "two bird" philosophy, and Erma had to retire early again the next night also.

When we were out playing after school the next day a man came into the yard. He was a very old man. Years afterward when I read about the Ancient Mariner I was reminded of that Mr. Mullen who came to us that day and "held us with his glittering eye" while we feared his "skinny hand". There is a plant called mullein -- and his voice made us think of the mullein leaves, sounding thick and hairy. He was probably a good old man, but he seemed queer to us, and I think, to our teachers, for after a few visits he didn't come any more. Another link between him and the Ancient Mariner was that he had sailed the seas. He had quantities of rare and most interesting shells and dried sponges and seaweeds and crocodile teeth and stones with fossil imprints -- treasures we would have loved had they not been accompanied by that hairy voice and skinny hand. On his last visit he promised to play his flute for us the next time he came, but he never did.

Still we did not lack for musical entertainment or instruction. By way of entertainment we were allowed to use the piano in the back schoolroom on Wednesday and Saturday evenings when there was no reading, for on the other nights the teachers took turns reading aloud to us. On these two "free" evenings we used to sing, generally someone could play the piano, perhaps Mabel or Lauretta, and we had what we called an orchestra, in which the leading instruments were harmonicas and combs with tissue paper
folded over them on which we tooted any tune that was suggested. We loved best to sing the old kindergarten songs that Miss Hum- bert had taught us, but now and then someone made up a song which had its run and was forgotten. One of these was a real "Glover" song and had a verse for each teacher.

For more serious music we were having singing, piano and violin lessons. The violin went very well for there was only a melody to learn; but the piano was more difficult for it could not be played with one finger at a time; and besides, with our piano lessons we were also learning to read Braille music. Thus, while the violin could be played by ear, the piano had to be puzzled out by the clumsy fingers, committed to memory one hand at a time, and then played both together -- a process far too tedious for my limited persistence. Therefore it was quite natural that while I enjoyed Miss Fish and my violin work, I was frequently at odds with Miss Chamberlain over the piano lessons. Of Miss Chamberlain it must in justice be said that she had an exceptionally sweet and gentle disposition. I know, even at that time I knew, that the fault was wholly mine. The Braille music was really too hard for me to learn at that age with the little experience I had had in reading with my fingers. But, as so often happens with children, I struggled with my notes alone in the practice hour and rebelled over more trivial things in class. My first caper was to hide the piano-stick. In teaching a group of blind people to sing one does not stand and wave one's hands to keep time; one beats the time gently with
the baton. Miss Chamberlain's baton was a flower-stick that some child had made in woodsloyd, and I hid it -- just behind the keyboard cover -- so half the period was wasted looking for it; and I was sent to bed because Erma told who hid it. Another day, in the midst of the singing lesson, I said, "The legs of this seat are wobbly." And Miss Chamberlain said, "Speaking of legs, Ruth, your shoes are on the wrong feet." (I was discreet about mentioning legs after that.)

Again I set the class in an uproar during the learning of the hymn "The King of Love My Shepherd Is". Miss Church had been reading us a story in which a girl fell down a ledge and her sweetheart carried her home with her broken leg dangling down his back. (If you know the hymn you will see the connection.) The last verse tells how:

"Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
But yet in love He sought me,
And on His shoulder gently laid
And home rejoicing brought me."

and there I laughed, catching a glimpse of legs dangling down an invisible back. Nowadays when so many children are being sent to schools for the feeble-minded, I thank my lucky stars that the custom was not so prevalent a quarter of a century ago. Yet if I had been sent to Waverley, Erma certainly would have accompanied me. At this time her favorite trick was catching grasshoppers and setting them free in the classroom when lessons became irksome. Besides frightening the girls, this diversion
annoyed the teachers who were puzzled to know how the pests got in so often. On Saturday mornings we had a class called "poetry." Erma, who had a knack at doggerel and therefore did not take the work very seriously, thought that the best time to play with her pets. Sometimes when asked to recite a poem she would give us something that was never heard before nor since, and the first lines were addressed to a very aged St. Bernard dog that belonged to the school gardener:

"Oh, Dando, you're disgusting, you nearly drive me mad! You don't deserve to have a name, because you smell so bad."

Erma did not like dogs at all and she often amused herself and us at their expense. The matron had a small airdale that we called Jack Barrett. One of the little girls, named Edna, had a large black-and-tan toy dog that in the twilight might easily have been taken for Jack. One evening when the assistant matron was bidding us good night, she saw this toy dog and called to it to come out of the child's room. As the animal did not move, she went in to it, discovered her error, and gave the toy dog a sound cuff, for which Edna cried herself to sleep. The next day she told Erma about it, and to soothe their indignation, they captured Jack Barrett, held him by his feet and dropped him over the railing of the high back veranda, carefully, to see if he would land on his feet like a cat. But, the joke, or the irony of the matter lay in the fact that she couldn't see well enough to tell how he landed. Shortly after that, in a repentant mood, we gave
the dog a caramel which stuck his teeth together so that the
tears ran down his face, and we laughed until the tears ran
down our faces, too.

Miss Barrett knew nothing of all this, yet she found cause
to lecture us every now and then, and one day she kept us after
prayers to tell us our faults. She addressed us in turn as we
happened to be seated; no one was charged with anything very
grave. Some were too noisy; some were too slow; one must im-
prove in combing her hair, another in making her bed. My room-
mate talked too much and I "had a chip on my shoulder." I
didn't know the phrase then -- I thought that one shoulder was
higher than the other, and when I asked her which one, she told
me not to be impudent. For a long time I kept putting my hands
on my shoulders to see if they were about even. Years later
when I learned the meaning of the metaphor I understood also why
my question seemed impertinent.

Did it surprise you that I spoke of making beds? In ad-
dition to that regular duty, we each had a reasonable share of
the general housework to do -- dusting the schoolrooms, halls
and stairs and our own rooms, dry-mopping the floors, polishing
the brasswork, watering the plants, passing out the laundry and
sundry other light tasks. This is a fundamental rule at Perkins.
Even the teachers take care of their own rooms and help serve
the meals, so that each one comes to feel a responsible member
of the family upon whom depends, in part, the welfare of the
whole. A spirit of helpfulness and independence is developed
in this way so that there is scarcely ever any friction in the domestic life, and the Perkins barometer nearly always registers wholesome activity and peaceful goodwill. In such an atmosphere the little children -- some of them timid and shrinking -- become trustful and free-hearted as little children should be. The serene benevolence of Mr. Anagnos pervaded the school like the blessing of a kindly deity. He visited each cottage once a month and on one of his visits there was an episode in the apple orchard that Erma treasures among her pleasantest memories.

The apple orchard stretched along one side of the playground separated from it by a wide gravel walk. At that time we were not allowed to play there; but it was a beautiful place and, being well cared for; the apples were delicious. So the girls who could see a little often skipped across the walk and never came back empty handed. On this day, when Mr. Anagnos had taken dinner in our cottage, Erma ran down to the orchard in the afternoon recess. She was sitting in the deep grass with two apples in each baggy sleeve, a dozen in the full sailor blouse and several more in her lap. She was trying to conceal these last about her person when a gentle voice inquired: "Well, my little girl, what are you doing?"

"I'm getting some apples," said Erma naively. "Wouldn't you like one?" and she held up the very nicest she had.

The kindly old gentleman said "Thank you, my dear" and put the apple into his pocket and walked on. Erma brought all she could carry back to the rest of us and we sat in the tall grass
and devoured them with relish. Within a day or two we were told at the dinner table that we must not take the apples from the orchard because they were to be gathered and put into barrels and given to us on "fruit days" during the winter when we couldn't get any fresh vegetables. This was so reasonable an order that we accepted it cheerfully and obeyed it quite faithfully.

Even before we realized it, winter was upon us. There came a Saturday afternoon when it was too cold and stormy to go out and we were sent up to play in the big hall on the fourth floor. Some took dolls and other toys, a few may have taken books, but most of us had acquired enough community spirit to enjoy games that all could share. Favorite among these was the "Indian game". We formed in two groups, one taking the part of white men, the other group taking off their shoes and impersonating the silent Indians. The English would go to sleep in one alcove and the Indians, creeping noiselessly up, would pounce upon them and all would join in the most blood-curdling shrieks. Then we would reverse the parts and do it again. Whatever else of American History may have been vague and uninteresting, the savage yell was clearly understood. Another game favorite was a fire at a public place, usually a theatre. We would arrange the seats for a large audience, recite a poem, sing a song or two, and then someone would shout "Fire!" Then pandemonium would break loose. But at one of these "fires" our friend Kathleen had hysterics and was really very ill afterwards so that sport was henceforth forbidden.
It was only on very stormy days that we were kept in. Clear cold weather was thought healthful and we were sent out and urged to have races and see who could walk around the playground the most times, and occasionally we were allowed to have sleds and coast down the little hill by the barn. Erma was very indignant that such a little slope should be called a "hill" and scorned the idea of "sliding about as fast as water runs up hill". "I'm glad it's 'most time for Christmas vacation," she would say, "I can have a real slide when I get home."

We had our Christmas carols as usual in joint assembly with the girls from Bradlee and the boys from Anagnos and Potter Cottages. The carols were: "Oh, Holy Night", "Carol, Carol, Christians", and "'Tis Christmas Day". One of the younger girls recited

"Down the chimney broad and black,
Came Sir Santa with his pack."

Erma played "Holy Night, Silent Night" as a violin solo, and the boys also contributed a solo and a recitation.

On display in the schoolrooms of each cottage were the little gifts we had made to take home -- knitted facecloths and sachet-bags, reed plant mats, hand-sewed dusters and dish towels, and little booklets containing short verses copied in pencil writing. On the covers of these booklets were either pictures of angels and Christmas bells, or snowflakes that we had cut out of tissue paper. These were tied with bits of red or green ribbon and, although not at all useful, they represented a great
deal of childish labor -- for pencil writing is one of the hardest lessons of the first few grades. We were very happy when we gathered these treasures and went home for ten days' vacation.
CHAPTER IV

The Year's At The Spring

Of the three years spent at Glover, in the fourth, fifth and sixth grades, the spring terms remain in memory as the most eventful and happy. In the winter we recited:

"Down swept the chill wind from the mountain peak."

and we complained about the cold.

"The chill no coat however stout

Of homespun stuff could quite shut out."

and we watched for the few red-letter days that marked the passing of the season. Chief of these was the arrival of Lincoln's Birthday and the Blaisdell Dollar.

Stephen Blaisdell had been a pupil at Perkins, and many a time he had wished for a little money in his pocket. After leaving school he made quite a fortune selling musical instruments, and when he died he left a sum of money with the bequest that one dollar should be paid to each Perkins pupil every year on Lincoln's Birthday -- "that these little boys and girls may know the pleasure of having pocket money at least once a year." Surely all of us had known the possession of nickels and dimes and perhaps of a rare quarter now and then; but for many a child, this Lincoln dollar was the first taste of wealth. During our grammar school days it was, for some, at least, the only spending money we had during the whole year. Out of it came the little Valentines we sent home, our small contribution to the sufferers of some flood or earthquake, a new hair-ribbon or a birthday
trinket for our best friend, and our pennies for Sunday School as long as the supply lasted. This beneficence began in 1902 and has continued to stir patriotism and gratitude in the student body consciousness every year since then. Erma thinks it is for this reason (subconsciously) that we have always maintained -- in that time-worn debate -- that "Lincoln was a greater man than Washington."

Be that as it may! On Washington's Birthday in the evening, the teachers had a party. The pupils went to bed at seven o'clock as usual (at least most of them did) but Alice, Anna and Erma stayed up and talked and made doll-clothes. Erma had a small celluloid doll for which she made a blue silk dress with velvet cuffs and neckband -- a very tiny thing made all in the dark! She was showing it off and enjoying the admiring exclamations of her companions when Miss Barrett came in and caught them out of bed. The punishment was to pass the following day without talking to anyone. The next day was Saturday, and it was pretty dull walking round and round the big playground, one behind the other, without speaking a word. Erma walked in the middle and once she reached ahead and guided Alice around the corner. They did not speak, but Miss Barrett saw the gesture and called Erma in and sent her to bed. It was a bitter cold day and Erma secretly rejoiced to be warm in bed; but poor Anna! The cook said the tears were frozen on her cheeks, and there were uncertain rumors that Alice's ears were slightly frozen. But Miss Barrett did not intend to be too severe with
us. She used to plan many nice things for our entertainment and instruction.

One pleasure of her planning, was an afternoon at the home of Mrs. Jack Gardiner. The fifth and sixth grades went with two teachers, making a group of twelve. It was a mild day in April and a strong, warm breeze blowing down the esplanade, made it necessary for us to hold our hats. As we passed through the iron gateway the teachers told us of the two lions at the door. Erma said it seemed more like a prison than a palace. But the instant we came in sight of the court and got a whiff of the flower-scented air her bad judgment was overruled. There were many other guests with whom we moved slowly across the ample rooms and up the marble stairs, drinking in the fragrant, spacious grandeur. To this emotional pleasure were added the glimpses of intellectual enrichment which we gleaned from the explanations of our teachers and from the subdued murmurs and soft exclamations of the assembly.

"Ah! What beautiful stained glass!" "That's a Botticelli." "And that's a Rembrandt." "Yes, the sailboat in the storm." "Here is a sedan-chair used by English royalty in the sixteenth century." "Just look at those beams!" "What exquisite carving!" "Aren't these pretty candle-sticks?" "This is a statue of the 'chubby boy'." "Oh! See those nasturtiums! They hang way down from the third balcony."

It was thus we saw a palace. To be sure it was mostly through the eyes of others; but that is our lot, and we learn how to find enjoyment in it -- or in spite of it.
Every year on a Sunday in April the spring season was officially opened by the Dixwell concert, given by a group of men who came to our assembly hall and entertained us with excellent music. They sang and played, both in concert and solos of violin, cello and flute. They also brought us flowers -- tulips, jonquils and daffodils -- exquisite, fragrant, bright colored things. How I loved them! Nothing in my early childhood compared with the rapture I experienced during those Dixwell concerts. Often we have beautiful music and often we have beautiful flowers, but it is not often that we have music and flowers together, and at their best. I know, on those Sunday afternoons, that some of us caught first glimpses of our own souls, and took away with us not only the bunches of yellow blossoms, but also the glimpses of a golden moment.

In April (but not on the nineteenth) for we are taught to avoid the crowds of a public holiday) the history class was taken to Concord and Lexington. We walked across "the rude bridge that arched the flood" and saw the "votive shaft" that Emerson tells about in his "Concord Hymn". We went into the house where Louisa May Alcott had lived, and we visited Sleepy Hollow Cemetery where Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne and other learned men are buried. Then after being refreshed by the lunch we had brought, we drove on to Lexington and saw or listened to a description of the statue of the Minuteman at the verge of that famous battlefield. It was a most delightful trip and a splendid way of making the history lesson vivid and tangible. However, you must not think
that the burden of serious study was shifted entirely to these pleasant supplements. We had our share of drudgery to do and we did it, the more willingly because our hearts were happy. So on the following morning we were up bright and early, marching by twos and threes round and round the nursery committing to memory in concert this bit of the zoology lesson:

"A typical worm is bi-lateral, with a well-marked dorsal and ventral side, a head-end and tail-end, and a body divided into segments. The digestive track is a long, slender tube lying free in the body cavity and extending from the mouth to the vent. Above it is the dorsal vessel or heart, while behind the neck is the nervous system consisting of bud-like swellings called ganglion." All this, just as it is, without one review, has been remembered for exactly twenty-seven years!

"How much of all this do you suppose we understood at that time?" Erma asks me as I write.

And I answer: "Probably not even half of it."

"Have we ever found this knowledge of any use to us since we acquired it?"

"No, we have not."

"Then why were we asked to struggle with this bit of useless information?"

"My dear Erma! Learning that passage taught us many things. It developed our power of concentration, strengthened our memory, increased our vocabulary, and above all, it gave us the glorious feeling of having mastered the thing in hand -- a
feeling that is more responsible for success than is any other circumstance. Had we spent our childhood studying only those things that were within our easy mental grasp, would our grasp ever have expanded?

"Quite right." Erma agrees. "I can think of many things that I learned in childhood and did not understand until long afterward. I remember when I was very small we used to sing "Will there be any stars in my crown" and I used to say "In the strength of the Lord let me lay down and play." They used to let us choose the hymn in prayers on our birthdays and I always chose that one because I liked the stirring martial swing to it. I put in twice as much fervor and enthusiasm into it then as I dare to indulge in now that I understand 'labor and pray'." So Erma and I are convinced that thinking, like swimming, is not an accomplishment until one can go beyond one's depth.

Recently I had an amazing opportunity to learn how very shallow our thinking was in those young days. Rex Beech has a book in which he tells of two old men -- prospectors in Alaska -- who were the most devoted friends, but every now and again they would have a hasty quarrel, divide their worldly goods and part company. They would even go so far as to cut in half their one rowboat! This they did many times and each time they would find separation intolerable so they would make up and patch their boat together and go a'prospecting again. When I read this book I questioned if any human beings could be so silly. Just about that time I had luncheon one day with my old chum Margaret, and
as we chatted, she asked:

"Rufus, do you remember the time we made some beautiful May baskets and then got mad and tore them up each taking back the material she had contributed?" I thought of Tom and Jerry and their one boat, and I said, "No, were we ever so foolish?"

It was on a balmy afternoon late in April. Margaret had some pretty colored paper and I had a few small boxes. I didn't have enough so I asked Miss Bartlett if she had any and she gave me a candy box in which there was a small piece of last year's maple sugar. We passed it all around the group but no one could bite it because it was so hard. Then Erma had the bright idea of holding it under the hot water for a minute and we each had a bite. After that Margaret and I took our materials and went out and sat on the barn doorstep (the barn was at the other end of the orchard) and there we made our pretty baskets. This was on Saturday. May Day was the following Wednesday, but on Tuesday we had one of our periodic quarrels and Margaret took back her useless crepe paper and I took my bare and empty boxes. I think the trouble all started because I said I was "very pleased" about something, and Margaret thought I should say I was "very much pleased". Weren't we stupid! 

Around the barn was a lovely place to play in the spring. It sheltered no domestic animals, but Mr. Gallagher, the school gardener, kept his tools there. A wide gravel path led to the barn between lilac bushes on one side and Japanese quince and flowering almond on the other. South of the barn was the apple
orchard, on the north was an open field at the far end of which was a ledge of the famous "pudding stone" that the Dorchester giants used to throw at their wives. This was a dangerous place where we were not allowed to go alone and therefore it was a great treat when we were taken there to sit on the warm rocks and feel the big humps that stuck up like the plums and hunks of citron in a Christmas pudding. Our teachers never just "minded" us like nurse-maids or attendants; they taught us something whenever we were with them -- either from books or from the rich fund of their own knowledge -- so that a feeling of fellowship grew strong between teachers and pupils. The feeling that one was always progressing and yet always far from the final goal left us with no time for idle habits or silly complexes. I do not mean that all the children were normal or were free from peculiarities. I mean that the normal, wholesome and happy side of life always predominated. There was never any swearing or vulgar talk, and never any mean jokes played on each other. Now and then a child would lie to get herself out of trouble, but never to get another child into trouble. Stealing was unheard of except in the one case I have mentioned. During the twelve years of a grammar and high school course, to my knowledge only one girl was expelled, and that was for misconduct during a long vacation when the school authorities were in no way responsible. Some blind children, for want of more normal exercise, sway the body back and forth when they should sit still; some move the head too much while talking; some stare at a window or bright
light or wave the hand before the eyes, because the sensation of seeing gives them pleasure. Such little habits make a blind child seem foolish-- and sometimes, of course, the child really is not bright -- but often these habits arise from very reasonable causes and are very difficult to check, even when a perfectly good mind is bent upon the effort. These matters are discussed frankly with most of the pupils, who are told what to avoid and why. Also, as a strong help to make the pupils normal, contacts with seeing people are made as often as it seems feasible. The Perkins pupils go to the local church services, to public concerts also to stores, parks, museums and wherever they are welcome. They are continually instructed how to act like other people, and very often do behave better than their seeing neighbors.

In accordance with this aim to develop normal behavior and provide a diversity of experience, we were taken in small groups to the natural history rooms in Boston. We were instructed to sit still and talk softly on the cars and not to attract attention or be public nuisances. We saw (we saw with our fingers; blind people use the word feel very sparingly), one thing that made a great impression, a whale's jaw. It rested on the first floor and we had to go upstairs to reach the point of it. After that we believed that if the whale didn't swallow Jonah, he certainly could have done so.

On another fine spring day we took a basket lunch and went to the Arnold Arboretum. Beautiful place! But the mosquitoes were having a picnic there on the same day -- and flowers are not
so pretty if you can neither see nor touch them. But once we went to the Sargent Estate and there were allowed to touch the gorgeous peonies and bury our faces in the wealth of Rhododendron blooms. Since that day my visions of great wealth have been framed in garlands of these two magnificent blossoms.

In the classroom we were studying the more humble flowers. The pussywillow had feathered into catkins; the anemone and arbutus were gone, and now we were dissecting the dandelion and the innocent daisies. Stamen, pistil, calyx and corolla were dropping into our vocabulary thick and fast as falling apple blossoms. Also we were learning where to find the buttercups and daisies and the little clumps of sour-grass, the hairy mullen leaves and the plantain -- of which we broke the stem to see how many lies we had told by the little threads that hung at the break. We kept away from the sticky horse-chestnut buds and tried to keep away from the patches of nettles until the gardener rooted them up. Before long the air was sweet with the scent of clover, and then one night we had fresh rhubarb for supper! Of course, we did not think the dandelion greens quite so nice, but besides toning up our systems, they served as an illustration of the notion that "one must take the bitter with the sweet" -- so our career in philosophy had begun. By this time we were reciting glibly:

"Spring, the sweet spring, is the year's pleasant king."

Then, one morning, Miss Dyer came into class and changed it to:

"What is so rare as a day in June!"
In June at the close of each school year there was a grand public performance at Boston Theatre. This was a very special occasion; the kindergarten and the primary and upper school all took part. It was a day on which we showed the public what we could do and what our school was accomplishing. All through the school year we had been learning our parts, unawares, so we did not have to practice frantically during the last few weeks.

The little tots played games and did their sewing cards or weaving, built Indian villages on the sand-table and sang some of their merry songs. Some of the Primary girls read aloud while others were hemming towels or knitting or weaving baskets. Then we explained one of our splendid big maps and finally did some fancy folk-dancing. Also two numbers were furnished by the "Kinder Orchestra". It is one of Erma's fond boasts that she played violin twice in the Boston Theatre and she does not always add that because she could not remember the bowing, she had to stand behind a little colored boy named Joe Rodrigo who always did his bowing correctly.

After the little children had left the stage the older students from the big school put on their grown-up display, which was of the same nature, showing the useful and cultural things the school was fitting us to do and enjoy. The girls did weaving on looms and sewing on regular sewing machines, while the boys did rush-seating and caning. There was vocal and instrumental music and reading from the big embossed books and the presentation of diplomas to the graduates.
"Boston Theatre Day" was a gala occasion, for added to the thrill of performing in public was the excitement in the anterooms. Some of the girls had once been with us who were now performing with the older groups, and we strained our ears for familiar voices and for glimpses of the school life that was ahead. Sometimes, behind the scenes, we met again these old schoolmates and exchanged whispered confidences about the old school or the new.

On the day following our appearance in Boston Theatre, our little class held a ceremony that took the place of graduation. One does not graduate from the sixth grade, but as we were to leave the Glover Building, it was thought fitting to have appropriate exercises. The members of the class were: Catherine, Gladys, Sophie, Loretta, Erma and I. We wore white dresses and our class colors which were blue and gold. First we sang, "Fly away, Birdling." Then Catherine who was the best reader, gave a selection by Mark Twain on "New England Weather." Gladys recited "In School Days" by Whittier, and Loretta sang "Only a Rosebud". Her solo was followed by a dramatic dialogue between Sophie and Erma, after which I read a composition about "How to Make Things Grow", and then we sang a very lovely "Farewell Song."

So! Glover days were over. Perhaps they were the happiest days of our school life, but we left them cheerfully, hoping for something better, as youth always does.
CHAPTER V

Under Mother Knowlton's Wing

That's where Catherine, Erma and I found ourselves when school opened the following September.

Mrs. Knowlton was an ideal matron. She was motherly, mild, and imperturbable; and she was pretty -- having refined features and snow-white hair. She usually wore a black dress with a white kerchief folded about the neck, and fastened with an amethyst brooch. A quiet, rather Puritanic old lady, she presided over Fisher Cottage for thirty-nine years.

Under the "Cottage system" it is intended to develop (as far as possible) a normal family group. It is not desirable to put all the young people in one cottage, all the seniors in another, and all the teachers in a third. A proper family group includes some young and some older pupils, some dull and some bright, some who can see among more who cannot. The teachers also are placed so as to provide diversity of interest and ability -- each cottage having, besides the matron, one or two literary teachers, one from the music or industrial department, and either the librarian, the gymnastic teacher, or someone from the office. By this arrangement, the family group is made broad and resourceful and, except in size, is much like a normal family group, anywhere. Five such groups comprised the Girls' Department of the Upper School. Catherine, Erma and I were in Fisher Cottage and Gladys and Loretta were in Brooks Cottage.

As the reader doubtless will suppose, the cottages were
named for benefactors of the school: Fisher, for John D. Fisher, the Founder; Peter and Edward Brooks, benefactors; Samuel May, trustee; William Oliver, second largest donor; and Eliott Cottage, named for Samuel Eliott who was President of the Corporation for over twenty-five years. At South Boston, this cottage was occupied by the girls, but when the school moved to Watertown, the name Eliott was given to one of the boys' cottages. The other three cottages in the Boys' Upper School are: Bridgman, named for the first deaf-blind pupil; Moulton -- Maria Moulton was a matron for many years; and Tompkins Cottage, named for the benefactor, Eugene Tompkins.

But while the school was at South Boston, the boys inhabited the old Mount Washington House, and even on the girls' campus, these fancy names were not in common use. We spoke of our dwellings as A, B, C, D, and E House, and whether we were sorting laundry or holding a social tea, this alphabetical designation was followed. Eliott Cottage was rather new, much larger than the others, and was made of brick. Also it stood apart, being the only one whose front door opened onto Broadway. The other four cottages faced East Fourth Street, and were built according to the style of their day, two under one roof -- alike, but opposite, so to speak.

In all these buildings, the kitchen, store-rooms and cold-closets were in the basements. The first floor was given over, half to the pupils' dining-room (which was also the pupils' sitting-room) and the other half (being divided into a back and
front parlor) sacred to the grown-ups. On the second and third floors were sleeping-rooms, fourteen, all told. Naturally the two rooms of interest to the new pupil were the dining-room and her boudoir.

The dining-room was just large enough to accommodate a fireplace, marble-top side-board, a bookcase, and two tables that would seat ten each. There were no plants in this room and, as the sun reached it only very early in the morning, it was rather dull the rest of the day. It may have been for that reason, or because the Principal was in our house, or -- I know not why -- but it seemed that we were not a very cheerful family, especially at meal time. We were so dull, in truth, that later in my career we used to be encouraged to learn famous quotations and bits of repartee which we would drag into the conversation as soon as the serving was over, in an effort to enliven the atmosphere. "The more the merrier" is true when the nucleus of the party is merry but when the dominant element is gloom, "The more, the gloomier" is also true. Who, then, made up the dominant element? On that first evening Catherine, Erma and I neither asked nor tried to answer that question. We attributed the solemn mood to homesickness and to the feeling of shy awkwardness that was so strong is us we forgot we were the only strangers present. The household included sixteen pupils and five grown-ups.

In the latter group were the matron, Mrs. Knowlton; her sister, Miss Bennett (who was the Principal of the Girls' Department); Miss Burnham, of the Literary Department; Miss Robbins,
from the industrial branch; and Miss Bardin, who taught music. Among these five people so far as we pupils ever knew there was neither disagreement nor friction, neither friendship nor community of interest between any two of them -- they were one hundred percent dissimilar.

The pupils, in a very general way, might have been divided into three types; those who were getting somewhere, intellectually; those who would get somewhere eventually; and those who would never get beyond the need of institution care.

Among those of some attainment were our two Seniors: Jessie Lewis, and Johanna Hilgenburg, pleasant girls whom I never came to know very well because of the difference of our age and grade. Also among the older girls was Sophie Muldoon, an advanced music student with a beautiful high soprano voice; and Nellie Smith, whose rich contralto voice often made my young soul thrill at the words of stirring revival hymns and the soft chords of her autoharp. Among the Sophomores, Nora Burk deserves mention here because she was one of the first girls whom I consciously observed to be physically normal -- not blindish. She was one of the very few blind girls whose smile was a thing of graciousness, and not provoked by humor of personal pleasure. Affliction tends to make people serious even when they are not unhappy; and blind children have to be taught to smile just as they have to be taught other details of dress and appearance. That Nora was afterwards happily married, may be only a coincidence, or it may be a consequence of the ability to smile and be pleasant, without an
immediate cause. In Fisher Cottage, Julia Parilla, Irena Flarido, Catherine, Erma and I represented the grammar grades. Five or six younger girls hovered between the first five grades, and completed our family circle.

As there was no school on that first day, we have been free to wander about and get acquainted with our new companions and surroundings. Supper was served regularly at ten minutes of six and, for want of something else to do, we were glad to go in when the bell rang at that time. It was the custom in Fisher Cottage to have applesauce on opening nights. On other nights there was always a main dish -- hash, beans, scalloped tomatoes, and the like -- with the usual buttered bread, cake or cookies, and milk; and here as throughout the schools, the meals were good and plentiful. I read, recently, that when the school was first opened that there was only bread and milk for supper, with cake only on Sunday nights. The writer of this statement added "but we were getting an education at the expense of the State, and we were very thankful." (L.D.S.)

While we were at supper that first night, Mother Knowlton told us of the few rules we must observe, and what our household duties were to be. There were not many rules, our conduct being guided by good example and suited to circumstances as they arose; but a few regulations were set down. We must get permission of the matron before going off the grounds or into the other cottages or into each others' rooms. We must not go to school without eating some breakfast, nor stay home from school without
notifying the matron about it. In general we were allowed one dress and change in the wash each week; and we were required to bathe twice a week, the younger girls having the use of the tubs on Wednesday and Saturday which were free evenings. Another group started for bed at eight, and the other girls were expected to be in bed by nine. From nine until six next morning the house was dark and quiet.

On opening night we went to our rooms soon after supper, for we were tired from traveling and we were eager to get acquainted with our new roommates. The rooms were just the right size to hold two beds, one bureau, a wardrobe, and two straight chairs. There was one window in each room, and one rug before each bed. Two bureau drawers and half the wardrobe were assigned to each girl. We had white spreads and nice woolen blankets on our beds, and while one girl dry-mopped the floor and cleaned the rugs, her roommate did the dishes or helped with the hall work. As there were not maids in the Upper School, the tablework was done by the pupils. The table was set by the younger girls; cleared by those more capable, and served, usually, by a girl with some sight. The pupils with a little sight are expected to act as leaders when they go out on the public street to church or to the local stores. So far as I know, these are the only two points of school life in which the matter of sight is considered. Otherwise the blind and the seeing share and share alike. Except in the case of new pupils and the deaf-blind and the very feeble-minded, all students are taught to find their own way from the
cottages to the classrooms and wherever they are allowed to go.

When you see a blind man going alone through city traffic, do not marvel at him. He would modestly admit that he is very much dependent upon the public — if they don't give him any other help, they usually keep out of his way. But he should be warmly admired for his courage, for his endurance in suffering nerve strain, and for the intelligence with which he keeps himself alert during every second, attentive to his surroundings, and prompt in his adjustment to rapid changes. Boys, finding their way about the school, however, probably do not realize that they are accumulating valuable self-reliance; and, of course, traveling alone is not nearly so common among the girls. But were you to see them scurrying about, sweeping and dusting and putting away dishes; or were you to see them curling their hair and blacking their shoes, without getting the blacking all over everything, you would realize that courage and endurance and intelligence are needed as much for the genteel as for the heroic.

We had about forty minutes after breakfast for our household chores and for making ourselves presentable for the day. Morning prayers were held for the entire school, in the Howe Building, at eight o'clock. School kept until nearly noon, when dinner was served. There was school again from one until five; so we were not in the cottages very much during week days, except for an hour just before supper. Wednesday and Saturday were free evenings, but on the other nights we had reading from
quarter of seven until half past. On Sunday we were required to attend both church and Sunday School; so, take it the week around, we had not much time to idle about the house.

Still there was time sufficient for the five cottages to acquire an individuality or an atmosphere by which each family group was summarily characterized.

Fisher Cottage was considered formal and old-maidish; Brooks Cottage housed the elite and social group; May was temperamental; Oliver was reserved and aloof; and Eliott harbored the lively and mischievous element. But this diagnosis is offered with the author's apologies to anyone who may disagree or disapprove of it. This is how we sized up the various family groups when we were newly come among them, when our judgment was immature and based upon first impressions. There were two sources from which our first impressions were drawn: our new classmates, and a few pupils whose special traits made them stand out as individuals from among the general student body. As it happened, we had new classmates from each cottage excepting Fisher, which may explain why that cottage seemed more formal to us. Elsie, from Brooks, was a very lady-like girl, who has since married and gone to live in Newport, R.I. -- a greater claim to society than any the rest of us can boast. That May Cottage was considered temperamental, I now attribute to the matron who was a bit odd, and to the fact that hysterics broke out there, once or twice in ten years. Our classmates were not responsible for the notion, but they fitted in to it rather well. Mildred, (like her little sister Margaret,
who had been my friend at the kindergarten) was an Albino. Mildred was strong, lively, easy-going and full of fun; everyone liked her, and it was a real loss to our class when she had to leave school because she was needed at home. Marion was also from May Cottage, and was unique in her way. She was a Canadian girl, a trifle English in her speech -- and besides, even after losing her sight she had gone to public school. This gave her more freedom of thought and behavior than we classified children had been allowed to show. Erma thought she was a tomboy just because she wore a bright red blouse, and because it was said that at home she went horseback riding with her brothers. She, too, left our class to complete her education nearer home. As she afterwards returned to Boston, the reader will have the pleasure of meeting her again in a later chapter.

From Oliver Cottage, Agnes Norton was our new classmate. She had some sight and a very sweet, almost saintly disposition. She was very reserved and aloof, but not in the least haughty. After graduating with us, she had some success in the art of elocution, but life spared her only a few years for the joy of accomplishment.

Eliott Cottage housed two new classmates: Bessie Anderson, who was of true Scotch descent, humor and all, and Josephine Sheffield, rather of the aristocratic English trype and very musical.

These six girls: Elsie, Mildred, Marion, Agnes, Bessie and Josephine, were in the seventh grade, and speaking correctly I
null
should say that we joined them -- not that they joined us.

Ours was the second class to be promoted from the Primary to the Upper School, and at first there was some discrepancy between the curricula of the two departments. For some time, on this account, we hovered between the sixth and seventh grades and in lieu of more definite classification we came to be spoken of as "The Glover Girls". Really this name did not belong to us more than to all the girls that came over. But it stuck to our class and came later to include all the girls in our grade, whether they had been to the Glover Building or not.

How well I can recall going to the Howe Building for prayers for the first time! There were about eighty pupils -- it was thrilling to be one among so many. Only among students can be found that perfect blending of ambition and contentment which gives to a school its academic atmosphere.

The hall seemed very spacious, even when we were all gathered there. At the right of the door was the piano, and at the left were half a dozen settees reserved for the teachers. Near the center, running crosswise, stood the long table at which the presiding officer sat. Behind the table the rest of the hall was filled with rows of seats. There must have been ample room for a hundred pupils, though I think we never had so many. We went in as we arrived, but we marched out, neatly, two by two. The order of exercises was the same as at the kindergarten: a short, familiar passage from the Bible, read aloud by amatron or teacher; the Lord's Prayer, recited in unison; and a hymn, sung by all who
knew it, and played by one of the music pupils. On that first morning, the schedule of classes was read by Miss Bennett, and the new girls were welcomed to the school, then we marched out hand in hand, and school had formally begun.
CHAPTER VI

Learning The Ropes

One afternoon toward the end of our first week, while we were having a pencil-writing lesson, an uproar suddenly interrupted Miss Sawyer's dictation.

There was a wooden bridge connecting the west room of the schoolhouse with the second floor of the Howe Building. Into this passage a pupil and a teacher were forced by their efforts to master each other in a hand-to-hand tussle. The girl was talking in a high, shrill voice and with incredible rapidity; the teacher said nothing. Even to our youthful minds it was clear that the teacher was temporarily helpless under the girl's rage. Miss Sawyer promptly closed the schoolroom door but for some minutes we could hear the high, racing words and an occasional thump against the sides of the passageway, then the commotion subsided.

"Who was that?" we asked one another when class was dismissed. "Who was it in the bridge, and what was the matter?"

"Oh, that was Cora," said Agnes. "She's a deaf-blind girl who lives in our cottage. She's always fighting with Miss Pottle."

"Who is Miss Pottle? Why does Cora fight with her?" asked Catherine.

"Miss Pottle is Cora's special teacher. Don't you know the manual alphabet which is used with deaf-blind people?"

"Sure," said Erma. "We learned it at the kindergarten so we could talk in church and at the table."
"Well," continued Agnes, "Miss Pottle goes to class with Cora and spells into her hand what the regular teacher is saying, more like an interpreter than a teacher, but of course she often has Cora alone as in study periods."

"But why do they fight?" inquired Erma. "Is Miss Pottle mean to her?"

"Oh, no," exclaimed Elsie. "Miss Pottle is gentle and kind to everybody."

"Cora's the one that's mean, or at least she gets into a rage over the least little thing, and kicks and bites, and says awful things. You noticed just now, Miss Pottle wasn't saying anything," said Agnes, who knew these two the best as they were in Oliver Cottage with her.

"That doesn't prove much," said Erma, "there's no consolation talking to a dummy."

"Huh!" snapped Gladys, "there's nothing dumb about Cora."

"Why, that's so," admitted Erma. "I thought deaf people were always dumb, too."

"No, indeed! That is a very common, but a very false notion," Agnes put in, hastily. "Most deaf people are not dumb. If you lost your hearing you could still talk, couldn't you?"

"Why, yes, for a while anyway. I suppose I would forget how to talk if I were deaf very long."

"Of course, in the case of deaf children it is very hard for them to learn to talk properly; but even they are not dumb. They can cry and shout and could talk if they knew how."
"Aren't there any dummies in the world?" said Erma, in a tone of such wonder and surprise that Mildred said laughingly, "Sure, you're one." Thereupon the two set off in a chase and broke up the discussion.

A merry companionship was awaking between Mildred and Erma, both having some sight and enough of the tom-boy spirit to abet each other on the field of sport. Especially were they friendly rivals in our splendid gymnasium where floor drill, apparatus work, and competitive games gave us ample opportunity for free and healthy exercise. Miss Sawyer, secretly called Mary Esther, was exactly suited to athletics. She was young, slight, wiry, with a sense of humor and a freshness of vitality that we did not often find in our other teachers.

"Naturally," says Erma. "We never saw them in the gym."

"For all that, my dear classmate, you cannot even imagine Miss Lily, or Miss Marrett, Miss Hangreen, or Miss Bennett skipping about the Maypole or trying the Highland Fling."

No, most of our teachers were the true academic type, and Miss Sawyer did the largest part of putting spice into our lives in those young days. As I have said, the gymnasium was a fine one, with stall bars, horizontal bars, rope-ladders, vaulting board, straight and slanting ropes, chest-weights, flying rings, and lots of fresh air and open floor space. We played archball and basketball, and had racing and marching, and folk dancing; all for the purpose of good health and good habits of standing and sitting and walking, so that we might grow up as nearly
normal as possible in movements and posture.

"What are you laughing at, Erma?"

"Don't you remember the day Miss Sawyer told us to let our arms swing when we walked?"

Most of us stuck our right hand and our right foot forward at the same time, and she said that even a crab couldn't walk that way.

That night in the bathroom (we were not allowed in each others' rooms so we had to congregate in there) we tried walking like all the animals we knew. The funniest one to imitate was the camel who puts his hind feet in front of his fore feet. Our attempts at this performance produced such thumps and shrieks that Mother Knowlton sent us to bed ten minutes early for "conduct unbecoming to little ladies."

In the winter, Miss Sawyer would take us out during the gym hour, for coasting or skating. In the spring and fall we had competitive field day sports which enlivened our mental and physical vigor, also increasing our school spirit and our class loyalty. These activities were great fun and will provide subjects for later narrative.

There were other features of the Upper School life that claimed our earlier attention. One new feature was our daily walk around Dorchester Heights. Everyone in school was required to spend at least one hour each day out of doors and exercising. From three to four in the afternoon was set apart for this purpose, and each girl who could see enough to act as a leader, took
one or two girls who could not see well enough to go alone. The girls who could see the most took a deaf-blind girl, or one who was lame, or for some reason needed special care. The leaders with very little sight, took a girl who, although totally blind, had a good sense of direction, and would be alert and intelligent in case of difficulty. It is astonishing to me now that our teachers saw that all these requirements were net, and yet left us so much freedom that we usually thought we were choosing our companions for the walk-hour.

Dorchester Heights is known in history as the vantage ground from which the early patriots drove the British from Boston Harbor. There is a monument upon the hill and an encircling fence around its base. Including the short walk to and from school, we were able to go around the Heights three times in the walk-hour. Of course, we did not all start at the same time and go in line or keep together; but we went in the same direction (with the fence on our left) so that we did not meet and pass. Therefore it seemed that in the walk-hour we got away from school and each other; and this gave us a feeling of relaxation which, together with the exercise and the stimulating knowledge that we were pedestrians among the public, produced an exhilaration that was very beneficial. Slight and habitual though it was, this daily contact with the public was another of the "saving graces" that kept us from becoming institutionalized.

The beautiful new grounds at the new Perkins are an unalloyed advantage to the pupils, the enormously increased use of the
automobile unavoidably restricts the freedom with which blind people may go about alone; the establishment of "sight-saving schools" has withdrawn many pupils who could serve as leaders; nevertheless, one of the things that helped to keep us normal was sacrificed when the regular walk outside the grounds had to be given up.

But so seldom do children recognize the advantages that accrue to them thru the routine of life, that during the six years that Erma and her pals took these daily walks, there is not one incident or circumstance to separate one day, or one year from the others. There are, however, two occasions clear in our memory, which Erma and I associate with Dorchester Heights:

"I have a notice to read, a pleasant treat for you," said Miss Bennett one morning before beginning the Bible reading. "If you will assemble with your regular partners, after supper, we will go to Dorchester Heights to see Halley's Comet which will be visible about a quarter before seven. A comet is a moving star with a long tail of fiery sparks trailing after it. Miss Lily will tell the geography classes more about it; and tonight some of you may be able to see one."

So we gathered after supper. It was a great treat to go out after dark. Some of the teachers were with us on this occasion, but out of the classroom they were not just like teachers, they lived with us, ate with us, had much of their recreation with us, they were like grown-up members of our own family. It was a delightful walk. The teachers talked with each other and
with us, but not to us. They seemed as eager to see a comet as a child is to see Santa Claus. When the fiery creature swept its tail across the sky, those who saw and those who did not, caught the thrill and the excitement. Although the vision was not the same, the experience was as vivid, and the memory as clear, whether we saw Halley's Comet with our understanding or with our eyes.

The second unique trip to Dorchester Heights was upon a glorious May morning. It is a voluntary custom at Perkins for pupils and teachers to go for a walk before breakfast on the first of May, and this being in our first year, is the one we particularly remember. It is doubtful if we would recall this May morning, except for the excitement provided by a little Italian girl who dressed in such haste that walking became impossible until one of her undergarments was extricated from under foot and carried home in the pocket. We went this time up to the top of the hill, and there the chorus sang: "The Sun is Rising O'er the Ocean."

Miss Riley's chorus was one of the pleasantest features of the new school work. Singing is an easy, happy, and very instructive occupation for young people, and although there was much difficulty for some of us in learning the braille music, the songs we sang were among the best known selections suited to the moral and musical training of youth. "Sweet and Low", "The Lord is My Shepherd", "To Thee, O Country", and "The Psalm of Life" were typical titles that appeared on our programs. There was
also a girls' orchestra which had the honor of joining the larger boys' orchestra on many special occasions. Later the instrumental music was given up, and the two choruses were united into the famous Perkins Choir, whose excellent achievement under the leadership of the late Edwin L. Gardiner, is well recognized in music-loving Boston.

Among the customs of the Upper School to which the new class had to make adjustment, were the monthly music recitals and the weekly exhibitions of school work.

As soon as pupils get old enough to stay up a while after supper, evening reading is provided. Formerly it was customary to have music reading, silent reading, current events and fiction, each one night a week. On the evening set apart for music, a teacher read the stories of the Operas, or about the lives of composers, and similar material. Once a month this evening was given over to a recital, during which, eight or ten pupils played a piece or two for the entertainment of their fellow sufferers. On being reminded of these occasions, Erma says:

"My solo effort was on two Duvenoy studies, both in the key of G, which I must have done very poorly, for I was never asked to perform again."

The weekly exhibitions were held every Thursday morning, and sometimes we had quite an audience. It was terrible, but it was good for us. We had to recite poems, demonstrate our Braille slates and other special appliances, and learn to dress and deport ourselves suitably for a public appearance.
These public performances, with the chorus, the walk-hour, and the gym period, made our lives somewhat more vigorous and exciting than at the Lower School. There were also new phases of the actual school work which afforded novelty for us in the early weeks of this particular year. One of these new phases was our first instruction under blind teachers.
Contrary to Biblical teaching, or let me rather say aside from the especial application of the Bible statement, when the blind lead the blind they do an exceedingly good job at it. Considered literally the blind seldom undertake to lead unless the path is thoroughly known to them, not merely in its general direction, but minutely in its ups and downs and curves, its ice or puddles, the branching hedges, the roots of trees, the children with their toys on the sidewalk and, less important because of its warning noise, the traffic. Unless all the details are known, the blind do not lead one another except in real emergencies.

But along paths of mental progress the blind are believed to be very suitable guides for those similarly afflicted. Of course it would be folly to assume that in a school for the blind, all the teachers should be blind. Such an arrangement would create a most tragic situation, for there is nothing that we blind people need so much as the occasional use of their neighbor's eyes. It is generally considered that for older pupils a blind teacher can bring to the lesson an inspiration of confidence and practical bits of personal experience that are not available to the teacher who can see. So we had Miss Burnham in the literary department, Miss Riley for the music, Miss Swinerton for corrective gymnastics, and Miss Snow for manual training. As Glover girls, we knew Miss Burnham the best, for
she taught us reading and arithmetic — the most important subjects of elementary education. Were we kinder to her or more considerate because she was more like us than the other teachers were? No, I cannot remember that we ever saved her a step or showed her a favor because she could not see. If we took advantage of her affliction, it was seldom, partly because there was little zest in it and partly because she was shrewd and gave us little opportunity. No one contradicted her because we soon learned that if she expressed an opinion she was very apt to be right. We did not like to have her catch us in the wrong because she was quite severe; but if one were in doubt, in need, or in trouble, Miss Burnham was a wise and kindly advisor. In acknowledgment of this quality we sometimes spoke of her as "the information bureau" and if we were often too flippant about it nevertheless, it was a proof of our admiration and of her reliability.

How many of our silly pranks does she recall and smile over in the twilight of the long summer vacations? Does she know about the day that Mary threw Rita's shoes out of the window, and Rita laughed and was dismissed from class and had to borrow Mary's shoes to make sufficient noise walking out? Does she think of the day while our class was laboring with decimals that a commotion arose in the next room?

"What is it?" she asked, politely stepping to the door.

"It's the cat, Miss Burnham," said Erma kindly. But no. It was I trying to drag the cat from under the table instead of
doing my number work.

Once for a brief spell we thought it was great luck to have a blind teacher in arithmetic. We made and took to class copies of the tables and measures that we were expected to learn by rote. But alas! Braille is so voluminous that it was more effort to look things up than to learn them. Our delays aroused her suspicion; her curiosity embarrassed our guilty consciences, and the venture was promptly given up as being without relish or profit. If virtue is its own reward, vice, likewise, is its own punishment.

But what would have happened if Miss Burnham had discovered these pranks? Demerit marks! The authorized system of discipline was to read the week's demerits before the Friday evening reading. For one or two bad marks the culprit went immediately to bed and missed the good story. For three demerits the victim was shut up alone in an empty basement room for three hours on Saturday afternoons. This was called "going to the opera". To entertain herself, thru one of these Matinees, Erma composed a long song to the tune of "In the Good Old Summer Time" of which the chorus ran like this:

"When Friday night comes round,  
When Friday night comes round,  
She wraps upon the table and the silence is profound,  
And then the list of marks is read,  
And that's the only sound,  
I tell you what, it ain't no fun,
When Friday night comes round."

Shortly after Mr. Allen's administration began, this method of punishment was discontinued by his order. It seems that there is not much disciplining at Perkins, for two reasons. First, the members of the staff are selected for their intrinsic worth; second, the pupils come young enough and remain long enough to be molded by the high character of their superiors. An orderly regime, contributing to everyone's comfort and convenience, results in peace and decency. That most Perkins pupils stand firmly for the best things in life is due to the two-fold element of uplift and continuity in Perkins training. Beyond this training, what help we got was from the heroes who had survived our own battlefields -- the blind who led the blind.

It was about this stage of our school career that we began to wonder why there is so much prolonged suffering in the world, and how so many of us came to be blind. What was more natural than that we should spend an occasional leisure hour recounting the causes of our individual plights to our comrades in adversity.

The occasion we bear particularly in mind was brought about by the arrival of a new classmate. Her appearance and her story were dramatic. I came from school one bright October day and saw her standing at the window of Fisher Cottage. She had on a dark, corduroy suit (most of us still wore dresses), she had an uncommon quantity of bright red hair, and she stood looking out of the window in a manner so alert and eager that it was a shock even to us to learn that she was totally blind. Ah, yes;
the condition was very new to her. The year before, she had graduated from high school and had gone to work. Early in the winter, returning home one evening, she had been struck at the back of the neck by a snowball. The following morning she woke up blind. A clot of blood, pressing against the optic nerve, paralyzed it, and there was no hope of recovery of her sight.

"Isn't it tragic," said Catherine, when Annie's sad story had been told to us; "isn't it tragic that the conditions of a whole lifetime can be determined by the actions of heedless children? When I was in the third grade," Catherine continued, "I had a scrap with a playmate at recess and after school I saw her chasing me and I ran. As she caught up with me I tripped, falling, and struck my head against the curbstone. I went home with a fearful headache which kept getting worse and finally developed into brain fever. When I got well and began walking about the house again I kept bumping into things, and gradually my family realized that I could not see. The doctor says if I get struck by lightning or have the fever again my sight might return, but I would rather stay blind than have brain fever again."

We were silent after this recital until Erma asked: "What about the other girl?"

"Oh," said Kitty, "she felt terribly about it. She stills lives near us, and is awfully good to me when I cam home in vacations."
"I don't suppose the boy who threw the snowball ever knew what happened to me," said Annie. "Maybe it is just as well --"

Her comment was checked by Erma's flippant doggerel:

"He threw a ball into the air,
It struck and fell, he knew not where:
And for that ball, at random sent,
Her life is in black blindness spent."

The last line was whispered into my ear and to fill the gap I supplied the rhyme --

His life in jail he should have spent.

"O-ho! So we have two poets in our new class," said Nora, and thus turned the conversation to the next bit of biography.

"Well, I have no one but myself to blame for my fate," said Ruth dolefully. I was just at the age when youngsters begin to scorn the high chair and I had a willful habit of planting myself in mother's before she came to the table. Always our breakfast was delayed until I obeyed orders, but still, day after day, we went through the same performance. One day I slipped, grabbed the tablecloth for support, and upset the coffee-pot. I was horribly burned, especially in my eyes." Ruth sighed, as well she might! Her blindness would be laid to accident, yet it was the consequence of willful and repeated disobedience.

"My case was a little more unique than most," said Marion, reflectively. "When we were four years old my twin sister and I were cutting pictures out of the Sunday paper. Both of us were trying to use the scissors and in the tussle, my right eye
was injured. Doctors thought the sight might be saved, but within a few days I had lost not only the sight of the injured eye, but of the other eye also.

Even as children we already knew of several cases in which injury to one eye meant the loss of sight in both. It is so human to hope for the best, that parents and doctors too, are very reluctant to be final. They are apt to say: "You are losing your sight beyond all probable help." But why? Is it because they do not know, or is it because while there is money there is hope? Many and many a person of my intimate acquaintance has "doctored" until the resources of the entire family were exhausted. When there is no more money the doctors say, "I'm afraid we can't do anything more to help you." If only they would be honest enough to say it as soon as they think it!

In the matter of blindness -- since there is so much that can be learned and prepared for in the way of readjustment that helps to relieve the great misery -- that to tell the truth is a merciful means of fortifying the patient for the inevitable.

If after the doctors have given up all hope a Saint Anne, a Mrs. Eddy, or a stroke of lightning restores your sight, are you any the worse because the doctor had told you he could not do it? One might guess that the great joy would be enhanced by its unexpectedness.
CHAPTER VIII

Lavender and Pale Green

There was no Dixwell concert officially to open the spring season at the Upper School. The "glad awakening" was dramatically announced, one fine day, by Erma, who bounced into the sewing room shouting joyfully:

"The crocuses are up! Oh, girls! The crocuses are up!"

Was it not enough that she should be about ten minutes late? How did she dare disturb the quiet and distract the attention of all the good little girls who were patiently hemming towels and pillowcases? This was what Miss Hangreen wanted to know.

"Erma! Erma! Yust vot do you mean? Such noise! Such manners! And such sewing." These last words were added with less vehemence, and on a tone so suggestive of hopelessness, that we all laughed; and Erma said, coaxingly:

"Oh, Miss Hangreen! The dearest little purple crocuses are all over the green. It's a shame to make us stay in and sew on such a lovely day!"

"Vell, never mind the crocuses," said Miss Hangreen firmly. "Yust put your mind on your work; yust think of your sewing for a little while."

Kind, and patient, and amazingly accomplished, was this teacher, with her slightly Scandinavian speech, and her passionate love of beauty and usefulness. Besides being an artist of all handicraft, and of painting, she could speak seven languages with sufficient fluency to really feel at ease in any country of
Europe. We did not realize how privileged we were to know such a person. But we profited by the privilege. For that which she taught, we learned. We learned it well, so that it has been of substantial use to us ever since. She did not teach us her seven languages; nor did we even know, at that time, that she had a gift for drawing and painting. But her broad intelligence, and her artistic sense of the importance and the proportion of things, gave her a strength of influence over us which was magnetic to those who could make any response to it. The last I heard of her, she was in Italy, painting for pleasure and profit. Doubtless she has forgotten most of us -- as individuals, at any rate. But we cannot forget her. Whether we darn our stockings, or ([with ordinary tissue paper patterns) cut and make new dresses, entirely without help; we know that Miss Hangreen's patient labor makes our accomplishment possible. Teachers have no means of following their successful pupils through life. If they could do so, they would be astonished at the knowledge and power that comes to our assistance when the need arises for us to use lessons that we learned in childhood. Seeing our ugly stitches and our crooked hems, one might well be astonished that so many blind or nearly blind girls make their own clothes, or realize much saving of money and of dependence on others, by being able to make and mend. Miss Hangreen will never know how many little thoughts of praise and thanks are offered to her, when we thread the sewing-machine without any trouble, or win the admiration of our comrades for running a reasonably straight seam.
Neither will Miss Hoxie ever know which of us got over being "little hoodlums": but that is quite another story.

In the spring of the year we always had a "field day". Athletics is a very important part of the daily school program in a school for the blind, because free physical activity is very much restricted among handicapped children, and therefore, carefully planned and supervised physical activity must be provided. A blind child, living among those who see, learns many things that cannot be taught where the majority are blind -- climbing trees, for example. But there are a great many games and sports that can be enjoyed by the blind, if just a little adjusting or regulating is done. Jumping rope, playing leap-frog and three-legged races were popular with the younger children; also throwing a ball the farthest or the highest, walking a narrow plank, or walking around the quadrangle balancing a light object on one's head; while tug-of-war and archball or basketball (with a bell tied on the basket so we could tell when the ball went in) -- these games were more popular with the older girls.

At the Field Day in our first year, the Glover girls, quite by accident, scored an overwhelming victory. There were three gym classes, with about twenty-five girls in each class. The Glover girls, with those who had joined us, made a group of fourteen, therefore we were more than half of the class in the gymnastic period. Naturally (since this was the Upper School) those in the lower grades were not over bright. Quite as
naturally, those in the higher grades were bent on passing examinations and on various matters that took their attention away, somewhat, from the more buoyant activities of youth. Besides, as I explained before, many of the advanced students were older than school girls usually are -- close on twenty, or beyond it. So we had the advantage of being "right in our element". Also, in our group were quite a few who could see a little -- six out of fourteen -- which helped, although it wasn't counted on. We went to the "field" which was our own familiar green, with a determination to win.

The first victory came when Mildred and I beat our rivals running four times round the quadrangle. It was an especial victory for me, being the first and the only time I outran Mildred; but as we were in the same class, that did not count. Our class won the tug-of-war and the archball, and we were all set to win everything when Erma brought us the final triumph.

By many demonstrations during the year, Erma had won the reputation of being a very poor shot. Whether she tossed her knitting onto the bed, or aimed a banana peel at the scrap-basket, she usually missed. On this particular Field Day, someone in our class, who should have tossed the archball over the gallery, was absent; and, since we had won so many things, Miss Sawyer, quite justly, asked Erma to fill in, thinking it would give some other class a change. How the older girls cheered to find Erma their opponent!

"You know, I never threw anything straight in my life," she
said, laughing, and taking the ball, which was about the size of a football. Erma stood at the edge of the green with the five other girls; Miss Sawyer counted; Erma shut her eyes because the grass was waving like an angry sea, and threw the ball with all her might and main. Her ball went nearly twice the distance of any other! How it happened, no one ever could explain. But it won all the honors for us. We cheered and shouted, and everyone was happy. There were no prizes; just the fun and excitement, and we were good sports -- those who didn't win, having quite as much fun as those who did.

This performance took place one afternoon toward the end of April, before the weather got too hot, and before final examinations claimed our efforts. It was a half-holiday from schoolwork, except that we had evening reading as usual. We were free from four until quarter of seven; but that was not long enough to quiet our enthusiasm. We were still all talking at once and pretty loudly, when we raced upstairs to the West Room, where Miss Hoxie was waiting to read to us. As I remember it now, she, too, almost had to shriek to make herself heard, and even then, I caught only the last two words: "little hoodlums". Our class never knew Miss Hoxie very well. I have no doubt that she was mild and good; but by the unreasoning impulse of children, we, ever thereafter, called her "The Hoodlum" -- in secret, of course. She must have been at school with us two or three years; but we cannot recall another incident in which she took part -- there is no accounting for the things by which young people will be
impressed!

To pass -- not from the sublime to the ridiculous, but in reverse order -- from something trivial to things of greater worth, Erma wishes me to speak of our brief acquaintance with Mrs. Julia Ward Howe. Although she visited school several times, only one occasion is distinctly remembered.

Surely, everyone knows that Mrs. Julia Ward Howe was the wife of Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, a great philanthropist, and the first director of Perkins. Probably every school child knows that it was Mrs. Julia Ward Howe who wrote the patriotic favorite "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory of the Coming of the Lord". She wrote other songs and poems, and once or twice a year she came to visit school, and talked to the assembled students and told of things in the life of Dr. Howe and Mr. Anagnos, and about things that had happened in the earlier days of Perkins history. No doubt the occasion we remember was the first we had attended.

We had been instructed to rise as soon as we knew she was entering the hall. I had been standing a long time, as it seemed to me, when she passed my seat -- a tiny, frail, slow-moving old lady, dressed in pale green, with lacy white about her head and shoulders. It was in the evening: we were assembled with the boys in the big main building, where Mrs. Howe spoke to us, briefly, after which the boys sang "The Hunting Song" which Mrs. Howe had composed and for which she played the piano accompaniment. Then she told us about writing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic"; about waking in the night, with the words springing
to her mind; and how she got out of bed and wrote them, by the
light of the moon, resting the paper on the windowsill. Scarcely
a word was changed, later; though she said she wished it could
have been: "Let us live (instead of die) to make men free."
Then we sang the famous "Battle Hymn" and returned to our cot-
tages --at least most of us did.

Two girls with the idea that they could write poetry, and
that a school dormitory was insufferable on such a fine May
evening, stayed out to talk it over. The two girls were Erma
and her new friend, Genevra. When they realized it was getting
late, they found that E House door was locked, and Genevra had
to climb up on Erma's shoulder and get in the dining-room
window. Then Erma crept cautiously into Fisher Cottage. In A
House, one could not get upstairs without first passing the door
to the back parlor, which was Mother Knowlton's sanctuary.
Seeing a light, Erma knew that the good soul had not yet retired;
so she sought a corner of the dining-room, to wait until all was
dark.

"I had not been there ten minutes," she tells me now, "when
out came Mother Knowlton, through the dining-room and into the
pantry. Fortunately she did not put on the light. Instead,
she put some vinegar on her hands -- 'to keep them smooth and
white', as she whispered softly to herself. Then, coming out
of the pantry and passing within easy reach of me," Erma con-
tinues, "she went to the window, pulled up the shade, and turned
the lock. Next she locked the door and then went up to bed. I
waited a brief moment, then crept stealthily in her wake. Through the silent hall I went, shoes in hand, and started up the stairs, when I heard my matron coming out of the washroom and going down the upper hall -- her feet passing within a few inches of my head, as I stood, breathless, on the stairs."

"Weren't you afraid?" I ask. To this she explains --

"At that time, my room was the nearest one to Mother Knowlton's, and she had to pass my door to reach her own. My one fear was, that my silly roommate might ask the matron where I was at that hour of the night. She actually was a silly little girl, who stayed at Perkins ten years and never got beyond the third grade; and she was in bed and asleep when I finally reached my haven of safety."

Erma had many tricks that neither her roommate nor her good matron knew anything about. One of them was to dress in bed on cold mornings. Using the bed-clothes like a tent, she would get into all but her shoes. Then she would lie warm and sleepy until the breakfast bell was rung; slip into the shoes and scuttle down to the dining-room. Again and again, Mrs. Knowlton, passing the door on her way down would say, "Erma! I'm afraid you won't be ready for breakfast." But she always was ready.

Another secret habit was that of reading in bed until ten o'clock or later. But this naughty practice came to a dramatic end.

Since so many men were blinded in the World War, nearly
everybody knows more or less about braille books. A great public interest was aroused at that time, and since then, both the war and civilian blind, have had more books, and much variety -- not only in subject matter, but especially in size and style and printing. I speak of this because, in the old days, our books were more huge. They were bound in volumes whose inches measured, 14 by 12 by 5. It was no languid luxury to lie in bed and with such a ponderous thing resting on your chest, or thereabouts, to say nothing of guiding the weight of the whole arm in its tedious passage through some hundred and sixty square inches of one braille page. Besides the difficulty of deciphering the type, there is a considerable amount of physical labor to reading raised print. One must be, mentally, either very active or very much bored, to perform this labor for the satisfaction it yields. Most of us are mentally active in our teens, and the book "Ben Hur" -- three large volumes, containing about six hundred pages -- did not seem too great an undertaking for our leisure time. At Christmas time, one of the older girls had read that passage telling of the journey of the Wise Men and the birth of the Christ Child. This had fired our interest, and as there were not many copies in the library, we had to wait our turn. Erma, having come to the beginning of the last volume was eager to finish it before the school year closed, and therefore was reading late into the night. She had gone well into the chapter in which Ben Hur finds the old family servant, Simonades. It was exciting when
the faithful old man made himself known to the son of his beloved master. Simonades was just about to tell the tale of his life -- Erma was sleepy, but the story was good. She turned a page (if one read the first line or two one felt on familiar ground when starting again); so, all in the dark, in the silent house, she read:

"I was born in a tomb."

Maybe this wouldn't be a shock to all readers, but it was to Erma, frightful! The book went under the bed, and Erma says: "Not until the study of Latin forced me to it, did I do any more reading after dark!"

"Didn't you finish the book before school closed in June?"

"No. You know we were allowed to take a book home for the vacation, so I finished it then, I feigned headache and stayed home from church a couple of times to get on with it, but I think Mrs. Knowlton got wise to that, for she invited me to lie on the sofa in her sitting-room and read poetry to me. Besides, I felt, somehow, as if it was cheating my Sunday School teacher, and I thought a lot of her. Do you remember?"

"Yes, Erma, I remember. Miss Mabel Jones! A tall, dark, delicate girl, with a quiet voice and gentle manners. That spring she was wearing a pale green silk dress, which, to us children, was like being clothes in samite. I have had a good many Sunday School teachers in my day, here and there and Miss Mabel Jones is the only one I still remember. Annie-May, Erma and I loved her and for along, long time, the word "angelic"
brought before me, a vision of her in the pale green of spring, as she gave me a blossoming heliotrope one Children's Sunday.

Soon we went home for the long summer vacation; some of us were noisy, others serious, some frivolous, others dreaming — nobody knew of what. Perhaps we were dreaming of the big things we would do next year, when school would re-open, and things would begin to go forward again.
CHAPTER IX
The End of Your Rope.

For a month or so after school opened, all the girls were reasonably good; there were not many names read on Friday nights; and, early in the season, "the opera" was poorly attended. But as time drew on toward Thanksgiving, mischief began to brew.

In all institutions, boarding-houses, and even in most homes -- regardless of the character of the food served at table -- something different is longed for. It is not for the nourishment of the inner-man, nor for the pleasure of having one's favorite dish: it is simply to break the monotony, that people like to dine out, or to have surreptitious meals at home.

When a few of us bought a can of kippered herring, and filled the house with an odor that clamored at the nostrils of those who weren't supposed to know, it was not the taste of the fish that we relished, but the excitement of holding our breath when Mother Knowlton came down the hall -- the feeling of triumph when we were not caught.

There is also the spirit of comraderie which eating inspires (when superior officers are not at the meal.)

"Feeds," therefore, offered one of the open roads to mischief, and sometimes to trouble.

My own participation in such escapades was slight. Had it not been for Erma the virtuousness of our class would have been somewhat above the average. Erma was the enlivening genius. She was a natural leader with the gift of getting her own way.
without letting others realize it was her way and not their own. She also was level-headed and had as much skill for keeping us out of trouble as for getting us into mischief. Thanks to her management, most of our pranks were not discovered.

There is, from among our memories, that gorgeous banquet in Mr. Gardiner's music room!

One way in which we girls were classified was according to the time we met for gymnastics. There were gym periods at nine, ten, and eleven in the morning. The older and more advanced pupils met together; the Intermediates were in as second class; and the younger, lower grade pupils were in another group. It was customary for each class to give a dance once each year, toward the middle of each term. There was much lee-way about the time and occasion. Sometimes we called it a Thanksgiving dance, a Valentine party, or a reception to the seniors; but these gatherings of the whole school were usually for an evening of dancing -- parties being more frequently held in the several cottages.

In our third year the "Glover Girls" gave a Hallowe'en dance the last week in October.

At the Upper School we had begun to go to church unchaperoned, also to the local stores. But a dance! It was really our first taste of grown-up privilege. To dress up (not in our Sunday best -- for we had often done that -- but in flimsy finery) to stay up late -- say until quarter of ten! To have two hours of light, music, action, and mirth! To shine with
our own enthusiasm -- those new experiences gave us a thrill of anticipation; and I may say of realization, too; for those dances were always a success. No boys attended; so far as my associates were conversational on the subject, boys were neither missed nor even thought of. In our day, co-education among the blind was most highly disapproved. Some girls there may have been, whose home life was more free, who would have voted for co-education. But most of were true to our training. From kindergarten days, we had lived and played with girls, only; and it was, for us, the pleasant, normal, natural way of life. As our class approached High School it began to be permissable for the older girls (who lived near, or who had made desirable acquaintances) to invite acceptable young men, especially to the senior dance. In our Junior year I think there may have been four or five boys to thirty or forty girls. But in our memorable Hallowe'en dance, there were no boys, no silly notions, just a jolly good time for healthy, happy girls. It was Miss Sawyer's chance to see what she had done for us, and also what remained for her to do. I suppose we exhibited all stages from awkwardness to grace, as we waltzed, two-stepped, and polkaed. We also tried the schottishe, the caprice and the Virginia reel; and if we were not uniformly artistic in our pose, probably our steps were correct and our obedience to the rhythm rather good. Although many of the blind girls could lead very well, it was natural for the girls with some sight to take the gentleman's part. This practice of usually leading, makes the semi-sighted
girl a bit awkward when she has a gentleman escort. At dances in the Boys' Department, the teachers are very much in demand, since it is more awkward for a boy to be led than for a girl to do the leading. But these points are very trivial. They were not even thought about in our school days. We had a jolly good time at our dance, and we came back to the cottages so full of excitement that Erma, racing heedlessly down the hall, ran her hand through the glass in her bedroom door.

The glass in the doors was not so the teachers could keep tabs on us: I never heard of anyone being caught or even suspected of watching us. The glass may have been intended to make the halls lighter; for, (as we were all used to doing without sight) lights were never used in the halls or in the pupils' rooms. But they are in use in the new school at Watertown.

To return to Erma: she did not hurt her hand very much, nor quiet her enthusiasm either. The next day was the typical "day after the night before". We knew less than ever in school, but, fortunately, we had most of the afternoon free.

For refreshment at the dance we had lemonade and grape juice, and there had been about a gallon left. As we were the highest grade among those who had acted as hostesses, a large pitcher of this punch came into our possession, and we provided ourselves with doughnuts, candy and fruit to accompany it. During the walk-hour we hid in a large schoolroom, sacred to the profession of Edwin L. Gardiner.

Mr. Gardiner was the head of the music department for the
entire school. He dwelt in the grand building with the boys. We saw him only when we went up to the main building for chorus practice. His room in our department he used two or three days a week to give lessons to the most advanced pupils. We were reasonably sure he would not come to the room during the afternoon we had chosen it for our banquet-hall. And he didn't.

We ate all kinds of things, contributed by one or another among us, and we have a merry lark. When the chorus bell rang, there was still a little punch left, which no one could drink, but which could not be wasted; so we recited "Intie, mintie, mighty moe" to see who must drink it, and the lot fell to Catherine. She bravely did so; but for her gallantry she was extremely dizzy all the following day. Besides the punch, there were three oranges left, of whose disposal Erma tells, thus:

Some girls in merry mood one day
Did use your music room,
For club-room, e'er they went away --
They had to go so soon,
They could not eat the feast grotesque --
Three oranges, remaining.
They left them there, within your desk,
No note or name, explaining.
They left them there, three in a row,
There to await your pleasure;
You came! Just see that fine fruit go!
Ah! We had lost our treasure!
But we who left those oranges,
Oft bless the one that ate them.
For who would have claimed those oranges,
If you had asked who left them?

In those youthful days of conceit and ignorance, I loathed Mr. Gardiner with profound hatred, because he used to stand in the chorus hall and shout at us, and call us "bumps on a log" and "blam baskets". Sometimes he said our heads were sieves, and at other times he said they were solid ivory, six million feet thick.

After graduation, I came to know Mr. Gardiner as a tireless worker, an inspiring leader, and a kind and fatherly friend. His great service to Perkins can never be set down in words -- it lives on in those who have come under his influence -- and his place in the school can never be adequately filled. Although he has a very fine successor, trained in his way, the individual and pioneer accomplishment of Edwin L. Gardiner can never be duplicated.

Year after year, on the contrary, the young people who feel their individuality to be of such importance, are repeating, like silly sheep the thoughts and acts of those who have gone before them. Which takes me back to the title of my chapter, when Miss Lily said, gravely: "Girls! You have gone to the end of your rope!"

I wasn't there. But I can imagine, now, the ice-bergian emphasis with which she said, "Girls!" Erma wasn't there, either.
But Marion was, and Mildred, and Alice, (who adored Miss Lily almost as devoutly as she adored the saints and angels -- she has since entered a convent.) Other girls were there, ten in all, and it was close on midnight. The feast had not been grotesque like ours -- scratched up as happened. The affair had been thoroughly planned and prepared. There was strawberry jam from "home" and angel-cake. Not having been there, we cannot narrate the repartee, the mirth, the smothered giggles. But we can tell of one giggle; one that was just a little too loud! And the door opened, silently; the light of a candle shattered the sheltering darkness, and an icy voice said: "Girls . . . . You have gone to the end of your rope . . . Come out."

As each passed out, taking or leaving, her scattered possessions, the rebuking voice said, dispassionately: "Marion. Mildred. Alice." etc.

There was a sensation the next Friday evening when ten girls, each bowed down under the weight of ten demerit marks, took their way, one by one, out of the assembly hall and slunk guiltily away from the company of good and happy students. Three times the ten of them filed in slow procession to the "opera". It was a problem to find empty rooms that were not far too comfortable for such disgrace so it happened that one of the culprits was put in a particularly forbidden room, where she either heard a mouse, or had hallucinations about rats. In due time this matter came to the attention of Mr. Allen who promptly put a stop to the "opera" performance.
Erma claims to have been the last girl to get three demerit marks — and thereby hangs another tale of mischief which she tells as follows:

"I was standing by E House steps one day waiting for Genevra, who was my best friend, you know, when the cook engaged me in conversation. Presently she asked me if I like chocolate blanc mange, to which I said there was no dessert I liked better. So she invited me into the kitchen to have some. I knew I wasn't allowed in E House without permission. Still, the cook was a grown-up -- perhaps she had authority to let me come in. I couldn't very well say "wait 'til I ask Mother Knowlton": neither could I suggest eating out on the doorstep like a common tramp. So I went in. The pudding was very good. I had begun on the second dish when the matron was heard coming down the stairs. Without a moment's thought I dashed behind the door. In came Miss Stoe and began talking to the cook.

"All at once, with great astonishment, I said to myself, 'Why! I'm hiding!' and out I walked.

"I was no coward. I had no intention of hiding behind doors. It was an involuntary act of which," says Erma, "I was instantly ashamed. So out I stepped, astonishing both Miss Stoe and the cook. Of course the matter was explained, and reported to Mother Knowlton; and I got three marks -- one for going into E House without permission and two for attempting deception."

"Weren't you shut up the next Saturday?"

"No. At two o'clock I hung about the dining-room of Fisher
Cottage, where I expected to be arrested so to speak. Along about quarter past two Miss Bennett came by on her way out. She read me a mild lecture on honesty and told me to be a good girl in the future."

"And were you?" I asked.

"I must have been," says Erma, complaisantly. "On two other occasions I got half a mark for losing my music book. Otherwise I went scot free."

One girl there was, who had cause to be very thankful for Mr. Allen's ultimatum -- our old friend Kathleen.

Kathleen was not one of the guilty ten. Being sent up because she was too old to remain at Glover, she was not in any grade, but took various subjects wherever she could fit, in time and ability. This unclassified condition, made her a misfit both with pupils and teachers. She never did anything right or well. Probably she couldn't -- she afterwards went insane, and it is a question crying for investigation, whether insanity is the cause or consequence of what happens in our lives before the insanity is recognized. To the credit of Perkins be it said that the teachers were good teachers, judicious and tolerant, with their determination set on building right minds and bodies and characters in the children under their care. To be sure allowance must be made always for the interplay of one personality upon another. It happened there was one teacher who could not be just and tolerant with Kathleen. Fortunately the method of punishment was by demerit marks.
Week after week Kathleen was in disgrace per order of Miss Smith. Thus it happened that Kathleen went to bed early every Friday night and usually spent Saturday afternoon quietly enjoying her own company. After the Saturday solitudes were forbidden only the marks and the early rest remained. As this was not enough for Kathleen's continual misdemeanors, or, after it was found that she really couldn't keep up with any grade, she was sent home before the end of the year and did not return. She had come to the end of her rope.
CHAPTER X

What's To Do?

In the days before sight-saving classes were thought of, Erma, Gladys, Josephine, Agnes, and I were learning to read braille -- not with our fingers only, but with our precious little sight, to the frantic distress of our good teachers. Most of us couldn't see enough to have gone to a sight-saving class if there had been one. But, with excruciating effort, by getting the eyes and the book into closest possible proximity, and by distorting our position to find the best light, we could just manage to see the little white dots. No wonder the teachers were frantic! Print would have been bad enough; braille was far worse. There is no doubt that some of us who still have sight enough to travel about alone, owe its preservation to the foresight and the great patience of Miss Bennett and her staff. They knew that our sight was vastly more important than whether we learned a lesson this week or next. Consequently we had very little homework to do, our lessons being taught to us in the classroom; and for the most part, our leisure was our own.

When winter came in real earnest, we began to find much pleasure in reading and writing for pastime. As a rule, the totally blind pupils are the best readers -- those who ever have read with their eyes seeming to have a subconscious protest against finger-reading, which slows up the process of learning for them. Catherine was the book-worm of our class. Often she would read until she wore the skin off the fore-finger of her
right hand, and then she would have to stop reading and knit for a while, which gave more exercise to the fore-finger of the left hand. "Henry Esmond" was one of the books that Catherine found intriguing enough to be worth sore fingers.

Some who were not very good readers had taken up copying for amusement, which gave us some practice in reading, and some writing to enliven the task. Sometimes the best reader dictated while others wrote. Many and happy were the Saturday afternoons that Margaret and I spent making quotation books. I have them now, tied with faded red ribbons, two books full of mistakes in spelling and writing, but dear to my heart, and quite indispensable to me in teaching and writing. They were not all gathered that winter, nor were they all copied in Margaret's company, but most of them were. Now, when there is so much talk about "the worthy use of leisure time", I look back upon those Grammar school days and I wonder if our time could have been better spent.

Like reading and writing, many of our pastimes were simply a carry-over of accomplishments we had learned in the schoolroom. All of us knew how to knit and sew a little and most of us could use a pencil well enough to write letters home. We could play games with regular dominoes, or with special ones that interlocked. We had (and still have) playing cards marked in braille, and checkers that fit down into the holes so that they can be studied by the fingers without being displaced. Most children can play the harmonica or toot through tissue-
paper; one girl had an auto-harp, and all of us could sing. Informal group singing was a favorite pastime indoors and out. We were nearly always happy and we sang for the love of it and for the joy of being alive. We loved it so much that one class set the physics lesson to a Gregorian chant and went about singing with beautiful harmony,

"A pulley is a wheel,
Turning on its axis,
And having a cord
Passing over its grooved circumference!"

To the tune of "Three Blind Mice" we sang:

"Three blind bats!
See how they bump!
They like to walk about all in a row;
Miss Bennett says, 'Girls! You mustn't do so!'
'Get out of our way, or we'll tread on your toe!'
Say three blind bats."

Perhaps this was not a worthy use of leisure time, but we sang this song only in secret and therefore not very often.

The same group of girls who sang this, will remember the day that Bessie was late for chapel. The ground was well covered with soft snow and she got lost in the yard and was floundering about when we began to sing:

"Lead us, O Father, in the paths of right,
Blindly we stumble when we walk alone."
"How ridiculous!" muttered Bessie. But she was led into the right path to the assembly hall, and you may be sure she was not guilty of the sin of tardiness for a long time thereafter. It is hard for blind people to find their way around when the snow is on the ground. Paths are not always shoveled in exactly the same place and it is harder to estimate the distance of familiar sounds. But as children we enjoyed the snow and winter sports. There was a "slide" -- a platform and runway -- along the walk back of the wooden school building. It was perfectly safe and very exciting to start our sleds at the top of the slide and see how far we could go around the first corner. If we turned to the right, we went down a very short incline to the beginning of the gallery. If we turned left, we might slide for some distance along a stretch of walk that was either covered with soft snow, or flooded for skating. Most of the girls thoroughly enjoyed these winter sports and made a carnival of the gym period and Saturday afternoon. Erma alone stood at Miss Sawyer's elbow, persistently begging to go in, and chattering her teeth in pitiful support of her plea. Erma could see enough to steer the sleds, and could have been a great help, but she preferred to shiver and tease. When she was allowed to go in, she would sit on the floor with her back against the radiator and revel in the joy of being warmer than the other girls.

When coasting was unseasonable, the slide was taken down and a "trolley" ran in its place. A stout cable was stretched from the Howe Building to the gallery. A wheel, supporting handle-bars
to which we hung, ran down this cable and gave us the thrill of speeding through the air, and a mild jounce at the end of the ride. Once when Helen Keller came to visit school, it was Erma's privilege to take Miss Keller up the steps to reach the handles, and to explain to her how she must hold on and what would happen at the end. Erma was very proud to use the manual alphabet and the English language so well that the precious celebrity did not fall off, but really said she like the ride.

For those not sufficiently active to enjoy the slide and the trolley, the "great eastern" and the "rocking-boat" were more fun. A great eastern resembles a rope swing; it has chains instead of ropes and the seat is about four feet long. Our usual way of working it was for one girl to stand at each end and pump, while several girls sat in a row along the seat. Being girls we never did go high enough to bump our heads against the gallery roof, but boys could easily have done so. The younger, more cautious children played in the rocking-boat -- a crescent shaped contrivance with seats in tiers, which swung in a track like a stationary rocker. A dozen or more could wedge themselves into this apparatus, and without much effort, maintain a sort of perpetual motion for hours at a time. These were the "things" with which we passed our idle moments. Deeper and more satisfying pleasures we found in other ways -- without things, within ourselves.

Among people who cannot be very active it is necessary to develop a resourcefulness of mind and a liking for intellectual
fun. We did things, at our social gatherings; we also played more thinking games than most young people do. The teachers, especially Miss Burnham, seemed to have an inexhaustible ability for originating new ideas as to how we could spend a jolly evening. Whether we planned a birthday or Valentine party, a commemoration exercise, or a May festival, there was always provision for merriment and good-fellowship, and, (linking the various features of entertainment) one could always trace the purpose of practical or ethical education. This consecration, on the part of Miss Bennett and her staff, to the vital, -- their steadfast aim of educating us -- not in school subjects merely, but in the deeper values of life -- this unity and continuity of training, is the very soul of the service which Perkins gives to its pupils, and through them, to the communities they enter and influence.

When we had a party on Longfellow's birthday, several of his poems were recited. The members of one class gave quotations for the rest of us to guess the titles from which they were taken. What poems contain the following line?

"Be thou the rainbow to the storms of life,"
"Act! Act in the living present,"
"Be still, sad heart, and cease repining,"
"Leave no yawning gaps between,"
"At each stride a mile he measured."

The prize, won by Julia, was five sheets of braille paper. That was a gift worth competing for, because we had to buy what paper we used out of school.

In preparation for this party, Miss Bennett asked our class
to select a poem to memorize and recite. Erma chose "The Goblet of Life," and thereby got herself in wrong with Miss Bennett, who (like most of our teachers) was richer in intellect than in sentiment. Of course, it was a queer choice for a girl of fourteen: and it did sound ridiculous to hear Erma's youthful interpretation of --

"Filled is Life's goblet to the brim,
And 'though mine eyes with tears are dim,
I chant a melancholy hymn,
In solemn voice and slow."

"What do you find pleasant about that?" Miss Bennett asked coldly.

"I like it," said Erma.

"Why?"

"It sounds nice."

"What does it mean?"

"I don't know."

"Well, then, why do you like it?"

Now, Erma knows that what she liked about that poem was the rhythm -- that it was not in the sickening four lined meter so common in children's verses. But she couldn't explain that to Miss Bennett -- we didn't have words to fit that idea, in those young days. So Erma answered all other questions with the child's stand-by: "I don't know", and finally the matter was dropped, except that Miss Bennett thought that Erma had a morbid, sentimental twist to her nature, and held it against her through the following years.
However, when the 27th of February arrived, Erma forgot to "chant a melancholy hymn" in the fun of playing "cross questions and crooked answers" and paying forfeits and eating great bars of gingerbread that were called "longfellows" in keeping with the occasion.

During the winter term, in Massachusetts, the monotony of school life is broken by many holidays commemorating historic events. First comes Lincoln's Birthday, when the Perkins children get the "Blaisdell dollar". Then Washington's birthday, on which the public exhibition is always held. Then St. Patrick's Day, which Bostonians honor as "Evacuation Day", and finally the 19th of April, which our jolly friend Marie has cause to remember.

"What day is this, Marie?" asked Miss Burnham, all primed to develop a fine history lesson.

"Tuesday, Miss Burnham," said Marie in the utmost astonishment, for Miss Burnham had never been known to ask such a question. She always knew what day it was, whose birthday it was, and everything about the day that separated it from other days.

"Marie," said Miss Burnham in disgust, and added with firm emphasis: "What special day is this?"

"Well -- It's Tuesday, Miss Burnham. That's all I know about it," said Marie, with apologetic meekness. At this the class giggled, very slightly.

"Come to the window, Marie," said the patient Miss Burnham,
opening it and so letting in a flood of patriotic noise -- bells, light fire-crackers, and the sound of drums from a passing parade. "Now, Marie! Can you think what day this is?"

Marie was one of the five girls who had come up from Glover that year. They were a most interesting class, being much more homogeneous than any other group in school at that time. Although quite different in their individual temperaments, they were always of one mind in everything that was of common concern to them. The class embraced: moderate, luxury-loving Muriel, and Marion with her serious, practical energy; there was Helen, frail and artistic, with a kind of silent genius for fun and mischief; and Annie and Marie who possessed an even balance of gay wittiness and hard common sense.

"It sounds like a holiday," admitted Marie, but that was the nearest she could get to it. So Miss Burnham had to tell Marie that the 19th of April was Lexington Day, (now called Patriot's Day) and no one in the class has ever forgotten it.

Nor has Margaret ever forgotten our spring picnic at Castle Island that year.

It may be remembered that our school campus fronted on Broadway. At the end of Broadway is City Point, and off the end of City Point is Castle Island. A long bridge connects the island with the mainland. It is a fine cement thoroughfare now, but in our time it was a rickety, wooden affair which rattled as we tramped across it. Castle Island was reserved as a public park. An old fort was there, but no bathing or amusements, and
few people went there on week days. For this reason, and because it was within walking distance of school, we had a picnic there nearly every year. We were never taken where there were the merry-go-round, the flying swings or the shoot-the-shoots. Such things are dangerous and, while they squander time, they do not contribute anything to the development of a contented and happy nature. It is a noteworthy truth that people who rest upon the ground, quiet, thoughtful, listening to the birds and insects, and to the swish of the wind and the sea -- people who do, and who grow to love to do these things, extend their capacity for thought, to limits never reached by those who pass their time flitting from one mechanical amusement to another at our public playgrounds.

There is nothing we can tell about these picnics on Castle Island. We just walked and talked or sat and rested and drank in the tonic of Nature in the Spring. Here, as at Jamaica Plain, we shared the intimacy of our teachers. Surely they did not regard us as helpless charges to be "minded". They were the kind of women (like Florence Nightingale and Jane Adams) who chose and pursued their life-work for the love of God and humanity. They were, without one exception, noble-minded, Christian women. They taught children, not subjects. They treated us like fellow beings whom they hoped would some day know as much and be as good as they. These times out of school were pleasures: they were also lessons on how to live and let live, on how to frolic together and grow rich in friendship and in happiness.
To be sure there were incidents enlivening these excursions, as when Margaret so carefully lugged the great jug of coffee all the way from school to the island, and sat down with such energy that she broke the bottle and lost the coffee! One excursion was to "Echo Bridge", where somebody called "It's Fourth of July!" and the echo came back -- "You lie! You lie!" This greatly amused some of the younger girls. To seem more marvelous, some of the older girls told about the man who lived in the mountains and, by way of setting his alarm each night before he went to bed, he would call "It's time to get up!" This call was purported to wake him next morning. All of which shows that the silly and fictitious had a part in our well-rounded growth.

Another time, at Long Island, we wanted to step into a little church. We were all bare-headed, except Erma who had worn a hat to shade her eyes. But Catherine wouldn't go into a church without a hat. So it was a pleasant lesson in philosophy for Erma, who loaned her hat, to go bravely in "uncovered" with the rest, chaperoned, as it were, by Kitty, in borrowed piety. Erma's diary says -- "Did the blessing go to the owner or to the wearer of the hat?"

On another great occasion the good people of Boston provided automobiles and took us to Sharon. That was a gala day, like the old sleigh-ride days at Bradlee and Glover. It was to be an all day outing. The cars came at eight o'clock in the morning. We didn't even have chapel first. We were paired off with classmates or special friends, with a teacher in each car, and plenty
of lunch here and there. The older girls wore their class colors and rehearsed their class cheers and songs. Elsie, Agnes, Catherine, Erma and I were in one big car with Miss Marrett. This treat had been announced some time previous, and Erma had composed, to the tune of Marching Thru' Georgia, a song which we sang all along the way.

"See the motley autos come with horns and flags so gay:
All the Perkins students are to have a jolly day!
See our colors, hear our cheers, with songs and laughter gay,

We will go riding to Sharon!

Hurrah! Hurrah! Good-bye to class-room woe!
Hurrah! Hurrah! To Sharon we will go.

Chug on, noisy gasoline, the way the chauffeurs know.

We will go riding to Sharon!"

When we got there, we roamd in the woods, which was an especial treat because there were no woods near school. About noon we had dinner in a huge house, and afterward, some of us, more adventuresome girls got into a boat on the lake. I think it was moored all the while, but we felt real big and privileged just to sit in it. It must have been a very satisfying day, for neither in diary or in memory can I find any account of the trip home — our minds must have been sleepy with happy contentment.

It was on the following evening (when Elsie asked permission to use the telephone, doubtless to tell her mother about our grand day in Sharon) that we were possessed of the idea that somebody had been meddling with the telephone money.
The telephone was in Brookes Cottage and we were free to use it, being required to write our names and the place we called on a slip of paper and to deposit the slip and the fee in a drawer provided for that purpose. If we had a quarter and only needed to leave a nickel, we took the right change: this arrangement always had worked very well. But now, it seemed, some of the money had been disappearing. Well -- it was the subject of whispered conversation for a day or two and was then forgotten. A few of us thought that the missing change had been traced to the same hands that had taken the toys from the doll's house back in kindergarten days. But there was no scene, no publicity, and presently the matter was forgotten by the pupils. What the faculty said or did about it, we never knew. Once again in high school days, the office supplies began dwindling too rapidly all of a sudden. The same girl was again suspected, and, again, the matter was promptly dropped. At that time, we recall, there was rumor that the culprit had a relative in jail for stealing. The truth of this rumor we never knew. But it was probably the first time that the theories of hereditary influence were thrust upon our consideration. Erma's diary reveals deep, grave thoughts on the subject, for we were getting old enough to notice that blindness was inherited, and that a sweet voice, or curly hair, or stealing, were things that "ran in families". We have visited schoolmates who had blind brothers or sisters or cousins. In the few cases where two sisters happened to be
in school -- in the cases of those whom we knew -- we accepted the condition as accidental, like having a twin brother or sister. But we thought there was something mysterious and alarming in cases that were not so well known to us. As Erma expressed it in her diary: "One might have a blind brother or sister as one might have a twin, but why should there be four blind children in one family? or why should cousins be blind? or why should a girl steal just because her father did?" And then Erma confided to her diary: "I wonder do we learn these things in church or in history?"

Keeping a diary was another worthy use we made of our leisure time. For most of us it was the first voluntary attempt at creative literature -- a faulty and faltering attempt to be sure, but one which filled our need for self-expression and satisfied our budding sense of individuality. It is from Catherine's diary that I now quote an account of the Ruby Seal Club.

"What fun! I have been asked to join the Ruby Seal! Elsie asked me as we were marching out of prayers together, and I was so thrilled I forgot to pay attention where I was going and nearly knocked Cora Crocker down stairs. The tongue-lashing she gave me brought Miss Bennett to her rescue, but she must have realized that I was getting the worst of it, for she only told Cora not to make so much noise.

"So I'm to be in the Ruby Seal! We're going to have a party Friday evening. It's a kind of secret club and no grown-ups go to the parties. I'm going to write the words of the
club song so I'll learn it better and so I'll always have a copy, and because it's the best way of telling all I know about the club, yet.

"Ruby Seal Song"

"The aim of our society is merriment to make, To break up all monotony, and keep us wide awake., Ever faithful, ever true, to our motto we will be, For we are the members of the R. S. C.

Chorus --

"We're a blithe association, we were formed for recreation; Ever faithful, ever loyal to our badge we 'll be. We are full of animation, we create a great sensation! We are the members of the R. S. C."

As membership in the Ruby Seal was by invitation only, the club took on the character of a certain clique and had in its personnel the most lively girls and those who acted most like seeing people. As I try now to recall its members, they seem to have been the girls who had the best sense of direction, the most taste about dressing and the greatest ease of manner. The club usually boasted about twenty members, although sometimes there would be so few that it would be dormant for a while, and would then brace up again, and throughout our school career it was the unchaperoned student experiment in the uses of formal society.

Another, less exclusive organization was the Howe Reading Club. Pupils of the high school and the last grammar grade, and members of the faculty joined this club whose aim was to stimulate
an interest in reading for pleasure. Braille reading is laborious. Many of us read only under compulsion. But there were also many who read for fun, or to "kill time" or for the true enjoyment of the story. Each member of the Howe Reading Club was expected to read and give a most brief report of one book each month. For long stories, such as "The Count of Monte Cristo" in 21 volumes, more time was allowed. At each monthly meeting, after the reports, there was always some form of entertainment. Sometimes there were lectures, by such great men as Arlo Bates, E. Charlton Black, and Marshall Perim. Sometimes we gave a play, or had readings from some good book that was not in Braille. Usually one meeting each year was held out of doors as a Fall or Spring picnic. The first of these in which the Glover Girls had a share was a trip to the home of Longfellow, where "grave Alice" told stories about her girlhood and read a few of her father's poems.

One of Longfellow's poems tells of an old legend in which a wedding ended in tragedy because a pearl from the bride's necklace fell into the hour-glass, and the time for the ceremony never arrived. Erma spent hours putting this story into shorter and more simple verse. Her version didn't sound much like Longfellow's. It ran something like this --

"There was a German baron who tried to offset fate

By choosing one of noble birth to be his daughter's mate."

We cannot quote it all because Mrs. Knowlton burned the manuscript with part of Erma's diary when they had been left
around on some shelf or table where they didn't belong. However, I mention the poem to indicate how we used our free time, twenty odd years ago.
CHAPTER XI

Fruits

That leisure is not synonymous with idleness is a hard lesson to learn when youth is rampant and "October's bright blue weather" makes a schoolroom seem like a dungeon.

Ours were pleasant schoolrooms -- even those in the basement whose large windows were above ground and faced south and west. Two of these rooms which occupied half the lower floor of the Howe Building, were used for manual training. In one, Miss Hangreen taught sewing and woodsloyd. In the other, Miss Robbins taught basketry and chair-canining. Here was the dungeon in which Erma now found herself condemned to spend an hour a day -- a precious hour from the morning of the beautiful autumn days with which a school year always begins.

Her job was chair-canining, and it certainly was no worse for her than for any other girl. The worst of it was that Erma detested it! She had learned to cane a chair the previous spring, and could do it quite well if she used her eyes and kept her attention on her work. But it was not sufficiently interesting to hold her attention and so she made mistakes enough to justify Miss Robbins in keeping her at it.

True, Miss Robbins had other justifications -- the seats had to be caned. The school had procured from a chair factory a large supply of unfinished seats. These were to be caned and returned to the factory to be polished and fitted with legs, backs and arms, and then sold. In order to get this privilege
the school had to take quite a quantity of seats and had to get them done reasonably well. Naturally, the girls who did the best work were the ones kept at the job, and most of us really enjoyed it. But not Erma. Even at that, no one could expect a teacher or a school to cater to any girl's every whim. What the teachers did not know was that Erma hated the work so violently that she was making herself sick over it. When she walked about the yard at recess, she would see moving before her eyes, the frame of a chair-seat partly caned. This was a case of nerves. Partly a mental tantrum perhaps, but partly an illness of the nerves of the eye. At this time Erma had other hallucinations, which she never confided to anyone, and never put into expression except in her diary. She says --

"So often now, I wake up in the night, frightened out of my wits, and sweating and shivering all at once, as it seems to me. Besides, at times I never know what woke me, but always everything in the room looks crazy. It is so dark and quiet at first, then I begin to see that the bureau is standing on top of the wardrobe, or the other bed seems to be climbing out of the window. Sometimes the door seems to be in the wrong place, and often I see things that should not be in the room at all. Once it was a parlor stove, and once it was a lady dressed in white and sitting in a rocking chair. I watched her until it grew quite light and I could gradually see things appearing in their accustomed places. In the morning it seems so ridiculous. I cannot tell anyone about it."
For nearly a year this sort of thing went on, night after night for a week or two, alternating with a week or two of natural sleep. Erma's diary tells how the nightmares were particularly severe during most of one summer vacation. She says — "Almost every night I lie awake until it gets light enough for me to see all around the room. Then I take the clothes off the bed, fix them on the floor under the window where the light is brightest, and from that time I sleep in peace until late in the morning." (No wonder her sister-in-law thought her the "laziest child that ever lived.") But at school, of course, Erma got up with the others, shortly after six o'clock, and kept her nightmares a dark secret.

Among the girls who were in school with me -- about seventy-five at a time -- there were three or four cases of hysterics in the course of twelve years. Knowing what I now know of Erma's condition, I wonder if there may have been more excuse for these outbreaks than was made at the time. Two girls had fits of screaming in the silent hours of the night. As we recall it now, one case was attributed to a "crush" on one of the teachers, and the other case was supposed to be caused by neuralgia pains. Kathleen's plight, (already referred to) seemed to be the result of a general breakdown from which she did not recover. But after a few "scenes" the other girls who were afflicted with "nerves" came back to normal and settled down to be self-contained and self-supporting Alumnae in due course of years.

In those days there was not so much talk about adolescence
and the problems of the adolescent child. There can be no doubt that some of us were solving those problems without much help. Indeed, in the minds of many good teachers, there is the gravest doubt if the solution which modern psychology offers to the problems of youth are not of far more harm than help. We heard no talk of "repression" or "expression" or "sublimation". But in every case -- except for Kathleen -- a normal and well balanced mental poise developed, unmarred by our youthful vagaries.

There were (besides these few cases of hysterics) a few square pegs and round holes -- misfits either in school life or cottage life. Also there were the inevitable "crushes" that spring up among people who live too much with their own sex. The sad phase of this juvenile experience is that many a genuine and valuable friendship is ridiculed as a crush. Upon this reef Erma's fine friendship with Genevra very nearly went to destruction.

A mistake often made in dealing with your people is to do what seems for their good without consulting them or giving them a chance to know what it's all about. To forbid a child to play with fire because it burns, is all right. But to forbid a child to play with fire, without telling or showing him why, is all wrong -- it is the best way of making him find out for himself. Contrary to popular philosophy, experience is the very worst of all teachers -- the most severe, the most wasteful, the most destructive and the most unprofitable.

When Miss Lily came upon two girls standing in the open
hallway with their arms about each other, she said: "Girls! Your conduct is disgusting." And when the girls expressed honest and innocent perplexity as to what she was driving at, she added: "Well! It looks very suspicious." And walked away.

"Suspicious of what?"

The answer to that question is what we girls honestly did not know. We had read a few decent love stories. We had also read and been taught of beautiful friendships such as existed between Ruth and Naomi, Jonathan and David, Tennyson and Arthur Hallam, and plenty more. We saw in our very midst the open and pleasant friendships between Mary Knapp and Mary Allen, between Annie Mae and Margaret Keegan, and even the more conspicuous devotion between Miss Marrett and Miss Lily herself. Of what, then, was she suspicious? From the cradle to the grave it is an instinct, nor merely of lovers, but of whatsoever lives, to caress or embrace whoever is nearest, in moments of joy or sorrow or excitement.

A normal person cannot grow to maturity without discovering that there are vile people who abuse the beauties and graces of love and friendship and of every other sacrament. But we were not mature. And we lived in an atmosphere far above normal. We were too young to begin looking for sordid impulses behind seemingly innocent behavior. Thus we found ourselves floundering about in a moral fog, in which our antics (which we looked upon as the greatest tragedies) would have been highly amusing to any detached observer.
But you must not think Miss Lily responsible for the state into which we were falling, for the incident just related was her single offense. Some of us whose later experience has been too much along the line of social work, wonder now if even Miss Lily knew what she meant by "suspicious". She was not merely looked up to as a teacher, but she was justly admired by everyone who was in school. Miss Marrett was envied, both for having Miss Lily's friendship, and for being so worthy of it -- as everybody knew she was. Young as we were, we consciously studied their characters as much as we did the studies they taught. We argued (in secret, of course) about which was better, and why. One was rather short and dark, the other rather tall and light. One walked with even, solid tread, the other with dainty mincing steps. Miss Lily could wear gray -- which required a strong personality, and for which she was softly spoken of as "the gray goddess". Miss Marrett was sweet in any color. Miss Lily's speech was faultlessly correct; Miss Marrett's was exquisitely correct: Miss Lily was admired for her equity and strength, and feared a little; Miss Marrett was admired for her graciousness, and loved at a respectful distance. For thirty years at least, each has been the other's first choice for companionship. Their friends are mutual and always think of them together. We say to Miss Burnham: "Have you heard from Miss Marrett and Miss Lily?" No one would think of saying Miss Marrett or Miss Lily. Their friendship -- as they enjoyed it and we observed it -- is one of the finest fruits of Perkins life.
What wonder that those who called themselves special friends, looked to these two as their ideal. Certainly it was so with Erma and Genevra. Erma almost adored Miss Marrett; while Gen, who was somewhat older and more aware of the serious side of life, rather favored Miss Lily.

This was so very natural, for Genevra was very much like Miss Marrett, dainty, neat, almost fastidious, and fervently devoted to art and beauty and the finest things in life. Both Genevra and Miss Marrett found their greatest inspiration and their pleasantest recreation in the best literature and poetry. So it was obvious that they would both be admired by Erma, and in their turn should admire Miss Lily.

Every good teacher should hope to be the study and model of her class. If our teachers did not know that they were being so analyzed and so imitated, it was because their full worthiness made them unafraid of the analysis and unaware of their high example.

"I'll tell Miss Marrett if you don't stop mimicking the way she walks. Your great big country feet couldn't do it anyway." This was Erma's way of getting even with Margaret Miller, who thought Miss Lily really was the re-incarnation of the Goddess Minerva whose name she bore. Sarah Minerva. The Gray Goddess. Immortal in that she will never be forgotten by anyone who knew her, however, slightly.

Some there may have been who thought highly of Miss Bennett. But at the time when the Glover Girls were hovering at the verge
of High School, she was by no means popular. There is no more perfectly harmless trait that so arouses resentment in a person who cannot see, as the trick of walking noiselessly. In Miss Bennett's case it might not be fair to call it "pussy-footing" for she was small and light and by nature quiet. But if it was an innocent characteristic, it was one for which we made no allowance -- we disliked and distrusted her for it. And when, without warning, and without the preparation that might have been gained by seeing her facial expression she came out with such remarks as: "Girls! Why do you act so?" The effect was devastating. One did not know how to react.

So it was with a resentful perplexity that six girls gathered one recess to ask each other why they had been summoned to meet in the East room with Miss Bennett at five o'clock. "Gen and I spend all our recesses together," said Erma, thoughtfully, "but I can't see any harm in that. We never go to each other's room, nor off the grounds, and we never do anything wrong -- we don't steal or lie or fight. Why shouldn't we be good friends?"

"She's just jealous that nobody likes her that well," one of the couples contributed, rather more amused at the idea than meaning it.

The fact that the girls sent for, were three sets of chums led them to suspect that it was their friendship which she objected to, also Miss Lily's remark, which had been discussed by all of us, without enlightenment.

Nor were they any more enlightened when they met in the
East Room and were told to avoid each other as though one of each pair had the smallpox.

"You girls have been going together too much. It isn't good for you. I don't want to see you together any more. There are lots of nice girls here. Find someone else to spend your recesses with. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Miss Bennett." Six lies. Well, perhaps not, for they did understand that she wished them not to be seen together. And they weren't.

Again I say I don't believe Miss Bennett really knew what she was trying to guard us against. Probably she had read, or perhaps observed, that some schoolgirl friendships degenerate into sham love affairs, that weaken characters that are already weak, and corrupt the morals of the strong. But did she think, because we spent our recesses together, because we walked under one coat when it rained and exchanged Valentines and birthday gifts, that we were becoming morbidly in love with one another? Across the yard -- on the other side of the fence -- we occasionally saw the boys. They also walked with their arms about each other. And if they carried locks of each other's hair, and if Tommy wrote sonnets to John -- what of it? Romance is as human an instinct as religion of self-preservation, and will find expression. Wouldn't it be wiser to provide or allow a natural outlet, than to create false barriers and force a secret outlet?

No doubt Miss Bennett felt sure she was acting for our good.
But we were busy people, under the best of influence, and very seldom alone. Our conduct was rarely, if ever, private. Therefore she had no grounds for her suspicions.

As it happened no two of the chums were in the same cottage. They had no access to shelter behind closed doors. And when this "separation" was laid upon them, without warning and without explanation, natural conduct was blocked, and sought expression in ways that were not natural. Wholesome school-girl friendships took on a romantic and sentimental twist they had not known before. At once those girls began to think of themselves as being like the heroines in books who were forbidden to see their sweethearts. What was more natural than for them to turn to letters and secret meetings? Meetings were almost impossible and far too risky; but the letters were easy, and whereas they began as a practical exchange of ideas -- written because there was no opportunity for talking -- they soon fell into the most sentimental love notes, because (in the absence of mutual experience) there were no common subjects to write about. The usual braille letter of friendship or business takes two or three pages; these billet-doux consumed ten or twelve, or they were not worth sending. What trash must have been written! At the end of that school year six trunks were filled with little rolls of braille papers, all neatly ties and fondly treasured. And alas for the precious time and energy that had been squandered on them, for page after page was learned by heart!
"We even paid excess baggage on my trunk," says Erma. "And now the letters are gone and all but forgotten. But the scars have remained -- innocence outraged by suspicion, the sacrifice of honor to policy, and skill in deceiving -- these are but some of the scars that we carried away from our youthful battlefield."

(This is Erma's summing up of her first experience with personal tragedy. In a recent letter on the subject, Erma continues --

"In her way, I think Miss Bennett really liked me, and I know she honestly thought what she did was for our good. She knew my mother had died while I was very young and that a child loses many of the finer influences if the home ties are broken too soon. She once tried to talk things over with me but she didn't know how. As a beginning she said that I needed to be loved, and I asked: 'Why don't you love me and be nice to me, then?' That put an end to it."

These remarks from one of Erma's letters, go to prove that knowing a child's case history does not help a teacher or social worker to understand or help the child. The personal appeal -- liking for one another -- is the only key to influence between two souls. Miss Bennett could no more understand Erma's mixture of hard, practical common sense and delicate, sentimental idealism, than we could understand her objection to our chumming with those we liked best.

Genevra had a little better luck. She was by nature, dainty, neat, fastidious, and of very delicate health, but she was blessed with a mother, a good home, and rather more money than
the rest of us; the comforts and refinements of good living were commonplace to her. Her gentle influence over Erma was, as Erma had realized, the most enobling influences of her life. With few relatives, fewer friends, and no money, Erma was a child born to battle for existence and win. But the warfare precluded indulgence in refinement. "Hold your own," was Erma's motto, until one day she saw Genevra playing for chapel, and had an impulse to wait outside and walk over to the cottage with her -- for the one who played for the others to march out, had to go home alone. That was how their acquaintance began. Right away it blossomed into friendship, and soon bore fruit.

Erma began to speak more softly and correctly. She began to shine her shoes and clean her nails, and arrange her hair with care, and saw the loose buttons on. Erma began to study for better marks, and especially to learn to spell. She tried not to be saucy, and conceited, for Erma had many advantages over the girls about her, and enjoyed them with more pride than gratitude. She had not stopped to consider that a little sight, a few brains, or a little wider experience were blessings that deserve a thankful heart and humble mind. But she was learning, learning from Genevra. The softening, chastening influence was also exhilarating. Erma was not a Catholic, but she was enjoying to the utmost that "state of grace which visits the child about to be confirmed."

This was the state of things into which Miss Bennett blundered with her decree of separation.
Fortunately Genevra had a soul that feared and loved the Lord and all His goodness. She would not permit the sly and secret circumventing of Miss Bennett's authority. So, for these two, there was more of the "fiery furnace" in this experience, than for the other four who shared the ban. Instead of writing sentimental letters, Genevra occupied her time and thoughts by copying quotations. This book of the finest and most helpful gems of poetry and literature was given to Erma the following Christmas, and was learned by her and treasured as the lessons of a catechism.

While these beatitudes were preparing, Erma fretted and chaffed, and would have kicked over the traces, had it not been for Miss Sawyer. There was a feeling of fellowship between Erma and Miss Sawyer; one a pupil, the other a teacher, they could not be friends or even companions. (But Erma liked Miss Sawyer because she used to let her go in out of the cold. It was a sign that she was more human than authoritative. Erma felt that Miss Sawyer thought of us not as pupils but as individuals.

Erma has lived to be well thought of by most of the teachers, but she was not a special favorite while in school. It was seldom she went to a teacher's room -- and very seldom, by invitation.

Shortly after the visit to the East Room, there was an afternoon which Erma spent with Miss Sawyer. The diary is not very lucid on the subject, but there are references to an afghan
and pretty sofa pillows, and kind words and tears, and a little ivory picture frame which stands yet on Erma's bureau, encircling a tiny snap-shot of Genevra. The diary isn't very helpful, but Erma says: -

"The gist of the conversation can be conveyed in two ideas: One is that if we go with one friend all the time, we miss knowing many other nice people whom we really would enjoy and who, perhaps, need us just a little more than we need them. The other argument Miss Sawyer offered, which helped most at the time, was that if two people are together a great deal, one is apt to sap the strength of the other -- the stronger one drawing from the weaker one."

Was it because Miss Sawyer taught physical training that she knew these things? Was it just because she knew Gen was not so very strong? Or did she know that Erma would not obey a rule without a reason? In any case, she held out the helping hand to which Erma clung.

"She gave me what I needed," is Erma's present comment, "a reason that was not suspicious. She gave me a chance to do a hard thing because it was right, and not just because I was told to do it."

In this respect, it was a trying year for Erma. This emotional strain should not have been added to the nightmares and the industrial tribulation. But "troubles never come singly," so Erma struggled with the battalions as best she could.

Toward the end of the year Miss Bennett was not very well,
and it often came about that Miss Lily held the reins of our fate in her capable hands.

There came a time when Erma got so sick of chair-caning that she would spend most of the hour cutting the cane into tiny pieces, using the scissors in her left hand to make the occupation more fascinating, and scattering the tiny slivers in ant-hills all over the schoolroom floor.

Presently, of course, Miss Robbins discovered this mean trick and told Erma to report to Miss Lily.

It did not often happen that one was sent to Miss Lily for discipline. Somehow we did not get in wrong with her. Erma had heard the story of the bitter cold day on which Marie, Annie, and Helen had stayed in-doors at recess and hidden in one of the music-rooms. Miss Lily had opened the door and said:

"Three dishonest girls," and closed the door and gone away. She wasn't the kind to stand and watch the struggle between a guilty conscience and a love of ease. She knew very well they would find any weather easier to endure than her disapproval.

Erma was afraid of Miss Lily. Not with a sneaking, cowardly fear, nor yet with a bold and defiant fear. The fear that we felt for "The Gray Goddess" was an awe-inspiring fear, like that which is called "the beginning of wisdom."

Here, again, the diary is very incoherent.

She says:-- "I'd rather not have gone. Yet I couldn't resist the temptation to see what it would be like. I can't refuse -- I wouldn't for the world have Miss Lily know I'm
afraid of her. Besides, I'll have to go! To show reluctance is to admit defeat."

We had just been reading "The Talisman" from which we had learned about the "ordeal"s of the Middle Ages. Erma was having a little ordeal all her own, not with Miss Lily so much as in getting up her courage to go to the physics laboratory. Of all unromantic places! As the diary puts it:-- "Who could confess one's weaknesses in such a place? Or whimper for self-indulgence from such a presence?" Sit a few minutes, staring at brass rods, stone sinks and iron pulleys, and then fancy yourself saying: "I don't want to do it because I don't like it." As well expect a pulley to make such a remark, as expect Miss Lily to understand or sympathize with it.

"You get your own way too much," Miss Lily was saying, when Erma got herself under control enough to listen. "It would do you good to do something you didn't want to do, just to prove that you could make yourself do something you didn't like, and do it well."

Erma tried to say it made her eyes ache.

That was a good excuse. So good that it made Erma blush to realize what Miss Lily would think of it. Everyone expected her to cane chairs without the help of her sight -- others could. Fancy telling the Gray Goddess that you saw a chair-seat dangling in mid-air when you walked about the yard! No! That was true, but it was a feeble defense against this woman's strength.

"Perhaps you don't realize it, Erma -- " She said your
name so crisply that it prodded you in the back. "Perhaps you
don't realize that all the other girls do just what you want them
to do. It isn't good for you."

"I never try to make them do anything."

"No. You don't have to try. They don't have to be made.
You are a natural leader. It's all right for the girls, but it's
not good for you." Was she breaking down Erma's resistance by
flattery? The girl hadn't asked for this -- hadn't offered any
resistance. But Miss Lily was not flattering. It was quite
ture: Erma did get her own way, too often and too easily.

"Have you strength of character enough to control yourself
as well as you do other people?" Silence.

"Are you willing to try?"

Erma sat up very straight. Inwardly she was shrieking, "No.
No."

Also inwardly she was hanging her head in helpless defeat.
But she sat very straight and still.

"And I think Miss Lily knew it was a half-hearted courage
that I was trying to muster," Erma tells me now; "for there was
a hint of coaxing, just a shade of mildness in her tone when she
dismissed me with the permission --"

"You keep at it for another month, and then come to me if
you are not satisfied that this is the right thing for you to do."

Without looking up, Erma walked swiftly from the room. This
was after evening reading, and Erma was thankful for the dark-
ness and that the girls had gone to bed. She had known that the
decision would be in favor of continuing the hated task. But she had not foreseen that without putting up any argument or any resistance herself, she could have felt so sore and bruised and weak. The gimp was gone. She would set her teeth and cane chairs as long as she must, but never again would Erma parade her poor weaknesses even before her own eyes, in the glaring light of Miss Lily's strong will.

How great was the need for someone to talk things over with Gen could have helped; but that was not allowed. Erma knew the wind had slackened from her sails, that there was no aim or direction to her course. Perhaps she vaguely understood that this was necessary in order that her life-boat might be steered into a wider channel. But how or where to steer, she did not know. And so we drifted through our Freshman year, garnering from the tree of knowledge such fruits as we could reach, or such as fell -- wormy and bruised, perhaps, but ours for the taking, if we had a relish for the sweet bites, here and there.
CHAPTER XII
Serious Glimpses

Class Poem
The freshman class now green as grass, some day will seniors be; We'll change our shade from green to white, when won the victory. Our friendship has such bonds and ties that nothing can divide -- From freshman level, to the end, we'll struggle side by side. And when at last we stand upon the heights we strive to climb, We'll not forget the helping hand you've given in bygone time. We bear goodwill to one and all; we mean to do or die; "If all united, none can fall," is our motto and our cry!

This, to the tune of Auld Lang Syne, was an expression of our mood, changing from school spirit to class consciousness.

Back in the last year of Grammar school there had been a glorious race between Erma and Annie Fisher over the final exam in geography. When Erma came out five-tenths of a point ahead, the rejoicing was hilarious! The matter was important because, until that time, the Glover Girls had been called a grade lower than those we had joined -- although we took all our lessons together. After this, (we were not really promoted) we had the same rating as the older group. During our Freshman year the ninth grade disappeared from the school program, and when school re-opened next fall we were all called Sophomores.

It was now that a goal began to glimmer ahead of us -- a goal we had been pursuing for nearly ten years, but had not really
seen before. We began to talk of "after graduation." We began to compare life at home with life at school and ask which was happier and why. We began to question ourselves in terms of what we might do to earn money. Hitherto our interest had been directed to getting "Passing marks" and having a good time. Now we began to catch uncertain glimpses of that huge, mysterious blur -- the Future. What would it hold for us?

Seeping slowly into some minds, breaking roughly upon us, came the realization that what the future would do to us depended almost wholly upon ourselves. "I am the master of my fate, the captain of my soul."

But it was not our souls that worried us. We were brought up to be good Christians; to follow the golden rule; to live and let live.

The question was, "should we undertake to fit ourselves for the struggle for existence? or should we accept maintenance at the hands of those who loved us?"

In those days the Junior High School with its experimental curricula was not in vogue. We were not allowed to dabble in this or that and to learn not much of anything. We were taught, thoroughly, the fundamentals of foundation subjects, and upon these we were expected to build according to our capacity.

The whole school, (excepting the very backward) learned enough literature and history to appear educated among educated people. If we did not really master English Grammar, at least we did speak "the King's English" without the props of slang and
the double negative. We knew enough about arithmetic to keep track of all the money we were ever likely to possess. Far beyond the average girl in her teens, we were versed in the fundamentals of sewing, typing, and music. Recently, 1938, there was great talk in the papers about some blind women of New York "using the first braille cookbook": this is nonsense! Back in 1912, Erma and her classmates were using their braille cookbooks -- and what we made was eaten. 0 -- not always, of course! There was the time Mary Watkins put salt in the muffins instead of sugar. But as a rule the teacher -- and three pupils got supper on the cook's night out; and it was generally very good.

"By the way, Erma; have you ever heard from Rosy? I can't remember her last name. But well I remember how she used to watch with a kindly eye when you stole surreptitious moments with Rodney, a la Romeo and Juliet between the driveway and your bedroom window. And was it Tony or Francesco who murmured those romantic phrases that only Julietta could interpret?"

Now I am amazed that such goings-on escaped the keen ears of Miss Burnham and the eagle eyes of Miss Robbins, whose windows also opened upon the driveway between the girls' and the boys' enclosures. But we were growing up, the buoyant and frivolous helping to balance and offset those serious glimpses of the economic struggle and the appalling cost of either success or failure. The cost of success was in terms of what we must give; the cost of failure was in terms of what we must bear and forebear.
Even Miss Burnham and Miss Robbins knew we were growing up, for at that Christmas party Erma, Catherine and I were given a package of wire hairpins as a gentle hint it was time to put up the hair and let down the skirts. It was a costume party, at which most of us dressed to represent characters from Dickens. Erma was Peggotty; Catherine was Madame Defarge, and I was Little Dorritt. Mother Knowlton was the "Cricket on the Hearth" and it was her turn to be guessed, she said: "I am black, and all I can do is chirp." Were we different from other girls, that we didn't need high-balls and boy-friends to help us have a good time? Possibly not. Yet, perhaps, not having the boy-friends made some of us grow up different. One of our most successful graduates said that every time she had to talk to a man -- even a bus driver or a store-clerk -- the shivers ran up and down her spine, for years after she had left school. Few of us are so sensitive as that, although we do approve of a more liberal attitude towards mixed company than was allowed when we were in school. Even in those days, the boys enjoyed more freedom than we girls could boast. They could invite girls who lived near the school to their dances and socials, and they went about the town unchaperoned to concerts and church gatherings to which the girls were "taken."

It was during the Christmas vacation that the boys' orchestra went to Providence and gave a performance at Infantry Hall. My sister and I attended, and I well remember how the audience gasped with admiration when Dick and Charley, after
lighting their cigars, locked arms and ran down that long flight of stairs like any perfectly normal, light-hearted youths. Of course, they were happy. They could play well; they were making money; they were meeting the outside world on its own level and they liked it. Here was another glimpse for us, of success through work well done.

At this time also our Glee Club was blossoming into prominence -- or perhaps an event which affected the whole school brought it to the attention of the Glover Girls for the first time. This event was the passing of Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, so dearly beloved by those who knew her, and so deeply revered by all the students. Many times the Glee Club was asked to sing at memorial or honorary services; and very frequently the favorite selection was the famous "Battle Hymn of the Republic", which Mrs. Howe had composed. Now, young people cannot hold the same mood very long at a time, no matter how sincere that mood may be at first. We were all a little weary of "Glory, glory, hallelujah" when some merry-hearted youngster sang out -- "Glory, glory, howl for Julia". The suggestion caught the popular fancy, and presently we had as good a parady as schoolgirls ever sang. But so few were the opportunities to rehearse this song, that we can't find anyone who remembers the words -- and I wouldn't dare include them if we could.

It was a rather startling prank which taught us younger girls to be somewhat careful how we made light of the sentiment of our elders; and thereby hangs another tale or two.
To begin with, when Erma was at the Glover Building there were a few cases of whooping-cough. Erma did not have it, but one day, just for amusement, Erma was whooping so lustily that the matron sent her home. In vain the girl protested that she was doing it for fun; that she had no sign of cough or cold or nausea, no headache -- nothing but a gift for showing off. Her protests were unavailing. Her father came for her and she went home and stayed for six weeks. Now, really, this was a crime. At that time Erma's father was earning very little, so it was no easy matter to have another person to support -- to say nothing of having the child idle about the house and missing school besides. "Well," says Erma, "it quite effectively cured me of mimicking. Never since, have I been able to do anything along that line -- not even to reading dialect when the lesson called for it."

But Maisie had no such scruples. Maisie was a most proficient mimic. She could sound so much like anybody she chose to impersonate that she often entertained us with a lively take-off of each other, and sometimes she fooled us by acting the part of Miss Bennett, or Mr. Gardiner, or even Mr. Anagnos. This latter voice she could feign so well that it got her into a most awkward predicament, and caused a considerable sensation at school. It may be remembered that Mr. Anagnos had returned to Greece, and there succumbed to a chronic disorder -- according to tardy reports. At first there had been some uncertainly as to whether he really had died, and although it was officially accepted, the
mystery hung over the school for a year or two. Possibly none of the faculty realized that we young folks knew or were bothering our heads about it, and so they didn't make a point of telling us all the facts. So it happened that someone got the inspiration to pretend that Mr. Anagnos was alive and well. In support of this hoax, our good pal Maisie was induced to telephone to a former graduate who, believing she had talked to Mr. Anagnos himself, relayed that information to Mother B. Mrs. Gleason, or "Mother B", as she was very affectionately called, was one of our favorites among the adult population of Perkins. She is very understanding and motherly, at the same time being truly wise and far-seeing. For forty or fifty years she has had the respect and loving confidence of the entire Perkins fellowship both young and old. We were fond of Mother B. and had no wish to grieve her; but when word began to circulate that Mr. Anagnos had returned and that friends of the school had talked with him, there was general consternation. Whether it was Mother B. who fainted, or whether it was Miss Swinnerton, or both, or all the faculty, we really do not know. All we know is that what started as a harmless joke turned out to be a fearful outrage against the finer sentiments of sincere and kindly people. Of course, nothing was done about it in the way of punishment; but we felt "put in our place," and that it was a very small and unworthy place for such self-respecting girls to occupy. And therefore, we kept our parody about Mrs. Howe a very quiet secret. And if we went about humming and only thinking
the words, sometimes we were also thinking over the possibilities of singing as a means of earning. Sophie, Nellie, Irena and Loretta, were already doing solo work and hoping for professional opportunities. Alice and Anastasia were taking up shorthand, and devoting much time and serious attention to typing. Genevra, who was a senior now, had arranged with a department store in her home town, to supply aprons, and she was working her dainty fingers and running the sewing machine with a clever ease that made people say: "Everything she does is done well!" Some of our recent graduates had taken up work that looked inviting. Rose and Marion were in normal school, Mary Knapp and Mary Allen were going to college. Jessie and Johanna were helping in the office and the industrial department of the Connecticut School for the Blind. A few of the girls were having extra housework with a view of becoming mothers' helpers.

From the homes of various pupils came other suggestions. One family increased the income by screwing glass gems into earrings at home whenever anyone had a little leisure. Others, usually boys, were going from house to house selling extracts and sewing supplies. More recently, the underwriting of insurance policies has become a very popular form of salesmanship for blind men, many of whom have done astonishingly well.

For ever so many years, the Matilda Ziegler Magazine has run a column called, "Experiences and Suggestions for Success." Each month this section contains a write-up of the attempts and accomplishments of some blind person who has tried a new field
or brought something new to an old line, wherein a blind person may earn a living, or contribute substantially to his own support. The scope of these suggestions is so broad and so varied that it seems a blind person may do almost anything, from hard-headed inventing to the very elusive arts of fortune-telling and mental-healing. The diversity of occupation certainly disproves Emerson's theory of compensation. Blind people do not all have better hearing, better musical ability, or better sense of direction, just because they are blind. By and large, they are exactly as gifted and as limited as the rest of mankind, and their success or failure comes from within, from their individualism, and not from their affliction or their compensation for being in a class. Over eighty percent of the successful blind people in this world have lived, not in a class with the blind but as individuals among the seeing. They succeed, not because of their blindness, but in spite of it.

It was to talk over these things with Miss Sawyer that Erma had lingered after the gym period one glorious day late in February; and when she left the building (feeling highly confident that she was one of the potential successes) she forgot about the slippery sidewalk, and came down to earth with a sprawling jolt. Of course, Rodney had no right to be in the driveway at that time of day. The girls used the gym in the morning and the boys in the afternoon. But there Rodney was, coming gallantly to the rescue. "I say! Are you hurt?"

"Of course not!" But how can a blind girl hope to be
successful in this world if she can't stand upon her own feet even to walk!"

"Oh, well! It won't always be winter," said Rodney cryptically, turning up the drive as Erma marched off toward the Fourth Street gate.

Miss Sawyer had advised Erma to talk with Miss Burnham about ways in which blind people had been most successful. Miss Burnham had been to normal school and had lived an active life in her community at home; so she knew a great deal about the problems of earning and the shaping of careers. Also, Miss Burnham had been at Perkins a long time. She knew the history of the school and the ways in which former pupils had made good. She knew much about the laws which governed the employment of blind people in factories. She knew what professions were most reasonable for us to try, what professional schools we might attend, what textbooks were in braille, and ever so many things that our other teachers would have to look up or inquire about. So, Miss Burnham was consulted, during a formal call one Saturday afternoon. And she shared her rich fund of information with us.

She told of Miss Poulsson who was writing children's stories and translating books from the Swedish into English. She told of Miss Etta Walker who was a successful masseuse. We spoke of Miss Rile, our own music teacher, and of others who were filling church positions as organists and choir leaders. Finally, Miss Burnham read us some notes about this problem of employment, from which we learned a part of the following information.
As early as 1840 Dr. Howe and others realized that the blind would be healthier and happier if work were provided, instead of charity. Accordingly a workshop was opened in which some blind people could make brooms, cane chairs, cover mattresses and so on. Later, other workshops were opened, in many cases being operated by the State, and the workers who could not earn a reasonable weekly wage were subsidized to meet a minimum standard. Obviously, some blind people could do certain handwork in the mills, factories, and shops where the same line of occupation was being carried on by seeing workers. But very often insurance and fire laws prohibit the blind from following these normal channels of industry. As our government becomes more highly organized (controlled by each additional bit of legislation) the American people become more and more restricted to their class. Gradually we are being separated into the rich or the poor, the able or unable, the successful or the defeated. From 1875 to 1925 it appeared that the number of competent blind people was steadily increasing; but since unemployment became so prevalent -- although the blind may be just as capable -- we now have far less chance to show what we can do, or to make any profitable use of our real accomplishments.

In the European countries this problem has had many trial solutions, some good, some horrible.

Sometimes parents have had to keep their blind children out of sight, from the cradle to the grave. In some countries, begging has been the only vocation open to the blind, and it is
told that in very large families young children have been made blind so that they could begin to contribute to their own support as early as possible. Still other governments have set aside a few occupations to be practised only by the blind, -- as massaging in Japan, census-taking in China, music and tuning, in Europe and England. Quite recently Massachusetts has passed a law that all State pianos must be tuned by blind tuners, and the Federal government has a law allowing blind people to have news-stands in Federal buildings.

But in the United States the workshop is still the most popular government aid. Day shops and resident shops are established according to the needs of the community being served; the articles are sold at fairs, sales, or by house to house canvassing; and the purchase of material and the paying of wages is eeked out by government appropriation or by volunteer endowment.

From reading we get the impression that the English have a very efficient system which carries the blind child as far as he can go through school, and then provides him with a degree of "after care" to fit his particular case.

As the pupils leave school they are guided to some line of employment suited to their attainments, and they are expected to continue this work until they show themselves qualified for some other means of support, or until they are ready for retirement with their own people or at a public home. A full program of all possible occupations is mapped out and the blind are fitted into it. This program is supervised by the government, which provides
raw material, transportation, delivery and marketing of goods, and the stipend or wages or dole, as the case may require. This system is very efficient from an economic standpoint, and (although it would seem to give the individual blind person very little freedom) with kind administrating, it is judged to be almost ideal.

Returning to consideration of our own country, many of the States have a Commission to supervise the services for the adult blind. In Massachusetts this commission is a Division of the Department of Education. We are very thankful that this field is under the Department of Education rather than the Department of Public Welfare, which (according to all experience) would greatly lower than standards. The Division of the Blind concerns itself with matters pertaining to: prevention of blindness, education of the blind both young and old, the deaf-blind, the conservation of sight, home conditions and relief, employment, and legislation effecting or benefiting the blind.

The Massachusetts Division for the Blind was formally established about 1910, and its helpfulness was just beginning to be felt by our recent graduates at the time when the Glover Girls were catching the first serious glimpses into the future. It was beginning to look like our own personal, very immediate future. Very soon we would have to do something about it. We had ideas, ambitions, dreams, but as yet we had very little knowledge and even less real skill or ability. Heretofore our minds had been set upon getting through school. Now the trend
of our thought was taking a vocational, commercial, economic turn. We must not get through school, until we had got something out of school that would sustain us and start us upon the road to self-support -- the only road that leads to happiness.
CHAPTER XIII

Years Without Spring

There was happiness all around her; but Erma was not happy. The Glover Girls had grown up. Most of us had found our stride. Not only were our minds and characters pretty well formed, but by now we knew ourselves as individuals -- the individual with whom we would be most closely bound for all the rest of our lives. We knew our own weaknesses, and whether we meant to accept them or fight against them. Of economic obligations, of kinds of entertainment, and of people, we knew which we could enjoy and which we would try to avoid. This was the age when "character books" were popular among school girls. We kept these books in braille. They bore record of personal description including age, weight and height, greatest fear, highest ambition, favorite color, favorite poems, authors, studies, teachers, etc. These books we shared only with our most intimate friends. But there were six good friends who were denied this wholesome form of self-analysis -- among them, Gen and Erma.

The rich, heavy perfume of syringa blossoms, the cloister-like quiet of a deserted school-yard, were the substitutes for Erma's character book. Times when it seemed safe, she would linger on the gallery step -- the low unused step where the bushes were thick and the seclusion was comforting. Here, so often, she would think things out, always alone, always under the melancholy spell of solitude -- a tranquil, companionless peace, often pleasant, but never joyous. A cold futile, philosophizing,
without human inspiration. These days, the diary was abandoned, and an occasional poem holds the only record of those unshared thoughts.

Gorgeous for the world to love,
The mountain laurel grew to bloom.
Came one who picked it for his own
Instant withering was its doom.

As free within our happy hearts
The glow of youth and friendship bloomed
Till withered Wisdom plucked our joy
And left us, like the laurel, doomed.

There was never any resentment in Erma's disposition: she had two reactions toward life -- "struggle if you know what you are struggling for; acquiesce, when you don't." So, when a greater separation came, a tragedy which no one could have foreseen or in any way alleviated, Erma was already too resigned to be anything but calm.

Dainty, delicate Genevra was in very truth too good for this hard world. After only four days' illness, she slipped peacefully away in her matron's arms. Because she was sick, Erma had been allowed to visit her. They had spent nearly half an hour alone together, so shortly before the end that afterward Erma felt she had received the first blessing of a new-born angel. Strange, how coldly inhuman those kind, intelligent people were to the girl's deep suffering. Erma says --

"After evening reading -- quite casually it seemed -- Miss
Simonds walked across the yard with me. She asked if I had seen Gen; and then said: "I'm glad you saw her. The end was very quiet and peaceful, Miss Stowe was with her; and we have to think it is better so." Erma's account goes on to say -- "As she left me, I heard her say to Miss Lily: 'She's taking it very calmly.'" Alas for their lack of understanding! Erma did not even know what had happened; had not begun to realize yet. She says: "After I had walked halfway around the green I said to myself -- 'She said the end -- that means dead! Then she is holy, and knows all. And she won't be afraid of the thunder any more.'"

At this point Erma came to her senses enough to realize that she should not be out after evening reading; so she went to the house. Although it was not yet nine o'clock the house was still, and Erma went to bed without seeing anyone. Just at that time she had no room-mate; and she says: "Instead of the usual evening prayers, I just sat on the floor with my head on the bed, and thought for a long, long time. The next morning, knowing that my thoughts were wandering, I asked Rosy if I looked all right — meaning was my hair parted straight and my dress clean. Rosy said: 'My God! you look awful!' and gave me a vigorous dab of Sloan's linament on each cheek to rouse the color." This rough kindness from Rosy was all the sympathy Erma got except for two notes of condolence — one from Miss Burnham, the other from Mary Watkins.

Dear Mary! What a help and influence she was to us girls about that time. She was a colored girl who had graduated from
the school for the blind in Texas, and had come North to study music. In honor of Perkins training be it known that there was never the slightest prejudice against creed or color in the school as we knew it. Mary was universally popular, especially with the older students. Her gentle Southern drawl may have been the first cause of fascination; but we soon discovered that she knew a great deal more about school subjects, and had a more sophisticated knowledge of life; was wider read, and had a more polished refinement and poise than any of us. Although Kitty fell upon me in a mock faint when Mary (being asked if she had met Cather-ine) said: "I think not -- I'm charmed to have the pleasure," When we found that this was her habitual manner and not put on, we adored it. How much I learned from her! Years before I had discovered that there was a body of learning which a person must have in order to hold his own in this world. Now, from Mary, I learned that there were other bodies of knowledge, which some may know, while others are happier and more successful if they do not know. Those were the days when the perpetrations of Harry Thaw were filling the newspapers; and I remember with gratitude that Mary sent me out of the room before allowing some of the older girls to talk about it. She often read aloud to us; and I recall a chapter from "The Last Days of Pompeii" which she skipped, saying "read it yourselves if you wish", but we respected her judgment, and didn't read it.

At a few rare and treasured intervals, Mary (whom we sometimes called "the lone star" because she came from Texas) was the
only little gleam of brightness in Erma's dark skies. And when, two years later, Mary returned South, there were many sad hearts feeling, as Erma put it --

(To the tune of Come Back to Erin)

Dixie is calling to Mary, our Mary;  
With straining heartstrings she answers the cry;  
Soon she'll be speeding across the broad prairie,  
Fanned by the zephyr that echoes our sigh.

Flowers of affection we scatter around her --  
What shall we choose our devotion to prove?  
Wheat for successes, and laurels to crown her,  
Ivy for friendship and roses for love.

Sadly we bid thee farewell, dearest Mary;  
Memories we cherish will ever be near;  
Each has her rosary of hours to o'er-number;  
Fondly we bid thee farewell, Mary, dear.

Now, as I write and share these lines with Erma, she bursts into laughter and I ask what it is all about.

"Do you remember when we were studying rhetoric? I asked Mary: 'If you met a man, walking down the street, dressed exactly as you were, would you be amused, surprised, astonished, or annoyed?' 'All four!' said Mary promptly."

"O, dear!" sighs Erma ruefully. "I interpreted the word 'man' as a person, and never thought how ridiculous a man would look dressed like any of us girls. It just goes to show how, even then, my mind was becoming intellectual, and losing the human touch. I have suffered for it ever since!"

Another mistake for which Erma has suffered ever since was her vaccination. When she entered school she had not been vaccinated because the home doctor had feared it might hurt her
eyes. At that time she had about twelve percent sight -- not quite enough to get along in public school. In our Junior year there was a smallpox scare in Massachusetts, and the command went forth for all school children to be vaccinated. A statement permitting Erma’s exemption was in the main office; but Erma was actually in charge of a matron in one of the cottages; and although she protested, the doctor said he didn’t think it would do any harm, and vaccinated her. That was on Thursday. By Saturday, Erma’s good eye was swollen so badly that she had to have it bandaged tightly for five weeks, to keep it from bursting. Two or three times a week she was taken to the Carney Hospital just to have the case watched, and eventually the swelling went down, but the sight has never been as good, and for many years after that there were long spells of pain. Before this happened, Erma could see enough to read her own mail, and to do other reading a little at a time; since, then, she has had between five and six percent vision and is not able to read anything smaller than headlines. She has often said this is the only thing which makes her feel blind -- everything else, there is some way of managing; it is only being at the mercy or other people for our private and personal correspondence, that makes us feel most helpless and inadequate. So the Junior year was not a very happy one, neither for Erma, nor for the school as a whole.

For rumors of change were in the air, and definite reports of a new school were filling our minds with both anticipation and regret. Perkins was to be moved from South Boston to
Watertown. Perkins was to occupy the beautiful thirty-four acre Stickney estate along the north bank of the Charles River. Building was already underway; paths were being laid out; new people had been engaged; great plans were in the making.

The graduating class of that last year at South Boston was one of the most illustrious in the school's history. It was a large class of twelve girls. Among the girls were the first group who had received training in the primary building. We were much interested in these girls -- Alice, Mary, Anastasia, Mabel and Irena -- for they had come up from Kindergarten just ahead of us; and we had tried to follow their example, and even had vague ambitions of surpassing them if possible. They were a noble group of young women, everyone of whom, has done advanced studying, and been self-supporting ever since graduation. As a class they have gloriously lived up to Erma's challenge:

To the Class of 1912.

Once green Freshmen; Sophomores tame-- Juniors with a thirst for fame --
Now a tried and trusty band, loyal Seniors here they stand;
As today we say farewell, crowned with honor's coronet,
Our last message tints the scene --
Seniors, keep your laurels green.
CHAPTER XIV

The New Perkins

One sees first the tower -- gray or gold, as touched by cloud or sunshine -- then the long, rambling, brick buildings, with slate roofs, and low walls basking in patches of ivy, dotted with casement windows, and relieved by bays and gables -- a blend of Tudor Gothic beauty and simplicity. Five or six groups of these buildings nestle among shade and fruit trees, flowering shrubs, and grassy playgrounds. Footpaths of tiny, stepping-stones, narrow, brick walks, and gravel driveways lead here and there over the thirty-four acres of the new campus. For sixteen hundred feet, shut in by a very low granite wall, the estate borders the Metropolitan Parkway, north of the Charles River Basin. This was the new school to which Erma and her classmates returned for their senior year.

Even for the individual, there is a mental set-up about a new dress, a new car, or a new home. Here were two hundred and fifty people all feeling mentally set-up at the same time -- it was a thrilling experience! Being seniors would have thrilled us; our budding ambitions would have braced us for high accomplishment, and to these were added the zest and adventure of an entirely new environment, designed to meet our especial needs in health, convenience, and inspiration. We were happy and hopeful -- a state of mind which places the whole world at one's feet.

As soon as we arrived, Erma and I made a tour of the buildings that were open to us, and returning to Fisher Cottage,
reported on the lay of the land to those who had not ventured beyond the house.

"You see," said Erma in the concise way she had of putting big ideas in few words: "the main building is shaped like a cross -- with a few extra parts. Supposing a big hollow cross were lying flat on the ground, and you could walk in at the top. You would walk down through the museum until you came to the part where the arms cross the upright piece. One arm is the library and the other arm is our big assembly hall. When you stand there in the center, (called the rotunda) the tower is right over your head; and if you could walk on down toward the bottom of the cross, you would pass through the chapel and come out on the skating rink. Under the rink is the gymnasium, which would be like a base for the cross to stand on -- if it weren't lying down flat."

"Heavens, Erma! How did you find out all this in so short a time?"

"Oh, I had a word with the janitor, while you were romancing about the cloister."

"The what! Crosses and cloisters, and what will we have next, and where are they?" came from a chorus of eager girls who had gathered to hear this wise senior expound the fundamentals of our labyrinth.

"Let's go back, in imagination," said Erma, thoroughly enjoying her gift for explaining things. "Let's go back to the main door at the head of the cross. Just beyond the -er-vestibule,
and before you start into the museum, there is a corridor going both ways. The left arm leads out to the boys' close, and the right arm leads out to our close. I think the offices open from these two corridors."

"I thought you said the left arm was the library," one of the freshmen interrupted.

Erma explained that the library was in the left arm of the main, big cross, and the offices were in the long corridor that ran along the top of the cross.

"Oh, I can understand it fine," said Kitty. "The museum, hall, library, and chapel, make the four sections of the cross. But where do the cloisters come in?"

"Well," said Erma, "let's imagine, now, that we enter by this little side door at the end of our close."

"Another monkish term!" said I; and Erma made motions as if to throw away her beautiful hair and don the bonnet and robe.

"Don't interrupt!" she said, severely, and went on. "This little door of ours lets you in at what we may call the northwest corner of a square. This square is hollow in the center; it is open to the sky, and has grass growing in it, and walks, and a fountain in the middle. And they are going to call it a cloister, --I guess it's because these buildings are somewhat like the old English monasteries. Anyway, it's pretty out there, and romantic, and scholarly, perhaps."

"In all this description," said an impatient Sophomore, "I don't see any real school-rooms. Are we going to have our lessons
in the library or in the museum?"

"Neither! Smartie!" said Erma. "I sat on the basin where the fountain is going to be. I sat facing the museum; the assembly hall was on my right, those offices I was telling you about were on my left, and the school-rooms were behind me, making the fourth side of the hollow square. There's another cloister and set of school-rooms on the boys' side-- they sort of fit into the upper half of that big cross we started with."

"It's very geometrical," said Marion Sibley, thoughtfully.

"And about as clear," said Agnes, who belonged in Oliver Cottage, but had come to Fisher to say hello to us.

"Still, it makes sense," said Kitty. "I almost think I could find my way to chapel alone if I should have to do so."

Erma was delighted with this tribute to her clearness, and said eagerly, "How would you go, Kitty?"

"I'd go in our side door and turn right, going past the school-rooms, and turn left into the assembly hall, and then turn right again into the chapel."

"Fine," Erma and I who had been there, both admired Kitty's display of cleverness.

"Only, you don't have to go through the hall," said Erma, "because there is a passage or corridor beside it. And before you turn into that passage, you find the stairs that go down to the manual training rooms."

"Don't tell us any more!" said Josy. "I'm dizzy enough to fall down stairs already!"
We were sitting in the alcove of the living-room, and as the conversation lagged between topics, we heard Mother Knowlton coming toward us, talking with someone we didn't know. A light step and gay little laugh gave us our first introduction to Miss Bicknell, the new principal. Erma fell in love with her at first sight. Nearly all of us were captivated by her feminine charm. The teachers of the old school were sedate, solid, noble women worthy to be admired and obeyed and revered. Miss Bicknell vividly typified a new school -- young, free, buoyant, adventurous! She seemed about thirty, rather tall, slender, and thoroughly alive. She had wavy, golden hair, purposeful blue eyes, and (judging from her manner of speaking) a small, resolute mouth, and a will of her own. It seems to be characteristic of a certain style of blondes that they are tremendously tenacious about a few things, but by and large, are graceful and gracious. Thus was Miss Bicknell, -- and her Christian name was Grace.

How we immediately fell into the habit of calling her "Biddy Bick" is a matter that needs much explaining.

Does my learned reader recall, in "Great Expectations" the character named "Biddy"? To understand our attitude toward Miss Bicknell, you must know Pip's feeling for this first and dearest of his teachers. One gleams from this passage in Dickens a feeling that "Biddy" is a term of endearment, like the word "buddy" that has more recently come into use between men who have faced danger or hardship together. As a title, Biddy Bick has other advantages. The word Miss, goes hissing through space like a
town crier's rattle; but "Biddy Bick" can be caught, just by those present, almost without being spoken. This is very important among blind people. But Biddy Bick never took advantage of us; never crept up on us unannounced. She came clicking down the hall on her high heels with a step that no one could mistake or imitate. During my senior year I had my first pair of high heels, and the girls said: "Ruthy, you walk like Bick, but not so dancingly."

She had another trick all her own, which amused us and endeared her to us. Here we could go into a long dissertation on the subject of expletives. No one who is really alive can entirely free the vocabulary from them. From "fudge" to "damnation" the meaning is not in the word, but in the character of the speaker. Our new principal permitted herself just one expletive, and by it she expressed everything from horror to joy, from grief to rapture.

"Oh-my!" she would say, and you couldn't tell whether she had just been left a million dollars, or whether she had just discovered she was eating a spider. We practised it for hours. A few of us worked up a pretty good imitation—-but never good enough to fool our fellows. Astonishment was the impression she most often conveyed; but you never could tell what the astonishment was about. When you sit alone and unexpectedly hear upon your door the familiar knock of a beloved friend, you do not know whether joy or sorrow, reminiscence or anticipation will be the subject of your discourse. That's how it was. When Miss Bicknell
would come into the room, saying: "Oh-my! girls!" we were all eagerness.

All this we did not learn in the moment of introduction, however, for when strangeness made our conversation a little awkward, Mother Knowlton tactfully suggested that we go out for a walk before supper.

"The close" as we called the enclosure between the cottages, was a brick walk 270 feet long and 20 feet wide, bordered on each side by a very low wall and a twenty foot garden between the walk and the cottages. Many girls just returned to school were walking by two's and three's up and down the close, and small groups were sitting comfortably on the low, parallel walls. All were talking eagerly to their next neighbor, or calling back and forth across the walk. "Hello, girls!" "Hiie There!" "What cottage are you in?" "Where's your matron?" So we picked up the loose ends and began piecing together the design for our last year at school.

Only one shadow hovered over those first few days— the absence of Miss Marrett and Miss Lily. They had retired in June, and were taking up new work together in Boston. We missed them, sadly. We liked our new teachers and grew fond of them; but they made entirely new places in our hearts and minds. They opened new vistas for us, but they never encroached upon the loyalties to tradition and idealism in which our earliest growth had been rooted. In that first year, some of the new teachers were at a great disadvantage, because the work was so new and strange to
them and they were taking the place of veterans in the service of the blind. Although we resent the notion that there is a "psychology of the blind" different from any other psychology, we do admit that certain adjustments of viewpoint make the blind and the seeing better friends. For instance, a blind girl who could find her way around the new buildings alone, might not be able to cut up her lettuce, or manage canned peaches gracefully. Now this is not a phase in the psychology of the blind! For it is equally true of the seeing.--A seeing person who may be able to drive her car around a strange city without benefit of maps, may not be graceful at the table. Or, again, to illustrate, they say "the blind are very sensitive." We don't like to be seen bumping into a lamp-post; it does embarrass us. But who ever saw a seeing person slip on the ice and fall in the public street, and not be embarrassed about it? There is not one single psychological observation that can be made about the blind, which cannot be equally well illustrated by some people who can see. So far as public opinion keeps us in a class, we are all alike--classified--blind! But as individuals, we are exactly like the rest of humanity -- with the same thoughts, the same feelings, the same variations of abilities, passions, fears, hopes, skills and what not. Do you think the blind are more afraid of falling than the seeing are? Consider how the population of a large city behaves during the black-outs in war-time.

We think the blind are exactly like the rest of the world, and if you do not think so, it all comes down to the fact that
none of us can see ourselves as others see us.

This digression on psychology arises from the fact that our new teachers had to learn how to get along with us as a class, and found it difficult at first to reconcile their treatment of us (as a class) with their natural treatment of us as individuals.

When one of our brilliant young teachers was overheard saying she felt as if she were teaching her grandmothers, most of the class was furious, but the two youngest girls thought it was a big joke, and admired her brains for getting through college younger than we were getting through high school.

Both pupils and teachers had a great deal to learn that first year at Watertown. As pupils, one of the new features of our school life, was morning assembly held in unison with the boys. A hundred and fifty happy young voices, well trained, all singing hymns of prayer and praise, was an exhilarating experience. Another feature which we greatly enjoyed was our rural atmosphere, the fresh, clean air or the mists that blew up from the River Charles "that washes our walls on the southern side", and the birds, and the trees, and the open windows. Particularly, when we were out of doors we used to enjoy hearing the music students playing and singing as their music floated out to us. Music sounds different out of doors than it does in a concert hall; it is softer and at the same time grander, and much more deeply emotional; hence the almost irresistible appeal of the hurdy-gurdy in the spring, the marching band, and the concerts in the park. We should have more of them in America.
In Watertown as at South Boston, we were required to spend one hour of every day out in the open. That year the first hour of the afternoon was set aside for walking. Now we did not have to go out on the street, the girls who could see a little were not needed as leaders, and so it happened that Erma and I strayed off together down beyond Brookes Cottage and were sprawled under a pear tree in the deep, green grass, with reddish gold leaves above us, and deep blue sky above that.

"Oh-my! Girls! Isn't this the walk hour?" We sprang up laughing, and sauntered back to the path with her. She wore a soft woolen dress in a shade of gorgeous bottle-green; and her bright hair seemed as gay as the dancing autumn leaves. Was it her charm, or was it our waking womanhood that made us almost worship her?

When we reached the driveway where most of the girls were walking, Miss Bicknell left us to talk with others, and presently Erma and I were joined by another new teacher, Miss Haven. It seems the teachers were keeping the walk-hour too, not for their health, but primarily to get acquainted with us in a social way, so that we would come to know them as friends as well as teachers. Miss Haven, like Miss Bicknell, was blonde, but lighter, taller, bigger — not at all the type that can be said to dance through life. Nor did we think of her as stolid or serious. She had a dreamy, almost sleepy manner of moving and speaking, which at first we did not understand, but which we have come to attribute to an unusually mild, gentle, poetic mature. More than any other
of our teachers, Miss Genevieve Haven was like Miss Marrett and Miss Lily -- those former teachers from whom we had learned not just subject matter, but how to live. She is (as has been proved by her years of service) the kind of teacher who can devote herself to a cause, giving of herself moderately, but over a long period.

Our other new teacher, Miss Edith Donnelly, was quite a contrast -- small, dainty, brunette, a little delicate in health, mentally very brilliant indeed, and emanating dynamic enthusiasm and contagious energy. She could put her "all" into teaching her subjects to one class each year, and have just as much for the next class, the next year. In fact, she only stayed at Perkins one year; but her work was potent. Those who studied with her enjoyed whatever she taught, learned it well, and remembered it. And remember her, pleasantly and gratefully. Miss Donnelly was the youngest teacher, younger than some of us girls, but she brought youth and life and fun to us. She could see, and she had not been brought up in a girls' school all her life. She had much to give us, especially us seniors who were so soon to go out and try to understand and cope with the outside world.

Perkins has changed very liberally since it came to Watertown. Being the first class to graduate from there (as Erma puts it) we are the strongest link between the old school and the new. If we still love the old type of training, the old style teachers, the old-time philosophy, we love it because it is the foundation upon which we have successfully built our lives. If we love the new
school, with its greater beauty, its more ample leisure, more freedom in dress and speech and play, and its less demanding thought, we love it because it has met the trend of the times, and is laying the foundation upon which the blind youth of New England will successfully build their lives.
No Flint! No Spark!

Though I, my love, must ever walk
With hesitance, in paths of endless night,
Just call to me, my Love, just call,
And your voice will be my light.

Though I must grope within a vast
Foreboding gloom, that threatens with distress,
Be near to me, my Love, be near,
And I shall know all loveliness.

(From "The Invisible Light", by J. Fraa)

The new school was still strange to us. We didn't know our way around very well. Nobody would have got lost for that reason. But Vincent was new, too. Recently blinded, he was newly arrived at Perkins; otherwise he would not have been wandering on the girls' side. He was in a tearing rage, was David Vincent, when he discovered how hopelessly lost he was. He knew the Charles was somewhere about -- he hadn't been looking for it; he didn't care much if he wandered into it. But they would see to that. They would "protect" him! For what? They had sent him to this infernal school after he had finished high school and had a year at college. What did they expect him to do here? Get lost and make a fool of himself! He ground his teeth in futile rage, and started up the drive once more. Would the black mood, and the thick, black feeling of the air around him, never lift?

Footsteps! At last, here was someone who might be able to tell him where to go.

"Say, look here! (Maybe he's blind too) if you can explain
to me the ways of this damn layout, so I can --"

"Oh!" exclaimed a girl's startled voice.

"Good Lord!" exploded Vincent. "I -- I beg your pardon. You see I'm new here; I don't know much about being blind, anyway."

The girl's voice interrupted with a fresh, clear laugh. "Of course you're new!" she said. "You wouldn't be on our side if you weren't. Now, let's see, where do you want to go?"

"I started for the chapel," said David, blushing at his helplessness, cursing inwardly, and trying desperately not to let it show in his voice. "I guess the kindergarten is where I belong."

"Well, it isn't built yet," said Erma cheerfully. "We'll let you stay in the boys' close this year-- if I can get you there. Can you follow the edge of the grass with your foot?"

"I can try."

"Well, keep the grass on your right. Up here a little way there's a brick walk. Skip it. Just beyond that there is the big door and the front of the main building. Turn right at the open place just beyond the building."

She came over to his side and lifted his arm. "There! That way. Can you make it?"

"I can try," he repeated absently. He was somewhat startled. He had never in all his twenty-two years known a girl who would grab him by the arm and show him things without any fuss or ceremony. Here at last was somebody who might take his mind off himself for a few seconds.

"Thanks! I'm ever so much obliged, you know. This is a
heck of a place to be in, don't you think?"

"Well--I don't know. Of course, it's all very strange to you. It's strange to us, too; but it's enough like the old school -- not the buildings, but the people and the ways of doing things--so we feel at ease, even if we aren't quite at home yet."

"Strange!" cut in Vincent. "I should say so! But it's your school and I suppose you like it."

"I didn't always," answered Erma gently. "Sometimes even now, I think it will get me -- our helpless inequality."

"You poor kid! So I'm not the only martyr in this place."

"Oh! Most of the time we don't mind it so much. It only gets you occasionally after the first horror wears off. Sometimes I feel so free and hopeful." Her voice grew vibrant. "It's music that will be my salvation. If you care for it at all, you'll see how it will help you."

"I love it," he murmured. Then he realized with a shudder that he hadn't put so much animation into anything since the darkness came. "But where in the name of all that's wonderful, do you get a chance to make any music here?"

"Get acquainted with Mr. Gardiner," Erma advised. "If you've got any music in you, he'll give you a chance." She was walking away from him. "Keep the grass on your right, and turn right after you pass the building."

"Oh, I say," he called. But she must have stepped onto the grass; even the footsteps were gone.

Erma drank in the brisk Fall air with long, full breaths,
thinking that perhaps life might be worthwhile again, sometime; there might be more to it than just earning a living; there might be friends -- not to take Gen's place, but just to keep one from feeling empty and acting useless. She listened. Yes, he was making it all right. She could hear the step on the gravel, alternating with a pause as he followed the grass. Then she heard Rodney's familiar voice --

"Hi, David. What have you been up to over there?"

So that was David, David Vincent, she'd heard about him -- a sad case among many sad cases; he had lost his sight in a Fourth of July mishap. Little sister's firecracker didn't work. Well, better him than her, the boy reasoned; but Erma thought a girl could fit into a life of helplessness and dependence better than a man could. Erma hurried into supper with her mind more active and more interested in the life about her, than it had been for a very long time.

Our new cottages were very pleasant, all following this general plan: a main entrance with a living-room on one side and teachers' suite beyond, a dining-room on the other side with domestic rooms beyond that. The upstairs was one long corridor from which opened ten or twelve sleeping rooms and the matron's quarters. In every cottage, at least one teacher also sleeps on this upper floor, having the large room midway of the hall. In all four houses most of the windows face the south, giving Fisher and May a view of the close, while Oliver and Brookes overlook the Charles. Trees, vines, gardens and paths are in evidence
everywhere, for it is believed that:

"The possibility of feeding constantly upon some source of beauty is a most vital necessity to a blind person."

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"By Jove! Erma! That's the way!" said Mr. Gardiner admiringly, when she went to the hall for her organ lesson next morning. "You've been moping around with a face as long as a fiddle, long enough. This morning you look as if Santa Claus was coming, and the look is becoming to you. You're a good looking girl when you smile; and no matter how well you can play, you'll need all the grace and charm you can get to make a go of it."

The praise brought the color to her cheeks as she seated herself at the console, saying,

"The height of my ambition is to overhear the audience or the reporters say, you'd never know she was blind!" And with an understanding laugh, the lesson got underway. Later, she told Mr. Gardiner about David wanting a chance to play, and although they knew he would find his way to the music department in the regular course of the school program, he promised to look the boy up right away in the hope of making the adjustment period a little easier for him.

So Erma listened, as she went about the school corridors, for a strange hand on the keys. Oh, yes, she would know; and she did know. The timid beginning, the notes swelling out with pride when he found he could do better than he had dared to hope; the
the occasional crashing on a wrong note when his courage over-
reached his judgment -- everyone knew there was a forlorn soul
groping for solace, and finding it there at the organ.

Six weeks passed before Erma dared to risk another meeting.
Then she went up the steps from the girls' corridor at the back
of the stage, and, standing behind the curtains, she said in a
stage whisper: "Well, I see you got your chance."

If David had been playing the organ, this wouldn't have been
so easy, for the organ keyboard is down on the main floor of
Dwight Hall. But the piano is often on the stage, and this morn-
ing he was memorizing "The Hunting Song" of which Mrs. Howe had
composed both words and music. David had played piano and organ
before he lost his sight; but braille music was a new and a sore
trial to him; he was overjoyed at this unexpected diversion. He
stopped playing, got up from the piano, and called out:

"Oh, I say! Hello! Where are you?"

"Sh-sh-sh!" Erma almost shrieked. "Heavens! Don't you know
we aren't allowed to meet or speak to each other? They'd have
the girls and boys at opposite ends of the state if they could
afford it. Go on playing, softly, and don't look this way, and
don't talk unless you have some braille music that you can pre-
tend to be reading. I'm behind a curtain; but you don't know who
may be watching you."

"Oh, hell!" the boy moaned; and he ground his teeth till
it hurt. "Inequality!"

Erma laughed -- because her understanding of his struggle
made her feel very close to tears. But she said rather sternly: "If you get into a rage every time, I shan't come."

For answer he began playing "The Prisoner's Song" from Il Trovatore -- and poured forth his heart's deep grief in the words, "Ah! I have sighed to rest me Deep in the silent grave."

Erma had not known he could sing; but it was not his fine voice that thrilled her so much as the deep earnestness of the words. She knew he had longed to die -- what blind person hasn't? But the song which is really a love song, gave him emotional relief, and because he was not in love, it carried him out of himself and back to sympathy with his fellowmen, back to the realization that blindness is not the only sorrow, and no matter how deep the ditch or how high the hurdle, the race is to the strong.

"I must dash," she breathed softly when he had finished. "Goodbye".

"Come tomorrow," he pleaded behind a poorly feigned cough. "Not until next week about this time," she said," and not then unless I'm sure they're all out. Goodbye. And cheer up. The inequality isn't as one-sided as it seems. Any Tom, Dick or Harry can see us-- maybe read our very thoughts, when we don't even know they're around and can't retaliate. It's unfair. But we get a try at their souls now and then -- those who come within reach. With your voice you will be able to remove mountains of other people's sorrow. So, cheer up. Got to cope with your own woes first, you know. Bye."
She was gone, and he had to turn his thoughts to the business of learning braille.

Soon began the rehearsing for Christmas carols. Chorus met in the chapel -- the chapel modelled on the old English style, with seats at the head for the archbishop, the bishop, the dean, and the lesser clergy, with long tiers of seats running lengthwise down the sides -- where the boys and the girls were separated by the broad main aisle -- and other seats for the faculty at the further end. The practising of carols is perhaps the very happiest part of the school work; everybody loves it and puts heart and souls into it. David had grown up in the world that works for its living and gets its pleasure through recreation. Now he was to learn about the "joy of work." It was very strange to him, Erma knew, but she would show him. Her voice was not very sweet, but it was clear and strong and true to pitch, and she exulted in singing. So they sang, sometimes with the rest, sometimes, it seemed just to each other; and there grew up a comraderie between them which gave the tranquil routine of school life a kind of magic glamour. With this appropriate setting, Christmas drew near.

There are usually two performances of carol singing, one for the public, the other on closing night for the school with relatives and friends. These concerts are given in Dwight Hall because the chapel does not accommodate an audience. When we were arranged on the stage, there was no broad aisle between us, and Erma and David were within easy speaking distance.
He touched her arm.
"David?" she questioned.
"Yes. But how did you know my name?"
"I've heard the boys talking to you."
"Then that's no fair, because I don't know yours -- it's inequality, you know."

She laughed and told her name.

They sang "O, Come All Ye Faithful."

"Isn't it wonderful!" she whispered.

He said thoughtfully: "I feel happier than I have since last June; and more pious than I ever did in my life before."

They sang, "Everywhere, Everywhere, Christmas Tonight" that beloved carol composed by Phillips Brooks. Then Loretta sang, "Silent Night, Holy Night," and her voice was clear and reverent and lovely. There were other carols, so dear, so full of meaning for us, because, except for our very limited material successes, our only real peace and strength comes from religion.

When it was over the girls went off backstage while the boys waited for the guests to leave and then went out through the hall.

"Tomorrow?" he murmured as the sopranos filed past.

"Perhaps." It wouldn't have been audible to anyone else, but he heard it and turning, locked arms with Rodney, with a vehemence that made him ask:

"What's up now?"

Of course Rodney knew. He knew everything about Vincent, for a vital friendship had awakened their understanding of many
things. "She's a peach," Rodney said, "but it's dangerous you know -- we're blind." He meant to say "you're both blind," but he couldn't, and yet he knew David would understand.

Yes, David understood, for like Prometheus, he had the courage to play with fire.

"No flint, no spark!" he retorted gaily; and although they were roommates, they said no more about it that night.

But in her little bed across the campus Erma lay awake playing with fire too, or at least, planning to do so. These snatches of moments caused a stimulation which there was no means to satisfy. "We must either get better acquainted," she said to herself, "or put an end to this. Try both, and in that order," she added dreamily, and fell asleep, happy.

She did not go to the hall next morning, though it was the last day before Christmas vacation. But that night, before the choir had time to be seated after the second carol, she seized his hand and whispered, "Come! And they vanished into the folds of the curtain.

Kitty and I were about to show amazement, but Rodney gave us the high-sign. He was sprawling across his own chair and David's, too. So we concealed Erma's seat, between us, and -- as they turned down the lights to make Loretta's solo more impressive -- the pair were not missed.

They sat on the steps. "It's a gorgeous evening," she murmured.

"How do we know?" he flung back almost bitterly.
"We can see a lot of things through our minds," she said. Then with a sudden impulse she started for the nearest window.

"I'll show you."

"There are wisps of clouds racing across the sky tonight — the stars are frosty white in between — the shadows are stretching over the paths, and the evergreens sway without rustling. Don't you see?" They were silent a long time. It was the hardest lesson he had tackled, to see without his eyes -- to pretend he enjoyed it. The young man stood rigid, struggling -- rebellious, cynical, hopeless, bitter -- hard as flint. In the stillness Loretta was singing --

"Glory streams from heaven afar, Heavenly sing -- "

"Won't you see?" the girl pleaded, gently.

"Radiance beams from thy holy face, With the dawn of redeeming grace."

"Please," she whispered.

He leaned his cheek against her hair.

"Listen, David. Everything is sparkling tonight. The grounds are sparkling white, the river is one big, winding sheet, glittering and silvery. They sky in the west is crystal blue, and so clear, where the hills and the bare trees are sparkly black and white against it. And there's a star shining just over the tower. A great, big, silver star! It's the Christmas star, David. Can't you see!"

"I see!" he whispered, faintly. Then more bravely, "Yes. I'll see, -- your way. I will not be a coward where a girl has
so much courage. Thank God!" She knew his lips were pressed against her temple, as he murmured: "And thank you, Erma, my dear."

Then he stood up abruptly. The spark had been struck -- beauty was not denied him -- the fire of life would glow again! He was utterly weary from the struggle, but rejoicing in the conquest.
While We Were Seniors

O, we are the seniors of P. I.
We more often laugh than we cry,
We are eight, you know, when we stand in a row,
Which we dasen't do when Bick is nigh.

There's Catherine so wise and so fair,
She sits in the president's chair,
And rules us you see as well as can be,
To disobey her none would dare.

There's Elsie the scribe and the scholar,
Who will not let us roar and hollar,
We always could be as happy as she
If her good example we'd foller.

Our Joe has a lofty position,
And holds it through every condition,
Her touch on the keys brings pleasure and ease,
For she is our senior musician.

There's Gladys the belle of the season,
The fame of her charm is no treason;
She mingles with ease; tries always to please,
Is a favorite for very good reason.

There's Bessie the Scot with her humor
Who keepeth us all in good 'umor;
Her joke and her jest are ever the best,
And the tale of her wit is no rumor.

Among us there's one -- "Agnes Nutton"
Whose circles are round as a button,
But geometry, is her enemy, --
She'd rather keep house and cook mutton.

O! Ruth is the linguist among us,
Her Latin is funny as fungus!
Her English goes well when she don't have to spell,
And at talk she can always out-tongue us.

Though Erma attempts to write poisy,
We cannot say she's our class posy,
For rhythm and rhyme she cannot combine, --
Her verse is exceedingly prosy.

And now we have told you our numbers,
We're not half so green as cucumbers!
We think we're all right, so I'll bid you good-night,
And wish you most peaceful of slumbers.
CHAPTER XVI

While We Were Seniors

While Erma was frittering away her time writing verses for our amusement and love-letters to encourage David, the rest of us were struggling with our graduating essays. Two things a Perkins graduate was required to do in those days, to pass a spelling test and write an essay for delivery at Commencement. During the winter term, this essay claimed our major effort. The topic was "English Literature" and the treatment was characteristic of Perkins, asserting that devotion to some form of beauty offers the only escape from the humdrum toil of daily life. Not that we knew very much about humdrum toil! We were young; and life was still full of absorbing interests. But Perkins was doing its best to fit us for our share of the world's work. We were Seniors, and our academic education being nearly accomplished, we were beginning to get a preview in the fields of commerce, industry, labor, and even humdrum toil of domestic duty. Perhaps the greatest innovation of the new school was the domestic science cottage. In the Senior class, Agnes and Elsie had a wholesome desire to learn the household arts, Josephine and Erma were wrapped up in their music, Kitty and Ruth were dreaming of normal school, while Gladys and Bessie seemed to be taking an ever increasing interest in the social life of their home communities. Bessie's people were of Scotch lineage; and as her classmates, and also as members of the full school audience, we often were entertained by their rollicking repartee, their little skits,
songs, and recitations. More than once this merry family provided entertainment for the Howe Reading Club; and of the Ruby Seal parties they had a share in, many a pleasant memory still lives among the pupils of those happy days.

"Lo! as hid seeds spring after rainless years" so now blossoms our remembrance of that first year at Watertown. Did you, my fortunate seeing housewife ever try to iron lace curtains with your eyes shut? And suddenly discover that the far corner, which you thought all stiff and smooth, was puckered up under the corner you were now struggling with?

"Of course, they didn't!" scoffs Erma at me while I write. "Seeing people never have such experiences." "But we did!" I persist. "And do you remember how the girls who could see a little used to pretend there were silhouettes of Humpty Dumpty and the Pied Piper with his train of rats, along the walls where we thought we had washed the paint?" Oh, but it was fun as well as work. But how we hated to empty the garbage! For if we held the bucket in one hand and our nose with the other, there was no way to tell if all the scraps had come out or not. There certainly are jobs that need three hands, when one hand has to take the place of eyes.

Miss Grace Porter was the guiding light of Bennett Cottage, as our new domestic science unit had been officially christened.

Miss Bennett, our "Little Principal" had retired just a few years before, and nearly all the girls at Watertown knew and remembered her. We did not, perhaps, realize that she had a
marked scientific or domestic interest; but the teachers and former students knew this, for they had known her long and well. Miss Lenna D. Swinnerton gives the following passage, telling of the work and character so much beloved by those who were privileged to call Miss Bennett, "Friend."

"Miss Gazella Bennett of Hamden, Massachusetts began her work at Perkins Institution--then in South Boston--In September, 1876. At that time Miss Shattuck was principal of both departments, living in the boys' building. Miss Bennett, as her assistant, was head teacher in the girls' department, where she lived, and where, the two departments were more rigidly separated, she was made Little Principal.

"In order to well understand and appreciate Miss Bennett and her method of carrying on the school, one must recall the conditions in New England farm homes and the character of New England country folk of the period in which she was reared. These hard-working, thrifty and independent people held stern religious beliefs, and set rather inflexible standards for social behavior. Mount Holyoke College -- then known as South Hadley "Seminary"--from which Miss Bennett was graduated, exerted a strong religious and moral influence upon its students, being noted for turning out "ministers' wives". From this background Miss Bennett brought to her responsible position an integrity of character and spirit of devotion which neither her pupils nor associate workers could fail to esteem. First of all she was loyal--loyal to the Director under whom she worked, and to her own standards of law and order.
A firm disciplinarian, any misconduct on the part of a pupil was, with her, a very serious matter; but she meant never to be unjust either in correcting or grading a girl. It was, perhaps, by the virtue of her virtues that she sometimes seemed to make too little allowance for the frivolities or weaknesses of some pupils which later years proved to have been mere immaturities. But Miss Bennett had no gloomy school—quite the contrary. She encouraged the girls in having all legitimate good times and such social activities as their means and school hours permitted. She herself was cheerful and urged good cheer and a truly family spirit in the cottage life. She reorganized classes into "grades" that should more nearly correspond to those in public schools, including tentative requirements for graduation. The first young woman entitled to receive a diploma upon this system was graduated in June, 1880, although the actual formal diplomas were not ready for distribution until June, 1883, when five other students with the former received them. A little later, the graduates and others, urged by their teachers, formed the "Perkins Institution Alumnae Association" to which Miss Bennett gave most cordial support. She encouraged its members to meet annually at the school, and invited them to bring her any suggestions gathered from their life experiences which might prove of practical value in preparing under-graduates to enter upon the "World's broad field of battle". By precept and example she inspired these and others of her pupils with a desire to be self-supporting and a purpose to be of some real service in life; and a notable proportion of
of them found employment in fields of signal usefulness.

"Miss Bennett was progressive; using every opportunity to keep herself and her pupils abreast of the times. From her studies at the "Teachers' School of Science" in Boston, she brought to her classes the best in method and material for their lessons in nature study, and helped to compile "Life and Her Children" a natural history reader which was very useful to those who read line type. She attended, and often took her pupils to the Lowell Institute Lectures given in Boston by the most literary and scientific men of the period. She also travelled abroad, observing and studying and adapting what she learned to the needs of her pupils.

"Recognizing the special need of the blind for physical training, Miss Bennett, having graduated from the Posse Gymnasium, personally taught many of the gymnastic classes. For those who were not able to do the class exercises, she engaged an assistant who gave them massage and "remedial" gymnastics. This was the beginning of the well-developed department of Physiotherapy now in vogue at Perkins.

"Miss Bennett was not unmindful of the spiritual needs of her pupils. Sunday mornings after "prayers" she read aloud the Sunday School lessons, and in the evening reading hour chose religious articles or books. She attended the Central Congregational Church in Boston, where professors from colleges or divinity schools often preached.

"Miss Bennett was genuinely domestic--a womanly woman--loving
her home and little children. Most of her summer vacations were spent on her farm in Hamden, where she provided for her father in his last years; kept the house in repair; paid the mortgage and, at her death, left the place to a younger brother. It had long been her wish that her Perkins girls might have a place in which to practice real housekeeping; so, when the school was moved to new buildings in Watertown, one cottage was erected and equipped for that express purpose, and, at the request of the alumnae association, was named "Bennett Cottage"-- a most suitable memorial to an earnest teacher and devoted friend of blind girls."

(Lenna D. Swinerton)

Bennett Cottage is much smaller than the other households, having accommodations for one teacher and four girls. It is more like a private home with a family-sized livingroom, dining-room and kitchen on the first floor, and three sleeping rooms upstairs.

The four girls eat and sleep there, but they do not spend all their day at domestic pursuits. They have a regular program while attending to breakfast and the practical problems of housekeeping and home-keeping. Some of the routine work, however, is done by other school girls who may have lessons an hour a day, or once or twice a week. Thus some who chiefly wish or need it, get a general idea of domesticity, from housemaid and mother's helper, to home-maker, wife and mother. Well! maybe not mother! One of our ambitious graduates married a college professor and they had four children. Then came the depression, when the
professor could have a year off, if he could find a means of living that long. His very ambitious young wife, blind, with four little ones, applied for the opportunity of making their home in Bennett Cottage and giving the Perkins girls first-hand experience in bringing up children. It was a noble scheme! But the administration evidently didn’t recognize its possibilities. So far as we know, the "Overbrook Exchange" plan gives our girls their best opportunity to work with little folks. This plan of having one graduate each year go to the school for the blind in Overbrook, Pennsylvania, and one of the Overbrook girls come to Perkins, for "further experience" has been carried on for several years and has operated to the great advantage of those who have participated in it. Those who went to Overbrook usually helped in the nursery and with the first grade children. At first the girl who came from Pennsylvania was an assistant teacher, but now she usually becomes a student in the "Harvard Course."

The Harvard Course is another stride forward in the education of the blind. Dr. E.E. Allen and other felt that teaching the blind presents so many unique phases that those who wish to enter this line of teaching should have special preparatory studies. Accordingly, in 1920, it was arranged that a course of college grade should be offered by Perkins, and recognized by Harvard University as worthy to count toward a degree of education. The course covers a half-year’s work, and may be followed by another half-year on special "methods." Students and teachers from many foreign countries, and graduates of many of our schools for the
blind, take this course in hope, and often with the assurance, of getting very good positions. Through this channel many earnest and charming people have lived at Perkins for at least a year, and have contributed greatly to the broadening influence which any form of education offers.

One of the first guests to enlist was Estralia Fauntinel, and when she got some tags to mark her clothes, the embroidery bureau had spelled her name so that instead of meaning a nice little girl, it meant a shreaded chicken -- which disgusted her, and amused us very much indeed. These friends who have lived with us and learned our ways and added much to our understanding of other races and cultures, have also given us a cosmopolitan feeling that suffers deeply in these times of war, cruelty and devastation. It is hard to think of the jolly girl from Holland, and wonder, and perhaps never know what has happened to her and her pupils. Sometimes we hear from Alice Carpenter-- brave, cheerful letters from war-torn China. How it has widened our horizon and strengthened our bonds of human sympathy to know these people!

In these thoughts, as in our lives, we have strayed far from Bennett Cottage and the problems of our high-school days, when we were grinding out first essays, and Erma was flitting through life on the sprouting wings of verse. The Wheelwright bells had just been presented to the school which Miss Haven thought a good subject for an exercise in English composition. So we did papers on the Wheelwright Bells! They, the bells, were
indeed a worthy subject. We went into the museum to see them, ponderous iron bells in huge frames, eight, tuned to play the scale. Each bell had a tongue, of course, and each had a motto or quotation molded upon it. Some of our papers were letters of thanks to Mrs. Andrew C. Wheelwright, a descendent of Thomas Perkins, who gave the bells to the school; some were rapturous anticipations of the pleasure and inspiration the gift would afford, while Erma's contribution ran somewhat as follows:

The Wheelwright Bells

No gift could more appropriate be
Then bells, for those who cannot see.

Our hearts will e'er appreciate
This chiming, peeling set of eight.

Lo, the deep-toned bass bids every youth
"Ring in the LOVE of good and truth."

HOPE chimes in with sweet accord --
"Lift up your hearts unto the Lord."

The tenor called with FAITH to see --
"Send out thy light: Let it lead me."

Then GLORY answers with full tone
"Arise! shine! for thy light is come."

One bell doth to the world proclaim,
"Sing forth the HONOR of His Name."

A special blessing gives one word --
"Ye light in darkness, bless the Lord."

With JOY the notes together gall;
God's ANGEL "bless those we do call."

So shall our bells, chiming or peeling
Thrill all who hear with noble feeling.

This burst of genius was the forerunner of a whole sheaf of
class poems used at our Class Day's ceremonies. Recalling the larks we had learning and rehearsing these "witties" as we called them, it is a marvel that we all passed the geometry, physics, English history and rhetoric exams, and finished the courses in sewing, typewriting, as well as keeping up with the chorus and music requirements. Indeed, no one had even thought of the possibility of failing, which may explain why no one failed. It was the happiest time of our lives, as a graduation year should be.
CHAPTER XVII
Love In Cloister

Though I, my love, must ever walk
With hesitance in paths of endless night,
Just call to me, my love, just call,
And your voice will be my light.

Though I must grope within a vast,
Foreboding gloom, that threatens with distress,
Be near to me, my love, be near,
And I shall know all loveliness.

(From "The Invisible Light" by Johanna Frada.)

Gorgeous with the gold of forsythia, the vivid green of new grass, the pale green of budding trees, and here and there a touch of flushing white, "all loveliness" had indeed assembled for spring at Perkins. People have been heard to express wonder and even disapproval that the new school is so beautiful. There is a lavishness of beauty about the buildings and the grounds which thoughtless people do not understand, thinking it to be wasted upon those who cannot see. One must try to realize that beauty is a thing apart from the material which gives it expression. Beauty is neither visible nor tangible— it is vibratory. You may feel of a rose, or a bird, or even of the Perkins tower, but you cannot feel the beauty in them. Beauty is not available through the touch, nor through the sight. Thousands of motorists ride home at evening in the face of the sunset. Of all who see the flaming
pageant, few are aware of its beauty!

Beauty is not seen nor touched -- it must be felt. But there must be some medium of contact. For you it may be sight, for us it must be inspiration. How lavish the material loveliness must be, that it may flood the atmosphere and pierce our work-a-day absorption!

If we are to attain even in slight measure the "fullness of life", we who are blind must have the capacity to feed constantly upon some source of beauty; we must have a hungering for beauty, and that hungering must be satisfied. Dr. Allen and those who helped him build the new Perkins, understood this--our very great need, and in excessive material loveliness, they have given us the substance which fulfills this need. Of his wide experience, Dr. Allen knows that "the young blind respond to environmental influence of all kinds, and that a certain measure of wholesome freedom--indesirable environment--counts for more than rigid discipline or concentration upon school instruction."

To this end the fullest, richest possible environment was made accessible to us is the new Perkins; our souls felt enriched and overflowed with joy. Occasionally we studied, usually together, and it might have been just as a battle of wits to see who knew the most, for lessons seemed almost incidental to the real business of living. As our beloved Director would sometimes tell us at morning assembly, "The business of living--the daily service you can render to others, or your contribution to your own keep while at school--counts for more in preparation for life,
than how much you have of academic learning. Some knowledge is a necessity; learning is a very useful asset; but living is an art."

As—to exist in the business world, one must know the rudiments of business, so—to make living an art, one must know the rudiments of the arts. For us, painting is out of reach, and so for all practical value, is sculpture—for though we can feel of it we cannot truly comprehend grace of line, proportion, or pose. The other three fundamental arts are open to us in fullest measure. It is so obvious that music is open to us, that many people think every blind person should have "absolute pitch", should be able to play anything by ear, and should earn a living by some form of music—whether it be singing on the street, or concert-playing. Not quite so obvious, but just as free for our enjoyment, is the art of motion. From the swaying of leaves, the lapping of waves, the rhythm of folk-dancing, to the rhythm of rocking, of weaving, of typing, or of swimming. Motion in all its forms offers escape from the bondage of blindness. A much fuller escape, an almost unfettered freedom is offered by the art of "words". Whether it be through reading or through creative writing, the blind can enjoy to the utmost, not only prose and poetry, but the deeper values of thought, feeling, and philosophizing, and—greater than all these—the deepest understanding of our fellow men—a deep and broad awareness that we are a unit in God's creation.

"It's good to be alive!" exclaimed Rodney to David one gay morning in late April, as they were strolling up the drive.

"I don't see much to live for," grumbled David, "unless it's
the few rehearsals in Dwight Hall, and a stolen chat with that
girl. I daren't even call her by name because I can't see who's
around listening!' The boy was still bitter, having been blind
less than a year, but yet feeling that year was ages long. "She's
been a peach this winter," he continued, "writing little notes
and poems to coax me to like braille and learn the contractions.
She knows every time I play the organ. I'm not so good at recog-
nizing her, but she lets me know sometimes, and we play the same
thing for each other, trying different interpretations."

"Lucky you've kept a safe distance," said Rodney. "They
wouldn't have allowed it, and yet it has meant so much to you."

"I never would have stuck it out here this year without her,"
declared David, fiercely.

They could smell the moist earth that had been turned up in
the flower-beds. The air was warm and sweet, some of the trees
were faintly fragrant. David knew there were crocuses poking up
through the grass—and he could not see them! Almost insane with
the desire to see, the lad rammed his hands into his pockets and
clenched his fists. His teeth made a grinding sound. Rodney was
quick with fellow-feeling, though he didn't quite understand.

"I know how it is, Vinnie. She must be a fine girl. But
it's a bit dangerous, don't you think?"

David shivered. "Say!" he burst out; "You're not intimating
that I would fall in love with the girl--"

"No, old chap, I'm not. But don't you know how easy it is to
think you're in love—just for a few minutes sometimes? Didn't
you ever--"

"I--I suppose," David muttered a trifle wearily. "But what of it? Haven't I got a right to fall in love if I want to?"

"No, David. Not with her."

"Why not?"

The startled amazement in his tone made Rodney drop the subject. "Perhaps I'm jealous," he said softly, "let's forget it."

"Don't worry," David answered almost gayly, and they went up to the music corridor to talk over the spring concert with Mr. Gardiner.

For all his love of music, his skill in teaching, and his patience with those who needed it, Mr. Gardiner thoroughly enjoyed a keen mind and a willing worker, and in David Vincent he had found both. In truth he had not found them there, he had helped to create them; and this year, David was the pride of the chorus. He was to sing the solo, the beautiful tenor aria "On away! Awake Beloved!"

'Tis said by some philosophers that there is no such thing as accident or chance. But certain it is that singing this beautiful love song (and there being no one but Erma toward whom his mind could turn for an ideal to sing to) very naturally beguiled the boy ever deeper into the charms and snares of the tender sentiment. So he spent hours in Dwight Hall, diligently practising—oh, yes,—and by the same song, pouring out his heart's joy to her by whom it was enkindled.
"On away! awake, beloved!
Thou the wild rose of the prairie;
Thou the wild bird of the forest;
Thou with eyes so soft and fawn-like.
If thou only lookest at me,
I am happy, I am happy,
As the lilies, the lilies of the prairie,
When they feel the dew upon them."

And, just beyond the stair, or down the hall, or out in the cloister where David could never go, Erma listened, thrilled.

When she knew it was not time for him to sing, she would often sit on the edge of the fountain, alone in the little square enclosure with its romantic name, and sing his part, softly to herself.

"On away! my heart sings to thee!
Sings with joy when thou art near me.
As the singing, sighing, branches,
In the merry month of strawberries."

It was not to be that Erma should sing solo parts, for Edith and Loretta were our prima-donnas that year. But Erma could play the organ, and thus pour forth her passionate response to his song, for they both knew the words.

"When thou art not pleased, beloved,
Then my heart is sad and darkened,
As the shining rivers darken
When the clouds drop shadows on them."

Indeed, this little flirtation came perilously close to becoming a romance. But youth is strong and brave! What it lacks in wisdom it make up in courage and hope.

It was the eleventh of May—Erma has always remembered—that day when he sought to detain her at a chance meeting near the library.
"Oh! We mustn't!" she gasped. "They'll--they'll--" He found her hands. "What shall I do? I think I am going crazy! How can a healthy, strong man endure to be blind? helpless? bound by the foolish, inhuman rules that take what little is left of normal life away from us?" He threw his arms about her and crushed her to him so that only the little braille book lay between their hearts. "I love you! I want you! I need you! Isn't it hard enough to have lost my sight? Without having to give up everything--the only thing that can make life a little worth living!" He was trembling with the intense agony of passionate helplessness.

She stood very still in his arms. "Davie," she whispered, "we mustn't. You don't understand." He started as if struck, and said in an incredulous tone: "You mean--because I'm blind?"

From his relaxed embrace she free one ice-cold hand and let it stray through his hair. "We can't. We couldn't -- ever--" Her voice was the faintest breath. "We couldn't ever have children--it wouldn't be fair to them."

He stiffened as Rodney's word came to his mind: "No, Davie, you haven't the right to fall in love with her." So that was it! But the fight had been roused in him. "You have lost your sight from measles, and I lost mine from an accident. Our blindness wouldn't be inherited. You know it wouldn't!" he exulted, pressing her closer to him once more.

They had moved, quite unconsciously from the hallway toward the deserted balcony of the gym. The shift in his line of approach
from love-making to reasoning had greatly helped the girl to recover her self-possession.

"Davie," she said softly. "A weakness has to begin somewhere. It isn't because you are blind, but because I'm blind too. We could never live a normal life. We would either have a third person around all the time to be eyes for us, or we would have to give up so many things that are necessary for a normal, active life. Neither of us could drive a car, or read our mail, or get the ants out of the baby's stockings!" She tried to laugh, but he was unconvinced.

"Other people have done it," he said challengingly.

"Not the kind of people we want to be!" she flung back. "They don't live the way I want to live." She was quite herself again. Her fear of being caught with him, even her excitement of being along with him, had passed. Again, for the moment at least, she was a level-headed young lady at the verge of Commencement.

"David," she said seriously, "because I could love you, I know some other girl will love you. Some girl will thrill when you sing, and grieve when you are blue and rebellious. There are so many girls—just like me—only they can see."

"I hate them," he growled. "I don't want them. They can't read braille, they will laugh when my hair isn't parted right. I hate girls who can see!" She laughed every so gently, and laid her head against his tall strong shoulder.

"And they will leave powder on your coat, and little curly hairs, and you won't even know it."
He ground his teeth to keep from swearing, and she continued: "But, Davie, dear, that is just the point. If I am leaving face-powder all over your shoulder, you must remember to brush it off. When your "little love" can see, you won't have to remember. She will take care of you, as I could never do. Trust me, Davie. I've been blind a long time! I know."

The manly strength and joy and pride oozed out of him; his heart sank; his head dropped until his lips rested against her hair. "God help me!" he whispered.

"He will!" she said reassuringly. "And I will. I'll think of you and pray for you, and write to you—until—you find the other girl." Their kiss was long and tender and rich with understanding.

She had walked swiftly back toward the library when she thought of him leaning over the high railing of the gym balcony. Supposing he should fall, or jump! Erma returned to the doorway.

"Davie," she called, "I shall love you—when you sing, tomorrow. Will you be singing just for me?"

"All the rest of my life I shall sing just for you," he answered. A frail and hopeless promise! But it softened just a little the sadness of their parting.
CHAPTER XVIII

Farewell To Perkins

The essays had been memorized; the physics exam was over; there was no exam in geometry, but there was a history test to cram for. Then would come Class Day, the big reception, and the final exercises. School spirit and class spirit had us well keyed up to meet the climax.

"Oh, my!" said Biddy Bick with disgust. "The boys want to have a goat's head on the school pennant! Oh, my! girls! what do you think of that?"

"I think it is very appropriate," said Erma, to the general consternation. "They call themselves 'the goats', why not?"

"Then they should put a bat on, too, for us," Kitty contributed.

"Oh, my! girls," our bewildered principal repeated. "Oh, my! What about the motto? *Semper aliquid melius* has been suggested for the whole school motto. The thought was to have the motto and each class date on pins or rings, as each class might choose."

"It ought to be 'browse and bray' or whatever goats do," said Erma perversely, for she knew Miss Bicknell was feeling in harmony with the Latin sentiment 'Always something better'."

"No, let's have some sense about our class," protested Elsie, winning the support of the majority. So it was "Semper aliquid melius" on semi-circular pins, with the date, and our initials on the back. The pennant was blue with a white goats' head and the word "Perkins". The diplomas would be tied with blue and white
ribbons, and graduation day would be the nineteenth of June.

Meanwhile there was Class Day.

"Let's have the ceremony on the senior porch," Agnes proposed, and we were delighted with the suggestion. The senior porch, as our class christened it, opened toward the west from our school corridor. It faced Brooks Cottage, and toward the south, in early summer gave a view of dreamy pear trees, gently sloping orchard green, and the quiet river beyond, reflecting the glory of the sunset whose full glare was softened by intervening cottages. We loved that orchard, that soft deep grass and light shade of old trees. We loved the distant river—it wasn't very distant, but some of us couldn't see it and so it seemed far away. And it went far away, symbolizing the future. Is there any one thing in nature that can symbolize the future as perfectly as can a river? In what other object is there such a certainty, and such a mystery? We know rivers go to the sea, but where? how? By what devious and hard or pleasant ways? We love the river Charles! It gives our school a conspicuous geographical place; it gives our school beauty; it gives us a symbolism of surety and adventure. So we held Class Day on the senior porch, looking far and away, thinking long, deep thoughts between the phases of the program.

In remembrance of an earlier solemnity—when we had left dear old Glover—we sang again:

"Fly away, birdling, what dost thou fear?
Strong are thy pinions, 'why tarry here?"

'^
There followed a medley, reviewing the class history. The dedication of the class tree having been performed on Arbor Day, the poem was read again as part of these ceremonies. Then came a most unceremonious little play in which we took off some humorous incidents of school life. The playlet was called "Remember, Girls?"

First Erma told about that Sunday when the minister had put one of his pet rhetorical questions. "I always had thought it funny nobody ever answered him, so when he asked, "Why do we always turn to God in time of trouble?" I called out good and loud, "I don't know, Mr. Camp." Oh what a trimming I got from Miss Lane when we got home! Remember girls?

Elsie told of the "cutting-up party" in Brooks Cottage. Mother B. was going away, and before leaving she had said: "Now, girls, don't do any cutting-up while I am gone." So they didn't even cut up their food, but during the whole week-end, ate without touching a knife. Of course, somebody tattled. But Mother B. was always a good sport, and said she would word her orders more carefully thereafter.

Agnes, who never got into any mischief, and whose gentle, appreciative nature was a blessing to Oliver Cottage, reminded us of the "Maria Kendall Oliver Fund" and the good times it had afforded us. This fund, given in memory of Maria Oliver, a former pupil, finally amounted to ten thousand dollars, is used to help gifted music students, and also to make it possible for pupils who enjoy music to attend an occasional symphony, opera, or concert of real worth. Our class had been to several
symphonies, and had seen the opera "Lohengrin" and attended the Cecelia concert, as well as having those splendid Dixwell concerts that came to the Jamaica Plain school every spring. When Agnes concluded with "Remember, girls?" she was presented with a bouquet of jonquils to show that we did remember and appreciate those dear old girlhood days.

Josephine, Gladys and I reminisced about the time when it was decided that the word "blind" should be changed to something more euphonesous. It really is an ugly word, the combination of "l" and long "i" giving it a harsh and sickening sound. It is said to be a modification of the word "blend" (because colors and things blend into each other when sight is not good) but the soft sound of "e" is so much milder. If they had asked us about it, we would have suggested coining a word with soft letters in it, or something that had a double meaning, such as "de-lighted." But it was taken under consideration by the proper authorities, and when they proposed scientific words that were clumsy and unfamiliar, the matter was dropped. In truth, when they suggested calling some of us who could see enough to walk alone "visi-legs" they were laughed into silence. Remember, girls?

Bessie's story related to an early physiology lesson when, having taken "brother bones" apart, we put him together with his legs where the arms should be, his arms where his legs belonged, and his head at the wrong end of his spine, so that he sat upon his collar-bone, and quite shocked Miss Lubell Hall who was our
principal that year because Miss Bennett was ill. Just then Miss Hall was called from the room for a moment, and we took Mr. Piper (our manikin) and held a mock funeral for him. We had got him rightly "laid away" when Bessie found the poor man's liver occupying the center of the table. We were exhuming the gentleman with great solemnity when Miss Hall returned, and said: "I thought I left a class of young ladies, not of little children." Remember, girls?

Kitty repainted for us the picture of some half-dozen "little women" crowded around the nice, big porcelain bathtub in the new Fisher Cottage. (It will be remembered that we were not allowed in each other's rooms without permission, and, this being late at night, we could not go down to the living-room.) These girls were leaning over the tub, or perched upon its edge, all eating fresh homemade bread and strawberry jam. This was almost a weekly ceremony during the winter of our last year, when whoever had gone home for the week-end, would bring back home food and "treat" the rest of us. Kitty's "remember, girls?" was the signal for our refreshment of nabiscoes and strawberries with cream.

After this intermission there was a community sing of kindergarten songs. Some of the favorites were: "When Everything is Jolly", "Come Little Leaves", "The Windflower", "Down in the Dear Old Orchard," and "Here Come the Sandman." It will be remembered that three of our class had not been with us in the Lower School. They did not know the words but they made our accompaniment with a harmonica and tissue paper horns. Nearly everyone joined in the
enthusiasm if not in the actual singing with us.

The Class Prophecy which followed, we now have the wisdom to omit because none of it came true. Our Class Day exercises then concluded with a Farewell Song to the tune of "Come Back to Erin", to which Erma had put new words. We wanted to save this song for a more formal occasion, so we marched off stage singing the first line,

"Farewell to Perkins, beloved Alma Mater!"

The next excitement was the trunk packing on the last Saturday afternoon. You do a lot of thinking while you pack a trunk. Some little trinket you have not used for months will remind you of bygone events, old friends, happy times, or hopes still in the offing. Also, while you reflect, you anticipate -- "When shall I wear this scarf again? Where will I get the money to replace this worn-out winter coat?" Each girl had her thoughts, all personal and private, yet all entwined with the life we had shared together.

"Here go the slippers I bought with my last Lincoln dollar," said Kitty to me as I stopped at her door to see how she was progressing. "Say," called Erma, coming to join us, "do you think I can wear this dress to church tomorrow? I wore it when I sang at Joe Rodrigo's funeral. It's still fresh enough, don't you think?" None of us could see very well, but we decided that it should go at least twice. And then we had a little chat about Joe, who was in kindergarten when we were. Perhaps he should have graduated with us, we didn't know, because of the strict
segregation. But he had brought the school its one tragedy of that first year by going in the swimming tank when he hadn't been feeling very well. Poor Joe!

The subject was hushed up suddenly when we heard Bick coming down the hall.

"Oh, my! Girls! Here is great news for you! You know about the Blaisdell fund from which you get the "Lincoln dollar"? When we don't have enough pupils to use all the interest, what remains is divided among the seniors.

"Wonderful!" we exclaimed, having each some little extravagance on which we longed to spend an extra dollar or two.

"This year it will amount to ten or fifteen dollars, Mr. Bryan thinks. What will you do with it, do you know?"

We did know. Kitty and I were planning to go to normal school, and we really needed a braille writer. At that time there was a very good one on the market for thirteen-fifty. Of all the fine things the school did for us, no single gift aroused more genuine gratitude than those braille writers. It is not merely that a machine is useful and labor-saving, but in our case--where so often we have to study with the help of someone who can see, a braille writer is indispensible because it helps us to work at a speed compatible with our more fortunate helpers--it keeps us from seeming and being blindish.

How little unexpected joys do lift a body out of the ruts and give one the feeling of "sitting on top of the world!" We were so happy it even showed in our looks. Smiles and laughter
good wishes and great expectations were filling the atmosphere like snowflakes in a blizzard. Perhaps we should say like "moon-light and roses" for it was June. A beautiful, soft June evening, and our reception was in progress. Pretty frocks, lights and laughter indoors; fragrance, soft words, and thoughtful silence, out-doors; music, friends and happiness everywhere. Then, the last night, with its wakeful hopes and its tranquil dreams.

Warm and lovely dawned our graduation morning. We were up betimes, though the exercises were not until ten-thirty. The trunks would go; the families and friends would come; and you never knew, when you said "Hi!" to some old chum who passed you on the walk, whether that might be the last time you two would ever meet. There was a sadness mingled with our joy, a growing-up feeling that we must weigh our words and acts so as to make life come out the way we wanted it to be. Doubtless the ceremony, the solemn address, our first public utterance as we labored through our essays, and the presentation of certificates and flowers, all contributed to the grown-up feeling that was taking possession of us.

Now we were graduated! Dr. Allen and Miss Bicknell had bid us the last farewell. Relatives and friends were gathering about each senior. In little groups we showed them about the school, by common consent gathering at last in the girls' cloister. Here our friends awaited us while all the graduates went in a body to Miss Burnham's schoolroom where we signed our names in the big book of the Perkins Institution Alumnae Association. This
was our last official act as pupils of the school.

The half joyous, half solemn little class of eight then returned to the cloister, joining our friends for the trip home. Standing in the school doorway, facing the little fountain, all clasping hands in one fond parting, (to the tune of "Come Back to Erin") we sang:

Farewell to Perkins
Farewell to Perkins, beloved Alma Mater,
Now as we gather to bid thee adieu,
Gladness is chastened, and joy dimmed by sorrow,
As we see school days fast fading from view.

Nothing can hold them, no future can bring them --
Girlhood's fresh hours, mingling pleasure and pain --
'Though we shall miss them, repeated may wish them,
Only in memory can they live again!'

O'er us is arching an uncertain future,
Purple or golden, what prophet may tell?
Dearly we love thee, Old home of our girlhood,
Fondly, yet sadly, we bid thee farewell.